

Groton Daily Independent

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Region 1B Wrestling

Here is the link to the video from Sisseton

<http://bearcats.tv/index.php?page=wrestling-game&id=7390>



Upcoming Events

Saturday, February 22, 2020

Basketball: Boys 7th/8th Jamboree at Britton-Hecla High School

10:00am: Wrestling: Varsity Regions at Sisseton

Sunday, February 23, 2020

11:00am- 4:00pm: Youth Wrestling Tournament at Groton Area High School

Monday, February 24, 2020

Life Touch pictures at elementary and middle/high school

Thursday, February 27, 2020

Double header basketball vs. Deuel at Clear Lake. Girls JV at 4 p.m., Boys JV at 4 p.m., Girls Varsity at 6:30 p.m. and Boys Varsity at 8 p.m.

Friday, February 28, 2020

National Qualifier at Brookings High School.

State Wrestling Tournament at Sioux Falls.

Boys' Basketball make-up game at Sisseton. C game at 5 p.m. followed by JV game then the varsity game.

Saturday, February 29, 2020

National Qualifier at Brookings High School.

State Wrestling Tournament at Sioux Falls.

Robotics at Mitchell Technical Institute

Show Choir competition at Vermillion

Sunday, March 1, 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

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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VISITOR: Groton High School ()

NO	PLAYER	P	TOT-FG		3-PT		FT	FTA	REBOUNDS			PF	TP	A	TO	BK	S	MIN
			FG	FGA	FG	FGA			OFF	DEF	TOT							
11	Guthmiller, Cade	*	4	9	1	2	1	1	1	3	4	4	10	0	1	0	1	24:00
20	Kurtz, Kaden	*	5	10	2	3	4	4	0	4	4	3	16	0	0	0	1	32:00
22	Doeden, Johnny	*	7	17	0	5	4	6	0	4	4	4	18	1	3	1	2	24:00
34	Jones, Austin	*	1	2	0	0	1	2	0	1	1	0	3	0	1	0	0	8:00
50	Traphagen, Tristan	*	1	4	0	0	0	2	0	2	2	0	2	0	1	0	0	8:00
5	Zak, Jayden		0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	16:00
10	Tietz, Lane		2	3	1	2	0	2	0	4	4	4	5	0	0	0	0	32:00
12	Smith, Isaac		0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	8:00
40	Larson, Tate		0	0	0	0	1	2	1	0	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	8:00
TEAM REBOUNDS									0	1	1				0			
Team Totals			20	46	4	13	11	19	2	19	21	17	55	1	6	1	9	160

Total FG% - 1st: 8/20 0.400 2nd: 12/26 0.462 Game: 0.435 Deadball
 3-PT FG% - 1st: 1/3 0.333 2nd: 3/10 0.300 Game: 0.308 Rebounds
 Total FT% - 1st: 3/8 0.375 2nd: 8/11 0.727 Game: 0.579 (4,0)

HOME: Milbank Bulldogs ()

NO	PLAYER	P	TOT-FG		3-PT		FT	FTA	REBOUNDS			PF	TP	A	TO	BK	S	MIN
			FG	FGA	FG	FGA			OFF	DEF	TOT							
3	Riley, Mason	*	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0:00
5	Cummins, Will	*	0	7	0	6	2	2	0	3	3	4	2	0	2	0	0	24:00
13	Schwenn, Bennett	*	13	22	1	3	2	2	2	2	4	3	29	1	1	0	1	32:00
23	McCulloch, Max	*	1	6	0	0	9	10	2	8	10	2	11	2	2	0	1	32:00
44	Trevett, Ryker	*	2	2	1	1	0	0	0	3	3	3	5	1	1	0	1	16:00
1	Erickson, Evan		1	2	0	1	0	0	0	1	1	0	2	1	1	0	0	16:00
4	Weber, Karson		0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	8:00
32	Hartman, Carter		5	8	2	3	1	1	2	4	6	3	13	1	0	0	1	32:00
TEAM REBOUNDS									1	7	8				0			
Team Totals			22	47	4	14	14	15	7	28	35	15	62	6	9	0	6	160

Total FG% - 1st: 12/25 0.480 2nd: 10/22 0.455 Game: 0.468 Deadball
 3-PT FG% - 1st: 4/13 0.308 2nd: 0/1 0.000 Game: 0.286 Rebounds
 Total FT% - 1st: 1/1 1.000 2nd: 13/14 0.929 Game: 0.933 (0,0)

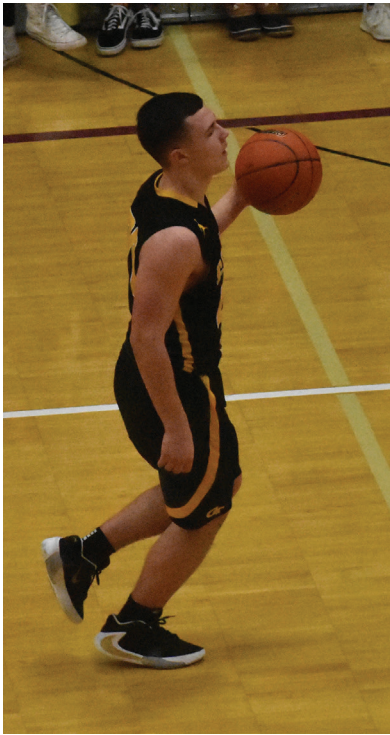
Technical Fouls: GHS (0)
 : MHS (0)

OFFICIALS :
 ATTENDANCE : 0

SCORE BY PERIODS	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	TOTAL
Groton High School	13	7	16	19	55
Milbank Bulldogs	14	15	12	21	62

Last FG: Groton High School 4th- 8:00, Milbank Bulldogs 4th- 8:00
 Largest lead: Groton High School by 2 1st- 8:00, Milbank Bulldogs by 12 2nd- 8:00
 Score tied: 5 times, Lead changed: 2 times

Rebounds and free throws propel Milbank to win over Groton Area



Kaden Kurtz brings the ball upcourt for the Tigers. (Photo by Paul Kosel)

Rebounds and free throws were the key element to Groton Area's 62-55 loss to Milbank in boys' basketball action played Friday in Milbank.

Groton Area goes to 14-4 on the season while Milbank improves to 11-7. The Tigers will travel to Clear Lake on Thursday where a double header will be played with Deuel.

The Bulldogs controlled the boards, 35-21, with Groton Area getting just two offensive rebounds while Milbank had seven offensive rebounds. Milbank missed just one free throw, making 14 of 15 for 93 percent off of Groton Area's 17 team fouls. Groton Area made 11 of 19 free throws for 58 percent off of Milbank's 15 team fouls.

The game was tied five times and there were two lead changes in the first quarter before Milbank took a 14-13 lead at the end of the first quarter. The Bulldogs went on an eight point run to take a 25-13 lead midway in the second quarter. Lane Tietz made a near half court shot right before the half time buzzer to cut Milbank's lead down to nine at half time, 29-20.

Milbank went back on top by 11, 31-20, and the Tigers battled back, making it a three point game at one point, 35-32. Milbank held a 41-36 lead at the end of the third quarter.

Milbank made 13 of 14 free throws in the fourth quarter. Groton Area closed to within two points, 52-50, and had chances to tie or take the lead. Milbank then scored eight straight points to take a 10-point lead, 60-50.

Jonathan Doeden led the Tigers with 18 points, four rebounds, one assist, one block and two steals. Kaden Kurtz had 16 points, four rebounds and one steal. Cade Guthmiller had 10 points, four rebounds and one steal. Lane Tietz had five points and four rebounds. Austin Jones had three points and one rebound. Tristan Traphagen had two points. Tate Larson had one

point and one rebound.

Bennett Schwenn led the Bulldogs with 29 points and four rebounds. Max McCulloch had a double-double with 11 points, 10 rebounds and was nine of 10 from the line. Carter Hartman had 13 points and six rebounds. Ryker Trevett had five points and Will Cummins and Evan Erickson each had two points.

Groton Area was four of 13 in three-pointers while Milbank was four for 14. In field goals, Groton Area was 20 of 46 and Milbank was 22 of 47. Milbank had more turnovers, 9-6.

The game was broadcast live on GDILVE.COM, sponsored by the Aberdeen Chrysler Center.

Milbank won the junior varsity game, 48-43. Groton held a 17-10 lead at the end of the first quarter and a 28-17 lead at half time. The Tigers enjoyed a 32-20 lead early in the third quarter, but Milbank scored 13 straight points to take a 33-32 lead at the end of the third quarter. The lead changed hands two more times and the game was tied once before Milbank pulled away for the win.

Isaac Smith led Groton Area with 12 points while Lane Tietz had eight, Jayden Zak seven, Jacob Zak four and Kannon Coats 2. Stevie Ash led Milbank with 15 points while Karson Weber had 10, Kellen Hoeke eight, Carter Hartman and Tanner Mertens each had six and Justus Osborn had three points.



Jonathan Doeden shoots over Milbank's Carter Hartman. (Photo by Paul Kosel)

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The junior varsity game was broadcast live on GDILIVE.COM, sponsored by the Julie and Carson Larson family.

Groton Area won the C game, 42-36. That game was tied six times and there were seven lead changes with the last lead change happening late in the game as Groton Area took a 37-36 lead. The Tigers scored the last seven points.

Tate Larson led Groton Area with 15 points while Cole Simon had 12, Jackson Cogley six, Jacob Zak five and Wyatt Hearnen four.

Wylie Mursu led the Bulldogs with 17 points as Aiden Fell had 11, Eli Johnson six and Justus Osorn added two points.

The C game was broadcast live on GDILIVE.COM, sponsored by Ronayne Law Office.

- Paul Kosel



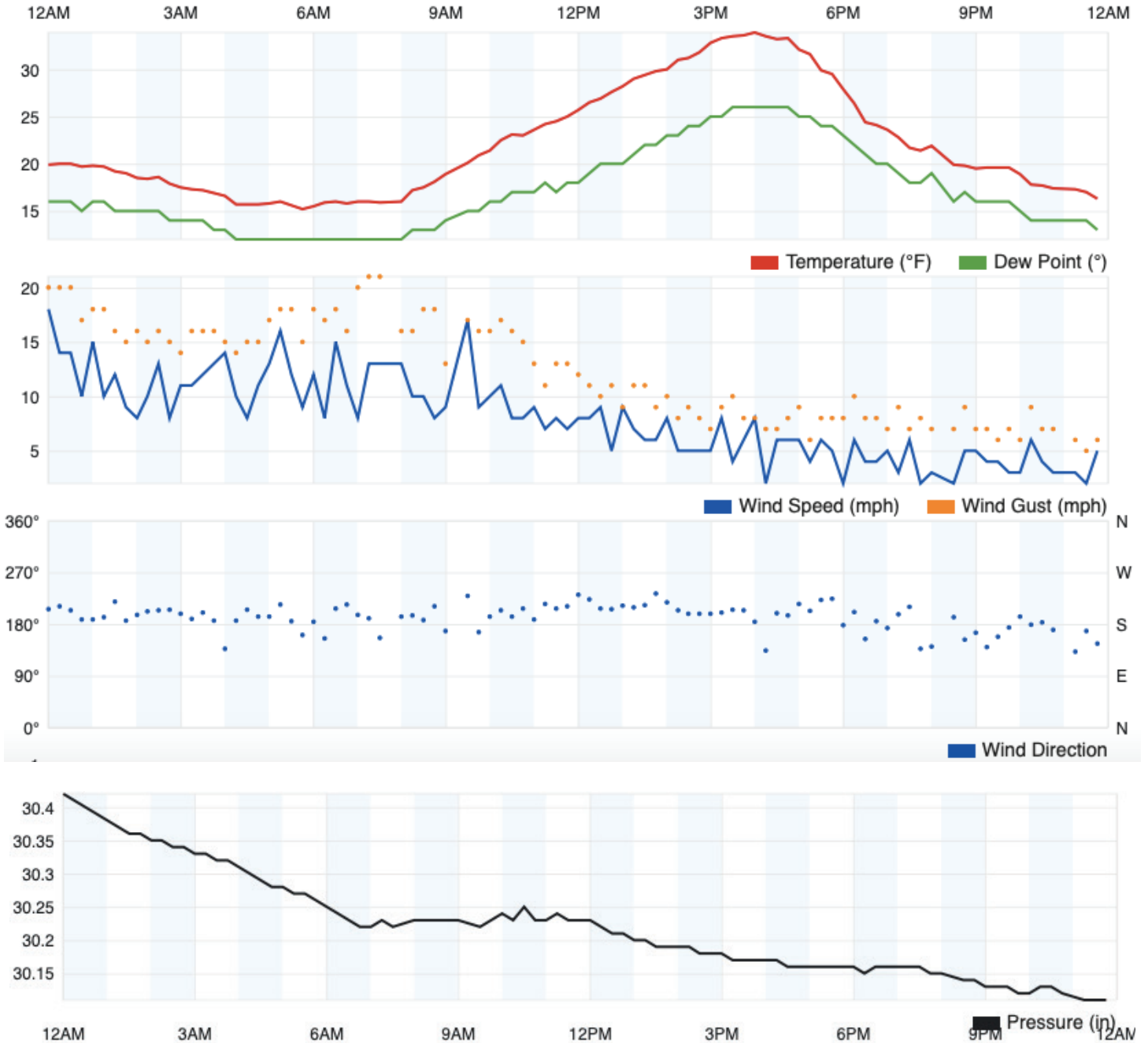
Cade Guthmiller looks for an open player.

(Photo by Paul Kosel)

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Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs



Broton Daily Independent

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Today



Sunny

High: 36 °F

Tonight



Mostly Clear

Low: 21 °F

Sunday



Sunny

High: 33 °F

Sunday
Night



Increasing
Clouds

Low: 13 °F

Monday



Mostly Cloudy
then Slight
Chance Snow

High: 31 °F

Rain & Snow

Monday, Colder
Highs 25-41°

Sunday, Cooler
Highs 30-45°

Today, Mild
highs 34-56°

Aberdeen, SD
Weather Forecast Office

Relatively mild temperatures will continue through the weekend. A system will bring snow and rain to the western and central parts of South Dakota on Monday.

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Today in Weather History

February 22, 1914: Heavy snow fell across parts of central and north-central South Dakota with 6 to 12 inches accumulations. Snowfall amounts included 6 inches at Timber Lake and Onida, 7 inches at Kennebec, and 12 inches at Murdo.

February 22, 2000: High temperatures across central and northeast South Dakota were in the 50s and 60s. Record highs occurred at Watertown, Pierre, and Kennebec. Watertown rose to 65 degrees, Pierre rose to 69 degrees, and Kennebec warmed to 71 degrees by late in the afternoon. Other high temperatures include; 55 degrees at Sisseton, 59 degrees at Aberdeen, and 64 degrees at Timber Lake.

1773 - The memorable "Cold Sabbath" in New England history. Many persons froze extremities while going to church. (David Ludlum)

1936 - Although heat and dust prevailed in the spring and summer, early 1936 brought record cold to parts of the U.S. Sioux Center IA reported 42 inches of snow on the ground, a state record. (20th-22nd) (The Weather Channel)

1971: A 2-day blizzard dumped 36 inches of snow at Buffalo, and 25 inches at Gage, Oklahoma. Follett, Texas picked up 26 inches while Amarillo recorded 14 inches.

1986 - A twelve day siege of heavy rain and snow, which produced widespread flooding and mudslides across northern and central California, finally came to an end. The storm caused more than 400 million dollars property damage. Bucks Lake, located in the Sierra Nevada Range, received 49.6 inches of rain during the twelve day period. (Storm Data)

1987 - A storm moving northeastward out of the Gulf of Mexico began to spread heavy snow across the Middle Atlantic Coast Region. Thunderstorms in northern Florida produced wind gusts to 65 mph in Alachua County. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1988 - Dry weather prevailed across the nation, with windy conditions from the Central Rockies to northern New England. Winds gusted to 58 mph at Cleveland OH, and reached 63 mph at Erie PA. Winds in the Central Rockies gusted to 120 mph at Mines Peak CO and Rendezvous Peak WY. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1989 - Strong northwesterly winds ushering cold arctic air into the north central U.S. produced snow squalls in the Great Lakes Region, with heavy snow near Lake Michigan. Totals in northwest Indiana ranged up to 24 inches at Gary, and up to 16 inches buried northeastern Illinois. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1990 - Thunderstorms developing along and ahead of a cold front produced severe weather from southern Mississippi to North Carolina. One thunderstorm spawned a tornado just prior to dawn which touched down near Opp AL injuring ten persons and causing half a million dollars damage. Thunderstorm winds injured four persons south of Troy AL, and five people at Columbus GA. Thunderstorm winds gusted to 76 mph at Dothan AL. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1998: Seven tornadoes struck east-central Florida late on this date and early on the 23rd. Three of the tornadoes were rated F3 on the Fujita scale. 24 people were killed in Kissimmee alone. A total of 42 people were killed, with 265 injured, and total damage was \$106 million.

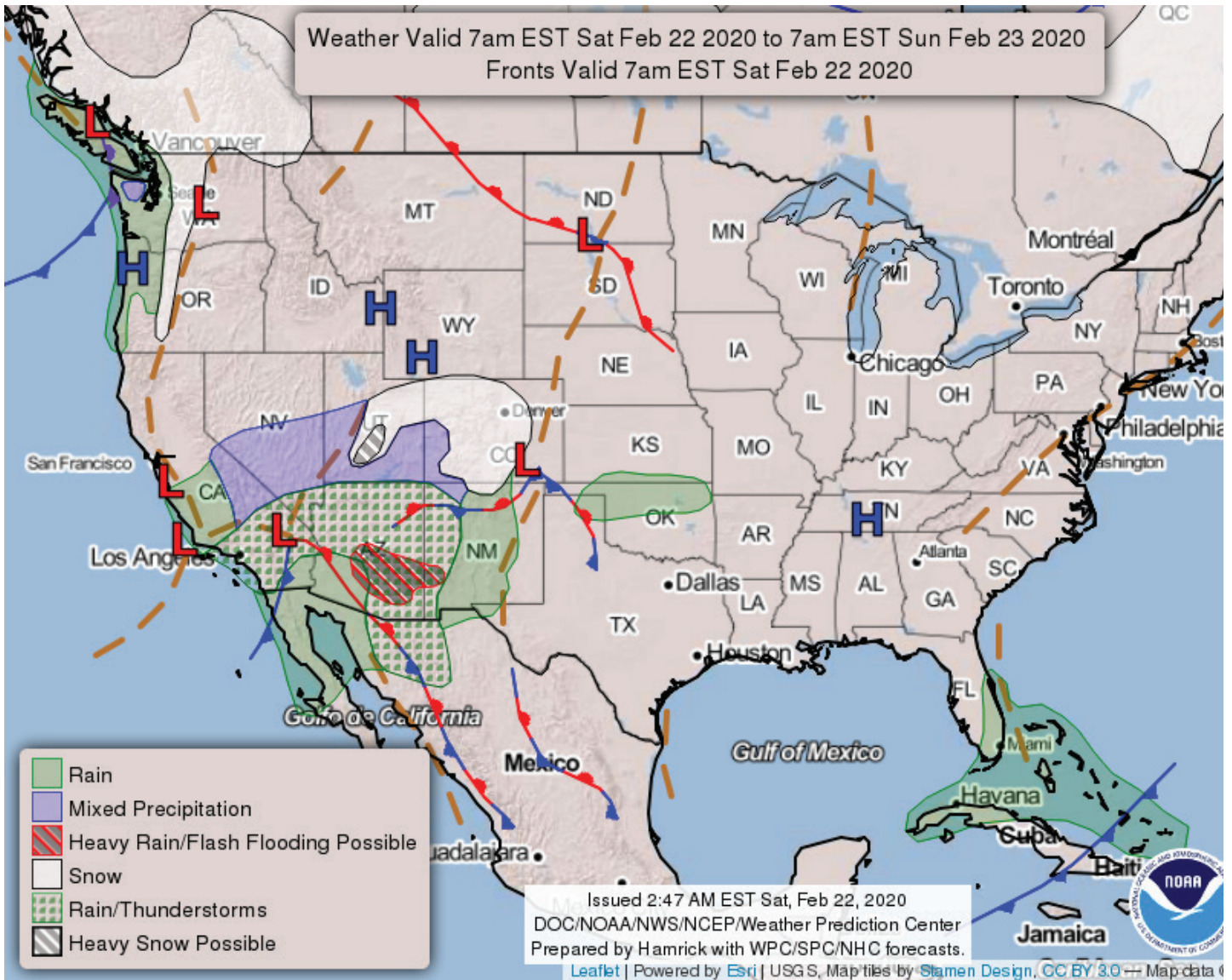
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Yesterday's Groton Weather Today's Info

High Temp: 34 °F at 3:56 PM
Low Temp: 15 °F at 5:44 AM
Wind: 21 mph at 12:00 AM
Snow

Record High: 59° in 2000, 1958
Record Low: -24° in 1918
Average High: 30°F
Average Low: 10°F
Average Precip in Feb.: 0.37
Precip to date in Feb.: 0.00
Average Precip to date: 0.84
Precip Year to Date: 0.35
Sunset Tonight: 6:10 p.m.
Sunrise Tomorrow: 7:23 a.m.



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THE OTHER SIDE

While driving over a beautiful mountain pass in North Carolina, my brother said to me, "Larry, I have never seen such beauty. The snowcapped peaks, the cascading waterfalls, the jagged rocks, and brilliant blue sky are more beautiful than any I have ever seen! I never expected to see such beauty anywhere."

"Oh," I said, "wait 'til you see the other side."

All of us are anxious to "see the other side." Some because our loved ones have gone on before us, and we are lonely. Others long to be free from endless suffering and relentless pain. Many are anxious and worried about problems that are never solved and seem to be tearing us into fragments. Many, however, because we want to see our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Paul encourages us to "Rejoice in our confident hope. To be patient in trouble, and keep on praying." In one verse he gives three commands to the Christian: We are to rejoice, remain patient and pray, knowing and believing that one day, "old things will pass away, and all things will be new" when we get to the "other side." What hope and happiness are ours because we are God's children. But until He calls us to be with Him, we must remain faithful!

Prayer: Lord, help us not to lose sight of the "other side" when the cares and concerns of life overwhelm us. May we be confident, remain patient, and be faithful. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: Romans 12:12 Rejoice in our confident hope. To be patient in trouble, and keep on praying.

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2020 Groton SD Community Events

- 03/14/2020 Youth Girls/Boys Basketball Tourney Grades 4th-6th (Baseball/Softball Foundation Fundraiser)
 - 04/04/2020 Groton Lions Club Easter Egg Hunt - City Park (Saturday a week before Easter Weekend)
 - 04/04/2020 Dueling Piano's Baseball Fundraiser at the American Legion
 - 04/25/2020 Fireman's Stag (Same Saturday as GHS Prom)
 - 04/25-26/2020 Front Porch 605 Rural Route Road Trip
 - 04/26/2020 Father/Daughter dance.
 - 05/02/2020 Spring City-Wide Rummage Sales, (1st Saturday in May)
 - 05/11/2020 Girls High School Golf Meet at Olive Grove Golf Course
 - 05/25/2020 Groton American Legion Post #39 Memorial Day Services
 - 06/05/2020 Athletic Fundraiser at Olive Grove Golf Course
 - 06/8-10/2020 St. John's VBS
 - 06/19/2020 SDSU Golf at Olive Grove Golf Course
 - 06/20/2020 Shriner's Golf Tournament at Olive Grove Golf Course
 - 06/22/2020 Olive Grove Golf Course Ladies Invitational
 - 06/26/2020 Groton Businesses Golf Tournament at Olive Grove Golf Course
 - 07/04/2020 Firecracker Golf Tourney at Olive Grove Golf Course
 - 07/12/2020 Summer Fest/Car Show
 - 07/16/2020 Olive Grove Golf Course Pro Am Golf Tourney
 - 07/31-08/04/2020 State American Legion Baseball Tournament in Groton
 - 08/07/2020 Wine on Nine Event at Olive Grove Golf Course
 - 09/12/2020 Fall City-Wide Rummage Sales (1st Sat. after Labor Day)
 - 09/13/2020 Olive Grove Golf Course Couples Sunflower Classic
 - 10/09/2020 Lake Region Marching Band Festival (2nd Friday in October)
 - 10/10/2020 Pumpkin Fest (Saturday before Columbus Day)
 - 10/31/2020 Downtown Trick or Treat
 - 10/31/2020 Groton United Methodist Trunk or Treat
 - 11/14/2020 Groton Legion Annual Turkey Party (Saturday closest to Veteran's Day)
 - 11/26/2020 Community Thanksgiving at the Community Center
 - 12/05/2020 Olive Grove Golf Course Tour of Homes & Holiday Party
 - 12/05/2020 Santa Claus Day at Professional Management Services
 - 01/--/2021 83rd Annual Carnival of Silver Skates
-
- Bingo every Wednesday 6:30pm at the American Legion Post #39
 - Groton Lions Club Wheel of Meat, American Legion Post #39 7pm (Saturday nights November 30th thru April 11th)
 - Groton Lions Club Wheel of Pizza, Jungle Lanes 8pm (Saturday nights November 30th thru April 11th)
-
- All dates are subject to change, check for updates here

News from the Associated Press

SD Lottery

By The Associated Press undefined

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) — These South Dakota lotteries were drawn Friday:

Mega Millions

04-07-13-16-60, Mega Ball: 6, Megaplier: 4

(four, seven, thirteen, sixteen, sixty; Mega Ball: six; Megaplier: four)

Estimated jackpot: \$50 million

Powerball

Estimated jackpot: \$60 million

School rallies around principal after cancer's return

By DEB HOLLAND Black Hills Pioneer

PIEDMONT, S.D. (AP) — On a recent morning at Piedmont Valley Elementary School, principal Ethan Dschaak had a visit from a pint-sized kindergartener.

