

International

# On road to 2020, New York's Gillibrand touts liberal cred

## Criticized in the past by party left-wingers as too moderate

**BOONE:** US Senator Kirsten Gillibrand made her maiden voyage to the critical primary state of Iowa over the weekend, laying out her case that she is the best Democrat to challenge President Donald Trump in the US presidential election in 2020. In a series of intimate meetings, Gillibrand focused her message on economic issues, while also delivering a fiery denunciation of Trump as a racist and a liar who is "ripping the fabric of America."

Gillibrand, from New York, joins a small field of Democratic contenders that is expected to expand by over a dozen more, all vying for the party's nomination and the right to challenge Trump, if he is the Republican's 2020 nominee. Criticized in the past by party left-wingers as too moderate, Gillibrand repeatedly emphasized her support for a "Medicare for all" proposal to create a national health care system.

"When I said we need to dismantle ICE and rebuild them, I'm very serious," she said, referring to US Immigration and Customs Enforcement. Gillibrand has joined liberals in calling for a revamping of the immigration enforcement agency. A parade of candidates is already crossing Iowa that will hold the first primary contest in early 2020. Senator Elizabeth Warren from Massachusetts traversed Iowa in early January, followed by Julian Castro, a former US housing chief under former President Barack Obama.

Iowa voters, predominantly white and divided between rural and urban areas, have historically kicked off a months-long series of state-by-state contests to pick a nominee for president. Gillibrand, who had never previously visited the state of Iowa, drew crowds in rural and urban areas. Some locals attributed the turnout to pent-up frustration among Democrats eager

to begin the process of trying to replace Trump. Few vowed support for Gillibrand at this early stage. In the small town of Boone, she held a meeting on Saturday that drew about 25 locals who braved the snow. Penny Vossler, 62, of Boone, hasn't decided who she will support but attended to hear what Gillibrand said about issues like health care. "I'm going to give them all a shot," Vossler said.

### House party

Gillibrand acknowledged she enters the race as a virtual unknown in Iowa. She barely registered in a December Des Moines Register/CNN poll of likely 2020 Iowa Democratic caucus-goers, which put well-known potential candidates like former Vice President Joe Biden and Senator Bernie Sanders at the top. At a "house party" in Sioux City, one voter asked her to explain her role in helping oust former Senator Al Franken from the Senate. Franken resigned from the Senate in 2017 in the wake of the #MeToo movement after being accused of harassing women.

Gillibrand was the most vocal of his colleagues to criticize him, which prompted blowback from other liberals who felt she had rushed to judgment. "It wasn't possible for me to remain silent, because what my silence meant was defending him, carrying his water, which I was unwilling to do," Gillibrand said.

At the same event, another voter asked her to explain why early in her political career she had received an "A" rating from the gun-rights group the National Rifle Association (NRA), a score reflecting its approval of her votes on gun laws. Gillibrand explained that growing up in rural New York state, she had never thought about gun control.



DES MOINES: US Sen Kirsten Gillibrand (D-NY) speaks to a large crowd at the state capitol for the third annual Women's March. —AFP

"I really only thought of guns through the lens of hunting. My mother still shoots the Thanksgiving turkey," she said, drawing laughter. But then she appeared to choke back tears as she discussed meeting

the family of a young woman who was a bystander when she was killed with a gun. As a result, she sponsored legislation to reduce gun trafficking. "I'm proud to have an F from the NRA," she said. —AFP

## Saudi-led coalition's planes pound Yemen's capital

**ADEN/SANAA:** Saudi-led forces launched overnight air strikes on Yemen's capital, described by one resident on Sunday as the worst in a year, as the United Nations struggles to implement a peace deal. A spokesman for the Saudi-led coalition said its warplanes attacked seven military facilities used for drone operations in Sanaa, which is held by rival Houthi forces.

Yemen's nearly four-year-old civil war, which pits the Iran-aligned Houthi movement against the Saudi-backed government of Abd-Rabu Mansour Hadi, has killed tens of thousands and left millions on the brink of starvation. Saudi-owned Al Arabiya television said the overnight targets included Al-Dulaimi Air Base, a drone storage site, and military training sites.

