

Groton Daily Independent

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"NO MATTER WHO WE ARE, NO MATTER HOW SUCCESSFUL, NO MATTER WHAT OUR SITUATION, COMPASSION IS SOMETHING WE ALL NEED TO RECEIVE AND GIVE."

-CATHERINE PULSIFER

Chicken Soup
for the Soul

Upcoming Events

Saturday, March 7

State Debate at Huron
Regional DI Competition at Groton Area

Sunday, March 8, 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

Monday, March 9, 2020

School Board Meeting, 7 p.m.
Girls SoDak 16

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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Class A and Class B SODAK16

1-8 Seed	9-16 Seed	Site	Time
STM	Clark/Willow Lake	Pierre TF Riggs	6:00 PM CT
Sioux Valley	Parker	Madison	7:30 PM CT
SF Christian	Milbank	Madison	6:00 PM CT
Crow Creek	Custer	Kadoka	6:00 PM MT
Dakota Valley	Mobridge-Pollock	Mitchell-Corn Palace	6:00 PM CT
Tiospa Zina	Pine Ridge	Pierre TF Riggs	7:30 PM CT
Dell Rapids	Vermillion	SF Pentagon	7:30 PM CT
Madison	Red Cloud	Chamberlain	6:00 PM CT
DeSmet	Colman-Egan	Mitchell - Corn Palace	7:30 PM CT
Aberdeen Chr.	Warner	Aberdeen Roncalli	7:00 PM CT
Viborg-Hurley	Elkton-LB	SF Pentagon	6:00 PM CT
Platte-Geddes	Timber Lake	Stanley County	6:00 PM CT
White River	Lyman	Stanley County	7:30 PM CT
Marty	Faith	Chamberlain	7:30 PM CT
Sully Buttes	Herreid-Selby Area	Gettysburg	7:00 PM CT
Arlington	Canistota	SF Roosevelt	7:00 PM CT

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Region 1A: Milbank 64, Groton Area 56

VISITOR: Milbank Bulldogs ()

NO	PLAYER	TOT-FG				3-PT		REBOUNDS									MIN	
		P	FG	FGA	FG	FGA	FT	FTA	OFF	DEF	TOT	PF	TP	A	TO	BK		S
3	Riley, Mason	*	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	2	2	2	0	0	1	0	1	16:00
5	Cummins, Will	*	3	12	2	7	3	4	1	3	4	1	11	2	2	0	2	24:00
13	Schwenn, Bennett	*	10	15	1	2	2	3	1	3	4	3	23	2	3	0	0	32:00
23	McCulloch, Max	*	5	11	0	1	4	4	2	9	11	4	14	4	1	1	0	16:00
44	Trevett, Ryker	*	3	4	1	1	2	2	0	2	2	3	9	3	1	0	1	24:00
1	Erickson, Evan		0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	2	0	0	1	0	0	16:00
32	Hartman, Carter		3	3	1	1	0	0	0	3	3	2	7	2	1	0	1	32:00
TEAM REBOUNDS										0	2	2			2			
Team Totals			24	46	5	12	11	13	4	25	29	17	64	13	12	1	9	160

Total FG% - 1st: 13/23 0.565 2nd: 11/23 0.478 Game: 0.522 Deadball
 3-PT FG% - 1st: 3/7 0.429 2nd: 2/5 0.400 Game: 0.417 Rebounds
 Total FT% - 1st: 2/2 1.000 2nd: 9/11 0.818 Game: 0.846 (0,0)

HOME: Groton High School ()

NO	PLAYER	TOT-FG				3-PT		REBOUNDS									MIN	
		P	FG	FGA	FG	FGA	FT	FTA	OFF	DEF	TOT	PF	TP	A	TO	BK		S
11	Guthmiller, Cade	*	3	9	1	4	1	2	5	2	7	1	8	2	1	0	0	24:00
20	Kurtz, Kaden	*	1	13	1	7	0	0	0	2	2	4	3	0	1	0	2	32:00
32	Coats, Kannon	*	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0:00
34	Jones, Austin	*	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	0	2	1	0	0	0:00
42	Dehoet, Brodyn	*	8	23	1	6	3	6	8	11	19	1	20	0	3	0	1	32:00
10	Tietz, Lane		3	7	3	4	1	2	0	0	0	4	10	0	1	0	3	32:00
12	Smith, Isaac		0	0	0	0	1	2	0	0	0	1	1	0	1	0	0	16:00
22	Doeden, Johnny		4	7	0	0	6	7	1	3	4	4	14	0	1	1	0	24:00
50	Traphagen, Tristan		0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0:00
TEAM REBOUNDS										2	1	3			0			
Team Totals			19	59	6	21	12	19	16	20	36	17	56	4	10	1	11	160

Total FG% - 1st: 8/26 0.308 2nd: 11/33 0.333 Game: 0.322 Deadball
 3-PT FG% - 1st: 0/5 0.000 2nd: 6/16 0.375 Game: 0.286 Rebounds
 Total FT% - 1st: 8/12 0.667 2nd: 4/7 0.571 Game: 0.632 (5,0)

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

OFFICIALS :
 ATTENDANCE : 0

SCORE BY PERIODS	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	TOTAL
Milbank Bulldogs	21	10	8	25	64
Groton High School	9	15	18	14	56

Last FG: Milbank Bulldogs 4th- 8:00, Groton High School 4th- 8:00
 Largest lead: Milbank Bulldogs by 12 1st- 8:00, Groton High School by 4 1st- 8:00
 Score tied: 1 times, Lead changed: 3 times

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Today's Region DI Schedule Groton Area High School

	<u>Scientific</u>	IC	<u>Fine Arts</u>	IC	<u>Technical</u>	IC
11:00	Watertown EL-44	12:20	Deuel EL	12:40	Watertown	2:00
11:20	Webster EL	12:40	Watertown ML-52	1:00	Huron	2:20
11:40	Watertown EL-99	1:00	Deuel ML	1:20		
12:00			Watertown ML-73	1:40		
12:20					<u>Engineering</u>	
12:40	Deuel ML	1:20			Webster	2:40
1:00	Groton ML	1:40	<u>Improv</u>			
1:20	Watertown ML	2:00	Groton EL-55	11:00	<u>Rising Stars</u>	
1:40	Webster ML	2:20	Groton EL-97	11:20	Watertown	1:00
2:00			Groton SL	11:40	Groton	1:15
2:20	Watertown SL	11:00			Deuel	1:30
2:40	Webster SL	11:20				

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**AGENDA
REGULAR MEETING
BROWN COUNTY COMMISSION
COMMISSIONER'S CHAMBERS, COURTHOUSE ANNEX
25 MARKET STREET, ABERDEEN SD**

**TUESDAY
MARCH 10, 2020**

- 8:45 a.m. – 8:50 a.m. – Bid Opening – Solid & Yard Waste Collection Service-Brown County Container Sites & Landfill Staffing
- 8:50 a.m. – 9:00 a.m. – Loffler Companies – County Network Assessment
- 9:00 a.m. – 9:15 a.m. – Derek Ricci, Fair Manager – Quiet Hours and Closing Times during Brown County Fair
- 9:15 a.m. – 9:25 a.m. – Scott Meints, EM Director & Sheriff's Dept. – Discuss Homeland Security Grant
- 9:25 a.m. – 9:30 a.m. – Cathy McNickle, Auditor – Absentee Voting & Primary Polling Locations

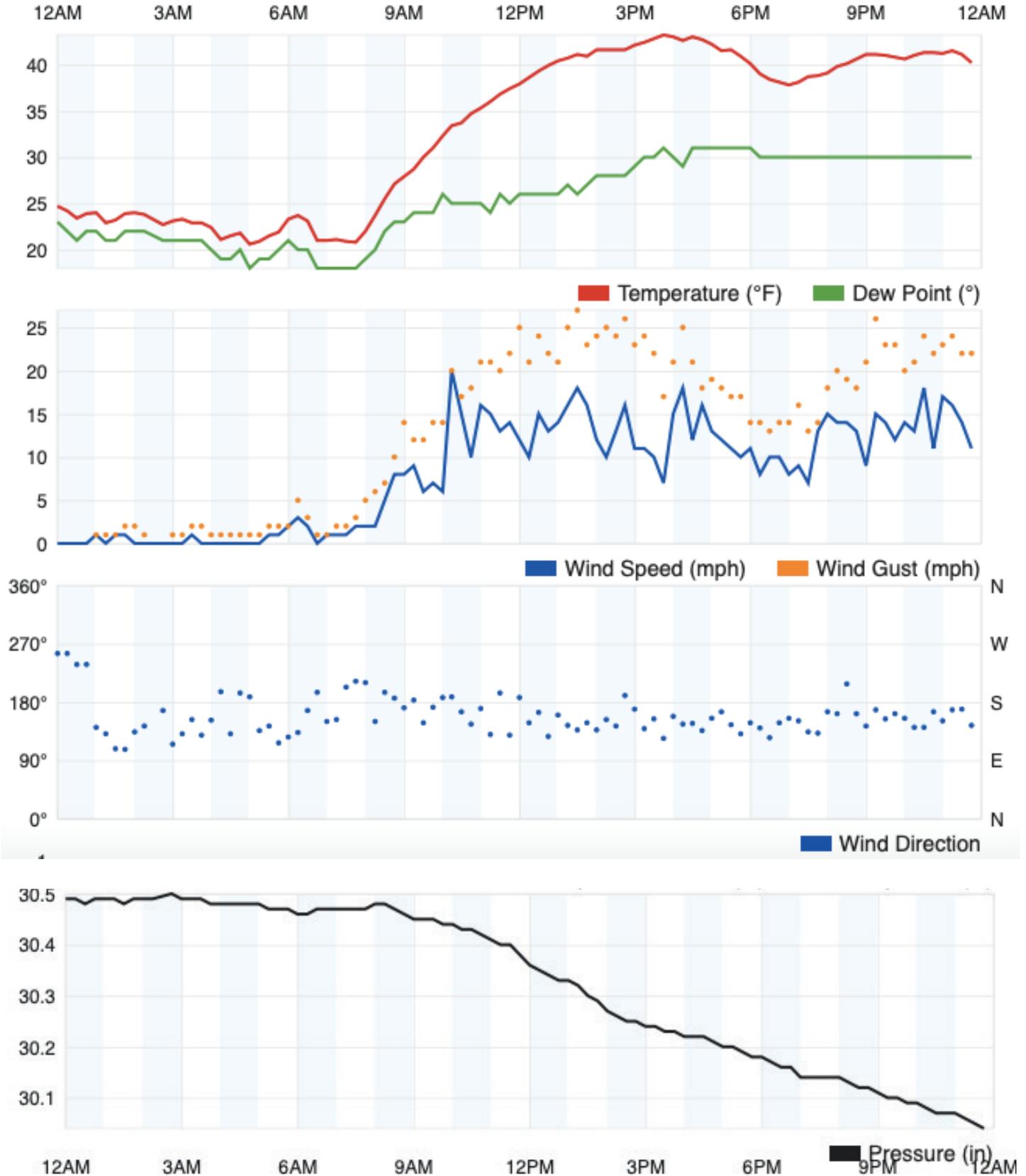
- Approve General Meeting Minutes of March 3, 2020
- Claims
- HR Report
- Fair Contracts
- Lottery Permits
- Set Hearing Date for Weed Chemical Bids
- Set Hearing Date for Liquor License Transfer
- Authorize advertising Notice of Weed & Pest Control
- 2020/2021 Stop Violence Grant Application
- Lease
- Temporary Special Event Malt Beverage & Wine License

Public Comment and any other matters to come before the Commission for discussion

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Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs



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Today



Mostly Sunny

High: 48 °F

Tonight



Mostly Cloudy
then Patchy
Fog

Low: 34 °F

Sunday



Patchy Fog
then Mostly
Cloudy

High: 47 °F

Sunday
Night



Mostly Cloudy

Low: 21 °F

Monday

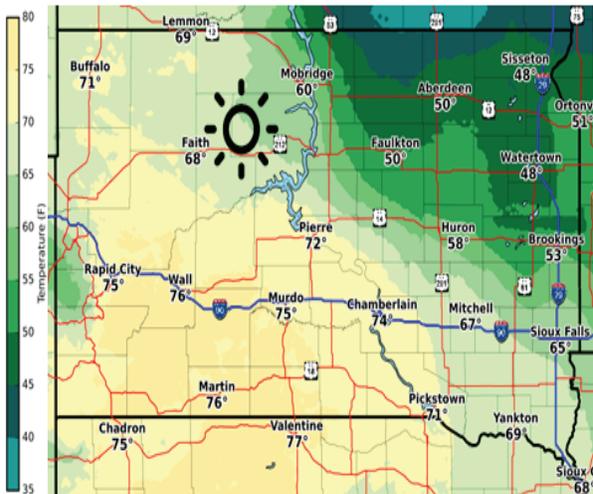


Partly Sunny

High: 32 °F

VERY WARM TODAY

HIGHS TODAY



Very Warm Today

Snow free areas near and west of the Missouri River will experience temperatures **20 to 30 degrees above average** for this time of year.



Elevated Fire Weather

Over portions of **southwestern SD**, Red Flag Warnings are in effect for this afternoon for gusty winds and low relative humidity values.



Overland and River/Stream

Flooding may Increase

Stay weather aware! Continue to monitor water levels as snow melts. Listen to the advice of local officials, and never go around flood barriers. Turn Around, Don't Drown!

see current and forecast river levels at <https://water.weather.gov>



National Weather Service Aberdeen, SD



Updated: 3/7/2020 5:24 AM Central

Highs will be in the upper 40s and 50s, except much warmer in the snow free areas near and west of the Missouri River, where temperatures will rise into the 60s to mid 70s. With the continued dry weather, low humidity, and gusty winds, elevated fire weather conditions have developed over portions of southwestern South Dakota. Stay weather aware as snow continues to melt into area streams and rivers. Flooding may be on the increase. Listen to local officials, and never go around flood barriers.

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Today in Weather History

March 7, 1998: A winter storm tracked across South Dakota, resulting in heavy snow of 6 to 8 inches across most of central South Dakota from the evening of the 6th into the afternoon of the 7th. Some snowfall amounts included 6 inches at Fort Pierre and near Stephan, 7 inches at Blunt, Pierre, and Murdo, and 8 inches across far southern Jones and Lyman counties. Many activities were canceled, and travel was significantly disrupted, especially on Interstate-90.

1717: A series of snowstorms between February 27 and March 7 blanketed the New England colonies with five or more feet of snow.

1970: Last near-total eclipse of the sun in Washington, DC, in this century. Sun was 95% eclipsed.

1997: The worst was finally over for states hit hard by the flooding Ohio River. The river crested on the 6th at Louisville, Kentucky, at 15 feet above flood stage, after topping out at nearly 13 feet at Cincinnati, Ohio, and more than 7 feet at Huntington, West Virginia.

1932 - A severe coastal storm set barometric pressure records from Virginia to New England. Block Island RI reported a barometric pressure reading of 28.20 inches. (David Ludlum)

1987 - Forty-five cities in the north central and northeastern U.S. reported record high temperatures for the date. Huron SD hit 80 degrees, and Pickstown SD reached 81 degrees. Rochester MN and Rockford IL smashed their previous record for the date by sixteen degrees. (The National Weather Summary)

1988 - High winds along a sharp cold front ushered snow and arctic cold into the Central Rocky Mountain Region and the Northern Plains. Snowfall totals in Utah ranged up to sixteen inches at Brighton. Winds gusted to 66 mph at Rapid City SD. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1989 - Blustery northwest winds ushered arctic cold into eastern U.S. Burlington VT reported a record low of 14 degrees below zero. Snow and ice over the Carolinas replaced the 80 degree weather of the previous day. High winds and heavy surf caused five million dollars damage along the North Carolina coast. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1990 - A major ice storm left much of Iowa under a thick coat of ice. It was the worst ice storm in at least twenty-five years for Iowa, perhaps the worst of the century. Up to two inches of ice coated much of western and central Iowa, with three inches reported in Crawford County and Carroll County. As much as five inches of ice was reported on some electrical lines. The ice downed 78 towers in a 17-mile stretch of a high voltage feeder near Boone costing three electric utilities fifteen million dollars. Damage to trees was incredible, and clean-up costs alone ran into the millions. Total damage from the storm was more than fifty million dollars. (Storm Data)

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Yesterday's Groton Weather Today's Info

High Temp: 43 °F at 3:47 PM

Low Temp: 20 °F at 7:37 AM

Wind: 27 mph at 1:26 PM

Snow

Record High: 70° in 2016

Record Low: -24° in 1995

Average High: 35°F

Average Low: 16°F

Average Precip in March.: 0.17

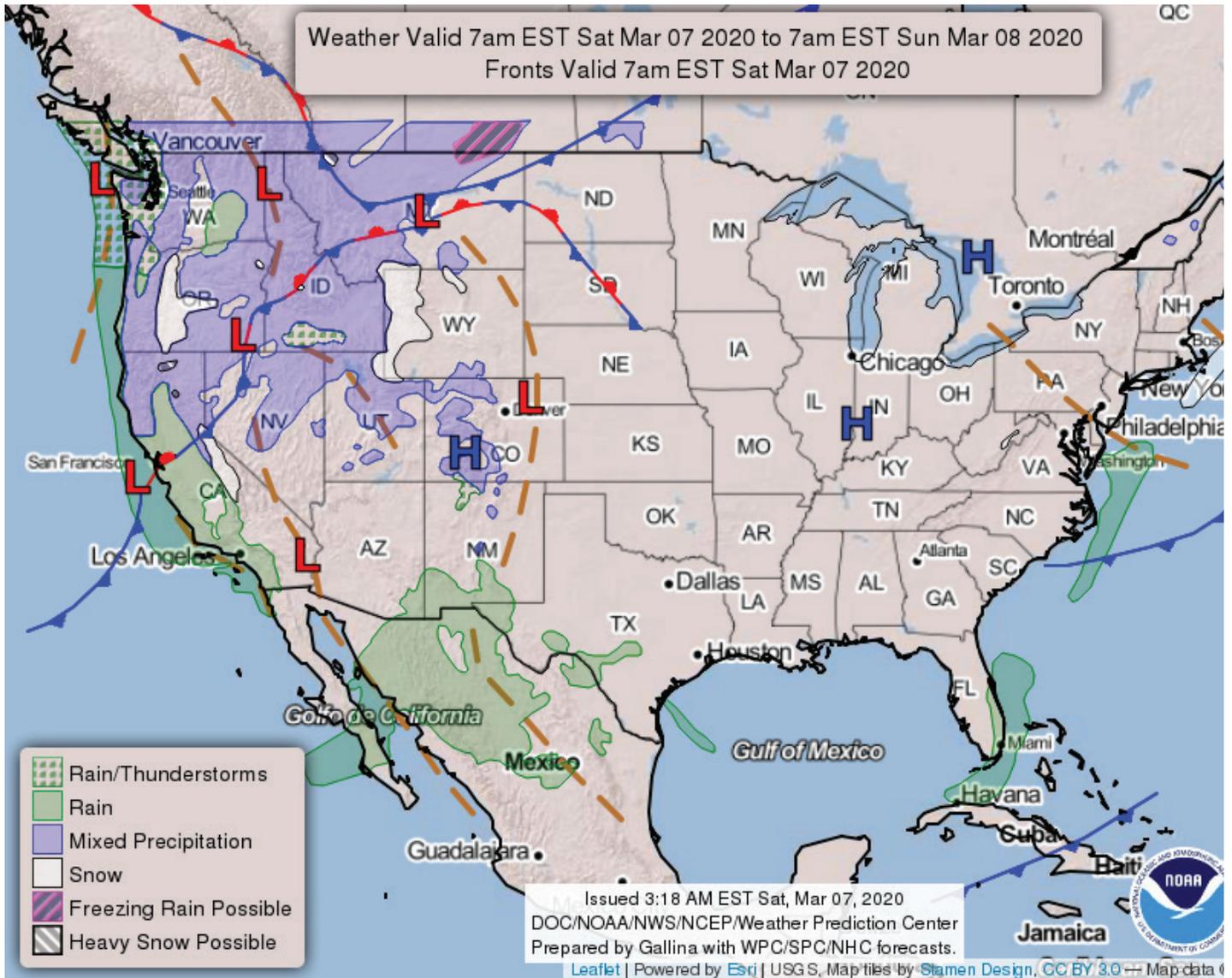
Precip to date in March.: 0.00

Average Precip to date: 1.19

Precip Year to Date: 0.35

Sunset Tonight: 6:30 p.m.

Sunrise Tomorrow: 7:58 a.m.



Issued 3:18 AM EST Sat, Mar 07, 2020
DOC/NOAA/NWS/NCEP/Weather Prediction Center
Prepared by Gallina with WPC/SPC/NHC forecasts.

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“ I CERTAINLY HOPE SO”

He had been dating JoAnn for nearly a year. One evening he decided that it was time he proposed to her and ask her to marry him and become his wife. His plea was passionate, his voice sincere, and his eyes filled with expectation, After listening to his carefully chosen words, she said softly and with feeling, “I can’t become your wife!”

“You can’t? Why?” he asked. “Is there someone else?”

“I certainly hope so,” came the reply.

