

Groton Daily Independent

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It's Basketball Action on GDILIVE.COM



**Deuel
Cardinals**

VS



Groton Area Tigers

AT CLEAR LAKE

4:00 p.m.: **Girls JV Game** - Sponsored by Larry & Kathy Harry
5:15 p.m.: **Boys JV Game** - Sponsored by Carson & Julie Larson Family
6:30 p.m.: **Girls Varsity Game**
Sponsored by Locke Electric and the
South Dakota Army National Guard
8:00 p.m.: **Boys Varsity Game**
Sponsored by the Aberdeen Chrysler Center

Upcoming Events

Thursday, February 27, 2020

Double header basketball vs. Deuel at Clear Lake. Girls JV at 4 p.m., Boys JV at 5 p.m., Girls Varsity at 6:30 p.m. and Boys Varsity at 8 p.m.

Friday, February 28, 2020

National Qualifier at Brookings High School.
State Wrestling Tournament at Sioux Falls.

Boys' Basketball make-up game at Sisseton. C game at 5 p.m. followed by JV game then the varsity game.

Saturday, February 29, 2020

National Qualifier at Brookings High School.
State Wrestling Tournament at Sioux Falls.
Robotics at Mitchell Technical Institute
Show Choir competition at Vermillion

Sunday, March 1, 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

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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Stress and Anxiety Affect Us All

Standing in front of a group of De Smet Parent Teacher Association® (PTA®) members, I was to play a trumpet solo. My teacher thought I was prepared, but unfortunately, I was not. My fears brought my heart up into my throat, I became short of breath, my heart pounded and, indeed, I stumbled and had to start over again. Although my failings were likely amusing to some in the audience, they were certainly not indicating any musical skills. It was a devastating experience for me.



By Richard P. Holm, MD ~ Prairie Doc® Perspectives

During our lifetimes, all of us experience physical and psychological ailments. People will admit to physical trouble but don't like to admit to psychological problems, and most of us are reluctant to ask for help. Many of these feelings increase adrenaline levels which, in turn, cause fast heart rate, shaking, shortness of breath, dizziness, diarrhea, urinary frequency, sleeplessness, headache, sweating and generalized discomfort. Sometimes these feelings of anxiety are normal, and sometimes not.

A reasonable level of anxiety can keep us driven to hunt for food, fix something, discover another frontier and improve what we can improve. Without stressors and the anxiety that follows, some experts believe we would become lazy, stop dealing with troubles and civilization would end. On the other hand, when feelings of anxiety expand out of proportion to the trouble we are facing, or come on easily and frequently, anxiety can sometimes interfere with a normal functioning life. Too much anxiety can be harmful to an individual.

We are all thrown off-balance by one kind of psychological challenge or another as we struggle through the typical encounters of daily living. Who hasn't experienced periods of anxious moodiness that follow the reduced sunlight of winter, or anxiety following the loss of a job or facing the demands of a new job? How does anyone handle a severe illness in a child or a spouse? Who can deal with divorce without anger, disappointment and, you guessed it, anxiety? Life is often very difficult; every individual will confront stressors in different ways and sometimes we just need help.

Bottom line: Each of us must deal with our own physical and mental illnesses throughout our lifetime, sometimes minor, like forgetting a trumpet solo, sometimes major, like a prolonged sense of anguish after a death in the family. When our ability to live a normal life is being interrupted by anxiety, it's time to see the doctor.

Richard P. Holm, MD is founder of The Prairie Doc® and author of "Life's Final Season, A Guide for Aging and Dying with Grace" available on Amazon. For free and easy access to the entire Prairie Doc® library, visit www.prairedoc.org and follow Prairie Doc® on Facebook featuring On Call with the Prairie Doc® a medical Q&A show streaming on Facebook and broadcast on SDPB most Thursdays at 7 p.m. central.

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Northern Kicks Off the NSIC Tournament With a Victory over SMSU

Written by Nathan Price

Aberdeen, S.D. – The No. 21 Northern State men's basketball team (23-6, 18-4 NSIC) took down the Southwest Minnesota State Mustangs (8-21, 5-17 NSIC) 79-67 to open up the NSIC/Sanford Health Basketball Tournament with a convincing win.

Gabe King saved his best for last in the final home game of his NSU career. He was seemingly unstoppable from beyond the arc as he went 6-of-8 from the 3-point line on his way to 20 points, helping his team get a round one win in the NSIC Tournament.

Though there were a few less people in attendance on a Wednesday evening, you wouldn't know it by just listening. The cheering sections for both teams were loud and enthusiastic, filling Wachs Arena with an intense tournament atmosphere as the game got underway.

Things got off to a heated start as both teams made defensive stops and forced turnovers, leading to a low scoring affair in the opening minutes. A 3-pointer by Mason Stark four minutes in kicked off the scoring however, putting in motion a 9-0 scoring run to open up a lead for NSU.

It became clear that Northern's defense and long ball accuracy were dialed in as the half dragged on. Ten minutes in and the Wolves were 3-of-5 from beyond the arc and had already forced seven turnovers on defense. The Mustangs weren't going down easily, but a buzzer beating long ball from Gabe King sent Northern to the locker room with momentum and a 37-31 lead.

After not being much of a presence in the first 20 minutes, Parker Fox gave his team a bolt of energy as he slammed home a pair of dunks to open the second half. Yet another long ball from King followed soon after, bringing the crowd to their feet and leaving no doubt of who was in control.

The Mustangs were remaining persistent, but NSU's withering 3-point accuracy was beginning to make its mark. Another long ball from King set off a 13-2 run, finally getting Northern a comfortable double-digit advantage in the ladder stages of the game. SMSU did their best to turn it around, but time wasn't on their side as the Wolves held firm for the round one victory.

Northern shot an impressive 60.0% from the floor, 47.4% from beyond the arc and 83.3% from the foul line. 42 of their points came from the paint, 14 off of turnovers and five from the bench. Meanwhile, the defense held SMSU to 50.0% field goal accuracy and forced 13 turnovers.

Leading the team in scoring was Mason Stark, who went a perfect 9-of-9 from the floor for 27 points. Gabe King followed going 7-of-10 for 20 points and three rebounds. The next closest were Tommy Chatman and Parker Fox, cashing in 12 and 11 points respectively.

Andrew Kallman followed with four points while leading the team in assists with six. Rounding out the score sheet were Cole Dahl and Jordan Belka with three and two points respectively.

Up next, the Wolves take on the winner of Augustana versus St. Cloud State in round two of the conference tournament, which begins at 12:00 p.m. on Saturday, February 29. The remainder of the tournament will play out in Sioux Falls, S.D. at the Sanford Pentagon. Tickets can be purchased at the Pentagon box office or at [ticketmaster.com](https://www.ticketmaster.com).

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Wolves Battle to an Overtime Win Against Concordia-St. Paul Advancing in the NSIC Tournament

St. Paul, Minn. – Northern State women’s basketball answered the call in St. Paul as they took down Concordia-St. Paul in the first round of the NSIC Tournament. The Wolves forced the overtime period and ultimately came out on top.

THE QUICK DETAILS

Scores: NSU 72, CSP 68 (OT)

Record: NSU 14-15 (NSIC 9-12), CSP 15-14 (NSIC 12-10)

Attendance: 490

HIGHLIGHTS

Neither team was able to get ahead in the first half as they were tied at 29

Northern State jumped ahead to a 5-point lead with 29 seconds left in the third quarter as Kennedy Harris hit a jumper

The Wolves out-scored the Golden Bears 15-12 in the third quarter shooting 43.7% from the floor and 20.0% from 3-point range

The 5-point lead was short lived by NSU as CSP came into the final quarter of regulation dropping the lead to one

Concordia took their first lead of the fourth quarter with 6:08 left in regulation as Riley Wheatcraft three was good

Sara Tvedt forced the overtime period for the Wolves knocking down two free throws with just seconds remaining

Northern State trailed for the first two minutes and ten seconds of overtime until Brianna Kusler hit a jumper in the paint giving the Wolves a 2-point lead

The Wolves out-scored CSP 36-32 in the paint and 17-12 off turnovers

Northern and Concordia tied the game 19 times over the 45 minutes

The Wolves shot 39.7% from the floor, 25.0% from distance, and 66.7% from the foul line

NORTHERN STATE STATISTICAL STANDOUTS

Brianna Kusler: 33.3 FG%, 75.0 FT%, 10 rebounds, 3 assists, 2 steals, 19 points

Lexi Wadsworth: 38.4 FG%, 50.0 3pt%, 11 rebounds, 13 points

Shariah Smith: 50.0 FG%, 8 rebounds, 4 assists, 2 steals, 11 points

Sara Tvedt: 44.4 FG%, 50.0 FT%, 11 rebounds, 1 block, 11 points

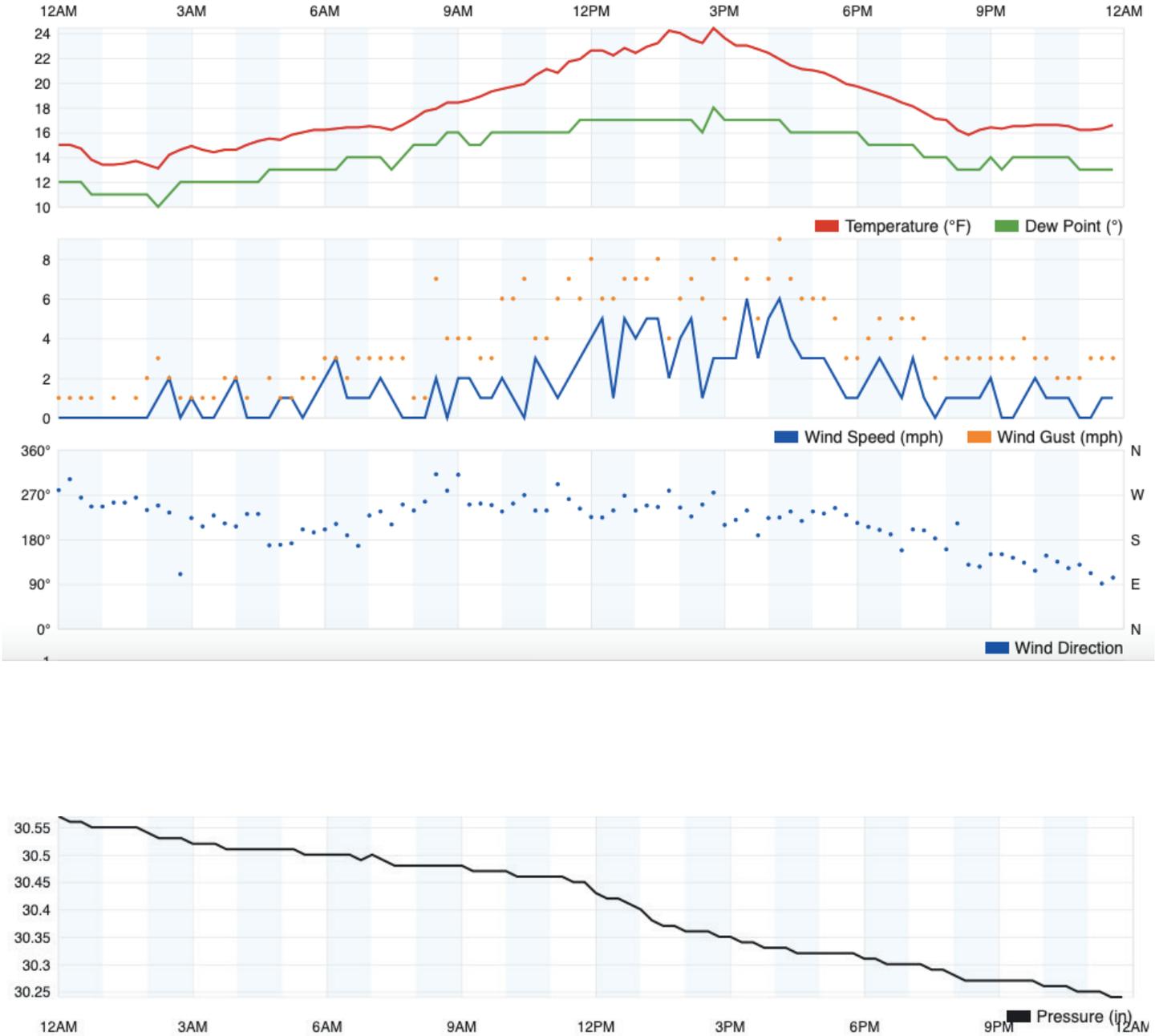
UP NEXT

Northern State women’s basketball is back in action from the Sanford Pentagon in Sioux Falls on Sunday, March 1. The Wolves will tip-off at 12 p.m. against Minnesota Duluth in the quarterfinal round.

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Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs



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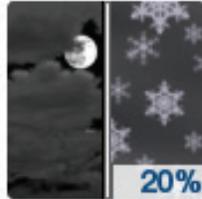
Today



Patchy Fog
then Cloudy

High: 26 °F

Tonight



Mostly Cloudy
then Slight
Chance Snow

Low: 18 °F

Friday



Mostly Cloudy

High: 33 °F

Friday
Night



Partly Cloudy

Low: 23 °F

Saturday



Mostly Sunny

High: 39 °F



Light Snow Possible

(little if any accumulation)

Today



20-44°

Some AM fog, Chance
Light Snow

Tonight



10-30°

Chance of
Light Snow

Friday



26-52°

Partly Sunny
& Milder

*Mildest Temperatures Central/SC SD

Updated: 2/27/2020 3:45 AM Central

Light snow is possible across the forecast area through tonight, but any amounts will be light. Warmer air should filter into the area for the upcoming weekend.

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Today in Weather History

February 27, 1969: Snowfall of up to 15 inches blocked many roads in South Dakota. Freezing rain formed a glaze on many utility lines resulting in extensive damage. The most considerable damage occurred in the north-central part of the state.

February 27, 1996: Across central and northeast South Dakota as well as west-central Minnesota, a strong area of low pressure brought 4 to 11 inches of snow from the late afternoon of the 26th to the late evening of the 27th. Along with the snow came strong cold north winds of 20 to 40 mph, creating near-blizzard conditions at times. Wind chills were from 20 below to 60 below. Some schools were closed or started late the 27th, along with some activities canceled. Snowfall amounts included, 4 inches at Sisseton, 5 inches at Aberdeen, Redfield, near Reliance, Wheaton, Browns Valley, Britton, and Gettysburg. Other snowfall amounts included, 6 inches at Lebanon, Hoven, Miller, Webster, Eden, Frederick, and Seneca, 7 inches near Chelsea and Mellette, 8 inches at Roscoe and east of Hosmer, Tulare and near Milbank, 9 inches south of Ree Heights, 8 to 10 inches in the Ortonville area, and 11 inches at Wilmot.

1986: It was 99 degrees in Palm Springs, California. This is the highest temperature on record for February. This also occurred on Fe2/26/1986.

2010: A magnitude 8.8 earthquake occurred off the coast of central Chili at 3:34 local time. The quake triggered a tsunami that devastated several coastal towns in south-central Chile. Tsunami warnings were issued in 53 countries. Waves caused minor damage in the San Diego area and the Tohoku region of Japan.

1717 - What was perhaps the greatest snow in New England history commenced on this date. During a ten day period a series of four snowstorms dumped three feet of snow upon Boston, and the city was snowbound for two weeks. Up to six feet of snow was reported farther to the north, and drifts covered many one story homes. (David Ludlum)

1969 - A record snowstorm in Maine came to an end. Two to four feet of snow buried southern and central Maine, with a state record of 57 inches reported at West Forks. Drifts covered many single story homes, and the weight of the snow collapsed many roofs. Two to four feet of snow also buried northeastern Vermont and northeastern Massachusetts. In New Hampshire, Mount Washington NH reported 97.8 inches of snow, a record storm total for New England. (24th-28th) (David Ludlum) (The Weather Channel)

1987 - A storm spread heavy snow into the Central High Plains Region, and produced severe thunderstorms in the Southern Plains. Snowfall totals in western Nebraska ranged up to 19 inches at Sydney. Severe thunderstorms in Oklahoma produced baseball size hail at Stringtown and Atoka. A storm in the eastern U.S. produced heavy rain over the Carolinas and heavy snow in the southern Appalachians and piedmont region. Five inches of rain left four feet of water in the streets of Greenville SC. Snowfall totals in southwestern Virginia ranged up to 20 inches. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1988 - Thunderstorms along a cold front produced heavy rain in southern California, with up to 2.52 inches reported in Ventura County. Strong winds accompanying the rain gusted to 55 mph in the Tehachapi Mountains. Rapid City SD established a February record with an afternoon high of 75 degrees. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1989 - Rain and snow prevailed in the southeastern U.S. Up to eight inches of snow blanketed north central Tennessee, and snowfall totals in western North Carolina ranged up to 14 inches at Mount Mitchell. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1990 - A winter storm produced heavy snow in southeastern Colorado, with 12 inches reported at Lamar. The same storm produced severe thunderstorms over the Southern High Plains, with wind gusts to 93 mph reported at the White Sands Missile Range in New Mexico. Low pressure brought high winds to the Prince William Sound area of Alaska. Big River Lakes reported wind gusts to 92 mph. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

2010 - A weak EF0 tornado causes no damage as it moved across California's southern San Joaquin Valley. However it is the only tornado reported in the United States during the month. According to the Storm Prediction Center only five months since 1950 have lacked a tornado report. The Weather Doctor

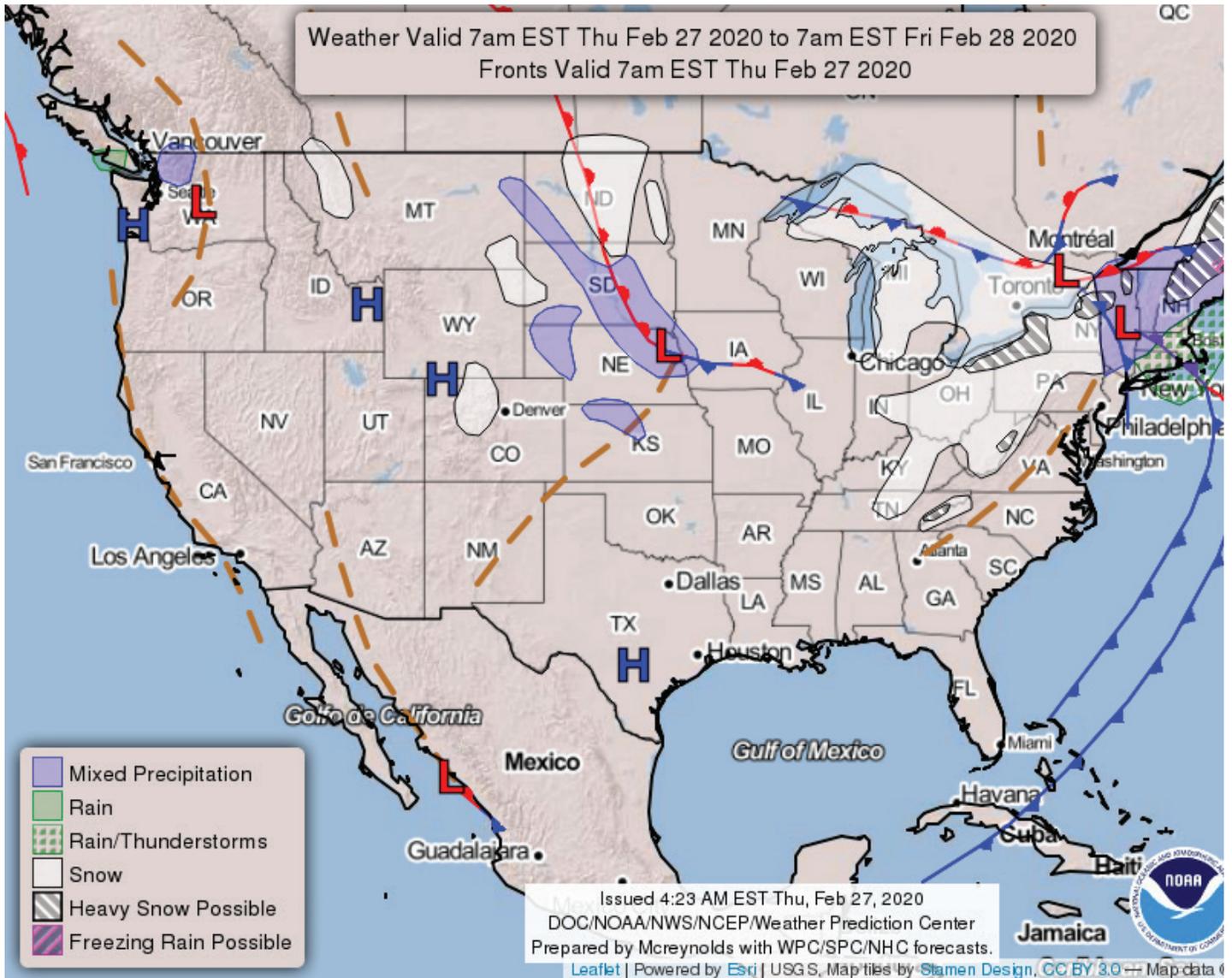
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Yesterday's Groton Weather Today's Info

High Temp: 25 °F at 2:49 PM
Low Temp: 13 °F at 2:06 AM
Wind: 9 mph at 4:07 PM
Snow

Record High: 68° in 2016
Record Low: -23° in 2001
Average High: 32°F
Average Low: 12°F
Average Precip in Feb.: 0.50
Precip to date in Feb.: 0.00
Average Precip to date: 0.97
Precip Year to Date: 0.35
Sunset Tonight: 6:17 p.m.
Sunrise Tomorrow: 7:14 a.m.



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WRITING FOR ETERNITY?

Thomas Mann was a widely known and highly regarded novelist. His books were well written, and on one occasion, he won the Nobel Prize. He was also recognized for the length of time it took him to write one of his books. On one occasion it took so long that his publisher complained to him saying, "You have been working on this book for an eternity!"

"After all," he replied, "I am writing it for eternity." Even though his writing skills and insights were known around the world and had great influence, none of them could produce life. There is only one Book that has life-giving power: God's Book – His Word.

Jesus said, "But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in His name." One Word, one Person, one purpose: Life through Christ. Only the living Word has life. All other books will perish and be forgotten.

The writer of Ecclesiastes said, "Of the writing of many books there is no end and much study wears the body." We read and study, ask questions and think, gain knowledge and insight, learn how to do things, and come to some well-thought-out conclusions. But in the final analysis, life does not come through books - it only comes through faith in Jesus Christ.

Prayer: Father, we accept and believe that You are the Way, the Truth and the Life. May we know You as a Friend, love You with sincerity, and worship You as King. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: John 20:31 But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in His name.