Medical workers and residents told Reuters at least two civilians were killed, and others injured, and that the raids also damaged homes. Houthi-run al-

Masirah TV said on Sunday that the coalition had conducted 24 air strikes on Sanaa since Saturday evening, including four on the air base. It said a plastics factory was also hit, causing a large fire. Reuters footage showed a large crater next to the factory, and damaged homes nearby. "The raids were very violent, the likes of which we have not seen for a year," Sanaa resident Arwa Abdul Karim told Reuters. "The house shook so much we thought it would fall on our heads."

### Fragile truce holds

The escalation in fighting, which follows a deadly Houthi drone attack last week on a Yemeni government military parade, augurs badly for a second round of U.N.-sponsored talks this month aimed at ending the war. Hadi was ousted from power in 2014, and the Sunni Muslim coalition led by Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates intervened in 2015 to try to reinstate him.

The United Nations is trying to implement a ceasefire and troop withdrawal agreement in the port city of Hodeidah, the main entry point for most of Yemen's imports and aid. In the first significant breakthrough in peace efforts, a deal was reached in talks in Sweden last month to avert a full-scale assault on the port. The truce has largely held in Hodeidah, which is controlled by the Houthis with thousands of coal-



SANAA: An explosion crater is seen behind a destroyed factory after a reported airstrike by Saudi-led coalition in the Yemeni capital. —AFP

tion-backed forces massed on the outskirts. But the withdrawal of forces by both sides has stalled over disagreements over who would control the Red Sea city.

Rights groups have criticized the coalition for air strikes that have killed thousands of civilians at hospitals, schools and markets since 2015. They also criticize the Houthis for missile attacks on Saudi cities, including the

capital Riyadh. Western nations, including some which supply the coalition with arms and intelligence, have pressed Riyadh and Abu Dhabi to end the conflict that has pushed Yemen to the brink of famine. The conflict is largely seen in the region as a proxy war between Saudi Arabia and Shi'ite Muslim Iran. The Houthis deny receiving any help from Iran and say their revolution is against corruption. —Reuters

## UK's Prince Philip back to driving - without seatbelt

**LONDON:** Britain's Prince Philip has been spoken to by the police for driving without a seatbelt — just two days after the 97-year-old was involved in a car crash. Images published in Sunday newspapers appeared to show him behind the wheel of a replacement Land Rover Freelander on his wife Queen Elizabeth II's private Sandringham estate on Saturday.

A Norfolk Constabulary spokeswoman said the force was aware of the photographs and that "suitable words of advice have been given to the driver". The advice was "in line with our standard response when being made aware of such images showing this type of offence." Meanwhile, a woman who broke her wrist in Thursday's crash near the royal country residence in Norfolk, eastern England, has reportedly complained about not receiving an apology from the Prince.

"I'm lucky to be alive and he hasn't even said sorry. It has been such a traumatic and painful time and I would have expected more of the Royal Family," Emma Fairweather, a passenger in the Kia which collided with the Prince's Land Rover, told the Sunday Mirror. A police family liaison officer however did call to pass on a message to Emma, who was in the vehicle with a friend and her nine-month-old baby, she said.

"The message he passed on didn't even make sense. He said, 'The Queen and the Duke of Edinburgh would like to be remembered to you.' That's not an apology or even a well-wish," she added. The crash, which left the Prince's Land Rover on its side, happened as the royal patriarch pulled out of a side road onto a busy main road. The prince walked away from Thursday's crash shaken but uninjured, according to a passer-by who helped him out of the vehicle. The driver of the Kia sustained cuts to the knee.

In a statement on Friday, Norfolk Constabulary said: "As is standard procedure with injury collisions, the incident will be investigated and any appropriate action taken." Philip, known for his forthright manner and off-color jokes, retired from public life in 2017 and underwent a hip replacement operation last April. —AFP

## 2 dead from heart attacks as strong quake jolts Chile

**SANTIAGO:** A strong 6.7-magnitude earthquake hit north-central Chile on Saturday, the US Geological Survey said, with police reporting the deaths of two people from heart attacks. The quake struck at a depth

of 53 kilometers (33 miles) with an epicenter some 15 km southwest of Coquimbo, USGS said. An elderly man and an elderly woman from Coquimbo suffered cardiac arrests as a result of the quake, police said, while there were several landslides reported on national highways.