Hope is the confident optimism that fills the hearts of Christians who know that God has good things in store for them. Those whose hope is outside of Christ may be “hoping” for things that may ultimately disappoint them or lead them into trouble. Some look expectantly for things to change and life to improve “hoping” that it is possible to find joy and peace with what the world has to offer. Hope, true Christian hope, is knowing God’s greatest gifts will come to them at the right time, in the right way, in the right place,

If we place our “hope” in ourselves and desire the things of this world, we will become frustrated, disappointed and confused. This world, nor the things it has to offer, can ever provide a reason for hope or happiness. True “hope” only comes from the Lord. The Psalmist made it clear when he wrote that our “only hope is in You.”

Remember: God’s character is unchanging, His promises dependable, His love enduring, His care continuous, and His faithfulness never waivers. Hope in the Lord!

Prayer: Father, we claim Your Word as the only true and reliable source for hope as the anchor for our lives. Give us Your peace as we await Your love, mercy, and grace. In Jesus’ Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: Psalm 39:7 And so, Lord, where do I put my hope? My only hope is in you.

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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

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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

15-48-56-58-70, Mega Ball: 4, Megaplier: 4

(fifteen, forty-eight, fifty-six, fifty-eight, seventy; Mega Ball: four; Megaplier: four)

Estimated jackpot: \$70 million

Powerball

Estimated jackpot: \$100 million

Man hurt by 'false hope' surrounding long-missing daughter

By ARIELLE ZIONTS Rapid City Journal

RAPID CITY, S.D. (AP) — For the past 35 years, Taylor Baldeagle has received letters and phone calls from strangers giving him tips and false hope about his daughter Sharon, who went missing in 1984 at the age of 12.

That false hope went public and viral in January after a Wyoming website and podcast, plus a South Dakota newspaper, said human remains found in Sweetwater County, Wyoming, might be Sharon.

As the stories began spreading on social media, Taylor — an 84-year-old from Eagle Butte who doesn't use the internet — suddenly began receiving phone calls from friends and family members telling him about the news, asking if it was true and sharing their condolences.

"I heard they found my sister," Taylor remembers his son telling him on the phone.

But law enforcement never contacted Taylor and the Sweetwater County Sheriff's Office soon released a statement saying the bones are unlikely to belong to Sharon.

"This isn't the first time" people have speculated about finding Sharon, Taylor told the Rapid City Journal during a recent interview in Rapid City where he was visiting his grandchildren. "But this is the first time that it went through Facebook and things like that, it went viral."

Taylor — a supreme court justice for the Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe who also assists Lakota speakers involved in tribal court cases across the state — says he wants people to remember his missing daughter and pass on any serious tips to law enforcement. But he also wants the public and media to be sensitive and fact-check when reporting and sharing information.

"I was hurt knowing that that went viral and it was printed without me knowing it," said Taylor. "To me it's all hearsay unless I hear it in a confirmation from the FBI."

Sharon ran away from the now-closed Brainerd Indian Training School in Hot Springs on Sept. 18, 1984, according to Journal archives. She and a friend from Hot Springs made their way to Casper, Wyoming, where they hitched a ride from Royal Russell Long. But instead of taking them to their destination — Taylor said his daughter was probably trying to visit old classmates in Idaho — the 49-year-old took them to his home in nearby Evansville. There, Long pointed a gun at the girls and tied them up.

The other girl, who had been raped, escaped but when she took police back to Long's home, he and Sharon were already gone. Law enforcement arrested Long a week later in Albuquerque, but Sharon was still nowhere to be found. Long pleaded guilty to the kidnapping of the two girls and the aggravated assault of the Hot Springs girl. He died in 1993 while serving two life sentences and maintaining he had dropped Sharon off with a trucker who took her to Texas.

False hope

This incident began after County10 — an online media outlet covering Fremont County, Wyoming — published a Jan. 10 article that cited an anonymous source connected with the neighboring Sweetwater

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County Sheriff's Office who said officials found the remains of a teenage Native American girl near a power plant and her bones had been there between 20 and 30 years.

The article, which does not list an author, also quoted Scott Fuller — host of the "Dead & Gone In Wyoming" true-crime podcast published by County10 — who said "there's a remote possibility these remains might be Sharon's."

The anonymous source is a volunteer cadaver dog trainer/handler with the sheriff's office, Fuller said in his Jan. 21 podcast episode.

"Generally speaking, this might be Sharon Baldeagle" but "I'm being very careful with this not to get anybody's hopes up that this is specifically Sharon," he said.

Fuller said he contacted Taylor to let him know about the find and how providing a DNA sample may help confirm if the bones are Sharon's.

The "Teton Times," a newspaper that serves the Cheyenne River and Standing Rock Reservations, published an article — also with no listed author — based on County10 and Fuller's reporting in its Jan. 15-22 edition.

Two days after Fuller's episode aired, the Sweetwater County Sheriff's Office released a statement saying Fuller and County10's source was wrong.

"It appears that the remains are that of a younger female of either European or Native American descent and are, more likely than not, prehistoric in nature," the news release says.

The sheriff's office said the bones are being tested to confirm their age but "at this time we do not have reason to believe that the located remains are those of Ms. Baldeagle."

Fuller published a follow-up podcast that same day to update listeners on the statement. He said the sheriff's office and other agencies "were contacted" before the article and podcast were published but "there was no objection to the information" shared with them. He also said he contacted Taylor to share the update and apologize for providing him with any false hope.

But Taylor told the Journal that Fuller never contacted him for the podcasts episodes. Fuller confirmed that he wasn't able to find Taylor's contact information so got in touch with a South Dakota journalist and asked him to pass on the information to Taylor.

"Regardless of my original intentions, I feel terribly about the evolution of the situation," Fuller told the Journal. "I'd meant to raise awareness of Sharon's disappearance in a positive and productive way, as I have while working directly with dozens of other families who are enduring similar uncertainty and tragedy. That Mr. Baldeagle has been caused distress by this is something I will forever regret. He has been an inspirational advocate for his daughter and for this issue of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women in general."

The spokesman for the Sweetwater County Sheriff's Office told the Journal that County10 didn't contact its office before publishing the Jan. 10 story. But the website's publisher told the Journal that staff left multiple messages with the sheriff's office over an 11-day period and never heard back from anyone. He said the website published the story since they trusted their source and since no one from the sheriff's office called back to say their information was wrong. Fuller said he contacted Wyoming state detectives but also never heard back from them.

"I don't even know what a podcast is. I stay away from electronic communicative devices," Taylor said. "Quit these troublemaking devices they use to let out false rumors and false hopes and tormenting a guy. They don't know how tough that is on a person."

We'll meet again

"It hurts to even talk about it," Taylor said when asked what it's like to live without knowing what happened to Sharon for more than three decades. "She's in my prayers every meal and she's traveling with me. I got her picture on my dashboard in my car, in my truck, she's with me" he said of the small, faded photo of Sharon taped inside his vehicle.

"I never will forget her," Taylor said as his eyes welled up.

Taylor raised Sharon and her three younger brothers as a single father. Sharon attended schools in Eagle Butte and Idaho. She then briefly attended the Hot Springs school before running away.

"She was the lady of the house and she was daddy's girl," Taylor said.

He said Sharon loved to sing, play the piano, do art projects and participate in powwows. She also helped take care of her younger brothers and was a talented young chef.

Christmas and Sharon's birthday's are especially difficult days for Taylor, a Korean War veteran and cancer survivor. He has few photos of his time in the military or of Sharon and her brothers since a tornado destroyed his house when he was living in Oglala in the early 1990s.

Taylor says he's aware of and happy about the Missing and Murdered Indigneous Women movement's ability to raise awareness about new and old cases like Sharon's. "I went looking my own self" for Sharon when there was no MMIW movement and Amber Alert system, he said.

After learning his daughter was kidnapped and missing, Taylor immediately drove to Casper to meet with Sharon's friend and plead for Sharon's release on local TV and radio stations, according to Journal archives. He then spent two months looking for her by driving or hitching rides, reaching as far south as Arizona. Throughout the years he's also spoken with media outlets, including the Journal in 2013 and West River Eagle, to raise awareness about his daughter.

Taylor said he believes Sharon is still alive and being held against her will. And he says he knows they'll be reunited someday.

There's no word for 'goodbye' in Lakota since "goodbye is final," he said. "We say 'tókša' which means 'later, we'll always meet later again no matter what.'"

'It's not about us': Foster parents say it's about the kids

By Elisa Sand American News

ABERDEEN, S.D. (AP) — Debra and Brian La Croix have heard all the arguments against being a foster parent more than once, and they dismiss one after the other.

The arguments are so common that Debra :a Croix completes her husband's thought before he can finish it.

Brian La Croix said, "The biggest objection I always hear is ..."

"I would be too sad. I would love them too much," she said.

Brian La Croix said parents don't want to get attached and then send the children home.

"My response is, 'It's not about you, it's about them. You're there to provide a safe environment for them until they can go back home,'" he said.

Time is also an argument — or rather a lack of it. But Brian La Croix said it's about making the time.

"We don't have any more time than anyone else," he said.

In their case, he said, his wife was a stay-at-home mom. But at times he has worked three jobs. And, he said, there's support available from the state.

Brian, 55, and Debra, 54, had five children in the house when they started as foster parents in 2004. While some of them have graduated and live elsewhere, the household is even bigger now. Two of the sibling groups they were foster parents for — seven in total — have been adopted into their family.

Watertown foster parent Andrea Shupe said the arguments against are almost insulting, the American News reported.

"These kids, when they are put into the system, they didn't have a say. They're young kids. ... Why wouldn't I go through that minor heartache and be that stability for them, that love for them, so they can see what it's like to be in a stable environment and what it should be like when they go back."

Shupe, 34, works full time as operations and productions manager for Informational Data Technologies and fosters as a single mom — currently for four young boys.

"It's totally doable," she said. "I have my village of love and support, and that's all I need."

Shupe said her current foster children are pre-teens and teens from two different families. Her secret? Structure.

"I have a lot of ground rules. We have a schedule and routine that stays constant. Putting routines in place are by far the most important," she said. "Our house would fall into chaos without the structure and

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routine.”

It’s that structure that helps the kids feel like they’re part of a temporary family, she said.

Having that structure, Shupe said, is a shift from the chaos the children have had in their lives, but it’s also less stressful. She said her goal is to make sure the kids focus on issues like bed time and homework as opposed to if there’s food for supper. For example, she said, she has a full tummy rule in her house — no one leaves the table hungry.

Shupe said some of the kids who enter the foster system have had to worry about money or food, but her goal is to provide an environment where those worries can be set aside.

She is relatively new to foster parenting — starting 18 months ago — but, she said, she loves it.

Through the years, Debra La Croix said, the need for foster parents always picks up when school is in session. That’s when teachers and other school officials notice if, for instance, a child doesn’t have winter attire. Those are the critical need times.

Virgena Wieseler, division director for Child Protection Services for the South Dakota Department of Social Services, agrees there are more referrals while school is in session.

“When school starts we see more referrals — schools, medical doctors, law enforcement and family members — those are making the reports,” she said.

While children get removed from a home for a variety of reasons, Wieseler said, the goal is to help parents in changing their behavior and improving lives at home so the families can be reunited. Some options for parents include both mental health and substance abuse treatment.

“Right now in South Dakota our goal at social services is to prevent the removal of children from their families, but there are times when it’s not safe,” said Laurie Gill, cabinet secretary for the state Department of Social Services.

As Gov. Kristi Noem talks about adoption and foster care, Gill said, it’s created more interest.

“We’ve got momentum and people are getting excited,” Gill said.

But the demand for foster parents is increasing as addiction becomes more of an issue. Wieseler said during the past few years there’s been an increase in the number of children in custody.

“When we look at the kids in the system because of addiction that’s a huge factor,” she said.

Statistics from the Department of Social Services support that. Placement requests were up to 1,215 in fiscal year 2019. Five years earlier, in fiscal year 2014, requests were at 888.

In an email response to questions about the growing need for foster parents, Wieseler said she attributes the rise in foster placement requests to a rise in drug-related neglect with the primary drug of choice being methamphetamine.

In any situation where placement is needed for children, Wieseler said, a relative is preferred, but not always available.

“There is a significant need for more Native American foster families,” she said. “In addition, more families are needed for teens (ages 12 to 18), sibling groups and children with complex emotional and medical needs.”

While foster families are needed across the state, Wieseler said, the need is greatest in central and western South Dakota.

While the goal is to return children to their families, Debra and Brian La Croix know that doesn’t always happen. Parental rights are terminated. Two sibling groups they fostered have since become permanent members of their family through adoption. With five biological children, those adoptions expanded their family by seven.

Wieseler said adoptions by foster families do happen. Of the 186 adoptions handled through the Department of Social Service in fiscal year 2019, 86% (or about 160) were with foster parents. And of those, 40% (about 64) were relatives. Wieseler said relatives are not required to become foster parents, but some do. Doing so means additional training and financial support, she said.

Those interested in becoming foster parents should contact their local Department of Social Services office. A 10-week training program is required. This takes about 30 hours.

Debra La Croix said a home inspection is also completed to evaluate safety issues and make sure there's sufficient space for the children.

She said she was prepared in advance for the inevitability of foster children. Extra beds were in each of the bedrooms, and shelf and dresser space was open and ready. That way there was always a space for clothes and other items belong to the foster kids.

Counseling is also important, she said.

"We always go to counseling just in case an issue comes along," she said. "That way it's part of the routine."

While there might be concern that being a foster parent will open the floodgates to one foster request after another, the La Croixes and Shupe said the foster parents have the ultimate say in how many kids they're willing to care for at any given time. There is a maximum set by the state — no more than six under the age of 18. A foster parent can also decide, for example, if they only want to provide respite care, which is short-term relief care for other foster parent.

Coyote hunting presents challenges to longtime hunters

By Kevin Woster Rapid City Journal

RAPID CITY, S.D. (AP) — To John Cooper and Jerry Pier, a coyote hunt is not a shooting gallery. So you won't find any high-capacity, fast-firing, military style weapons in their coyote-hunting arsenal. What you will find are some smooth-handling, accurate, bolt-action rifles, along with a commitment to making one shot count.

And that's one shot at a standing coyote, not a road runner. It's the deception and the concealment and the accuracy they're after, not a barrage of bullets fired at a running coyote. That's where crippling occurs, Cooper says, and where the quality of the hunt is degraded.

"It's about a quick, clean kill," says the 75-year-old former federal game warden and state Game, Fish & Parks Department secretary from Pierre. "And if you start shooting coyotes on the run at 200 yards, it's likely to be a wounding shot. We shoot accurate, bolt-action guns with the idea of killing on the first shot. We don't get into a field-of-fire-type thing where you're taking five shots at a running coyote."

Cooper shoots .223 or .22-250-caliber rifles on coyotes. Pier has a .243 caliber he likes. Cooper tries to shoot from a prone position, off of a bipod. Pier shoots sitting up, with his rifle on shooting sticks and his back to something like a hay bale to break up his silhouette.

"Jerry's accurate out to about 300 yards shooting off those sticks. I'm not as good long range as Jerry is," Cooper says.

Pier, 76, who lives in the country near Pierre, started hunting coyotes more than 30 years ago. He says there's no place on earth he'd rather be than in an expansive piece of West River prairie, trying to fool what he considers to be one of the smartest creatures on Earth.

"Coyotes are extremely smart, with great instincts, incredible eyesight and hearing, and they can smell you. They have a great memory, too," Pier says. "Coyotes' decisions are life and death. The survivors pass that survivability on from generation to generation. And they're not only surviving, they're thriving."

Pier has slowed down with age, but he still hunts at least 15 times a winter, often with Cooper. They've developed a sense of teamwork in how they set up, how they call and how they signal to each other with a minimum of movement.

"The more you move around, the less chance you have of getting a coyote," Pier says.

Cooper, who has been hunting coyotes since he was a high schooler in California, says he and Pier have tried taking a third hunter along. But it doesn't work as well.

"You just have that much more scent and sound and opportunity for that coyote to pick up on something," he says. "With just the two of us, when we're set up well and focused, we're pretty good. And boy, is it fun to have somebody there to share it with."

They use both electronic calls and mouth calls to attract coyotes. Call sounds include coyote howls, rabbit squeals, fawn bleats and high-pitch whimpers of female coyotes. They call and watch and wait, wearing

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camouflage that fits the terrain.

Both prefer cold-season hunting, which means they don't get shots at the young-of-the-year coyotes that are easier to fool and kill. The dumb young coyotes are either dead or older and wiser by the time winter hunts begin.

"People are now hunting coyotes in July and August, if not earlier, so they're getting some of those half-grown adolescents that are prone to make mistakes. And when they do, they die," Pier says. "To each his own, but I kind of think guys who are doing that are wrong."

Pier and Cooper sell the coyotes they kill for their fur. This year individual trapped or snared coyotes with excellent winter fur are selling for up to \$80 or so. Coyotes that have been shot will sell for less than the top price.

"You're not going to make much money on this deal, though, not the way we do it," Cooper says. "We're not in it for that."

They're in it for the time outdoors, the time together — even when concealed and silent and motionless — and for the chance to hunt a creature that knows the survival game as well as anything that lives.

"I like the challenge of hunting them," Cooper says. "I don't think there's a critter out there that has all the finely developed senses of the coyote. They win a lot. And we win sometimes. And when we do, it's really something."

One careful shot at a time.

Friday's Scores By The Associated Press

BOYS BASKETBALL=

Class A Region 1=

SoDak 16 Qualifier=

Milbank 64, Groton Area 56

Tiospa Zina Tribal 58, Sisseton 45

Class A Region 3=

SoDak 16 Qualifier=

Dell Rapids 64, West Central 50

Sioux Falls Christian 83, Tri-Valley 36

Class A Region 4=

SoDak 16 Qualifier=

Dakota Valley 72, Tea Area 65

Vermillion 50, Lennox 46

Class A Region 5=

SoDak 16 Qualifier=

Madison 59, McCook Central/Montrose 32

Parker 65, Parkston 54

Class A Region 6=

SoDak 16 Qualifier=

Mobridge-Pollock 58, Cheyenne-Eagle Butte 50

Class A Region 7=

SoDak 16 Qualifier=

Pine Ridge 57, Winner 46

Red Cloud 69, Todd County 60

Class A Region 8=

SoDak 16 Qualifier=

Custer 64, Belle Fourche 57

St. Thomas More 74, Rapid City Christian 50

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Class B Region 1=
SoDak 16 Qualifier=
Aberdeen Christian 63, Northwestern 50
Warner 46, Leola/Frederick 44
Class B Region 2=
SoDak 16 Qualifier=
Herreid/Selby Area 72, Lower Brule 48
Sully Buttes 59, Potter County 52
Class B Region 3=
SoDak 16 Qualifier=
Arlington 62, Wolsey-Wessington 43
DeSmet 64, Wessington Springs 27
Class B Region 4=
SoDak 16 Qualifier=
Colman-Egan 49, Sanborn Central/Woonsocket 42
Elkton-Lake Benton 66, Hanson 46
Class B Region 5=
SoDak 16 Qualifier=
Canistota 54, Freeman Academy/Marion 44
Viborg-Hurley 59, Bridgewater-Emery 36
Class B Region 6=
SoDak 16 Qualifier=
Marty Indian 67, Corsica/Stickney 66
Platte-Geddes 60, Gregory 45
Class B Region 8=
SoDak 16 Qualifier=
Faith 52, Lemmon 47
GIRLS BASKETBALL=
Class AA SoDak 16=
State Qualifier=
Brandon Valley 52, Aberdeen Central 45
Harrisburg 57, Pierre 40
Rapid City Stevens 66, Watertown 46
Sioux Falls Lincoln 66, Spearfish 28
Sioux Falls O'Gorman 70, Douglas 19
Sioux Falls Roosevelt 62, Huron 50
Sioux Falls Washington 65, Mitchell 48
Yankton 44, Rapid City Central 26

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

Police: Man accused of murder has ties to robbery group

SIoux FALLS, S.D. (AP) — The man charged with killing a pizza delivery driver has ties to a group of people in Sioux Falls who had plans to make money by robbing people, according to an arrest affidavit.

Jahennessy Deuniqué LaPaul Bryant, 21, was arrested Wednesday in Sioux Falls on charges of first-degree murder, second-degree murder, first-degree attempted robbery and manslaughter with a dangerous weapon.

Bryant is the only suspect in the murder, said Lt. Terrance Matia, but adds the case isn't done yet. It's an ongoing investigation, the Argus Leader reported.

Casey Bonhorst, 30, was shot to death Feb. 26 after he delivered a pizza. Police say Bonhorst was shot after Bryant tried to rob him.

Clyburn's kingmaker moment changes landscape of 2020 race

By MEG KINNARD and LAURIE KELLMAN Associated Press

COLUMBIA, S.C. (AP) — At a funeral service last month, Jannie Jones locked eyes with Democratic Rep. Jim Clyburn across the church sanctuary and crooked a finger, beckoning him to come over to the pew where she sat. She had a question, but she didn't want to ask it out loud.

The House majority whip bent down so the 76-year-old Jones could whisper in his ear: "I need to know who you're going to vote for," she asked.

Clyburn whispered back, "Joe Biden."

Giving Clyburn a thumbs up, Jones wondered if he'd endorse the former vice president publicly.

"I had no idea he was going to do it," Jones recalled in a telephone interview with The Associated Press from her home in Hopkins, South Carolina, outside the capital city of Columbia.