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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

Man must pay back more than \$40,000 for vandalizing school

RAPID CITY, S.D. (AP) — A man has ordered to pay back more than \$40,000 in a plea deal after a rampage through the Pine Ridge School left what authorities called a bloody and ink-stained “path of destruction in his wake.”

Court documents show that Nicholas Otter Robe broke into the school early in June 2018, the Rapid City Journal reported. Tribal officers found two damaged government vehicles in the parking lot of the school and blood stains on the driver’s seat.

Inside, officers discovered that Otter Robe had damaged or destroyed four computers, two refrigerators, a touchscreen, a copy machine, two window air conditioners, a carpet and other items. He also left furniture, papers and filing cabinets “strewn about down the hallway,” documents show.

Authorities also found Otter Robe, who was intoxicated and suffering from a cut on his arm.

Otter Robe, who pleaded guilty to third-degree burglary, was sentenced to five years of probation that involves completing substance abuse and mental health treatment. A charge of destroying government property was dropped as part of the plea deal.

SD Lottery

By The Associated Press undefined

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) _ These South Dakota lotteries were drawn Wednesday:

Dakota Cash

05-07-08-09-30

(five, seven, eight, nine, thirty)

Estimated jackpot: \$82,000

Lotto America

02-03-29-30-40, Star Ball: 7, ASB: 2

(two, three, twenty-nine, thirty, forty; Star Ball: seven; ASB: two)

Estimated jackpot: \$8.39 million

Mega Millions

Estimated jackpot: \$60 million

Powerball

08-27-29-36-47, Powerball: 24, Power Play: 3

(eight, twenty-seven, twenty-nine, thirty-six, forty-seven; Powerball: twenty-four; Power Play: three)

Estimated jackpot: \$70 million

Wednesday’s Scores

By The Associated Press

GIRLS PREP BASKETBALL=

Spearfish 59, Hot Springs 36

BOYS PREP BASKETBALL=

Little Wound 45, Takini 36

Bill requiring resources for deaf students fails in Senate

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) — A bill to require South Dakota schools to accommodate the educational needs of deaf students failed in the Senate on Wednesday, but it may be reconsidered this week.

The proposal received a narrow majority of votes, but it needed a two-thirds majority to pass because

it contained a provision to give the Department of Education \$370,000 to pay for the requirements.

The bill would require schools to provide teachers and specialists for deaf and hard of hearing students. The Sioux Falls Argus Leader reported last year on the lack of school resources for students who are deaf and hard of hearing.

"Over the past two decades, promises have been made to address this problem, but we have failed to step up," said Sen. Reynold Nesiba, the Sioux Falls Democrat who introduced the bill.

He indicated he may ask the Senate to reconsider the bill. If the budget allocation is struck from the bill, it would need just a simple majority vote to pass.

Opponents of the bill said they have not heard from the Department of Education that there is a problem in addressing the needs of students who are deaf and hard of hearing.

Senate unanimously passes plan for Native American schools

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) — The South Dakota Senate on Wednesday unanimously approved a proposal to start four schools based around Native American language and culture.

The House will next consider the proposal, which aims to address high drop-out rates in some Native American communities in the state. The schools would teach an Oceti Sakowin curriculum centered on Lakota, Dakota, and Nakota language and culture. It is pushed by a group of educators who are planning to open the schools in Native American communities.

When Sen. Troy Heinert, a Democrat from Mission, introduced the bill, he had hefty opposition from Gov. Kristi Noem and education groups. But he was able to win the Republican governor's support through a re-write of the bill. He also won the support of the Republican-dominated Senate.

Education groups oppose the proposal, saying that the current school system can accommodate innovative programs.

The schools were originally called charter schools in the bill, but the term was switched to "community-based schools." The schools would need to apply to school districts to start within the district, and they would receive funding based on the number of students enrolled in the schools. They would purchase or lease school facilities independently from the school districts.

SD Senate panel narrowly defeats commercial surrogacy ban

By **STEPHEN GROVES** Associated Press

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) — A South Dakota Senate committee on Wednesday narrowly rejected a measure that would have criminalized commercial surrogate pregnancy agents, making it unlikely for such a ban to win approval this year.

The Senate Health and Human Services voted down the bill 4-3 after a debate pitting some families who have used surrogates for pregnancy against critics who argue the practice exploits and endangers women and babies.

Sen. Arthur Rusch, a Republican from Vermillion, cast the deciding vote against the legislation after initially moving to approve it and send it on to the full Senate. He called it "one of the most difficult decisions that I've made."

The House had previously passed the bill, which deals with the practice of having a woman being impregnated with an embryo from another couple.

The proposal would have made acting as a surrogacy agent a misdemeanor punishable by up to a year in jail. It would have made South Dakota one of a handful of states to criminalize the practice. Lawmakers said they would be more open to regulating surrogacy rather than passing an outright ban.

Rep. Jon Hansen, the Dell Rapids Republican who introduced the bill, argued that commercial surrogacy makes women and babies vulnerable to commercial contracts.

"Human beings are not property to be bartered for," he said.

During testimony Wednesday, supporters of the commercial ban pointed to situations in other states where commercial surrogates have had to go to court over disputes arising from the contracts. They argued

that commercial surrogacy targets women who are poor and from vulnerable communities.

Jennifer Lahl, an activist against commercial surrogacy from California, said surrogate pregnancies have higher health risks than normal pregnancies and pointed to the deaths of several women who died from complications during a surrogate pregnancy.

The bill also had the support of anti-abortion groups, an influential force in the conservative state. Many surrogacy contracts address "fetal reduction," in which one fetus may be aborted if a woman has twins or triplets. They argued that the contracts could be used to pressure women into getting an abortion.

Women from a group of families that have had children through surrogacy opposed the bill. They have been frequent visitors to the Capitol as the bill progressed through the Legislature, making their case to lawmakers.

They argued that the bill is based on worst-case scenarios, mostly from other states, and that the commercial contracts protect both the women acting as surrogates and the intended parents.

Emilee Gheling, a lawyer who said she runs the state's only commercial surrogacy agency, told lawmakers that she conducts psychological screenings and credit checks before facilitating a contract. She said that both surrogates and intended parents have lawyers representing them so they can work out any potential disputes before the pregnancy begins.

The women also took issue with the assertion that commercial surrogacy contracts lead to abortions, saying that they were motivated by giving children to families.

Several women who have been surrogates also voiced their opposition. Gheling argued that they deserved to be compensated for carrying a child.

When the final vote was tallied and it became clear that the bill would fail, the group of women collectively exhaled in relief. Several cried.

Gheling said she would welcome regulation of commercial surrogacy in the state and hoped to work with the bill's proponents to come up with laws to protect women and potential parents.

The Legislature may decide to create a group to study the issue before next year's session, but that won't be decided until near the end of the legislative session in March.

Deere denying design defect allegations in tractor fire suit

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — Deere & Co. has formally denied allegations from Kingsbury County farmers that a design defect led to fires in one of its tractor models.

Deere responded earlier this month to a federal lawsuit brought by Brad, Greg, Jeff and Jon Albrecht, the Argus Leader reported.

In its response, the company denies that its John Deere 9620RX tractors were "unreasonably dangerous" when they were made by the Illinois-based company.

"The subject tractor conformed to the state-of-the-art at the time it was designed, manufactured, packaged, and labeled," Deere's response said.

The Albrechts bought the tractor on Dec. 30, 2015, paying \$462,229, their lawsuit says. The tractor was damaged when it caught fire while being operated on Oct. 30, 2017.

The lawsuit argues the tractor was faulty because a design flaw failed to shield debris from accumulating around the exhaust system. When hot, that allowed the tractors to catch on fire.

In 2019, the company published a product enhancement program to address the issue of debris accumulation, according to the lawsuit.

Steven Hamers, an Iowa-based engineer, examined the tractor on behalf of the plaintiffs. He concluded that the likely reason for the fire stemmed from the collection of debris.

"This tractor fire is one of a group of John Deere 9000RX tractors being investigated by this engineer," he wrote in his report. "All of the tractors share similar fire observation circumstances."

Hamers noted that a similar tracked tractor, built by Case Corp., includes shields to safeguard it from debris buildup under the engine compartment.

In 2018, the company faced a similar lawsuit after two John Deere 9460R tractors caught fire near Gettys-

burg under related circumstances. That lawsuit was subsequently dismissed by agreement of both parties.

Rapid City school bond issue fails to get super majority

RAPID CITY, S.D. (AP) — A plan to build new schools in Rapid City and upgrade other facilities was thwarted Tuesday when a light turnout of voters who braved poor road conditions rejected a \$189.5 million bond issue.

A majority of voters favored the issue but it needed 60 percent approval to pass. It would up with 56 percent support, the Rapid City Journal reported. Only 23 percent of voters cast ballots in this special election, which followed a Monday winter storm that made driving tricky.

If it had passed, the money would have gone toward three new elementary schools and one new middle school over six years. Four of the elementary schools plagued by deteriorating conditions and overcrowding would have closed. Rapid City High School's building would have been converted to an elementary school.

Lori Simon, Rapid City Area Schools superintendent, said the issued would have passed in 43 other states that do not require a super majority.

"This is not the speech I was hoping to make," Simon said at a watch party. "I'm obviously incredibly disappointed and sad for the thousands and thousands of kids in our district who attend sub-par schools and facilities in far too many crowded classrooms. That makes me sad."

Man accused of killing pedestrian held on \$100,000 bond

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — Bond has been set at \$100,000 cash for a man accused of driving drunk and killing a woman who was walking her dog in Hartford.

Nichole Gail Anderson, 41, died at the scene Monday night.

Micah Giebler made an initial appearance Tuesday in Minnehaha County court.

A prosecutor told the judge the 31-year-old Giebler left the scene and drove to his house less than a mile away after striking Anderson. He returned to the scene with his roommate and called police, according to the Minnehaha County State's Attorney's Office.

The Argus Leader says it's not the first time Giebler has faced criminal charges. Court records show he was charged in a separate hit-and-run case in January, including hit-and-run-death or injury.

He pleaded guilty to misdemeanor charges of driving under the influence in January 2010 and to driving under the influence, second offense, in March 2011. He also pleaded guilty to simple assault aiding and abetting in November 2010.

Trump urges calm even as US reports worrisome new virus case

By LAURAN NEERGAARD and RICARDO ALONSO-ZALDIVAR Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump declared that a widespread U.S. outbreak of the new respiratory virus sweeping the globe isn't inevitable even as top health authorities at his side warned Americans that more infections are coming.

Shortly after Trump spoke Wednesday, the government announced a worrisome development: Another person in the U.S. is infected — someone in California who doesn't appear to have the usual risk factors of having traveled abroad or being exposed to another patient.

At a White House news conference, Trump sought to minimize fears as he insisted the U.S. is "very, very ready" for whatever the COVID-19 outbreak brings. Under fire about the government's response, he put Vice President Mike Pence in charge of coordinating the efforts.

"This will end," Trump said of the outbreak. "You don't want to see panic because there's no reason to be panicked."

But standing next to him, the very health officials Trump praised for fighting the new coronavirus stressed that schools, businesses and individuals need to get ready.

"We do expect more cases," said Dr. Anne Schuchat of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

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If the CDC confirms that the latest U.S. case doesn't involve travel or contact with an infected person, it would be a first in this country and a sign that efforts to contain the virus' spread haven't been enough.

"It's possible this could be an instance of community spread of COVID-19," the CDC said in a statement.

More than 81,000 cases of COVID-19, an illness characterized by fever and coughing and in serious cases shortness of breath or pneumonia, have occurred since the new virus emerged in China.

The newest case from California brings the total number infected in the U.S. to 60, most of them evacuated from outbreak zones.

Trump credited border restrictions that have blocked people coming into the U.S. from China for keeping infections low. But now countries around the world — from South Korea and Japan to Italy and Iran — are experiencing growing numbers of cases. Asked if it was time to either lift the China restrictions or take steps for travelers from elsewhere, he said: "At a right time we may do that. Right now it's not the time."

Trump spent close to an hour discussing the virus threat, after a week of sharp stock market losses over the health crisis and concern within the administration that a growing outbreak could affect his reelection. He blamed the Democrats for the stock market slide, saying, "I think the financial markets are very upset when they look at the Democrat candidates standing on that stage making fools out of themselves." And he shifted to defend his overall record and predict a win in November.

A key question is whether the Trump administration is spending enough money to get the country prepared — especially as the CDC has struggled to expand the number of states that can test people for the virus. Other key concerns are stockpiling masks and other protective equipment for health workers, and developing a vaccine or treatment.

Health officials have exhausted an initial \$105 million in emergency funding and have been looking elsewhere for dollars. Earlier this week, Trump requested \$2.5 billion from Congress to fight the virus. Senate Democratic Leader Chuck Schumer of New York countered with a proposal for \$8.5 billion.

Trump told reporters he was open to spending "whatever's appropriate."

Trump compared the new virus repeatedly to the flu, which kills tens of thousands of people each year. The new coronavirus has killed more than 2,700 people — most in China and none in the U.S. — but scientists still don't understand who's most at risk or what the death rate is.

Without a vaccine, the CDC's Schuchat advised people to follow "tried and true, not very exciting" but important precautions: Wash your hands, cover your coughs and stay home when you're sick.

A day earlier, another CDC official, Dr. Nancy Messonnier, was even more blunt, telling Americans to get ready for some of the same steps as occurred during the 2009 flu pandemic, such as school closings. "It's not so much a question of if this will happen anymore, but rather more a question of exactly when this will happen — and how many people in this country will have severe illness," she said.

The National Institutes of Health's top infectious disease chief cautioned a vaccine won't be ready for widespread use for a year or more. But Dr. Anthony Fauci said even if the virus wanes soon, it's "quite conceivable" that it might "come back and recycle next year." By then, he said, "we hope to have a vaccine."

Democrats were quick to condemn Trump's response to the outbreak. House Speaker Nancy Pelosi called it "opaque and chaotic."

"Instead of listening to public health and medical experts, the president has been downplaying the potential impact of the virus for over a month," said Democratic Rep. Bennie Thompson of Mississippi, chairman of the House Homeland Security Committee.

Thompson added that putting Pence, "someone with no public health expertise, in charge of the response will not instill confidence with the American people and raises questions about the administration's ability to coordinate an effective response to a complex public health threat."

During his time as Indiana's governor, Pence faced criticism for his response to a public health crisis in the southern part of the state.

In 2015, Scott County saw the number of people infected with HIV skyrocket, with nearly 200 people testing positive for the virus in a span of months. Indiana law at the time prohibited needle exchanges, exacerbating the outbreak, which primarily infected intravenous users of the painkiller Opana.

Pence had long opposed needle exchanges but was eventually persuaded to issue an executive order allowing one in Scott County. Despite his own misgivings — Pence said he didn't support the exchanges as an "anti-drug policy" — he signed a law allowing the state government to approve them on a case-by-case basis.

Associated Press writers Jonathan Lemire, Zeke Miller, Andrew Taylor and Darlene Superville contributed to this report.

Venice faces new threat from virus after reeling from floods

By **RENATA BRITO** and **GIADA ZAMPANO** Associated Press

VENICE, Italy (AP) — Still reeling from the effects of major flooding just a few months ago, Venice faces a new emergency: the threat of a new virus outbreak across Italy that is worrying international visitors worldwide and hitting the economy hard.

The fragile lagoon city, renowned for its unique cultural and artistic heritage, is already grappling with the effects of the worst flooding in a half-century at the end of last year. It caused more than 1 billion euros in damage to residents and businesses, hurting iconic landmarks like St. Mark's Basilica and La Fenice theatre.

The Italian government is taking extraordinary measures to contain the two main virus outbreaks that hit the northern regions of Veneto and Lombardy, two areas that together produce more than 30% of Italy's economic output.

As of now, Venice — whose historic center has around 53,000 residents and more than 30 million tourists a year -- has registered at least four cases of COVID-19, with 71 in the whole of Veneto — the worst-hit region after Lombardy, where 10 towns are on lockdown.

Neighboring Lombardy still has the most cases with at least 258, according to the latest official data. Twelve people have died so far in Italy, all of them elderly.

The Venice local hoteliers' association noted Wednesday that in the immediate aftermath of the virus outbreaks, hotel reservations saw a drop of about 50%. The numbers were rebounding for Carnival, with 95% occupancy reported just last weekend, only to have them drop by 40% when officials took the precaution — unprecedented in modern times — of canceling the last two days of celebrations.

"We understand the fear that is spreading but at the same time we are aware that our health care system is holding and we believe that the image of efficiency of our area will win out," said Daniele Minotto, the hotel association's deputy director.

Venice city councilor for economic development Simone Venturini said that the economic impact of the new virus outbreak should worry national authorities as much as the impact on public health.

In the city of Carnival, the virus threat forced visitors to observe strict precautions. Regional authorities also closed museums in the city — along with schools and other official offices — until March 1.

Many tourists visiting Venice's central St. Mark square enjoyed much free space on what normally would be a crowded plaza, while restaurants, hotels and souvenir stores counted their losses. Below their Venetian masks, they also wore white sanitary masks.

"We can see the square is relatively empty. If I can say, from my 39-year work experience, there is a very heavy fall, around 40% compared to previous years," said Roberto Nardin, a Venice gondolier.

The Italian government has staunchly defended its handling of the crisis, even as it acknowledges alarm over the growing number of cases — more than any other country outside Asia.

Following the outbreak escalation, Italian Premier Giuseppe Conte has raised the specter of an economic recession, as Italy's ailing economy struggles with moribund growth, massive debt, and high youth unemployment. Economic experts and business associations predict the virus spread to take a heavy toll on Italy's output, now seen falling between 0.5% and 1% this year, causing the loss of up to 60,000 jobs.

While there are measures in place to contain the outbreak, authorities also warned against unjustified panic. However, finding the balance between appropriate measures without repelling tourists and breaking the festive atmosphere remains a challenge.

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This year's succession of damaging events has also left some Venetian store owners desperate. Flavio Gastaldi said he is considering closing the souvenir store he has run for 30 years. Although business has highs and lows, his rent does not.

"At this point we won't recover anything (from the losses he has endured this year)," he said. "We will return the keys to the landlords soon."

But not all in Venice were ready to let virus worries dampen their party.

Yi Hui Ang, a doctor from Singapore who lives in Australia, recently walked around the historic center wearing a typical 18th-century costume she made herself, as well as a sanitary mask.

"I did have a dinner booked and everything, but that was canceled," she said. "But I'm still going to wear the dress."

Eva Mazens, a 7-year-old French tourist also disguised for Carnival, was even bolder.

"I couldn't care less about the virus. All that matters is the party," she said.

Giada Zampano reported from Rome.

Full AP coverage of the virus outbreak can be found here: <https://apnews.com/VirusOutbreak>

Vexed by how to contain virus, countries take tough steps

By MATT SEDENSKY and JON GAMBRELL Associated Press

BANGKOK (AP) — Saudi Arabia cut travel to Islam's holiest sites, South Korea toughened penalties for those breaking quarantines and airports across Latin America looked for signs of sick passengers Thursday as a new virus troubled a mushrooming swath of the globe.

With the illness pushing its way into a sixth continent and the number of sick and dead rising, the crisis gave way to political and diplomatic rows, concern that bordered on panic in some quarters, and a sense that no part of the world was immune to the disease's spread.

"Viruses don't know borders and they don't stop at them," said Roberto Speranza, the health minister in Italy, where northern towns were on army-guarded lockdowns and supermarket shelves were bare.

As growing parts of Europe and the Middle East saw infections and a first case was found in South America, air routes were halted and border control toughened. But for an illness transmitted so easily, with its tentacles reaching into so many parts of the world, leaders puzzled over how to keep the virus from proliferating seemed willing to try anything to keep their people — and economies — safe.

Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe called for schools across the country to close for weeks, a decision that impacted 12.8 million students.

"The most important thing is to prevent infections," said Norinobu Sawada, vice principal of Koizumi primary school, "so there aren't many other options."

In South Korea, the hardest-hit country outside China, four Busan markets known for colorful silks and a dizzying array of other wares were shuttered while the country's military sent hundreds of its doctors and soldiers to aid in treatment and quarantines.

In Iran, the front line of Mideast infections, officials loosened rules barring the import of many foreign-made items to allow in sanitizers, face masks and other necessities, and removed overhead handles on Tehran's subways to eliminate another source of germs. Peru put specialists on round-the-clock shifts at its biggest airport, Argentina took the temperature of some new arrivals and El Salvador added bans for travelers from Italy and South Korea.

The holy city of Mecca, which able-bodied Muslims are called to visit at least once in their lives, and the Prophet Muhammad's mosque in Medina were cut off to potentially millions of pilgrims, with Saudi Arabia making the extraordinary decision to stop the spread of the virus.

With the monarchy offering no firm date for the lifting of the restrictions, it posed the possibility of affecting those planning to make their hajj, a ritual beginning at the end of July this year.

"We ask God Almighty to spare all humanity from all harm," the country said in announcing the decision.

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Disease has been a constant concern surrounding the hajj, with cholera outbreaks in the 19th century killing tens of thousands making the trip. More recently, another coronavirus that caused Middle East respiratory syndrome, or MERS, prompted increased public health measures, but no outbreak resulted.

COVID-19's westward creep — including a case in California in the United States that does not appear linked to overseas travel — had some countries warning their people to obey measures intended to keep a single case from blossoming into a cluster that could paralyze a community.

A man originally from Wuhan, the Chinese city at the center of the global outbreak, who contracted the virus was charged alongside his wife in Singapore for allegedly lying about their whereabouts as officials tried to stem further infections. In Colombia, which has yet to report any cases, officials reminded residents they could be jailed for up to eight years if they violate containment measures. And in South Korea, the National Assembly passed a law strengthening the punishment for those violating self-isolation, more than tripling the fine and adding the possibility of a year in prison.

"It came later than it should have," said Lee Hae-shik, spokesman for the ruling Democratic Party, calling for further non-partisan cooperation to address the outbreak.

Countries' efforts to contain the virus opened up diplomatic scuffles. South Korea fought prohibitions keeping its citizens out of 40 countries, calling them excessive and unnecessary. China warned Russia to stop discriminatory measures against its people, including monitoring on public transit. Iran used the crisis to rail against the U.S., which it accused of "a conspiracy" that was sowing fear.

The global count of those sickened by the virus hovered around 82,000, with 433 new cases reported Thursday in China and another 505 in South Korea, where the military called off joint drills planned with American troops. Iran's caseload surged by more than 100 cases.

Even the furthest reaches of the globe were touched by the epidemic, with a woman testing positive in Tromsø, the fjord-dotted Norwegian city with panoramas of snow-capped mountains. Health officials said the woman had traveled to China.

