

NATION IN BRIEF

Fed's see steady growth, signals pause in rate cuts

WASHINGTON — Federal Reserve Chairman Jerome Powell expects the U.S. economy to continue growing at a solid pace, though it still faces risks from slower growth overseas and trade tensions.

Powell also says the Fed is likely to keep its benchmark short-term interest rate unchanged in the coming months, unless the economy slows enough to cause Fed policymakers to make a "material reassessment" of their outlook.

In a written statement he will deliver to the Joint Economic Committee later Wednesday, Powell said, "Looking ahead, my colleagues and I see a sustained expansion of economic activity, a strong labor market, and inflation near our symmetric 2% objective as most likely."

The Fed cut short-term rates last month for the third time this year, to a range of 1.5% to 1.75%.

9 student deaths since August shakes USC campus

LOS ANGELES — The death of nine students since classes began a little more than two months ago has left students and administrators at the University Southern California shaken and seeking answers.

The Los Angeles Times reports the latest death was discovered Monday when the body of a 27-year-old student was found in an off-campus apartment.

The first occurred in August when an incoming freshman was struck by a car on a freeway.

Monday's death occurred shortly after administrators sent letters to students and parents telling them of the earlier fatalities.

Administrators say three deaths were the result of suicide. The causes of the other deaths are either unknown or haven't been disclosed.

Most distant world ever explored gets new name: Arrokoth

CAPE CANAVERAL — The most distant world ever explored 4 billion miles away finally has an official name: Arrokoth.

NASA said Tuesday that means "sky" in the language of the Native American Powhatan people.

NASA's New Horizons spacecraft flew past the snowman-shaped Arrokoth on New Year's Day, 3-1/2 years after exploring Pluto. At the time, this small icy world 1 billion miles beyond Pluto was nicknamed Ultima Thule given its vast distance from us.

Lead scientist Alan Stern says the new name "reflects the inspiration of looking to the skies."

Doctors: Double lung transplant recipient was teen who vaped

DETROIT — A double lung transplant recipient who severely damaged those internal organs by vaping has been identified as a Michigan teenager.

Doctors at Henry Ford Hospital in Detroit described to reporters Tuesday the procedure that saved the 17-year-old's life and pleaded for the public to understand the dangers of vaping.

The teen was admitted in early September to a Detroit-area hospital with what appeared to be pneumonia. He was eventually taken to Henry Ford Hospital and the transplant was performed Oct. 15.

The double lung transplant is believed to be first performed on a patient due to vaping.

— The Associated Press

TRUMP IMPEACHMENT INVESTIGATION OPENS

Dems, GOP take aim at each other

By Lisa Mascaro and Mary Clare Jalonick  
The Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The U.S. House launched the first public hearing Wednesday of Donald Trump's impeachment investigation, the extraordinary process to determine whether the 45th president of the United States should be removed from office.

Rep. Adam Schiff, the Democratic chairman of the House Intelligence Committee, immediately outlined the question at the core of the impeachment inquiry — whether the president used his office to pressure Ukraine officials for personal political gain.

"The matter is as simple and as terrible as that," Schiff said. "Our answer to these questions will affect not only the future of this presidency but the future of the presidency itself, and what kind of conduct or misconduct the American people may come to expect from their commander in chief."

It was a remarkable moment, even for a White House full of them. The hearing is the first chance for America, and the rest of the world, to see and hear for themselves about Trump's actions toward Ukraine and consider whether they are, in fact, impeachable offenses.

The top Republican on the panel, Rep. Devin Nunes of California, accused the Democratic majority of conducting a "scorched earth" effort to take down the president after the special counsel's Russia investigation into the 2016 election failed to



Susan Walsh/The Associated Press

House Intelligence Committee Chairman Adam Schiff of California, left, speaks as Rep. Devin Nunes, R-California, the ranking member on the committee listens during the House Intelligence Committee on Capitol Hill in Washington on Wednesday in the first public impeachment hearing of President Donald Trump's efforts to tie U.S. aid for Ukraine to investigations of his political opponents.

spark impeachment proceedings.

"We're supposed to take these people at face value when they trot out new allegations?" said Nunes, a top Trump ally. He derided what he called the "cult-like atmosphere in the basement of the Capitol" where investigators have been interviewing witnesses behind closed doors for weeks. Transcripts of those interviews have been released.

Nunes called the Ukraine matter a "low rent" sequel to the Russia probe. "Democrats are advancing their impeachment sham," he said.

The proceedings were being broadcast live, and on social media,

from a packed hearing room on Capitol Hill. The country has been here only three times before, and never against the 21st century backdrop of real-time commentary, including from the Republican president himself.

Testifying will be two seasoned diplomats, William Taylor, the graying former infantry officer now charge d'affaires in Ukraine, and George Kent, the deputy assistant secretary in Washington, telling the striking, if sometimes complicated story of a president allegedly using foreign policy for personal and political gain ahead of the 2020 election.

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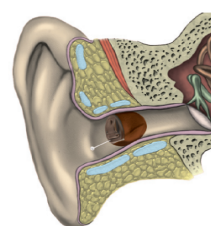
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