Not only did Clyburn go public with his choice among the sprawling Democratic field, just days ahead of his native South Carolina's pivotal primary, but he also anonymously credited Jones and their whispered conversation with his choice to do so.

"She said, 'You don't have to say it out loud, but just whisper into my ear, who are you going to vote for next Saturday? I have been waiting to hear from you. I need to hear from you,'" Clyburn recalled in his passionate endorsement speech, three days before South Carolina's Feb. 29 vote. "I decided then and there that I would not stay silent."

Biden handily won South Carolina, bested chief rival Bernie Sanders on Super Tuesday and bumped rivals Tom Steyer, Pete Buttigieg, Amy Klobuchar, Mike Bloomberg and Elizabeth Warren out of the contest in one of the most muscular comebacks in presidential campaign history.

The kingmaker moment was a long time coming for Clyburn, a minister's son whose congressional career began 27 years ago, after a false start in losing a state legislative race. He rose through the ranks and became the vote-counting House Democratic whip on Nancy Pelosi's leadership team, the No. 3 Democrat in Congress as well as its highest-ranking black member. And as Republicans rose to prominence in his native South Carolina, Clyburn's stature in the state increased among its Democratic contingent.

Political endorsements at times aren't thought of as carrying significant heft, used by candidates and endorsers alike for a momentary media bounce that quickly fades to another name on a list.

But the backing of Clyburn seems to have been the endorsement that brought Biden's candidacy back from the brink following lackluster performances in other early states. It was an awaited signal for many black voters in South Carolina that Biden would be the candidate to stand up for their interests. He scored a blowout margin of victory of nearly 30 points.

"In our community, as African Americans, we've always had a history of hearing from people who have been chosen to lead us," said Antjuan Seawright. "This example of Jim Clyburn is no different. There's a reason why I think God preserved him for this moment, to be able to have such an impact."

Biden has acknowledged the lifeline thrown to him by his friend.

"My buddy, Jim Clyburn, you brought me back," he said, adding that the congressman had "lifted me in this campaign on his shoulders."

Biden had long led in surveys heading into South Carolina, where fewer than half of Democratic voters are white. He ultimately won 64% of the ballots cast by African American voters, also performing strongly with older voters, women, regular churchgoers and moderates and conservatives, according to AP VoteCast, a wide-ranging survey of more than 1,400 voters in South Carolina's Democratic primary.

AP VoteCast results also showed that about a third of South Carolina Democrats said they made a late decision about their vote. Of those voters, roughly half ultimately supported Biden.

As the field constricted and candidates dropped out, Biden's momentum carried him to victories in 10 of 14 Super Tuesday states. In Alabama, where African American voters made up a majority of the Demo-

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cratic primary electorate, roughly 7 in 10 supported the former vice president, according to AP VoteCast.

Once Clyburn spoke his mind, said another strategist, Democratic voters of all backgrounds who may have been waffling among the remaining moderate choices saw an imperative to unite behind one of them.

"They got their theoretical permission from Jim Clyburn to do what they needed to do, because they realized the importance of this election, and that the only way that we were going to beat Bernie Sanders, in order to beat Donald Trump, was if we all worked together," said Amanda Loveday, who has formerly served as Clyburn's spokeswoman and executive director of the South Carolina Democratic Party. "If your ultimate goal is to beat Donald Trump, it's time to elect someone who's going to do that."

Reflecting recently on that pivotal conversation with Jones, Clyburn said it wasn't until he had turned to walk away that he realized what she was asking him to do.

"The expression on her face, the look in her eyes when she said it, she just bowled me over with it," he told The AP. "It was just a combination of stuff. I knew that this lady was asking me to man up."

Jones, who had never met Clyburn before their exchange, said she was shocked to see him on cable channels crediting her for inspiring him to go public. But, several weeks after the whispers that helped change the political landscape, she said she was elated to have played a role.

"He is a superhero," Jones said. "I have so much joy in my heart because Congressman Clyburn endorsed Biden."

Kellman reported from Washington.

Catch up on the 2020 election campaign with AP experts on our weekly politics podcast, "Ground Game."

AP FACT CHECK: Trump's sunny side up take on coronavirus

By CALVIN WOODWARD and HOPE YEN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — As the stock market convulses, airline schedules buckle and businesses worry their overseas supply lines will snap, President Donald Trump is looking on the sunny side of an economy clouded by the coronavirus.

For several weeks he's played down the consequences of the public health emergency even as his agencies scramble to manage it. Now he's suggesting that a robust jobs report might be explained in part by the prospect that Americans are hunkering down and focusing more of their spending in their own country. There's no evidence that the virus has juiced jobs.

Trump's plentiful and sometimes inaccurate comments on the outbreak this past week prompted the chairman of the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee, Sen. Lamar Alexander, R-Tenn., to suggest that Trump and Vice President Mike Pence stand back and "let the experts do the talking." Trump paid that advice no heed.

A sampling of the past week's rhetoric on the virus and other matters and how it compares with the facts:
CORONAVIRUS

TRUMP: "We're going to have Americans staying home instead of going and spending the money in other countries. And maybe that's one of the reasons the job numbers are so good." — remarks to the press Friday.

THE FACTS: That is not one of the reasons the job numbers are so good.

The government's report Friday showing employers added a healthy 273,000 jobs last month was compiled before the coronavirus had spread through multiple states.

Even so, the report showed employment at hotels was flat. Restaurant hiring jumped by more than 50,000, but most economists attributed that to relatively warm weather. Now, with many businesses restricting their employees' travel, airlines are already getting hit: United Airlines said Wednesday it has instituted a hiring freeze.

Trump is probably correct that fewer Americans will go abroad and spend money while the outbreak is

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active. The flip side is that fewer foreigners may come to the U.S. and spend their money here.

WHITE HOUSE: "The President is no longer traveling to Atlanta today. The CDC has been proactive and prepared since the very beginning and the President does not want to interfere with the CDC's mission to protect the health and welfare of their people and the agency." — statement Friday about Trump's planned visit to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

THE FACTS: Actually, the White House rationale for canceling the trip was contradicted a short time later by Trump, who said he postponed because a CDC employee in Atlanta was thought to have contracted the infectious disease and "because of the one person, they didn't want me going." It was not about staying out of the way of CDC employees,

He said it turned out that the person was not infected. He visited the CDC after all.

TRUMP: "A lot of people will have this, and it's very mild. They will get better very rapidly. They don't even see a doctor ... So, if we have thousands or hundreds of thousands of people that get better just by, you know, sitting around and even going to work — some of them go to work, but they get better." — Fox News interview Wednesday.

TRUMP: "I NEVER said people that are feeling sick should go to work. This is just more Fake News." — tweet Thursday.

THE FACTS: He seems to be suggesting that people with COVID-19 can go to work if they have minor symptoms, contradicting the guidance of his federal health officials. Regardless of how sick people may or may not feel, people are advised to stay home.

The CDC states that people with confirmed or suspected COVID-19 who do not need hospitalization should restrict their activities and "stay home except to get medical care."

"Do not go to work, school or public areas," it states.

TRUMP, on developing tests for coronavirus in patients: "The Obama administration made a decision on testing that turned out to be very detrimental to what we're doing. And we undid that decision a few days ago so that the testing can take place in a much more accurate and rapid fashion." — Wednesday at the White House.

VICE PRESIDENT MIKE PENCE: "The last administration asserted FDA jurisdiction over testing and the development of tests like this. ... The president changed that on Saturday so that now, as I spoke to several governors this morning, the states now have the ability to actually conduct the coronavirus test in state labs, university laboratories." — Wednesday at the White House.

TRUMP: "And now we have tremendous flexibility. Many, many more sites. Many, many more people. And you couldn't have had that under the Obama rule, and we ended that rule very quickly." — Wednesday.

THE FACTS: They're trying to blame Barack Obama for something his administration didn't do.

It's not true that an Obama-era rule limited laboratories run by companies, universities and hospitals from developing and running tests for the coronavirus during an emergency. No such regulation existed.

The Trump administration's action last Saturday only undid a policy that its own Food and Drug Administration put in place. The new action lets labs develop and use coronavirus diagnostic tests before the agency reviews them. Previously, the FDA had only authorized use of a government test developed by the CDC.

FDA guidance drafted during the Obama administration called for tighter regulation of so-called laboratory-developed tests, a market traditionally not overseen by the agency. But that guidance was not brought into effect. Even if it had been, it would not have applied to public health emergencies such as the coronavirus.

TRUMP: "We're talking about a vaccine. Maybe a cure is possible. But we're talking about a vaccine and they're moving along very quickly, all of the pharmaceutical companies, are moving along very quickly." — remarks Monday.

TRUMP: The U.S. may have a vaccine "relatively soon" and "something that makes you feel better ... sooner." — North Carolina rally Monday.

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THE FACTS: That's misleading, given the far more cautious pronouncements of federal public health officials and scientists. They say a vaccine is probably more than a year away at best and there are no special treatments for COVID-19. The notion of a quick "cure" is not in their vocabulary as they focus on trying to help people avoid getting the disease in the first place.

What's actually happening: Studies have begun in COVID-19 patients in parts of the world to see if certain antiviral medications could help treat the infection.

Today, there are no proven treatments. In China, scientists have been testing a combination of HIV drugs against the new coronavirus, as well as an experimental drug named remdesivir that was in development to fight Ebola. In the U.S., the University of Nebraska Medical Center also began testing remdesivir in some Americans who were found to have COVID-19 after being evacuated from a cruise ship in Japan.

It's not known how soon such studies will answer whether any of the drugs help. And many patients recover without needing any treatment. The biggest concern is how to help the fraction who become severely ill.

TRUMP: The U.S. is "ranked by far No. 1 in the world for preparedness" — North Carolina rally.

THE FACTS: Not "by far."

He's referring to a report coauthored by Johns Hopkins Centers for Health Security. Hopkins experts on Monday said the U.S. got a "grade" that overall was highest by a few points among a variety of high-income countries that are all at about the same level of preparedness.

But the report's overall finding: "No country is fully prepared for an epidemic or pandemic," cautioned Hopkins' Jennifer Nuzzo, who coauthored the report.

It's difficult to say from the report that a country that scores two points higher than another is going to fare much better, she added.

In the U.S., the biggest worry is access to that health care. "If fear of the cost of health care is a deterrent, that could create a bad situation where people stay at home, potentially infecting others," she said.

HEALTH CARE

TRUMP: "Preexisting conditions, 100% we take care of." — Fox News town-hall show Thursday.

THE FACTS: Far from it.

People who have medical problems or a history of them are protected in the health insurance marketplace because of Obama's Affordable Care Act, which Trump is trying to dismantle in and out of court.

When Fox News anchor Martha MacCallum challenged Trump's familiar and false assurance about preexisting protections, Trump obliquely acknowledged he has not delivered on his promise — and apparently won't before the election.

Republicans have "all pledged" that people with preexisting conditions will have their insurance protected, he said, but for that to happen, "we have to hold the Senate. We have to get the House. We have to, obviously, keep the White House."

VETERANS

TRUMP: "We got Choice. Nobody thought we were going to get Choice. They've been trying to get Choice for over 40 years." — Fox News interview Wednesday.

THE FACTS: Yet another false telling of how the program to let some veterans get private health care at public expense came about. It's a staple of his rhetoric. The Choice program was achieved by Obama. Trump expanded some of the conditions for qualifying for it.

Associated Press writers Matthew Perrone, Lauran Neergaard, Christopher Rugaber and Ricardo Alonso-Zaldivar contributed to this report.

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

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Trump's challenge: keeping his act fresh in reelection year

By AAMER MADHANI Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Donald Trump show has a consistent script. Same villains. Same nicknames. Same grievances. Same hero: himself.

At raucous rallies held mostly in states that are friendly to him, the president tells audiences that he could be presidential, even Lincoln-esque, if he wanted to. But that, he says, would be boring.

"It's easy to be presidential but only have about three people in front of me," Trump said at a recent rally, before breaking into a monotone imitation of a droning politician. "Doing this takes far more talent than doing that. Doing that is very easy. This is not easy."

As he seeks reelection with little variance from the themes that brought him to power four years ago, a central challenge will be to keep those audiences satisfied and to make sure, like a great entertainer, that the act isn't getting stale.

The president retains robust approval ratings among Republicans but even that fealty will be tested as he asks voters for another four years essentially offering them not new promises but more of the same.

Trump's campaign remains highly confident it will not only retain those who backed the president in 2016, but will also expand the electorate by turning out people who did not vote for years ago, in addition to peeling off some African American and Latino males.

At a rally last week in South Carolina, nearly 29% of those who registered for tickets didn't vote in the 2016 election, according to Trump campaign manager Brad Parscale.

But there are other metrics that don't look quite as hopeful.

Trump's Twitter following has grown to more than 73 million, up from 25 million at the start of his presidency. But the public's engagement with the president on his favorite social media platform has diminished since his inauguration more than three years ago.

Trump's tweets drew an average of 5.37 likes per 1,000 followers at the start of his presidency and were down to 1.29 in February, according to an analysis by Factba.se, a data analytics company that analyzes spoken and written remarks by elected officials. By comparison, top Democratic presidential contenders Joe Biden and Bernie Sanders — both of whom have a fraction of Trump's Twitter following — tallied 2.13 and 2.73 likes per 1,000 followers respectively last month.

The falling engagement numbers come as Trump, who likes to use social media as a tool to reach Americans without the contextualizing of the mainstream media, is relying on Twitter more than ever.

Trump broke his personal record for most tweets or retweets in a day in January as the Senate began hearing opening arguments in his impeachment trial, sending out more than 140 posts before most Americans had left work for the day. Trump, who was in Switzerland for an economic forum at the time, mostly posted tweets and retweets attacking Democratic House impeachment managers while amplifying messaging from allies who came to his defense.

Brian Ott, a Texas Tech University professor of communications and co-author of "The Twitter Presidency: Donald J. Trump and the Politics of White Rage," says that Trump's Twitter following has naturally expanded beyond his fervent supporters and political watchers because of his standing as the world's most powerful leader.

But his hardcore fans don't get the same thrill from retweeting and commenting on Trump's every post, and Russian trolls who were active on social media ahead of the 2016 election have less incentive, at the moment, to interfere and have melted away, Ott said.

Trump's campaign speeches have also become longer, according to Factba.se.

In 2017, his campaign speeches averaged 59 minutes. Thus far in 2020, he's clocking in at an average of 80.7 minutes.

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"An overwhelming percentage of his discourse is about attacking others, and he simply has more enemies now," said Ott, explaining why Trump's speeches may be getting longer. "He uses the campaign rallies to air grievances and he's just got more grievances at this point and never lets go of anything."

For even his staunchest supporters — many wait hours in line to attend a rally — the president's lengthy remarks can be tough to stick with until the end.

At Trump's rally in the swing state of North Carolina earlier this week, his speech checked in at 67 minutes, relatively tight for Trump.

But with about 20 minutes to go, dozens of rallygoers who had showed up hours early to get prime spots to stand on the floor of Charlotte's Bojangles Coliseum headed for the exits.

Several pockets in the seated area that had been filled with men and women chanting "Four More Years!" and waving campaign signs as Trump took the stage began thinning out a full 15 minutes before the president concluded his speech. Most of those who remained until the end seemed to hang on Trump's every word but were far less animated as they sat with their "Promises Kept" and "Women for Trump" signs laying neatly in their laps.

Similar scenes played out at recent rallies in Colorado Springs and Las Vegas.

In Las Vegas, retirees Jim Haney and wife Theda Haney ran out of steam about nine hours after arriving at the arena and left before Trump finished his speech. They decided to leave early despite snagging a prime spot near the podium.

"I have no voice left," Theda Haney said.

"I'm ready for a cup of coffee and a nap," her husband added.

Trump frequently boasts that his rallies draw more supporters than he can fit in the arena. At his rally in Colorado Springs last month, Trump crowed there were "a lot of people, thousands of people that couldn't get in."

Indeed, several dozen people camped overnight in sub-freezing temperatures to attend Trump's recent rally in the military town. Some 2,000 people were turned back after the arena filled to capacity, but most stuck around for a while to watch Trump on a large screen in the parking lot. There were only a couple dozen left by the time he finished, with many shuffling their feet and huddling to ward off the cold.

For some devoted Trump fans, just getting a small taste of seeing Trump campaign in the flesh is enough. Rodney Siscoe, of Fountain, Colorado, left the Colorado Springs rally after about 10 minutes, walking out with a broad smile and satisfied that he got at least a glimpse of the president in action.

"It's been a long grueling day, five hours in line, and then I just barely got in," Siscoe said. "I'm going to head home before it gets dark and watch him in the comfort of my home."

Associated Press writers Noreen Gillespie in Charlotte, North Carolina, Ken Ritter in Las Vegas and Jim Anderson in Colorado Springs, Colorado, contributed to this report.

Now this: Tornado clobbers African American North Nashville

By TRAVIS LOLLER Associated Press

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (AP) — On a frigid Friday morning in North Nashville, Ishvicka Howell stood in her driveway and peered down the street at several utility trucks.

"When I saw those blinking lights, it was like Christmas," she said.

Howell has been without electricity since a tornado tore through her neighborhood shortly after midnight on Tuesday.

"No power. No heat. We pioneering it," Howell said. "Grilling it and boiling water on the grill. We're in survival mode."

The tornado that struck Nashville wrecked several neighborhoods as it hopped across the city, smashing into the trendy Germantown and Five Points, where two people died.

But North Nashville's historically African American neighborhoods were already suffering from decades of redlining and neglect, isolated from more affluent neighborhoods by the interstates that cut through the

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heart of the city. More recently, they have begun to feel the pressure of gentrification as new residents and short-term renters search out affordable areas near downtown.

And now this. The killer storm devastated whole blocks, tearing off roofs, blowing down walls, uprooting huge trees and toppling electrical poles. While many parts of North Nashville had little storm damage, most residents were still without electricity Friday. No lights. No heat. And no way to store or cook food.

Some are wondering if North Nashville can recover from this latest hit or if its African American families will be permanently displaced.

"We are worried because we know developers are going to come in," said Cornelius A. Hill, pastor of Ephesian Primitive Baptist Church.

But Hill said he was encouraged by the outpouring of aid. His church, too, is without power. But outside in the parking lot, donations of all sorts have been pouring in to be scooped up by grateful residents. It was a scene repeated on nearly every corner of the storm-damaged blocks on Friday. Volunteers manned folding tables with free water, batteries, diapers, trash bags, and hot food like barbecue, hot dogs and pizza.

Meanwhile, hundreds of volunteers toting rakes and chainsaws were taking advantage of the daylight. They covered roofs with tarps, sliced away at downed and damaged trees, and piled debris at curbside for public works trucks to cart away.

"This is a historic part of Nashville. Some of these homes have been here 40 or 50 years," said Jonathan Williamson with the community group Friends and Fam. "It's beautiful to see everyone come out and work together to get things fixed."

North Nashville is home to several historically black colleges and universities. Fisk University and Meharry Medical College were largely unscathed from the storm. But Tennessee State University suffered the near total destruction of its agricultural research center. The loss is estimated at between \$30 and \$50 million.

College of Agriculture Dean Chandra Reddy said the school has never been funded on par with the University of Tennessee. It's only in the past few years that the state government has started matching federal funding, and the school has been working hard to build up the program.

"This tornado is a double whammy for us. We were barely putting something up there, and then this comes and wipes it out," said Reddy.

Reddy said he is encouraged that Gov. Bill Lee, who supports rural development, visited Tuesday morning. He is hoping the state government will come through to help the program quickly rebuild and grow.

"If we want to produce top-class research, we need good facilities and good faculty," Reddy said. "Those don't come cheap."

Over at the corner of 16th Ave. North and Knowles Street, one of the most heavily damaged residential blocks, new city councilman Brandon Taylor stopped to talk with Robert Sherrill of the nonprofit Impact Youth Outreach. Taylor said city leaders already are discussing ways to help residents rebuild.

"We're trying to build a plan to make sure the community comes out of this whole," he said.

Sherrill grew up on 16th Ave. North and has already seen how much it has changed through gentrification. He worries that any help won't come soon enough.

"We know there are people already knocking on doors," he said. "If they say they're going to put you up in the Omni for a week and give you \$100,000 cash, and you're staying in a house with no walls, you might accept that."

Paige Jack, with the group Friends and Fam, was handing out food nearby and was more optimistic. She thinks the volunteers from other parts of the city and beyond will leave feeling more connected to North Nashville.

"It's made people much more appreciative of our community," she said.

The National Weather Service has said at least six tornadoes hit middle Tennessee during the series of storms that killed 24 people and caused massive damage. Eighteen were killed in Putnam County, where President Donald Trump visited on Friday to offer his condolences. Trump flew in and out of Nashville but did not stop in the city.

US cruise ship in limbo as anti-virus controls spread

By JOE McDONALD Associated Press

BEIJING (AP) — Officials in California were deciding Saturday where to dock a cruise ship with 21 coronavirus cases aboard and four U.S. universities canceled in-person classes, as Western countries imitate China by imposing travel controls and shutting down public events to contain the outbreak.

The Grand Princess cruise ship was waiting off San Francisco with 3,500 people aboard. Authorities want it to go to a non-commercial port for everyone aboard to be tested amid evidence the ship was the breeding ground for a deadly cluster of 10 cases during an earlier voyage.

