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Trump: Tester has 'big price to pay'

President miffed after resignation of nominee

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After his pick to run the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs withdrew his nomination Thurs-

day morning, President Donald Trump called in to the television show Fox & Friends and said Montana U.S. Sen. Jon Tester, the top Democrat on the Senate Veterans Affairs Committee who was key in bringing forward the allegations against Rear Admiral Ronny Jackson, has a "big price to pay."

Jackson, who serves as personal physician to the president, withdrew in the wake of concerns about ethics and temperament brought forth by more than 20 current and former colleges. Jackson has denied the claims and Trump defended him Thursday while attacking Tester.

"I watch what Jon Tester of Montana, a state that I won by, like, over 20 points, you know, really, they love me and I love them. And I want to tell you that Jon Tester, I think this is going to cause him a lot of problems in his state," Trump said Thursday morning. Tester is seeking re-election to

his third term this fall. He is expected to face a close race, with money flowing into the state from national groups both supporting and attacking him. Nationally Democrats are trying to win back a majority in Congress,

Please see **TESTER**, Page A10



BETHANY BAKER BILLINGS GAZETTE

Ahsha Morin, a volunteer with Operation Underground Railroad, pours red sand into a crack in the sidewalk during the Red Sand Project trafficking awareness event hosted by Zonta Club of Billings at Montana State University Billings on Thursday.

For those who fall through the cracks

Red Sand projects spotlight trafficked, exploited victims

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The cracks in the sidewalk near Peaks to Plains Park at Montana State University Billings turned red Thursday.

The fine-grain red sand also bled into the park's pond, poured

into the water by people at the Red Sand Project seeking to raise awareness of human trafficking.

The Red Sand Project began in 2014 by New York City artist Molly Gochman, Zonta Club member Melanie Tripp told a crowd of more than 50 people. Since Gochman's first installation, more than 200,000 Red Sand projects have been completed worldwide.

It's designed put the spotlight on human trafficking, people

in bondage to others who fall through the cracks.

"After today you will know them as victims and slaves," Tripp said. "Red Sand projects start a conversation about a dark unspoken secret that happens right here in our hometown every day."

Human trafficking, both a federal and international crime, involves a victim who is forced or coerced into doing commercial sex acts, labor or any other ser-

vice she or he doesn't want to do, attorney and Zonta Club member Renee Coppock said. The most common types are sex trafficking, forced labor and debt bondage.

"It's important to know that victims do not have to be physically transported anywhere for it to be trafficking," she said. "It can be a parent forcing a child to perform a sex act with others in their home."

Please see **VICTIMS**, Page A10

Davison to finish probation

Businessman engaged in Ponzi scheme

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Pat Davison, the prominent Billings businessman who swindled friends, relatives and charities out of millions of dollars, will soon be released from probation.

Davison's three-year supervision term ends on May 10. His Helena-based probation officer said he is a low-risk probationer.

The one-time gubernatorial candidate orchestrated what is believed to be the largest Ponzi scheme in Montana history. Former State Auditor John Morrison made a film about it.

Davison was released from prison on May 11, 2015, after serving roughly seven years and eight and a half months. Davison was sentenced to 10 years, but officials at the federal prison in Sheridan, Oregon, where he served his time, said he was released early for completing a residential drug abuse program.

As of December 2017, Davison has paid \$422,166 of the \$5,598,166 in restitution he was ordered to pay. The information was contained in a status report from Davison's probation officer filed in court in December. Up-to-date restitution information is not publicly available without a court order.

The bulk of the restitution paid has come from WesRail LLC and Madison Resources LLC, after the government filed writs of

Please see **DAVISON**, Page A10

Comedian convicted of sexual assault

Prosecutor: We see 'the real Bill Cosby'

MICHAEL R. SISAK AND CLAUDIA LAUER
Associated Press

NORRISTOWN, Pa. — After decades of whispers, lawsuits, investigations and close calls — and a multitude of women who lost hope anyone would ever believe their word against that of America's Dad — Bill Cosby could be on his way to prison at age 80 for the remainder of his life.

The comedian was convicted Thursday of drugging and mo-

lesting Andrea Constand at his suburban Philadelphia 14 years ago in a verdict women's advocates called a turning point in the #MeToo movement that proved what Cosby's accusers had been saying all along — that his nice-guy image was a sham.

Lili Bernard, who said Cosby sexually assaulted her before giving her a one-time role on "The Cosby Show" in 1992, became so emotional in the courtroom gallery that she accidentally banged her forehead on the bench in front of her.

"I'm overcome with gratitude," Bernard, sobbing, said outside the courthouse. "I feel

like I have to pinch myself. Am I awake? It's a miracle."

The verdict in the first big celebrity trial of the #MeToo era sealed the spectacular late-in-life downfall of an entertainer who broke racial barriers in Hollywood on his way to TV superstardom as sweater-wearing, wisdom-dispensing Dr. Cliff Huxtable.

It was the only criminal case to arise from a barrage of allegations from more than 60 women who said Cosby drugged and molested them over a span of five decades — but whose

Please see **COSBY**, Page A10



MARK MAKELA, ASSOCIATED PRESS

Actor and comedian Bill Cosby reacts while being notified a verdict was in his sexual assault retrial Thursday at the Montgomery County Courthouse in Norristown, Pa. A jury convicted the "Cosby Show" star of three counts of aggravated indecent assault on Thursday. The guilty verdict came less than a year after another jury deadlocked on the charges

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