The girl had in tow a box of chocolates and a handmade card. The printing in the card was unmistakably that of a kindergartener, but the sentiment summed up the thoughts of an entire school and community — “Mr. Dschaak, thank you for being a great principal. I am praying for you.”

Dschaak announced recently that his cancer, which had been in remission for more than five years, has returned.

At a trip to Mayo Clinic last month, the doctor found a tumor on Dschaak's lung that is believed to be cancerous. He was headed to Mayo Clinic and was scheduled to have surgery to have the tumor removed.

Dschaak shared the news on Facebook saying: “Although I am disappointed in this news, we are not defeated. This is simply a setback that we will get through. In many ways this situation could have been so much worse. There could have been multiple tumors or worse yet, multiple tumors in both lungs. We will get through this and I will be physically in a better place once we do.”

Some may wonder how Dschaak can keep such a positive attitude in the face of adversity. The 46-year-old, who grew up in Belle Fourche, said it was always an expectation in his family that you don't feel sorry for yourself.

“My parents instilled in us that you learn to deal with the hand you are dealt,” he told the Black Hills Pioneer.

Carol Waider, second-grade teacher, said the staff is often stunned by Dschaak's positive attitude.

“In light of everything, he is oftentimes the one that is comforting us,” she said.

Waider said she sends Dschaak positive thoughts, but keeps the messages lighthearted.

“He likes Seinfeld, so sometimes I send him Seinfeld memes or anything that's not super sappy,” she said.

Waider was among staff members at the elementary school who have gone through multiple bouts of cancer with Dschaak.

“The first time it happened he had really young kids. I feel like he maintained a positive attitude for them and that has just carried forward,” Waider said.

Dschaak was diagnosed in November 2009 with leiomyosarcoma, a form of cancer, which caused a soft tissue tumor in his thigh.

The first symptoms appeared nearly a year before that when Dschaak thought he had bruised his left thigh muscle while running on a treadmill. He thought it was a bruise from a muscle tear and treated it as such. Over the course of the year, he would aggravate it every once and awhile, but for the most part it did not bother him.

Then on Oct. 19, 2009, he was again running on a treadmill, when he injured his thigh again. This time

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he decided to seek medical advice as how to fix the muscle tear.

His doctor ordered an MRI, and on Nov. 3, 2009, he was told he needed to meet with a surgeon because it was suspected that the mass was a cancerous tumor. A biopsy confirmed the worst.

"The cautionary tale is that early detection is obviously important, and I was foolish in ignoring it for almost a year," he said.

Dschaak and his wife, Shanna Monahan, headed to the Mayo Clinic at Rochester, Minnesota, for surgery.

"In 2009, they cut the tumor out. I went through five months of chemotherapy, six weeks of radiation, and I lived at Mayo clinic for six weeks," he recalled.

The cancer went away and things were looking good, then from 2010 to 2014 the cancer returned to his lungs four times.

Then from 2014 until Dschaak's latest trip to Mayo Clinic in January, he had been in remission.

Dschaak said it wasn't easy telling his kids about the diagnosis.

"The last time this happened, Dalyn was seven and Danica was five. When they are 13 and 11, they certainly understand the circumstances much better and you can see and hear the concern," Dschaak said. "You never feel good about worrying your children, but it's nice to know they are worried about you. They are incredibly resilient kids and we will all get through this together."

Dschaak commended his wife for being the family's "rock."

"I know Shanna well enough to know that this is uncomfortable and painful, but much like myself, she's chosen to take the approach that we will get through this together. We will get to the other side of this and we will be OK," he said.

Dschaak said they are a faith-based family who whose church family at Grace Lutheran in Sturgis have been incredibly supportive.

"When things are tough, those that grew up in the church get drawn more strongly to it. I just think that's God's way of speaking to you to hang in there," he said.

The staff at PVE organized an opportunity for the school and community to show their support by purchasing Team DschaakT-shirts which read: "Team Dschaak. Never Defeated."

A note was sent home with students about Dschaak's illness and included an order form for shirts. Ten years ago after Dschaak's first cancer diagnosis, they had shirts made that said: "Team Dschaak – Game On."

"This time we changed it to 'Never Defeated' because when Mr. Dschaak announced his diagnosis to the staff he just said, "This is not going to defeat me. This is just a bump in the road,"" said Samantha Spear, Piedmont Valley Elementary School Administrative Assistant.

She said sales of the shirts have been amazing.

An announcement about the shirts was shared districtwide and to students.

"The student order alone is huge," Spear said.

Spear said Dschaak is holding strong and not being defeated by his illness.

"We know he wants to get back here and keep going," Spear said.

Staff at the school have become even closer because of what their leader is going through, Waider said.

"We've been through something pretty major together. We're kinda like family around here. It's like sending an older brother off to Mayo clinic," she said.

Dschaak is an endearing person, Waider said.

"He's goofy. He always has a funny story to share. He makes PVE a fun place to be," she said.

And Dschaak is a true survivor, Waider said.

"After that initial diagnosis, we didn't know what was in store for him and his young family. It's been quite a journey," she said.

This time, Waider believes the power of having so many young souls sending positive thoughts can only help.

"When you have 500 children behind you, you have got to draw some strength from that," she said.

A smile here or a high-five there can't help but make you feel good, Dschaak said.

He said he has had a number of little ones, including the note-writing, candy-carrying kindergartener,

ask him what is going on.

"She told me she was thinking about me and gave me a hug. It was the cutest thing ever. I try to be encouraging and tell them it's going to be OK. I truly believe it will be," he said.

Parents plead for tougher texting while driving penalties

By LISA KACZKE Argus Leader

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) — Jacob William Dahl was a 19-year-old Northern State University student when he was killed after running into the back of a soybean truck while looking at his cellphone.

Dahl, a 2013 graduate of Castlewood High School, was "the greatest kid in the world," his father Jeff Dahl said. Jacob was active in his church and played on his high school football team. He was studying to become a special education teacher to help students like his younger brother, who has autism.

Jeff cried as he showed his son's football jersey to the House Transportation Committee on Feb. 13, the Argus Leader reported. Jacob wanted to become a football coach, and his football number has been retired in his honor. Jeff said his son was committed to serving the United States, holding up a photo of his son in his U.S. Army Reserves uniform. Then he held up the cellphone his son was holding when he died.

"Cruise control set, never stopped, never hit the brake, never saw it coming," Jeff said. "Not on drugs, not on alcohol, that wasn't my son. The only thing distracting him was this piece of plastic."

Jeff and Jacob's mother Lesa Dahl sat in the audience as the House Transportation Committee passed, in a 10-1 vote, House Bill 1169 to prohibit using a cellphone while driving and make it a primary offense. Rep. Steve Livermont, a Republican from Martin, was the only opponent in the vote.

The South Dakota House passed the bill on Feb. 19 after several lawmakers shared stories of friends who had been killed or injured in accidents involving a driver who was distracted by their phone. The bill will next go to the Senate, where a similar bill failed by one vote last year.

Second attempt at the ban

Republican Rep. Doug Barthel, the former Sioux Falls police chief, wasn't planning to file his bill again after it was defeated on its final vote in the Legislature last year.

He thought he'd give it a rest for a year before trying again in a future session, but then Jeff called him last summer, wanting to talk to him about the bill.

"Every year that goes by, we could have people like the Dahls come and speak," Barthel said after the committee's bill hearing. "There's someone new who is impacted every year by this."

Barthel hopes the bill can pass all the way through to Gov. Kristi Noem this year, but he's not taking its passage at each step for granted. His goal is to not get a phone call like Jeff's again next summer, he said.

HB 1169 would prohibit cellphone use while driving except for emergency purposes, using a GPS app or reading or entering a phone number. Talking on the phone would need to be done in either a hands-free mode or by holding the phone up to the ear. If passed, using a cellphone while driving would be a Class 2 misdemeanor and a \$122.50 fine. Texting while driving is currently a secondary offense in South Dakota, meaning a driver must be pulled over for a reason other than that in order to be ticketed. Sioux Falls has an ordinance prohibiting texting while driving.

The number of crashes was decreasing, but that trend is reversing with the advent of smartphones, and the same is true in South Dakota, said Doug Abraham, a lobbyist for the American Property Casualty Insurance Association.

More than 32,800 crashes occurred on South Dakota roads in 2019, and those crashes killed 80 people, injured 3,941 drivers and passengers, and caused more than \$100 million in property damage, Abraham said, quoting state Department of Public Safety data.

Sanford, Avera, the South Dakota Municipal League and the South Dakota associations for health care, sheriffs, police chiefs, firefighters and EMTs, insurance companies, general contractors and auto dealers all spoke in favor of the bill at the committee hearing. No one spoke in opposition.

'I cry every single day'

Jacob Dahl died on Oct. 23, 2014, on a road near Andover.

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From the time he left Northern's parking lot that day until he crashed, Jacob was constantly on his phone. He was trying to take a picture with his phone when he ran into the back of the truck carrying soybeans. His funeral was held in the high school gym.

"Gyms are for athletics and gym and proms and science fairs, not funerals," Jeff told the legislators, crying as Lesa comforted him.

Jeff hadn't been able to get ahold of his son for hours when the Sheriff's Office, escorted by the pastor from their small hometown church, knocked on the door. Jeff knew immediately that the worst had happened. He told the legislators that he hopes they never have to answer a knock on the door like that.

He hopes no more high school football numbers have to be retired or scholarships started in the name of another South Dakotan who has been killed because of distracted driving.

Working as a school janitor in Watertown, Jeff goes into an empty room whenever he needs to cry so that the kids can't see him crying, he said.

"My boy was 19 years old," he said, "and I cry every single day since then."

Friday's Scores **By The Associated Press**

BOYS BASKETBALL=

Arlington 56, Chester 32
Britton-Hecla 54, Aberdeen Roncalli 47
Castlewood 71, Estelline/Hendricks 50
Clark/Willow Lake 64, Redfield 34
Crazy Horse 64, Takini 50
DeSmet 86, Miller 42
Dell Rapids 79, Lennox 62
Dell Rapids St. Mary 71, Baltic 54
Ethan 67, Tripp-Delmont/Armour 32
Gregory 65, Bon Homme 48
Harding County 72, Lemmon 67
Herreid/Selby Area 59, Leola/Frederick 41
Howard 72, Elkton-Lake Benton 63
Jones County 67, Bennett County 45
Lake Preston 56, Iroquois 45
Little Wound 58, Timber Lake 48
Madison 84, Dakota Valley 80
Milbank 62, Groton Area 55
Parker 57, Bridgewater-Emery 54
Parkston 73, Mt. Vernon/Plankinton 69, OT
Platte-Geddes 68, Wagner 20
Potter County 69, Highmore-Harrold 49
Scotland 53, Menno 42
Sioux Falls Lincoln 60, Aberdeen Central 51
Sioux Valley 69, McCook Central/Montrose 36
Sunshine Bible Academy 61, North Central Co-Op 44
Tiospa Zina Tribal 79, Webster 52
Watertown 66, Brookings 52
Waubay/Summit 76, Great Plains Lutheran 37
West Central 62, Chamberlain 55, OT
White River 73, New Underwood 41
Winner 68, Mobridge-Pollock 66

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Yankton 61, Mitchell 40
GIRLS BASKETBALL=
Aberdeen Central 53, Sioux Falls Lincoln 46
Bon Homme 52, Gayville-Volin 42
Cheyenne-Eagle Butte 81, Timber Lake 51
Crazy Horse 88, Takini 60
Dakota Valley 67, Madison 63
Deubrook 44, Florence/Henry 33
Ethan 60, Tripp-Delmont/Armour 47
Faith 56, Belle Fourche 51
Flandreau Indian 44, Oldham-Ramona/Rutland 40
Hill City 59, Wall 30
James Valley Christian 48, Wessington Springs 24
Marshall, Minn. 69, Sioux Falls Roosevelt 39
North Central Co-Op 46, Sunshine Bible Academy 17
Pine Ridge 82, McLaughlin 61
Sully Buttes 58, Potter County 47
Tea Area 57, Elk Point-Jefferson 52
Wagner 55, Platte-Geddes 23
Waubay/Summit 59, Great Plains Lutheran 24
White River 69, Philip 52
Winner 72, Mobridge-Pollock 39

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

Jury acquits woman who claimed self-defense in stabbing

RAPID CITY, S.D. (AP) — A jury on Friday acquitted a Pine Ridge woman who said she fatally stabbed her boyfriend in self-defense.

Jurors deliberated about four-and-a-half hours before finding Doreen Brown, 44, not guilty of second-degree murder, voluntary manslaughter and involuntary manslaughter in the June 27, 2019, screwdriver stabbing death of 43-year-old Donald McMillan Jr.

McMillan was found dying on Brown's couch with wounds on his back and another in his chest that pierced his lung and heart. Brown said she stabbed him with a screwdriver she found on the ground after he attacked her with a tree branch.

After the jury's verdict, Judge Jeffrey Viken told Brown she was free to go. Brown had been held at the Pennington County Jail since last July, the Rapid City Journal reported.

Brown and her family members quietly cried as the verdict was announced while McMillan's family sobbed and walked out of the courtroom at the federal building in Rapid City.

Brown testified Thursday that McMillan abused her for 15 months and was attacking her moments before she stabbed him.

House fire injures 3 children, 1 adult in South Dakota

ALLEN, S.D. (AP) — A house fire has injured three children and an adult in southern South Dakota.

The fire broke out Thursday at a home in Allen. The Martin Volunteer Fire Department tweeted that the three children were transferred to a Colorado burn center. The adult is at a hospital in Rapid City. Their conditions were not released, KOTA-TV reported.

Fire crews arrived to find the house in flames.

Senate passes Noem's proposal to streamline county zoning

By **STEPHEN GROVES** Associated Press

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) — The South Dakota Senate on Friday passed Gov. Kristi Noem's proposal to overhaul the decision-making for county zoning that would pave the way for permitting for feedlots and other projects.

The Republican governor has pitched the bill as bolstering economic growth in the state by making the process more predictable and fair, but opponents say it cuts people who would object to feedlots or other projects out of the decision-making process.

Her proposal would get rid of stringent vote requirements for permits in some counties, stipulating that those counties cannot require a two-thirds majority vote to have a permit approved. The bill would also make it more difficult to appeal decisions once they are made.

Noem has put her presence behind the bill in recent days, watching over Friday's debate from the gallery of the Senate and testifying at its committee hearing earlier in the week. At a press conference before the vote on Friday, she touted her efforts in this legislative session to cut "red tape" through a series of bills that she said "put people over paperwork."

But Democrats in the Senate argued the zoning bill does just the opposite.

"It basically eliminates any meaningful right of the public to object, of the public to participate, of the public to challenge," said Sen. Craig Kennedy, a Yankton Democrat.

The proposal gives people 21 days to appeal a permit decision, limits the people who can appeal a decision only to those who can show they would be particularly affected by the project. It would also require a two-thirds majority vote of the permitting board to overturn a permit and says that courts can make people who sue over the permits and lose pay courts costs and attorney's fees .

Proponents say that feedlots and other projects have been endlessly delayed by "frivolous" lawsuits.

Kennedy's home county of Yankton has been the center of bitter disputes over permitting feedlots. He said the conflict represents a split between rural farmers and city-dwellers.

Opponents to the feedlots object to the air and water pollution, as well as health risks like asthma for those who live near industrial farming operations that can house thousands of animals.

Sen. Josh Klumb, a Republican from Mount Vernon, said there are two feedlots within a mile of his farm, but technology that controls the manure and stench has prevented it from becoming an issue.

Several other Republicans broke with their party to vote against the bill. Lawmakers were divided on whether the proposal would erode "local control."

Sen. Troy Heinert, a Democrat from Mission, said the bill represented state government trying to come up with a solution for something that has been a problem in a few counties.

Noem pointed out that the bill does not touch county zoning standards, it only standardizes the decision and appeal process.

Sen. Brock Greenfield, a Clark Republican, said it gives local control by making the process more objective. Counties could determine a checklist for permits, then follow those for every permit application. He said it would take the "personal element" out of permit decisions because county officials have been subject to aggressive lobbying by their friends and neighbors.

The House will consider the bill next.

Lincoln NewsTrain on April 4

NewsTrain, an effort started by the Associated Press Media Editors that has trained more than 7,500 journalists, is offering a full day of digital training in Lincoln, Nebraska, on April 4. Register by March 4 for the early rate of \$75. On March 5, the cost rises to \$85.

The sessions at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln will include using social media as a reporting tool, storytelling on mobile and mining data for enterprise off any beat.

The Lincoln NewsTrain is being led by the University of Nebraska-Lincoln's College of Journalism and Mass Communications.

For questions, email Laura Sellers-Earl, NewsTrain project co-director, at lsellers.newstrain@gmail.com.

For more information and to register, go to: <https://www.apme.com/page/LincolnNebraskaNewsTrain2020>.

US pushes changes to Western land plans that judge blocked

BILLINGS, Mont. (AP) — U.S. Interior Department officials are seeking to bolster their case for easing restrictions on energy development, mining and grazing in Western states inhabited by a declining bird species.

A federal judge in Idaho blocked the Trump administration plans last year over concerns that they could harm greater sage grouse, a ground-dwelling bird.

Assistant Interior Secretary Casey Hammond says a new set of environmental studies published Friday clarifies the steps the government will take to conserve the bird's habitat.

The Interior Department opened a 45-day public comment period on the studies that cover millions of acres of public lands in Wyoming, Colorado, Utah, Nevada, Idaho, Oregon and California.

Sage grouse have been in decline for decades due to habitat loss and other factors, and their numbers dropped sharply last year across much of their range.

Sage grouse territory in Montana, Washington and the Dakotas was not impacted by the proposed changes.

The legal dispute over the administration's proposal is before Judge B. Lynn Winmill In Idaho.

The case dates to 2016, when environmental groups sued the Obama administration over a previous set of rules that they described as insufficient to protect grouse from heading toward extinction.

Noem opposes bill to stop schools requiring vaccinations

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) — Gov. Kristi Noem on Friday said she's against a bill that would stop South Dakota schools and colleges from requiring students to get vaccinations.

The Republican governor told reporters that vaccinations save lives and that her office will be opposing the bill when it is presented to a committee next week. House Majority Leader Lee Qualm, a Republican from Platte, introduced the proposal to drop vaccination requirements for students. The proposal has the backing of a few influential lawmakers.

Qualm has said he's not necessarily opposed to vaccinations, but wanted to leave the choice up to parents. The state currently allows vaccination exemptions only for students who have weakened immune systems or who have religious objections.

"Vaccinations have literally saved millions of lives over the years," Noem said.

The Department of Health, under her administration, has promoted vaccines as safe and important for keeping kids healthy. The Department reported that over 96% of kindergartners have been vaccinated for measles, mumps, and rubella, representing one of the highest coverage rates in the nation. The state has not had a reported case of measles since 2015.

But the issue of vaccinations has already come up several time in the House. On Thursday, lawmakers supporting a bill that would stop schools from doing medical exams or other non-emergency procedures on children without parental support said they feared some schools could administer flu shots without parental consent. Other lawmakers said that schools don't administer flu shots.

The bill failed by one vote, but may be reconsidered.

Department of Health spokesman Derrick Haskins said that some school districts do host flu shot clinics, but parental consent is always required.

House Minority Leader Jamie Smith, a Sioux Falls Democrat, said the discussion revealed a recurring distrust of doctors and medical authorities by Republicans in the House.

GOP attorneys general seek to block Equal Rights Amendment

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (AP) — Five Republican attorneys general are seeking to block an effort by three Democratic-led states to see the Equal Rights Amendment is adopted into the U.S. Constitution.

Legal chiefs in five states — Tennessee, Alabama, Louisiana, Nebraska and South Dakota — filed a motion on Thursday to intervene in a lawsuit filed by Virginia, Nevada and Illinois. All five rescinded their approvals of the ERA amendment before a congressionally mandated ratification deadline more than 40 years ago, Tennessee Attorney General Herbert Slatery said Thursday.

“Tennessee has an interest in ensuring that its vote to reject the ERA is given effect,” Slatery said.

Virginia recently became the 38th state to ratify the measure designed to guarantee women the same legal rights men enjoy. “Equality of rights under the law shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any State on account of sex,” it says.

Constitutional amendments must be ratified by three-quarters of the 50 states, or 38. But the ERA’s future is uncertain, in part because the ratification deadline set by Congress expired so long ago.

Enforcing that rule fell to the archivist of the United States, David Ferriero, who announced that he would “take no action to certify the adoption of the Equal Rights Amendment.” The three Democratic attorneys general sued Ferriero, arguing that the deadline, first set for 1979 and later extended to 1982, is not binding.

“The Equal Rights Amendment is valid as the 28th Amendment to the Constitution, and it is disappointing and frankly unfathomable that any state would take action to block equal rights for women,” said Virginia Attorney General Mark Herring in a statement.

Herring added the Democratic states “will continue working with our partners to ensure that all women have the constitutional equality to which they are entitled.”

Survey suggests trade deal signings buoyed bankers’ hopes

OMAHA, Neb. (AP) — A new survey of bankers in rural parts of 10 Plains and Western states suggests they’re optimistic about the economy over the next few months, thanks to the signings of the U.S.-Mexico-Canada trade agreement and the China trade agreement.

The finding was one of several in the latest Rural Mainstreet Survey. The overall index for February declined to 51.6 from 55.9 in January. Any score above 50 suggests a growing economy, while a score below 50 indicates a shrinking economy, organizers say.

“Due to weak farm income, 40.6% of bankers reported that their banks had restructured loans while only 3.1% indicated that their banks had rejected a higher percentage of farmland loans,” said Creighton University economist Ernie Goss, who oversees the survey.

The survey’s confidence index increased to a healthy 58.1 from January’s weak 50.0, the survey report said.

“The signing of the Phase 1 trade agreement with China and the USMCA boosted economic confidence across the region with expectations of higher international agriculture sales,” Goss said.

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

Six questions before the Nevada caucus

By NICHOLAS RICCARDI Associated Press

LAS VEGAS (AP) — The Nevada caucus, the third contest in the Democratic presidential race, is Saturday. Here are six questions going into that fateful vote.

HOW WELL DOES SANDERS DO?

Sen. Bernie Sanders of Vermont has high expectations going into the caucus. He is leading national polls and his campaign has a huge footprint in Nevada, a state he narrowly lost to Hillary Clinton in 2016.

But Sanders also had lofty prospects going into New Hampshire last week because he won that state by 22 points in the 2016 primary, and he only eked out a narrow victory over former South Bend Mayor Pete Buttigieg.

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Nothing's guaranteed Saturday, especially in Nevada, whose young caucuses (this is only their fourth iteration) are unpredictable.

If Sanders wins, he solidifies front-runner status heading into South Carolina next week and, more important, into critical Super Tuesday primaries on March 3. But if something goes wrong, or he only barely pulls out a win, it will intensify questions about whether the self-declared democratic socialist can extend his support beyond his fervent base.

HOW WILL LABOR FLEX ITS MUSCLE?

Sanders and Joe Biden have long held themselves out as the champions of organized labor. Nevada will offer a fresh test of their appeal.