“Those that will need to be quarantined will be quarantined. Those who will require medical help will receive it,” said Vice President Mike Pence. President Donald Trump said he would have preferred not to let the passengers disembark onto American soil but would defer to medical experts.

In Egypt, a cruise ship on the Nile with more than 150 passengers and crew was under quarantine in the southern city of Luxor after 12 people tested positive for the virus. The passengers include American, French and Indian travelers.

A Taiwanese-American passenger tested positive after returning to Taiwan in February, Egyptian health authorities said. A health official said the 12 people who tested positive were isolated inside the ship while the rest await results.

The incident raised Egypt’s total number of cases to 15.

Also Saturday, the port of Penang in Malaysia turned away the cruise ship Costa Fortuna with 2,000 passengers and crew because there were 64 people aboard from Italy, the center of Europe’s epidemic. It was the second port to reject the ship after Phuket in Thailand on Friday.

The Costa Fortuna was making its way to Singapore, according to Phee Boon Poh, an executive councilor of Penang state.

The global death toll has risen past 3,400, most of them in China, with more than 100,000 cases reported.

Iran’s health ministry said Saturday that 21 more people had died from the coronavirus, raising the country’s death toll to 145. More than 1,000 infections were also confirmed overnight. With a total of 5,823 cases, Iran has the vast majority of cases in the Mideast.

Iran’s state-run IRNA news agency said a 55-year-old newly elected member of parliament died of the virus in Tehran. Earlier, another lawmaker told state TV that 23 members had the virus.

Iran has set up checkpoints to limit travel and had firefighters spray disinfectant on an 18-kilometer (11-mile) stretch of Tehran’s most famous avenue.

South Korea, the hardest-hit country outside China, reported 448 new cases for a total of 7,041. The government reported four new deaths for a total of 48.

China, where the disease first emerged in December, reported 99 new cases on Saturday, its first daily increase of less than 100 since Jan. 20. The government reported 28 new fatalities, raising the mainland death toll to 3,070.

China has 22,177 patients in treatment and has released 55,404. The official Xinhua News Agency said one of three temporary hospitals for virus cases in Wuhan, the city at the center of the outbreak, discharged its last patient Saturday and was due to close. The 1,460-bed Fangcang Hospital was built in three days in an exhibition center and opened Feb. 7.

The epidemic appears to be easing in China but numbers of cases elsewhere are rising.

The World Health Organization has warned against “false hopes” that the disease will fade when warmer summer weather arrives in northern countries.

The Netherlands reported its first virus death Friday. Serbia, Slovakia and Malta in Europe, Peru and Colombia in Latin America and Togo and Cameroon in Africa announced their first infections.

Authorities in Florida reported the first two U.S. deaths away from the West Coast. They said the two patients were in their 70s and one had underlying health problems.

The University of Washington and two other universities said campuses in Seattle would hold classes online instead of in-person. Stanford University, south of San Francisco, announced similar plans.

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Also in Seattle, Starbucks announced an employee of one of its cafes was diagnosed with COVID-19, the disease caused by the virus. The company said the store would reopen after a "deep clean."

On Saturday, South Korean officials said a Korean Air flight attendant who was in Los Angeles on Feb. 18-21 has tested positive for the coronavirus.

The 36-year-old woman suffered fever and muscle pain on Feb. 27, said Mayor Baek Kun-ki of Yongin, a city near Seoul, on Facebook. Officials at Korean Air didn't respond to repeated phone calls.

The 100,000 figure of global infections dwarfs other major outbreaks such as SARS, MERS and Ebola. The virus is still much less widespread than annual flu epidemics, which cause up to 5 million severe cases around the world and 290,000 to 650,000 deaths annually, according to the World Health Organization.

Governments have imposed restrictions on visitors from China, South Korea, Italy and Iran.

In Switzerland, which reported 210 new cases Friday, the military was being readied to provide support services at hospitals. Serbia said it might deploy its army.

The top U.N. climate change official said her agency won't hold meetings in person until the end of April.

French Health Minister Olivier Veran said children would be banned from visiting patients in hospitals and other health facilities. He said patients would be allowed one adult visitor at a time.

Spanish officials announced a monthlong closure of 200 centers in and around Madrid where the elderly go for daytime care and activities.

The global economy faces mounting damage due to anti-virus controls that shut down much of China's economy and are disrupting travel and trade worldwide.

China, the world's biggest trader, reported Saturday its exports tumbled 17.2% from a year earlier in January and February. Imports sank 4%.

Beijing's decision to keep factories and offices empty by extending the Lunar New Year holiday sent shockwaves through Asian economies that supply components to manufacturers who produce the world's smartphones, toys and other consumer goods.

Chinese manufacturers are reopening but aren't expected to return to normal production until at least April.

A total of 78 million migrant workers have returned to work, or about 60% of those who went to their hometowns for the Lunar New Year, the Ministry of Human Resources and Social Security announced Saturday.

Chinese authorities have eased some travel controls but most people in Wuhan still are barred from leaving their homes.

A deputy premier, Sun Chunlan, who visited a Wuhan apartment complex this week was met with complaints that its management neglected sanitation and food delivery. Residents said the complex was hurriedly cleaned just before Sun's visit.

"It's all fake!" a resident can be heard shouting on videos circulated on social media. A commentary in the main Communist Party newspaper, People's Daily, criticized the apartment managers for trying to deceive officials.

Off the California coast, passengers on the Grand Princess waited in their cabins for word on its fate.

The ship was bound from Hawaii to San Francisco when it was ordered Wednesday to keep its distance from shore so 46 people with possible coronavirus symptoms could be tested.

On Thursday, a military helicopter crew lowered test kits onto the 951-foot (290-meter) ship by rope and later flew them for analysis at a state lab. The tests were ordered following the death of a passenger who was on a previous voyage in February.

Associated Press writers Tong-hyung Kim in Seoul, South Korea; Eileen Ng in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia; Samy Magdy in Cairo; Nasser Karimi in Tehran, Iran, and researcher Henry Hou in Beijing contributed to this report.

Follow AP coverage of the virus outbreak at <https://apnews.com/VirusOutbreak> and <https://apnews.com/>

UnderstandingtheOutbreak

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SpaceX launches station supplies, nails 50th rocket landing

By **MARCIA DUNN AP Aerospace Writer**

CAPE CANAVERAL, Fla. (AP) — SpaceX successfully launched another load of station supplies for NASA late Friday night and nailed its 50th rocket landing.

The Falcon rocket blasted off with 4,300 pounds (1,950 kilograms) of equipment and experiments for the International Space Station. Just minutes later, the spent first-stage booster made a dramatic midnight landing back at Cape Canaveral, its return accompanied by sonic booms.

"And the Falcon has landed for the 50th time in SpaceX history!" SpaceX engineer Jessica Anderson announced amid cheers at Mission Control. "What an amazing live view all the way to touchdown."

The Dragon capsule, meanwhile, hurtled toward a Monday rendezvous with the space station.

It's the 20th station delivery for SpaceX, which has launched nearly 100,000 pounds (45,360 kilograms) of goods to the orbiting outpost and returned nearly that much back to Earth since it began shipments in 2012. Northrop Grumman is NASA's other commercial shipper.

SpaceX founder and chief executive Elon Musk said it was the windiest conditions ever — 25 mph to 30 mph (40 kph to 48 kph) — for a booster landing at Cape Canaveral, but he wanted to push the envelope. The landing was the 50th successful touchdown of a SpaceX booster following liftoff, either on land or at sea.

"Envelope expanded," Musk tweeted following touchdown.

The company's first booster landing was in 2015, intended as a cost-saving, rocket-recycling move. Both the latest booster and Dragon capsule were recycled from previous flights.

Among the science experiments flying: an analysis of running shoe cushioning in weightlessness by Adidas, a water droplet study by Delta Faucet Co. striving for better showerhead water conservation, 3D models of heart and intestinal tissue, and 320 snippets of grape vines by Space Cargo Unlimited, the same Luxembourg startup that sent 12 bottles of red wine to the space station last November for a year of high-altitude aging.

The Dragon also contained treats for the two Americans and one Russian at the space station: grapefruit, oranges, apples, tomatoes, Skittles, Hot Tamales and Reese's Pieces.

As for packing the capsule for launch, no extra precautions were taken because of the global coronavirus outbreak, according to NASA. The usual stringent precautions were taken to avoid passing along any germs or diseases to the space station crew. The doctor-approved procedures have proven effective in the past, officials noted.

This is the last of SpaceX's original Dragon cargo capsules. Going forward, the company will launch supplies in second-generation Dragons, roomier and more elaborate versions built for crews.

The company aims to launch NASA astronauts this spring. The California-based SpaceX also teaming up with other companies to fly tourists and private researchers to the space station, as well as high solo orbits in the next couple years.

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Coronavirus concerns stalls cruise ship off California

By **OLGA R. RODRIGUEZ** Associated Press

SAN FRANCISCO (AP) — Thousands of people were confined to a cruise ship circling in international waters off the San Francisco Bay Area Saturday after 21 passengers and crew members tested positive for the new coronavirus.

The Grand Princess was forbidden to dock in San Francisco amid evidence that the vessel was the breeding ground for a deadly cluster of more than 10 cases during its previous voyage.

Meantime, Florida reported two coronavirus deaths — the first outside of the West Coast. Health officials said two people in their 70s who had traveled overseas died in Santa Rosa County in Florida's Panhandle and in the Fort Myers area. Florida also raised the number of people who have tested positive for COVID-19, the new virus strain, from four to seven.

The U.S. death toll from the virus climbed to 16, with all but three victims in Washington state. The number of infections swelled to over 200, scattered across about half the states. Pennsylvania, Indiana, Minnesota and Nebraska reported their first cases.

In California, state authorities were working with federal officials around-the-clock to bring the Grand Princess cruise ship to a non-commercial port over the weekend and test everyone for the virus. There was no immediate word on where the vessel will dock.

Two passengers on the ship said Friday night that the captain has notified them they are moving to a location 20 miles off the coast for easier delivery of supplies. The captain said a guest requires medical attention and may be airlifted out, the passengers said.

While health officials said about 1,100 crew members will remain aboard, passengers could be disembarked to face quarantine, possibly at U.S. military bases or other sites. That's what happened to hundreds of passengers who were exposed to the virus on another cruise ship in January.

"Those that will need to be quarantined will be quarantined. Those who will require medical help will receive it," Vice President Michael Pence said Friday as he announced that 19 crew members and two passengers had tested positive for COVID-19.

President Donald Trump, speaking Friday at the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in Atlanta, said he would prefer not to allow the passengers onto American soil but will defer to the recommendations of medical experts.

"They would like to have the people come off. I'd rather have the people stay but ... I told them to make the final decision," the president said.

"I don't need to have the numbers (of U.S. cases) double because of one ship that wasn't our fault," Trump said in a Fox News interview. "And it wasn't the fault of the people on the ship either. Okay? It wasn't their fault either. And they are mostly American, so I can live either way with it."

In the meantime, passengers aboard the Grand Princess remained holed up in their rooms as they awaited word about the fate of the ship. Some said ship officials only informed them of the confirmed coronavirus cases after they first learned about it from news reports.

Steven Smith and his wife, Michele, of Paradise, California, went on the cruise to celebrate their wedding anniversary.

The Smiths said they were a bit worried but felt safe in their room, which they had left just once since Thursday to video chat with their children.

Crew members wearing masks and gloves delivered trays with their food in covered plates and left them outside their door.

To pass the time they have been watching television, reading and looking out the window, they said.

"Thank God, we have a window!" Steven said.

The ship was heading from Hawaii to San Francisco when it was ordered Wednesday to keep its distance from shore so 46 people with possible coronavirus symptoms could be tested. On Thursday, a military helicopter crew lowered test kits onto the 951-foot (290-meter) ship by rope and later flew them for analysis at a state lab.

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Health officials undertook the testing after reporting that a 71-year-old man who had been on a February voyage of the same ship to Mexico contracted the virus and died this week at a hospital in Placer County in Northern California. Others who were on that voyage also have tested positive in Northern California, Minnesota, Illinois, Hawaii, Utah and Canada. A "presumed positive" patient was self-isolating at home in Nevada, health officials there said.

Some passengers who had been on the Mexico trip stayed aboard for the current voyage — increasing crew members' exposure to the virus.

Another Princess ship, the Diamond Princess, was quarantined for two weeks in Yokohama, Japan, last month because of the virus. Ultimately, about 700 of the 3,700 people aboard became infected in what experts pronounced a public-health failure, with the vessel essentially becoming a floating germ factory.

Hundreds of Americans aboard that ship were flown to military bases in California and other states for two-week quarantines. Some later were hospitalized with symptoms.

An epidemiologist who studies the spread of virus particles said the recirculated air from a cruise ship's ventilation system, plus the close quarters and communal settings, make passengers and crew vulnerable to infectious diseases.

"They're not designed as quarantine facilities, to put it mildly," said Don Milton of the University of Maryland. "You're going to amplify the infection by keeping people on the boat."

He said the fallout from the ship quarantined in Japan demonstrates the urgent need to move people off the ship and into a "safer quarantine environment."

The president pro tem of California's state Senate agreed.

"We have to be better than just leaving all these people out at sea," Toni G. Atkins said in a statement. "There are Americans on board, families, seniors, and others all wanting nothing more than to be safe and to get treatment if they need it."

On Wall Street, stocks swung wildly as fears mounted over the potential damage to the global economy from factory shutdowns, travel bans, quarantines and cancellations of events big and small — a list that grew to include the world-famous South by Southwest arts festival in Austin, Texas, which was set to begin next week.

Stanford University announced that it was cancelling in-person classes for the final two weeks of the winter quarter and instead holding classes online. The school also said large-group events were being adjusted or canceled.

Trump has signed an \$8.3 billion measure to help public health agencies deal with crisis and spur development of vaccines and treatments.

Worldwide, the virus has infected more than 100,000 people and killed over 3,400, the vast majority of them in China. Most cases have been mild, and more than half of those infected have recovered.

Most of the dead in the U.S. were from suburban Seattle's Life Care Center nursing home, now the subject of federal and state investigations that could lead to sanctions, including a possible takeover of its management. Washington state has the nation's biggest concentration of cases, with at least 70.

Thirty medical professionals from the U.S. Public Health Service were to arrive Saturday at the nursing home to help care for patients and provide relief to the exhausted staff, said Dow Constantine, executive in charge of King County in the Seattle area.

"We are grateful the cavalry is arriving. It will make rapid change in the conditions there," he said.

The nursing home was down to 69 residents after 15 were taken to the hospital in the preceding 24 hours, Constantine said.

Some major businesses in the Seattle area — including Microsoft and Amazon, which together employ more than 100,000 people in the region — have shut down operations or urged employees to work from home. The University of Washington called off classes at its three Seattle-area campuses for the next two weeks and will instead teach its 57,000 students online. And a comics convention next week in Seattle that was expected to draw about 100,000 people was canceled.

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Associated Press writers Janie Har and Daisy Nguyen in San Francisco; Gene Johnson, Martha Bellisle and Carla K. Johnson in Seattle; Adriana Gomez Licon in Miami ; Rachel La Corte in Olympia, Washington; and AP researcher Monika Mathur in Washington, D.C., contributed to this report.

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Iran's Revolutionary Guard seeks absolution in virus fight

By JON GAMBRELL Associated Press

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates (AP) — Wearing gas masks and waterproof fatigues, members of Iran's Revolutionary Guard now spray down streets and hospitals with disinfectants as the Islamic Republic faces one of the world's worst outbreaks of the new coronavirus.

Its commanders likely hope it also will wash away something else — the anger the public feels toward the powerful paramilitary force stained by its shooting down of a Ukrainian passenger jet in January. All 176 people on board — most of them Iranian citizens — were killed.

The push by the Guard comes as the new virus has infected and killed members of Iranian officialdom. Ensuring the survival of the government — as well as its own place in power — remains paramount amid one of the world's deadliest virus outbreaks outside of China. Fear over the virus and the government's waning credibility has become a major challenge to Iran's leaders, who already are reeling under the weight of American sanctions.

"We have prepared all our health care facilities and specialized cadres that will expand this sacred jihad," said Brig. Gen. Gholamreza Soleimani, who commands the Guard's volunteer Basij force.

That the Guard is involved in the relief effort of a major catastrophe is not surprising in Iran. The Guard, whose forces include an estimated 125,000-plus troops and 600,000 mission-ready volunteers, routinely respond to the earthquakes that shake the country. Recent floods saw its troops mobilize as well.

Its forces, which include virologists, faced chemical weapons during Iran's eight-year war against Iraq in the 1980s. It expanded into private industry after the war years to help the country rebuild. And the Guard, also known by the acronym IRGC, has conducted polio and other immunization drives in the past.

"The IRGC sees itself as the lead agency in any threat against the regime," said Afshon Ostovar, an assistant professor at the Naval Postgraduate School in the United States who wrote book on the Guard. "Whether it's protests, a state adversary or a virus, the IRGC will position itself publicly as Iran's frontline defender."

Today, the Guard controls broad parts of Iran's economy, including its powerful construction company Khatam al-Anbiya. Exactly how much it controls is in dispute, with estimates ranging from below 10% to as much as 40%, but Iran's government needs the Guard's economic muscle in times of crisis, especially as it faces crushing sanctions from the U.S.

The Guard's troops have moved into hard-hit cities like Tehran, Rasht and Qom. Using modular construction, they've quickly built hospitals and created a headquarters called the Coronavirus Fight Base, staffed with so-called "modern warfare units" who focus on responses to chemical, biological and cyberattacks.

Wearing gas masks and suits designed to protect during chemical weapons attacks, Guard members have been seen washing down areas to kill lingering traces of the virus that causes the COVID-19 illness. They've touted operations to target those hoarding desperately needed medical supplies.

"Their show of force regarding the coronavirus is as much political theater as a public health effort," Ostovar said.

It comes as propaganda images created amid the outbreak have shown doctors and nurses in the

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foxhole with troops. That contrast also helps mock Iran's civilian government, whose esteem among the public already is reeling since President Donald Trump's decision to unilaterally withdraw the U.S. from Iran's 2015 nuclear deal with world powers.

"Now, hospitals are Iran's front line," one volunteer at an Iranian hospital said her mother told her in a widely shared online video. "If you leave the front line, you'll be deserter and I do not welcome a draft dodger in my home."

That kind of spirit comes as a balm for Guard members, who have seen themselves widely criticized after shooting down Ukraine International Airlines Flight 752 on Jan. 8. That same day, the Guard had launched a ballistic missile attack on U.S. forces in Iraq. That attack came as a response to the U.S. drone strike in Baghdad killing Guard Gen. Qassem Soleimani, a top commander responsible for the force's expeditionary operations across the wider Mideast.

Even before that, the Guard and security forces cracked down on protesters across the country in November, reportedly killing at least 300 people amid a nationwide internet blackout. Some bitterly note the irony of the Guard using the term "suppression" to describe their anti-virus operations in the wake of the crackdown.

"On COVID-19, it's clear that there's been a great deal of mismanagement and so the Guards are now trying to present themselves as the saviors," said Ariane Tabatabai, an Iran analyst at the U.S.-based RAND Corp. "And of course, it doesn't hurt to be able to change the conversation from the airliner episode — although, this will be a hard task to achieve given that both are examples of incompetence and mismanagement."

The risks, however, are clear. If Iran doesn't get a handle on the virus outbreak, it's more than just the Guard's reputation on the line. Already, top officials in Iran's civilian government and its Shiite theocracy have contracted the virus, with several dying. Given that the virus is sweeping through the upper-echelons of power in Tehran and its front-line operation in hospitals, Guard members may too come down with COVID-19.

The Guard also has trafficked in baseless conspiracy theories amid the outbreak, with its leader Gen. Hossein Salami falsely suggesting the U.S. created the virus amid the wider tensions with America.

"We will win in the fight against the virus, which may be the product of the American biological invasion, which it first spread to China and then to Iran and the rest of the world," Salami told a crowd in the Iranian city of Kerman. "The U.S. must know that if it did it, (the virus) will return to it."

Still, the Guard's power means it will remain front and center in any response to the virus crisis. The Guard only will grow more powerful if the outbreak remains severe into July, the global analysis firm the Eurasia Group said.

"A broader role is likely for the Revolutionary Guard in all aspects of the economic, political and public-health response," it said in an analysis Thursday.

Follow Jon Gambrell on Twitter at www.twitter.com/jongambrellAP.

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Heavy police raids leave east Jerusalem neighborhood on edge

By JOSEPH KRAUSS Associated Press

JERUSALEM (AP) — Murad Mahmoud's 14-year-old son has been detained by Israeli police in his east Jerusalem neighborhood three times in the last two years. His 10-year-old has been interrogated by police in combat gear. These days, he keeps all six of his children inside most of the time, fearing even worse.

"I won't even let them go to the corner store," he says. "I'm not just afraid they'll be arrested, I'm afraid they'll lose an eye or get shot in the head."

Nearly every day for the last nine months Israeli police have stormed into the Palestinian neighborhood

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of Issawiya in east Jerusalem in a campaign they say is needed to maintain law and order. Rights groups say that in addition to searching houses and issuing fines, they have detained hundreds of people — some as young as 10 — on suspicion of stone-throwing.

The operations frequently ignite clashes, with local youths throwing rocks and firebombs, which police say justifies their heightened presence.