Gambrell reported from Dubai, United Arab Emirates. Contributing to this report were Tong-hyung Kim and Hyung-jin Kim in Seoul, South Korea; Jan M. Olsen in Copenhagen, Denmark; and Mari Yamaguchi in Tokyo.

Saudi Arabia halts pilgrimages over virus; Iran cases spike

By JON GAMBRELL Associated Press

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates (AP) — Saudi Arabia on Thursday banned foreign pilgrims from entering the kingdom to visit Islam's holiest sites over the new coronavirus, potentially disrupting the plans of millions of faithful ahead of the Muslim fasting month of Ramadan and as the annual hajj pilgrimage looms.

The decision showed the growing worry across the Mideast about the virus as Iran confirmed that infected cases in the country spiked by over 100, to 254 now. A total of 26 people have died so far, it said. That pushes the region's overall cases to above 350. Iran's death toll is highest outside of China, where the outbreak began.

Saudi Arabia's barring of pilgrims from Mecca, home to the cube-shaped Kaaba that the world's 1.8 billion Muslims pray toward five times a day, and also the holy city of Medina, appeared unprecedented in modern history. The kingdom's Al Saud ruling family stakes their legitimacy in overseeing and protecting the sites. Authorities also suspended entry to travelers from nations affected by the new virus who hold tourist visas for the kingdom.

It appeared Saudi officials worried about the risk of pilgrims spreading the virus as they had in Iran. The virus' epicenter in the Islamic Republic is the holy Shiite city of Qom, where the faithful in reverence reach out to kiss and touch a famous shrine. That shrine and others have remained open, despite Iran's civilian government calling for them to be closed.

There have been no confirmed cases of the new coronavirus in Saudi Arabia amid the outbreak.

"Saudi Arabia renews its support for all international measures to limit the spread of this virus, and

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urges its citizens to exercise caution before traveling to countries experiencing coronavirus outbreaks," the Saudi Foreign Ministry said in a statement announcing the decision. "We ask God Almighty to spare all humanity from all harm."

News of the cancellation shocked the Muslim world, as many save their entire lives for a chance to see the Kaaba and walk along the path of the Prophet Muhammad and visit his tomb in Medina.

Hundreds of faithful deplained in Pakistan as the ban came into effect, while Indonesia and Turkey had to turn away thousands of pilgrims set to fly. Authorities at Cairo's international airport said the Saudi decision created "intense confusion" and "extreme anger" among thousands of passengers waiting for flights. Security officials needed to call in reinforcements to control the crowd as news of the ban broke, said the officials, who spoke on condition of anonymity as they weren't allowed to speak to reporters.

Disease outbreaks always have been a concern surrounding the hajj, which is required of all able-bodied Muslims once in their life, especially as pilgrims come from all over the world. The earliest recorded outbreak came in 632 as pilgrims fought off malaria. A cholera outbreak in 1821 killed an estimated 20,000 pilgrims. Another cholera outbreak in 1865 killed 15,000 pilgrims and then spread worldwide.

More recently, Saudi Arabia faced the danger from another coronavirus, one that causes the Middle East respiratory syndrome, or MERS, which jumped from ill camels to humans. The kingdom increased its public health measures during the hajj in 2012 and 2013 and urged the ill and the elderly not to take part in the pilgrimage.

Since September 2012, there have been nearly 2,500 cases of MERS reported, with 858 deaths attributed to the virus, according to the World Health Organization. However, the hajj itself saw no MERS outbreak. Saudi officials also instituted bans on pilgrims coming from countries affected by the Ebola virus in recent years as well.

Since the new coronavirus emerged in December in central China, it has sickened 82,000 people globally, with more than 2,700 deaths. The illness it causes was named COVID-19, a reference to its origin late last year.

While millions attend the hajj, which is this year set for late July into early August, millions more come during the rest of the year to the holy sites in the kingdom. Those other pilgrimages are referred to as the umrah, which drew 7.5 million people in 2019 alone. One of the biggest times for the umrah is the Muslim holy fasting month of Ramadan, which is set to begin at the end of April.

Those pilgrims spend upward of 10 days at holy sites, mingling in tight quarters. Of those coming, many are older, have pre-existing chronic diseases and come from countries "with suboptimal disease surveillance," according to a letter Thursday to The Lancet medical journal.

"Respiratory infections are the most common illness among pilgrims ... and the lack of social distancing among pilgrims as they engage in religious rituals amplifies their risk of acquiring and transmitting respiratory diseases," the letter read.

The letter added: "We do not need to wait for the first case to emerge in Saudi Arabia's holy sites. The time for preparedness is now."

Dr. Ziad A Memish, a Saudi professor who studies infectious diseases and co-signed the letter, said he welcomed the kingdom's decision.

"This is a very tough decision," he told The Associated Press. "But with the rapid spread of COVID-19 and a lack of good diagnostics, preventative vaccines and therapeutics, this is the best decision that could be taken at such difficult times."

Kristian Ulrichsen, a research fellow at the James A. Baker III Institute for Public Policy at Rice University, called the Saudi decision "unprecedented."

"Given the worldwide spread of the virus and the global nature of the umrah, it makes sense from a public health and safety point of view," said "Especially since the Iranian example illustrates how a religious crossroads can so quickly amplify the spread and reach of the virus."

By leaving the suspension of travel to the holy sites open-ended, Saudi Arabia has opened the possibility of this year's hajj potentially being disrupted as well.

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The hardest-hit nation in the Mideast is Iran, where Health Ministry spokesman Kianoush Jahanpour on Thursday reported 26 deaths out of 245 confirmed cases of the illness. Experts are concerned Iran may be underreporting cases and deaths, given the illness' rapid spread from Iran across the Persian Gulf.

Jahanpour seemed to address that, saying new labs in Iran were conducting tests and the number of confirmed cases could continue to spike in coming days. Thursday's number represented a jump in over 100 new cases from the previous day.

Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei on Thursday praised medical staffers, calling their work "very invaluable." But the virus has struck the official in charge of Iran's response to the outbreak, as well as a reformist lawmaker. On Thursday, a hard-line cleric from Qom who also serves in parliament posted a video online acknowledging he had been infected.

"Yes, my corona test is positive, too and I am in quarantine," Mojtaba Zonnouri said in the video. "God willing, our nation will overcome in fight against corona."

Associated Press writers Nasser Karimi in Tehran, Iran; Munir Ahmed in Islamabad; Isabel DeBre in Cairo; Niniek Karmini in Jakarta, Indonesia; Andrew Wilks in Ankara, Turkey, and Qassim Abdul-Zahra in Baghdad contributed to this report.

Campaigners win court challenge to block Heathrow expansion

By **DANICA KIRKA and JILL LAWLESS** Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — Campaigners won a court ruling Thursday to block the plan for a third runway at Heathrow Airport on environmental grounds, setting the stage for a new fight over whether to make Europe's biggest airport even bigger.

The ruling by Britain's Court of Appeal could stall the 14 billion-pound (\$18 billion) plan to expand the London airport amid concerns about climate change, pollution and noise. The judges ruled that the government did not take into account its commitment to the Paris Agreement on climate change in making its decision.

"We won!" said an ecstatic London Mayor Sadiq Khan, a longtime opponent of the project.

"Huge" Environment Minister and longtime opponent Zac Goldsmith tweeted.

Heathrow Airport said it will appeal to the Supreme Court and says it is "confident that we will be successful."

Heathrow says a third runway is needed to meet increasing demand for air travel. Parliament approved the plan in 2018, triggering a challenge from environmental groups who say the project conflicts with Britain's commitments to fight global warming. Local residents also complain about noise, pollution and increased congestion.

But things have changed since Parliament approved the matter. In particular, Boris Johnson, a longtime opponent of the expansion who once promised to lie down in front of the bulldozers to prevent the runway, is now prime minister.

Less than a few hours after the ruling, Johnson's spokesman said the government will not appeal, signaling a change of tone in the leadership.

The ruling opens the possibility that he will use the decision to attempt to kill the measure.

The location of a new runway in southeastern England has been debated for years, pitting the economic benefits of greater expansion versus the consequences of all those additional planes at Heathrow, already one of the world's busiest airports. The issue is so toxic that politicians created an independent commission to weigh the options.

Amid furious public relations battles, the Airports Commission backed Heathrow in 2015, rejecting plans from Gatwick Airport, 30 miles (50 kilometers) south of central London, as well as a proposal to build a new airport in the Thames Estuary.

The Department for Transportation argued the project would permit an additional 260,000 flights a year and give a 74 billion-pound (\$99 billion) boost to the British economy over 60 years.

Despite Parliament's approval, the issue never went away. Environmentalists and local campaigners kept fighting. They were cheered by the court ruling, particularly as the change in the political climate offers greater hope for refusal.

"It surely must be the final nail in the coffin for Heathrow's attempts to steamroll over local and national opposition to their disastrous third runway plans," said Gareth Roberts, the leader of Richmond Council, which is in the the flight path. "The expansion of Heathrow would be a catastrophe for our climate and environment and for the thousands of Londoners who would be forced to live with the huge disruption it will cause."

10 Things to Know for Today

By The Associated Press undefined

Your daily look at late-breaking news, upcoming events and the stories that will be talked about today:

1. CORONAVIRUS CASES CONTINUE TO SPIKE IN ASIA As the worst-hit areas in China and South Korea continue to struggle with the viral epidemic, worries about infection and containment spread across the globe.

2. SAUDIS HALT PILGRIMAGES OVER VIRUS The kingdom halts travel to the holiest sites in Islam over fears about a viral epidemic just months ahead of the annual hajj pilgrimage as confirmed cases spike to over 240 in the Middle East.

3. 'WE DO EXPECT MORE CASES' U.S. health officials stress that schools, businesses and individuals need to get ready as the new coronavirus threat comes to America.

4. GUNMAN KILLS 5 AT MILWAUKEE BREWERY A 51-year-old employee of Molson Coors opens fire at one of the nation's largest breweries, killing five co-workers before taking his own life, police say.

5. WHAT HAS CONGRESSIONAL DEMOCRATS NERVOUS Moderates in the party worry about Bernie Sanders and the damage they feel the presidential front-runner could do to their prospects of retaining House control.

6. SYRIAN OPPOSITION FIGHTERS RETAKE KEY TOWN Just days after President Bashar Assad's government reopened a key highway linking Damascus with the north, Turkish-backed opposition fighters retake the northwestern town of Saraqeb.

7. WHERE BIG LABOR IS PUTTING ITS MONEY Boasting nearly 2 million members, the Service Employees International Union unveils plans to invest \$150 million in a nationwide campaign to help defeat Trump.

8. 'I'M HAPPY TO GET IT' More than 3,000 people in Guam are expecting to get long-awaited compensation from the U.S. government for their suffering at the hands of imperial Japan during World War II.

9. AMERICANS GETTING FATTER About 4 in 10 U.S. adults are obese, and nearly 1 in 10 is severely so, government researchers say.

10. FAKE MEAT AND A LATTE Starbucks in Canada will soon start selling a sandwich featuring a meat-free patty from Beyond Meat.

Sanders' rise fuels Dems' angst over keeping House control

By ALAN FRAM and LISA MASCARO Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Sen. Bernie Sanders' ascendancy as Democrats' leading presidential hopeful fueled growing unease as lawmakers openly expressed anxiety that the self-proclaimed democratic socialist could cost them House control and questions abounded over what party leaders should do.

House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, D-Calif., projected calm — and neutrality — on Wednesday as she batted away reporters' queries about whether it was time for her to try thwarting Sanders to protect her party's majority.

"We're not going to lose the House," she said. "We're going to be united by whomever is the candidate for president. But we are taking responsibility for winning the House, and we're not assuming anything. But we feel very confident."

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She delivered a similar message to colleagues at a closed-door meeting Wednesday morning, when she told them, "We cannot show any division. This has to be about unity, unity, unity." Her remarks were described by a Democratic aide on the condition of anonymity to relay private comments.

Yet with Sanders, I-Vt., riding high after early nominating contest wins in New Hampshire and Nevada and a virtual first-place tie in Iowa, other House Democrats were less sanguine.

Time was growing short to head Sanders off. South Carolina holds its primary Saturday, followed three days later by Super Tuesday, when contests in 14 states and one territory will decide one-third of the delegates to this summer's Democratic convention.

Rep. Tom Malinowski, a freshman from a closely divided New Jersey district, said Democrats have "a simple path" to defeating President Donald Trump by focusing on health care, the economy and a promise that their presidential candidate won't lie. "I don't want to squander that opportunity" by nominating a contender who divides Democrats, he said in an unspoken reference to Sanders.

Freshman Rep. Elaine Luria, D-Va., who defeated an incumbent Republican in 2018 in a swing district in coastal Virginia, said a Sanders candidacy would be "incredibly divisive" and endanger more centrist lawmakers like herself. The former Navy commander said of GOP efforts to paint all Democrats as socialists, "Bernie Sanders just adds fuel to that fire."

Rep. Scott Peters, D-Calif., a leader of his party's House moderates, said there is widespread concern among lawmakers from competitive districts "that a Sanders candidacy would sink their reelections."

Peters, whose San Diego district is safely Democratic, said Sanders would complicate moderates' reelection bids because "the face of the Democratic Party might be spouting things that are absolutely anathema to your voters." Sanders advocacy for "Medicare for All," the Green New Deal and student loan forgiveness has alienated many moderates.

Of the 42 House seats Democrats gained in 2018 when they captured the majority, 29 are from districts that Trump either won in 2016 or lost by a narrow 5 percentage points or less. Most of them are moderates.

Republicans will need to gain 18 seats in November's elections to win House control, assuming they retain three vacant seats held previously by the GOP.

Asked what Pelosi was doing about Sanders, Peters said, "I hope that we do have a conversation as a party" about his impact on endangered Democrats.

Hours after No. 3 House Democratic leader James Clyburn endorsed former Vice President Joe Biden for the Democratic nod, Clyburn declined to say Wednesday whether it was time for Pelosi to speak up. "I don't tell people what to do politically," Clyburn, from South Carolina, told reporters.

Asked if Sanders would cost Democrats the House, Clyburn said, "I don't know if he will or not. It's not a chance I want to take."

Speaking on the condition of anonymity, one Democratic lawmaker from a competitive district said many party moderates were eager for Pelosi to do something to hinder Sanders' drive toward the nomination.

No lawmakers interviewed specified what leaders could do to help sidetrack Sanders. Any action they took would risk backfiring by antagonizing liberal voters who all Democrats will need this fall.

Sanders' rise has put many Democrats in a delicate situation similar to what many Republicans faced four years ago. As Trump roared toward the GOP nomination, his anti-immigrant views and personal foibles soured Republican congressional candidates, but many chose not to abandon him and risk alienating their party's base, conservative voters.

Underscoring the tricky political terrain they face, several vulnerable Democrats said Wednesday that they would back whoever their party's nominee is, but stopped short of saying they would campaign with Sanders.

"We haven't gotten that far yet," said Rep. Lucy McBath from a closely divided district outside Atlanta.

"I'll cross that bridge if I come to it," said Michigan Rep. Elissa Slotkin, from a Lansing-area district that leans toward the GOP.

Some of Congress' most liberal Democrats have endorsed Sanders. One of them seemed to apply pressure on Pelosi on Wednesday to not undermine him.

Rep. Pramila Jayapal, D-Wash., said Pelosi "plays a very important role in staying neutral and calming everybody down." She said Pelosi and other leaders who have not endorsed a candidate should continue that stance.

"They're going to have to win the votes for their own leadership positions within the caucus, and I think that weighing in would not be appropriate for the speaker," Jayapal said. The House majority party elects the speaker for every new Congress.

Democratic Party officials will brief lawmakers Thursday on the rules that will govern their nominating convention this summer in Milwaukee. The party has weakened the clout of superdelegates, who include members of Congress, but they could play an important role if the convention does not choose a nominee during the gathering's first ballot.

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

Syrian opposition fighters retake key town from government

By **BASSEM MROUE** Associated Press

BEIRUT (AP) — Turkey-backed Syrian opposition fighters on Thursday retook a strategic northwestern town in Syria that was recently captured by government forces, and cut the highway linking the capital, Damascus, with the northern city of Aleppo days after the government reopened it for the first time since 2012.

The retaking of Saraqeb which sits on the highway is a setback for Syrian President Bashar Assad's forces who have scored major gains in a weeks long Russian-backed campaign in the last rebel stronghold in Idlib province. Officials had hailed the reopening of the motorway, known as the M5, as a major victory in the nine-year conflict.

The government's military campaign to recapture Idlib, the last opposition-held stronghold in the country, has triggered a humanitarian catastrophe and the war's largest single wave of displacement. According to the U.N. almost 950,000 civilians have been displaced since early Decembers, and more than 300 have been killed. Most have fled further north to safer areas near the Turkish border, overwhelming camps already crowded with refugees in cold winter weather.

The Britain-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, an opposition war monitoring group, said the opposition fighters seized the town of Saraqeb after intense bombardment by Turkish troops. Turkey and Russia support opposite sides in Syria's brutal civil war, with Ankara backing the opposition and Moscow backing Assad.

From inside Saraqeb, activist Taher al-Omar said the town is now under opposition control. He posted a video with a fighter saying the government forces "ran away like rats."

The Observatory said more than 60 fighters were killed on both sides since Wednesday, adding that later on Thursday, government forces launched a counteroffensive under the cover of Russian airstrikes to try retake the town.

Syrian state media reported intense clashes near Saraqeb, saying insurgents sent suicide car bombs and that Turkish forces bombarded the area. It said a small group of insurgents reached the highway to score a "propaganda stunt," adding that "Syrian troops are dealing with them."

Backed by Russian air power, Assad's forces have over the past few days captured dozens of villages, including major rebel strongholds in the last opposition-held area.

The campaign also seized the last segments of the south-north M5 highway. When the government forces first took Saraqeb earlier this month, it marked their capture of the last major rebel-held town along the highway.

Over the past weeks, Turkey sent thousands of troops into Idlib province. Clashes between Syrian and Turkish troops have killed 18 Turkish soldiers.

Turkey's Defense Ministry said on Thursday that two Turkish soldiers were killed in Syria in an air attack in Idlib province the previous day, and that two others were wounded.

Turkey responded by targeting Syrian government forces. An air defense missile system, an anti-aircraft gun, three tanks, an ammunition vehicle, an anti-tank weapon and two construction vehicles were destroyed, the ministry said.

Associated Press writers Andrew Wilks in Ankara, Turkey, and Albert Aji in Damascus, Syria, contributed to this report.

AP Interview: Al-Qaida, IS affiliates team up in West Africa

By CARLEY PETESCH Associated Press

THIES, Senegal (AP) — The only place in the world where fighters linked to al-Qaida and the Islamic State group are cooperating is in West Africa's sprawling Sahel region, giving the extremists greater depth as they push into new areas, according to the commander of the U.S. military's special forces in Africa.

"I believe that if it's left unchecked it could very easily develop into a great threat to the West and the United States," U.S. Air Force Brig. Gen. Dagvin Anderson told The Associated Press in an interview this week.

The leader of U.S. Special Operations Command Africa described the threat even as the Pentagon considers reducing the U.S. military presence in Africa.

Experts have long worried about collaboration between al-Qaida and the Islamic State group. While the cooperation in the Sahel is not currently a direct threat to the U.S. or the West, "it's very destabilizing to the region," Anderson said.

He spoke on the sidelines of the U.S. military's annual counterterrorism exercise in West Africa, currently the most active region for extremists on the continent.

The alarming new collaboration in the Sahel between affiliates of al-Qaida and IS is a result of ethnic ties in the region that includes Mali, Niger and Burkina Faso.

"Whereas in other parts of the world they have different objectives and a different point of view that tends to bring Islamic State and al-Qaida into conflict, here they're able to overcome that and work for a common purpose," Anderson said, emphasizing that it's a local phenomenon.

The cooperation allows the extremist groups to appeal to a wider audience in a largely rural region where government presence is sparse and frustration with unemployment is high.

The past year has seen a surge in deadly violence in the Sahel, with more than 2,600 people killed and more than half a million displaced in Burkina Faso alone.

Al-Qaida is the deeper threat both in the region and globally, Anderson said.

"Islamic State is much more aggressive and blunt, and so in some ways they appear to be the greater threat," he said. But al-Qaida, which continues to quietly expand, is "for us the longer strategic concern."

Al-Qaida has been successful at consolidating efforts in northern Mali and moving south into more populated areas "and taking various groups and galvanizing them together into a coherent movement," Anderson said.

The most prominent of those affiliates is a coalition of al-Qaida-linked groups known as JNIM with about 2,000 fighters in the region, according to the Center for Strategic and International Studies.

West Africa's Sahel, the vast strip of land just south of the Sahara Desert, for years has struggled to contain the extremist threat. In 2012, al-Qaida-linked fighters seized large swaths of northern Mali. French forces pushed them from strongholds in 2013 but the fighters have regrouped and spread south.

The largest IS affiliate in the region, Islamic State in the Greater Sahara, emerged more recently and claimed responsibility for killing four U.S. soldiers in Niger in 2017. The attack led to an outcry in Washington and questions about the U.S. military presence in Africa.

Between the advances of al-Qaida and IS-linked fighters, once-peaceful Burkina Faso has become the latest front for what experts call an alarming rate of deadly attacks.

The al-Qaida affiliates visit areas in advance to "engage with key leaders in key locations to recruit early," Anderson said. Others move in later.

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The fighters are funding themselves with kidnapping for ransom as they attempt to control access to markets via taxation methods, he said. They also are likely eyeing what has been a source of income for centuries: gold.

"I believe they'd be happy to be able to control some of the artisanal mines and the other mines in the area, especially the gold and other precious metals that are easily transportable," Anderson said.

While al-Qaida affiliates work toward establishing safe havens, the Islamic State in the Greater Sahara is working to destabilize local governance, control territory and rally people to their cause, he said.

The strategy for countering the growing threat from the patchwork of Islamic extremist groups is a whole-of-governance one that goes beyond military efforts, Anderson said: "There's no easy answer."

Many young men in the largely impoverished region feel isolated from the government and are drawn in by extremists' promises of employment and purpose.

"Al-Qaida, whether we agree with it or not, brings some level of justice to many of these areas, and some level of services that aren't provided by central governments," Anderson said. "And they provide some representation to minority groups that don't feel part of the larger community, such as the Fulani or the Tuareg."

African partners need to invest in governance, he emphasized, though international involvement is necessary.

The French lead the military effort in the Sahel with more than 5,000 forces and they hope to bring in more European partners.

But the French have urged the U.S. to reconsider any cuts to its already small military footprint of about 1,400 personnel in West Africa. The U.S. has about 6,000 personnel on the continent.