The Culinary Union, which represents many of the workers in the casino and hotel industry, is one of the most powerful political forces in the state. Its endorsement was coveted by all of the candidates, but the union decided to not endorse. In 2008, the union's decision to back Barack Obama was critical to his success in the state.

Though Sanders would seem a natural ally, many union members prize the health care that comes with their jobs as a result of their membership and do not embrace Sanders' plan for "Medicare for All". Biden has hammered on this point, as he critically needs union members' backing.

HOW HIGH IS TURNOUT?

Nevada Democrats have been heartened that their experiment with early caucus voting led to nearly 75,000 people marking preference cards in four days of initial balloting before the main event Saturday. That's close to the 84,000 who voted in 2016. After a disappointing turnout in Iowa, Democrats hope Nevada shows their voters are enthusiastic enough about the election to defeat President Donald Trump in November.

Some Democrats hope Nevada surpasses the 118,000 who showed up at the 2008 caucuses when Obama faced Clinton. But Democrats should be careful about declaring victory based on raw numbers. There are more Democrats in fast-growing Nevada now than in 2008, when more than one-quarter of all Democrats participated in the caucus. The number of caucus participants needed for 2020 to surpass that 2008 rate would be above 150,000.

WILL NEVADA WINNOW THE FIELD?

This is the musical chairs portion of the primary. Normally, at the end of each contest, at least some candidates have to drop out due to poor performance and lack of funds.

It hasn't worked that way so far because the field has been so evenly split, but that can't last forever. Will Nevada be the end of one of the six main candidates? If not, will a disappointing finish in the state hasten an eventual exit?

Even if someone drops out, there's another Democrat, billionaire former New York Mayor Mike Bloomberg, waiting on the ballot on Super Tuesday states, making it likely Democratic voters will still have numerous choices going into the busiest stretch of primary season. This is not necessarily a good thing.

WHAT DO MINORITY VOTERS DO?

After two early states that are overwhelmingly white — Iowa and New Hampshire — Nevada may change the picture. The state is among the most diverse in the nation. And even though caucuses require a greater investment of time, which can make it harder for minorities to participate, the event will feature a far more diverse electorate.

The problem is there is no reliable polling or data that will tell us how different demographic groups split. That's because highly transient Nevada is notoriously difficult to survey. Still, by studying precinct level data, analysts and campaigns will glean indications of how candidates did.

Will Buttigieg and Minnesota Sen. Amy Klobuchar be able to broaden their appeal to Latinos, African Americans and Asians? Will Sanders, as he has been hoping, assemble a multi-ethnic coalition? Will Biden hold onto the minority voters that were once presumed to propel him to the nomination?

Nevada demographically resembles the diverse array of states scheduled to vote on Super Tuesday, when nearly one-third of the total delegates in the contest are up for grabs. It may hint at what lies ahead

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in the race.

DID THE DEBATE HAPPEN IN TIME FOR WARREN?

Many months ago, Nevada politicians viewed Massachusetts Sen. Elizabeth Warren as the Democrat to beat in their state. She assembled a team of operatives to push her populist message of structural change that was expected to resonate with Nevada's working-class Democrats.

But then Warren's national position began to erode, and she limped into Nevada a political afterthought.

That changed on Wednesday night when Warren delivered a powerful debate performance highlighted by her skewering of Bloomberg. She saw an avalanche of money and attention. But a huge share of Nevada had already voted by then.

After weathering a disappointing fourth-place showing in New Hampshire, which borders her home state, Warren desperately needs a win. Will Nevada make her the next comeback kid?

Virus spreads in South Korean city as thousands are screened

By KIM TONG-HYUNG Associated Press

SEOUL, South Korea (AP) — South Korea on Saturday reported an eight-fold jump in viral infections in four days to 433, most of them linked to a church and a hospital in and around the nation's fourth-largest city, where health workers scrambled to screen thousands of worshippers.

The country also reported its third death from the virus, a man in his 40s who was found dead at home and posthumously tested positive.

There's concern that South Korea's death toll could grow. Virus patients with signs of pneumonia or other serious conditions at the Cheongdo hospital were transferred to other facilities, 17 of them in critical condition, Vice Health Minister Kim Gang-lip told reporters.

He said that the outbreak had entered a serious new phase, but still expressed cautious optimism that it can be contained to the region surrounding Daegu, where the first case was reported on Tuesday.

In some positive news, China said Saturday that the daily count of new virus cases there fell significantly to 397, though another 109 people died of COVID-19, the disease caused by the virus. Most of the new cases and all but three of the deaths were in Hubei province, where the outbreak started.

The new figures, along with an upward revision of Hubei's earlier count, brought the total number of cases in mainland China to 76,288, with 2,345 deaths. China has severely restricted travel and imposed strict quarantine measures to stop the virus from spreading.

A few Chinese provinces, eager to restart factories and their economies, began easing those restrictions after reporting no new cases in recent days. Liaoning and Gansu provinces both lowered their emergency response level, and two cities in Shaanxi province resumed bus services and removed checkpoints at railway stations, bus stations and on some highways.

Of the 229 new cases in South Korea, 200 are from Daegu and nearby areas. By Saturday morning, the city of 2.5 million and surrounding areas counted 352 cases, including two fatalities in the Cheongdo hospital. Both patients had pneumonia.

The central government has declared the area a "special management zone" and is channeling support to ease a shortage in hospital beds, medical personnel and equipment.

While some experts say the virus has started to spread nationwide, pointing to a number of infections in Seoul and elsewhere that weren't immediately traceable, government officials remained hopeful of containing the outbreak.

"Although we are beginning to see some more cases nationwide, infections are still sporadic outside of the special management zone of Daegu and North Gyeongsang Province," Kim said during a briefing. He called for maintaining strong border controls to prevent infections from China and elsewhere from entering South Korea.

Nationwide, the numbers told of a ballooning problem. There were 20 new cases reported Wednesday, 53 on Thursday and 100 on Friday.

Around 230 of those have been directly linked to a single house of worship, a Daegu branch of the

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Shincheonji Church of Jesus, where a woman in her 60s attended two services before testing positive for the virus.

Officials are also investigating a possible link between churchgoers and the spike in infections at the Cheongdo hospital, where more than 110 people have been infected so far, mostly patients at a mental illness ward.

Health officials were screening some 9,300 church followers, and said that 1,261 of them have exhibited cough and other symptoms.

Among them, four had traveled abroad in recent months, including one to China, although that trip came in early January and was not near Hubei.

All 74 sites operated by the Shincheonji Church have been closed and worshippers have been told to instead watch services online for a sect whose leader claims to be an angel of Christ, but who is dismissed by many outsiders as a cult leader. Its teachings revolve largely around the Book of Revelation, a chapter of the New Testament known mostly for its apocalyptic foreshadowing.

Health and city officials say the woman who first tested positive had contact with some 1,160 people, both at the church, a restaurant and a hospital where she was treated for injuries from a car accident.

But officials say it's unlikely that the woman set off the chain of infections, and that she was probably just the first person to be detected in an area where the virus was circulating in the population.

Anxiety is also palpable in other parts of the country. In Seoul, South Korea's capital, fear of the virus led many to avoid shops and restaurants and instead eat at home and order necessities online. Buses and subways were full of mask-clad commuters.

Rallies were banned in downtown Seoul, but hundreds went ahead with an anti-government protest on Saturday.

The first three cases in the country's 600,000-member military also sprung up on separate bases Friday, bringing added concern. A U.S. Army garrison in Daegu restricted access and imposed self-quarantine for American troops.

"There remain zero confirmed cases of USFK personnel with COVID-19 despite the rise in confirmed South Korean cases," U.S. Forces Korea said in a statement.

Globally, nearly 78,000 people have been infected in 29 countries, and more than 2,300 have died.

In Japan, among 16 new cases of the virus was a middle school teacher in her 60s, prompting concern for the health of other teachers and students in Makuhari in Chiba prefecture southeast of Tokyo.

Iranian health authorities on Saturday reported the country's fifth death from the virus and 10 new cases, raising the country's total number of cases to 28.

Saudi Arabia barred travel to Iran and said anyone coming from there can enter only after a 14-day quarantine. The decision directly impacts thousands of Iranians who travel to Mecca and Medina for Islamic pilgrimages, effectively barring them from the kingdom.

Italian authorities say a 78-year-old man died of the disease and the number of people infected has more than quadrupled due to an emerging cluster of cases in the country's north. Many of the new cases represented the first infections in Italy acquired through secondary contagion and brought the country's total to 19.

A dozen towns in northern Italy were on effective lockdown Saturday.

In the United States, 35 people have tested positive for the virus, including 18 who returned home from a quarantined cruise ship in Japan and one new case reported Friday in California.

Associated Press writers Mari Yamaguchi in Tokyo and Aya Batrawy in Dubai, United Arab Emirates, contributed to this report.

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AP FACT CHECK: Donald Trump and the audacity of hype

By CALVIN WOODWARD, HOPE YEN and JOSH BOAK Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — In their boisterous presidential debate, several Democrats sold short the health care plans of rivals or glossed over aspects of their own record. In an audacious league of his own, President Donald Trump celebrated the elimination of a tax that still exists and went deep and wide in distorting what he's done in office.

A sampling from the past week:

TAXES

TRUMP: "We got rid of it. No more death tax, no more inheritance tax." — Colorado rally Thursday.

THE FACTS: False. The "death" tax is still alive.

He's referring to the estate tax, also known as the inheritance tax. He didn't get "rid of it."

The 2017 tax overhaul doubled the threshold at which the estate tax gets levied. A couple worth less than \$22.4 million would avoid the tax. But the increase of the threshold isn't permanent. It's set to expire in 2026.

TRUMP, on the effects of the estate tax on people inheriting family farms: "You know what? They go out and they would borrow a lot of money and they would lose the farms. The number is staggering." — Colorado rally.

THE FACTS: He's inflating the peril to family farms from the estate tax, which is aimed at the hugely wealthy. After his 2017 tax cuts, the Agriculture Department published estimates that 38,106 farm estates would be created in 2018. Of those, only 230 would have to file an estate tax return and only 133 would have any estate tax liability.

TRADE

TRUMP: "If our formally targeted farmers need additional aid until such time as the trade deals with China, Mexico, Canada and others fully kick in, that aid will be provided by the federal government, paid for out of the massive tariff money coming into the USA!" — tweet Friday in all capital letters.

THE FACTS: That's a flatly false account of where the money for the farm subsidies comes from. It comes from U.S. taxpayers. There is no "massive tariff money coming into" the country, from which the subsidies could be drawn.

Since the start of his trade war with China, Trump has been consistently deceptive about who is paying for it. Tariffs are principally paid by U.S. importers and those costs are usually passed on to consumers in the form of higher prices for goods. China and other exporters are not cutting the U.S. a check. The money to help farmers hurt by the trade war comes from the U.S. treasury at the expense of other federal programs and the debt.

The nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office says household income takes a hit from the tariffs. It estimated last year that the tariffs then in play would bring down average inflation-adjusted household income by \$580 from 2018 to 2020.

STOP AND FRISK

DEMOCRATIC PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE MIKE BLOOMBERG, on the stop-and-frisk policing policy when he was New York mayor: "What happened, however, was it got out of control and when we discovered — I discovered — that we were doing many, many, too many stop and frisks, we cut 95% of them out." — Democratic debate Wednesday.

THE FACTS: He's misrepresenting how stop and frisk declined. That happened because of a court order, not because Bloomberg learned that it was being overused.

In Bloomberg's first 10 years in office, the number of stop-and-frisk actions increased nearly 600% from when he took office in 2002, reaching a peak of nearly 686,000 stops in 2011. That declined to about 192,000 documented stops in 2013, his final year as mayor.

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Bloomberg achieved his claim of a 95% cut by cherry-picking the quarterly high point of 203,500 stops in the first quarter of 2012 and comparing that with the 12,485 stops in the last quarter of 2013.

The former mayor defended the practice even after leaving office at the end of 2013 and only apologized for it a few weeks before declaring his candidacy for presidency.

COAL

BLOOMBERG, citing his philanthropy's work with the Sierra Club: "Already we've closed 304 out of the 530 coal fire plants in the United States, and we've closed 80 out of the 200 or 300 that are in Europe." — Democratic debate.

THE FACTS: He's wrongly taking credit for driving the U.S. coal industry to its knees.

The U.S. coal industry's plunge is largely due to market forces, above all drops in prices of natural gas and renewable energy that have made costlier coal-fired power plants much less competitive for electric utilities. Bloomberg has indeed contributed huge sums to efforts to close coal plants and fight climate change, but against the backdrop of an industry besieged on other fronts.

U.S. coal production peaked in 2008, but since then has fallen steadily. That's due largely to a boom in oil and gas production from U.S. shale, begun under the Obama administration, that made natural gas far more abundant and cheaper, and falling prices for wind and solar energy, partly because of improving technology in the renewable sector.

The U.S. Energy Information Administration reaffirmed in a report in December the extent to which the market has turned away from coal.

HEALTH CARE

TRUMP, on Sanders' "Medicare for All" plan: "Think of this: 180 million Americans are going to lose health care coverage under this plan. But if you don't mind, I'm not going to criticize it tonight. Let them keep going and I'll start talking about it about two weeks out from the election." — Arizona rally Wednesday.

THE FACTS: That's a thorough misrepresentation of the Sanders plan as well as similar plans by Democrats in Congress. People wouldn't "lose" coverage. Under Sanders, they would be covered by a new and universal government plan that replaces private and job-based insurance. Democrats who stop short of proposing to replace private and job-based insurance would offer an option for people to take a Medicare-like plan, also toward the goal of ensuring universal coverage.

WARREN on Klobuchar's health plan: "It is like a Post-it note, insert plan here. ... Amy, I looked online at your plan. It's two paragraphs." — Democratic debate.

THE FACTS: That's not true. Klobuchar's health care policies run thousands of words online, addressing coverage, substance abuse and mental health, prescription drugs and the elderly. Some of her material lacks specifics found in the plans of several of her rivals. Yet aspects of her agenda are grounded in detailed legislation led or supported by the senator from Minnesota.

It's true that Klobuchar's main health policy page devotes two paragraphs to summarizing her way of achieving universal coverage. But that's not the extent of her plan.

SANDERS, to Buttigieg: "Let's level, Pete. Under your plan, which is a maintenance continuation of the status quo. ..." — Democratic debate.

WARREN: Buttigieg's health care plan is "not a plan. It's a PowerPoint."

THE FACTS: It's more than the status quo and more than a PowerPoint presentation. Buttigieg's plan would cover almost all U.S. citizens and legal residents, even if it's not as far reaching as the proposals of Sanders and Warren.

An analysis of health care overhaul plans by the Urban Institute and the Commonwealth Fund found that an approach like the one advocated by Buttigieg would reduce the number of uninsured people from more than 32 million to less than 7 million. Those 7 million or so would mainly be people who are in the

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country illegally.

The proposal from Buttigieg features a new government-sponsored "public option" plan that even people with employer-sponsored coverage could join voluntarily.

Warren's put-down of Buttigieg's plan comes after she reconsidered her own approach to Medicare for All, deciding to proceed in stages. She would first expand coverage by building on existing programs and postpone the push for a system fully run by the government until the third year of her presidency.

TRUMP: "We are now offering plans that are up to 60% less expensive than they were, and it is better health care." — Arizona rally.

THE FACTS: Cheaper, yes. But not cheaper and better.

The bargain health insurance plans Trump talks about are cheaper because they skimp on benefits such as maternity or prescription drug coverage and do not guarantee coverage of preexisting conditions.

The short-term plans the Trump administration is promoting as an alternative to the Affordable Care Act provide up to 12 months of coverage and can be renewed for up to 36 months.

Premiums for the plans are about one-third the cost of fuller insurance coverage. They're intended for people who want an individual health insurance policy but make too much money to qualify for "Obamacare" subsidies.

TRUMP: "We are protecting people with preexisting conditions ... we are trying to get rid of 'Obamacare' ... we are trying to get rid, so we can give you a great health-care plan and protect preexisting conditions." — Arizona rally.

THE FACTS: Not really. People with preexisting medical problems have health insurance protections because of Obama's health care law. As Trump notes, he is trying to dismantle it.

One of Trump's major alternatives to Obama's law — short-term health insurance — doesn't have to cover preexisting conditions. Meanwhile, his administration has been pressing in court for full repeal of the Obama-era law, including provisions that protect people with preexisting conditions from health insurance discrimination.

He and congressional Republicans say they would put new protections in place, but they have not spelled them out.

With Obama's law still in place, preexisting conditions continue to be covered by regular individual health insurance plans. Insurers must take all applicants, regardless of medical history, and charge the same standard premiums to healthy people and those who had medical problems before or when they signed up.

Before the Affordable Care Act, any insurer could deny coverage — or charge more — to anyone with a preexisting condition who was seeking to buy an individual policy.

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TRUMP, on one of the people who benefited from his round of pardons and sentence commutations: "Rod Blagojevich did not sell the Senate seat. He served 8 years in prison, with many remaining. He paid a big price. Another Comey and gang deal!" — tweet Wednesday.

THE FACTS: That's misleading at best. The FBI closed in on Blagojevich when he was trying to make the sale. He was convicted of trying to sell an appointment to President Barack Obama's former Senate seat as well as trying to shake down a children's hospital. Trump commuted the sentence of the former Illinois governor on Tuesday.

James Comey, the FBI director fired by Trump, had nothing to do with the case. Comey was working in the private sector when Blagojevich was indicted, tried and convicted. As for Comey's "gang," Patrick Fitzgerald, the federal prosecutor who brought the case against Blagojevich, is a Comey friend and one of his lawyers.

TRUMP: "I'm actually, I guess, the chief law enforcement officer of the country." — remarks Tuesday to reporters.

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THE FACTS: That's disputed.

Several veterans of Obama's administration described Trump's assertion as simply wrong on the law, while conservative legal minds say they think Trump is right.

"While the president is in charge constitutionally, as a matter of good policy, presidents have kept law enforcement at arms length," said John Yoo, a University of California at Berkeley law school professor and Justice Department lawyer during President George W. Bush's Republican administration. "Neutrality in law enforcement is important if the government is to have the credibility and integrity to convince judges and juries, who are the ones who ultimately render the verdict."

Trump's push for leniency for convicted confidant Roger Stone drew condemnation from more than 2,400 former Justice Department officials who served in Democratic and Republican administrations.

Martin Lederman, a Georgetown law professor and former Obama Justice Department official, said on Twitter that Congress, not the president, gives the authority to prosecute to the attorney general. It's also the attorney general's responsibility, Lederman said, to stand up to a president who charts an unlawful course, "knowing that it might ... lead to removal."

Chris Lu, who managed Obama's Cabinet in his first term, said the Obama White House followed its predecessors in adhering to strict rules on who could communicate with the Justice Department and on what topics.

"What Trump is suggesting is at odds with this longstanding precedent and dangerous to the principle of impartial justice," Lu said.

Associated Press writers Ricardo Alonso-Zaldivar, Jonathan Lemire, Ellen Knickmeyer, Eric Tucker, Mark Sherman and Paul Wiseman in Washington and Amanda Seitz in Chicago contributed to this report.

EDITOR'S NOTE — A look at the veracity of claims by political figures.

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At Trump's India rally, Modi bets on bolstering his image

By SHEIKH SAALIQ Associated Press

AHMEDABAD, India (AP) — A festive mood has enveloped Ahmedabad in India's northwestern state of Gujarat ahead of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's meeting there on Monday with President Donald Trump, whom he's promised millions of adoring fans.

The rally in Modi's home state may help displace his association with deadly anti-Muslim riots in 2002 that landed him a U.S. travel ban. It may also distract Indians, at least temporarily, from a slumping economy and ongoing protests over a new citizenship law that excludes Muslims. But beyond the pageantry and symbolism of the visit, experts expect little of substance to be achieved for either side.

"For Modi, Trump's visit to India offers a useful distraction from the domestic political tumult playing out across the country," said Micheal Kugelman, deputy director of the Asia Program at the U.S.-based Wilson Center. "I don't think the visit will have much impact on domestic politics in either country."

To welcome Trump, who last year likened Modi to Elvis Presley for his crowd-pulling power at a joint rally the two leaders held in Houston, the Gujarat government has spent almost \$14 million on ads blanketing the city that show them holding up their hands, flanked by the Indian and U.S. flags.

It also scrambled to build a wall to hide a slum along a road that Trump and first lady Melania Trump will take, caught stray dogs, planted exotic trees and is rushing to finish a cricket stadium in time for Trump's arrival. The buzz around the event has resonated in Ahmedabad, a city of 7.2 million people divided between those proud of Modi, a Gujarati tea seller's son who went on to hold India's highest office, and those who angrily remember his term as the state's chief minister, when at least 1,000 people were killed in the anti-Muslim riots.

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Trump has said Modi has promised between 6 million and 10 million people will turn up for their rally in the city, although authorities expect closer to 100,000.

A big trade deal that both sides had hoped to sign also seems increasingly unlikely.

India has tried to advance cooperation on a range of defense and strategic issues with the U.S., but Indian tariffs remain a major sticking point.

"We're not treated very well by India," Trump recently told reporters.

Still, with India's economy registering its worst slowdown in a decade, expectations of a trade deal remain high in India.

"It would be embarrassing if the two countries cannot manage to strike a modest deal," said Joshua White, who served in former President Barack Obama's White House as senior adviser and director for South Asian affairs at the National Security Council.

The India-U.S. relationship, apart from trade tensions, has also experienced strain because of Washington's desire to use India as a geopolitical buffer with China, while at the same time some members of Congress are criticizing its actions in disputed Kashmir.

A recent letter from four senators to U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo condemned the Modi government's decision to scrap the semi-autonomy and statehood of Kashmir, India's only Muslim-majority region, last year.

Trump has offered to mediate between India and Pakistan, both of which claim Kashmir, an offer India has repeatedly rejected.

While experts aren't optimistic that any substantial gains will be achieved by the visit, they see plenty of parallels between the leaders' planned rally in Ahmedabad, dubbed "Namaste Trump," which translates to "Greetings, Trump," and last year's "Howdy Modi" event in Houston.

With flashy Bollywood musical and dance numbers, the Houston rally was the Indian-American diaspora's grand welcome to Modi after his landslide reelection victory in 2019. But beneath the extravaganza, it was a political rally for the two nationalist leaders, organized by a nonprofit with Hindu nationalist links.

This grand style of event, likely to be replicated in Ahmedabad, could provide Trump an opportunity to appeal to Indian-American votes in the U.S. presidential election, experts say.

"By participating in such a huge event," Kugelman said, Trump can go back home and "make a pitch to Indian-Americans, many of whom originally hail from Gujarat."

For Modi, however, the visit could mean more.

Modi has long been trying to bolster his image as a respected leader on the world stage. The visit by Trump could be viewed as endorsing his Hindu nationalist policies that have contributed to a slew of recent losses by his party in state elections.

"President Trump's visit will be taken as a personal vote of confidence in Modi, and a signal that the United States is willing to overlook his party's increasingly assertive and troubling majoritarianism," White said.

Modi has previously hosted Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu in his home state while pitching the implementation of Gujarat's development model across India. Bringing world leaders to Gujarat is a tactic to "pull crowds in his home turf," said Ajay Umat, a senior journalist in Gujarat who has reported on Modi for the last 30 years.

"He loves to make an exhibition," Umat said. "What better place than his own state?"

Muslim leaders and human rights groups say Modi, when he was the state's chief minister, did little to stop the 2002 anti-Muslim riots, a charge he has denied.

Suspicious that Modi quietly supported the riots led the U.S. to deny him a visa, which has since been reversed. While government investigators eventually ruled there was no evidence to charge him, the shadow of the riots continues to hang over Ahmedabad.

A few days before the two leaders' visit, Salim Mohammad sat in his modest house in Naroda Patia, a dingy Muslim-majority neighborhood where 97 people died in the riots. Mohammad said Modi's invitation to the U.S. president to a city which experienced communal riots "under his watch" was like a "reopening of wounds."

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"But I am not surprised," Mohammad said. "After all, both leaders are of the same ideology. They both promote divisive politics."

US leads training exercises in Africa amid focus on Sahel

By CARLEY PETESCH Associated Press

THIES, Senegal (AP) — Crouching in the sparse brush, maneuvering into formations through a divide, and then shooting at a target, about 10 soldiers from Burkina Faso are among a select group of African soldiers being trained to battle West Africa's fast-growing extremist threat.