But residents and human rights groups say the raids themselves seem intended to provoke confrontations and have created an atmosphere of terror, with parents afraid to let their children play outside. Last month, a 9-year-old boy was shot in the face by police, losing an eye in an incident authorities say they are still investigating.

It's unclear what prompted the crackdown, but many residents feel police are making an example out of Issawiya so that Israel can cement its control over east Jerusalem, which it seized in the 1967 war and later annexed.

East Jerusalem Palestinians have Israeli residency, but few have accepted citizenship, either because they don't recognize Israeli control or because of the long and complicated application process. That has left many feeling vulnerable.

"From May of last year until today, every day they occupy Issawiya all over again," said Amin Barakat, an optometrist and a member of the neighborhood council.

Issawiya tumbles down a hillside behind Israel's Hebrew University, just a few miles (kilometers) from the city-center. But like other Arab neighborhoods in east Jerusalem it is overcrowded and poorly served, a legacy of decades of Israeli policies favoring Jewish areas of the city, including east Jerusalem settlements. Under President Donald Trump's Mideast initiative, which strongly favors Israel and was rejected by the Palestinians, Issawiya would remain part of Israel's capital.

The narrow streets wind past walls covered in graffiti supporting Hamas and other armed groups, and residents take pride in their Palestinian identity. But many work in Jewish communities. They say the graffiti is the work of local teenagers, and there's no evidence any factions have an organized presence in the neighborhood.

The intensive raids began last May, but the situation escalated the following month, when a 20-year-old was shot and killed by police, who said he approached to within a few meters (yards) and launched fireworks at them.

The police say they treat Issawiya like any other Jerusalem neighborhood.

"There's no use of unnecessary force," Israeli police spokesman Micky Rosenfeld said. "There's no unnecessary patrols that are taking place. Everything is carefully calculated based on what is taking place inside Issawiya."

He said forces have responded to stone-throwing on nearby roads, including a major highway, but he was unable to name any specific act of violence outside of the clashes with police inside Issawiya.

Residents angrily reject any suggestion they pose a threat to others.

"For 19 years I've been working with Jews," said Mahmoud, a construction manager. "They welcome me into their homes. ... I have more than a hundred Jewish clients. I only have problems here in my home."

Rights groups say the raids go far beyond the targeting of individual suspects and amount to collective punishment of the neighborhood's 20,000 residents.

Ir Amim, an Israeli group that advocates for equal rights in Jerusalem and has closely followed developments in Issawiya, said the operations are "unprecedented in scope and scale," amounting to a "violent disruption of daily life."

In addition to sweeping arrest raids, police have set up flying checkpoints that strangle traffic and issued arbitrary fines for minor violations of local ordinances, it said.

"It's inexplicable and unjustifiable that an entire neighborhood would be targeted" because of individual offenses, said Amy Cohen, a spokeswoman for the group.

Mohammed Abu al-Hummus, the head of Issawiya's local council, says around 750 people have been detained in the last nine months, with most released after a day or two and many placed under house arrest for days or weeks. He says only around 30 people have been formally charged.

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Rosenfeld, the police spokesman, said fewer people have been detained and more have been indicted, but did not provide figures.

Rights groups and residents acknowledge that young people respond to the police operations by throwing stones and firebombs. But they say police provoke the violence and many fear the effects it will have on the next generation.

"It's a long-lasting trauma for them," said Tal Hassin, a lawyer with the Association for Civil Rights in Israel. "If you talk with kids, especially the boys, they are big heroes, But it's only a facade. They don't sleep at night, they have nightmares."

Her group has sent formal complaints to the police chief and the attorney general presenting evidence of a campaign of collective punishment and routine violations of Israeli laws governing the treatment of minors. It has not received a response.

Barakat, the optometrist, has seen the effects on his own son, a shy, soft-spoken 15-year-old whose friend was recently arrested. He says his son rarely sleeps longer than three hours at a time and sometimes screams out at night.

"When he sees what happens in the streets he feels anxious. He's nervous at home, at school — and not just him, the whole generation," he said.

"He goes to bed at nine. He gets up three hours later and wants water, or he gets up and wants to watch a football game. He's not even interested in the game, he just wants to sit with his mom and dad."

Associated Press writer Mohammed Daraghmeh contributed.

Gadgets for tech giants made with coerced Uighur labor

By **DAKE KANG** and **YANAN WANG** Associated Press

NANCHANG, China (AP) — In a lively Muslim quarter of Nanchang city, a sprawling Chinese factory turns out computer screens, cameras and fingerprint scanners for a supplier to international tech giants such as Apple and Lenovo. Throughout the neighborhood, women in headscarves stroll through the streets, and Arabic signs advertise halal supermarkets and noodle shops.

Yet the mostly Muslim ethnic Uighurs who labor in the factory are isolated within a walled compound that is fortified with security cameras and guards at the entrance. Their forays out are limited to rare chaperoned trips, they are not allowed to worship or cover their heads, and they must attend special classes in the evenings, according to former and current workers and shopkeepers in the area.

The connection between OFILM, the supplier that owns the Nanchang factory, and the tech giants is the latest sign that companies outside China are benefiting from coercive labor practices imposed on the Uighurs, a Turkic ethnic group, and other minorities.

Over the past four years, the Chinese government has detained more than a million people from the far west Xinjiang region, most of them Uighurs, in internment camps and prisons where they go through forced ideological and behavioral re-education. China has long suspected the Uighurs of harboring separatist tendencies because of their distinct culture, language and religion.

When detainees "graduate" from the camps, documents show, many are sent to work in factories. A dozen Uighurs and Kazakhs told the AP they knew people who were sent by the state to work in factories in China's east, known as inner China — some from the camps, some plucked from their families, some from vocational schools. Most were sent by force, although in a few cases it wasn't clear if they consented.

Workers are often enrolled in classes where state-sponsored teachers give lessons in Mandarin, China's dominant language, or politics and "ethnic unity." Conditions in the jobs vary in terms of pay and restrictions.

At the OFILM factory, Uighurs are paid the same as other workers but otherwise treated differently, according to residents of the neighborhood. They are not allowed to leave or pray — unlike the Hui Muslim migrants also working there, who are considered less of a threat by the Chinese government.

"They don't let them worship inside," said a Hui Muslim woman who worked in the factory for several weeks alongside the Uighurs. "They don't let them come out."

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"If you're Uighur, you're only allowed outside twice a month," a small business owner who spoke with the workers confirmed. The AP is not disclosing the names of those interviewed near the factory out of concern for possible retribution. "The government chose them to come to OFILM, they didn't choose it."

The Chinese government says the labor program is a way to train Uighurs and other minorities and give them jobs. The Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs on Monday called concern over possible coerced labor under the program "groundless" and "slander."

However, experts say that like the internment camps, the program is part of a broader assault on the Uighur culture, breaking up social and family links by sending people far from their homes to be assimilated into the dominant Han Chinese culture.

"They think these people are poorly educated, isolated, backwards, can't speak Mandarin," said James Leibold, a scholar of Chinese ethnic policy at La Trobe University in Melbourne. "So what do you do? You 'educate' them, you find ways to transform them in your own image. Bringing them into the Han Chinese heartland is a way to turbocharge this transformation."

OFILM's website indicates the Xinjiang workers make screens, camera cover lenses and fingerprint scanners. It touts customers including Apple, Samsung, Lenovo, Dell, HP, LG and Huawei, although there was no way for the AP to track specific products to specific companies.

Apple's most recent list of suppliers, published January last year, includes three OFILM factories in Nanchang. It's unclear whether the specific OFILM factory the AP visited twice in Nanchang supplies Apple, but it has the same address as one listed. Another OFILM factory is located about half a mile away on a different street. Apple did not answer repeated requests for clarification on which factory it uses.

In an email, Apple said its code of conduct requires suppliers to "provide channels that encourage employees to voice concerns." It said it interviews the employees of suppliers during annual assessments in their local language without their managers present, and had done 44,000 interviews in 2018.

Lenovo confirmed that it sources screens, cameras, and fingerprint scanners from OFILM but said it was not aware of the allegations and would investigate. Lenovo also pointed to a 2018 audit by the Reliable Business Alliance in which OFILM scored very well.

All the companies that responded said they required suppliers to follow strict labor standards. LG and Dell said they had "no evidence" of forced labor in their supply chains but would investigate, as did Huawei. HP did not respond.

OFILM also lists as customers dozens of companies within China, as well as international companies it calls "partners" without specifying what product it offers. And it supplies PAR Technology, an American sales systems vendor to which it most recently shipped 48 cartons of touch screens in February, according to U.S. customs data obtained through ImportGenius and Panjiva, which track shipping data.

PAR Technology in turn says it supplies terminals to major chains such as McDonald's, Taco Bell, and Subway. However, the AP was unable to confirm that products from OFILM end up with the fast food companies.

McDonald's said it has asked PAR Technology to discontinue purchases from OFILM while it launches an immediate investigation. PAR Technology also said it would investigate immediately. Subway and Taco Bell did not respond.

A report Sunday from the Australian Strategic Policy Institute, researched separately from the AP, estimated that more than 80,000 Uighurs were transferred from Xinjiang to factories across China between 2017 and 2019. The report said it found "conditions that strongly suggest forced labor" consistent with International Labor Organization definitions.

The AP also reported a year ago that Uighur forced labor was being used within Xinjiang to make sportswear that ended up in the U.S.

FROM FARMERS TO FACTORY WORKERS

Beijing first sent Uighurs to work in inland China in the early 2000s, as part of a broad effort to push minorities to adopt urban lifestyles and integrate with the Han Chinese majority to tighten political control.

At first the program targeted young, single women, because the state worried that Uighur women raised

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in pious Muslim families didn't work, had children early and refused to marry Han men. But as stories of poor pay and tight restrictions trickled back, police began threatening some parents with jail time if they didn't send their children, six Uighurs told the AP.

The program was halted in 2009, when at least two Uighurs died in a brawl with Han workers at a toy factory in coastal Guangdong province. After peaceful protests in Xinjiang were met with police fire, ethnic riots broke out that killed an estimated 200 people, mostly Han Chinese civilians.

An AP review of Chinese academic papers and state media reports shows that officials blamed the failure of the labor program on the Uighurs' language and culture. So when the government ramped up the program again after the ascent of hardline Chinese President Xi Jinping in 2012, it emphasized ideological transformation.

A paper drafted by the head of the Xinjiang statistics bureau in 2014 said the Uighurs' poor Mandarin made it hard for them to integrate in inner China. It concluded that Xinjiang's rural minorities needed to be broken away from traditional lifestyles and systematically "disciplined", "trained" and "instilled with modern values."

"The local saturated religious atmosphere and the long-time living habits of ethnic minorities are incompatible with the requirements of modern industrial production," the paper said. It outlined a need to "slowly correct misunderstandings about going out to choose jobs."

Before Uighurs were transferred for jobs, the paper continued, they needed to be trained and assessed on their living habits and adoption of corporate culture.

"Those who fail will not be exported," it said.

The paper also described government incentives such as tax breaks and subsidies for Chinese companies to take Uighurs. A 2014 draft contract for Xinjiang laborers in Guangdong province obtained by the AP shows the government there offered companies 3000 RMB (\$428.52) per worker, with an additional 1000 RMB (\$142.84) for "training" each person for no less than 60 class hours. In exchange, companies had to offer "concentrated accommodation areas," halal canteens and "ethnic unity education and training."

But it was a tough sell at a time when Chinese officials were grappling with knifings, bombings and car attacks by Uighurs, fueled by explosive anger at the government's harsh security measures and religious restrictions. Hundreds died in race-related violence in Xinjiang, both Uighur and Han Chinese.

A labor agent who only gave his surname, Zhang, said he tried brokering deals to send Xinjiang workers to factories in the eastern city of Hangzhou, but finding companies willing to take Uighurs was a challenge, especially in a slowing economy.

"Their work efficiency is not high," he said.

The size of the program is considerable. A November 2017 state media report said Hotan prefecture alone planned to send 20,000 people over two years to work in inner China.

There, the report said, they would "realize the dreams of their lives."

ANSWERING THE GOVERNMENT'S CALL

The Uighurs at OFILM were sent there as part of the government's labor program, in an arrangement the company's website calls a "school-enterprise cooperative." OFILM describes the workers as migrants organized by the government or vocational school students on "internships".

OFILM confirmed it received AP requests for comment but did not reply.

The AP was unable to get inside the facility, and on one visit to Nanchang, plainclothes police tailed AP journalists by car and on foot. But posts on the company website extoll OFILM's efforts to accommodate their Uighur workers with Mandarin and politics classes six days a week, along with halal food.

OFILM first hired Uighurs in 2017, recruiting over 3,000 young men and women in Xinjiang. They bring the Uighurs on one- or two-year contracts to Nanchang, a southeastern metropolis nearly two thousand miles from Xinjiang that local officials hope to turn into a tech hub.

OFILM is one of Nanchang's biggest employers, with half a dozen factory complexes sprinkled across the city and close ties with the state. Investment funds backed by the Nanchang city government own large stakes in OFILM, corporate filings show. The Nanchang government told the AP that OFILM recruits

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minorities according to “voluntary selection by both parties” and provides equal pay along with personal and religious freedom.

OFILM’s website says the company “answered the government’s call” and went to Xinjiang to recruit minorities. The Uighurs need training, OFILM says, to pull them from poverty and help them “study and improve.”

Mandarin is heavily emphasized, the site says, as well as lessons in history and “ethnic unity” to “comprehensively improve their overall quality.” The site features pictures of Uighurs playing basketball on factory grounds, dancing in a canteen and vying in a Mandarin speech competition.

In August, when OFILM organized celebrations for Eid Qurban, a major Islamic festival, Uighur employees did not pray at a mosque. Instead, they dressed in orange uniforms and gathered in a basketball court for a show with Communist officials called “Love the Motherland – Thank the Party.” An OFILM post said a “Uighur beauty” dazzled with her “beautiful exotic style.”

State media reports portray the Nanchang factory workers as rural and backwards before the Communist Party trained them, a common perception of the Uighurs among the Han Chinese.

“The workers’ concept of time was hazy, they would sleep in till whenever they wanted,” a Party official is quoted as saying in one. Now, he said, their “concept of time has undergone a total reversal.”

In the reports and OFILM posts, the Uighurs are portrayed as grateful to the Communist Party for sending them to inner China.

Despite the wan expressions of three OFILM workers from Lop County, a December 2017 report said they gave an “enthusiastic” presentation about how they lived in clean new dormitories “much better than home” and were visited by Communist Party cadres.

“We were overjoyed that leaders from the Lop County government still come to see us on holidays,” one of the workers, Estullah Ali, was quoted as saying. “Many of us were moved to tears.”

THEY TOOK MY CHILD TO INNER CHINA

Minorities fleeing China describe a far grimmer situation. H., a wealthy jade merchant from Lop County, where OFILM now gets Uighur workers, began noticing the labor transfer program in 2014. That’s when state propaganda blaring through television and loudspeakers urged young Uighurs to work in inner China. Officials hustled families to a labor transfer office where they were forced to sign contracts, under threat of land confiscations and prison sentences.

H., identified only by the initial of his last name out of fear of retribution, was worried. The government was not only reviving the labor program but also clamping down on religion. Acquaintances vanished: Devout Muslims and language teachers, men with beards, women with headscarves.

Toward the end of 2015, when H. greeted his 72-year-old neighbor on the street, the man burst into tears. “They took my child to inner China to work,” he said.

Months later, H. and his family fled China.

Zharqynbek Otan, a Chinese-born ethnic Kazakh, said that after he was released from an internment camp in 2018, neighbors in his home village also told him their sons and daughters were forced to sign contracts for 6 months to five years to work at factories near Shanghai. If they ran from the factories, they were warned, they’d be taken straight back to internment camps.

Nurlan Kokteubai, an ethnic Kazakh, said during his time in an internment camp, a cadre told him they selected young, strong people to work in inner Chinese factories in need of labor.

“He told us that those young people would acquire vocational skills,” Kokteubai said.

Not all workers are subject to the restrictions at OFILM. One ethnic Kazakh said her brother made power banks in central China for \$571.36 a month and didn’t take classes.

But another said two of his cousins were forced to go and work in cold, harsh conditions. They were promised \$428.52 a month but paid only \$42.85. Though they wanted to quit, four Uighurs who complained were detained in camps after returning to Xinjiang, scaring others.

Uighurs and Kazakhs in exile say it’s likely those working in inner China are still better off than those in

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camps or factories in Xinjiang, and that in the past, some had gone voluntarily to earn money. A former worker at Jiangxi Lianchuang Electronics, a lens maker in Nanchang, told The Associated Press the 300 or so Uighurs there were free to enter or leave their compound, although most live in dormitories inside factory grounds. He and a current worker said they were happy with their working conditions, their salary of about 5,000 RMB (\$714.20) a month, and their teachers and Mandarin classes in the evenings.

But when presented a list of questions in Uighur about the labor transfers, the former Jiangxi Lianchuang worker started to look very nervous. He asked for the list, then set it on fire with a lighter and dropped it in an ashtray.

"If the Communist Party hears this, then" – he knocked his wrists together, mimicking a suspect being handcuffed. "It's very bad."

Associated Press writer Erika Kinetz contributed to this report.

WSJ: Saudis arrest 2 princes for allegedly plotting coup

NEW YORK (AP) — Saudi officials arrested two members of the royal family early Friday for allegedly plotting to oust King Salman and the son he has designated to succeed him, Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, the Wall Street Journal reported.

Quoting unidentified sources, the Journal said guards from the royal court detained one of the king's brothers, Prince Ahmed bin Abdulaziz al Saud, and one of his nephews, Prince Mohammed bin Nayef. Both men were arrested at their homes and charged with treason, it said.

There was no immediate comment from Saudi authorities on the report.

Mohammed bin Nayef, a once powerful figure as head of Saudi counterterrorism efforts, had been crown prince until 2017, when King Salman took away the title and put his son first in line for the throne of the longtime U.S. ally.

The crown prince, who is in charge of day-to-day governance in the kingdom, has been praised in the West for implementing social reforms, but he also has drawn intense criticism for a tough crackdown on Saudis perceived as critics of his policies.

He also came under criticism after the 2018 killing of Saudi dissident and Washington Post columnist Jamal Khashoggi inside the Saudi consulate in Istanbul. Critics accused him of being linked to the slaying, but he denied it. A Saudi court sentenced five people to death for the killing, but did not hold any high-ranking officials responsible.

Congress has also harshly criticized Saudi Arabia for its war in Yemen, which has led to the world's worst humanitarian disaster.

Virus cases top 100,000 in 90 countries as markets take dive

By ANGELA CHARLTON and MATT SEDENSKY Associated Press

PARIS (AP) — Crossing more borders, the new coronavirus hit a milestone, infecting more than 100,000 people worldwide as it wove itself deeper into the daily lives of millions, infecting the powerful, the unprotected poor and vast masses in between.

The virus, which has killed more than 3,400 people and emerged in more than 90 countries, edged into more U.S. states on Friday and even breached the halls of the Vatican. It forced mosques in Iran and beyond to halt weekly Muslim prayers, blocked pilgrims from Jesus' birthplace in Bethlehem and upended Japan's plans for the Olympic torch parade.

As financial markets dived again, repercussions from the virus also rattled livelihoods in the real economy.

"Who is going to feed their families?" asked Elias al-Arja, head of a hotel owners' union in Bethlehem in the Israeli-occupied West Bank, where tourists have been banned and the storied Church of the Nativity was shuttered.

At the White House, President Donald Trump signed a \$8.3 billion bill to fight the coronavirus a day after

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Italy said it would double its own spending to 7.5 billion euros (\$8.5 billion).

In Geneva, the U.N. health agency said it had received applications for 40 possible virus tests, had 20 vaccine candidates in development and reported that numerous clinical trials of experimental drugs for the new coronavirus were under way.

"We're all in this together. We all have a role to play," said Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, chief of the World Health Organization, urging more global cooperation from the business world and solidarity with the poorest.

The news wasn't all bad: more than half of those who contracted the virus have now recovered. It's retreating in China, where it first emerged, and in nearby South Korea.

China on Saturday morning reported just 99 new cases, the first time it has had only a double digit increase since Jan. 20. It also reported another 28 deaths. Overall, China now counts 22,177 patients currently in treatment, while it has released 55,404. South Korea on Saturday morning reported 174 new cases.

The virus continued popping up in new places, however, with countries like Colombia and Togo reporting their first confirmed cases.

Questions swirled around whether Iran could control its outbreak, as the number of reported infections jumped beyond 4,700 on Friday, with 124 deaths. Iran set up checkpoints to limit travel and had firefighters spray disinfectant on an 18-kilometer (11-mile) stretch of Tehran's most famous avenue.

"It would be great if they did it every day," grocery store owner Reza Razaienejad said. "It should not be just a one-time thing."

The 100,000 figure of global infections is largely symbolic, but dwarfs other major outbreaks in recent decades, such as SARS, MERS and Ebola. The virus is still much less widespread than annual flu epidemics, which result in up to 5 million annual severe cases around the world and from 290,000 to 650,000 deaths annually, according to WHO.

But the epidemic's economic impact snowballed, with world stocks and the price of oil dropping sharply again Friday.

The travel decline and a broader economic downturn linked to the outbreak threatened to hit already-struggling communities for months. In response to plummeting demand, German airline Lufthansa announced a reduction of its capacity in coming weeks to as much as 50% of pre-coronavirus outbreak levels. Slovakia banned all flights to and from Italy.