Anderson countered that the U.S. is already doing a lot in the Sahel through the State Department, a large USAID presence and investment. "Instead of looking at the size of the presence, I think we should look at what is the appropriate engagement across the government, from all levels," he said.

With very small engagement, the U.S. can still help countries develop the capabilities to build coalitions and share intelligence, Anderson said.

"It's going to take all these nations working together, but also it's going to have to be African solutions to an African problem," he said.

AP Exclusive: MLB appoints 1st black umpire crew chief

By BEN WALKER AP Baseball Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Major League Baseball has appointed its first African American umpire crew chief, promoting Kerwin Danley to the position this week, The Associated Press has learned.

A person familiar with the move spoke to the AP on Wednesday night on condition of anonymity because the announcement had not yet been made.

MLB often shuffles its roster of umpires in the offseason to account for retirements, promotions and new hires.

The 58-year-old Danley has worked two World Series and been on the field for 10 other postseason rounds, including the AL Championship Series last year. He's also been chosen to call two All-Star Games.

Danley called his first game in the majors in 1992 as a minor league fill-in and was hired to the MLB staff in 1998.

Danley played college ball at San Diego State and was a first-team All-America outfielder in 1983 when he batted .399. His teammates with the Aztecs included future Hall of Fame outfielder Tony Gwynn — Danley's roommate — and current Colorado manager Bud Black.

In a neat coincidence, Danley was the first base umpire when Gwynn got his 3,000th hit during a 1999 game in Montreal and gave his former teammate a hug by the bag.

Danley began his umpiring career in 1985 in the Northwest League, and kept working his way up through the minors. He is known for having an even temperament, always an attractive quality when MLB picks its crew chiefs. He has totaled just four ejections in the past five seasons, according to retrosheet.org.

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Danley also was an instructor at the first umpire camp at MLB's Urban Youth Academy in Compton, California.

There have been about 10 full-time African American umpires in the majors since Emmett Ashford ascended to become the first in 1966. There have been several blacks in MLB umpire leadership positions, including Peter Woodfork, senior vice president of baseball operations, supervisor Cris Jones and the late Chuck Meriwether, a longtime big league umpire who became a supervisor.

More AP MLB: <https://apnews.com/MLB> and https://twitter.com/AP_Sports

India says US politicizing religious riots in which 30 died

EMILY SCHMALL and SHEIKH SAALIQ Associated Press

NEW DELHI (AP) — India accused a U.S. government commission of politicizing communal violence in New Delhi that killed at least 30 people and injured more than 200 as President Donald Trump was visiting the country.

The violent clashes between Hindu and Muslim mobs were the capital's worst communal riots in decades and saw shops, Muslim shrines and public vehicles go up in flames. Though the rioting had largely subsided, the rising toll was confirmed by hospital officials Thursday.

On Wednesday, the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom said it was deeply troubled by the violence and cited accounts that police had not intervened in attacks against Muslims, which police and India's federal government have denied.

"The government is failing in its duty to protect its citizens," Commissioner Anurima Bhargava said.

India's External Affairs Ministry said the commission's comments were "factually inaccurate and misleading" and appeared to be "aimed at politicizing the issue."

On Thursday, burned shops and public vehicles stood charred near a highway in Chandbagh, a Muslim-dominated locality. Streets were littered with broken glass and charred petrol bombs as dozens of police in camouflage and helmets patrolled.

Muslims affected by the violence allege Hindu mobs screamed pro-Hindu slogans and rioted with impunity as the police appeared to aid the marauding crowds. Muslim rioters, too, have been violent, and a number of Hindus, including security personnel, are among the dead and injured.

Most of the violence, however, appeared to be targeting Muslims who complained that while Hindu mobs went on a rampage, the police went missing. Police have denied the allegations.

The violence began Sunday when clashes between supporters and opponents of India's new citizenship law quickly escalated into full-blown religious riots between Hindus and Muslims in working-class neighborhoods on the outskirts of the sprawling capital.

Hours before the clashes, local politician Kapil Mishra, who is affiliated with Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Bharatiya Janata Party, appeared at a rally against the citizenship law's opponents and issued an ultimatum to the police to clear out the demonstrators. He told the crowd at the rally if police wouldn't clear out the demonstrators, he and his followers would do it themselves.

Many people, including Hindus, believe Mishra and his Hindu nationalist supporters stoked the latest riots.

The law that passed in December fast-tracks naturalization for foreign-born religious minorities of all major faiths in South Asia except Islam. Nationwide protests followed, with many opponents saying the law is discriminatory and breaks from India's secular traditions.

The supporters of the law, including leaders from Modi's party, have often called the protests anti-Indians funded by Pakistan.

Trump's first state visit to India included a lavish reception in Modi's home state of Gujarat and talks with the Indian leader, but the U.S. leader said they didn't discuss the violence. Trump declined to comment about the citizenship law, saying he wanted to leave that to India, before departing.

New US coronavirus case may be 1st from unknown origin

By **ROBERT JABLON** and **MIKE STOBBE** undefined

LOS ANGELES (AP) — A new coronavirus case in California could be the first in the U.S. that has no known connection to travel abroad or another known case, a possible sign the virus is spreading in a U.S. community, health officials said.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reported the case Wednesday.

California officials said the person is a resident of Solano County, northeast of San Francisco, and is getting medical care in Sacramento County. They said they have begun the process of tracking down people who the patient has been in contact with, a process known as contact tracing.

The patient was brought to UC Davis Medical Center from another Northern California hospital on Feb. 19 but it was four days before the CDC heeded a request to test the patient for COVID-19, according to an email sent to employees Wednesday by the hospital's interim CEO, Brad Simmons, and David Lubarsky, CEO of UC Davis Health.

The patient arrived on a ventilator and special protection orders were issued "because of an undiagnosed and suspected viral condition," according to the email, which was sent to employees.

The hospital asked the CDC to test for the coronavirus but testing was delayed until Sunday "since the patient did not fit the existing CDC criteria for COVID-19," the email said.

The hospital, which has treated other coronavirus patients, has been taking infection prevention precautions since the patient arrived. The email said officials believe there was only a small chance that others at the facility were exposed to the virus.

"Nevertheless, a small number of medical center employees have been asked to stay home and monitor their temperatures," the email said.

Messages to the CDC seeking comment on the email were not immediately returned Wednesday night.

All of the 59 other cases in the U.S. had traveled from abroad or had been in close contact with those who traveled. Health officials have been on high alert for so-called community spread.

Earlier U.S. cases included 14 in people who traveled back from outbreak areas in China, or their spouses; three people who were evacuated from the central China city of Wuhan; and 42 American passengers on the Diamond Princess cruise ship who were evacuated by the federal government to the U.S. from where the ship was docked in Japan.

Some of those evacuated were taken to Travis Air Force Base, which is in Solano County. A number of the earlier cases have been in California, including among some of the people taken to Travis and one in which a traveler who returned to San Benito County spread it to a spouse.

California officials have been preparing for the possibility that community spread of the virus might first surface there.

"We have been anticipating the potential for such a case in the U.S., and given our close familial, social and business relationships with China, it is not unexpected that the first case in the U.S. would be in California," said Dr. Sonia Angell, Director of the California Department of Public Health and State Public Health Officer, in a statement.

The outbreak, which began in China, has infected tens of thousands of people in more than three dozen countries, with the vast majority in mainland China.

The new virus is a member of the coronavirus family that can cause colds or more serious illnesses such as SARS and MERS.

The virus can cause fever, coughing, wheezing and pneumonia. Health officials think it spreads mainly from droplets when an infected person coughs or sneezes, similar to how the flu spreads.

Officials are advising people to take steps to avoid infection with coronavirus or other respiratory infections like a cold or the flu, including washing hands with soap and water and avoiding close contact with people who are sick.

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Labor union unveils \$150M campaign to help defeat Trump

By STEVE PEOPLES AP National Political Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — One of the nation's largest labor unions is unveiling plans to invest \$150 million in a nationwide campaign to help defeat President Donald Trump, a sweeping effort focused on eight battleground states and voters of color who typically don't vote.

The investment marks the largest voter engagement and turnout operation in the history of the Service Employees International Union, which claims nearly 2 million members. The scope of the campaign, which quietly launched last month and will run through November's general election, reflects the urgency of what union president Mary Kay Henry calls "a make-or-break" moment for working people in America under Trump's leadership.

"He's systematically unwinding and attacking unions. Federal workers rights have been totally eviscerated under his watch," Henry said in an interview. "We are on fire about the rules being rigged against us and needing to elect people that are going to stand with workers."

The union's campaign will span 40 states and target 6 million voters focused largely in Colorado, Florida, Michigan, Minnesota, Nevada, Pennsylvania, Virginia and Wisconsin, according to details of the plan shared with The Associated Press. The union and its local members will pay particular attention to two key urban battlegrounds they believe will play a defining role in the 2020 general election: Detroit and Milwaukee. There may be some television advertising, but the investment will focus primarily on direct contact and online advertising targeting minority men and women who typically don't vote.

Few groups of voters will be more important in the 2020 general election. Trump won the presidency four years ago largely because of his popularity with working-class whites and a drop-off in turnout from minority voters.

The union's political director, Maria Peralta, noted that Trump's campaign has been working effectively in recent months to win over some minority voters, particularly men, who have traditionally voted Democratic.

"He's going after our communities in ways that are pervasive. We're deeply aware of that," Peralta said. "They're talking about the strength of the economy."

The Service Employees International Union, like the Democratic Party and its allies across the nation, faces significant headwinds in its fight to deny Trump a second term. Voters who may dislike his overall job performance are generally pleased with his leadership on the economy, and unemployment for black Americans has hit record lows in recent months.

At the same time, Trump's campaign is far ahead of where it was four years ago, when it had little national organization.

On Wednesday, the Trump campaign announced plans to open 15 "Black Voices for Trump Community Centers" in battleground states and major cities, including Michigan and Wisconsin. The offices will feature a line of campaign swag adopting the "woke" label, and videos of prominent Trump surrogates like online stars Diamond and Silk explaining their support for the president and pamphlets outlining the president's record.

SEIU is the most diverse union in the United States. The union's membership features those who work in health care, food service, janitorial services and state and local government workers, among others. Half its members are people of color, and more than half make less than \$15 an hour.

The 2020 investment is designed to benefit Democrats up and down the ballot this fall, though defeating Trump stands as a primary goal.

That said, SEIU's political team has determined that a message simply attacking Trump isn't effective with its target audience, which includes a significant number of conservatives.

"We don't want to get too caught up in the Trump bashing," Peralta said. "Data shows people care about wages, and they care about health care across the board."

The union also determined that it's particularly effective to highlight Trump's work to weaken labor unions

and conditions for working-class Americans.

After campaigning for a higher minimum wage, Trump has done little to raise the federal minimum wage, which has been stuck at \$7.25 for more than a decade. His administration has also taken steps to make it harder for new groups of workers to form unions. And labor officials have decried his appointments to the National Labor Relations Board and the Supreme Court, which dealt a huge blow to labor in 2018 by ruling that government workers no longer could be required to pay union fees.

When asked, Henry had little to say about the specific Democratic presidential contenders fighting for the chance to take on Trump. SEIU may endorse a candidate in the coming months, she said, but it has decided to stay out of the messy nomination fight for now.

"We're trying to figure out, inside our union as we walk through Super Tuesday and through March, what do working people and our members think about the choice in the field," Henry said.

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

Gunman kills 5 at Milwaukee brewery before taking own life

By CARRIE ANTLFINGER and GRETCHEN EHLKE Associated Press

MILWAUKEE (AP) — An employee opened fire Wednesday at one of the nation's largest breweries in Milwaukee, killing five fellow workers before taking his own life, police said.

The assailant who attacked the Molson Coors complex was identified as a 51-year-old Milwaukee man who died of a self-inflicted gunshot wound, police said.

"There were five individuals who went to work today, just like everybody goes to work, and they thought they were going to go to work, finish their day and return to their families. They didn't — and tragically they never will," Milwaukee Mayor Tom Barrett said.

Authorities offered no immediate motive for the attack and did not release details about the shooter or how the shooting unfolded.

None of the victims was identified. Police, who were still contacting relatives, said identities would not be released for at least 24 hours. No one was wounded beyond those who were killed, authorities said.

Officers worked for hours to clear the more than 20 buildings in the complex where more than 1,000 people work. Police announced at a late evening news conference that the work was done and all employees had been allowed to go home. Police Chief Alfonso Morales said authorities believe the shooter acted alone.

President Donald Trump addressed the shooting before speaking at the White House about his administration's efforts to combat the coronavirus.

"Our hearts break for them and their loved ones," the president said. "We send our condolences. We'll be with them, and it's a terrible thing, a terrible thing."

The attack occurred at a sprawling complex that includes a mix of corporate offices and brewing facilities. The complex is widely known in the Milwaukee area as "Miller Valley," a reference to the Miller Brewing Co. that is now part of Molson Coors.

Molson Coors CEO Gavin Hattersley called the shooter "an active brewery employee."

"Unfortunately, I am devastated to share that we lost five other members of our family in this tragic incident," he said in an email sent to employees. "There are no words to express the deep sadness many of us are feeling right now."

He said the office would be closed the rest of the week and the brewery shuttered "for the time being" to give people time to cope.

A group of brewery employees gathered at a nearby bar to talk about what had happened.

"We are all a family. We work a lot of hours together, so we're all very sad," said Selena Curka, a brewery employee who was about to start her shift when the complex went on lockdown and she was turned away.

"It's just weird, because nine times out of 10 you're going to know the shooter," said another employee Thomas Milner. "It's a tight-knit family. Within the brewery we all interact with each other."

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Milner was also on his way to work when the shooting happened, and he was turned away too.

James Boyles told the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel that his wife, Lasonya Ragdales, works at Molson Coors in the claims department. She was texting from inside the facility and told her husband that there was an active shooter and she was locked in a room with a bunch of co-workers, the Journal Sentinel newspaper reported.

"Miller Valley" features a 160-year-old brewery, with a packaging center that fills thousands of cans and bottles every minute and a distribution center the size of five football fields. A massive red Miller sign towers over the complex and is a well-known symbol in Milwaukee, where beer and brewing are intertwined in the city's history.

The facility is also home to corporate customer service, finance, human resources and engineering departments. Tours take people to underground caves where beer was once stored, a saloon with intricate woodwork, a stein hall with stained-glass windows, a champagne room meeting hall with leaded-glass windows, and an outdoor beer garden that can hold 300 people.

Molson Coors announced in October that it planned to close a Denver office as part of a restructuring to eliminate 400 to 500 jobs. The reorganization was to benefit Milwaukee, which was expected to see hundreds of corporate and support jobs relocated there.

Before Wednesday's shooting, there had been three mass killings nationwide in 2020, with 12 total victims. All have been shootings. In 2019, there were 44 mass killings, with 224 total victims. The Associated Press/USA TODAY/Northeastern University Mass Killings database tracks all U.S. homicides since 2006 involving four or more people killed, not including the offender, over 24 hours regardless of weapon, location, victim-offender relationship or motive.

The last mass shooting in the Milwaukee area was in August 2012, when white supremacist Wade Michael Page fatally shot six people and wounded four others at a Sikh temple in suburban Oak Creek. Page killed himself after being wounded in a shootout with police. The worst mass shooting in the area in the past 20 years was in 2005, when seven people were killed and four wounded at a church service in Brookfield, a Milwaukee suburb. The shooter killed himself.

Shortly before word of the brewery shooting broke, Republican Senate Majority Leader Scott Fitzgerald told reporters in suburban Franklin that state gun laws would not be changing despite a push by Gov. Tony Evers, a Democrat, to do so, according to a report in the Journal Sentinel.

Evers called lawmakers into special session late last year to consider expanding background checks and allowing guns to be taken from people deemed a threat. But the Republican-controlled Legislature adjourned without action. Fitzgerald later called the shootings "an act of evil," the Journal Sentinel reported.

At a news conference outside Molson Coors, Lt. Gov. Mandela Barnes said, "We shouldn't accept this." He took up the issue later on social media, tweeting: "Another avoidable uniquely American tragedy. It's not normal, we should never accept it, and we should never relent when 'leaders' offer hollow thoughts and prayers but choose inaction."

Associated Press writers Dave Kolpack in Fargo, North Dakota, Meghan Hoyer in Washington, Scott Bauer and Todd Richmond in Madison, Wisconsin, and Amy Forliti and Tim Sullivan in Minneapolis contributed to this report.

This story has been updated to correct the name of the company to Molson Coors Brewing Co., instead of MillerCoors.

Trump urges calm even as US reports worrisome new virus case

By LAURAN NEERGAARD and RICARDO ALONSO-ZALDIVAR Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump declared Wednesday that a widespread U.S. outbreak of the new respiratory virus sweeping the globe isn't inevitable even as top health authorities at his side

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warned Americans that more infections are coming.

Shortly after Trump spoke, the government announced a worrisome development: Another person in the U.S. is infected — someone in California who doesn't appear to have the usual risk factors of having traveled abroad or being exposed to another patient.

At a White House news conference, Trump sought to minimize fears as he insisted the U.S. is "very, very ready" for whatever the COVID-19 outbreak brings. Under fire about the government's response, he put Vice President Mike Pence in charge of coordinating the efforts.

"This will end," Trump said of the outbreak. "You don't want to see panic because there's no reason to be panicked."

But standing next to him, the very health officials Trump praised for fighting the new coronavirus stressed that schools, businesses and individuals need to get ready.

"We do expect more cases," said Dr. Anne Schuchat of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

If the CDC confirms that the latest U.S. case doesn't involve travel or contact with an infected person, it would be a first in this country and a sign that efforts to contain the virus' spread haven't been enough.

"It's possible this could be an instance of community spread of COVID-19," the CDC said in a statement.

More than 81,000 cases of COVID-19, an illness characterized by fever and coughing and in serious cases shortness of breath or pneumonia, have occurred since the new virus emerged in China.

The newest case from California brings the total number infected in the U.S. to 60, most of them evacuated from outbreak zones.

Trump credited border restrictions that have blocked people coming into the U.S. from China for keeping infections low so far. But now countries around the world — from South Korea and Japan to Italy and Iran — are experiencing growing numbers of cases. Asked if it was time to either lift the China restrictions, or take steps for travelers from elsewhere, he said: "At a right time we may do that. Right now it's not the time."

Trump spent close to an hour discussing the virus threat, after a week of sharp stock market losses over the health crisis and concern within the administration that a growing outbreak could affect his reelection. He blamed the Democrats for the stock market slide, saying, "I think the financial markets are very upset when they look at the Democrat candidates standing on that stage making fools out of themselves." And at one point he shifted to defend his overall record and predict a win in November.

A key question is whether the Trump administration is spending enough money to get the country prepared — especially as the CDC has struggled to expand the number of states that can test people for the virus. Other key concerns are stockpiling masks and other protective equipment for health workers, and developing a vaccine or treatment.

Health officials have exhausted an initial \$105 million in emergency funding and have been looking elsewhere for dollars. Earlier this week, Trump requested \$2.5 billion from Congress to fight the virus. Senate Democratic Leader Chuck Schumer of New York countered with a proposal for \$8.5 billion.

Trump told reporters he was open to spending "whatever's appropriate."

Trump compared the new virus repeatedly to the flu, which kills tens of thousands each year. The new coronavirus has killed more than 2,700 — most in China and none in the U.S. so far — but scientists still don't understand who's most at risk or what the actual death rate is.

Without a vaccine, CDC's Schuchat advised people to follow "tried and true, not very exciting" but important precautions: Wash your hands, cover your coughs and stay home when you're sick.

A day earlier, another CDC official, Dr. Nancy Messonnier, was even more blunt, telling Americans to get ready for some of the same steps as occurred during the 2009 flu pandemic, such as school closings. "It's not so much a question of if this will happen anymore, but rather more a question of exactly when this will happen — and how many people in this country will have severe illness," she said.

The National Institutes of Health's top infectious disease chief cautioned a vaccine won't be ready for widespread use for a year or more. But Dr. Anthony Fauci said even if the virus wanes soon, it's "quite conceivable" that it might "come back and recycle next year." By then, he said, "we hope to have a vaccine."

Democrats were quick to condemn Trump's response to the outbreak. House Speaker Nancy Pelosi

called it “opaque and chaotic.”

“Instead of listening to public health and medical experts, the president has been downplaying the potential impact of the virus for over a month,” said Democratic Rep. Bennie Thompson of Mississippi, chairman of the House Homeland Security Committee.

Thompson added that putting Pence, “someone with no public health expertise, in charge of the response will not instill confidence with the American people and raises questions about the administration’s ability to coordinate an effective response to a complex public health threat.”

During his time as Indiana’s governor, Pence faced criticism for his response to a public health crisis in the southern part of the state.

In 2015, Scott County saw the number of people infected with HIV skyrocket, with nearly 200 people testing positive for the virus in a span of months. Indiana law at the time prohibited needle exchanges, exacerbating the outbreak, which primarily infected intravenous users of the painkiller Opana.

Pence had long opposed needle exchanges but was eventually persuaded to issue an executive order allowing one in Scott County. Despite his own misgivings — Pence said he didn’t support the exchanges as an “anti-drug policy” — he signed a law allowing the state government to approve them on a case-by-case basis.

Associated Press writers Jonathan Lemire, Zeke Miller, Andrew Taylor and Darlene Superville contributed to this report.

Mom of missing kids waives extradition; bail stays at \$5M

By JENNIFER SINCO KELLEHER Associated Press

HONOLULU (AP) — Bail will remain at \$5 million for a mother arrested in Hawaii over the disappearance of her two Idaho children, a judge ruled Wednesday.

Lori Vallow wore an orange jumpsuit in court on the Hawaiian island of Kauai for a hearing on her request to reduce bail. After the judge denied the request, her defense attorney, Craig De Costa, said she is waiving an extradition hearing, which had been scheduled for March 2.

She wants to expedite her return to Idaho, De Costa said. Kauai Prosecutor Justin Kollar said he will work with Idaho authorities on logistics for her departure. The judge set a March 4 status hearing to make sure she has been picked up.

Kauai police arrested Vallow last week on an Idaho warrant. She has been charged with two felony counts of child abandonment.

Seven-year-old Joshua “JJ” Vallow and 17-year-old Tylee Ryan have not been seen since September. Their disappearance captured worldwide attention after authorities pleaded for help in finding them. Police in the city of Rexburg, Idaho, have said they “strongly believe that Joshua and Tylee’s lives are in danger.”

Earlier this week, her Kauai defense attorneys filed a motion asking the judge to reconsider Vallow’s \$5 million bail. On Wednesday, De Costa urged Judge Kathleen Watanabe to “ignore the publicity, ignore the hype” and set reasonable bail.

Vallow, 46, is a flight risk, prosecutors said. “Given the extensive media attention, she is clearly aware that the authorities have prioritized her case,” prosecutors said. “She also has the means to move across an ocean.”