They are carrying out drills as part of the U.S. military-led annual counterterrorism exercise in West Africa, which this year takes place in the shadow of possible U.S. troop cuts in Africa although extremist attacks in the region have reached a worrying new level.

A Pentagon decision on the size of the U.S. force in Africa is pending as part of a global review with the aim of better countering Russia and China.

More than 1,500 service members from the armies of 34 African and partner training nations have assembled for the Flintlock exercises in Senegal and Mauritania, the two countries in West Africa's sprawling Sahel region that so far have not been hit by violence from extremists linked to al-Qaida or the Islamic State group.

The U.S. Africa Command, which organizes the two weeks of training, defers questions about the possible troop cuts to the Pentagon. It has said European nations should step up to help France's 5,000-strong force leading the counterterror fight in the Sahel, the region just below the Sahara Desert. French leaders have appealed to Washington to keep U.S. troops in place.

Senegalese Foreign Minister Amadou Ba during a visit this week by U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo made it clear the region is under threat.

"We hope they will continue to support in security areas. We hope they will continue to support us in training and intelligence," he said of U.S. forces.

Extremists know no boundaries, Col. Magatte Ndiaye, a spokesman for Senegal's armed forces, told The Associated Press. "We must have a synergy of international action to face this threat," he said.

"We have trust in the Americans," he added. "They are aware of the situation and I'm sure they'll take a decision that makes good sense."

Security in the Sahel region continues to deteriorate and requires international participation, said the commander of Special Operations Command Africa, U.S. Air Force Brig. Gen. Dagvin Anderson. "It's not just a U.S. or Western effort. It takes partnerships across the international community, and it takes close partnership within the region in order to be effective," he said.

Extremists don't respect borders, so intelligence sharing is vital, he said. That involves building trust and relationships across borders: "Ultimately, that's what leads to stability, and that stability is what we need."

But a five-nation regional counterterrorism force, the G5 Sahel, has suffered from insufficient funding.

In Burkina Faso, which has seen a growing number of attacks as extremists move over the border from Mali and Niger, the military has been accused by human rights groups of abuses in counterterror efforts that risk alienating young people and sending them to join the extremists.

Burkina Faso's military needs more training to fight against growing extremism, said Lt. David Ouedraogo, who leads the group of Burkinabe soldiers training as special forces. His forces will be deployed to hold the line against the extremists' expansion southward toward the capital.

"We must always adapt and continue training," he said as his team ran drills led by the Dutch. "The threat has changed ... the attacks on positions, the attacks on military camps and on civilians. This is all a threat that has grown against our country."

Once-peaceful Burkina Faso has seen a rising number of attacks since Islamic extremists became active in the country in 2015. Hundreds have been killed and more than a half-million people displaced in the past year alone.

"There's less freedom to move ... and it all affects the morale" of residents, he said. "It's important ...

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to find stability.”

Capt. Sam Okenarhe of Nigeria’s Brigade Strike Force faces a more entrenched threat from Boko Haram, whose insurgency has lasted more than a decade, and an offshoot called the Islamic State West Africa Province.

“We all know that terrorism is not something that our country faces alone, so definitely it’s very important that our Western partners have an intervention in it,” he said as his force received training from the U.K.’s Royal Marines.

There are signs, though, that U.S. military interest in the Sahel could be waning. Late last year the U.S. switched to a strategy of merely trying to contain extremist groups in the region instead of weakening them, according to a new report by the Pentagon inspector general.

However, the U.S. ambassador to Mauritania, Michael J. Dodman, countered the idea that the U.S. is pulling out.

“We have absolutely not abandoned the fight against terrorism in West Africa or in the Sahel, or frankly, anywhere in the world,” he said last week in a phone press conference.

“We continue to modify what we’re doing” said Dodman. “We try to stay on top of the situation and try to build up the capacities of the countries in the region, who are the ones who are really going to be the key to defeating the threat that comes from extremists.”

Germany admits there’s a far-right problem, but what to do?

By DAVID RISING Associated Press

BERLIN (AP) — As Germany’s president expressed his sympathy and shock during a candlelight vigil for nine people killed by an immigrant-hating gunman, a woman called out from the crowd, demanding action, not words.

But the country’s leaders are struggling to figure out how to counter a recent rise in right-wing hate, 75 years after the Nazis were driven from power.

The shooting rampage Wednesday that began at a hookah bar in the Frankfurt suburb of Hanau was Germany’s third deadly far-right attack in a matter of months and came at a time when the Alternative for Germany, or AfD, has become the country’s first political party in decades to establish itself as a significant force on the extreme right.

In the wake of the latest spasm of violence, Chancellor Angela Merkel denounced the “poison” of racism and hatred in Germany, and other politicians similarly condemned the shootings.

The rampage followed October’s anti-Semitic attack on a synagogue in Halle and the slaying in June of a regional politician who supported Merkel’s welcoming policy toward migrants. But Germany’s top security official, Interior Minister Horst Seehofer, said the trend goes back further, noting a 2016 attack on a Munich mall against migrants and a years-long cross-country killing spree against foreigners by a group calling itself the National Socialist Underground.

“Since the NSU and the rampage in Munich through today, an extreme-right trail of blood has run through our country,” he said.

Extremism is no new phenomenon in modern-day Germany, where the Red Army Faction and other radical-left groups waged a campaign of kidnappings and killings from the 1970s through the ‘90s, and where some of the key Sept. 11 plotters lived and schemed before heading to the U.S. to attend flight school ahead of the 2001 attacks.

Germany has strict laws prohibiting any glorification of the Nazis, with bans on symbols like the swastika and gestures like the stiff-armed salute, and denial of the Holocaust is illegal.

But security officials have frequently been accused of being “blind in the right eye,” for intentionally or inadvertently overlooking some far-right activity.

That was said to be the case with the NSU, which was able to kill 10 people, primarily immigrants, between 2000 and 2007 in attacks written off by investigators as organized crime. It was only after two NSU members died in 2011 in a botched robbery that the group’s activities were uncovered.

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Mehmet Gurcan Daimaguler, an attorney who represented victims' families at the trial of an NSU member, said German authorities need to give more than "lip service" to fighting racism.

"We haven't really begun yet a real fight against neo-Nazis, and one of the reasons, for me, clearly is the victims," he said. "The victims of Nazis are not members of the German middle class, but Muslims, migrants, LGBT people, immigrants. As long as the victim pool, so to say, was limited to minorities, it was not considered a real threat for society."

Seehofer said that has changed, noting increased resources are being devoted to fighting far-right crime, including the addition of hundreds of new federal investigators and domestic intelligence agents. In addition, stricter laws have been passed, and the Cabinet approved a bill just this week, before the Hanau attacks, to crack down on hate speech and online extremism.

Under the bill, which is awaiting passage in parliament, internet companies would have to report a wide range of hate speech to police, and retweeting such material to a wide audience, or explicitly condoning it publicly, could be subject to prosecution.

"We are not blind in any eye," Seehofer said.

Still, with national elections coming next year, politicians are grappling with strategies to confront AfD and blunt its appeal to disgruntled voters.

The AfD does not espouse violence, but many are accusing the party of producing a climate where right-wing extremism can flourish. The 7-year-old party now has members in all 16 state parliaments and is the largest opposition party nationally, though with less than 13 percent of the vote in the last election.

"One cannot see this crime in isolation," said Norbert Roettgen, one of several members of Merkel's party hoping to succeed her as chancellor when her term ends next year. "We need to fight the poison that is being dragged into our society by the AfD and others."

Alexander Gauland, an AfD leader, accused Roettgen and others of trying to exploit the Hanau violence for political advantage. "Everything that we know is that it was a totally crazy person," Gauland said.

The gunman, 43-year-old Tobias Rathjen, posted rambling writings and videos online ahead of the attacks, advocating genocide and espousing theories about mind control.

Gauland, who once got in trouble for downplaying the Nazi era as a speck of "bird poop" in German history, said Rathjen had probably never heard any of his speeches, and he rejected any connection between the bloodshed and his party's anti-migrant platform, as did several other AfD leaders.

But Seehofer said the power of words cannot be discounted.

"I can't deny that a statement that Nazism is a speck of bird poop in history provides this fertile soil," Seehofer said. "There are also many other remarks that, in my view, mess up heads, and something bad comes from messed-up heads far too often."

Holger Muench, head of the BKA, Germany's equivalent to the FBI, said the threat from mentally disturbed people has grown in recent years, as they latch on to ideas often found online and turn violent.

"The fact that there are mentally ill people in society, that is unchanged for the most part," he said. "But the fact that there are mentally ill people with a world view that makes them a risk to serious acts of violence, that is changing."

No evidence has emerged to link Rathjen to the AfD. But people in Hanau were quick to suggest at least an indirect connection.

Dieter Hog watched as the police descended upon Rathjen's house after the shootings and said he didn't know his neighbor or what might have motivated him. "But it might be the seed of Mr. Hoecke," he said, referring to Bjoern Hoecke, an AfD leader who called Berlin's memorial to the victims of the Nazi Holocaust a "monument of shame."

And Hatice Nazerzadeh, the woman who yelled at German President Frank-Walter Steinmeier during the candlelight vigil, said that with the party's ascent, attacks are becoming common. Parts of AfD are already under close scrutiny by Germany's domestic intelligence agency, but she said more should be done.

"The core problem is the AfD," said Nazerzadeh, whose cousin was shot in the head by Rathjen and killed. "As long as the AfD is legal, racism is legal."

Democrats face an important test in Nevada caucuses

By **STEVE PEOPLES, MICHELLE L. PRICE and JONATHAN J. COOPER** Associated Press

LAS VEGAS (AP) — Just past the roulette wheel and slot machines, the smoky bars and blinking lights, Nevada Democrats are preparing to weigh in on their party's presidential nomination fight.

Seven casino-resorts on the Las Vegas Strip stand among 200 caucus locations statewide that will host the presidential caucuses on Saturday, the third contest in a 2020 primary season that has so far been marred by chaos and uncertainty in overwhelmingly white, rural states. The exercise of democracy inside urban temples of excess is just one element that distinguishes the first presidential contest in the West, which will, more importantly, test the candidates' strength with black and brown voters for the first time in 2020.

"Nevada represents an opportunity for these candidates to demonstrate their appeal to a larger swath of our country," said state Attorney General Aaron Ford, a Democrat who is not endorsing a candidate in the crowded field.

Nevada's population, which aligns more with the U.S. as a whole than the opening elections in Iowa and New Hampshire, is 29% Latino, 10% black and 9% Asian American and Pacific Islander.

The vote comes at a critical moment for the Democratic Party as self-described democratic socialist Bernie Sanders emerges as the clear front-runner and a half dozen more moderate candidates savage one another for the chance to emerge as the preferred alternative to Sanders. The ultimate winner will represent Democrats on the ballot against President Donald Trump in November.

Yet on the eve of the caucuses, questions lingered about Nevada Democrats' ability to report election results quickly as new concerns surfaced about foreign interference in the 2020 contest.

Campaigning in California, Sanders confirmed reports that he had been briefed by U.S. officials about a month ago that Russia was trying to help his campaign as part of Moscow's efforts to interfere in the election.

"It was not clear what role they were going to play," Sanders said. "We were told that Russia, maybe other countries, are going to get involved in this campaign."

He added: "Here's the message to Russia: Stay out of American elections."

Despite the distraction, Sanders enters Saturday increasingly confident, backed by strong support from Latinos and rank-and-file union workers who have warmed to his fiery calls to transform the nation's economy and political system to help the working class.

In a fiery speech the night before the caucuses, Sanders lumped the "Democratic establishment" in with the corporate and Republican establishment, saying they can't stop him. He said the establishment was "getting worried" about a multiracial coalition that wants higher wages and health care.

The outlook was dire for virtually everyone else.

Long before voting began, there was skepticism about Pete Buttigieg's ability to win over a more diverse set of voters after strong finishes in overwhelmingly white Iowa and New Hampshire. It was the opposite for Joe Biden, who struggled in Iowa and New Hampshire but looked to Nevada's voters of color to prove he still has a viable path to the nomination.

The two women left in the race, Elizabeth Warren and Amy Klobuchar, were fighting for momentum, hoping to benefit from a sudden surge of outside money from newly created super PACs. Billionaire Tom Steyer has invested more than \$12 million of his own money on television advertising in Nevada, according to data obtained by The Associated Press, which details the extent to which several candidates have gone all-in ahead of Saturday's contest.

The pro-Warren Persist super PAC, created in recent days, is spending more money in Nevada this week than any other campaign or allied outside group. Persist, which hasn't yet disclosed any donors and cannot legally coordinate with Warren's campaign, has invested \$902,000 this week in Nevada television on her behalf, according to spending data obtained by The AP. That's more than Klobuchar's and Biden's campaigns have spent over the entire year.

New York billionaire Mike Bloomberg, who dominated the political conversation this week after a poor

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debate-stage debut, won't be on the ballot. He's betting everything on a series of delegate-rich states that begin voting next month.

"I think right now predicting who's going to win here in Nevada would be a wild guess," former Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid said in an interview. "And if I were a gambler, which I'm not, I wouldn't be betting on who's gonna win here in Nevada."

The political world, meanwhile, hoped there would be a winner at all.

Saturday's caucuses are the first since technical glitches and human errors plagued Iowa's kickoff caucuses. Nearly three weeks later, state Democratic officials have yet to post final results.

Nevada Democrats have projected confidence in their process, although Democratic National Committee Chairman Tom Perez this week refused to commit to releasing the full results on the day of the vote. He said a number of factors, including early voting and potentially high turnout, could affect the tabulation and timing of results. In addition, Nevada, like Iowa, reports three sets of data from the multistage caucus process.

"We're going to do our best to release results as soon as possible, but our North Star, again, is accuracy," Perez told The Associated Press this week.

One potential complication: Early voting.

The state party has added to its responsibilities by offering early voting – something Iowa did not attempt. Nevada voters have been eager to partake, given the alternative is to spend significantly more time voting at a chaotic caucus site.

The party said nearly 75,000 Democrats cast early ballots, and a majority were first-time caucus-goers. In 2016, a total of 84,000 Nevada voters participated in the Democratic caucuses.

A small, but significant number of the ballots cast early were disqualified.

Of the more than 36,000 ballots that were cast through Monday, 1,124 ballots were voided largely because voters forgot to sign them, according to the state party, which did not release the final numbers. Party officials said they were reaching out to these voters and encouraging them to caucus in person on Saturday.

Campaigning in Las Vegas on the eve of the caucuses, Trump sought to raise doubts about the process.

"I hear their computers are all messed up just like they were in Iowa. They're not going to be able to count their vote," Trump charged. "They're going to tell you about health care. They're going to tell you about our military and jet fighters and the missiles and rockets, but they can't count votes."

Amid such concerns, Nevada Democrats tried to stay focused on the candidates and the issues they represent.

Reid, who at 80 years old remains one of the most powerful Democrats in the state, predicted that Sanders' signature health care policy, "Medicare for All," could not win support in Congress. Yet he said he thinks the fiery Vermont senator could bring Democrats together.

"I have no doubt that if Bernie Sanders is the nominee, the party will unite behind him and beat Trump," Reid said. ____

Peoples reported from Washington. AP writers Christina A. Cassidy in Atlanta and Nicholas Riccardi contributed.

Afghan deal will be hard to assess, fraught with pitfalls

By LOLITA C. BALDOR Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Hopes for ending America's longest war hinge on maintaining a weeklong fragile truce in Afghanistan that U.S. officials and experts agree will be difficult to assess and fraught with pitfalls.

What if one militant with a suicide vest kills dozens in a Kabul market? Or, if a U.S. airstrike targeting Islamic State insurgents takes out Taliban members instead, does that destroy the deal?

The agreement, which took effect Friday, calls for an end to attacks around the country, including road-side bombings, suicide attacks and rocket strikes between the Taliban, Afghan and U.S. forces.

But in a country that has been wracked by violence for more than 18 years, determining if the agree-

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ment has been violated will be a tough task. And there are a number of other groups and elements in the country that would love to see the deal fall through.

"The reason this is a challenge is this is a very decentralized insurgency," said Seth Jones, a senior adviser at the Center for Strategic and International Studies and an Afghanistan expert. "There are going to be a lot of opportunities for any militia commander, element of the Taliban, the Haqqani network, and other local forces who don't want to see a deal, to conduct violence."

The Haqqani network is an insurgent group linked to the Taliban.

According to one defense official, any attack will be reviewed on a "case-by-case" basis. And much will depend on how well U.S. military and intelligence officials in Afghanistan can quickly determine two things: Who was responsible for the attack, and can any of the blame be traced back to the Taliban, particularly the group's leaders who have been participating in the negotiations.

The Taliban issued a statement late Friday saying their military council has instructed commanders and governors to stop all attacks against foreign and Afghan forces. The council has a web of commanders and shadow governors across the country.

U.S. officials have made it clear that "spoilers" — such as militants associated with the Taliban who are not in favor of the peace talks — could launch an attack in a deliberate attempt to prevent them from happening.

Jones said the U.S. military has tried to get a good layout of where all the insurgent groups are operating so it will be able to determine where any attack comes from and who likely was responsible. And U.S. military officials said they were prepared and ready to make quick assessments.

If successfully implemented, the weeklong "reduction in violence" agreement, which began at midnight Friday local time (1930 GMT, 2:30 p.m. EST), will be followed by the signing of a peace accord on Feb. 29. That accord would finally wrap up the 18-year war and begin to fulfill one of President Donald Trump's main campaign promises: to bring U.S. troops in Afghanistan home.

The U.S. will continue to have surveillance aircraft and other assets overhead to monitor events and help to determine who is responsible for any attack.

One senior U.S. official also said that the U.S., Afghans and Taliban will have a channel through which they will be able to discuss any issues that arise.

Another U.S. official said that communications between the groups will allow the Taliban, for example, to quickly deny involvement with an attack. But in all cases, officials said the U.S. military — led by Gen. Scott Miller in Afghanistan — will be responsible for investigating incidents and figuring out who is at fault.

The officials all spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss details of the private negotiations.

Once Miller reaches a conclusion, officials said it will be up to the White House and State Department to make a final determination about whether an attack constitutes a violation of the truce and if it is enough to affect the peace deal.

The Pentagon has made it clear that U.S. troops may continue to conduct operations against Islamic State and al-Qaida militants as needed. But officials also noted that all sides want the peace agreement to be successful, so they will try to avoid anything that might scuttle it.

The Pentagon has said for months that it is poised to reduce the number of U.S. troops in Afghanistan from the current number of more than 12,000 to 8,600. That reduction is likely to be triggered once the peace agreement is finalized, but officials said Friday it could take several months for any troop cuts to begin.

Jones expressed some skepticism, saying the Taliban has expressed little interest in laying down arms or integrating into a government run by someone other than the group itself.

"This is a first down, we're at the 10-yard line," said Jones. "We have 90 more to go and I don't know that we'll ever get the touchdown."

The agreement mapping out a plan for peace follows months of negotiations between the U.S. and the Taliban that have broken down before. Both parties, however, have signaled a desire to halt the fighting that began with the U.S. invasion after the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks by Osama bin Laden's Afghanistan-based al-Qaida network.

The only other cease-fire the Taliban had agreed to was for three days in 2018 over the Islamic holiday of Eid al-Fitr. Then fighting ceased completely and Taliban and Afghan security forces were even filmed taking selfies together and laughing. The Taliban military leaders chastised its fighters at the end of the cease-fire for their frolicking with the enemy.

AP Diplomatic Writer Matthew Lee in Washington and Kathy Gannon in Islamabad contributed.

Bloomberg : 3 women can be released on non-disclosure deals

By ALEXANDRA JAFFE AND KATHLEEN RONAYNE Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Mike Bloomberg said Friday he'd free three women from confidentiality agreements that bar them from speaking publicly about sexual harassment or discrimination suits filed against him over the last three decades.

The billionaire former mayor of New York also said his company, Bloomberg LP, will no longer use such agreements "to resolve claims of sexual harassment or misconduct going forward."

His remarks come after days of intense scrutiny over the treatment of women at the company he's led for three decades, and amid pressure from Democratic presidential rival Elizabeth Warren to allow the women to share their claims publicly. Warren hammered Bloomberg over the issue in the recent debate, his first time facing his rivals. The announcement Friday highlights his efforts to remove a vulnerability ahead of the next debate, on Tuesday in South Carolina, and refocus his campaign ahead of March 3, known as Super Tuesday, when he will be on the ballot for the first time.

Bloomberg didn't automatically revoke the agreements, but told the women to contact the company if they would like to be released. The three agreements he's willing to open up relate specifically to comments he's alleged to have made. His company reportedly faced nearly 40 lawsuits involving 65 plaintiffs between 1996 and 2016, though it's unclear how many relate to sexual harassment or discrimination.

Bloomberg said in a statement he'd done "a lot of reflecting on this issue over the past few days."

"I recognize that NDAs, particularly when they are used in the context of sexual harassment and sexual assault, promote a culture of silence in the workplace and contribute to a culture of women not feeling safe or supported," it continued.

But his move only prompted more criticism from his rivals.

"That's just not good enough," Warren said while campaigning Friday in Las Vegas, a day before the Nevada caucuses. "If there are only three, then why didn't he sign a blanket release?"

A spokeswoman for former vice president Joe Biden's campaign said Bloomberg's action "tells the public nothing," by only addressing three agreements.

"If Mayor Bloomberg wanted to release all current and former Bloomberg LP employees from NDAs, he surely could have done so — and he still can and should," Biden's deputy campaign manager, Kate Bevingfield, said in the statement. Bloomberg's Friday statements mark a stark departure from his remarks about the agreements in this week's debate. He called the agreements "consensual" and said women who complained "didn't like a joke I told." The remarks were viewed by some as out-of-touch with the post-#MeToo era, which has prompted far more serious scrutiny of sexual harassment and innuendo by men in the workplace. Bloomberg is one of the country's richest men, worth an estimated \$60 billion.

It was the first time Bloomberg was truly put on the spot in an otherwise choreographed campaign, where he's been promoting his message via television advertising and scripted speeches rather than debates and town halls with voters.

One of the women covered by Bloomberg's announcement is Sekiko Sekai Garrison, 55, who filed a complaint against Bloomberg and his company in 1995. She did not respond to a phone message seeking comment on Friday.

Garrison's complaint, reviewed by the Associated Press, was filed when she was about 30 and alleged Bloomberg told her to "kill it" when she told him she was pregnant with her first child. The lawsuit details several other alleged personal interactions with Bloomberg and describes a misogynistic corporate culture

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where women were typically paid less than men, subject to routine sexual harassment and demoted or fired if they complained.

In the alleged incident, Garrison said Bloomberg approached her near the office coffee machines and asked about her married life. When she told him she was pregnant with her first child, he said "kill it," in a serious monotone. He allegedly then repeated it and called her "number 16," a reference to the number of pregnant women employees.

Bloomberg has denied making the remarks. But Garrison said he left her a voicemail apologizing and calling the remark a joke. She resigned from the company.

Lawyer Bonnie P. Josephs, who filed the 1995 complaint on Garrison's behalf, told AP on Thursday that she later handed the case off to another attorney. Josephs said she was then told that Garrison had settled the case against Bloomberg for a "six-figure sum" and signed a nondisclosure agreement.

A longtime Bloomberg aide confirmed that case was one of the three agreements Bloomberg mentioned in his statement, in which an NDA was signed that directly related to Bloomberg. The other two cases never went to court and are not public.

Bloomberg also said his company would undertake a review of its policies on equal pay and promotion, sexual harassment and discrimination and the use of "other legal tools" that prevent cultural change. He also pledged to push policies if elected president that expand access to childcare and reproductive health and guarantee 12 weeks of paid leave.

"I will be a leader whom women can trust," he said.

Ronayne reported from Sacramento. Associated Press reporters Michael Biesecker in Washington, Michelle R. Smith in Providence, Rhode Island, and Yvonne Gonzalez in Las Vegas contributed.

University of Michigan officials told of abuse decades ago

By **LARRY LAGE, REESE DUNKLIN, KATHLEEN FOODY and MIKE HOUSEHOLDER Associated Press**

ANN ARBOR, Michigan (AP) — University of Michigan officials were warned more than four decades ago that one of its doctors was fondling patients during medical exams, but he continued working there despite a demotion and went on to allegedly abuse again as a physician with the school's athletic department, records obtained Friday by The Associated Press show.