The head of the U.N.'s food agency, the World Food Program, warned of potential for "absolute devastation" as the outbreak's effects ripple through Africa and the Middle East. India scrambled to stave off an epidemic that could overwhelm its under-funded, under-staffed health care system, which lacks enough labs or hospitals for its 1.3 billion people.

"We're seeing more countries affected with lower incomes, with weaker health systems and that's more concerning," WHO chief Ghebreyesus said.

Inconsistent health insurance and sick leave policies put the earnings of millions of workers' who can't work from home — waiters, drivers, delivery workers and more — at risk. In the U.S. the AFL-CIO labor federation urged the government to issue emergency regulations outlining employers' responsibilities to protect workers from infectious diseases.

The fear and the crackdowns that swept through China are now shifting westward, as workers in Europe and the U.S. stay home, authorities vigorously sanitize public places and consumers flock to stores for household staples.

Nation after nation put some travel restrictions into place, blocking visitors from hard-hit areas like China, South Korea, Italy and Iran. The United Nations' top climate change official said her agency won't hold any physical meetings at its headquarters in Germany or elsewhere until the end of April.

French Health Minister Olivier Veran said children would be banned from visiting patients in hospitals and other health facilities across the country and that patients would be limited to one adult visit at a time. Spanish officials announced a month-long closure of 200 centers in and around Madrid where the elderly go for daytime care and activities.

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"The Western world is now following some of China's playbook," Chris Beauchamp, a market analyst at the financial firm IG, said of the reaction to flu-like illness that for most people causes mild or moderate symptoms such as fever and cough but can hit elderly or sick people much harder.

Off California's coast, a Grand Princess cruise ship remained at sea with passengers confined to their cabins as Vice President Mike Pence said 21 people on the ship — almost all crew members — had tested positive for coronavirus. Pence said the government was planning to bring the Grand Princess cruise ship into a "non-commercial port" where all the passengers and crew will be tested.

Thailand on Friday blocked a separate cruise ship from docking, worried because it carried dozens of passengers from Italy, which with 197 virus deaths is the center of Europe's epidemic.

In the U.S. the number of cases surpassed 230, scattered across 18 states. The University of Washington announced Friday it would stop holding classes and teach students online, a decision affecting some 57,000 students. The state has at least 70 confirmed COVID-19 cases, most in the Seattle area and the highest U.S. state death toll at 13.

As the numbers kept growing in Europe, Serbia threatened to deploy the army to keep the virus at bay, and Hungary used virus fears to tighten its doors against migrants.

In Switzerland, officials reported 210 new virus cases on Friday, up from 90 a day earlier, and the military was being readied to provide support services at hospitals.

"This wave will come, it will rise, but it will be over at some point," said Daniel Koch, head of the department for communicable diseases at the country's Federal Office of Health.

The Netherlands reported its first virus death Friday while Serbia, Slovakia, Peru and Cameroon announced their first infections. Even Vatican City was hit, with the tiny city-state confirming its first case Friday. The Vatican has insisted that 83-year-old Pope Francis, who has been sick, only has a cold.

WHO officials warned against having "false hopes" that the virus could fade away when warmer summer temperatures come to northern countries.

"Every day we slow down the epidemic is another day governments can prepare their health workers to detect, test, treat and care for patients," WHO chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus told reporters.

Sedensky reported from Bangkok. Associated Press writers contributing to this report were Alan Clendenning in Phoenix; Jamey Keaten in Geneva; Kim Tong-Hyung and Hyung-jin Kim in Seoul, South Korea; Aya Batrawy and Jon Gambrell in Dubai, United Arab Emirates; Nicole Winfield in Rome; Colleen Barry in Milan, Italy; Dusan Stojanovic in Belgrade; Sylvie Corbet in Paris; Gene Johnson in Seattle; Olga Rodriguez in San Francisco; and Mohammed Daraghmeh in Bethlehem, West Bank.

Follow AP coverage of the virus outbreak at <https://apnews.com/VirusOutbreak> and <https://apnews.com/UnderstandingtheOutbreak>

The Associated Press receives support for health and science coverage from the Howard Hughes Medical Institute's Department of Science Education. The AP is solely responsible for all content.

Nursing home showed few signs it prepared for virus outbreak

By **BERNARD CONDON and CARLA K. JOHNSON** Associated Press

KIRKLAND, Wash. (AP) — In the days before the Life Care Center nursing home became ground zero for coronavirus deaths in the U.S., there were few signs it was girding against an illness spreading rapidly around the world.

Visitors came in as they always did, sometimes without signing in. Staffers had only recently begun wearing face masks, but the frail residents and those who came to see them were not asked to do so. And organized events went on as planned, including a purple- and gold-festooned Mardi Gras party last week, where dozens of residents and visitors packed into a common room, passed plates of sausage, rice and king cake, and sang as a Dixieland band played "When the Saints Go Marching In."

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"We were all eating, drinking, singing and clapping to the music," said Pat McCauley, who was there visiting a friend. "In hindsight, it was a real germ-fest."

That was just three days before last Saturday's announcement that a Life Care health care worker in her 40s and a resident in her 70s had been diagnosed with the new virus. The news would be followed over the next few days by the first resident deaths: two men in their 70s, a woman in her 70s and a woman in her 80s.

Of the 14 deaths across the nation as of Friday, at least 10 have been linked to the Seattle-area nursing home, along with dozens of other infections among residents, staff and family members.

A man in his 60s who died Thursday had been a visitor to the nursing home in Kirkland, public health officials announced late Friday.

As disease detectives try to solve the mystery of how exactly the coronavirus got inside Life Care, they also are questioning whether the 190-bed home that had been fined before over its handling of infections was as vigilant as it could have been in protecting its vulnerable patients against an outbreak that had already killed thousands in China and around the world.

A team of federal and state regulators planned to visit Life Care on Saturday, a move that could lead to sanctions, including a possible takeover of its management. The team will look at the home's practices, including infection control.

In an outbreak like this, "it's not business as usual, so business as usual is not going to be OK," said Dr. Mark Dworkin, an epidemiologist at the University of Illinois at Chicago School of Public Health. "There needs to be some sort of mobilization within the facility for enhanced adherence to procedures. Infection control and visitors logging in. These things need to be translated out across the country."

Life Care did not respond to questions from The Associated Press that were sent to an email address set up for news media inquiries. In the week since the outbreak began, the center has issued statements saying it grieves with the families who have lost loved ones. It also has noted that visits have been halted, staffers are being screened and residents with any kind of respiratory illness have been placed in isolation.

Several family members and friends who visited residents at Life Care over the past few weeks told the AP that they didn't notice any unusual precautions, and none said they were asked about their health or if they had visited China or any other countries struck by the virus.

Pat and Bob McCauley, who visited a friend eight times in two weeks before the outbreak, said they noticed some staff members wearing face masks during a visit on Feb. 26 that included the Mardi Gras party but didn't think much of it. They went to a common room with a half-dozen tables and began singing along with their friend as residents in wheelchairs bunched together to get clear view of the banjo, bass and washboard players.

"As it became more crowded, we helped move patients into seats, move wheelchairs into places between tables, holding doors, adjusting tables and chairs to accommodate wheelchairs," Pat McCauley said. "We had very close contact with numerous patients."

Two days later, when the couple arrived for another visit, they realized the reason for the masks. A staff member told them at the door that they would have to wear ones themselves because a "respiratory virus" had spread.

They turned around and went home.

Lori Spencer, whose 81-year-old mother is at Life Care, said she also noticed the masks on a visit that same Wednesday and how packed the place was.

"The hallways were crowded with people. The place was buzzing," she said. "All the doors to the rooms were open, and I could see there were multiple people in there. I kept thinking how people were on top of each other."

Spencer said that firefighters had just visited the place, too, and there were student nurses as well.

A union representative for the Kirkland firefighters said Thursday that all firefighters tested so far have come back negative for the coronavirus, but they want more testing.

"We're cooking together and eating together," Evan Hurley said. "Trying to actually trace this all back to

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who's been exposed is difficult."

Betsy McCaughey, chairwoman of the nonprofit Committee to Reduce Infection Deaths, said that by the day the Mardi Gras party was held, the nursing home should have been doing more to protect its residents.

"All these nursing facilities hold parties," she said. "The issue is: Were attendees asked ahead of time, 'How are you feeling? ... Have you traveled to one of the coronavirus hot spots? Has someone in your family traveled to a hot spot? Is there any illness in your family?'"

McCaughey estimates 380,000 nursing homes residents die each year of infections, about half of them preventable. She said federal regulators are largely to blame for not holding nursing homes to the same standards as hospitals. While residents of nursing homes may need more social interaction than hospital patients, "they shouldn't have to sacrifice their lives for it," she said.

Exactly how the virus made its way into the nursing home remains a mystery. One theory is that someone who became infected overseas brought it to Washington state and passed it on to others. Ordinarily in nursing homes, bedridden patients have the virus brought to them by visitors or staff members who are sick.

While Life Care generally has a good rating with the federal Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, state inspectors last April found infection-control deficiencies following two flu outbreaks that affected 17 residents and staff. Life Care was fined \$67,000. A follow-up inspection found that it had corrected the problems.

As of Friday, 69 residents remained at Life Care after 15 were taken to the hospital within the past 24 hours. King County Executive Dow Constantine said the state has offered to help families set up home care if they want to move their loved ones out.

Dr. Stephen C. Morris, a University of Washington School of Medicine public health specialist who was sent into the nursing home to evaluate patients Thursday, said that in the midst of this crisis, the staff there needed help.

"They need nurses who are better trained. They need doctors who are better trained," he said.

Family members said that since the nursing home has been locked down, they have agonized over leaving their loved ones inside and have resorted to communicating with them by tablet computers, cellphones and signs held up at the windows.

Patricia Herrick, whose 89-year-old mother died Thursday, said it was difficult to know that her mother was caught in the epicenter of the outbreak, in a room so nearby but completely inaccessible.

"Knowing that she was in an environment that is dangerous and not being able to help ... it was awful," she said. She said she wants her mother tested to see if she died of the virus.

Herrick said she noticed some staffers were wearing masks three days before the Mardi Gras party visit, but she didn't think much of it. She also said she walked right in that day without signing the visitors log. But she thinks the problem lies not with the staff of Life Care but with government health officials.

"Even at the state level, the department of health should have dictated what these facilities should do: No parties. Anyone with respiratory problems goes into isolation," Herrick said. "This is a wake-up call. There are holes in our system."

Condon reported from New York. AP photographer Ted Warren in Kirkland contributed to this report.

The Associated Press receives support for health and science coverage from the Howard Hughes Medical Institute's Department of Science Education. The AP is solely responsible for all content.

Follow AP coverage of the virus outbreak at <https://apnews.com/VirusOutbreak> and <https://apnews.com/UnderstandingtheOutbreak>

Trump's CDC visit turns into scattershot defense on virus

By JONATHAN LEMIRE, DARLENE SUPERVILLE and DEB RIECHMANN Associated Press

ATLANTA (AP) — President Donald Trump's visit to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention on Friday turned into a scattershot defense of his administration's handling of the coronavirus outbreak, veering into political score-settling, exaggerations and talk harking back to his impeachment.

With financial markets slowing and the virus spreading, Trump tried once more to quell the growing alarm that has prompted travel to be curtailed and events to be cancelled from coast to coast. But Trump, wearing his "Keep America Great" campaign hat while discussing the global worry, repeatedly detoured from his message of reassurance.

Trump called Washington state's governor, who is dealing with the most serious outbreak in the nation, a "snake." He said he'd prefer that people exposed to the virus on a cruise ship be left aboard so they wouldn't be added to the count for the nation's total number of infections. And he falsely claimed that a test for the virus was available immediately to all who want it.

He also suggested the accuracy of the coronavirus test was "perfect — like the letter was perfect." With that, Trump was making a comparison to the July phone call with Ukraine's president that led to his impeachment. Trump, who was acquitted by the Senate last month, has insisted he did nothing wrong.

Before departing Washington, Trump signed an \$8.3 billion coronavirus response funding bill at the White House and instructed the public: "Be calm. It will go away."

"We have very low numbers compared to major countries throughout the world. Our numbers are lower than just about anybody," Trump said about cases of the virus.

But his messaging was more scattered at the CDC, reflective of the on-again, off-again, on-again nature of the trip itself. The White House had announced early Friday that Trump's trip to the CDC was canceled because of concern about a possible infection there, but that person tested negative and Trump ended up going after all.

During his visit to the CDC, Trump touted the ratings of his town hall this week on Fox News and mocked a CNN reporter. He cut off Health and Human Services Secretary Alex Azar as he tried to counsel Americans to be patient. And despite calling this week for bipartisanship during the crisis, Trump said he told Vice President Mike Pence not to be complimentary during his Thursday meeting with Gov. Jay Inslee of Washington because "he is a snake."

"So I told Mike not to be complimentary of the governor because that governor is a snake, OK? Inslee. I said, 'If you're nice to him he will take advantage.' And I would have said no. Let me just tell you: We have a lot of problems with the governor, the governor of Washington. ... So Mike may be happy with him but I'm not."

Trump also insisted that for those concerned about the virus, "Anybody who wants a test, can get a test."

Pence, who chairs the federal coronavirus task force, at a later briefing suggested a timeline of "weeks" before the test would be widely available to the general public.

Pence was also asked whether Trump's comments about Inslee and impeachment raised questions about how seriously the president was taking the virus. The vice president responded, "I promise you, President Trump has no higher priority than the health and safety of the American people."

Inslee tweeted his own response to Trump's comments: "It's important for leaders to speak with one voice. I just wish the president and vice president could get on the same page."

Trump also said he talked on the phone with California Gov. Gavin Newsom about the 3,500 people stuck on a cruise ship anchored off the coast of California. He said he'd prefer for the passengers to remain on the ship — in part so they would not count against the total number of victims in the United States.

"I don't need to have the numbers double because of the people on that ship," he said. Trump did say he would defer to the medical experts and Pence later said the ship would be brought to a U.S. port.

The legislation Trump signed at the White House provides federal public health agencies with money for vaccines, tests and potential treatments and helps state and local governments prepare and respond to the threat.

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"It's an unforeseen problem," Trump said of the virus. "It came out of nowhere. We're taking care of it." The president, while touring the CDC, talked up his ability to understand the virus, although he has repeatedly misstated how long it would take for a vaccine to be developed and available.

"I like this stuff. I really get it," Trump said. "People are surprised that I understand it. ... Maybe I have a natural ability."

This story has been corrected to add full name of CDC: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Riechmann reported from Washington. Lemire reported from New York.

Roller-coaster week ends with bond yields, stocks sinking

By STAN CHOE and ALEX VEIGA AP Business Writers

NEW YORK (AP) — A dizzying, brutal week of trading dropped one last round of harrowing swings on investors Friday.

After skidding sharply through the day as fear pounded markets, steep drops for stocks and bond yields suddenly eased up in the last hour. By the end of trading, the S&P 500 had more than halved its loss for the day to 1.7% and even locked in a gain for the week.

It's the latest lurch in a wild ride that has sent stocks flipping between huge gains and losses — mostly losses the last two weeks. Investors are trying to guess how much economic damage the coronavirus will ultimately inflict, and they're shifting by the minute as the number of new infections piles up on one hand and central banks and governments offer stimulus on the other.

All the uncertainty has left markets churning.

"It's anyone's guess at this point why it rallied into the close," Adam Taback, chief investment officer for Wells Fargo Private Bank, said of the last hour of Friday's trading.

Earlier in the day, the S&P 500 had been down 4%. Even more alarming was another breathtaking drop in Treasury yields to record lows.

The 10-year Treasury yield falls when investors are worried about a weaker economy and inflation, and it sank below 0.70% at one point. Earlier this week, it had never in history been below 1%. It was at 1.90% at the start of the year, before the virus fears took hold.

Even a better-than-expected report on U.S. jobs wasn't enough to pull markets from the undertow. It's usually the most anticipated piece of economic data each month, but investors looked past February's solid hiring numbers because they came from before the new coronavirus was spreading quickly across the country.

"The bond market says the monster under the bed is much bigger and scarier than anyone expects right now," said Ryan Detrick, senior market strategist at LPL Financial.

At the heart of the drops is the fear of the unknown. The virus usually causes only mild to moderate symptoms. But because it's new, experts aren't sure how far it will spread and how much damage it will ultimately do, both to health and to the economy.

The number of infections has topped 100,000 worldwide and businesses are reporting hits to their earnings. Danger for companies is coming from two sides. On the supply side, for example, Apple has said slowdowns in manufacturing iPhones in China will hurt its sales totals. On the demand side, an airline industry group says the outbreak could lose as much as \$113 billion in revenue as people cancel trips.

Friday's drop for the S&P 500 was the latest swing in a remarkably turbulent week. It started off with a 4.6% jump on Monday, then fell 2.8%, rose 4.2% and fell 3.4%.

"At this point no one can really explain why the markets behave the way they do, and what may be next," said Ipek Ozkardeskaya, a senior analyst at Swissquote Bank. "The only thing we can say is this high volatility is bad."

It was only two weeks ago that the S&P 500 set a record high, on Feb. 19. It's lost 12.2% since then.

The bond market sounded the alarm on the effects of the virus long before the stock market, and yields

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fell further Friday.

The Fed surprised the market earlier this week by cutting interest rates half a percentage point. Investors expect other central banks around the world to follow suit in hopes of supporting markets.

Eric Rosengren, president of the Boston Federal Reserve Bank, said Friday the Fed could start using new tools to combat a downturn, such as buying a broader range of financial assets.

At the same time, doubts are high about how much effect lower rates can have. Cheaper loans may encourage people and business to make big purchases, but they can't get workers back into factories if they're out on quarantine.

A boost for stocks came earlier this week after Congress agreed on an \$8.3 billion bill to combat the coronavirus, which President Donald Trump signed Friday. But investors say a slowdown in the economy seems inevitable, and many analysts expect the market's sharp swings to continue as long as the number of new cases accelerates.

"As the market tries to find its bottom, it's going to go up and down, up and down, until it has a reason to steadily change in one direction or the other," said Taback of Wells Fargo Private Bank.

MARKET ROUNDUP:

The S&P 500 fell 51.57, or 1.7%, to 2,972.37. It rose 0.6% for the week.

The Dow Jones Industrial Average lost 256.50, or 1%, to 25,864.78. The Nasdaq fell 162.98, or 1.9%, to 8,575.62.

The yield on the 10-year Treasury dropped to 0.77% from 0.92% late Thursday. It rallied from as low as 0.66% earlier in the day, according to Tradweb.

Benchmark U.S. crude tumbled \$4.62, or 10.1%, to settle at \$41.28 per barrel. It was the worst day for oil in more than five years. Brent crude, the international standard, dropped \$4.72, or 9.4%, to \$45.27.

In Europe, the French CAC 40 dropped 4.1%, and the German DAX lost 3.4%. The FTSE 100 in London fell 3.6%.

Japan's Nikkei 225 fell 2.7%, South Korea's Kospi lost 2.2% and stocks in Shanghai dropped 1.2%.

Gold rose \$4.40 to settle at \$1,672.40 per ounce. Silver fell 13 cents to \$17.26 an ounce, and copper slipped 1 cent to \$2.56 a pound.

Wholesale gasoline fell 13 cents to \$1.39 a gallon, heating oil fell 10 cents to \$1.39 a gallon and natural gas lost 6 cents to \$1.71 per 1,000 cubic feet.

AP Economics Writers Christopher Rugaber and Paul Wiseman and AP Business Writers Damian J. Troise and Yuri Kageyama contributed.

Ohio State settling some suits over doc abuse; cost unclear

By KANTELE FRANKO Associated Press

COLUMBUS, Ohio (AP) — Ohio State reached an unspecified settlement with nearly half of the roughly 350 men who say they were sexually abused decades ago by a team doctor who was jokingly known among some athletes by nicknames like "Dr. Jelly Paws."

The settlement announced Friday is the first for accusers of the late Richard Strauss, who say the doctor groped and otherwise mistreated students for two decades while school officials knew about concerns but did little to stop him.

With the settlement not yet finalized, the school and others involved are staying mum about how much would be paid.

Ohio State said in a statement that a special overseer independent of the university will help allocate the funds to individual accusers based on their experiences and the harm done. The payments will come from "existing institutional discretionary funding," not tuition or taxpayer or donor money, according to the school.

Rick Schulte, a lawyer who represented former Ohio State football players, wrestlers and other athletes, said the settlement will help the men move forward and heal.

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"The bravery of our clients is humbling," Schulte said in the statement shared by the university. "We are pleased that Ohio State stepped forward and did the right thing."

Schulte and university officials wouldn't say whether specifics of the settlement had yet been shared with the affected plaintiffs.

"Strauss' conduct was reprehensible, and the university's failures at the time are completely unacceptable," Ohio State President Michael Drake said in the Friday statement. "While nothing can undo what happened here years ago, today's university has a responsibility to support our former students and alumni, and this initial settlement is another important step in the process of restorative justice."

Mike DiSabato, the ex-wrestler whose claims in 2018 helped prompt the university to have a law firm investigate allegations about the doctor, said the settlement isn't what he hoped but "is a deal that allows us to move forward with closure."