Prosecutors noted that Vallow’s husband, Chad Daybell, had \$152,000 in a First Hawaiian Bank account. Police also have said Vallow and Daybell have lied about the children’s whereabouts.

Vallow, also known as Lori Daybell, is also accused of disobeying a court order that required her to bring her children to Idaho authorities last month. De Costa said she is fighting the order because it would allow authorities to take her children into foster care.

The tangled case includes investigations into three deaths. Vallow’s estranged husband, Charles Vallow, was shot and killed in Phoenix last July by her brother, Alex Cox. Then Cox, who claimed the shooting was in self-defense, died of unknown causes in December.

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Vallow moved her family to Idaho in late August. In October, Chad Daybell's wife, Tammy Daybell, died of what her obituary said was natural causes. When Daybell married Vallow roughly two weeks after Tammy's death, law enforcement became suspicious and had her remains exhumed.

Test results on Daybell's remains and toxicology results for Cox have not yet been released.

Rexburg police questioned Daybell and Vallow about the missing children in late November, and when detectives returned the next day for a follow-up interview the couple had left town.

In December, Idaho authorities asked police on Kauai for help finding the couple. On Jan. 26, Kauai police served a search warrant on a vehicle and condo the couple were renting in the resort town of Princeville.

The couple's move to Kauai was "pre-planned," De Costa said. Kollar said it's concerning that it seemed to have been planned before Vallow's husband died.

Kauai police did not arrest Daybell and he doesn't face any charges.

Daybell visited his wife Tuesday at the Kauai Community Correctional Center, said Toni Schwartz, a spokeswoman for the Hawaii Department of Public Safety.

Trump campaign sues NY Times for defamation over Putin

NEW YORK (AP) — The campaign to reelect President Donald Trump sued The New York Times for defamation Wednesday, saying it was responsible for an essay by a former executive editor for the newspaper that claimed the campaign made a deal with Russian officials to defeat Hillary Clinton in 2016.

In the lawsuit in state court in New York, Donald J. Trump for President Inc. said the newspaper knowingly published false and defamatory statements when the Op-Ed piece claimed the campaign had an "overarching deal" with "Vladimir Putin's oligarchy" to defeat the Democratic candidate.

The lawsuit blamed the newspaper for the essay, saying the March 2019 article headlined "The Real Trump-Russia Quid Pro Quo," by Max Frankel, said the deal called for "the quid of help in the campaign against Hillary Clinton for the quo of a new pro-Russian foreign policy."

Frankel was executive editor of the Times from 1986 to 1994.

The lawsuit said Times reporters had confirmed the falsity of the statements, but the newspaper published them anyway because of its "extreme bias against and animosity toward the Campaign, and The Times' exuberance to improperly influence the presidential election in November 2020."

According to the lawsuit, the campaign sued to recover unspecified damages, publicly establish the truth, properly inform the newspaper's readers and the rest of the world and to seek appropriate remedies for the harm.

While briefing the media on the COVID-19 virus Wednesday evening, Trump fielded a question about the lawsuit and said the Times piece was beyond an opinion.

Eileen Murphy, a spokeswoman for the Times, said in a statement that the Trump campaign "has turned to the courts to try to punish an opinion writer for having an opinion they find unacceptable. Fortunately, the law protects the right of Americans to express their judgments and conclusions, especially about events of public importance. We look forward to vindicating that right in this case."

Brian Hauss, staff attorney at the American Civil Liberties Union who specializes in free speech, privacy and technology, said the lawsuit was "completely meritless."

"A publisher cannot be held liable for commentary based on public facts. If the law were any different, President Trump himself could be held liable for asserting that the Democrats colluded with Russia," he said in a statement.

Lawyers: New evidence backs Loughlin, Giannulli's innocence

By ALANNA DURKIN RICHER Associated Press

BOSTON (AP) — Lawyers for "Full House" actress Lori Loughlin and her fashion designer husband, Mossimo Giannulli, said Wednesday that new evidence shows the couple is innocent of charges that they bribed their daughters' way into the University of Southern California.

An attorney for the couple said in a legal filing that prosecutors provided the defense with notes written by the admitted ringleader of the college admissions cheating scheme that support the couple's claim that they believed their payments were legitimate donations, not bribes.

"This belated discovery ... is devastating to the government's case and demonstrates that the government has been improperly withholding core exculpatory information, employing a 'win at all costs' effort rather than following their obligation to do justice," attorney Sean Berkowitz wrote.

The filing came on the eve of a status hearing in the case scheduled for Thursday at Boston's federal court in the sweeping college admissions bribery case. It was expected that the judge would set a trial date for the parents still fighting the charges at that hearing.

Now, the couple's attorneys are asking the judge to postpone the setting of the trial date in light of the new evidence, saying "it is the only fair way to protect the defendants' rights."

Loughlin and Giannulli are accused of paying \$500,000 to get their daughters into USC as crew recruits even though neither was a rower. Authorities say the money was funneled through a sham charity operated by college admissions consultant Rick Singer, who has pleaded guilty to orchestrating the scheme.

Lawyers for Loughlin and Giannulli have argued that the couple believed the payments were "legitimate donations" that would go directly to USC as a fundraising gift or support Singer's charity. They have accused prosecutors of hiding crucial evidence that could prove the couple's innocence because it would undermine their case.

The new information provided to the defense includes notes written by Singer detailing his discussions with FBI investigators about recorded phone calls he had with parents, Berkowitz wrote. Singer said in his notes that the FBI told him to lie by saying that he told the parents who participated in the scheme that their payments were bribes, instead of legitimate donations to the schools, the attorney said.

"They continue to ask me to tell a fib and not restate what I told my clients as to where their money was going — to the program not the coach and that it was a donation and they want it to be a payment," Singer wrote, according to the filing.

Berkowitz called the information not only "exculpatory, but exonerating for the defendants the government has charged with bribery."

The couple is among 15 prominent parents still fighting accusations that they rigged the college admissions system by paying people to pretend their kids were star athletes for sports they didn't play or cheat on their children's entrance exams.

Nearly two dozen parents have pleaded guilty, including "Desperate Housewives" star Felicity Huffman, who was sentenced to two weeks in prison for paying \$15,000 to have a proctor correct her daughter's SAT answers.

Federal prosecutors have said the first trial for the parents should begin in October, and that Loughlin and Giannulli should be tried in the first group.

But lawyers for the parents said the substantial amount of evidence, outstanding pretrial motions and "general complexity" of the case made a trial this fall impossible and that there should be no trial before next February.

Utility to pay \$53M for blasts that damaged homes, killed 1

By ALANNA DURKIN RICHER Associated Press

BOSTON (AP) — A utility company will pay the largest criminal fine ever imposed for breaking a federal pipeline safety law — \$53 million — and plead guilty to causing a series of natural gas explosions in Massachusetts that killed one person and damaged dozens of homes, federal officials said Wednesday.

Columbia Gas of Massachusetts has agreed to plead guilty to violating the Pipeline Safety Act and pay the fine to resolve a federal investigation into the explosions that rocked three communities in the Merrimack Valley, north of Boston, in September 2018.

"Today's settlement is a sobering reminder that if you decide to put profits before public safety, you will pay the consequences," FBI Agent Joseph Bonavolonta said.

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The company said in an emailed statement that it takes full responsibility for the disaster.

"Today's resolution with the U.S. Attorney's Office is an important part of addressing the impact," the company wrote. "Our focus remains on enhancing safety, regaining the trust of our customers and ensuring that quality service is delivered."

The company's parent, Merrillville, Indiana-based NiSource Inc., also to sell the company and cease any gas pipeline and distribution activities in Massachusetts. Any profit from the sale of Columbia Gas of Massachusetts will be handed over to the federal government.

Eversource announced later Wednesday that it has agreed to buy the company's natural gas assets in Massachusetts for \$1.1 billion.

"We knew that one of the things those communities wanted was for Columbia Gas to simply go away," U.S. Attorney Andrew Lelling told reporters. "The tragedy was to such an extent that it would be extremely difficult for the populations in those towns to trust this company going forward, so that was one of our priorities when we struck this deal," he said.

The explosions and fires outraged the communities of Lawrence, Andover and North Andover, where thousands of homes and businesses went without gas service for weeks, and months in some cases, during the winter. Residents and public officials lashed out at the company for not adequately responding and called for officials to be held accountable.

Leonel Rondon, 18, died when a chimney collapsed on his vehicle in the driveway of a friend's home — hours after he had gotten his driver's license. About two dozen others were injured, and dozens of buildings were damaged or destroyed.

A series of class action lawsuits stemming from the explosions has settled for \$143 million. The settlement awaits final approval from a judge.

Lawrence Mayor Dan Rivera praised the plea deal, saying it will be a "great day" when Columbia Gas no longer exists.

"This agreement will bring some much needed solace to those affected," he told reporters.

The National Transportation Safety Board blamed the explosions on overpressurized gas lines, saying the company failed to account for critical pressure sensors as workers replaced century-old cast-iron pipes in Lawrence. That omission caused high-pressure gas to flood the neighborhood's distribution system at excessive levels.

Lelling said federal investigators found that Columbia Gas violated minimum safety standards for starting up and shutting down gas lines through a "pattern of flagrant indifference."

An internal company notice circulated in 2015 showed that the company knew that failing to properly account for control lines in construction projects could cause fires and explosions, officials said. Yet Columbia Gas cut corners to increase its bottom line, officials said.

The company didn't keep reliable records of control lines because it was too expensive, hired inexperienced and untrained workers, and didn't communicate with the city of Lawrence about construction projects, Bonavolonta said. Columbia Gas couldn't even give NTSB investigators an accurate picture of who its customers were in the immediate wake of the explosions, he said.

"This disaster was caused by a whole management failure at Columbia Gas," Lelling said.

Until Columbia Gas is sold, an independent monitor will ensure that the company is following state and federal laws, Lelling said.

The disaster prompted federal officials to call in September for every state to require that all natural gas infrastructure projects be reviewed and approved by a licensed professional engineer. The NTSB also recommended that natural gas utilities be required to install additional safeguards on low pressure systems like the one involved in the explosions.

Columbia Gas is scheduled to plead guilty on March 9.

Shifting demographics drive GOP nosedive on US West Coast

By **ANDREW SELSKY** Associated Press

BEND, Ore. (AP) — In the early 1990s, the population of Bend was around 25,000 and leaned Republican. A lumber mill operated in the Oregon high-desert town along the banks of a scenic river.

Today, the lumber mill is an REI outdoor recreation store. The population has quadrupled. And for the first time in memory, the number of registered Democrats in Deschutes County recently eclipsed the number of Republicans.

The transformation shows how demographic shifts and the GOP's tack further to the right are helping push the party into a nosedive along the West Coast.

The last Republican presidential candidate that California went for was George H.W. Bush. For both Oregon and Washington, it was Ronald Reagan. Now, Republicans are struggling to hold seats in Congress, statehouses and city councils up and down the coast.

California, Washington and Oregon will hold their presidential primaries on March 3, March 10 and May 19 respectively, and which Democratic candidates they favor will become clear. But this much is certain: In November, none of the three states is apt to go for President Donald Trump, and there is little hope Republicans will claw back much ground in other contests.

Political districts have flipped in population centers, from San Diego in the south to Seattle in the north. "There is no way out," Chris Vance, a former Washington state Republican Party chairman and legislator, said in a telephone interview.

In San Diego, by the U.S.-Mexico border, each of the nine city council districts now has more registered Democrats than registered Republicans, including one that until recently leaned strongly Republican.

In 1980, Orange County, near Los Angeles, was 80% white and a GOP stronghold. Today, Orange County is mostly Hispanic and Asian, with many displeased by Republicans' hard stance on immigration. In 2018, voters there dealt a stunning defeat to a two-term GOP congresswoman.

The California GOP wound up losing six other U.S. House seats that year, leading a former Republican leader in the state to declare: "The California Republican Party isn't salvageable at this time."

Democrats also hold the California governor's office, both U.S. Senate seats and almost complete control of the Legislature.

In Seattle, tens of thousands of tech employees have flooded into the city and its suburbs, hired by Amazon, Microsoft, Google and Facebook. The influx of highly educated workers over the past decade helped fuel a population boom that made many communities much more diverse and affluent, and turned them away from the GOP and toward Democrats.

The result: The GOP has lost all the statehouse seats it once held in Seattle's eastern suburbs.

Vance blames the area's exodus of college-educated white voters, particularly women, from the GOP on the party's turn toward more fundamentalist values under Trump. Vance himself abandoned the party in 2017 after an unsuccessful run for the U.S. Senate as the Republican candidate.

"This was the party of nerdy, wonky, tweedy capitalists who cared about economic growth. Now it is the party of populists: alt-right, let's keep the immigrants out, truck- and rifle-populists," Vance said. "That works in Mississippi and Arkansas and stuff, but it does not work in the Seattle area."

Washington Gov. Jay Inslee, among a line of Democratic governors dating back to 1985, faces no significant GOP challenge as he seeks a third term in November. Both of Washington's U.S. senators are Democrats, and seven of its 10 U.S. House members belong to the party. Democrats hope to expand their majorities in the Legislature, where they hold a 28-21 edge in the Senate and a 57-41 advantage in the House.

And Democrats in Oregon — who already hold the governorship, both U.S. Senate seats and four of five U.S. House seats — wield supermajorities in the Legislature, and are gunning for more seats.

One of them is the House seat representing Bend, currently held by moderate Republican Rep. Cheri Helt. Challenging her is Deschutes County Deputy District Attorney Jason Kropf, whose treasurer is a veteran political fundraiser.

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After the demise of the timber industry, Bend became a mecca for outdoor enthusiasts and beer lovers. The town of roughly 100,000 is arrayed along the Deschutes River and below the Cascade Range, with one of the highest number of breweries per capita in America.

"Bend is full of beautiful, very fit, beer-swilling jocks," said James Foster, professor emeritus of political science at Oregon State University-Cascades in Bend.

The shifting demographic has made Bend, and Deschutes County, "much more moderate" than in the past, he said.

In 2018, about 4,100 more people moved to the county than moved out, with two-thirds arriving from 11 California counties — 10 of which are predominantly Democratic — and from the liberal bastions of Seattle and Portland, according to a new study by the Oregon Employment Department.

The growth of registered Democrats "could be a reflection of the political party affiliation of the new residents, rather than longtime locals shifting their party affiliation," said economist Damon Runberg, who prepared the study.

Republican lawmakers in Oregon are so fed up with Democratic dominance that they began a boycott of the Legislature this week in an attempt to kill a bill aimed at stemming global warming. Helt bucked the move by remaining in the capitol.

Some Republicans also formed a group, Move Oregon's Border for a Greater Idaho. It is collecting signatures to make rural Oregon counties part of conservative Idaho.

"I understand they're looking at Idaho fondly," Idaho Gov. Brad Little said on Fox News last week. "But there's a lot of governmental hurdles and legal hurdles that would have to be jumped before they could ever do that."

AP writers Michael R. Blood in Los Angeles and Chris Grygiel in Seattle contributed to this report.

Follow Andrew Selsky on Twitter at <https://twitter.com/andrewselsky>

Pope observes usual Ash Wednesday customs in time of virus

By NICOLE WINFIELD and JIM GOMEZ Associated Press

VATICAN CITY (AP) — Pope Francis celebrated the Ash Wednesday ritual that marks the opening of the Catholic Church's Lenten season in traditional fashion while greeting the public in Rome as other Masses were canceled in northern Italy over fears of the coronavirus outbreak.

Francis and a long line of priests, bishops and cardinals walked in a procession through Rome's Aventine hill into the 5th-century Santa Sabina basilica for a late-afternoon Mass. Neither the priests nor the faithful wore face masks, but Rome has largely been spared the virus as Italy's national case count grew to more than 440.

Other Catholic countries took Ash Wednesday precautions. In the Philippines — Asia's only majority Roman Catholic country — priests sprinkled ashes on the heads of the faithful rather than making the mark of the cross on their foreheads to avoid physical contact.

"Wherever the ash is placed, on the forehead or on the head, the feeling is the same, it's uplifting," Editha Lorenzo, a 49-year-old mother of two wearing a face mask, told The Associated Press in Manila.

At the Vatican, Francis held his general audience as usual in St. Peter's Square and offered prayers to people sickened by the virus and the medical personnel treating them. In the crowd of thousands, a handful had masks on their faces.

"I want to again express my closeness to those suffering from the coronavirus and the health care workers who are treating them, as well as the civil authorities and all those who are working to help patients and stop the contagion," Francis said.

Francis kissed at least one child as he looped through the square in his popemobile and made a point of shaking hands with the faithful sitting in the front row. Usually, he only waves. He also greeted prelates with a handshake at the beginning and end of the gathering, but it appeared most clergy were refraining

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from kissing Francis' ring or embracing him, as they normally would do.

In his remarks, he urged the faithful to put down their cellphones during Lent and pick up the Bible instead. "It is the time to give up useless words, chatter, rumors, gossip, and talk and to speak directly to the Lord," he said.

While Francis went ahead with his usual Ash Wednesday plans, the patriarchate of Venice canceled the Mass scheduled for St. Mark's Basilica, after a handful of elderly people in the lagoon city tested positive for the virus.

The surrounding Veneto region is one of two northern Italian regions where clusters of cases emerged in Italy. The other is Lombardy.

In the Philippines, the Rev. Victorino Cueto, rector of the popular National Shrine of our Mother of Perpetual Help in the Manila metropolis, said the practice of sprinkling ash on heads of devotees was a precaution to prevent the spread of infections but actually is an old tradition based on the Old Testament.

"It's better to be cautious," said churchgoer Evet Accion.

On Good Friday, which marks Christ's death on the cross, bishops in the Philippines strongly suggested that churchgoers refrain from kissing or touching the cross, a common practice among Catholics. "Instead, the faithful are requested to genuflect or make a profound bow as they venerate the cross," said Archbishop Romulo Valles, who heads the bishops' conference.

Last month, the bishops recommended that Catholics receive the Eucharistic host by the hand instead of the mouth and avoid holding hands in prayer during Masses as precautions amid the viral scare.

In the United States, Catholics filled St. Joseph Cathedral for an Ash Wednesday service in San Diego, where two patients with the virus were recently treated at a local hospital after being evacuated from China. Priests maintained the tradition of placing ashes on parishioners' foreheads. Some worshipers said they saw little reason for concern, while noting a reluctance among fellow parishioners to shake hands during Mass recently.

"Some people nod and wave but personally that hasn't stopped me," said Clarissa Falcon, 47, whose parents live in the Philippines. "I'm used to the physical fellowship. It sort of goes along with the spirit of this — having faith."

Gomez reported from Manila, Philippines. Associated Press writer Julie Watson in San Diego contributed to this report.

Buttigieg aides say path beyond March 3 possible but tricky

By THOMAS BEAUMONT Associated Press

COLUMBIA, S.C. (AP) — Democratic presidential candidate Pete Buttigieg is bracing his supporters for a difficult stretch, with the sobering assertion that front-runner Bernie Sanders will likely emerge from next week's Super Tuesday contests well ahead in the race for delegates.

The disclosure, made in a strategy memo sent to supporters, comes as the former South Bend, Indiana, mayor prepares for the uncertainty of Saturday's South Carolina primary. After strong finishes in Iowa and New Hampshire, Buttigieg is working to beat expectations in South Carolina, where his pull among African American voters will be tested, while keeping up the fundraising stream that launched him into the top tier.

Despite the challenging stretch leading up to Super Tuesday, there remains a path to the nomination for Buttigieg, his campaign strategists say, though one marked by assumptions about the rest of the field and the candidate's own performance over the next six critical days.

"The question is, Can he keep the balloon in the air?" said David Axelrod, former senior adviser to President Barack Obama. "So, I think there's a lot at stake here. This was always going to be the toughest part of the competition for him."

Punctuating his challenge, Buttigieg canceled a round of morning television appearances in South Carolina on Wednesday and scrubbed a day of Florida fundraising events from his schedule after falling ill with what aides described as flu-like symptoms, the result of a near-nonstop campaign schedule over the past

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two months.

Buttigieg did make time to speak, as did other candidates, at the National Action Network minister's breakfast hosted by the Rev. Al Sharpton in Charleston, South Carolina, on Wednesday morning.

After an afternoon of rest, Buttigieg has meetings scheduled Thursday on Capitol Hill with members of the Congressional Black Caucus, the Congressional Hispanic Caucus and the centrist New Democratic Coalition, as well as a series of media appearances on March 3 primary state television states.

Buttigieg campaign manager Mike Schmuhl acknowledges that Sanders looks to come out well ahead in the delegate count on Tuesday.

"Bernie Sanders will be the delegate leader after the March 3rd contests, but whether that makes him the prohibitive nominee is highly dependent on Pete's performance," Schmuhl said in the seven-page memo, which was released to the media and aimed at keeping donors on board.

Chiefly, Schmuhl and other Buttigieg strategists argue that Buttigieg has been the only candidate to beat Sanders. They draw on the near-tie in the leadoff caucuses as proof that Buttigieg can hold down Sanders' margins of victory in Super Tuesday states — especially swing states such as Colorado, North Carolina and Virginia, but also in Vermont, the senator's home state. The campaign began airing ads in those states Monday.

"There are several states in there that kind of represent an idea of places where we're seeing opportunity and also cost efficiency," senior strategist Michael Halle said in an interview.

The path Schmuhl and other strategists sketch relies on unpredictable factors of other candidates quitting the race and a map they argue is more favorable to the Midwestern centrist after March 3.

"Contrary to the media narrative, this race will not be determined on Super Tuesday -- but only if Pete has the resources to compete," Schmuhl noted in the memo.

It's an acknowledgement that Buttigieg also faces a fundraising crunch in a race with former New York Mayor Mike Bloomberg's unlimited resources and Sanders' unending stream of online contributions.

Buttigieg raised an eye-popping \$75 million last year, no small feat for the former mayor of a city of about 103,000. But having spent twice as much as he raised in the ramp-up to Iowa, he is now in a race against the clock to raise \$13 million by March 3. He was only about 40% of the way there Wednesday. However, the campaign said it had raised more than \$800,000 online after Tuesday's debate.

And while the cancellation of Wednesday's fundraisers in Florida might seem ill-timed, the events' sponsors had already secured more in contributions than the goals set, aides said, though they declined to say how much Buttigieg had hoped to raise from the three stops.

Buttigieg has fundraisers scheduled for Oklahoma and Texas in the run-up to March 3, when he plans to make stops in North Carolina, Alabama, Texas, Oklahoma and California.

Associated Press writers Laurie Kellman and Alan Fram in Washington contributed to this report.