In 1980, the late Dr. Robert E. Anderson was pressed to step down as head of the University Health Service amid such concerns, according to a statement that his former supervisor gave to a campus detective who had started investigating the physician more than a year ago following a complaint from a former university wrestler.

When the detective told Tom Easthope, a former university administrator who oversaw Anderson's department, that he was investigating "inappropriate behavior" by Anderson, Easthope replied, "I bet there are over 100 people that could be on that list," according to the records.

Easthope told the detective that he had confronted Anderson about "fooling around in the exam rooms with the boy patients" and told the doctor, "You gotta go." He said the doctor didn't deny the allegations against him. By 1980, at least two students had made complaints to Michigan officials about Anderson inappropriately touching them, according to interviews and records.

When the detective informed Easthope that Anderson had continued working on campus, including with Michigan's football program, up until 2003, Easthope became "visibly shaken" and added that "he was sure that he had left the university."

On Thursday, Michigan President Mark Schlissel said in prepared remarks at the open of the school's Board of Regents meeting that its police investigation, launched in 2018, had found "indications" that staff was "aware of rumors and allegations of misconduct."

Washtenaw County prosecutors first received the police department's report in late April or early May of 2019, said Steven Hiller, assistant chief prosecuting attorney.

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A prosecutor concluded that summer that no criminal charges could be authorized because the primary suspect had died and none of the offenses were within Michigan's six-year statute of limitations, Hiller said Thursday.

But the records obtained Friday by the AP add much more detail to what those indications were and show that complaints about Anderson, who died in 2008, spanned much of his tenure at Michigan, up to 2002. More men came forward this week after the investigation became public, including Olympic wrestler Andy Hrovat, who told the AP that Anderson touched him inappropriately during medical exams during his freshman year in 1998.

The revelations echo high-profile sexual abuse allegations made against sports doctors at other universities, including Michigan State and Ohio State.

The records were released by the Washtenaw County Prosecuting Attorney's Office in response to a Freedom of Information Act request. The prosecutor's office had reviewed complaints following the university police investigation, which was triggered after a former wrestler in July 2018 sent a four-page letter to current Athletic Director Warde Manuel detailing decades-old abuse.

That wrestler wrote that in 1975, five years before Anderson's demotion, that he had informed his coach, Bill Johannesen, and the then-athletics director Don Canham that he had been fondled and given unnecessary rectal exams. Athletes on other sports teams had similar experiences with Anderson, the wrestler wrote.

"I am fully aware that it was the 1970s and it was an entirely different world then," the wrestler wrote in his letter. "I am also aware that 40-plus years is an extremely long time ago. I expect nothing. I want nothing. I just feel the need to report this."

The student, whose name was redacted in the records released to AP, also recalled Anderson being known as "Dr. Drop your drawers Anderson" by athletes in the 1970s. He accused the doctor of touching his penis and testicles, and inserting his finger into his rectum "too many times for it to have been considered diagnostic or therapeutic for the conditions and injuries that I had."

The first time this happened was during his freshman year in 1972, when he went to the doctor for treatment for facial cold sores, according to the letter. The wrestler saw the doctor several more times for that condition and was inappropriately touched each time, he wrote.

"I didn't like it, but I didn't really pay much attention to it," the letter said. "He was the doctor and it never occurred to me that he was enjoying what I was not."

The wrestler said the doctor touched him again during his junior season after he dislocated an elbow. "I found it strange that I needed a penis and hernia check," he wrote.

The wrestler told Manuel that athletes on at least two other sports teams knew about Anderson's conduct while he was at the school.

Johannesen, who coached the Michigan wrestling team in the 1970s, told police that, while none of his athletes told him they were violated by a doctor, he did remember them "laughing" and "joking" about one particular doctor who told them to "take your pants down" for a "hurt elbow." Asked by police to recall the doctor's name, Johannesen said: "Dr. Anderson."

Attempts by the AP to reach Johannesen on Friday were not successful.

Another member of the Michigan wrestling team in the 1970s told police that the doctor gave him a rectal exam when he went for treatment of an ankle injury. His name also was redacted from the documents.

The former wrestler told police that he felt abused but that "as an 18-year-old kid, you don't think to question stuff like that."

A physician's assistant who worked at the school in the 1970s, Deborah Kowal, told police that Anderson conducted annual physicals of the athletes, including rectal exams. She said she did a couple of rectal exams until then-football coach Bo Schembechler found out. "She said that coach Schembechler did not want a women performing rectal exams on his male players, so Dr. Anderson did the physicals after this," according to the report.

The nearly 100 pages detailing the police investigation also include interviews with people who said they had not heard any complaints about Anderson. Among them was Russell Miller, who was an athletic

trainer when Anderson worked with the Michigan football team. He told police that Anderson was an “unbelievable team doctor.”

According to the police report, Miller said when Anderson left his job as director of Health Services, Canham, who died in 2005, worked out a deal so Anderson could work with the football team. Miller said Anderson served as a primary care physician for most of the football staff and their families.

Miller said the thought of Anderson being investigated “shatters him,” according to the police report. Jack Harbaugh, who was an assistant football coach at Michigan in the 1970s and is the father of current head coach Jim Harbaugh and Baltimore Ravens head coach John Harbaugh, told police he did not know of anything negative about Anderson. He said he had “great admiration” for him.

Authorities also contacted the state’s licensing and regulatory affairs agency and found that it had received a complaint of sexual misconduct against Anderson filed in May 1994. The records don’t describe the outcome of the complaint, which was closed within 10 months, and the agency’s records on the case were purged seven years later. But an agency official managed to find the name of a man who filed the complaint and provided that to the detective.

When the detective reached out, the complainant said: “I am glad someone finally called to look into this.”

The man, whose name is redacted in the records, told the detective that he was a student at the University of Michigan starting in 1973. Once he went for a routine physical at a campus health center, and during that Anderson fondled him to the point of ejaculation. He said Anderson “did not appear to react to this, nor did he say anything,” according to the detective’s summary of the interview.

The man finally filed the complaint decades later because “I couldn’t live with myself,” the detective wrote.

The police report also describes an alleged sexual assault from 2002. A man affiliated with the university said in 2018 that he was sexually assaulted by Anderson while being examined for a brain tumor.

The man said he was told to take off all his clothes and lay down on the exam table. Anderson allegedly started to feel his feet and legs with both hands — in a rubbing, prodding fashion — before moving to his genitals.

“He said that he thought it was totally inappropriate and remembered the way that Dr. Anderson’s breathing patterns changed while he was massaging” his genitals, the officer wrote.

Dunklin reported from Dallas. Foody reported from Chicago.

Associated Press writer David Eggert in Lansing, Mich., contributed to this report.

Case of missing children tied to doomsday beliefs, 3 deaths

By **REBECCA BOONE** and **JENNIFER SINCO KELLEHER** Associated Press

HONOLULU (AP) — Family members used to describe Lori Vallow as an attentive mother who had her kids’ best interests at heart.

But that was before she reportedly declared herself a god sent to prepare the world for an imminent apocalypse. Before three untimely deaths of people surrounding her. Before her children went missing.

Seven-year-old Joshua “JJ” Vallow and his 17-year-old sister, Tylee Ryan, haven’t been seen since September. After fleeing from Idaho to Hawaii during an investigation, Vallow, 46, was arrested Thursday on charges of felony child abandonment — a milestone in a case that spans several states and is filled with bizarre twists.

“If somebody two years ago would have said this is what’s going to happen with Lori, I never would have believed it,” JJ’s grandfather, Larry Woodcock, said last month when he announced a \$20,000 reward for information leading to the children. “I don’t know what caused this conversion. You don’t go from being mother of the year, mother of a special needs child, to being a person who won’t even tell you where she is at, where he is, where they are at.”

“There’s a timeline change with Lori, and it started a few years ago,” he said.

Some of the timeline is detailed in newly released court documents from investigators in the rural Idaho

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city of Rexburg. The documents paint a bleak picture, with police saying Vallow repeatedly lied about her children's whereabouts, their belongings had been found in an abandoned storage unit and there has been no sign of them for months.

Vallow appeared Friday in court in Hawaii, where her attorney couldn't get her \$5 million bail lowered. Defense attorney Daniel Hempey said police knew she was on Kauai and had a lawyer who's offered to turn her in.

"Instead she was arrested and media was calling us all day," Hempey said. "It seems like it was a made-for-media event at taxpayer expense."

She faces a hearing March 2 on extradition to Idaho.

Of Vallow's children, Tylee disappeared first, according to a probable cause affidavit written by Rexburg police Lt. Ron Ball. The teen went on a day trip to nearby Yellowstone National Park with her mom, little brother and uncle. A National Park Service camera captured her image at the entrance, and a photo from Vallow's computer shows the girl made it inside the park.

But ever since? No trace, Ball wrote.

Then JJ vanished, the document says. He was enrolled in an elementary school for a few weeks in September and last seen there, shortly before Vallow told employees that she was going to homeschool the boy.

"We have not been able to find any witnesses who have seen J.V. since September 24, 2019," Ball wrote.

Investigations into strange circumstances surrounding Vallow didn't begin in September. Her husband, Charles Vallow, was shot and killed in July at the family's suburban Phoenix home by her brother, Alex Cox.

The Vallows' marriage had been crumbling. Charles had filed for divorce, saying in court documents that he feared she would kill him and that she'd developed strange, doomsday-cult-like beliefs, reportedly calling herself "a god assigned to carry out the work of the 144,000 at Christ's second coming in July 2020."

Cox told police the shooting was in self-defense, that Charles Vallow had come at him with a baseball bat. Police investigated, but the case didn't go far before Cox died of unknown causes in his Arizona home in December. Toxicology reports done as part of an autopsy have not yet been released.

Lori Vallow moved to Idaho with the kids. She got an apartment in Rexburg in early September and reportedly continued spending time with an old acquaintance, Chad Daybell.

He's a publisher and author who has written several books loosely based on theology of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, largely focused on doomsday scenarios. He also posted podcasts for an online organization aimed at church members, with an interest in preparing for biblical end times.

Lori Vallow participated in some of the podcasts, and the two had grown close.

Daybell's longtime wife, Tammy Daybell, died in October. The obituary said the 49-year-old fit school librarian died of natural causes, and the family declined an autopsy before she was buried in Utah. About two weeks later, Chad Daybell and Vallow married on a Hawaii beach.

Meanwhile, JJ's grandparents, Larry and Kay Woodcock of Louisiana, were increasingly worried about the kids. Regular phone calls with JJ grew infrequent, then stopped in August. They couldn't get answers.

Idaho authorities were growing suspicious after hearing that Daybell had married so soon after his wife's unexpected death. They exhumed Tammy Daybell's body. The results of toxicology and other testing have not yet been released.

In late November, police in Rexburg showed up at Vallow's apartment to check on the children at the grandparents' request. Investigators spoke with Cox and Daybell and got a strange reaction, documents say.

"Chad acted as if he didn't know Lori very well and stated he didn't know her phone number. Alex told the detectives that J.V. was with his grandma, Kay Woodcock, in Louisiana which was not likely to be true due to the fact that Kay was the individual who first called in a missing child report," Ball wrote.

The lieutenant said Vallow told him that the boy was in Arizona with a friend. That friend told police that JJ hadn't been to her house for months.

When Rexburg police returned, Vallow's home was empty.

The investigation has turned up disturbing findings but no sign of the children. Their belongings, includ-

ing JJ's winter clothes, were found in an abandoned storage unit in Rexburg last month. Police searching Vallow's apartment found medicine prescribed to JJ, who has autism, but it was dated January 2019, and the prescription has never been filled in Idaho, records show.

Daybell and Vallow were living in Hawaii by then, in the same town where she and her first husband resided years earlier. Police searched the couple's house and car last month and found the children's birth certificates, Tylee's bank card and JJ's iPad but say there's no evidence the children ever arrived in Hawaii.

Vallow was ordered by a judge to produce the kids to Idaho authorities last month, but she didn't comply. Police asked for an arrest warrant this week, calling the couple a "flight risk."

"Lori Vallow and Chad Daybell have significant financial resources. I am aware that Chad Daybell received at least \$430,000 in life insurance proceeds upon the death of his wife Tammy. As such, Lori and Chad have resources sufficient to help them travel and hide from law enforcement and the court," Ball wrote.

An email to Daybell was not immediately answered.

Boone reported from Boise, Idaho.

Former Ukraine diplomat Marie Yovanovitch has book deal

By HILLEL ITALIE AP National Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Former Ambassador to Ukraine Marie Yovanovitch, the career diplomat who during the impeachment hearings of President Donald Trump offered a chilling account of alleged threats from Trump and his allies, has a book deal.

Houghton Mifflin Harcourt confirmed Friday to The Associated Press that it had acquired Yovanovitch's planned memoir, currently untitled. According to the publisher, the book will trace her long career, from Mogadishu, Somalia, to Kyiv and "finally back to Washington, D.C. — where, to her dismay, she found a political system beset by many of the same challenges she had spent her career combating overseas."

"Yovanovitch's book will deliver pointed reflections on the issues confronting America today, and thoughts on how we can shore up our democracy," Houghton Mifflin Harcourt said in an announcement.

Financial terms were not disclosed, but two people familiar with the deal told the AP that the agreement was worth seven figures, even though the book is not expected until Spring 2021, months after this fall's election. They were not authorized to discuss negotiations and spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss financial terms. Yovanovitch was represented by the Javelin literary agency, where other clients include former FBI Director James Comey and former national security adviser John Bolton.

"Ambassador Yovanovitch has had a 30-year career of public service in many locations, with many lessons to be drawn. This is about much more than just the recent controversy," said Houghton Mifflin Senior Vice President and Publisher Bruce Nichols, in response to a question about why her book wasn't coming out this year.

Yovanovitch told House investigators last year that Ukrainian officials had warned her in advance that Rudy Giuliani and other Trump insiders were planning to "do things, including to me" and were "looking to hurt" her. Pushed out of her job earlier in 2019 on Trump's orders, she testified that a senior Ukrainian official told her that "I really needed to watch my back."

Yovanovitch was recalled from Kyiv as Giuliani pressed Ukrainian officials to investigate baseless corruption allegations against Democrat Joe Biden and his son Hunter, who was involved with Burisma, a gas company there. Biden, the former vice president, is a contender for the 2020 Democratic presidential nomination.

According to a rough transcript released by the White House, Trump told Ukrainian leader Volodymyr Zelenskyy last summer that Yovanovitch "was bad news and the people she was dealing with in the Ukraine were bad news."

The allegations that Trump pressured Ukraine to investigate a political opponent led to his impeachment in December on two counts by the Democratic-run House. Earlier this month, the Republican-run Senate acquitted him on both counts.

Yovanovitch, 61, was appointed ambassador to Ukraine in 2016 by President Barack Obama. She recently

was given the Trainor Award, an honor for international diplomacy presented by Georgetown University, and currently is a non-resident fellow at Georgetown's Institute for the Study of Diplomacy.

AP Exclusive: DEA agent accused of conspiring with cartel

By JOSHUA GOODMAN and JIM MUSTIAN Associated Press Writers

MIAMI (AP) — A once-standout U.S. federal narcotics agent known for spending lavishly on luxury cars and Tiffany jewelry has been arrested on charges of conspiring to launder money with the same Colombian drug cartel he was supposed to be fighting.

Jose Irizarry and his wife were arrested Friday at their home near San Juan, Puerto Rico, as part of a 19-count federal indictment that accused the 46-year-old Irizarry of "secretly using his position and his special access to information" to divert millions in drug proceeds from control of the Drug Enforcement Administration.

"It's a black eye for the DEA to have one of its own engaged in such a high level of corruption," said Mike Vigil, the DEA's former Chief of International Operations. "He jeopardized investigations. He jeopardized other agents and he jeopardized informants."

Federal prosecutors in Tampa, Florida, allege the conspiracy not only enriched Irizarry but benefited two unindicted co-conspirators, neither of whom is named in the indictment. One was employed as a Colombian public official while the other was described as the head of a drug trafficking and money laundering organization who became the godfather to the Irizarry couple's children in 2015, when the DEA agent was posted to the Colombian resort city of Cartagena at the time.

When The Associated Press revealed the scale of Irizarry's alleged wrongdoing last year, it sent shockwaves through the DEA, where his ostentatious habits and tales of raucous yacht parties with bikini-clad prostitutes were legendary among agents.

But prior to being exposed, Irizarry had been a model agent, winning awards and praise from his supervisors. After joining the DEA in Miami 2009, he was entrusted with an undercover money laundering operation using front companies, shell bank accounts and couriers. Irizarry resigned in January 2018 after being reassigned to Washington when his boss in Colombia became suspicious.

The case has raised concerns within the DEA that the conspiracy may have compromised undercover operations and open criminal cases.

"His fingerprints are all over dozens of arrests and indictments," said David S. Weinstein, a former federal prosecutor in Miami. "It could have a ripple effect and cause courts to re-examine any case he was involved in."

Irizarry and his wife posted \$10,000 bond each and were released. The DEA referred comment to the Justice Department and messages to Irizarry's attorney were not immediately returned.

One of the two unnamed co-conspirators in the indictment is Diego Marin, a relative of Irizarry's wife, according to two people familiar with the investigation who agreed to reveal details only if not quoted by name because they weren't authorized to discuss the probe. Irizarry-Gomez, 36, was charged with conspiracy to launder money.

U.S. and Colombian officials consider Marin one of the top money-laundering suspects in Colombia over the past decade. Dubbed Colombia's contraband king, he is believed to use drug dollars to import shipping containers full of electronics and textiles from Asia that wind up being sold at flea markets at a steep discount.

Marin was arrested in 1993 for allegedly hiding dope money for the Cali cartel in Colombia-bound home appliances. But he was never charged and has eluded prosecution ever since by leveraging relationships built over decades as an informant to multiple U.S. law enforcement agencies, the officials said.

It was not immediately possible to locate Marin or an attorney representing him.

A lawyer for the star witness in the case, a former DEA informant who was handled by Irizarry, celebrated the charges. Gustavo Yabrudi was given a 46-month sentence last year for his role in a multimillion-dollar money-laundering conspiracy.

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"Mr. Yabrudi has been waiting for almost two years for this day," said Leonardo Concepcion. "It's time that the puppet masters who pulled his strings and abused their authority over him are made to answer for their actions."

Starting around 2011, Irizarry allegedly used the cover of his badge to file false reports and mislead his superiors, all while directing DEA personnel to wire funds reserved for undercover stings to accounts in Spain, the Netherlands and elsewhere that he controlled or were tied to his wife and his co-conspirators.

He's also accused of sharing sensitive law enforcement information with his co-conspirators.

The DEA has declined to comment on its employment of Irizarry and potential red flags that came up during his screening process. Irizarry was hired by the DEA despite indications he showed signs of deception in a polygraph exam, and had declared bankruptcy with debts of almost \$500,000. Still, he was permitted to handle financial transactions after being hired by the DEA.

In total, Irizarry and informants under his direction handled at least \$3.8 million that should've been carefully tracked by the DEA as part of undercover money laundering investigations.

Not all of that amount was skimmed off the top and pocketed by the co-conspirators. But the indictment details at least \$900,000 that was paid out from a single criminal account opened by Irizarry and an informant using the name, passport and social security number of a third person who was unaware their identity had been stolen.

Proceeds from the alleged scheme funded a veritable spending spree. It included the purchase of a \$30,000 Tiffany diamond ring, a BMW, three Land Rovers and a \$767,000 home in Cartagena as well as homes in south Florida and Puerto Rico, where the couple has been living.

It also funded the purchase in Miami of a 2017 Lamborghini Huracan Spyder on behalf of a family member of co-conspirator 2.

A red Lamborghini with the same vehicle ID named in the indictment belongs to Jenny Ambuila, who was arrested last year in Colombia along with her father, Omar Ambuila, a customs agent in the port of Buenaventura, a major transit point for cocaine and contraband goods used to conceal the proceeds of narcotics sales. Before her arrest, Ambuila shared photos and videos of herself on Facebook posing next to the red sports car, which is valued at more than \$300,000.

Omar Ambuila is the other co-conspirator referred to in the indictment, according to the two people familiar with the investigation.

The indictment was handed up a week after another former DEA agent was sentenced to four years in federal prison for his role in a decade long drug conspiracy that involved the smuggling of thousands of kilograms of cocaine from Puerto Rico to New York.

Associated Press writer Joshua Goodman reported this story in Miami and AP writer Jim Mustian reported from New Orleans.

Joshua Goodman on Twitter: twitter.com/APjoshgoodman

Jim Mustian on Twitter: twitter.com/jimmustian

Picketing, pigeons, politics: Scenes from the Nevada caucus

By **MICHELLE L. PRICE** and **JONATHAN J. COOPER** Associated Press

LAS VEGAS (AP) — Candidates have hustled past tourists and slot machines to ask housekeepers and cooks for their votes in the back of flashy casinos. They've made their pitches over plates of tamales, tacos and soul food. They've walked a picket line in the street with union workers. And then, with unsurprising showmanship, there was that flock of pigeons with tiny MAGA hats.

If Nevada has one job in the Democratic primary, it's to offer something different. And in many ways it has delivered. As the presidential race turned to the state this week, gone was the earnestness of Iowa and tradition of New Hampshire and in its place was racial diversity, a new unpredictability and the muscle of urban, union politics.

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"Nevada is truly a state that represents the rest of the country," former Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid said, famous for his Nevada cheerleading and early primary state trash talk. "It's not like Iowa where you have no diversity ... New Hampshire is a state that has no diversity."

It's far from clear that Nevada's more representative population — it is 29% Latino, 10% black, 9% Asian American and Pacific Islander and 49% white — will result in a dramatic scramble of the pecking order set by Iowa and New Hampshire. In the past, Nevada Democrats have twice been a tiebreaker in two-person contests. In this crowded field of candidates, the state's input isn't expected to reorder the race.

Still, the Silver State campaign has delivered on some of its promises to change it up on the campaign trail, offering up scenes that are hard to imagine happening elsewhere.

There was Elizabeth Warren ordering a boba tea at a cafe in Las Vegas' Chinatown. Tom Steyer hosting a Black History Month concert with former members of R&B groups En Vogue and Boyz to Men. Bernie Sanders' face plastered on a mobile billboard driving through heavily Latino neighborhoods — the kind promotion typically used to advertise strip joints and acrobatic shows.

President Donald Trump couldn't resist getting in on the action. He spent much of the week sleeping at this gleaming hotel tower on the Las Vegas Strip. Tourists booed and cheered as they watched his motorcade cruise along a Las Vegas Strip eerily cleared of traffic after a rally in Phoenix on Wednesday. He had another on Friday in Las Vegas.

On Saturday, seven casino-resorts on the Las Vegas Strip will be among 200 locations hosting sites for the state's Democratic caucuses. (This state doesn't blink at allowing the democratic process in adult playgrounds devoted to gambling and overindulgence.)

Nevada's turn near the top of the presidential campaign calendar is still new, added ahead of the 2008 election. That means caucuses here don't come with the same traditions and voters haven't become habituated to seeing the candidates at their neighborhood parks and high schools.

"Dude, we just touched Bernie!" two University of Nevada-Las Vegas students yelled to a third shortly after Sanders wrapped up a campus rally.

Campaigns have had to be creative in pursuit of voters who can be hard to find, not hyper-engaged, new to the process and, sometimes, behind a gate. Traditional organizing tactics like door-knocking and phone-banking are tough in Nevada, where people move so often that records of addresses and phone numbers are regularly out of date.

So many Nevadans don't have landlines that the former Mayor Pete Buttigieg's campaign relied more on text messaging rather than phone banking, said Olivia Bercow, a campaign spokeswoman.

The campaign found it tricky to do routine canvassing in the locked apartment complexes and gated communities in the sprawling suburbs. It focused on asking supporters to organize friends and neighbors, helping them get inside.

They've also looked to find locals where they hang out — at their church, the "first Fridays" art walk, open mic nights, a Dia de los Muertos celebration or a salsa dancing class. But there's one place you don't go, campaigns learn quickly.

"If you go to the Strip thinking that you're going to talk about Pete, most people you find don't live in Nevada," Bercow said. "It's not a great use of time."

Natalie Montelongo, a senior strategist for Massachusetts' Sen. Elizabeth Warren's campaign, said organizing in the state "requires creativity and grit."

In a state with strong labor, among the most coveted group of voters are the casino workers' Culinary Workers Union, Local 226. While they are sometimes unnoticed by the millions of tourists frequenting casinos, the workers who keep the hotels humming, the drinks flowing, the rooms clean and the dishes sparkling are part of a 60,000-member majority-female, majority-Latino group that presidential candidates have aggressively courted.