It remains to be seen how the deal might compare with those from other recent sexual misconduct scandals at major universities, including Michigan State's \$500 million settlement for 500-plus female victims of imprisoned sports doctor Larry Nassar.

Lawsuits by other Strauss accusers remain unresolved after months of mediation, and they have asked a judge to let them resume litigation. The most vocal among them have argued for a settlement that would mandate institutional change and be costly enough to convey that Ohio State and other schools can't let abuse happen again.

"The other half of us that haven't settled have experienced significant sexual abuse and significant cover-up by Ohio State, so we feel we should be compensated similar to what Michigan State and Penn State people were," said Brian Garrett, a lead plaintiff in one of the still-pending cases.

Lawyers for a different group of plaintiffs said in a statement that they were excluded from the negotiations that led to Friday's settlement. They called for the university to share details of the settlement so that all of the men could judge it for themselves.

Some of the accusers have said they felt their federal lawsuits against the school were their only way to seek justice and accountability now because they can't confront Strauss, who died in 2005.

As more accusers came forward or sued, the university learned of about 1,500 alleged instances of decades-old sexual misconduct by Strauss, and old records and new interviews revealed a much different portrait of him from the one implied by his unblemished employment file.

Alumni began sharing stories of being groped barehanded during mandatory medical exams or when they sought treatment for unrelated ailments like coughs or shoulder injuries, and one former athlete described being drugged and raped. Other ex-athletes recalled a voyeuristic doctor who showered in their locker rooms and was joked about as "Dr. Jelly Paws."

In an investigation conducted for the school, a law firm concluded Strauss sexually abused young men between 1979 and 1997 in medical exams at campus athletic facilities, the student health center, his off-campus men's clinic and his home. Though concerns were raised with athletics and student health officials, none reported Strauss to law enforcement or regulators.

When the State Medical Board of Ohio eventually investigated him in 1996 after he complained about another physician, credible evidence about Strauss' sexual misconduct was ignored and, inexplicably, no action was taken against him, according to a state panel's review of the old investigation.

No one has publicly defended Strauss as dozens of men have recounted how the abuse has caused long-lasting harm to their health and relationships.

In lawsuits against Ohio State, they alleged the school violated the federal Title IX law that bars sex discrimination in education. The university initially argued those claims were time-barred by law.

Beyond the litigation, Ohio State and some of its former employees face more scrutiny.

The U.S. Department of Education Office for Civil Rights has said it is examining whether the school responded "promptly and equitably" to students' complaints.

And Ohio's medical board is reviewing whether there are any licensed Ohio doctors who knew or suspected Strauss' misconduct and should have reported it but didn't. If so, they could face disciplinary action,

though Ohio's window for criminally prosecuting that has passed.

The medical board also is reviewing about 2,000 closed cases of alleged sexual misconduct or impropriety by doctors over the past 25 years to determine whether any others involved evidence of criminal behavior that was ignored.

Strauss' personnel records indicate he worked at five other schools before Ohio State. None of those has said any concerns were raised about him.

The claims about Strauss are strikingly similar to accusations made public recently alleging decades-old abuse by another sports doctor who worked at the University of Michigan during the same era.

Follow Franko on Twitter at <http://www.twitter.com/kantele10>. See AP's coverage of the allegations here: <https://apnews.com/OhioStateTeamDoctor>.

Trump names Rep. Mark Meadows his new chief of staff

By **ZEKE MILLER, JONATHAN LEMIRE and JILL COLVIN** Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — In the midst of one of the most daunting crises of his administration, President Donald Trump announced he had made a major staff overhaul, replacing his acting chief of staff Mick Mulvaney with Republican Rep. Mark Meadows.

While much of the country was focused on the spreading coronavirus, Trump announced the surprise reshuffle by Friday night tweet, saying Mulvaney would become the U.S. special envoy for Northern Ireland.

"I have long known and worked with Mark, and the relationship is a very good one," he wrote, thanking Mulvaney — who never shook his "acting" title — "for having served the Administration so well."

The long-rumored move comes as Trump has been pulling together a team of loyalists and allies ahead of what is expected to be a bitter reelection fight. But the timing — as his administration was already facing criticism over its handling of the outbreak — threatened to exacerbate concerns about the government's ability to protect the nation from a virus that has now infected more than 100,000 people worldwide. Meadows will be Trump's fourth chief of staff in as many years.

Mulvaney had been leading the administration's interagency response to the virus until Trump designated Vice President Mike Pence to lead the whole-of-government effort more than a week ago.

It was just one of a long series of downgrades for Mulvaney, whose relationship with Trump began to sour not long after he was named to the position in December 2018. Indeed, Trump had been eyeing the change for many months, according to people familiar with his thinking, but wanted to wait until after the impeachment saga was over to make his move.

Meadows, the onetime leader of the House Freedom Caucus, is a longtime Trump confidant and sounding board, whose political instincts Trump respects. He announced last year that he would not be seeking reelection for his North Carolina House seat, and said he expected to join Trump's team in some capacity, though it was not clear in what role.

He was officially offered the job Thursday, according to one of the people familiar with the matter, who, like others, spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to discuss the changes publicly. Mulvaney was informed Friday.

Some outside advisers had cautioned Trump that making such a high-profile switch during the coronavirus crisis would rattle markets craving stability, and his decision to make the announcement after Wall Street had closed Friday was partly informed by those concerns, the people said.

First elected in the post-Tea Party wave of 2012, Meadows quickly established himself as a leader of a new generation of conservative Republicans on Capitol Hill. He served as chairman of the unyielding Freedom Caucus, and his antics in the House helped spur Speaker John Boehner's sudden retirement.

As Trump ascended in 2016, Meadows switched from his earlier backing of Texas Sen. Ted Cruz and — urged on by his wife — joined the Trump train. Since then he has proven himself an unwavering Trump ally.

A skilled negotiator, Meadows is seen as both a leader and an outlier among Republicans on Capitol Hill. Meadows was central to talks on the failed effort to repeal Obamacare and pass the GOP tax cuts. But

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in many ways, he remains his own counsel, with a skill set and status that may serve him well in Trump's White House.

Meadows has also made clear to the White House and those close to the president that he has no plans to try to rein in Trump, as others — like Mulvaney's predecessor, retired four-star Gen. John Kelly — have tried and failed to do.

Having seen how Kelly's efforts to impose military order had grated on Trump and antagonized outside allies, Mulvaney, a former congressman from South Carolina, took a laissez-faire approach, making clear he believed his job was to manage the staff and not the president.

He adopted the "Let Trump be Trump" mantra that had served others in Trump's orbit well and focused instead on trying to boost staff morale and wooing lawmakers at the Camp David presidential retreat. But while he never irritated Trump and outside allies, Mulvaney had been relegated to the sidelines even before a disastrous mid-October press conference in which he insisted quid pro quo was normal when it came to foreign policy, undercutting the president's position that there was no such thing in his dealings with Ukraine.

Still, his allies had repeatedly brushed off rumblings of his imminent departure and had said as recently as last month that he planned to stay at least through the election in November.

Trump had other plans. Ever since he was acquitted by the Senate on the impeachment charges, Trump has been on a tear to rid his administration of those he deems insufficiently loyal. And he has been assembling a team of trusted confidants as he prepares for a tough reelection fight.

Still, one person close to Mulvaney insisted he was pleased with the decision to bring in Meadows, noting the two were friends and had served together on the Freedom Caucus. Indeed, they said Mulvaney had raised the idea of Meadows as chief of staff before Trump had tapped Mulvaney for the job, and said he discussed the plan with Trump following his trip to India last week.

Lemire reported from New York. Associated Press writer Lisa Mascaro contributed to this report.

One more victory: Biden wins most Super Tuesday delegates

By **SETH BORENSTEIN** and **NICHOLAS RICCARDI** Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Former Vice President Joe Biden has put an exclamation point on his Super Tuesday victories by winning the most delegates on the presidential primary calendar's biggest night.

The Associated Press has allocated more than 92% of the 1,344 delegates that were up for grabs on Tuesday, and Biden has such a commanding lead that Vermont Sen. Bernie Sanders cannot catch up as the remaining votes from that day's 14 state primaries are counted.

Biden built his delegate lead on Tuesday by racking up huge victories in Alabama, North Carolina and Virginia, while scoring a narrow win in Texas. In all, Biden won 10 states and Sanders won four.

"Look, not long ago the press and the pundits declared this campaign dead, but this week we saw tremendous support across the nation," Biden told supporters by phone Friday evening. "We changed the whole narrative."

Sanders won California and three other states — Colorado, Utah and his home state of Vermont. Although Sanders won the biggest state, California, he didn't rack up the commanding lead required to surpass Biden's haul.

Biden has won at least 610 delegates from Tuesday's contests, while Sanders has won at least 513, according to the AP delegate count. There are 102 delegates still to be allocated.

Most of the delegates still not allocated are in California, with the next biggest chunks in Colorado and Utah. Despite Sanders winning all three states, he has already been awarded the largest share of delegates in those states.

Many of the delegates are being withheld because it is unclear whether former New York Mayor Mike Bloomberg will finish above the 15% threshold in California, which would score him a significant number of statewide delegates. Regardless of whether Bloomberg reaches the threshold, Sanders can't catch Biden

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because many of the remaining delegates would then go to Biden.

Bloomberg dropped out of the presidential race on Wednesday.

Overall, Biden has 664 delegates to Sanders' 573. Sanders started the week with a six-delegate lead. Biden's performance was all the more remarkable considering his slow start in the first three contests. Less than a month ago, Biden didn't win a single delegate in New Hampshire.

The contest could now become a drawn-out two-man battle for delegates to win the nomination at the Democratic National Convention in July. It takes a majority of pledged delegates won in primaries and caucuses — 1,991 — to win the nomination on the first ballot. With only two viable candidates left in the race, the prospect of a contested convention is remote.

The race now enters a key stretch as voters in 10 states cast ballots over the next two weeks. Sanders scrapped an appearance in Mississippi to campaign in Michigan — the largest prize on Tuesday, when six states representing 352 delegates vote. Sanders' move was an acknowledgement that he stands little chance of blunting Biden's edge with black voters in the South and must focus on fighting back in the Midwest.

Four states vote on March 17, including delegate-rich Illinois, Ohio and Florida, where Sanders could struggle because of the state's older electorate and his recent praise of Cuban leader Fidel Castro.

When Sanders ran against Hillary Clinton in 2016, Clinton won in Florida, Illinois and Ohio — the three states with the most delegates at stake in the mid-March primaries. In Florida, the biggest prize of the next two weeks, Clinton nearly doubled Sanders' vote.

Riccardi reported from Denver. Associated Press writer Bill Barrow in Atlanta contributed to this report.

Catch up on the 2020 election campaign with AP experts on our weekly politics podcast, "Ground Game."

Let the sun shine later as daylight saving time back Sunday

WASHINGTON (AP) — Like clockwork, daylight saving time strikes again this weekend.

Watch for it at 2 a.m. local time Sunday in most of the United States. Don't forget to set your clocks an hour ahead, usually before bed Saturday night, to avoid being late for Sunday morning activities.

With the annual change, sunlight will extend longer into the evening, but the shine will take longer to emerge in the morning.

No time change is observed in Hawaii, most of Arizona, Puerto Rico, the U.S. Virgin Islands, American Samoa, Guam and the Northern Marianas.

Standard time returns Nov. 1.

A poll last year by The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research found that 7 in 10 Americans preferred not to switch back and forth to mark daylight saving time. But there was no agreement on which time clocks ought to follow.

Truce brings some relief but no joy for Syrians in Idlib

By ZEINA KARAM and BASSEM MROUE Associated Press

BEIRUT (AP) — For the first time in three months, Omar Zaqzaq says he and his family slept through the entire night, without an airstrike or artillery shell jolting them out of bed.

Idlib's skies were completely free of Russian and Syrian government warplanes Friday as a cease-fire deal took hold in Syria's northwestern province, the last rebel stronghold.

The truce, brokered by Turkey and Russia, halted a terrifying three-month air and ground campaign that killed hundreds and sent 1 million people fleeing toward the Turkish border.

But there is no joy among residents of the province or for the hundreds of thousands of displaced people who say they won't be returning to their homes anytime soon.

"The truce is only a chance for the two sides to catch their breath" said Zaqzaq, who lives in the rebel-held town of Binnish, along with his wife, 5-year-old daughter Maria and 3-year-old son Akef. "It's a very fragile truce and I don't think it will last long."

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The agreement, announced Thursday after a six-hour meeting between the Turkish and Russian presidents in Moscow, essentially froze the conflict lines in Idlib. It does not force Syrian President Bashar Assad's forces to roll back significant military gains made in Russian-backed offensive for the past three months — a key Turkish demand prior to the talks.

That effectively rules out the possibility of hundreds of thousands of displaced people returning to their homes, now under Assad's control.

"If we wanted to live under their mercy (Russia and Syrian government) we would have stayed there," said Alaa Turki Hammam, a 25-year-old who fled his home near Marat al-Numan and is now at a camp west of the mountainous town of Haranabush near the Turkish border.

"Now, after this meeting, we have lost even one percent hope that we would return to our homes," he added.

Russian President Vladimir Putin and Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan each back opposing sides in the conflict and have become the main power brokers in the war-torn country.

The deal announced in Moscow is the latest of many cease-fire agreements for Idlib in recent years. All have ended up unraveling after few months, triggering new government offensives that captured more territory from the opposition. Government forces now control much of Syria after evicting rebels from other parts of country.

The cease-fire deal appears to achieve Moscow's key goal of allowing the Syrian government to keep control of the north-south highway known as the M5. Syrian forces captured its last segments in the latest offensive.

The deal sets up a security corridor along the M4, a key east-west highway in Idlib. According to the accord, published in Syrian pro-government media, Russian and Turkish troops are supposed to begin joint patrols on the M4 on March 15.

The deal lacked specifics or a known mechanism to enforce the truce, saying that details related to the security corridor along the M4 will be worked out by Russian and Turkish officials within a week.

Under a Russia-Turkey agreement reached in the summer of 2018, the two highways were supposed to be opened before the end of that year. But rejection of the deal by al-Qaida-linked militants in Idlib kept the two vital roads closed.

Turkey, a strong backer of the rebels, has intervened in the war four times to carve out zones of influence. It has sent thousands of troops to Idlib, leading to direct clashes in which 60 Turkish soldiers and scores of Syrian forces were killed in the past month.

On Friday, Erdogan said there would be "no question of change" regarding Turkey's 12 observation posts inside Idlib, some of which now fall within Syrian government-controlled territory. The posts are manned by Turkish troops and are in place as part of the 2018 agreement with Russia. Erdogan's remarks were made on his flight back from Moscow and were carried by the state-run Anadolu Agency.

Despite the disappointment and skepticism, the cease-fire brought relief to a weary and displaced population traumatized by years of conflict and weeks of relentless bombardment amid freezing weather.

"Warplanes that used to terrorize children at night and commit massacres are not flying overhead now," said Salwa Abdul-Rahman, a citizen journalist who spoke by phone to The Associated Press from Idlib's provincial capital, which bears the same name.

Abdul-Rahman, however, said many residents who were displaced in the past three months "are angry because they were hoping to return to their homes" that are now under government control. She added that people who "are now living in tents discovered they cannot return."

"This matter concerns us, Syrians, but it seems we don't have a say in this. They are playing chess with us," she said of the Russia-Turkey agreement.

The European Union's top diplomats met Friday in Croatia to discuss what to do about Syria. Upon arrival, EU foreign policy chief Josep Borrell described the cease-fire as "good news."

"Let's see how it works, that is the precondition in order to increase humanitarian help for the people in Idlib," Borrell said.

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The province is home to thousands of al-Qaida-linked militants, many of whom reject a political solution for Syria's nine-year conflict, which has killed more than 400,000 people. The province also is home to about 3 million people, many of whom fled from other parts of Syria.

Assad has vowed to regain control of all parts of the country lost in the war.

Zaqaq, the father of two in Binnish, said the truce "gave legitimacy" to the advances by Syrian forces in the past weeks and that, bit by bit, they will take back more chunks of Idlib after claiming cease-fire violations.

"This happened in Daraa, Ghouta, Rastan and now now it is biting off new areas under the pretext that the cease-fire was violated. They will then negotiate a truce from the (next) area they reach," he said.

Associated Press writers Suzan Fraser in Ankara, Turkey, and Angela Charlton in Paris contributed.

Asylum-seekers, coronavirus collide with complicated results

By PABLO GORONDI Associated Press

BUDAPEST, Hungary (AP) — No entry, says Hungary. Not all at once, says Greece. Watch out, says Croatia: They might have the coronavirus.

This week, thousands of asylum-seekers sit at the intersection of a pair of fast-moving news stories — a spike in migration in Europe and uncertainty about the global spread of the new and sometimes deadly virus. They have found themselves trapped between two worlds, at the mercy of political machinations and governments that are telling them in no uncertain terms: We don't want you here.

The complex situation, which has commanded the attention of rights advocates across Europe and anti-immigration extremists on the ground in at least one nation, is a product of something that happens ever more frequently in today's globalized world: a collision of high-profile global events that places the powerless in a situation far beyond their control.

"The current wave of migrants is not a threat only with the direct risk of terrorism. Most of the illegal migrants are arriving from territories like Iran, which is also a focal point of the coronavirus," said Istvan Hollik, the communications director of Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban's Fidesz party.

"We cannot put at risk the security of the Hungarian people, so we continue to say 'no' to immigration and we protect the Hungarian borders," Hollik said in a video posted Wednesday on Facebook.

Worries about the potential spread of the new virus by migrants and refugees have also been mentioned as a risk factor by officials in Greece and Croatia. In varying degrees, they have identified migrants as security threats and — also in varying degrees — linked them directly to coronavirus fears.

Hungary has also suspended admitting asylum-seekers into a pair of transit zones on the Serbian border, where they file their asylum claims, because of the concerns about the spread of the coronavirus. Officials said the indefinite suspension was done to protect Hungary and the 321 asylum-seekers already in the transit zones.

Four cases of the new virus have been identified in Hungary thus far — including a pair of Iranian students who recently visited their homeland.

Rights advocates in Hungary aren't happy with the approach. They say the government decision to bar asylum-seekers from the border transit zones was part of a "hate campaign demonizing refugees."

"From the point of view of the epidemic risk, this is only an act to keep up appearances," the Hungarian Helsinki Committee said in a statement. It noted that people applying for asylum at the transit zones have to wait in Serbia for extended periods, even years, before being allowed into the transit zones.

"No coronavirus testing is carried on travelers arriving from Serbia at the border crossing a few hundreds yards from the transit zone at Roszke," the group said. As of midday Friday, Serbia had a single confirmed case of the new virus, a 43-year-old man who made several recent trips to Budapest.

Since asylum applications in Hungary can only be made in the transit zones, preventing migrants from entering the complexes built from shipping containers amounts to "the total denial of access to the asylum procedure," the group said.

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In Greece last week, before a migrant crisis on the border with Turkey began, Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis said he planned to step up border security in light of the new virus. He told a cabinet meeting that his approach was informed by the presence of migrants from Afghanistan and particularly Iran, where many cases have been reported. He also outlined plans to build new migrant detention centers on Greece's eastern islands to replace existing ones that are overcrowded and squalid.

"Our islands, which already face public health problems, must be doubly protected," Mitsotakis said. "To put it simply, we must do whatever we can to prevent the coronavirus appearing — especially (on the islands)."

Iranians make up less than 3% of migrant arrivals in Greece, with Afghans accounting for one in two.

In Croatia, Health Minister Vili Beros said the migrants represent a "potential" risk of spreading the coronavirus, adding that the European Union will find a solution for the problem. So far, Croatia has recorded 10 confirmed cases.

And in Serbia, there's also growing anti-migrant sentiment amid the coronavirus spread and the potential of another wave of migrants coming north from Greece. Extremists have organized evening foot patrols in the capital city, Belgrade, threatening migrants, telling them how to behave, where to go and "not to touch" Serbian women.

Serbia's populist president, Aleksandar Vucic, has pledged that he will not allow his country, considered only a transit area for the migrants attempting to reach the EU, to become "a parking lot" for migrants. Far-right parties have even suggested that some 6,000 migrants currently in the Balkan country be kicked out.

On Friday, Serbia recorded its first confirmed case of the coronavirus, and the government ordered the health ministry to establish a quarantine for migrants.

The government of ethnically divided Cyprus last week shut four of nine crossing points along a U.N. controlled buffer zone, saying it wanted to better check for potential carriers of the coronavirus traversing from the breakaway Turkish Cypriot north to the internationally recognized Greek Cypriot south.

Cyprus is beset by its own migrant issues. It says it can no longer cope with a stream of migrants who enter the island mainly from the north to seek asylum in the south. The Cypriot government accuses Turkey of channeling migrants to the south to purposely alter the country's demographic character.

Cypriot government officials insist the crossing point closings have nothing to do either with the migration issue or the complex politics of the island nation's ethnic divide. The 120 mile-long buffer zone is notoriously porous and many migrants cross southward from unguarded areas. They said the measure is a temporary one enacted solely to protect from the possible spread of the virus.

Cypriot President Nicos Anastasiades dismissed criticism of the closures as unjustified, saying the government is obligated to protect all Cypriot citizens.

Hungarian officials have also noted the rising number of migrants caught at their borders in recent months. The government's stringent anti-immigration policies led to the construction in 2015 of fences protected with razor wire on the southern border with Serbia. In 2015, over 400,000 migrants passed through Hungary before the fences were erected.