The earthquake, which hit at 0132 GMT (Sunday), was felt in Valparaiso, O'Higgins and the region of the capital Santiago, as well as in Atacama and Coquimbo up north. Thousands of homes lost power, which showed how intense the quake was, according to Ricardo Toro of the National Emergency Office. Residents in Coquimbo and neighboring Serena, a

coastal region about 500 kilometers from Santiago, evacuated to high ground even though authorities quickly ruled out a tsunami, according to local media.

The Coquimbo region experienced a tsunami in September 2015 after an 8.3 magnitude earthquake struck, killing a dozen people. Chile is one of the world's most earthquake-prone countries. The 1960 Valdivia earthquake in Chile was the strongest ever recorded, at 9.5, on the magnitude scale, according to the USGS. Chile lies on the Ring of Fire — an arc of fault lines that circles the Pacific Basin and is prone to frequent earthquakes and volcanic eruptions. —AFP

## Diocese sorry after students mock Native American

**WASHINGTON:** A US diocese has apologized and vowed to take action after videos emerged showing boys from a Catholic private school mocking an elderly Native American man at a rally in the capital Washington, triggering widespread criticism. The incident occurred on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial on Friday when the annual anti-abortion March for Life coincided with a rally by indigenous communities calling for their rights to be respected.

In footage captured on multiple phone camera videos that swept social media on Saturday, a student from Covington Catholic High School in Kentucky wearing a Make America Great Again hat is seen smirking as he stands extremely close to Nathan Phillips, a Native American Vietnam war veteran, who beats a traditional drum while chanting. Other teens, many also

wearing clothing bearing President Donald Trump's political slogan jeered, jumped and appeared to mock the man.

The Diocese of Covington and Covington Catholic High School issued a statement rebuking the students after their displays drew widespread derision. "We condemn the actions of the Covington Catholic High School students towards Nathan Phillips specifically, and Native Americans in general, Jan. 18, after the March for Life, in Washington, DC," the statement said.

"We extend our deepest apologies to Mr Phillips. This behavior is opposed to the Church's teachings on the dignity and respect of the human person. The matter is being investigated and we will take appropriate action, up to and including expulsion." Kaya Taitano, a witness to the incident, was quoted by CNN as saying Phillips had decided to intervene with a "healing prayer" when the school teens got into a verbal altercation with a group of African American youths who had been preaching about the Bible nearby.

An emotional Phillips gave his reaction in a separate video. "I heard them saying, 'Build that wall, build that wall.' We're not supposed to have walls here, we never did. 'I wish I could see



BOSTON: Challinaru Dones shows her Native American ancestry and performs during the 2019 Women's March at Boston Common. —AFP

that energy of that young mass of young men...into making this country really, really, great. Helping those that are hungry."

Deb Haaland, one of the first two Native American women elected to Congress in November, linked the students' behavior to rising levels of racial

intolerance under the Trump administration. "This Veteran put his life on the line for our country," she wrote on Twitter. "The students' display of blatant hate, disrespect, and intolerance is a signal of how common decency has decayed under this administration. Heartbreaking." —AFP

## Iranian women protest US arrest of state TV journalist

**TEHRAN:** Dozens of women staged a protest in Tehran yesterday calling for the release of an Iranian state TV journalist arrested in the United States. The demonstrators waved pictures of Marzieh Hashemi at the rally in front of the Swiss Embassy which handles US interests in the Islamic republic. US-born Hashemi, who works for Iran's English-language Press TV, was held on arrival at St Louis Lambert International Airport on January 13, according to family and friends cited by Press TV.

Hashemi, a Muslim convert who changed her name from Melanie Franklin, had reportedly been visiting her ill brother and other family members. A US court on Friday confirmed the arrest, saying her testimony is required over an unspecified case but that she is not accused of a crime. At a hearing in Washington, a judge ordered the partial unsealing of an order on Hashemi.

It said that Hashemi was arrested on "a material arrest warrant" and would be let go after she gave testimony to a grand jury investigating unspecified "violations of US criminal law". The protesters in Tehran, including students and female members of the paramilitary Basij militia, shouted slogans such as "we are all Marzieh" and carried posters with the hashtag #FreeMarziehHashemi. —AFP