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

Delta reduces flights to Korea as virus outbreak spreads

By DAVID KOENIG AP Airlines Writer

Delta Air Lines is reducing flights to South Korea while Hawaiian Airlines will suspend them entirely, as airlines deal with growing concern about the spread of the new virus beyond China.

Delta said Wednesday that it will suspend flights between Seoul and Minneapolis after Saturday and running through April 30. Delta also said it will reduce flights from Seoul to Atlanta, Detroit and Seattle to five times a week. The airline said last fall that it was operating about 28 flights per week on those routes.

The Atlanta-based airline, the world's largest by revenue, will also delay the start of new flights between Seoul's Incheon Airport and Manila. Instead of beginning March 29, the launch has been pushed back to May 1.

Hawaiian Airlines said it will suspend flights between Honolulu and Seoul starting next Monday and run-

ning through April 30. The carrier currently flies the route five times a week.

Hawaiian CEO Peter Ingram called the suspension prudent because of the rise in COVID-19 cases in South Korea and the effect the outbreak is having on demand for leisure travel by Koreans.

Delta, United Airlines and American Airlines have already suspended all flights to and from mainland China and Hong Kong. United said this week that demand for service to China had disappeared, and that March bookings for flights elsewhere in the Asia-Pacific region had plummeted 75% since the outbreak.

Fear about the virus is hitting cruise lines and other travel companies hard too. Booking Holdings Inc., the parent of travel search and booking sites including Kayak and Priceline, said the virus had "a significant and negative impact across our business" in the first quarter.

"It is not possible to predict where, and to what degree, outbreaks of the coronavirus will disrupt travel patterns," the company said.

The number of new cases of the COVID-19 virus reported Tuesday was greater outside China than inside China for the first time, according to the World Health Organization. South Korea has reported more than 1,200 cases and 11 deaths.

Several airlines in Asia and the Middle East have suspended flights to other Asian countries besides China. The list includes Korean Air, Japan Airlines and Philippine Airlines. Singapore Airlines, hurt by weak demand, has suspended flights to several destinations in the U.S. and Europe.

Shares in the U.S. airlines that fly to Asia have been hammered — they have been among the biggest losers during this week's stock market downturn.

The stocks — along with those of cruise companies — continued to fall Wednesday, even as the broader market stabilized after a two-day rout.

On Wednesday, shares of Delta Air Lines Inc. fell 2.6%. United Airlines Holdings Inc. plunged 5.7%, Hawaiian Airlines parent Hawaiian Holdings lost 3.8%, and American Airlines Group Inc. dropped 3.5% — hitting its lowest level since late 2013, when the airline's predecessor parent company was under bankruptcy protection.

The four biggest losers in the Standard & Poor's 500 index on Wednesday were Royal Caribbean Cruises Ltd., Norwegian Cruise Line Holdings Ltd., Carnival Corp., and online travel agency Expedia Group Inc. Royal Caribbean dropped more than 8%; the others fell more than 7%.

AP Business Writer Tali Arbel in New York contributed to this report.

Hockey coach moved from job to job, despite sex allegations

By **AMY FORLITI** and **MICHAEL TARM** Associated Press

MINNEAPOLIS (AP) — Tony Kellin remembers an assistant hockey coach at the University of Minnesota approaching him in the locker room during the 1984-85 season and saying he knew a woman who would perform oral sex on Kellin, but only if Kellin would be blindfolded with his hands tied.

A junior defenseman at the time, Kellin said he told coach Thomas "Chico" Adrahtas: "That ain't gonna happen." Kellin came to believe Adrahtas was the one who would be performing the proposed sex act — and that some underclassmen were victims of his scheme. He said he reported his suspicions to the athletic director, and Adrahtas was soon gone.

But in 2012, Kellin learned Adrahtas was still coaching. A revered coach who took teams to championships, Adrahtas had bounced around several hockey programs in the Chicago area, landing at Robert Morris University in 2008. Despite a 2010 decision by the Amateur Hockey Association of Illinois to suspend Adrahtas from its programs and a 2012 report to police by Kellin, Adrahtas did not leave Robert Morris until November 2018. For Kellin, Adrahtas' ability to move easily from job to job after the accusations were reported raises questions.

"In my opinion, they dropped the ball," Kellin told The Associated Press on Tuesday, a day after the University of Minnesota announced that it is investigating the allegations. "I'm disgusted that he was allowed to keep doing it. He's a predator. He's a creep."

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The allegations were first reported by The Athletic, which quoted several firsthand accounts by young men who said they were victimized. Adrahtas, 64, did not immediately respond to messages left by the AP at a cellphone number believed to be his. He denied to The Athletic that he had ever sexually abused anyone.

It's likely too late for Adrahtas to face criminal or civil charges in Minnesota for alleged abuse in the 1980s, due to the statute of limitations. So far, no allegations have emerged publicly from Adrahtas' time at Robert Morris.

University spokeswoman Nancy Donohoe told the AP that if any complaints had come in, the school would have acted on them. She declined to say whether Robert Morris opened any inquiries into Adrahtas or whether the school would release records related to his tenure, saying she could not speak about personnel issues.

During his 10 years at Robert Morris, Adrahtas gained a reputation as a standout coach and recruiter who raised the level of play despite a modest budget. During the 2013-2014 season, Robert Morris made it to the American Collegiate Hockey Association title game, losing to top-ranked Arizona State.

According to The Athletic, Adrahtas was scheduled to be inducted into the Illinois Hockey Hall of Fame in 2010. When one of his former players, Chris Jensen, heard about that, he reached out to the Amateur Hockey Association of Illinois, or AHAI, and told the group that he was one of Adrahtas' victims.

In a statement to the AP, the amateur hockey organization said it suspended Adrahtas indefinitely on March 1, 2010, pending a hearing that did not happen because Adrahtas resigned from all AHAI affiliate positions. His suspension is still in effect.

It's unclear whether AHAI and the University of Minnesota reported the allegations to police.

Adrahtas is also suspended from coaching any USA Hockey-sanctioned teams, pending the completion of an investigation by the U.S. Center for SafeSport involving allegations from multiple former players.

SafeSport investigates reports of sexual misconduct and abuse within organizations that are affiliated with the U.S. Olympic Committee, including USA Hockey. SafeSport says on its website that Adrahtas was temporarily suspended on Sept. 13, 2018, after allegations of misconduct. The website does not provide details. The center said in a statement that it "doesn't discuss individual matters to protect the integrity of the process and the safety and privacy of the people involved, including those who report abuse."

The Athletic reported that the SafeSport investigation was launched after one of Adrahtas' former junior hockey players, Mike Sacks, sent a letter to both the American Collegiate Hockey Association and Robert Morris University describing a 20-month span of sexual abuse and exploitation. Sacks declined to comment Tuesday when reached by the AP.

The University of Minnesota said it has hired the Seattle-based law firm Perkins Coie to determine what happened. Athletic Director Mark Coyle also wrote to members of the 1984-85 team, inviting them to come forward with information.

The investigation comes at a time when several men alleging sexual abuse by a deceased University of Michigan doctor have retained law firms that are representing accusers who sued Michigan State University and Ohio State in similar cases.

Kellin said he was approached at least twice by Adrahtas and refused the coach's offer both times. But he believed that some younger players were being assaulted by Adrahtas without their knowledge. So when one player was presented with the same offer, Kellin and other players organized a "sting operation" of their own and staked out the doors of Adrahtas' apartment complex to watch for a woman coming or going. No one did.

Kellin then approached Athletic Director Paul Giel. Shortly after that, the coach was gone.

Kellin said he was hunting with friends in 2012 when the topic came up, and one of his buddies suggested that Kellin find out whether Adrahtas was still coaching. Kellin was dismayed to find that he was.

"I kind of figured he was banned from coaching," Kellin said. "He's been doing this everywhere he's been, and he's probably still doing it."

Tarm reported from Chicago.

Court sides with Trump in 'sanctuary cities' grant fight

By LARRY NEUMEISTER Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — The Trump administration can withhold millions of dollars in law enforcement grants to force states to cooperate with U.S. immigration enforcement, a federal appeals court in New York ruled Wednesday in a decision that conflicted with three other federal appeals courts.

The ruling by the 2nd U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals in Manhattan overturned a lower court's decision ordering the administration to release funding to New York City and seven states — New York, Connecticut, New Jersey, Washington, Massachusetts, Virginia and Rhode Island.

The states and city sued the U.S. government after the Justice Department announced in 2017 that it would withhold grant money from cities and states until they gave federal immigration authorities access to jails and provide advance notice when someone in the country illegally is about to be released.

Before the change, cities and states seeking grant money were required only to show they were not preventing local law enforcement from communicating with federal authorities about the immigration status of people who were detained.

At the time, then-Attorney General Jeff Sessions said: "So-called 'sanctuary' policies make all of us less safe because they intentionally undermine our laws and protect illegal aliens who have committed crimes."

In 2018, the Justice Department imposed additional conditions on the grant money, though challenges to those have not yet reached the appeals court in New York.

The 2nd Circuit said the plain language of relevant laws make clear that the U.S. attorney general can impose conditions on states and municipalities receiving money.

And it noted that the U.S. Supreme Court has repeatedly observed that the federal government maintains broad power over states when it comes to immigration policies.

In the past two years, federal appeals courts in Chicago, Philadelphia and San Francisco have ruled against the federal government by upholding lower-court injunctions placed on the enforcement of some or all of the challenged conditions.

"While mindful of the respect owed to our sister circuits, we cannot agree that the federal government must be enjoined from imposing the challenged conditions on the federal grants here at issue," the 2nd Circuit three-judge panel said in a decision written by Judge Reena Raggi.

"These conditions help the federal government enforce national immigration laws and policies supported by successive Democratic and Republican administrations. But more to the authorization point, they ensure that applicants satisfy particular statutory grant requirements imposed by Congress and subject to Attorney General oversight," the appeals court said.

The Justice Department praised the decision, issuing a statement calling it a "major victory for Americans" and saying it recognizes that the attorney general has authority to ensure that grant recipients are not thwarting federal law enforcement priorities.

The department added that the ruling's effect will be limited because other courts have ruled the other way, giving the plaintiffs in the New York case the opportunity to point to those as reasons to ignore the new conditions.

Cody Wofsy, a staff attorney with the American Civil Liberties Union, called the decision a "real outlier," saying he believed the 2nd Circuit was the nation's first court to side with the Trump administration on the issue.

"Over and over, courts have said the Department of Justice doesn't have authority under governing statutes to impose these conditions," he said. "These conditions are part of the administration's attempts to bully, cajole and coerce state and local governments into participating in federal immigration enforcement activities."

Under the Constitution's federalism principles and the 10th Amendment, Wofsy said, states and municipalities "are entitled to decline to become part of the administration's deportation force."

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In a statement, New York City Mayor Bill de Blasio said Trump's "latest retaliation against his hometown takes away security funding from the number one terrorist target in America — all because we refuse to play by his arbitrary rules."

He added: "We'll see President Trump back in court and we will win."

Bitta Mostofi, commissioner of the city's Office of Immigrant Affairs, said in a statement that the ruling was deeply troubling.

"New York City stands with our immigrant brothers and sisters and that will never change," Mostofi said.

The appeals rulings pertain to the issuance of the Edward Byrne Memorial Justice Assistance Grant Program.

Created in 2006, it is the vehicle through which Congress annually dispenses over \$250 million in federal funding for state and local criminal justice efforts.

The Byrne Program was named for New York City Police Officer Edward Byrne, who at age 22 was shot to death while guarding the home of a Guyanese immigrant cooperating with authorities investigating drug trafficking.

Associated Press writer Michael Balsamo in Washington contributed to this report.

Pelosi urges Democratic unity amid Sanders' campaign surge

By LISA MASCARO and ALAN FRAM Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Speaker Nancy Pelosi on Wednesday urged party unity amid Bernie Sanders' surge in the presidential race, even as House Democrats worry about a volatile election season that could put a self-described democratic socialist atop the ticket and threaten their majority.

"I would hope that everyone would say, no matter who the nominee is for president, we wholeheartedly embrace that person," Pelosi, D-Calif., told the House Democratic caucus at a closed-door meeting. "We cannot show any division. This has to be about unity, unity, unity," she said, according to a Democratic aide who attended the session. The aide was not authorized to discuss the private meeting and spoke on condition of anonymity.

Down-ballot jitters are apparent as the Vermont senator takes an increasingly commanding lead in early voting and withstands the constant pummeling by rivals who have been unable to slow his rise.

With South Carolina's primary on Saturday, followed by the Super Tuesday contests on March 3, House Democrats are navigating how best to hold onto their seats while opponents try to lasso them to Sanders' socialist label.

Many first-term Democrats are counting on their own well-crafted brands, not the party's eventual presidential nominee, whoever that may be, to see them to reelection. The House majority was built by lawmakers who come from districts where President Donald Trump is popular, and his campaign operation will be turning out voters in the fall. But in a campaign cycle full of unknowns as the party tries to unseat Trump, they are relying on the backgrounds that pushed them to office in the first place to do it again.

"I will go into my race with the same degree of confidence, no matter who is at the top of the ticket," said Rep. Tom Malinowski, a freshman Democrat from a competitive New Jersey district who supports former Vice President Joe Biden in the primary.

Malinowski said he will "absolutely" support Sanders if the senator becomes the party's nominee. But the congressman said Democrats need to simplify their message and seize the moment with a candidate who can topple Trump. "Why we would risk this extraordinary opportunity by nominating somebody who has a tendency to divide our own side is beyond me," he said.

Other Democrats, though, are more open about their fears of a Sanders nomination.

First-term Rep. Elaine Luria, who defeated an incumbent Republican in 2018 in a swing district in coastal Virginia, said a Sanders candidacy would be "incredibly divisive" and could endanger more centrist members of Congress like herself.

Her opponents are already trying to tag Luria, a former Navy commander and Naval Academy graduate,

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as a “socialist,” she said. Luria rejects the label as “ridiculous.”

“Bernie Sanders just adds fuel to that fire,” Luria said.

She has endorsed Biden but had praise for former New York Mayor Mike Bloomberg, calling both of them politicians who “build bridges rather than break them down.”

Hoping to propel Biden’s lagging candidacy in a state he has pledged to win, the No. 3 House Democrat, Rep. Jim Clyburn of South Carolina, an influential leader and the highest-ranking African American in Congress, announced his endorsement on Wednesday.

Veteran Rep. David Price, D-N.C., said of Biden: “There’s not a congressional district in this country he couldn’t campaign in.”

Divisions run deep among House Democrats, whose primary preferences span the party’s ideological reach, from the most liberal and progressive members backing Sanders to those preferring Biden, Bloomberg or the other more centrist candidates.

Freshman Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, D-N.Y., is one of Sanders’ most high-profile backers in the House. Rep. Ro Khanna, D-Calif., is a Sanders campaign co-chairman.

Many liberals say Sanders is the only candidate able to energize base voters and take on Trump. His commitment to curbing income inequality and his bold policy proposals, including “Medicare for All” and tuition-free college, are galvanizing voters, they say. They point to Sanders’ strong showing in Nevada as a snapshot of the coalition he could build nationwide against Trump.

Campaigning Wednesday in South Carolina, Sanders warned that a “conventional campaign” like Biden’s won’t defeat Trump.

In Tuesday night’s presidential debate, candidate Pete Buttigieg warned of the potential down-ballot consequences in Congress if Sanders won the nomination. Senate Democrats are struggling to flip the chamber from Republicans, who have a slim majority, while House Democrats are working to retain their advantage.

Pelosi said she thinks that “whoever our nominee is, we will enthusiastically embrace — and we will win the White House, the Senate and the House of Representatives.”

House Democrats hold a modest majority, and while Trump is eager to have his party in control of the chamber, House Republicans have seen a rush toward the exits with retirements. The House GOP is still recruiting candidates to challenge the Democrats and has lagged in fundraising.

Pelosi said lawmakers will have a briefing Thursday at the Democratic National Committee headquarters about the nominating process. The party convention is in July.

Democrats changed the nominating rules to reduce the power of “superdelegates” — lawmakers and other VIPs — to choose the nominee.

If no candidate secures the nod outright on the initial round of voting at the convention, the superdelegates, including lawmakers, may have a role to play in casting votes.

At an earlier debate in Las Vegas, the 2020 candidates were asked whether the candidate with the most delegates should be the nominee, even if that person lacked a delegate majority. Almost every candidate suggested that the convention process should work its way out.

Sanders, who helped force the changes to the nomination process this year and expects to take a significant delegate lead in the coming weeks, was the only exception.

“The person who has the most votes should become the nominee,” he said.

House Democrats, particularly the freshmen, are being told to chart their own course as they did running in 2018.

In much the way some House Democrats won their seats as they distanced themselves from Pelosi, they may be faced with running for reelection by distancing themselves from the party nominee.

“This is tough,” Pelosi told the House caucus. “We have to win.”

Associated Press writers Michael Tackett and Laurie Kellman in Washington and Alexandra Jaffe in South Carolina contributed to this report.

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

This story has been corrected to show that Super Tuesday is on March 3, not March 2.

Facebook bans ads with false claims about new virus

By **BARBARA ORTUTAY AP Technology Writer**

SAN FRANCISCO (AP) — Facebook said Wednesday that it is banning ads that make false claims about products tied to the new coronavirus.

The social network said it is removing ads that feature a product and imply a limited supply, seeking to create a "sense of urgency" in their mention of coronavirus. Ads that guarantee a cure or prevention are also banned, it said.

For instance, ads for face masks that claim the products are 100% guaranteed to prevent the spread of the virus are not allowed, the company said.

The ban went into effect this week. Facebook had previously banned ads, along with regular unpaid posts, that peddle fake cures such as drinking bleach, spread conspiracy theories about the virus, or discourage people from seeking medical treatment.

The ban went into effect as the World Health Organization reported that the number of new cases outside China exceeded the number of new infections inside the country for the first time on Tuesday. The COVID-19 virus has now spread to at least 39 countries.

Kids shine as Broadway's 'To Kill a Mockingbird' goes big

By **MARK KENNEDY AP Entertainment Writer**

NEW YORK (AP) — The cast of "To Kill a Mockingbird" ditched its somber Broadway home Wednesday for the cavernous Madison Square Garden, performing the play for 18,000 school kids in an electric one-time-only performance that one actor called "primal."

It marks the first time a Broadway play has been performed at the venue nicknamed "The World's Most Famous Arena," which is home to the New York Knicks and Rangers. The last line of the play is "All rise" and the students did exactly that, giving it a standing ovation and a hearty thank you.

"I loved the book in middle school when I read it and seeing it live and seeing the characters come to life, it's so much more real," said Alissa DiCristo, 17. "It makes you feel so much more."

The play's usual Broadway home is the 1,435-seat Shubert Theatre, where it's routinely sold out. But thousands of middle and high school students from all five boroughs got to see it for free, courtesy of the Scott Rudin-led production and James L. Dolan, executive chairman and CEO of The Madison Square Garden Company. The tickets were distributed by the city's education department. Free popcorn and bottles of water were also offered on the way out.

The audience this time surrounded the stage and, in the moments before the play, started using the flashlight feature on their phones to make patterns and signals, turning the Garden into a tapestry of lights, like a forest ignited with fireflies.

As the play progressed, the students clapped, booed, cheered and gasped, even erupting in the same pitched excitement as a buzzer-beating 3-point basket when the stately Atticus Finch wrestled with the evil Bob Ewell. At other times, the Garden was completely silent as it felt like 18,000 young people held their breaths, particularly during courtroom scenes.

"We did say how we feel and each and everyone was respectful, too, when they needed to," said 17-year-old Eric Meza, who had his first experience with a Broadway show. "It was just an amazing experience."

"To Kill a Mockingbird" by Harper Lee won a Pulitzer Prize in 1961 and has been widely praised as a sensitive portrait of racial tension in 1930s Alabama. At its core is Finch, a lawyer called upon to defend a black man falsely accused of raping a white woman.

Oscar-winning screenwriter Aaron Sorkin adapted Lee's play and it crackles with current issues: insti-

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tutional racism, a flawed criminal justice system, police misconduct, sexual assault and standing against evil. Ripples of anger coursed through the crowd when racial epithets were used.

"I feel like it targeted a lot of prominent issues in today's society and it really did speak to me," said Ambria Creary, 17. "Definitely there were parts where you had to react because it hurt so bad to even imagine it happening today."

The entire current Broadway cast performed the show, led by Ed Harris as Finch. They practiced for the Garden show in a warehouse in Long Island City, preparing to work on their new space, a stage measuring 90 feet in length by 40 feet in width.

Despite the size, the actors kept the experience intimate, rolling pieces of equipment onstage and helping put away props. Some, when not onstage, sat in chairs or a bench waiting their cues. At one point, Nick Robinson, who played Jem, gave Lisa Gay Hamilton, who played Calpurnia, a gentle hug after a powerful scene.

"It was magical. It felt like what theater used to like be thousands of years ago," said actor Taylor Trench, who played Dill Harris. "It's something I'll remember forever."

Mayor Bill de Blasio and city first lady Chirlane McCray introduced the show, urging the students to think about the themes of the play and urging them to embrace the arts. "You are part of history today," McCray said. Director Spike Lee, a die-hard Knicks fan, said: "Don't let anyone tell you you can't be artists. Follow your dreams."

While Sorkin's script wasn't altered, the staging had to adapt to the hulking space. Eight cameras captured the action and beamed it onto four massive screens so everyone could see small details.

The stage arrived in about 100 pieces and took four hours in install, including the jury box, which remains empty throughout, a signal that the audience also is complicit in the trial. On Wednesday, director Bartlett Sher paced along one side of the stage during the performance, helping actors with their sound equipment and cheering them on.

Trench thought back to his own youth and didn't initially know if the three-hour play would capture the attention of the children. He needn't have worried.

"It was almost primal," he said. "There was like an electrical charge in the air that you don't get at the Shubert Theatre."

Mark Kennedy is at <http://twitter.com/KennedyTwits>

World battles virus epidemic as cases multiply outside China

By **KIM TONG-HYUNG** and **MATT SEDENSKY** Associated Press

SEOUL, South Korea (AP) — Crews scrubbed everything from money to buses, military bases were on high alert and quarantines were enforced Wednesday from a beachfront resort in the Atlantic to a remote island in the Pacific, as the world worked to halt the fast-spreading virus that for the first time counted more new cases outside China than inside the country, where the epidemic originated.

Worries over the ever-expanding economic fallout of the COVID-19 crisis multiplied, with factories idled, trade routes frozen and tourism crippled, while a growing list of nations braced for the illness to breach their borders. Even the Olympics, five months away, wasn't far enough off to keep people from wondering if it would go on as planned.

"We don't expect a miracle in the short term," said Kianoush Jahanpour of the health ministry in Iran, where an official tally of infections of 139 was doubted by some who thought the problem was far bigger.