Even though the union's leaders have said the group is not endorsing, candidates are still working to woo the union's politically engaged members. Warren and former Vice President Joe Biden were among the candidates touring the casino's employee dining rooms during the week.

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On Wednesday, nearly all of the candidates carried signs and chanted as they joined picketing union members in front of a towering casino-hotel that's been locked in a longstanding labor dispute with the Culinary Union. Warren wore red, matching the workers. Biden wrapped an arm around the union's leader, Geoconda Argüello-Kline, and former South Bend, Indiana Mayor Pete Buttigieg, Minnesota Sen. Amy Klobuchar and billionaire businessman Tom Steyer carried signs that said "No contract, no peace." Nearby, a troupe of dancers dressed as a bartender, cook, server, cocktail waitress, housekeeper and janitor danced in unison.

There was little peace at the Wednesday debate, the most combative of the primary and the first to feature former New York Mayor Mike Bloomberg. Although Bloomberg isn't competing in the Nevada caucus he took nearly as many blows as Trump, who spent the night down the street.

As Trump appeared in the city, so too did a group of pigeons with tiny red "Make America Great Again" hats like those worn by Trump's supporters on their heads. One pigeon had a tiny blond wig similar to Trump's distinctive hair. A self-proclaimed "underground radical group" that goes by the acronym P.U.T.I.N. (Pigeons, United To Interfere Now), told the Las Vegas Review-Journal they released the pigeons as an "aerial protest piece" in response to the 2020 Democratic debate as "a gesture of support and loyalty to President Trump." They also hope to elevate the stature of the pigeon, the group said.

2016 again? Russia back to stirring chaos in U.S. election

By **AAMER MADHANI, DEB RIECHMANN and MARY CLARE JALONICK** undefined

WASHINGTON (AP) — Just weeks into this year's election cycle, Russia already is actively interfering in the U.S. presidential campaign in hopes of reelecting President Donald Trump, and is also trying to help the candidacy of Sen. Bernie Sanders on the Democratic side, intelligence officials have concluded.

The Russian efforts are aimed at undermining public confidence in the integrity of U.S. elections and stirring general chaos in American politics, intelligence experts say.

Lawmakers were told in a classified briefing last week that Russia is taking steps that would help Trump, according to officials familiar with the briefing. And Sanders acknowledged Friday that he was briefed last month by U.S. officials about Russian efforts to boost his candidacy.

The revelations demonstrate that the specter of foreign interference in the 2020 presidential election will almost certainly be a cloud over the campaign, and possibly even the final results if the contest is close. Democrats have consistently criticized Trump for not doing more to deter the Russians and others, and now they have fresh evidence to support their concerns.

There were some conflicting accounts about what the briefers had revealed about Russia's intentions. One intelligence official said that members were not told in the briefing that Russia was working to directly aid Trump. But advancing Sanders' candidacy could be seen as beneficial to Trump's reelection prospects.

"That Russia would put its national intelligence apparatus in an operational mode to enhance Sanders and attack (Joe) Biden and others is only natural," said Malcolm Nance, a veteran intelligence officer who wrote a book on meddling in the 2016 presidential election. "A damaged Sanders or one who would lose at a brokered convention would ... assure another Trump victory."

Sanders condemned Russia and called on President Vladimir Putin to steer clear of U.S. politics.

"I don't care, frankly, who Putin wants to be president," Sanders said. "My message to Putin is clear: Stay out of American elections, and as president I will make sure that you do."

Trump, acknowledging nothing, took a different tack in responding to news that the House Intelligence Committee earlier this month had been briefed by U.S. intelligence experts that Russia was attempting to ensure his reelection.

On Friday he sought to minimize the new warnings by his government intelligence experts and revived old grievances in claiming any problem was just Democrats trying to undermine the legitimacy of his presidency.

The president started the day on Twitter, claiming that Democrats were pushing a "misinformation campaign" in hopes of politically damaging him.

Later, making light of the intelligence findings at a campaign rally in Las Vegas, he suggested that Russia

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might actually prefer Sanders in the White House.

"Wouldn't he rather have, let's say, Bernie?" Trump said. "Wouldn't he rather have Bernie, who honeymooned in Moscow?"

A senior intelligence official with knowledge about the briefing said the handful of U.S. election security briefers did not tell Intelligence Committee members in so many words that Russia was "aiding the re-election of President Trump."

The official, who spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss the classified briefing, said the briefers covered election threats from Russia, China, Iran, non-state actors, hacktivists and ransomware, but that both Democrats and Republicans homed in on Russia's activities. The official said some of the lawmakers reached conclusions that had not been made by the briefers.

The fresh warnings about Russian interference came in what has been a tumultuous stretch for the intelligence community.

A day after the Feb. 13 briefing to the House Intelligence Committee, Trump berated the acting Director of National Intelligence Joseph Maguire in a meeting at the White House. Then this week, Trump abruptly announced that Maguire would be replaced by Richard Grenell, a Trump loyalist who also will hold the job in an acting capacity.

In addition to Maguire, two other senior officials will soon leave the agency.

Andrew Hallman, one of Maguire's top deputies, announced Friday he would be leaving. He is expected to return to the CIA, where he has spent more than 30 years, according to an official familiar with the move, who spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss the personnel move. Jason Klitenic, the general counsel for the national intelligence director's office, is returning to private practice. Klitenic's departure is unrelated to the sudden shakeup by Trump.

Former CIA Director John Brennan told MSNBC's "Morning Joe" on Friday that Trump's ouster of Maguire and Hallman was a "virtual decapitation of the intelligence community."

Like Trump, Sanders appeared to suggest there was a political motive to the revelations about Russian interference. Nevada Democrats are to hold their nominating contest on Saturday.

"One day before the Nevada caucus, why do you think it came out?" he said.

Trump erupted when he learned last week about the briefing to House members, according to a senior administration official familiar with the matter. It was unclear whether he was aware of the specific information briefed, but he was agitated that contents of the briefing could be politically damaging to him, said the official, who spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss sensitive matters.

Trump tweeted Friday that he was considering four candidates to serve as permanent intelligence director and said he expected to make a decision within the next few weeks. He told reporters Thursday evening that Rep. Doug Collins of Georgia was among those he's considering.

But Collins, who is vying for one of Georgia's Senate seats, said Friday he's not interested in the job overseeing the nation's 17 spy agencies.

The installation of Grenell, even in a temporary role, has raised questions among critics about whether Trump is more interested in having a loyalist than someone steeped in the complicated inner workings of international intelligence.

Grenell has a background that is primarily in politics and media affairs. Most recently, he's been serving as Trump's ambassador to Germany.

The Democratic chairman of the House Homeland Security Committee, Bennie Thompson of Mississippi, dismissed Grenell as someone who, "by all accounts, rose to prominence in the Trump administration because of his personal devotion to Donald Trump and penchant for trolling the President's perceived enemies on Twitter."

From the start of his presidency three years ago, Trump has been dogged by insecurity over his loss of the popular vote in the general election and a persistent frustration that the legitimacy of his presidency is being challenged by Democrats and the media, aides and associates say. He's also aggressively played down U.S. findings that Russia interfered in the 2016 election.

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In addition to those findings by the major intelligence agencies, a nearly two-year investigation led by special counsel Robert Mueller concluded there was a sophisticated, Kremlin-led operation to sow division in the U.S. and upend the 2016 election by using cyberattacks and social media as weapons.

Russia also took steps to support Sanders in the 2016 presidential campaign, according to a criminal indictment against a Russian troll farm and Mueller's lengthy report.

Mueller charged 13 Russians in a covert social media campaign that prosecutors said was aimed at dividing public opinion on hot-button social issues as well propping up Sanders and Republican candidate Donald Trump while denigrating Hillary Clinton, the eventual 2016 Democratic nominee.

Organizers of that Russian effort circulated an outline of themes for future social media content, with instructions to "use any opportunity to criticize Hillary and the rest (except Sanders and Trump—we support them)," according to the indictment.

Moscow has denied any meddling. Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said Friday that the newest allegations are "paranoid reports that, unfortunately, there will be more and more of as we get closer to the elections (in the U.S.). Of course, they have nothing to do with the truth."

Associated Press writers Eric Tucker, Julie Pace and Michael Balsamo in Washington, Zeke Miller in Las Vegas and Daria Litvinova in Moscow contributed to this report.

Player reps not voting on NFL labor deal; more talks Tuesday

By BARRY WILNER AP Pro Football Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — NFL owners' eagerness to approve negotiated terms of a new labor agreement apparently is not matched by the players.

They want more talks.

Union player representatives decided Friday to not vote on the new labor deal approved by team owners Thursday. The NFL Players Association will meet with league negotiators at the scouting combine in Indianapolis on Tuesday.

Earlier Friday, the union's executive committee voted 6-5 to recommend rejecting the terms of the new collective bargaining agreement. But the player reps and the full union membership could vote next week.

Objections to an expanded regular season are considered the main stumbling block to player approval.

"Today the NFLPA Board of Players Representatives did not take a vote on the principal terms of a proposed new collective bargaining agreement," the union said in a statement. "Our player leadership looks forward to meeting with NFL management again next week before the board takes a vote shortly after."

If the NFLPA does not approve the terms, the current CBA that expires in March 2021 would remain in effect and further talks would be required.

The owners' proposal features a 17-game season, shorter preseason, larger rosters and limits on the number of international games.

The union's executive committee includes NFLPA President Eric Winston, former Giants linebacker Mark Herzlich and former Bills linebacker Lorenzo Alexander, all retired; Giants long snapper Zak DeOssie; 49ers cornerback Richard Sherman; Patriots tight end Benjamin Watson; Colts kicker Adam Vinatieri; Chargers tackle Russell Okung; Saints punter Thomas Morstead; Buccaneers linebacker Sam Acho; and Giants safety Mike Thomas.

Several people familiar with the terms say they feature increases in minimum salaries, changes in practice squad makeup and eligibility, and reduced offseason and preseason requirements as pivotal parts of the deal.

Those people spoke to The Associated Press on condition of anonymity because specific details of the provisions in the agreement that would run through 2030 are not being made public.

An expansion of the playoffs to seven teams in each conference, with only the top seed in the AFC and NFC getting a wild-card bye, can be instituted by the league without any negotiations — as long as the postseason remains in a four-week format. Several owners are strongly in favor of doing so regardless of

the CBA status.

One of the wild-card weekend games might wind up as a Monday night contest.

The 17-game schedule actually is a compromise offer for some owners who wanted 18 games. Adding the one regular-season match would seem to indicate each of those games would be at a neutral site.

But the league has promised the union to cap the number of international games and that there would not be a full week of such contests. More likely is a continued mix of games in England (and other European sites) and Mexico. Most team schedules will have nine home games and eight road games in alternating years.

The preseason would be reduced from four games to three, not counting the Hall of Fame game that starts the exhibition schedule.

Training camp padded practices would be reduced from a total of 28 to 16. A five-day acclimation period would precede summer practices. There would be more days off during camp — eight instead of five — and a limit on joint practices.

There would be no extra bye week in the regular season, something that had been discussed. However, teams would basically have two weeks to prepare for the season opener with the elimination of the fourth preseason game.

Rosters would expand from 53 to 55, with 48 players able to dress for games rather than the current 46. Practice squads would go from 10 players to 12 and eventually to 14, probably by 2022. There would be more flexibility for protecting practice squaders from becoming free agents.

Suspensions for a positive test for marijuana likely would end, except for cases of tampering with a test. But doctors appointed by the league and union would have the ability to recommend players sit if they are not under treatment or are at risk if they suit up.

A major point of contention when the current agreement was reached in 2011 following a 4 1/2 month lockout was Commissioner Roger Goodell's role in discipline. Should these terms be accepted by the players, a neutral, jointly appointed hearing officer would make findings on off-field issues and whether the actions violated the league's personal conduct policy. Those findings would be binding, but a player could appeal — with Goodell making the final decision.

The terms contain substantial changes in a variety of fines for violating club rules to provide a scaled pricing discipline system. A maximum fine could not be rendered until a third violation.

Significant boosts in pension for retired players and active ones also are provided in the contract. There are provisions for bringing in players who are not getting pensions, too.

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

South Korea becomes newest front in shifting virus outbreak

By **HYUNG-JIN KIM** and **MATT SEDENSKY** Associated Press

SEOUL, South Korea (AP) — Cases of a new virus swelled Friday in South Korea, making the country the newest front in a widening global outbreak centered in China and now reverberating elsewhere.

South Korea said two people have died and 204 have been infected with the virus, quadruple the number of cases it had two days earlier. Schools were shuttered Friday, churches told worshipers to stay away and some mass gatherings were banned.

The multiplying caseload in South Korea showed the ease with which the illness can spread. Initial infections were linked to China, but new cases in South Korea and Iran — where there have been four deaths — don't show a clear connection to travel there. In an emerging cluster of illnesses in northern Italy, the first to fall ill met with someone who had returned from China on Jan. 21 without experiencing any symptoms of the new virus, health authorities said.

The World Health Organization warned that clusters not directly linked to travel, such as the ones in South Korea and Iran, suggest that time may be running out to contain the outbreak.

"The window of opportunity is still there. But our window of opportunity is narrowing," said WHO Director-

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General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus. "We need to act quickly before it closes completely."

Tedros singled out Iran's discovery of 18 cases and four deaths in two days — and that a traveler from Iran carried the virus to Lebanon, and another traveler from Iran to Canada.

"These dots are very concerning — take them as dots or trends," he said.

South Korea Prime Minister Chung Se-kyun started a government meeting on the health emergency by saying, "We have entered an emergency phase."

"Our efforts until now had been focused on blocking the illness from entering the country," he said. "But we will now shift the focus on preventing the illness from spreading further in local communities."

Daegu, a southeastern city of 2.5 million that is the country's fourth largest, emerged as the focus of government efforts to contain the disease known as COVID-19, and Chung promised support to ease a shortage in hospital beds, medical personnel and equipment. Mayor Kwon Young-jin of Daegu has urged residents to stay inside, even wearing masks at home, to stem further infection.

The first case in Daegu was reported on Tuesday. By Friday, the city and its surrounding areas had 152, including South Korea's first two fatalities from COVID-19.

Nationwide, the numbers told of a ballooning problem. There were 20 new cases reported Wednesday, 53 on Thursday and 100 on Friday.

The central government declared a "special management zone" around Daegu on Friday, which didn't restrict movement of residents or supersede local officials' power but served as official recognition of the problem.

Most of those cases have been linked to a single house of worship, a branch of the Shincheonji Church of Jesus, where a woman in her 60s attended two services before testing positive for the virus.

About 1,000 others who attended services with the woman have been isolated in their homes for screening, and health authorities say they're trying to monitor thousands of other church members.

All 74 sites operated by the Shincheonji Church have been closed and worshipers have been told to instead watch services online for a sect whose leader claims to be an angel of Christ, but who is dismissed by many outsiders as a cult leader. Its teachings revolve largely around the Book of Revelation, a chapter of the New Testament known mostly for its apocalyptic foreshadowing.

Health and city officials say the woman eyed as a potential transmitter at the church had contact with some 1,160 people, both at the church and at a restaurant and a hospital where she was treated for injuries from a car accident. That raised fears that South Korea — which before Wednesday had recorded just 31 cases of the virus — should brace for a further surge.

"I hope South Korea will do everything to contain this outbreak at this early stage," Tedros said.

Usually bustling downtown streets of Daegu were nearly deserted Friday as people wearing face masks lined up at clinics seeking testing. Crowds formed in supermarkets where shelves of ramen and curry were nearly bare. Eight hundred area schools, due to start a new academic year on March 2, delayed their openings by a week.

"Panic is taking hold," said Daegu resident Huh Mi-yeon. "People are scared of any situation where they would run into another person."

Elsewhere in the country, angst grew too. In the capital of Seoul, major downtown rallies were banned, and fears of the virus led many to avoid shops and restaurants and instead eat at home and order necessities online. Buses and subways were full of mask-clad commuters.

The first three cases in the country's 600,000-member military also sprung up on separate bases Friday, bringing added concern. A sailor on Jeju Island and an army officer in North Chungcheong province both tested positive. Both had made recent visits to Daegu, officials said. A third infection was reported in an air force officer who is based in Daegu but who had recently traveled to military headquarters in central South Korea, the defense ministry said, prompting the quarantine of 80 soldiers there.

Even as new alarms were sounded elsewhere in Asia, in China, where the vast majority of cases have occurred, officials have expressed optimism over the number of new infections, which has been trending downward. China said Friday 889 new cases were recorded in the preceding 24 hours and 118 additional deaths.

WHO's Dr. Sylvie Briand said there's no information yet that the virus itself is changing. But she's concerned that there are different patterns of transmission in different parts of the world, what she called "a very different phase of this outbreak depending where you look."

Globally, more than 76,000 people have been infected in 27 countries, and more than 2,200 have died. Italian authorities say the number of people infected has more than quadrupled due to an emerging cluster of cases in the country's north. Many of the new cases represented the first infections in Italy acquired through secondary contagion and brought the country's total to 14 on Friday.

In the United States, 35 people have tested positive for the virus, including 18 who returned home from a quarantined cruise ship in Japan and one new case reported Friday in California.

The U.S. Department of State is advising citizens to reconsider cruises to or in East Asia and the Asia-Pacific Region. The spread of the virus is causing countries to implement strict screening procedures. The State Department warns that depending on local conditions, passengers could be unable to get off a ship or become subject to quarantine procedures.

Sedensky reported from Bangkok. Associated Press writer Tong-hyung Kim contributed to this report.

Weinstein jury indicates it is split on most serious counts

By TOM HAYS and MICHAEL R. SISK Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — The jury in Harvey Weinstein's rape trial indicated Friday that it is deadlocked on the most serious charges against the once powerful Hollywood mogul, but the judge told the panel it must keep working.

In a note to the judge late in the fourth day of deliberations, jurors asked if it was permissible for them to be hung on one or both counts of predatory sexual assault while reaching a unanimous verdict on the other charges.

Weinstein's lawyers said they would accept a partial verdict, but prosecutors said no and Judge James Burke refused to allow it. He sent jurors back to deliberate for a few more minutes before letting them go home for the weekend. They'll resume Monday morning.

"It is not uncommon for a jury to have difficulty initially in reaching a unanimous verdict, and it is not uncommon for a jury to believe that they will never be able to reach a unanimous verdict," Burke said, reading instructions to the jurors. "But after further deliberations, most jurors are able to reach a unanimous verdict."

The jury posed its deadlock question in hypothetical fashion, writing: "We the jury request to understand if we can be hung on (Count) 1 and/or (Count) 3 and unanimous on the other charges? Thank you."

One reason for that phrasing could be that the verdict sheet — which lays out the charges — doesn't include instructions for what to do if they can't agree on a particular count, only how they're supposed to proceed once they've reached a verdict of guilty or not guilty.

The way the sheet is designed, jurors are supposed to first reach a unanimous verdict on the predatory sexual assault counts, which carry a maximum penalty of life in prison, before they can even consider the other three counts.

Law professor Cheryl Bader said the note suggests the jury is split on a key aspect of both predatory sexual assault counts — "Sopranos" actress Annabella Sciorra's allegations that Weinstein attacked her in the mid-1990s — and that it is in unanimous agreement on the allegations by two other women — an aspiring actress who says he raped her in March 2013 and a former film and TV production assistant, Mimi Haley, who says he forcibly performed oral sex on her in March 2006.

Weinstein has maintained any sexual encounters were consensual.

The Associated Press has a policy of not publishing the names of people who allege sexual assault without their consent. It is withholding the name of the 2013 rape accuser because it isn't clear whether she wishes to be identified publicly.

"It's not unusual for the judge to have them keep deliberating and not just give them a pass at the first

sign of trouble," said Bader, a former federal prosecutor who teaches at Fordham University School of Law. The defense said speculating on the verdict at this point "would be premature and a mistake."

In all, Weinstein, 67, is charged with five counts stemming from the allegations of Sciorra, the aspiring actress and Haley.

To convict Weinstein of a predatory sexual assault charge, jurors must agree on two things: that Weinstein raped or forcibly performed oral sex on Sciorra, as she alleges, and that he committed one of the other charged offenses.

The predatory sexual assault charge requires prosecutors to show that a defendant committed a prior rape or other sex crime, but doesn't have the statute of limitation constraints that would bar Sciorra's allegations from consideration on their own.

Since getting the case Tuesday, jurors have been focusing a lot of attention on Sciorra, who testified nearly a month ago and was the first accuser to do so in the closely watched #MeToo trial.

They started the day Friday by listening to a reading of her cross-examination and follow-up questioning by prosecutors. About 90 minutes into the reading, the jurors notified the judge they had "heard enough" and resumed their deliberations.

Earlier in their deliberations, jurors looked at emails that Weinstein sent regarding Sciorra, including ones to the private Israeli spy agency he allegedly enlisted to dig up dirt on would-be accusers as reporters were working on stories about allegations against him in 2017.

Sciorra, now 59, told jurors how Weinstein showed up unexpectedly at the door of her Manhattan apartment before in late 1993 or early 1994 before forcing her onto a bed and assaulting her.

Bader said she was surprised the jury appears to be struggling with Sciorra, "because she was a much cleaner witness" than the other alleged victims, who admitted to having non-forced sex with Weinstein and staying in touch with him after their alleged assaults.

Sciorra went public in a story in *The New Yorker* in October 2017 after one of the few people she says she told about the incident, actress Rosie Perez, got word to reporter Ronan Farrow that he should call her.

Sciorra's allegations weren't part of the original indictment when Weinstein was arrested in May 2018, but after some legal shuffling they were included in an updated one last August.

"Annabella was brought into this case for one reason and one reason only," Rotunno said in her closing argument last week. "She was brought in so there would be one witness who had some star power, one witness you may recognize and one witness whose name may mean something."

On Twitter, follow Tom Hays at twitter.com/aptomhays and Michael Sisak at twitter.com/mikesisak

For more coverage of the Harvey Weinstein case, visit: <https://apnews.com/HarveyWeinstein>

Grief, anger and calls for action after shooting in Germany

By DAVID McHUGH and FRANK JORDANS Associated Press

HANAU, Germany (AP) — Gokhan Gultekin's juggling act was in many ways typical of Hanau's Turkish community: taking care of frail parents, hustling to work at a late-night cafe, making some cash on the side at a second job and attending Friday prayers at the mosque across town.

On Friday, Gultekin's friends mourned him at his house of worship, two days after "Gogo" was killed in a racially motivated shooting rampage that shook Germany and prompted fresh calls for a crackdown on far-right extremism and anti-immigrant scapegoating.

"We grew up in here in these streets, ran through the playgrounds, laughed together," said Omer Demir, who described his recently engaged, 37-year-old friend as hard-working. "He had to be. He had to take care of his parents. If he had 50 euros, he would give 30 to his mother."

On Wednesday, a 43-year-old German, Tobias Rathjen, shot to death nine people with immigrant backgrounds in this Frankfurt suburb before apparently killing his mother and himself. Five of the victims were reported to be Turkish citizens. Rathjen left rambling texts and videos in which he espoused racist views,

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called for genocide and claimed to have been under surveillance since birth.

Germany's top security official, Interior Minister Horst Seehofer, said protection would be stepped up across the country at mosques and other "sensitive sites" in the wake of the attack.

"The threat posed by far-right extremism, anti-Semitism and racism is very high in Germany," Seehofer said in Berlin.

In Hanau, German and Turkish flags flew at half-staff outside the Turkish-speaking DITIB mosque, where more than 300 people attended the regular Friday prayers.

"The mood is subdued," said Adam Arslan. "I cannot accept this crime."

The mosque opened its doors to the journalists who have swarmed into Hanau after the attack — not a usual practice in privacy-obsessed Germany. Members of the congregation discussed their concerns openly and offered reporters tea.

The chairman of the mosque board, Memduh Onder, said the community was not afraid, "because we are together," citing the memorial gathering Thursday evening in front of City Hall, where German President Frank-Walter Steinmeier spoke. "The thousands of people on the square, most of them were German," Onder said.

In the southern Romania village of Singureni, another of those killed in the attack was mourned by relatives. Vili Viorel Paun, 23, left school and went to Germany at age 16 to earn money to pay for his mother's medical treatment, and was working as a driver for a delivery company. His parents followed him there.

His aunt, Nicoleta Danciu, described him as "a very gentle young man, polite as a girl, the nicest kid one can imagine. The pain from his loss will never go away."

