

Franken faces ethics probe; woman says he groped her

WASHINGTON (AP) — Minnesota Sen. Al Franken faces a storm of criticism and a likely ethics investigation after a Los Angeles radio anchor accused him Thursday of forcibly kissing her and groping her during a 2006 USO tour.

Franken apologized, but the criticism only grew through the day. Fellow Democrats swiftly condemned his actions, mindful of the current climate as well as the prospect of political blowback.

Republicans, still forced to answer for the multiple allegations facing Alabama Senate candidate Roy Moore, joined in pressing for an investigation. Franken said he would welcome it.

Leeann Tweeden posted her allegations, including a photo of Franken and her, on the website of KABC, where she works as a news anchor for a morning radio show. The photo shows Franken posing in a joking manner, smiling at the camera with his hands on her chest as she naps wearing a flak vest aboard a military plane.

Tweeden said Thursday that before an earlier show Franken had persisted in rehearsing a kiss and "aggressively stuck his tongue in my mouth." Now, she said, "every time I hear his voice or see his face, I am angry." She's angry with herself, too, she said, for not speaking out at the time "but I didn't want to rock the boat."

Franken, 66, is the latest public figure to be caught in the deluge of revelations of sexual harassment and misconduct that have crushed careers, ruined reputations and prompted criminal investigations in Hollywood, business and beyond.

Moore targets female accusers as critics decry intimidation

BIRMINGHAM, Ala. (AP) — Ever defiant, Republican Roy Moore's campaign on Thursday lashed out at the women accusing him of sexual misconduct, declaring "let the battle begin."

Moore ignored mounting calls from Washington Republicans concerned that



In this image provided by the U.S. Army, then-comedian Al Franken and sports commentator Leeann Tweeden perform a comic skit for service members during the USO Sergeant Major of the Army's 2006 Hope and Freedom Tour in Camp Arifjan, Kuwait, in 2006.

Moore may not only lose a seat they were sure to win but also may do significant damage to the party's brand among women nationwide as they prepared for a difficult midterm election season.

Moore's team showed no such concerns. "You ask me if I believe the girls. No, I don't believe the girls. I believe Judge Moore," Moore strategist Dean Young said. "Let the battle begin. ... Get ready to fight Mitch McConnell. We're going to fight you to the death on this."

Big House victory for GOP tax plan, but fate unclear

WASHINGTON (AP) — Republicans rammed a \$1.5 trillion overhaul of business and personal income taxes through the House Thursday, edging toward the code's biggest rewrite in three decades and the first major legislative triumph for President Donald Trump and the GOP after 10 bumpy months of controlling government.

The mostly party-line 227-205 vote masked more ominous problems in the Senate. There, a similar package received a politically awkward verdict from nonpartisan congressional analysts showing it would eventually produce higher taxes for low- and middle-income earners but deep reductions for those better off.

Those projections came a day after Wisconsin Sen. Ron Johnson became the first GOP senator to state opposition to the measure, saying it didn't cut levies enough for millions of partnerships and corporations. With at least five other Republican senators yet to declare support,

the bill's fate is far from certain in a chamber the GOP controls by just 52-48. Even so, Republicans are hoping to send a compromise bill for Trump to sign by Christmas.

"Now the ball is in the Senate's court," Vice President Mike Pence urged after the House vote.

Menendez avoids 'political grave,' but cloud still looms

ATLANTIC CITY, N.J. (AP) — New Jersey Democratic Sen. Bob Menendez exited his federal bribery trial after a mistrial Thursday with an eye on a 2018 re-election effort, but with him neither acquitted nor convicted, the cloud from the investigation remains.

The mistrial gave Democrats hoping to hold onto the seat in next year's midterm elections cause for some optimism, but spurred Republicans to keep the pressure up ahead of a campaign season that could feature plenty of attack ads against Menendez based on the allegations that he helped a wealthy friend in exchange for luxury trips and campaign donations.

Menendez, himself, was buoyed by the decision. "To those who were digging my political grave so they could jump into my seat, I know who you are and I won't forget you," Menendez said.

A bi-partisan group of lawmakers on the Senate's Ethics Committee said Thursday it would resume an inquiry into Menendez that started in 2012 and was deferred a year later because of the criminal investigation.

Bipartisan senators back bill to bolster gun checks

WASHINGTON (AP) — Republican and Democratic senators have joined forces on legislation to strengthen the FBI database of prohibited gun buyers after the Air Force failed to report the criminal history of the gunman who slaughtered more than two dozen people at a Texas church.

Congress has taken no steps on guns in the weeks after deadly shootings in Las Vegas and Sutherland Springs, Texas. The bill, which has the backing of the Senate's No. 2 Republican, John Cornyn of Texas, would ensure that federal agencies, such as the Defense Department, and states accurately report relevant criminal information to the FBI.

The Air Force has acknowledged that the Texas shooter, Devin P. Kelley, should have had his name and domestic violence conviction submitted to the National Criminal Information Center database.

The bill would penalize federal agencies that fail to properly report required records and reward states that comply by providing them with federal grant preferences.

Cornyn said agencies and state governments have for years failed to forward legally required records without consequences.

"Just one record that's not properly reported can lead to tragedy, as the country saw last week in Sutherland Springs," Cornyn said. "This bill aims to help fix what's become a nationwide, systemic problem so we can better prevent criminals and domestic abusers from obtaining firearms."

Trump reverses ban on importing trophy elephants

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Trump administration said it will allow the importation of body parts from African elephants shot for sport, contending that encouraging wealthy big-game hunters to kill them will aid the vulnerable species.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service said in a written notice issued Thursday that permitting elephants from Zimbabwe and Zambia to be brought back as trophies will raise money for conservation programs. A licensed two-week African elephant hunt can cost more than \$50,000 per person.

The change marks a shift in efforts to stop the importation of elephant tusks and hides, overriding a 2014 ban imposed by the Obama administration. The new policy applies to the remains of African elephants killed between 2016 and December 2018.

"Legal, well-regulated sport hunting as part of a sound management program can benefit certain species by providing incentives to local communities to conserve those species and by putting much-needed revenue back into conservation," the agency said in a statement.

FRIDAY AFTERNOON & EVENING

A comprehensive TV schedule table for Friday afternoon and evening. It includes columns for time slots (12 PM, 1 PM, 2 PM, etc.) and rows for various channels (FOX, CBS, NBC, ABC, PBS, etc.). Each cell contains the program name and any special events or ratings.

FRIDAY LATE NIGHT & SATURDAY MORNING

A comprehensive TV schedule table for Friday late night and Saturday morning. It includes columns for time slots (12 AM, 1 AM, 2 AM, etc.) and rows for various channels (FOX, CBS, NBC, ABC, PBS, etc.). Each cell contains the program name and any special events or ratings.