Orban began expressing increasingly anti-immigration views in early 2015. His 2018 re-election campaign — which saw his Fidesz party win its third consecutive two-thirds majority in parliament — was based on his opposition to immigration, especially by Muslims, whose arrival in large numbers he said would end Europe's Christian culture.

Since the 2015 migrant crisis, Hungary has taken repeated measures to reduce the number of asylum-seekers received in the country. Speaking last month in Rome, Orban noted that "there is not a single Muslim migrant in Hungary."

Nicholas Paphitis in Athens, Greece, Menelaos Hadjicostis in Nicosia, Cyprus, and Dusan Stojanovic in Belgrade, Serbia, contributed to this report.

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For more coverage, please visit: <https://apnews.com/VirusOutbreak>

Cameron and Lauren share lessons, life after 'Love Is Blind'

By RAGAN CLARK Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Cameron Hamilton had never seen Lauren Speed when he got down on one knee. Speed had never seen Hamilton when she said yes.

The couple met on "Love Is Blind," a Netflix reality show where couples who have never seen each other face-to-face can decide to get engaged based on the emotional connection they make while dating in "pods." After getting engaged, they finally see each other, take a trip, meet the family and have a wedding.

AP recently sat down with the married couple to find out what's happened in the year and a half since the show was filmed and their feelings about the experience.

Answers have been edited for brevity and clarity.

AP: How has it been since the show?

LAUREN SPEED: It's been amazing. Just the outpouring of love from people, you know, not only here in the States, as they say, but from around the world, just people saying that they're inspired by our story, that they can relate to our story.

CAMERON HAMILTON: Yeah, we never imagined that our love story would have this type of impact. I think, when we fell for each other, that was the focus, was making our relationship work.

AP: Was it a challenge hiding your relationship?

HAMILTON: Absolutely. And, you know, we wanted to live our lives and, you know, like we went to vacation together in Cancun and some of the fans saw the reflection of Lauren in my sunglasses and dissected it.

SPEED: Literally zoomed in, like, 'Wait, that's Lauren. That's her shape, that's the color she had on.' So that was kind of crazy.

HAMILTON: Yeah. Even like the Christmas tree. Lauren had a Christmas tree on Facebook. I think I had one on Instagram, (they) compared the decorations on the tree. So, it's wild.

AP: What has taken place over the last year and a half?

HAMILTON: We've been growing together every day. I think we've started to kind of mirror each other and pick up some of our attributes that we have. I mean, everyone sees Lauren. She's such an outgoing, fun person. So, I look up to that aspect of her. I want to be more like that.

SPEED: Ahh, babe. Well yeah, just continuing to blend our lives and blend our families, raise our fur baby. ... You know, it's almost like we're still dating because we got married and then we're kind of like dating each other. So, we're in a fun dating adventure.

AP: You talked about being an interracial couple on the show. Did you feel that was over-dramatized?

SPEED: I feel like, you know, as an interracial couple, it's definitely something that we addressed and we talked about and we communicated about. And I was very transparent with Cameron about how I was feeling. And even with the show, talking to the people or the audience, you know, just sharing my emotions and feelings, I wanted to be authentic. I wanted to be real... But it seems like the show kind of made it like right at the forefront. Like every time we sat down, it's like, 'You know, I'm black and you're white.' 'Hey, you're white and I'm black.' But it wasn't like that.

HAMILTON: And it was important to us to talk about, of course. So, it's good that it was covered in the show, absolutely. I would have liked to have seen even more content of our dates and the things that we talked about, you know, like how we were going to raise a family together, you know, how we would discipline our kids together. You know, these types of conversations that added more layers to our relationship.

AP: Lauren, did you decide to keep your apartment?

SPEED: After we got married, I ended up keeping my apartment for about three months... But after three months, I was like, you know what? I'm all in. So, I ended up getting rid of my apartment and (I'm) fully in our house. Now, I just have my space in our house where I just go and close the door if I need

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some space.

AP: When did you know that you would say 'yes' at the altar?

SPEED: It was a decision that I didn't take lightly... So, I would say even up until that day... I was a hermit before this show, like, I stayed in my apartment. And now I'm talking about being married and sharing a space and having a husband and becoming a wife. So that's a big thing. So, I really thought about it thoroughly, and I'm happy with my choice.

HAMILTON: It's hard to say what day, you know, in the process, but, it had gotten to a point where I had asked Lauren all the questions that I felt like I needed to ask. You know, ruled out any possible red flags. You know, we talked about long-term compatibility, family values, how we're going to balance a household together, responsibilities, all these different things. And I mean, every conversation we had, I never had any doubt instilled in my mind from the conversations, it just felt right.

SPEED: Yeah, I was like, 'You don't have any doubts? Not one? Come on. You've got one. And he was like, 'No.' So, I mean... it helped me realize, like, 'Wow, this man really loves me.' Like I've never had someone that was so ready and loving and willing. Like, 'No, I know you're my wife.' Like, no doubts. So, yeah, that was beautiful... Are you crying?

HAMILTON: No, I'm not.

SPEED: We cry a lot. We're a crying relationship.

AP: You do see men cry on the show.

SPEED: It's so important for men to be comfortable with their emotions. It's like men feel like you can't be masculine and also willing to be vulnerable when it comes to love or even just in general with, you know, showing your emotions. So I think that a lot of people really appreciated that with you.

HAMILTON: And my viewpoint on it is ... if you're willing to be that vulnerable to show how sensitive you are, to me, it's a sign of strength. I'm not afraid to show my emotions. I know people might think it's not masculine to cry, but I mean, I'm a very sensitive person, emotional person. So, I'm going to put it out there and that's just how it is.

AP: What was the biggest thing you learned?

SPEED: That vulnerability is strength. And that love is not aesthetic. It's so much deeper than that. Like it's about your heart. I know that sounds cheesy, but it's so true. Like it's not surface.

HAMILTON: Yeah. And on that same vein, I think that people shouldn't be afraid to be who they are. You know, they shouldn't feel pressure to perform. You know, I think people can relate to you the most when you are just yourself. Even if it's a little awkward or goofy.

SPEED: And love who you love. There's somebody out there who will love you for you exactly how you are. Like, you don't have to change yourself to make somebody like you. Be yourself.

AP: What's next?

SPEED: So, Cameron and I, we know that there has been a lot of supporters that are like, you know, 'What are you guys doing now?'... So, we're starting YouTube to kind of continue letting our family, as we call them, into our life, like our day to day. It's called 'Hanging with the Hamiltons.' So, we're excited to continue our journey with you guys.

Trump says sexism not to blame for end of Warren's campaign

By JILL COLVIN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — "Lack of talent." Unlikable. "Mean."

President Donald Trump insisted Friday that sexism wasn't to blame for the end of Elizabeth Warren's Democratic presidential campaign, even as he showered her with insults that are often deployed against women.

Speaking to reporters as he signed an emergency \$8.3 billion funding package to help tackle the coronavirus outbreak, Trump was asked whether he thought sexism had anything to do with Warren's departure from the Democratic presidential race on Thursday.

"No, I think lack of talent was her problem. She has a tremendous lack of talent," Trump responded. The

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president commended her debate performances, saying she "was a good debater" who had "destroyed" the candidacy of former New York Mayor Mike Bloomberg "like it was nothing."

"But people don't like her," he went on to say. "She's a very mean person. ... People don't want that. They like a person like me, that's not mean."

It's the kind of criticism often directed at female politicians, like when former President Barack Obama condescendingly called his then-rival Hillary Clinton "likable enough" during the 2008 Democratic primary campaign.

Trump, of course, has a long history of making unkind comments himself. While he has defended himself as an equal-opportunity insulter, he has used especially harsh rhetoric against women, going after their physical appearances, comparing them to animals and seeming to dwell on their criticism of him.

After moderator Megyn Kelly confronted Trump during the first Republican debate of the 2016 cycle with a list of demeaning comments he had made about women, Trump later said of her: "You could see there was blood coming out of her eyes, blood coming out of her wherever."

Warren has not blamed sexism for her failed candidacy, but on Thursday suggested that her road may have been harder than that of the male candidates in the race.

"If you say, 'Yeah, there was sexism in this race,' everyone says, 'Whiner!'" she said. "And if you say, 'No, there was no sexism,' about a bazillion women think, 'What planet do you live on?'"

Warren ended her campaign after a disappointing showing in early-state voting, including failing to win a single Super Tuesday state. Trump's campaign had once seen her as a potentially formidable challenger, and Trump went after her early, derisively labeling her "Pocahontas" over her claims of Native American heritage.

Catch up on the 2020 election campaign with AP experts on our weekly politics podcast, "Ground Game."

Golf's famous 'Hinkle Tree' from '79 Open uprooted by wind

TOLEDO, Ohio (AP) — A tree that appeared overnight during the 1979 U.S. Open to become a part of golf lore has met its end.

The Black Hills spruce known as "The Hinkle Tree" was partially uprooted by a gust of wind this week at Inverness Club in Toledo, Ohio, and was cut down.

The tree dated to the 79th Open, when a journeyman pro named Lon Hinkle came up with a way to outsmart the course during the first round.

Hinkle noticed that he could take a shortcut by hitting through a gap of trees near the eighth tee and drive his ball on the adjacent 17th fairway, shaving 75 yards off the dogleg hole.

It made for an easy birdie, but U.S. Golf Association officials were not amused.

The USGA dispatched the course's greens chairman to bring in a tree from a nursery and block the shortcut. Overnight, the Black Hill spruce, about 20 feet tall, appeared in the gap.

But during the next round, Hinkle and his playing partner, Chi Chi Rodriguez, decided to hit their tee shots over the tree.

"There was maybe a couple hundred people at the tee, waiting to see what I would do," Hinkle told The Associated Press in 2003. "I used the full size of the teeing ground and went to the left corner of the tee box. The tree wasn't really even in the way. This time, I used a driver and flew it over the tree and had only a 6 iron to the green."

Again, he made birdie.

Trump surveys tornado damage, marvels at 'tremendous heart'

By DARLENE SUPERVILLE Associated Press

COOKEVILLE, Tenn. (AP) — President Donald Trump on Friday toured a neighborhood reduced to rubble by a tornado earlier this week and marveled at "the tremendous heart" he witnessed. He also offered a

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message for survivors and those who lost family members: "We love them, they're special people," he said.

Trump assumed the role of national consoler as he traveled to Tennessee. Trump surveyed devastated communities in Putnam County, where a tornado tore a 2-mile-long path, killing 18 people, including five children under 13. Many more people were injured, some critically.

Statewide, the death toll stood at 24 from a pair of storms.

Trump was met upon his arrival by Tennessee Gov. Bill Lee, U.S. Sen. Marsha Blackburn and other top officials.

"It's been a painful, tragic week for our state," Lee said after surveying with Trump a street where eight people were killed.

The street was filled with debris where houses once stood. Limbs were crudely snapped from trees. A white laundry basket, chairs from a dining table, cinder blocks and a step ladder dotted the landscape.

Trump then met with survivors and volunteers at a local church filled with boxes of emergency supplies, pallets of water and tables filled with clothes.

"When you have those who lost somebody, that's a very tough situation," Trump said during the nearly 40-minute stop. "We are with you all the way."

He posed for pictures and shook hands with people before speaking to emergency personnel. "Nobody's seen what you had to go through," Trump said.

Such trips have become familiar for the president, who has visited numerous scenes of disaster and tragedy after hurricanes, mass shootings and wildfires during the past three years.

The Republican president won the heavily GOP state by 26 percentage points in the 2016 election, and trounced Democrat Hillary Clinton in Putnam County by a margin of more than 2-to-1. Davidson County, the other Tennessee region devastated by tornadoes, is a Democratic enclave in the reliably Republican red state.

Trump will also visit the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in Atlanta, which is leading efforts to stop the spread of the new coronavirus. He will end the day at his private Mar-a-Lago club in Palm Beach, Florida, attending a pair of fundraising events to benefit the Republican Party and his reelection campaign.

Associated Press writers Deb Riechmann and Kevin Freking contributed to this report from Washington.

Follow Darlene Superville on Twitter: <http://www.twitter.com/dsupervilleap>

Publisher cancels plans to release Woody Allen memoir

By HILLEL ITALIE AP National Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Woody Allen's publisher has decided to cancel the planned release of his memoir "Apropos of Nothing."

The announcement Friday by Hachette Book Group followed days of criticism focused on allegations that Allen sexually abused his daughter Dylan Farrow. On Thursday, dozens of Hachette employees staged a walkout.

"The decision to cancel Mr. Allen's book was a difficult one. At HBG we take our relationships with authors very seriously, and do not cancel books lightly," the publisher announced.

"We have published and will continue to publish many challenging books. As publishers, we make sure every day in our work that different voices and conflicting points of views can be heard."

Allen's book was scheduled to come out next month.

Allen has denied any wrongdoing and was never charged after two separate investigations in the 1990s. But the allegations have received new attention in the #MeToo era.

Allen's agreement with Hachette meant that he briefly shared a publisher with one of his biggest detractors, his son Ronan Farrow, whose "Catch and Kill" was released last year by the Hachette division Little, Brown and Company.

"Hachette's publishing of Woody Allen's memoir is deeply upsetting to me personally and an utter be-

trayal of my brother whose brave reporting, capitalized on by Hachette, gave voice to numerous survivors of sexual assault by powerful men," Dylan Farrow said in a statement Monday hours after details of the book were released by The Associated Press.

Ronan Farrow followed up a day later, calling Hachette's decision "wildly unprofessional." Both he and his sister complained that the publisher had not reached out to fact check their father's book.

Nazi flag display at Sanders rally sparks broad condemnation

By ELANA SCHOR Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The display of a Nazi flag by a man at a Bernie Sanders campaign rally in Arizona drew condemnation from Jewish American groups and his main rival in the Democratic presidential primary on Friday amid ongoing worries about Democratic candidates' security at public events.

Images of a flag depicting the Nazi swastika symbol that was briefly displayed at Sanders' Thursday night rally in Phoenix began circulating online after the incident. The moment also elicited warnings about anti-Semitism directed at the Jewish Sanders, who has talked about members of his father's family being "wiped out" by the Holocaust.

"Good people, regardless of how they vote, should call this out in no uncertain terms," Anti-Defamation League CEO Jonathan Greenblatt said in an interview, adding that "I worry we'll see more of this" given the anti-Semitism that emerged, particularly online, during the 2016 campaign.

The American Jewish Committee tweeted in response to reports of the Sanders rally display that "Nazi flags are symbols of pure hate and have no place anywhere in America, much less in a rally for a Jewish presidential candidate."

The Anti-Defamation League on Friday identified a white supremacist with a history of anti-Semitic and anti-Islamic harassment as the perpetrator of the incident, citing a social media post in which the man takes credit for the display.

Sanders' chief rival for the Democratic presidential nomination, former Vice President Joe Biden, tweeted that regardless of "who you're supporting, attacks like this against a man who could be the first Jewish President are disgusting and beyond the pale."

Sanders told reporters on Friday that the incident doesn't raise "a question of whether I feel unsafe," but of the bigger impact of anti-Semitism in the public square.

"It is horrific. It is beyond disgusting that, in the United States of America, there are people who would" display Nazi symbolism, Sanders said. He thanked local law enforcement for their handling of the episode.

Security at the venue notified state police officers about the swastika flag shortly before Sanders took the stage, said Bart Graves, a spokesman for the Arizona Department of Public Safety. The crowd "turned on the man," he dropped the flag and ran when he saw officers approach. Officers would have cited him for trespassing but were not able to find him, Graves said.

Biden said on Thursday that he might consider requesting Secret Service protection following a close brush with anti-dairy industry protesters who rushed the stage where he was speaking on Tuesday night.

Among those castigating the Nazi display were groups that have previously criticized Sanders, for remarks by campaign surrogates and his shows of opposition to Israeli government policies.

Greenblatt said that "while I will call out those people in Sanders' campaign who I think are outside the norm, that doesn't preclude me from stating unequivocally that anti-Semitism directed at anyone ... is about intimidation, about harassment — it simply has no place in politics."

Associated Press writer Jonathan J. Cooper in Phoenix contributed to this report.

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Today in History

By The Associated Press undefined

Today in History

Today is Saturday, March 7, the 67th day of 2020. There are 299 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On March 7, 1965, a march by civil rights demonstrators was violently broken up at the Edmund Pettus Bridge in Selma, Alabama, by state troopers and a sheriff's posse in what came to be known as "Bloody Sunday."

On this date:

In 1793, during the French Revolutionary Wars, France declared war on Spain.

In 1876, Alexander Graham Bell received a U.S. patent for his telephone.

In 1911, President William Howard Taft ordered 20,000 troops to patrol the U.S.-Mexico border in response to the Mexican Revolution.

In 1912, Norwegian explorer Roald Amundsen arrived in Hobart, Australia, where he dispatched telegrams announcing his success in leading the first expedition to the South Pole the previous December.

In 1926, the first successful trans-Atlantic radio-telephone conversations took place between New York and London.

In 1936, Adolf Hitler ordered his troops to march into the Rhineland, thereby breaking the Treaty of Versailles (vehr-SY) and the Locarno Pact.

In 1945, during World War II, U.S. forces crossed the Rhine at Remagen, Germany, using the damaged but still usable Ludendorff Bridge.

In 1975, the U.S. Senate revised its filibuster rule, allowing 60 senators to limit debate in most cases, instead of the previously required two-thirds of senators present.

In 1994, the U.S. Navy issued its first permanent orders assigning women to regular duty on a combat ship — in this case, the USS Eisenhower.

In 1999, movie director Stanley Kubrick, whose films included "Dr. Strangelove," "A Clockwork Orange" and "2001: A Space Odyssey," died in Hertfordshire, England, at age 70, having just finished editing "Eyes Wide Shut."

In 2001, Ariel Sharon was sworn in as Israel's prime minister, serving until he suffered a stroke in 2006.

In 2005, President George W. Bush nominated John Bolton to be U.S. ambassador to the United Nations, an appointment that ran into Democratic opposition, prompting Bush to make a recess appointment.

Ten years ago: The Iraq war thriller "The Hurt Locker" received six Academy Awards including best picture, with Kathryn Bigelow accepting the first directing Oscar awarded to a woman. Iraq held an election in which neither the Sunni-backed coalition nor the Shiite political bloc won a majority, spawning an eight-month deadlock and stalling formation of a new government.

Five years ago: President Barack Obama joined tens of thousands of people in Selma, Alabama, to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the "Bloody Sunday" march of 1965, saying that America's racial history "still casts its long shadow upon us." Nigeria's home-grown Boko Haram Islamic extremists pledged formal allegiance to the Islamic State group as they battled a multinational force that had dislodged them from a number of towns in the north. Izola Ware Curry, who had stabbed the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. in the chest with a letter opener at a Harlem book signing in 1958, died at a nursing home in Queens, New York, at age 98.

One year ago: Longtime Colombo crime family boss Carmine "The Snake" Persico died at the age of 85 at the Duke University Medical Center; he'd been serving what was effectively a life sentence at a federal prison in Butner, North Carolina. Former Trump campaign chairman Paul Manafort was sentenced in Virginia to nearly four years in prison for tax and bank fraud related to his work advising Ukrainian politicians; a federal judge in Washington a week later added three and a-half years to that sentence.

Today's Birthdays: TV personality Willard Scott is 86. International Motorsports Hall of Famer Janet Guthrie is 82. Actor Daniel J. Travanti is 80. Entertainment executive Michael Eisner is 78. Rock musician Chris White (The Zombies) is 77. Rock singer Peter Wolf is 74. Rock musician Matthew Fisher (Procol Harum) is

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74. Pro Football Hall of Famer Franco Harris is 70. Pro and College Football Hall of Famer Lynn Swann is 68. Rhythm-and-blues singer-musician Ernie Isley (The Isley Brothers) is 68. Rock musician Kenny Aronoff (BoDeans, John Mellencamp) is 67. Actor Bryan Cranston is 64. Actress Donna Murphy is 61. Actor Nick Searcy is 61. Golfer Tom Lehman is 61. International Tennis Hall of Famer Ivan Lendl is 60. Actress Mary Beth Evans is 59. Singer-actress Taylor Dayne is 58. Actor Bill Brochtrup is 57. Author E.L. James is 57. Author Bret Easton Ellis is 56. Opera singer Denyce Graves is 56. Comedian Wanda Sykes is 56. Actor Jonathan Del Arco is 54. Rock musician Randy Guss (Toad the Wet Sprocket) is 53. Actress Rachel Weisz (wys) is 50. Actor Peter Sarsgaard is 49. Actor Jay Duplass is 47. Classical singer Sebastien Izambard (Il Divo) is 47. Rock singer Hugo Ferreira (Tantric) is 46. Actress Jenna Fischer is 46. Actor Tobias Menzies is 46. Actress Sarayu Blue is 45. Actress Audrey Marie Anderson is 45. Actor TJ Thyne is 45. Bluegrass singer-musician Frank Solivan is 43. Actress Laura Prepon is 40. Actress Bel Powley is 28. Actress Giselle Eisenberg (TV: "Life in Pieces") is 13.

Thought for Today: "In a democracy dissent is an act of faith. Like medicine, the test of its value is not in its taste, but in its effects." — J. William Fulbright, U.S. senator (1905-1995).

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