Family members last saw him in the summer, when he spent a few days and "gave us rides with his nice car," which they said was the silver Mercedes seen in photos from the shooting site.

Photos of Paun stood outside the family house, candles lit by villagers around them.

On Thursday evening, thousands of people gathered in cities across Germany to hold vigils for the victims but also to express anger that authorities haven't done more to prevent attacks despite a string of violent episodes in recent years. Last week, authorities arrested 12 men, including a police employee, on suspicion of planning attacks on Muslims and politicians.

Some have also called for a crackdown on the extremist and anti-migrant ideology that has crept into mainstream political debate with the rise of the Alternative for Germany party, or AfD. A top official in the center-left Social Democratic Party, a junior partner in Chancellor Angela Merkel's governing coalition, accused AfD of providing ideological fodder to people like the Hanau gunman.

"One person carried out the shooting in Hanau. That's what it looks like. But there were many that supplied him with ammunition, and AfD definitely belongs to them," Lars Klingbeil told German public broadcaster ARD.

Parts of AfD already were under close scrutiny from Germany's domestic intelligence agency. The party has rejected all responsibility for far-right attacks, including a deadly anti-Semitic shooting outside a synagogue and the killing of a regional politician last year.

One key question in the investigation is whether authorities or others were aware the gunman posed a threat. Peter Frank, Germany's chief federal prosecutor, said investigators will examine his movements and contacts.

"That's one of the points that's particularly interesting to me in this investigation," Seehofer said. "Who knew what."

Jordans reported from Berlin and Associated Press writer Vadim Ghirda contributed from Singureni, Romania.

US, Taliban truce takes effect, setting stage for peace deal

By KATHY GANNON and MATTHEW LEE Associated Press

ISLAMABAD (AP) — A temporary truce between the United States and the Taliban took effect on Friday, setting the stage for the two sides to sign a peace deal next week aimed at ending 18 years of war in Afghanistan and bringing U.S. troops home.

If successfully implemented, the weeklong "reduction in violence" agreement, which came into force at midnight Friday local time (1930 GMT, 2:30 p.m. EST), will be followed by the signing of the peace accord on Feb. 29, wrapping up America's longest-running conflict and fulfilling one of President Donald Trump's main campaign promises.

Friday's announcement of an agreement on terms for a peace deal follows months of negotiations between the two sides that have broken down before. Yet both parties have signaled a desire to halt the fighting that began with the U.S. invasion after the September 11, 2001, attacks by Osama bin Laden's Afghanistan-based al-Qaida network.

Should the truce stand, the U.S.-Taliban deal would be followed within 10 days by the start of all-Afghan peace talks that could result in the formation of a new government in Kabul, a pledge from the Taliban not to allow terrorist groups to operate in the country, and the phased withdrawal of U.S. and other foreign troops over 18 months.

The plan is a gamble for Trump, who retweeted several news accounts of the agreement. If it's successful, he will be able to claim to have taken a first step toward meeting his 2016 campaign pledge to bring American troops home. But if it fails, Trump could be painted by his Democratic adversaries in an election year as being naïve and willing to sacrifice the security of U.S. soldiers and American interests for the sake of political expediency.

For the Taliban, the successful completion of the truce and Afghanistan peace talks would give the group a shot at international legitimacy, which it lacked at the time it ran the country and gave bin Laden and his associates safe haven.

The truce, to be monitored by American forces, will likely be fragile and U.S. officials have noted the possibility that "spoilers" uninterested in peace talks could disrupt it. Determining who is responsible for potential attacks during the seven days will therefore be critical.

Both sides were cautiously optimistic in announcing the agreement that had been previewed a week ago by a senior U.S. official at an international security conference in Munich, Germany. The announcement had been expected shortly thereafter but was delayed in part because of Monday's release of the results of Afghanistan's disputed September 2019 elections that showed President Ashraf Ghani winning by an extremely narrow margin.

U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said in a statement that the peace agreement, to be signed in Doha, Qatar, by U.S. special envoy for Afghanistan Zalmay Khalilzad and Taliban representatives, will eventually lead to a permanent cease-fire. The deal also envisions guarantees from the Taliban that Afghanistan will not be used to attack the U.S. or its allies.

"We are preparing for the signing to take place on February 29," Pompeo said. "Intra-Afghan negotiations will start soon thereafter, and will build on this fundamental step to deliver a comprehensive and permanent ceasefire and the future political road map for Afghanistan."

The Taliban, meanwhile, said in a statement that the agreement is intended to achieve nationwide peace and an end to the foreign troop presence in the country.

The statement said both sides "will now create a suitable security situation" ahead of the agreement signing date, invite international representatives to a signing ceremony, arrange for the release of prisoners, structure a path for peace talks, "and finally lay the groundwork for peace across the country with the withdrawal of all foreign forces."

The Taliban added that they will not allow "the land of Afghanistan to be used against security of others so that our people can live a peaceful and prosperous life under the shade of an Islamic system."

But the road ahead is fraught with difficulties, particularly as some Taliban elements and other groups

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have shown little interest in negotiations. An attack that killed two Americans last September disrupted what at the time was an expected announcement of a peace deal.

And, it remained unclear who would represent Kabul at the intra-Afghan talks. Ghani's rivals have disputed the Afghan election commission's declaration that he won the presidential election.

The Taliban have refused to talk to Ghani's government and also denounced the election results, saying they will talk to government representatives but only as ordinary Afghans, not as officials. Germany and Norway have both offered to host the all-Afghan talks, but no venue has yet been set.

Pompeo did not say who would represent Kabul, only that talks "will build on this fundamental step to deliver a comprehensive and permanent cease-fire and the future political road map for Afghanistan."

Under the terms of the "reduction in violence" — which covers all of Afghanistan and also applies to Afghan forces as well as the United States and Taliban — all sides have committed to end attacks for seven days. For the Taliban, that includes roadside bombings, suicide attacks and rocket strikes.

The Taliban military commission issued instructions to its commanders "to stop attacks from Feb. 22 against foreign and Afghan forces until Feb 29."

The peace deal also calls for the release of 5,000 Taliban prisoners, most of whom are being held by the Afghan government. Although the U.S. has already discussed the prisoner release with government representatives, there has been no public announcement about it from Ghani's government.

Neighboring Pakistan, which has long been accused of backing the Taliban, welcomed the reduction-in-violence plan.

"We hope the Afghan parties would now seize this historic opportunity and work out a comprehensive and inclusive political settlement for durable peace and stability in Afghanistan and the region," said a Pakistan Foreign Ministry statement. Pakistan hosts more than 1.4 million Afghan refugees.

During any withdrawal, the U.S. would retain the right to continue counter-terrorism operations in Afghanistan, which have been focused mainly on an Islamic State group's affiliate and al-Qaida, according to Pentagon officials.

Ghani said in a statement that "for the week of Taliban's reduction in violence, our defense and security forces will remain in defensive mode" and continue operations against the Islamic State, al-Qaida "and other terrorist groups except Taliban."

The Pentagon has declined to say whether the U.S. had agreed to cut its troop levels in Afghanistan to zero. Defense Secretary Mark Esper has said if the truce is successful and the Afghan peace talks begin, the U.S. would reduce its troop contingent "over time" to about 8,600. There are more than 12,000 U.S. troops in Afghanistan.

Yet Suhail Shaheen, the spokesman for the Taliban's political office in Doha, tweeted that the Taliban expect a complete withdrawal. In a Pashto language tweet, he said, "based on the agreement with the U.S., all international forces will leave Afghanistan and the invasion will end and no one will be allowed to use Afghan soil against others."

In Brussels, NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg welcomed the developments. The U.S.-led military alliance has some 16,000 troops in Afghanistan helping to train the country's security forces, but it could draw down on its operation to accommodate any firm peace agreement. More than 8,000 of these alliance troops are American.

"This is a critical test of the Taliban's willingness and ability to reduce violence, and contribute to peace in good faith," Stoltenberg said in a statement. "This could pave the way for negotiations among Afghans, sustainable peace, and ensuring the country is never again a safe haven for terrorists."

Lee reported from Washington. Associated Press writers Tameem Akhgar in Kabul, Afghanistan, Lorne Cook in Brussels and Lolita Baldor and Robert Burns in Washington contributed to this report.

Bloomberg struggles to respond to politics of #MeToo era

By ALEXANDRA JAFFE and MARYCLAIRE DALE Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Mike Bloomberg's name last appeared on a ballot a decade before #MeToo transformed cultural mores surrounding sexual harassment and the treatment of women. As he campaigns for the presidency, the 78-year-old billionaire is struggling to adjust.

The former New York City mayor was caught flat-footed during much of Wednesday night's debate when rival Elizabeth Warren blasted his company's use of non-disclosure agreements in cases of sexual harassment. She sought to portray such agreements as endemic of a broader culture of sexism at the company, Bloomberg LP, when he was CEO.

Bloomberg's response was dismissive. He said some of those who alleged misconduct "didn't like a joke I told" and argued that non-disclosure agreements were "consensual" deals supported by the women involved.

The response struck some women as out of touch with how the #MeToo movement has reshaped the conversation around sexual harassment in the workplace — and the use of non-disclosure agreements in particular. Employment lawyer Debra Katz, who represented accuser Christine Blasey Ford in her Senate testimony against then-Supreme Court nominee Brett Kavanaugh, said Bloomberg's comments "really missed the mark."

"I think Bloomberg's comments were tone-deaf," she said. "In this moment, when we now understand that many NDAs were entered into in coercive manners, it's incumbent upon companies and especially those (led by people) like Bloomberg, who are public figures, to agree to revisit these issues."

The episode could cost Bloomberg some support from women, who are crucial to winning the Democratic nomination and defeating President Donald Trump. Warren kept up the pressure on Thursday, saying when women complain, Bloomberg can "throw a little money on it, put a little gag in the woman's mouth."

Bloomberg campaigned Thursday in Salt Lake City, Utah, where he showed no sign of changing his approach, bemoaning the division on display during the debate and reinforcing his central point that he's best positioned to beat Trump.

Still, his rise in the polls is prompting scrutiny of Bloomberg's company. Bloomberg LP has reportedly faced nearly 40 lawsuits involving 65 plaintiffs on an array of employment issues between 1996 and 2016. It's unclear how many of these cases were related to sexual harassment, but a number of recent media reports have disclosed charges of sexist comments made by Bloomberg and other managers at the company.

Earlier this month, The Washington Post published a long-rumored joke book of crude comments Bloomberg allegedly made about women from 1990. His campaign has said he never made any of the comments disclosed in the booklet.

But Tina Tchen, the CEO and president of Time's Up, the organization created to fight sexual harassment in the wake of #MeToo, said she wasn't surprised by allegations about the culture at Bloomberg LP.

"Being in the finance world, having worked in a corporate law firm myself in the '80s and '90s, I think it's fair to say that workplaces, especially the Wall Street workplace, was a very different place in terms of the comments that were considered normal and accepted," she said.

But she said, now, "most companies have evolved, and are continuing to evolve," particularly on the issue of NDAs. She noted that NDAs have "long been a tool that have silenced survivors of sexual harassment ... and really take agency away from survivors."

They can also make it tougher for a company to correct a culture of sexual harassment, because the secrecy surrounding these incidents mean employees and managers don't know how widespread they are. Tchen said it would be perfectly reasonable for Bloomberg to amend the NDAs now.

"Knowing what we all know now about the workplace and sexual harassment, are you willing to, now, allow folks to speak up about their experience?" she asked.

Many types of litigation, from insurance cases to product liability, are routinely settled through confidential settlements.

In sexual misconduct cases, they've served to protect the privacy of victims as well as the careers and

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reputations of the accused, including comedian Bill Cosby, Hollywood mogul Harvey Weinstein, Fox News host Bill O'Reilly and other powerful men.

In the wake of the #MeToo movement, some think the practice should be revisited.

"One interesting thing is whether it will be an end to the confidentiality pledge," Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg said at a February 2018 event at the National Constitution Center in Philadelphia.

"I hope those agreements will not be enforced by courts," she added in a revised version of the speech published last year.

Katz said that while there's a role for non-disclosure agreements to help victims preserve their privacy, and that the majority of her clients prefer to keep their agreements confidential, she believes public figures like Bloomberg should release them from the secrecy clause if they want to go public.

"Certainly in this environment, Bloomberg needs to be transparent," she said. "And, if in fact, there was nothing that implicated his conduct in these agreements, he should want to have them be made public. But to the extent that he presided as CEO of these companies and simply paid settlements as the cost of doing business, and didn't take appropriate corrective measures, that's certainly something that should be important for voters to know about."

A number of current and former employees have spoken out in defense of Bloomberg, and say his promotion of women and advocacy on women's issues has long been one of his strengths. Bloomberg himself noted on the debate stage that he has employed and elevated many women to positions of leadership within his organization and his mayoral administration. He appointed the first woman to serve as deputy mayor, and has donated tens of millions of dollars to organizations promoting women's reproductive rights and other women's rights efforts.

Fatima Shamah, who currently serves on the campaign as national director overseeing coalitions and constituencies and worked in the Bloomberg administration from 2006 until he left office, said he made clear in his administration that women "were all clear partners in the work that we were doing." She suggested a few incidents that occurred at Bloomberg LP, which employs thousands of people globally, were "wrongly layered onto Mike."

"As a father, as a brother, as a son, as a mayor, as a business leader and philanthropist, his leadership has consistently focused on engaging women, on issues that matter to women," she said.

But his refusal to acknowledge and apologize for issues within his company come in stark contrast to how some of his Democratic opponents have addressed similar issues throughout the campaign. After several women said Joe Biden made them feel uncomfortable with unwanted physical contact, he pledged to "be more mindful about respecting personal space in the future." And Bernie Sanders apologized and enacted reforms after women came forward with claims of sexual harassment on his 2016 campaign.

Some of Bloomberg's critics from his time as mayor say his refusal to show a similar level of contrition is unsurprising. Melissa Mark-Viverito, a former New York City Council speaker who did battle with Bloomberg frequently, said his debate performance "very much reminds me of the Mike Bloomberg that I knew."

"It does continue to reinforce that image that people have that he is out of touch and has no willingness to understand or address that," she said.

Indeed, that may be the continued political fallout for Bloomberg if he fails to address the issue, warned Democratic strategist Maria Cardona. She suggested Bloomberg's refusal to apologize for the conduct at his company could blur the very clear distinction the candidate has tried to draw between himself and Trump, who has faced many more and far more salacious claims of sexual harassment directed at him personally, but who has also never taken responsibility for any wrongdoing.

"If Bloomberg really wants to be the one that unequivocally is left standing as the one Democrat that can fight Trump, I don't think he's going to be able to do that until he puts this to rest," she said.

This story has been corrected to fix the spelling of Fatima Shamah's name. Dale reported from Philadelphia.

Syrian war pulls in major foreign actors, increasing tension

By ZEINA KARAM Associated Press

BEIRUT (AP) — In northern Syria, heavy exchanges between Syrian and Turkish troops are erupting with more frequency, threatening to escalate into full-blown conflict. Russian and U.S. convoys crisscross each other on remote dirt roads, the tension between them on full display. U.S. troops even have had a deadly clash with Syrian gunmen at a checkpoint.

Syria's civil war long has provided a free-for-all battlefield for proxy fighters. But in its ninth year, it is drawing major foreign actors into direct conflict, with the threat of all-out confrontations becoming a real possibility.

In the northwest, the Syrian government's Russia-backed military offensive to recapture Idlib, the country's last opposition-controlled region, has infuriated Ankara, which has poured in thousands of troops in response. In the northeast, U.S. troops on a murky mission to protect oil fields find themselves an increasing target as government troops exhibit more confidence.

The result is a battlefield so fraught with tensions that every day brings the potential for an incident or a miscalculation that could ignite broader violence.

On Thursday, Turkish forces and Turkey-backed rebels attacked government troops in Idlib, and Russian warplanes struck back. Two Turkish soldiers were killed in the incident, bringing the number of Turkish troops killed in Idlib this month to 15. Later, Turkey said it had asked the U.S. to deploy Patriot missile defense systems on Turkey's border with Syria to guard against possible attacks from Syrian territory.

A look at the foreign actors and how they're involved in northern Syria:

TURKEY

Syria's northern neighbor was an early backer of the Syrian opposition, providing crucial logistical support as well as weapons and funding for the rebels who took up arms against Syrian President Bashar Assad.

Nine years later, Turkey has essentially lost that war. Idlib province, near the Turkish border, is the last region still held by the rebels. That's why for Ankara, it has become an existential problem.

The Syrian government's rapid military advances in Idlib threaten areas of the border farther north that were captured in Turkey's incursions. Ankara, which hosts more than 3.5 million Syrian refugees, is also worried that an attack on the provincial capital and its surroundings will push 2 million more people toward its border, putting it under enormous pressure to let some of them in.

In the last two weeks, it has sent thousands of additional troops to Syria to try to stem the government's advances, triggering clashes with Syrian government troops. So far, talks between Russia and Turkey to reduce tensions have failed to bring results.

Now, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan is threatening a larger operation to halt Syria's current offensive, but to do that would be to risk a direct confrontation with Moscow that Ankara can ill-afford to have.

RUSSIA

If there has been a constant in the Syrian war, it is Russia's unwavering support for Assad.

Russia has waged a military campaign in Syria since September 2015, allowing Assad's government to reclaim control over most of the country. The cost has been huge: Whole cities have been destroyed, mostly by indiscriminate Russian bombardment.

But Syria, and its naval base in Tartus, gives Moscow a strategic foothold in the Mediterranean, and Russia is determined to go all out to protect it.

Moscow has blamed Turkey for the collapse of a cease-fire in Idlib, accusing Ankara of "provoking further escalation" by continuing to offer military support for militants in violation of the 2018 agreement.

Russia moved to fill the vacuum left by the United States last year after U.S. President Donald Trump ordered the pullout of American forces in northeastern Syria, deploying its troops to keep apart Syrian and Turkish forces.

That made Moscow the ultimate power broker, mediator and winner of the war -- maintaining cooperation with all the players, including the Kurds, Turkey and even the United States, with whom it operates

a so-called deconfliction line to defuse tensions.

UNITED STATES

While Trump ordered U.S. troops to withdraw from Syria last year, his military commanders and advisers later convinced him to keep a scaled-back force to protect Kurdish-controlled oil fields and facilities from falling into the hands of militants from the Islamic State group.

According to officials, there are about 750 U.S. troops in eastern Syria, spread across a swath of land that stretches more than 90 miles (150 kilometers) from Deir el-Zour to the border region east of al-Hassakeh.

They patrol a region crowded with other troops, including the Russians, Syrian government troops and even Iranian proxy forces not too far away.

But it is clear who has the upper hand.

Earlier this month, U.S. troops shot and killed a man after their convoy came under attack near a checkpoint manned by pro-Assad forces on a remote road east of the city of Qamishli in northeastern Syria. The convoy was attacked by stones and firebombs, and a man was seen firing at the convoy with a rifle. An American vehicle got stuck in the dirt, apparently having veered into a ditch, while another had a flat tire.

At one point in the melee, a Russian army convoy arrived on the scene, apparently to mediate. Images showed vehicles bearing Russian, U.S. and Syrian flags all in one frame.

The Russian Defense Ministry said the arrival of Russian troops prevented "further escalation of the conflict."

Wrestler adds to abuse allegations against university doctor

By **LARRY LAGE, DAVID EGGERT, KATHLEEN FOODY and MIKE HOUSEHOLDER** Associated Press

ANN ARBOR, Michigan (AP) — An Olympic wrestler has accused a University of Michigan doctor of touching him inappropriately during medical exams at the school and said the physician's reputation for such conduct was well known among his teammates.

Andy Hrovat, who competed for the U.S. in the 2008 Summer Olympics, told The Associated Press on Thursday that the encounters with the late Dr. Robert E. Anderson happened during his freshman year in 1998.

"I would like to let people know that it's OK to come out," Hrovat said in an interview from his attorney's office in Denver. "It's OK to let your voice be heard."

He is the first athlete to make public accusations against Anderson following complaints this week from other former students that the doctor sexually abused them decades ago. The revelations echo high-profile sexual abuse allegations made against sports doctors at other universities.

"I was warned about him from teammates, saying, 'If anything happens and you go see the doctor, he's going to inappropriately touch you, that's just what Dr. A does,'" Hrovat recalled.

He declined to describe the exam, saying he was uncomfortable talking about it.

"To me, the mental part of it of having to go in there knowing that this doctor was going to touch you inappropriately is what sticks out most in my mind," he said.

Hrovat said he did not tell then-Michigan wrestling coach Dale Bahr or anyone in athletic administration about Anderson's conduct.

"In my mind, he normalized what he was doing and made you think that was just a normal part of the procedure," he said. "So why would you tell somebody?"

Speaking to the AP on Friday, Bill Martin, who was Michigan's athletic director from 2000 to 2010, said Anderson had not even been on his radar.

"I actually never met him and never heard one word about him good, bad or indifferent," Martin said in a telephone interview.

On Thursday, the university's president apologized to "anyone who was harmed" by Anderson. His comment came a day after the school announced that it had launched an investigation into Anderson's behavior following abuse allegations from five former patients.

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Another former student, Gary Bailey, told the AP that Anderson dropped his pants and asked him to fondle his genitals in a medical exam during Bailey's senior year in 1968 or 1969. Bailey said he filled out a complaint form to the University Health Service within a month or so, writing that the behavior was "inappropriate."

"I never heard anything about it ever again," said Bailey, now 72.

Officials have acknowledged that some university employees were aware of accusations against the doctor prior to a 2018 complaint that led to a police investigation.

University President Mark Schlissel opened a meeting of the school's Board of Regents Thursday by reading a prepared statement about Anderson, who died in 2008.

"The patient-physician relationship involves a solemn commitment and trust," he said. "The allegations are highly disturbing. On behalf of the university, I apologize to anyone who was harmed by Dr. Anderson."

University spokesman Rick Fitzgerald said Thursday that, since the investigation was announced, 22 people have called a hotline to report on interactions with the onetime director of the University Health Service and physician for the football team. Fitzgerald said he did not have detailed information about the individual callers or what they described. He said some of the callers reported having no issues with Anderson.

"It was a traumatic thing at the time," Bailey said of his experience with Anderson. While the abuse has not "ruined my life or anything, it may have other people and that's why I'm bringing my story to light."

Bailey, who is gay, said Anderson "preyed a little bit on people who were gay ... because he sort of thought that they wouldn't say anything because, you know, people were pretty closeted back then." He said he told friends about the abuse decades ago.

Bailey, of Dowagiac, Michigan, first publicly spoke to The Detroit News.

Another man, Robert Julian Stone, told the AP on Wednesday that Anderson assaulted him during a medical appointment at the university's health center in 1971. Stone said he alerted university officials last summer, inspired by the national #MeToo movement against sexual misconduct.

The AP left phone messages with two of Anderson's three children. An email was sent to the third seeking comment.

Fitzgerald said he could not elaborate on investigators' findings that some university employees were aware of accusations against the doctor prior to the 2018 complaint that led to a police investigation.

John Manly, a lawyer for many of the hundreds of victims of now-imprisoned former Michigan State University sports doctor Larry Nassar, said Thursday that half a dozen people have called his California-based firm alleging abuse by Anderson – mostly ex-football players and wrestlers. He said they were fearful of what could happen to their positions on teams or at the school if they reported what he did to them.

"As men in their 30s up to their 60s, there is a real shame associated with this," he said. "Most didn't speak up because they were concerned he wouldn't clear them to play. And if you're not cleared by the doctor, you lose your athletic scholarship. He had tremendous control. These at the time boys and young men were subjected to this stuff knowing that if they said anything, they were fearful he would retaliate."

Manly urged the university to ensure that alleged victims have a neutral third party, either law enforcement or a counseling service, to call to discuss what happened to them. He said he is concerned that the school has asked people to reach out directly through the hotline.

"My experience has been that's much more about liability protection than helping the victims," Manly said. "It's really important that one of America's greatest universities act like it and treat these people not as adversaries but as people that are injured and that deserve support. My fear is that's not happening."

The university said the July 2018 complaint came from a former student athlete who wrote to Athletic Director Warde Manuel alleging abuse by Anderson during medical exams in the early 1970s.

Fitzgerald said he also could not answer questions about the scope of the police investigation, including whether investigators reviewed Anderson's resignation as head of the health service in 1980 or his retirement in 2003.