The World Health Organization, meanwhile, reported that the number of new cases outside China on Tuesday exceeded the number of new infections inside the country for the first time. The number in China was 412, while the tally in the rest of the world was 459.

"The sudden increases of cases in Italy, the Islamic Republic of Iran and the Republic of Korea are deeply concerning," WHO director-general Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said Wednesday.

About 81,000 people around the globe have been sickened by the coronavirus that kept finding new

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targets. With Brazil confirming the arrival of Latin America's first case, the virus had a toehold on every continent but Antarctica.

In Europe, where Germany, France and Spain were among the places with a growing caseload, an expanding cluster of more than 440 cases in northern Italy was eyed as a source for transmissions. In the Middle East, where cases increased in Bahrain, Kuwait and Iraq, blame was directed toward Iran. In Asia, where the crisis originated late last year in China, threats continued to emerge around the region, with South Korea battling a mass outbreak centered in the 2.5 million-person city of Daegu.

And in the United States, which has 60 cases, President Donald Trump declared that the U.S. was "very, very ready" for whatever threat the coronavirus brings, and he put Vice President Mike Pence in charge of overseeing the country's response. Shortly after Trump spoke, health officials in the U.S. confirmed a new case of coronavirus infection in California that could be the first instance of the virus spreading in a U.S. community. The patient in California was not known to have traveled to a country with an outbreak, or be connected to a known patient.

The illness had now spread to at least 39 countries, said world health officials, who simultaneously cautioned against the risks of unnecessary fears or stigma.

"We are in a fight that can be won if we do the right things," WHO chief Ghebreyesus said.

Though the virus pushed into countries both rich and poor, its arrival in places with little ability to detect, respond and contain it brought concern it could run rampant there and spread easily elsewhere.

"We're going to be trying to slow down the spread so that our hospitals are not overwhelmed in one big gulp, one big hit," said Ian Mackay, who studies viruses at the University of Queensland in Australia.

Saudi Arabia announced a series of precautionary measures, including temporarily stopping tourists from places with confirmed outbreaks from entering the country, as well as pilgrims coming for the Umrah or to visit the Prophet's Mosque in Medina.

In South Korea, workers sanitized public buses, while in China, banks disinfected banknotes using ultraviolet rays. In Germany, authorities stressed "sneezing etiquette," while in the United States, doctors announced a clinical trial of a possible coronavirus treatment.

Around the world, as Christians marked the start of the holy season of Lent with Ash Wednesday, worshipers found churches closed and rituals changed by virus fears. Even in St. Peter's Square, many of those gathered for Pope Francis' weekly audience wore face masks and clergy appeared to refrain from embracing the pontiff or kissing his ring.

Services in Singapore were broadcast online to keep people from crowded sanctuaries where germs could spread, bishops in South Korea shuttered churches for what they said was the first time in the Catholic Church's 236-year history there, and in Malaysia and the Philippines, ashes were sprinkled on the heads of those marking the start of Lent instead of using a damp thumb to trace a cross of ashes.

"We would like to be cautious so that the coronavirus will not spread," said the Rev. Victorino Cueto, rector of the National Shrine of our Mother of Perpetual Help in Manila in the Philippines.

Major gatherings were eyed warily, with organizers scrambling to respond in the face of the epidemic. Looming largest of all are the Olympic Games, whose opening ceremonies are scheduled for July 24 in Tokyo. A member of the International Olympic Committee, Richard Pound, sounded alarms a day earlier, saying the virus could force a cancellation of the games. The Japanese government, in turn, gave mixed signals, insisting they would go forward yet urging that sports events be curtailed for now.

Prime Minister Shinzo Abe called for major sports and cultural events in the coming two weeks to be canceled or postponed to stem further infections. Meanwhile, the top government spokesman said Olympics preparations would proceed and the games would go on as planned.

Among the other crowded places that had officials worried: Military bases.

The South Korean military announced additional infections among its troops, with 20 cases on its bases and some 9,570 people in isolation. The U.S. military, which has 28,500 troops in South Korea, confirmed the first infection of an American soldier, a 23-year-old man based at Camp Carroll near Daegu, a day after the Americans said a military spouse also had contracted the illness. Bowling alleys, movie theaters and a golf course on four American bases in the country were closed.

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"This is a setback, it's true, there's no getting around that. But it's not the end of the war," Col. Edward Ballanco, commander of the U.S. Army Garrison Daegu told troops in a video message. "We are very well equipped to fight this thing off."

Italy recorded 78 new infections on Wednesday and Greece, North Macedonia and Romania became the newest countries to see a case of the virus. South Korea announced 284 new cases, largely in Daegu, bringing its total to 1,261. China, still the epicenter of the crisis even as new outposts caught the world's attention, reported 406 new cases and 52 more deaths. The country has a total of 78,604 cases of the virus and 2,715 fatalities.

China said Wednesday that those sickened by the virus included 555 prisoners who officials said likely became infected by guards using the same bus station as a nearby pulmonary hospital. In a twist, China is now heavily regulating arrivals from abroad, with authorities placing South Koreans under monitoring, state broadcaster CCTV reported, after five people on a flight showed signs of fever.

Indonesia said it evacuated 188 crew members from the World Dream cruise ship and planned to take them to remote Sebaru Island. The workers were released from quarantine in Hong Kong after finding no infections, but authorities mandated an additional observation period.

And on the opposite side of the world, the MSC Meraviglia was denied permission to land in Grand Cayman, where it was due to arrive Wednesday, following a decision by Jamaica to refuse it entry. The cruise line expressed frustration with the moves, which came after it reported one crew member from the Philippines was sick with common seasonal flu.

It brought reminders of the MS Westerdam, which was repeatedly denied entry to Asian ports before Cambodia welcomed its passengers.

MSC Cruises said the Meraviglia was sailing onward to Mexico.

Sedensky reported from Bangkok. Associated Press writers Jim Gomez and Joael Calupitan in Manila, Philippines; Hyung-jin Kim in Seoul, South Korea; Stephen Wade and Mari Yamaguchi in Tokyo; Nicole Winfield in Vatican City; Aniruddha Ghosal in New Delhi; and Jon Gambrell in Dubai, United Arab Emirates, contributed to this report.

US, South Korea militaries face new enemy in viral outbreak

By HYUNG-JIN KIM and KIM TONG-HYUNG Associated Press

SEOUL, South Korea (AP) — The U.S. and South Korean militaries, used to being on guard for threats from North Korea, face a new and formidable enemy that could hurt battle readiness: a virus spreading around the world that has infected more than 1,200 people in South Korea.

As the new coronavirus, which was first found in China, has begun to sweep through South Korea, soldiers stationed in close quarters on bases throughout the country are at particular risk. Already 20 South Korean soldiers and one American have tested positive.

In response the allies are taking aggressive measures to guard against a viral outbreak and are even considering curtailing a key joint military exercise, something experts say is inevitable because if the virus were to spread through the ranks it could significantly weaken their ability to fight if necessary.

"In the military, soldiers are living as a group. So even if just one person contracts the virus at his base, its aftermath would be really tremendous," said Kim Dae-young, an analyst at the Korea Research Institute for National Strategy. "This year, no military training can be the best option."

The virus has infected more than 80,000 people worldwide, mostly in China, though over the past week South Korea has become the second-worst affected country after an outbreak centered in the southeast around its fourth-largest city, Daegu.

South Korea boasts a 600,000-strong military, while the U.S. stations 28,500 troops in the country largely as a deterrent to possible North Korean aggression. Daegu, with a population of about 2.5 million people, is near four American bases.

The United States Forces Korea on Monday said that a USFK widowed dependent tested positive for the

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virus. On Wednesday the U.S. reported that a 23-year-old soldier had tested positive and would be treated at Camp Humphreys near Seoul. It said the soldier was originally based at Camp Carroll near Daegu.

South Korea has suspended some unilateral field training, placed 9,570 troops under quarantine and banned most of its enlisted soldiers from leaving their bases. The U.S. military is also urging its personnel to avoid handshakes and large gatherings if possible.

At Camp Walker in Daegu, the U.S. has prohibited active-duty soldiers there from visiting public gatherings and places off-base, such as grocery stores, bars and restaurants, without permission. The infected U.S. soldier at Camp Carroll visited Camp Walker earlier this week.

Col. Edward Ballanco, commander of the U.S. Army Garrison Daegu, said bowling alleys, movie theaters and a golf course at the four U.S. bases in the Daegu region were closed after the soldier's case was confirmed, and that all restaurants there were only serving take-out meals.

Restaurants, bars and stores near U.S. bases in South Korea have been hit hard by the outbreak.

"The number of customers has been declining outrageously," said Song Doo Hak, owner of a hamburger restaurant near a U.S. air base near Seoul. "I've never experienced this kind of situation."

Song said he used to receive about 200 customers, about 40% of them U.S. service members, each day. He said he now receives about 15 customers a day. He said four U.S. soldiers visited his restaurant on Tuesday but none on Wednesday.

"Primero," a Mexican restaurant near Camp Walker in Daegu, has seen its customers evaporate over the past week. The restaurant's owner, who asked to be named only by her surname Ji citing privacy concerns, said revenue was down by at least 90%.

Concerned about the possibility that her restaurant becomes linked to a future infection, Ji has closed the dining room and is now serving only take-out meals.

"There's nothing I can do until the outbreak comes under control," she said.

After a meeting in Washington on Monday, the U.S. and South Korean defense chiefs told reporters that the virus threatens their military exercise schedules.

U.S. Defense Secretary Mark Esper said both countries "are looking at scaling back" some training because of worries about the coronavirus. He added that he is confident that the allies will find a way to protect troops while also making sure that both countries "remain fully ready to deal with any threats that we might face together."

South Korean Defense Minister Jeong Kyeong-doo separately ordered officials to take all necessary steps to prevent quarantine measures from hurting South Korea's military readiness.

The U.S. and South Korean militaries have regularly held drills since the 1950-53 Korean War and they have become a major source of animosity with North Korea, which views them as rehearsals for an invasion.

Both countries also sent personnel to a major multinational military exercise currently underway in Thailand. In Thailand, U.S. Marine Corps Capt. George McArthur said about 150 U.S. service members from the 51st Fighter Wing, U.S. Air Force, from Osan Airbase, were deployed to Exercise Cobra Gold 2020. The base is almost 200 kilometers (120 miles) from Daegu. Photos posted on a Facebook page under the operations name showed U.S. and Thai soldiers receiving thermal scans from Thai medical personnel.

South Korea's military already had announced plans two weeks ago to sharply reduce the number of personnel it was sending to the exercises from about 400 to 30, all senior level officers to take part only in a command post exercise, not field maneuvers.

North Korea hasn't officially reported a single case of the new virus. But experts say an epidemic in North Korea could be dire because of its chronic lack of medical supplies and poor health care infrastructure. Pyongyang's state media has called anti-virus quarantine efforts "a matter of national existence."

In response to the virus, the North has likely drastically reduced its military activities as well, said Moon Seong Mook, a retired South Korean army brigadier general who participated in inter-Korean military talks.

"The North likely reduced training and any other movement of military units as it intensifies national efforts to stem the spread of the virus," Moon said.

The U.S. military is also taking precautions for its some 50,000 personnel in Japan, which has seen more

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than 800 people infected by the virus, most of them linked to a cruise ship.

U.S. Forces Japan said Wednesday that it was elevating the health precautions, requiring units to consider limiting or cancelling meetings, training events and large social gatherings as they monitor developments in areas close to American bases.

U.S. Forces in Japan also restricted non-essential travel to South Korea, while leisure or non-essential travel is now prohibited for American personnel and their families.

"The overall risk to individual USFJ members in Japan remains low," said USFJ spokesman Capt. Tyler Hopkins. "The command encourages strict hygiene measures to reduce the risk of transmission."

The outbreak comes at a delicate time in the decades-long alliance between Washington and Seoul. President Donald Trump has openly demanded a big increase in South Korea's financial contribution to U.S. troop deployment in the country.

Kim Hyo-eun, whose 22-year-old son is performing his mandatory military service at a South Korean army base near Seoul, is watching the situation with increased unease.

"While I am relieved that the infections announced by the military so far haven't been about my son's unit, I am still worried because the illness is spreading so rapidly," she said.

"If the virus continues to spread," she said, "I think I will have to talk to my son again and ask what I can do to help keep him safe."

Associated Press writer Mari Yamaguchi in Tokyo contributed to this report.

Biden claims momentum as Sanders marches past debate fray

By STEVE PEOPLES, MEG KINNARD and BILL BARROW Associated Press

CHARLESTON, S.C. (AP) — Eyeing a South Carolina victory to rescue his presidential ambitions, Joe Biden claimed one of the state's most coveted endorsements on Wednesday as Democratic front-runner Bernie Sanders marched past the blistering assault from his rivals on the debate stage the night before.

And Pete Buttigieg, a leading critic of both Biden and Sanders, canceled multiple events on the day saying he was sick.

The developments came just three days before South Carolina's presidential primary election — and six days before Super Tuesday — with the Democratic establishment growing increasingly concerned that Sanders, a polarizing progressive, is tightening his grip on his party's presidential nomination.

Biden is staking his candidacy on a win in South Carolina on Saturday that would deny Sanders a third consecutive clear victory. He got a boost Wednesday after earning the endorsement of U.S. Rep. Jim Clyburn, the highest-ranking black member of Congress and a South Carolina political kingmaker.

"I want the public to know that I'm voting for Joe Biden. South Carolina should be voting for Joe Biden," Clyburn said, later adding "I know Joe. We know Joe. But most importantly, Joe knows us."

Speaking afterward, Biden predicted victory and slapped at Sanders. "Today, people are talking about a revolution," Biden said. "But what the country's looking for are results."

The night before, Biden and his Democratic rivals unleashed a roaring assault against Sanders during a contentious debate that tested the strength of the undisputed front-runner in the party's presidential nomination fight.

Sanders faced the brunt of the attacks for much of the night, and for one of the few times, fellow progressive Elizabeth Warren was among the critics. The Massachusetts senator pressed the case that she could execute ideas that the Vermont senator could only talk about.

"Bernie and I agree on a lot of things," she said. "But I think I would make a better president than Bernie."

A group of moderates, meanwhile, fought to emerge as the chief Sanders alternative.

Biden argued that only he has the experience to lead in the world. Minnesota Sen. Amy Klobuchar repeatedly contended that she alone could win the votes of battleground state moderates. And Buttigieg, the former mayor of South Bend, Indiana, pointed to Sanders' self-described democratic socialism and his recent comments expressing admiration for Cuban dictator Fidel Castro's push for education.

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"I am not looking forward to a scenario where it comes down to Donald Trump with his nostalgia for the social order of the 1950s and Bernie Sanders with a nostalgia for the revolutionary politics of the 1960s," Buttigieg declared.

But the moderates did little to draw separation among themselves, a dynamic that has so far only benefited the Vermont senator. Sanders fought back throughout the night, pointing to polls that showed him beating the Republican president and noting all the recent attention he's gotten: "I'm hearing my name mentioned a little bit tonight. I wonder why."

Sanders senior adviser Jeff Weaver argued afterward that the debate didn't knock Sanders off his front-runner perch.

"They threw everything they could at Bernie Sanders. None of it stuck," Weaver said, adding that some candidates showed "an air of desperation."

Trump, who returned to Washington early Wednesday after a two-day trip to India, responded to a reporter's shouted question about whether he'd seen the debate: "I did," he said while stepping into a car. "Not too good, not too good."

The intensity of Tuesday's forum, with candidates repeatedly shouting over each other, reflected the reality that the Democrats' establishment wing is quickly running out of time to stop Sanders' rise. Even some critics, Bloomberg among them, conceded that Sanders could build an insurmountable delegate lead as soon as next week.

The Democratic White House hopefuls will not stand side by side on the debate stage again until the middle of March. That made Tuesday's debate likely the last chance for some candidates to save themselves and alter the trajectory of the nomination fight.

Though Sanders was at the center of the attacks, this week marks something of a high point in his political career. After spending nearly three decades as an agitator who delighted in tearing into his party's establishment, that very party establishment was suddenly fighting to take him down, a clear sign of his rising status as the leading candidate for the nomination.

New York billionaire Mike Bloomberg also faced sustained attacks that gave him an opportunity to redeem himself after a bad debate debut one week earlier. Warren cut hard at his record as a businessman, bringing up reports of one particular allegation that he told a pregnant employee "to kill it," a reference to the woman's unborn child. Bloomberg fiercely denied the allegation, but acknowledged he sometimes made comments that were inappropriate.

Bloomberg "cannot earn the trust of the core of the Democratic Party," Warren said. "He is the riskiest candidate standing on this stage."

But Bloomberg will likely remain a force in the contest even as other candidates may quickly face tough choices about the sustainability of their campaigns. Bloomberg has already spent more than \$500 million on a national advertising campaign, and his fortune ensures he will remain a factor at least through Super Tuesday.

But the skepticism for Sanders was a constant.

Buttigieg raised concerns that a Sanders nomination would cost Democrats the House and make it harder to retake the Senate.

"We're not going to win these critical, critical House and Senate races if people in those races have to explain why the nominee of the Democratic Party is telling people to look at the bright side of the Castro regime," Buttigieg said.

Back in Washington, House Speaker Nancy Pelosi on Wednesday brushed back the down-ballot warnings about Sanders.

"I think whoever our nominee is we will enthusiastically embrace — and we will win the White House, the Senate and the House of Representatives," Pelosi told reporters at the Capitol.

The South Carolina contest offers the first real look at the influence African American voters play in the Democrats' presidential nomination process. Biden is trying to make a big impression in the state, where he was long viewed as the unquestioned front-runner because of his support from black voters.

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But heading into Saturday's primary after three consecutive underwhelming finishes, there were signs that the former vice president's African American support may be slipping.

One reason: Tom Steyer. The billionaire activist has been pouring money into African American outreach, which threatens to peel away some of the support Biden badly needs.

Biden used the Clyburn endorsement to repeat an idea he mentioned, almost casually, at the end of Tuesday's debate, to nominate a black woman to the Supreme Court.

"As president, I'd be honored to appoint the first African American woman. Because it should look like the country. It's long past time," Biden said, recalling that Obama nominated the court's first Latina, Justice Sonia Sotomayor.

And he offered a direct message to Democrats in South Carolina and beyond who may be doubting the strength of his candidacy.

"If you send me out of South Carolina with a victory, there will be no stopping us," Biden charged. "We will win the nomination. We will win the presidency. And most importantly, we will end the fear ... of a second term for Donald Trump."

Peoples reported from Washington. AP writer Thomas Beaumont in Columbia, South Carolina contributed.

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

Managing remote workers? It takes more than the latest apps

By **JOYCE M. ROSENBERG** AP Business Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Nicolas Vandenberghe's company has 42 staffers scattered among 36 cities in 15 countries. As technology makes it possible for people to be in constant touch while working remotely, businesses like Chili Piper are becoming the norm.

"We have Zoom, Slack, and a myriad of other collaborative tools — do we really need the in-person water cooler meetings?" asks Vandenberghe, whose business makes software to help companies manage meetings. Vandenberghe himself is continually remote, splitting his time between Brooklyn, New York; Los Angeles and France.

Whether it means a parent working from home while caring for a sick child, a staffer who logs into a company computer daily from a coffee shop or an entire law firm that operates online, remote working is gaining momentum at small businesses. Technology that makes communication and meetings easy is a big factor in the growth of remote working, but so is the shrinking labor pool that accompanies an unemployment rate below 4% for over a year. Many companies no longer look for help close to their home base.

It's hard to find definitive statistics on how many people work remotely. Gallup's most recent survey in 2016 showed that 43% of employees worked remotely in at least some capacity; that was up 4 percentage points from 2012.

But even as remote working grows, business owners find managing offsite staffers involves more than giving them the latest technology. Communication, for example, can't be left solely to videoconferencing and messaging apps like Slack. Three of Jazmine Valencia's seven staffers are in her Los Angeles office, three are in New York and one is in Chicago. Her company, JV Agency, does marketing for the music industry. Valencia's remote staffers can feel left out when the onsite team discusses issues.

"I have to over-communicate and make sure everyone is on the same page. This might mean more one-on-ones, more calls and sometimes just being constantly emailing or private messaging the remote team," Valencia says. "I need to give them a sense of security."

Owners say a remote operation can't work without trust between a boss and staffers, especially because it can be difficult for an owner to know what an employee is doing during a workday. Tyler Forte recalls that when he first managed staffers remotely, "it was me checking on them probably too frequently." He worried about staffers at his real estate brokerage spending time on social media.

But, "over time, you develop trust with the employee, that we're all working toward the same goal," says

Forte, CEO of Felix Homes, based in Nashville, Tennessee. The company has staffers in Los Angeles. "Even if I'm not overseeing every move, I believe they are doing their best to advance the goals of the company."

Forte has found project management software, an aid many owners use, helps him keep track of what everyone is doing.

Sometimes the problem is very different from staffers goofing off.

"People have this idea that if you have a remote team, they won't work," says Emma Rose Cohen, CEO of Final Straw, a maker of reusable straws that has a hub in Seattle. "It's the opposite — if you hire the right people, they're self-starters, and self-starters are often people who work too much."

She's alert to signs that any of her 15 staffers are spending too much time on the job, and when they tell her they feel burned out, tired, or stressed, Cohen says it's time to take a break. And she's very public about the fact she blocks off time for non-work things she needs to do.

One reason why employees take remote jobs is their bosses give them flextime; they can make their own hours, take time off for children's activities or to go to the gym or walk the dog. That perk can help a small business attract and retain staffers.

But remote work is a bad fit for some employees because it often is isolating; staffers can feel disconnected and even alienated from co-workers. That can be countered to some extent through messaging channels that allow everyone to chime in on a fun discussion. Cohen has gone further, creating channels devoted to specific topics like pets or podcasts.

When Andrew DeBell hires remote staffers, he flies them to his company's home base for interviews; that's one way to increase the odds they'll work well with the team at Water Bear Learning, a Ventura, California-based company that creates educational materials.

Some owners find remote work can have a stifling effect on a team's creativity — there's no light-bulb moments as staffers pass each other in the hallway, no riffing in a meeting, no break room chats that are unexpectedly productive.

"You're able to feed off each other and brainstorm ideas better in person than when you've got several people on the phone," DeBell says. His company has one staffer in Denver and two in Ventura. It also has a network of freelancers in the eastern U.S.

Vandenberghe encourages staffers to go to coworking spaces so they can avoid isolation. When he needs a brainstorming session, he flies staffers to where he is so they can meet in person.

Saili Gosula has a remote administrative staffer and several onsite employees at her Synergy HomeCare franchise in San Mateo, California, and all of her caregivers work out in the field. Gosula has some of the same issues as owners whose work is computer-based; she does a lot of communicating and informing, trying to be sure that all her office staff is on the same page.