The university police department referred the AP to the university's Division of Public Safety and Security for questions about the investigation. A spokeswoman for the division did not reply to an email with

specific questions about the investigation Thursday.

Washtenaw County prosecutors first received the police department's report in late April or early May of 2019, said Steven Hiller, assistant chief prosecuting attorney.

A prosecutor concluded that summer that no criminal charges could be authorized because the primary suspect had died and none of the offenses were within Michigan's six-year statute of limitations, Hiller said Thursday.

The university said in a statement Wednesday that it was making the information public following a determination a day earlier by prosecutors that no criminal charges would be authorized. Fitzgerald said late Thursday that the campus police department reviewed its records and emails and found "no documentation indicating that the prosecutor's review had been completed prior to" Tuesday.

"As we move forward, and in consultation with the Prosecutor's Office, we all agree there is value in adopting a more formal process for notification when formal criminal charges are not filed," Fitzgerald said.

Hiller did not immediately return a message on Friday morning about the university's statement.

Foody reported from Chicago. Eggert reported from Lansing, Michigan.

Associated Press researchers Jennifer Farrar, Randy Herschaft and Rhonda Shafner in New York and AP Writer Tammy Webber in Chicago and Kantele Franko in Columbus, Ohio, contributed to this report.

Survivor: German shooter emptied magazine, calmly walked out **By CHRISTOPH NOELTING Associated Press**

HANAU, Germany (AP) — Piter Minnemann and his friends were eating when they heard shots fired outside the door of the snack bar in Hanau where they had gathered.

Minnemann, 18, recalled that he had just got his pizza when the first shots were heard at the Arena Bar. It was the second site targeted in Wednesday night's shooting of nine people by a German man who had posted an online rant calling for the "complete extermination" of many "races or cultures in our midst."

"We thought it was a blank gun or something. We thought nothing of it," he said. "Then the man came in, he fired."

The gunman shot two people before coming into the bar, where "he aimed right at us — he shot the first one in the head," Minnemann said.

A pregnant woman jumped out of the window, he said.

"He came, fired, emptied his magazine, then everything was quiet, then he walked out normally," he recalled. "I opened my eyes, I saw that I was alive, I was happy. I asked if people were OK but Edris — I don't know if he's still alive but I think he survived — he had a hole in his throat and he said, 'I've been hit, I've been hit,' my other friend Momo was hit in the shoulder."

In all, Hanau native Minnemann said he lost four or five "friends I have known for years."

He spoke to The Associated Press next to a statue of the Brothers Grimm, the collectors of folk and fairy-tales who hailed from Hanau, in the town's main square. That memorial is now festooned with flowers and candles in memory of Wednesday night's victims.

"I still can't believe it, in some situations it's as if nothing happened, but when I see the people crying, when I see this, then it becomes true again, ... then you see that it is real," he said. "But otherwise, I can't believe that this happened to us, us of all people, in the very place where we are every day, where we chill out every day."

"I thought it was some kind of gang stuff at first," Minnemann said. He recalled that there were 12 or 13 people at the scene at the time of the shooting. Many others died, he said — "I was very lucky."

Another witness of the shooting at the Arena Bar told Turkey's Haber television that he and his friends heard five or six shots outside before the gunman entered.

"He shot the first people he saw in the head. A man fell to the floor," Muhammed Beyazkender, who was lying in his hospital bed with a bandaged shoulder, said on Thursday. "Then he fired at all of us. I got shot in the arm while I tried to hide behind the wall."

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Beyazkendersaid he lay on the floor on top of someone, and someone then lay on top of him, and someone else then on top of him.

"There was a kid underneath me with a hole in his throat," he said. "The kid said to me: 'my brother, I cannot feel my tongue; I cannot breathe.' I said to him, recite the Kalima Shahadat prayer (from the Quran). He recited the Kalima Shahadat, he called on everyone to recite it. There was no other sound, just the two of us. I didn't see him escape or anything."

—
This story has been corrected to fix the spelling of the hospitalized survivor's name. It is Muhammed Beyazkender, not Beyazkender Muhammed.

Intel officials say Russia boosting Trump candidacy

By MARY CLARE JALONICK and MICHAEL BALSAMO The Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Intelligence officials have warned lawmakers that Russia is interfering in the 2020 election campaign to help President Donald Trump get reelected, according to three officials familiar with the closed-door briefing.

Trump pushed back Friday accusing Democrats of launching a disinformation campaign.

"Another misinformation campaign is being launched by Democrats in Congress saying that Russia prefers me to any of the Do Nothing Democrat candidates who still have been unable to, after two weeks, count their votes in Iowa. Hoax number 7!" Trump tweeted.

The officials, who asked for anonymity to discuss sensitive intelligence, said Thursday that the briefing last week focused on Russia's efforts to influence the 2020 election and sow discord in the American electorate. The intelligence warning was first reported by The New York Times and The Washington Post.

A senior administration official told The Associated Press that the news infuriated Trump, who complained that Democrats would use the information against him. Over the course of his presidency, Trump has dismissed the intelligence community's assessment of Russia's 2016 election interference as a conspiracy to undermine his victory. The official spoke on the condition of anonymity to describe the private meeting.

A day after the Feb. 13 briefing to the House committee, Trump berated the then-director of national intelligence, Joseph Maguire, and he announced this week that Maguire would be replaced by Richard Grenell, a Trump loyalist.

Moscow denied any meddling. Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said Friday that the allegations are "paranoid reports that, unfortunately, there will be more and more of as we get closer to the elections (in the U.S.). Of course, they have nothing to do with the truth."

House Speaker Nancy Pelosi tweeted that, "American voters should decide American elections — not Vladimir Putin." She added that all members of Congress "should condemn the President's reported efforts to dismiss threats to the integrity of our democracy & to politicize our intel community."

Rep. Adam Schiff, D-Calif., the chairman of the House intelligence committee, tweeted: "We count on the intelligence community to inform Congress of any threat of foreign interference in our elections. If reports are true and the President is interfering with that, he is again jeopardizing our efforts to stop foreign meddling. Exactly as we warned he would do."

U.S. intelligence agencies say Russia interfered in the 2016 election through social media campaigns and stealing and distributing emails from Democratic accounts. They say Russia was trying to boost Trump's campaign and add chaos to the American political process. Special counsel Robert Mueller concluded that Russian interference was "sweeping and systematic," but he did not find a criminal conspiracy between Russia and the Trump campaign.

Republican lawmakers who were in last week's briefing by the DNI's chief election official, Shelby Pierson, pushed back by noting that Trump has been tough on Russia, one of the officials said.

While Trump has imposed severe economic sanctions on Russia, he also has spoken warmly of Russian leader Vladimir Putin and withdrawn troops from areas, like Syria, where Moscow could fill the vacuum. He delayed military aid last year to Ukraine, a Russian adversary — a decision that was at the core of his

impeachment proceedings.

The Times said Trump was angry that the House briefing was made before Schiff, the panel's chairman, who led the impeachment proceedings.

Trump on Thursday formally appointed Grenell, the U.S. ambassador to Germany, to replace Maguire as the new acting director of national intelligence. Maguire was required to step down soon under federal law governing acting appointments. The Times cited two administration officials as saying the timing, after the intelligence briefing, was coincidental.

Grenell's background is primarily in politics and media affairs. He lacks the extensive national security and military experience of Maguire, as well as previous holders of the position overseeing the nation's 17 intelligence agencies.

His appointment does little to heal the president's fraught relations with the intelligence community, which Trump has derided as part of a "deep state" of entrenched bureaucrats that seek to undermine his agenda. The administration has most notably feuded with the intelligence community over the Russian interference and the events surrounding Trump's impeachment.

Pierson told NPR in an interview that aired last month that the Russians "are already engaging in influence operations relative to candidates going into 2020. But we do not have evidence at this time that our adversaries are directly looking at interfering with vote counts or the vote tallies."

Pierson, appointed in July 2019 by then-Director of National Intelligence Dan Coats, works with intelligence agencies like the CIA, the FBI, the National Security Agency and the Department of Homeland Security to identify anyone seeking to interfere with U.S. elections.

Pierson told NPR that the U.S. doesn't know exactly what the Russians are planning, but she said it's not just a Russia problem.

"We're still also concerned about China, Iran, non-state actors, hacktivists and frankly — certainly for DHS and FBI - even Americans that might be looking to undermine confidence in the elections."

At an open hearing this month, FBI Director Christopher Wray told the House Judiciary Committee that Russia was engaged in "information warfare" heading into the November election, but that law enforcement had not seen efforts to target America's infrastructure. He said Russia is relying on a covert social media campaign to divide the American public.

Associated Press writers Aamer Madhani, Deb Riechmann and Eric Tucker in Washington, Zeke Miller in Las Vegas and Daria Litvinova contributed from Moscow contributed to this report.

AP-NORC Poll: Democrats feel mixed about nomination process

By EMILY SWANSON and AAMER MADHANI Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Democratic voters feel generally positive about all of their top candidates running for president, but they have only moderate confidence that their party's nomination process is fair, according to a new poll by The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research.

U.S. voters from across the political spectrum have mixed confidence in the fairness of either party's system for picking a candidate, but Democrats are especially likely to have doubts about their own party's process. Among Democratic voters, 41% say they have a great deal or quite a bit of confidence in the Democratic Party's nomination process, while 34% have moderate confidence and 25% have little to no confidence.

Among Republicans, meanwhile, 61% say they have high confidence in their party's process, and just 13% have low confidence. President Donald Trump has only nominal opposition in the GOP nomination process, and several state Republican parties have even canceled holding a primary.

For Democrats, the results reveal early signs of fallout from what's shaping into a contentious and divisive primary, and sharpen focus on the prospect that the nominee may be chosen in a messy vote at a brokered convention. The anxieties have been exacerbated by a breakdown in the vote count in the kickoff Iowa caucus, an outcome Nevada officials are working to avoid in their caucus Saturday.

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Julianne Morgan, 29, of Dayton, Ohio, said her confidence in the Democratic Party's process was undercut earlier this month when Democrats delayed tabulating the results of the first-in-the-nation Iowa caucuses because of problems with a buggy mobile app.

Her concerns were further exacerbated this week after reading that Sen. Elizabeth Warren, a Massachusetts Democrat who is third in the delegate count, was excluded in hypothetical head-to-head matchups against Trump in some recent polls.

"It doesn't sound like there's been fair representation for all the candidates," said Morgan, who is supporting Warren's candidacy.

The poll builds on AP VoteCast's earlier findings of distrust in the system among Democrats who voted in last week's New Hampshire primary.

Some respondents said they worry that an increasingly bitter internal battle for the Democratic nomination could weaken whomever emerges to take on Trump in November. The poll was conducted before White House hopefuls on Wednesday took part in the most contentious debate of the cycle. Democrats are set to host their third 2020 nominating contest on Saturday in Nevada.

"They keep digging at each other," said Roger Kempton, 85, of Niles, Michigan, a Trump voter in 2016 who said he plans to vote for a Democratic candidate in 2020. "They say beating Trump is the most important thing, but they keeping fighting each other. It's only making people like myself unhappy with the choices."

Others raised concerns that the Democrats have hung on too long to the tradition of giving Iowa the first spot on the nominating calendar. Since 1972, the top voter-getter in the Democratic caucuses has gone on to win the nomination in seven of 10 contested races. But only Jimmy Carter in 1976 and Barack Obama in 2008 won the presidency.

"Iowa is not a very diverse state, and I feel like it doesn't really represent the country well," said Katie Lewis of Lexington, Kentucky, who backs Vermont Sen. Bernie Sanders.

Among Democratic respondents, self-described moderates and conservatives are more likely than liberals to have high confidence that their process is fair, 46% to 34%. Those age 45 and older are also more confident than those who are younger, and nonwhite Democrats are more confident than white Democrats.

The poll shows that Sanders gets slightly higher ratings nationally from Democratic voters compared to his nearest primary rivals, some of whom remain less well known even within the party.

Seventy-four percent of Democratic voters say they have a favorable opinion of Sanders, while 67% say that of former Vice President Joe Biden, 64% for Warren, and 58% for former South Bend, Indiana Mayor Pete Buttigieg. About half of Democrats express favorable opinions of billionaire Mike Bloomberg and Minnesota Sen. Amy Klobuchar, while nearly 4 in 10 say they have a positive opinion of billionaire Tom Steyer.

Many Democratic voters say they don't know enough to have an opinion of many of the candidates, including Steyer (52%), Klobuchar (39%), Buttigieg (28%), Bloomberg (25%) and Warren (16%).

But about 2 in 10 Democrats express negative opinions of Biden, Bloomberg, Warren and Sanders.

The more moderate Democrats — Biden, Bloomberg, Buttigieg and Klobuchar — have all raised questions about whether Sanders, 78, a self-described democratic socialist, is too far to the left of the American electorate. Both Sanders and Warren — who support heftier taxes on the wealthy to pay for expanded health care, free college, and other programs — have been branded by rivals as too liberal.

Biden had poor showings in Iowa and New Hampshire and has faced questions about whether his best days as a politician are in the past.

Bloomberg, the former New York City mayor and billionaire founder of a financial, software, data, and media company, didn't enter the race until November. Some of his Democratic rivals, as well as Trump, have accused Bloomberg of trying to buy the nomination by pumping in hundreds of millions of dollars of his own fortune to fund campaign ads in the more than a dozen Super Tuesday states and U.S. territories. Those March 3 contests account for more than a third of all delegates at stake.

Bloomberg has also faced criticism for disparaging comments about transgender people, his support of "stop-and-frisk," a controversial policing strategy that led to disproportionate stops of African Americans and Latinos in the nation's biggest city, and complaints that he repeatedly made misogynistic comments to women who worked for him the 1980s and 1990s.

Wanda Gibson, 58, a Democrat from suburban Cincinnati, Ohio, who is undecided about who she'll support, said that Bloomberg's backing of stop-and-frisk and his sexist comments were wrong. But she also said that she worried that some Democrats are discounting the possibility that Bloomberg has changed.

"We've all done or said something in our past that would not necessarily be politically correct," said Gibson, who said she is still weighing which Democrat she'll back. "The problem is that we have Donald Trump, someone who continues to do this stuff daily, sometimes hourly. If someone did something 10 years ago, they can evolve."

The AP-NORC poll of 1,074 adults was conducted Feb. 13-16 using a sample drawn from NORC's probability-based AmeriSpeak Panel, which is designed to be representative of the U.S. population. The margin of sampling error for all respondents is plus or minus 4.2 percentage points.

Online:

AP-NORC Center: <http://www.apnorc.org/>

Trump tries new approach for \$1 trillion infrastructure plan

By DAVID A. LIEB Associated Press

JEFFERSON CITY, Mo. (AP) — As a presidential candidate in 2016, Donald Trump promised a \$1 trillion infrastructure plan that would use tax incentives to spur private investment in public works projects.

He has so far failed to persuade Congress to pass anything like that.

In another election year, Trump has outlined a new \$1 trillion plan for spending on roads, rails, water systems and other infrastructure. This time, the president is proposing to rely fully on federal spending. That fundamental change from his first plan drew praise from some state transportation officials and industry groups, even though Trump doesn't spell out how to pay for it all.

Since outlining his budget proposal last week, Trump has done little to promote his new infrastructure plan. A politically divided Congress has no obligation to consider it. In fact, Trump's prior infrastructure proposals all stalled, even when Republicans controlled both the House and Senate.

Some Republicans already are lowering expectations.

"The Republican House version of the bill won't be a trillion dollars, I can tell you that right now," said U.S. Rep. Sam Graves, the ranking GOP member of the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee. "It will be a lot farther south than that."

Trump's retooled infrastructure plan relies on existing fuel tax revenue to cover much of the cost. That allows him to include billions of dollars worth of projects that likely would have happened no matter who was president.

White House budget documents show that Trump's plan lacks revenue sources for almost half the \$1 trillion amount — about \$450 billion proposed for roads and bridges, public transit, rails, ports, pipelines, dams, drinking water and sewer systems, and electrical and high-speed internet networks.

The proposal is "a fantastic development" that "would be a great shot in the arm for infrastructure improvements in this country," said Dean Franks, head lobbyist for the American Road and Transportation Builders Association. But he added, "How to pay for it is always the big question."

Improving the nation's infrastructure has been one of the few policy areas touted by both parties. But such talk has yet to result in action.

Last year, for example, Trump and Democratic congressional leaders temporarily agreed to work toward a \$2 trillion infrastructure plan that House Speaker Nancy Pelosi said "would be big and bold." But that disintegrated as House Republicans raised concerns about cost, Trump declared a new North American trade deal a higher priority and Democrats pursued impeachment.

For Trump, a \$1 trillion target has remained a focal point of his infrastructure plan, even as the way to pay for it has evolved.

The goal traces back to one-upmanship of former Democratic presidential candidate Hillary Clinton, who

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in 2016 had proposed spending and loans that she projected would generate about \$500 billion for infrastructure. Asked for details about his own plan in August 2016, Trump told Fox Business: "Well, I would say at least double her numbers." When pressed on how he would pay for it, Trump replied, "We would do infrastructure bonds."

During an October 2016 speech in Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, Trump provided new details and included infrastructure in his "100-day action plan to make American great again." He said he would leverage "public-private partnerships and private investments through tax incentives to spur \$1 trillion in infrastructure investment over the next 10 years."

As president, Trump's first two budget proposals included \$200 billion in new federal funding for infrastructure that he said would generate at least \$1 trillion in projects when matched with money from state and local governments or private investors. But those plans never passed a Republican-led Congress.

Some state transportation officials raised concerns about their ability to shoulder the burden, noting that Trump's plan would have flipped the traditional model — wherein the federal government covers the majority of costs for highways, bridges and public transit projects.

"There was much criticism of this administration when they kept promising a \$1 trillion infrastructure plan, and the budget came out, and there was only \$200 billion in actual federal money," said Jeff Davis, senior fellow at the nonprofit Eno Center for Transportation in Washington, D.C. "This year, it's actually \$1 trillion in honest-to-God spending by the United States Treasury Department."

Trump's new plan takes a more traditional Washington approach. He proposes \$810 billion through a 10-year reauthorization of the surface transportation program, which provides funding for roads, bridges, rails, public transit and transportation safety programs and is set to expire at the end of September.

He adds \$190 billion in one-time grants, including \$60 billion for "mega-projects" that could include everything from roads to dams to high-speed internet networks. Other grants would be devoted to freight systems, bridges, public transit and rural projects. But no specific examples of potential projects are listed.

U.S. Rep. Peter DeFazio, an Oregon Democrat who chairs the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee, said he was encouraged that Trump's budget "signals he is interested in at least talking about the need to invest in our nation's crumbling infrastructure."

But DeFazio touched on a potential sticking point: He said it was hard to say whether Trump "actually wants to move forward with innovative solutions that would tackle carbon pollution in the transportation sector."

One way to fund Trump's latest plan would be to raise the federal fuel tax, which has remained unchanged since 1993, at 18.3 cents a gallon for gasoline and 24.3 cents for diesel fuel. But that has gained little traction in Congress, even though the increase has support from the U.S. Chamber of Commerce and AFL-CIO, two high-profile allies of both parties.

Trump's proposal includes no tax increase. The White House Office of Management and Budget said the administration would work with Congress to cover a \$261 billion gap between highway trust fund revenue and his proposed spending. It suggested cuts could be made elsewhere in the budget to help pay for it.

Trump's plan is larger than a House Democratic plan announced in January.

His plan to pair a transportation reauthorization bill with an upfront infusion of cash for infrastructure projects is similar to a concept that then-President Barack Obama unsuccessfully proposed in 2011. Lawmakers who were reluctant to take on new spending may remain hesitant today.

"We have to be careful when it comes to increasing deficits," said Graves, who represents a northern Missouri district that voted overwhelmingly for Trump. "We just can't keep heaping more spending and more spending on top of what we're already doing."

Follow David A. Lieb on Twitter: <https://twitter.com/DavidALieb>

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Today in History

By The Associated Press undefined

Today in History

Today is Saturday, Feb. 22, the 53rd day of 2020. There are 313 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On Feb. 22, 1980, the "Miracle on Ice" took place in Lake Placid, New York, as the United States Olympic hockey team upset the Soviets, 4-3. (The U.S. team went on to win the gold medal.)

On this date:

In 1732 (New Style date), the first president of the United States, George Washington, was born in Westmoreland County in the Virginia Colony.

In 1857, Robert Baden-Powell, founder of the Boy Scouts, was born in London.

In 1862, Jefferson Davis, already the provisional president of the Confederacy, was inaugurated for a six-year term following his election in November 1861.

In 1909, the Great White Fleet, a naval task force sent on a round-the-world voyage by President Theodore Roosevelt, returned after more than a year at sea.

In 1924, Calvin Coolidge delivered the first presidential radio broadcast from the White House.

In 1935, it became illegal for airplanes to fly over the White House.

In 1984, David Vetter, a 12-year-old Texas boy who'd spent most of his life in a plastic bubble because he had no immunity to disease, died 15 days after being removed from the bubble for a bone-marrow transplant.

In 1987, pop artist Andy Warhol died at a New York City hospital at age 58.

In 1995, actor Ed Flanders, 60, died at his own hand in Denny, California.

In 1997, scientists in Scotland announced they had succeeded in cloning an adult mammal, producing a lamb named "Dolly." (Dolly, however, was later put down after a short life marred by premature aging and disease.)

In 2004, consumer advocate Ralph Nader announced he was running again for president, this time as an independent.

In 2018, the U.S. women's hockey team won the gold medal at the Winter Olympics in South Korea, beating Canada 3-2 after a shootout tiebreaker.

Ten years ago: Najibullah Zazi (nah-jee-BOO'-lah ZAH'-zee), accused of buying beauty supplies to make bombs for an attack on New York City subways, pleaded guilty to conspiring to use weapons of mass destruction, conspiring to commit murder in a foreign country and providing material support for a terrorist organization. (Zazi faced up to life in prison but spent nearly a decade after his arrest helping the U.S. identify and prosecute terrorists; he was given a 10-year sentence followed by supervised release.) New York City police officer Richard Kern, accused of sodomizing a drug suspect in a subway station, was acquitted at trial; two colleagues were acquitted of a cover-up.

Five years ago: At the 87th Academy Awards, "Birdman" won best picture; Julianne Moore received the best actress Oscar for "Still Alice" while Eddie Redmayne was recognized as best actor for "The Theory of Everything." Joey Logano won his first career Daytona 500 after taking the lead following a restart with 19 laps remaining.

One year ago: R&B star R. Kelly was charged in Chicago with aggravated sexual abuse involving four victims, including at least three between the ages of 13 and 17. (Kelly is being held without bond in Chicago; he is facing a variety of charges in three states.) Police in Jupiter, Fla., said New England Patriots owner Robert Kraft faced charges of soliciting a prostitute after he was twice videotaped in a sex act at a shopping-center massage parlor. (Kraft has pleaded not guilty but issued a written apology.) A California couple pleaded guilty to torture and years of abuse that included shackling some of their 13 children to beds and starving them. (The couple would be sentenced to up to life in prison.) Producers of the Fox TV show "Empire" announced that actor Jussie Smollett's character would be removed from the final two episodes of the season after his arrest on charges that he staged a racist, anti-gay attack on himself.

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Today's Birthdays: Actor Paul Dooley is 92. Actor James Hong is 91. Actor John Ashton is 72. Actress Miou-Miou is 70. Actress Julie Walters is 70. Basketball Hall of Famer Julius Erving is 70. Actress Ellen Greene is 69. Former Sen. Bill Frist, R-Tenn., is 68. Former White House adviser David Axelrod is 65. Actor Kyle MacLachlan is 61. World Golf Hall of Famer Vijay Singh is 57. Actress-comedian Rachel Dratch is 54. Actor Paul Lieberstein is 53. Actress Jeri Ryan is 52. Actor Thomas Jane is 51. TV host Clinton Kelly is 51. Actress Tamara Mello is 50. Actress-singer Lea Salonga (LAY'-uh suh-LONG'-guh) is 49. Actor Jose Solano is 49. International Tennis Hall of Famer Michael Chang is 48. Rock musician Scott Phillips is 47. Singer James Blunt is 46. Actress Drew Barrymore is 45. Actress Liza Huber is 45. Rock singer Tom Higgenson (Plain White T's) is 41. Rock musician Joe Hottinger (Halestorm) is 38. Actor Zach Roerig is 35. Actor Daniel E. Smith is 30.

Thought for Today: "It is better to offer no excuse than a bad one." — President George Washington (1732-1799).

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