As it turns out, Gosula uses some of the same skills with her caregivers, who are all working in sensitive, emotional situations as they care for elderly or sick people.

"We talk to them often, ask them how it's going," Gosula says. "We ask them questions every time we interact with them."

Follow Joyce Rosenberg at www.twitter.com/JoyceMRosenberg. Her work can be found here: <https://apnews.com>

Biden nabs Clyburn endorsement before South Carolina primary

By MEG KINNARD and BILL BARROW Associated Press

NORTH CHARLESTON, S.C. (AP) — U.S. Rep. Jim Clyburn, the highest-ranking black member of Congress and the kingmaker of South Carolina's Democratic political orbit, on Wednesday endorsed Joe Biden's presidential campaign. The backing could provide a much-needed boost for the former vice president heading into South Carolina's primary.

"I can think of no one better suited, better prepared, I can think of no one with the integrity, no one more committed to the fundamental principles that make this country what it is than my good friend,"

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said Clyburn, appearing with Biden at an event in North Charleston.

He called on the people of South Carolina to "stand with" Biden.

It had long been expected that Clyburn, the House majority whip, would support Biden. The men were in Congress together for more than a decade, with Clyburn also working closely with the Obama administration in his House leadership roles. Biden was among the presidential hopefuls and other political notables who attended two days of funeral and homegoing services last year for Clyburn's wife, Emily.

The support could help Biden avoid limping across the finish line in Saturday's balloting in South Carolina, where he has long led in polling, particularly among the black voters, who comprise most of the Democratic electorate. But that lead has tightened in recent months, in part because of Vermont Sen. Bernie Sanders' momentum after success in other early state contests. Another factor is the focus of candidates including California billionaire Tom Steyer, who has spent millions of dollars on ads in the state and worked to build relationships with black voters.

Biden, taking the podium from Clyburn on Wednesday, thanked his longtime friend but then quickly slipped into an opaque reference to Sanders.

"Today, people are talking about a revolution," Biden said. "But what the country's looking for are results. What they're looking for is security. What they're looking for is being able to sustain and maintain their dignity."

Biden went on to note Clyburn's role in securing the Democratic votes for the 2010 health insurance overhaul that ranks as President Barack Obama's signature domestic achievement. Biden said his proposal for a "public option" insurance plan to expand coverage under "Obamacare" would build on Clyburn's work rather than "start from scratch" with single-payer government insurance that Sanders proposes.

"What people are looking for is some hope, some reassurance, some notion that 'I can take care of my family,'" Biden said.

Biden also used the Clyburn endorsement to repeat an idea he mentioned, almost casually, at the end of Tuesday's presidential primary debate, to nominate a black woman to the Supreme Court.

"As president, I'd be honored to appoint the first African American woman. Because it should look like the country. It's long past time," Biden said, recalling that Obama nominated the court's first Latina, Justice Sonia Sotomayor.

Following poor finishes in Iowa and in New Hampshire, Biden notched a second-place finish in the Nevada caucuses, a status he said positioned him to do well in South Carolina, a state that can be a bellwether for other Southern states and has been referred to as Biden's "firewall" of support.

Earlier this month, Clyburn gave some insight into his thinking when he said that he was watching efforts by several campaigns aiming to cut into Biden's support in South Carolina. Clyburn noted that Steyer, in particular, is doing "an incredible job."

Clyburn also said former South Bend, Indiana, Mayor Pete Buttigieg "is doing very good." Clyburn has previously said Buttigieg may struggle among older black voters because he is gay. Clyburn's grandson is working for Buttigieg's South Carolina campaign.

Asked directly if South Carolina is Biden's "firewall," where success or failure could make or break his campaign in the states that follow, Clyburn said, "Well, I don't know. We will see."

Biden said Wednesday that despite Clyburn's endorsement "nothing is expected or guaranteed," and he promised to continue working for votes. But, he said, "If you send me out of South Carolina with a victory, there will be no stopping us. We will win the nomination. We will win the presidency. And, most importantly, we will end the fear ... of a second term for Donald Trump."

Clyburn hosted Biden and nearly two dozen other Democratic hopefuls last summer at his fish fry, which began in 1992 in a parking deck near the South Carolina Statehouse as a way to thank volunteers who helped him secure his first congressional victory. Through the years, the fish fry has blossomed into a showpiece event for Democratic politicians in the state and as a must-stop event for the party's presidential contenders aiming to build support in the state.

twitter.com/BillBarrowAP.

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An increasingly isolated Iran tries to control virus crisis

By JON GAMBRELL Associated Press

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates (AP) — Iran girded Wednesday for a long battle against the coronavirus that is spreading rapidly across the country and the wider Middle East, even though officials in the Islamic Republic had earlier minimized the outbreak that has now killed 19 people, the highest toll outside of China.

President Hassan Rouhani said there were no immediate plans to quarantine cities, but he acknowledged it may take "one, two or three weeks" to get control of the virus in Iran, which has been linked to most of the over 210 confirmed cases in the region.

As Iran's 80 million people find themselves increasingly isolated in the region by the outbreak, the country's sanctions-battered economy saw its currency slump to its lowest level against the U.S. dollar in a year.

Rouhani sought to portray the virus crisis in terms of Iran's tense relationship with the U.S., which under President Donald Trump unilaterally withdrew from its nuclear deal with world powers and sent its economy into freefall.

"We must not let the United States attach a new virus to the coronavirus by stopping our social activities through tremendous fear. This is a conspiracy we see today and you see in foreign propaganda," Rouhani said at a Cabinet meeting, according to a transcript on the presidency's website.

"They are also suffering from coronavirus. Influenza has killed 16,000 people in the United States, but they are not speaking about themselves. Americans better take care of thousands of flu casualties in their own country," he said.

The comments by Rouhani came as Iran appeared to be slowly coming to grips with the scope of the crisis.

In Tehran overnight, mass transit workers disinfected buses and the capital's subway system, removing overhead handles to try to limit surfaces where the virus could rest. Traffic again appeared lighter on Tehran's normally gridlocked roads amid a winter rain. Signs warned Iranians not to touch surfaces in crowded areas.

In Qom, the Shiite holy city south of Tehran that government statistics say has been hit hardest by the virus, photos published by the judiciary's Mizan news agency showed doctors wearing high-end face masks.

The masks are difficult to find in Iran, as is alcohol-based hand sanitizer and other materials, because Iranian law typically prohibits the import of items that can be made locally. Those rules have been loosened in the crisis.

Health Ministry spokesman Kianoush Jahanpour said 19 people have died from the illness, which is named COVID-19, with 139 confirmed cases in the country. The World Health Organization says the virus has infected more than 80,000 people globally, causing over 2,700 deaths, mainly in China.

The first two cases of the virus were reported Wednesday by the government of neighboring Pakistan, with one of the infected patients having traveled to Iran with his family.

Experts are concerned that Iran may be underreporting cases and deaths, given its rapid spread from Iran across the Persian Gulf. Ahmad Amirabadi Farahani, a hard-line lawmaker, has alleged there have been 50 deaths in Qom alone, which the government denies.

Figures released Wednesday still showed no cases confirmed in the Iranian city of Mashhad, even though a number of cases reported in Kuwait are linked to there.

"We must be optimistic, because pessimism causes us to attract this disease," said Afsaneh Azarloo, a Tehran resident. "We should be optimistic and hope that nothing bad will happen to us."

That optimism was not shared by another passer-by, who gave his name only as Saeed.

"I'm worried. It's the first time I have left home after a week," he said. "My home is now my workplace too."

That pessimism is widespread, especially after the top official in charge of Iran's response to the coronavirus tested positive for the illness after trying to play down the disease a day earlier.

Iran's Cyber Police reported that 24 people were arrested and 118 other were warned about "spreading rumors" on the internet about the virus.

"Coronavirus must not be turned into a weapon for our enemies to halt work and production in our country," Rouhani said.

Iran's currency, the rial, fell to its lowest level against the U.S. dollar in a year, likely pushed by the country's neighbors closing borders and air routes. The rial traded at 160,000 to \$1. At the time of Iran's nuclear deal with world powers in 2015, it traded at 32,000 to \$1.

Rouhani's estimate of up to three weeks to control the virus followed efforts by officials repeatedly to minimize its threat.

That has sparked more concern among Iranians already angry over nationwide economic protests, the U.S. drone strike that killed a top Iranian general and Iran accidentally shooting down a Ukrainian jetliner and then denying it for days. The Feb. 21 parliamentary election also saw the country's lowest recorded turnout.

Jahanpour suggested Tuesday it could take as long as late April to control the virus. And with the Persian New Year, or Nowruz, coming on March 20, experts worry it could worsen.

"Containment of the COVID-19 virus within Iran will be a challenge because of Iran's poor health infrastructure and traditional unwillingness to communicate freely and openly across all branches of government and between health institutions," the Austin, Texas private intelligence firm Stratfor said.

That worry was echoed by analysts at the Eurasia Group.

"Tehran is likely significantly underestimating the risk posed by an outbreak of coronavirus to its citizens, economy and neighbors," they wrote. "Iran has a relatively robust public health system, although it has been weakened by U.S. sanctions. But a breakdown in national-level decision-making has severely hampered its ability contain the spread of the virus."

Associated Press journalists Amir Vahdat, Saeed Sarmadi and Mehdi Fattahi in Tehran, Iran, and Samy Magdy in Cairo contributed.

Brazil confirms first coronavirus case in Latin America

By MARCELO DE SOUSA and MAURICIO SAVARESE Associated Press

RIO DE JANEIRO (AP) — Brazil's government confirmed on Wednesday that a 61-year-old Brazilian man who traveled to Italy this month has Latin America's first confirmed case of the new coronavirus spreading worldwide.

"We will now see how this virus behaves in a tropical country in the middle of summer, how its behavior pattern will be," Brazil's Health Minister Luiz Henrique Mandetta said in a press conference.

The Brazilian man spent two weeks in northern Italy's Lombardy region on a work trip, where he contracted the contagious virus, the Health Ministry said.

Authorities had already said Tuesday evening that a first laboratory test for the COVID-19 virus had a positive result, and were waiting for a second test to confirm it.

Since the virus began to spread throughout the world from China, Brazil and other countries in the region have registered dozens of suspected cases, all of which previously had been discarded following tests.

According to the Health Ministry, the man began to show symptoms compatible with the illness, such as a dry cough, throat pain and flu symptoms. Lombardy is the epicenter of the outbreak in Italy, and there have been hundreds of confirmed cases there as well as several deaths.

Sao Paulo's Albert Einstein Institute, where the man received medical attention, carried out respiratory tests, and the Adolfo Lutz Institute in the same city carried out the subsequent test confirming the virus. The man was in stable condition and in isolation at home in Sao Paulo.

Brazil's national health agency Anvisa has been working to map all contact the man had with others, and

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on Tuesday requested the manifest of the flight he took to investigate other possible cases.

The Health Ministry said that the man received some 30 family members at his home after returning to Sao Paulo on Feb. 21. Those people are under observation, as are with passengers from the plane.

"Our healthcare system has already undergone grave respiratory epidemics before," Mandetta said. "We will get through this situation, investing in science, research and clear information."

Residents of the biggest city in Latin America were beginning to acknowledging the risks of an epidemic Thiago Alves, the manager of drugstore in central Sao Paulo, said he had sold more than 3,000 masks on Wednesday.

"We are already short and it isn't even the beginning of the afternoon," he said.

Attendance was light at many schools in downtown Sao Paulo and there were few customers in Chinese shops and restaurants.

Sao Paulo's stock exchange, which had been closed since Friday due to the Carnival holiday, was down 5% shortly after 2 p.m., which economist André Perfeito attributed to "the global outbreak of coronavirus, not necessarily its arrival here." Global stock markets had dipped sharply while the Brazilian exchange was closed.

Four years ago, Latin America's largest country found itself under the microscope as the spreading Zika virus was linked to cases of microcephaly in babies just ahead of the summer Olympics in Rio de Janeiro.

Brazil's response was deemed adequate by international organizations and its public health care system handled most cases, though medicine was in short supply in many isolated areas of the Northeast region. Some foreign sports fans and competitors still canceled their plans to attend South America's first Olympics.

As of Wednesday, there were 20 suspected cases of the new coronavirus in Brazil, 12 of which in people who returned from Italy. Authorities have so far ruled out 59 cases that were suspected since the outbreak began.

Due to the spread of the new virus worldwide, Brazil on Monday broadened its criteria for analysis of suspected cases. The Health Ministry determined that people with fever and flu symptoms returning from Italy and six other countries should be considered suspected cases. Those countries are Germany, France, Australia, Malaysia, the United Arab Emirates, and the Philippines.

The news of the virus reaching Brazilian soil comes as the nation emerges from its annual Carnival revelry. Amanda Pereira, who joined a street party on Wednesday with her young daughter, said, "I worry a lot because my daughters have breathing problems, so we will stay alert."

Asked whether Brazilians should cancel plans to visit Europe, Mandetta said this is "just another reason for domestic tourism" and said that people should use "good sense"

"If it's not necessary, why are you going to book? Wait for us to see if this starts to behave better," he said. "Now, we also can't stop our lives because there is a respiratory syndrome."

The countries already on Brazil's watch list were China, Japan, Singapore, South Korea, North Korea, Thailand, Vietnam and Cambodia.

AP videojournalist Diarlei Rodrigues and writer Mauricio Savarese contributed to this story.

Death toll rises to 24 from Delhi riots during Trump trip

By SHEIKH SAALIQ and EMILY SCHMALL Associated Press

NEW DELHI (AP) — At least 24 people were killed and 189 injured in three days of clashes in New Delhi that coincided with U.S. President Donald Trump's first state visit to India, with the death toll expected to rise as hospitals continue to take in the wounded, authorities said Wednesday.

Shops, Muslim shrines and public vehicles were left smoldering from violence between Hindu mobs and Muslims protesting a new citizenship law that fast-tracks naturalization for foreign-born religious minorities of all major faiths in South Asia except Islam.

Twenty-four deaths were reported at two hospitals in New Delhi, officials said.

The clashes were the worst communal riots in the Indian capital in decades. The law's passage in December earlier spurred massive protests across India that left 23 dead, many of them killed by police.

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The dead in this week's violence included a policeman and an intelligence bureau officer, and the government has banned public assembly in the affected areas.

Police spokesman M.S. Randhawa said 106 people were arrested for alleged involvement in the rioting. Officials reported no new violence Wednesday as large police reinforcements patrolled the areas, where an uneasy calm prevailed.

National Security Adviser Ajit Doval toured the northeastern neighborhoods of Delhi where the rioting occurred, seeking to assure fear-stricken residents including a female student who complained that police had not protected them from mobs who vandalized the area and set shops and vehicles on fire.

While clashes wracked parts of the capital, Prime Minister Narendra Modi hosted a lavish reception for Trump, including a rally in his home state of Gujarat attended by more than 100,000 people and the signing of an agreement to purchase more than \$3 billion of American military hardware.

On Wednesday, Modi broke his silence on the violence, tweeting that "peace and harmony are central to (India's) ethos. I appeal to my sisters and brothers of Delhi to maintain peace and brotherhood at all times."

New Delhi's top elected official, Chief Minister Arvind Kerjwal, called for Modi's home minister, Amit Shah, to send the army to ensure peace.

Police characterized the situation as tense but under control. Schools remained closed.

Sonia Gandhi, a leader of the Congress party, India's main opposition group, called for Shah to resign. She accused Modi's Hindu-nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party of creating an environment of hatred and its leaders of inciting violence with provocative speeches that sought to paint Muslim protesters against the citizenship law as anti-nationalists funded by Pakistan.

New Delhi's High Court ordered the police to review videos of hate speeches allegedly made by three leaders of Modi's party and decide whether to prosecute them, the Press Trust of India news agency reported.

The clashes escalated Tuesday, according to Rouf Khan, a resident of Mustafabad, an area in the capital's northeast.

Khan said mobs with iron rods, bricks and bamboo sticks attacked the homes of Muslims while chanting "Jai Shri Ram," or "Victory to Lord Ram," the popular Hindu god of the religious epic "Ramayana."

As Air Force One flew Trump and his delegation out of New Delhi late Tuesday, Muslim families huddled in a mosque in the city's northeast, praying that Hindu mobs wouldn't burn it down.

"After forcing their way inside the homes, they went on a rampage and started beating people and breaking household items," Khan said of the mobs, adding that he and his family had to run and take shelter inside a mosque that he said was guarded by thousands of Muslim men.

"I don't know if our house was burned or not, but when we were running away we heard them asking people to pour kerosene and burn everything down," Khan said.

Some of the dead had bullet wounds, according to Dr. Sunil Kumar, medical director of the Guru Teg Bahadur Hospital.

Others came to the hospital with gunshot and stab wounds and head injuries.

Among them was Mohammad Sameer, 17, who was being treated for a gunshot wound to his chest Wednesday at Guru Teg Bahadur Hospital.

Speaking to The Associated Press after having an operation, Sameer said he was standing on his family's apartment terrace watching Hindu mobs enter Mustafabad when he was shot in the chest.

"When Sameer was shot, I took him on my shoulders and ran downstairs," said the boy's father, Mohammad Akram. "But when the mob saw us, they beat me and my injured son. He was bleeding very badly. While they were beating with sticks, they kept on chanting 'Jai Shri Ram' slogans and threatened to barge inside our homes."

Akram said he managed to get his son into a vehicle, but they were stopped several times by Hindus demanding they pull their pants down to show whether they were circumcised before they managed to escape from the area and reach the emergency room. Muslims are generally circumcised, while Hindus are not.

In Kardampura, a Muslim-majority area where a youth was shot and killed on Monday, hundreds of po-

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lice personnel in riot gear patrolled the area and asked people to stay indoors, while residents said they were living in fear.

"We are scared and don't know where to go," said one resident, Dr. Jeevan Ali Khan. "If the government wanted, they could have stopped these riots."

Close by, black smoke still rose on Wednesday afternoon from a market that sold tires and second-hand car parts in Gokalpuri as fireman tried to douse the smoldering fire.

The violence drew sharp reactions from U.S. lawmakers, with Rep. Rashida Talib, a Democrat from Michigan, tweeting, "This week, Trump visited India but the real story should be the communal violence targeting Muslims in Delhi right now."

Pakistani Prime Minister Imran Khan condemned the killing of Muslims, saying: "Now 200 million Muslims in India are being targeted. The world community must act now."

Trump told reporters Tuesday that he had heard about the violence but had not discussed it with Modi. Instead, Trump gloated about his reception in India.

India has been rocked by violence since Parliament approved the citizenship law in December. Opponents have said the country is moving toward a religious citizenship test, but Trump declined to comment on it.

"I don't want to discuss that. I want to leave that to India and hopefully they're going to make the right decision for the people," he said.

It was the worst religiously motivated violence in New Delhi since 1984, when Prime Minister Indira Gandhi was killed by her Sikh bodyguards, triggering a wave of riots that resulted in the deaths of more than 3,000 Sikhs in the capital and more than 8,000 nationwide.

In 1992, tens of thousands of Hindu extremists razed a 16th-century mosque in northern India, claiming that it stood on the birthplace of the Hindu god Rama. Nearly 2,000 people were killed across the country in the riots that followed.

The religious polarization that followed saw the right-wing Hindu Bharatiya Janata Party emerge as the single largest party in India's Parliament. The Congress party and regional parties courted Muslim votes by portraying themselves as defenders of minority rights.

In 2002, the western Indian state of Gujarat erupted in violence when a train filled with Hindu pilgrims was attacked by a Muslim mob in a small town. A fire erupted — it remains unclear whether it was arson — and 60 Hindus burned to death. In retaliation, more than 1,000 people, mostly Muslims, were killed in the state.

Modi was Gujarat's chief minister at the time. He was accused of tacit support for the rampage against Muslims, but a court ultimately cleared him of wrongdoing. Still, for several years the U.S. included him on a travel ban. Hosting Trump in Gujarat was important symbolically for Modi.

Violent large-scale clashes between Hindus and Muslims last took place in New Delhi in 2014, months after Modi's party came to power, in a largely poor neighborhood close to where this week's rioting occurred.

A Muslim-owned shop was set on fire, Hindus pelted a mosque with stones, and dozens of angry Muslim men attacked Hindu homes. About three dozen people were injured.

Associated Press journalists Ashok Sharma and Shonal Ganguly in New Delhi, and Munir Ahmed in Islamabad, Pakistan, contributed to this report.

Sharapova retires from tennis at age 32 with 5 Slam titles

By HOWARD FENDRICH AP Tennis Writer

Maria Sharapova was a transcendent star in tennis from the time she was a teenager, someone whose grit and groundstrokes earned her a career Grand Slam and whose off-court success included millions of dollars more in endorsement deals than prize money.

And yet, Sharapova walked away from her sport rather quietly Wednesday at the age of 32, ending a career that featured five major championships, time at No. 1 in the WTA rankings, a 15-month doping ban and plenty of problems with her right shoulder.

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There was no goodbye tournament, no last moment in the spotlight, for someone so used to garnering so much attention for so long, with or without a racket in hand.

"I've been pretty good in the past, balancing my time with my sponsors with my tennis, because I know my priority. At the end of the day, what I love doing is competing, and that's where my heart is at: on center court," Sharapova said in a 2006 interview with The Associated Press right before that year's U.S. Open.

"There are a couple of sides of me," she said then. "There's the Maria that's a tennis player. There's the Maria that is a normal girl. And there's the Maria who's a businesswoman. And that's where the 'Maria Sharapova brand' comes into play."

Around that time, she signed a "lifetime" contract with a racket company, a deal that eventually was ended. And two weeks after that, she would win the U.S. Open trophy while wearing an outfit that resembled a sparkly black cocktail dress, part of the "couple of sides" persona she cultivated.

Two years later, though, Sharapova missed the tournament at Flushing Meadows because she needed surgery on her shoulder, which has troubled her off and on ever since; she had another operation on that joint in 2019.

She lost the last four matches she played at major tournaments, with first-round exits in her past three appearances, including at the Australian Open in January. That turned out to be the last match of her career and made her 0-2 this season.

In an essay written for Vanity Fair and Vogue about her decision to retire, posted online Wednesday, Sharapova asks: "How do you leave behind the only life you've ever known?"

She disclosed that she "had a procedure to numb my shoulder to get through the match" a half-hour before walking on court for a first-round exit at last year's U.S. Open, writing: "I share this not to garner pity, but to paint my new reality: My body had become a distraction."

Born in Russia, and "discovered" by Martina Navratilova at an exhibition event in Moscow, Sharapova moved to Florida as a child and trained at the Nick Bollettieri Tennis Academy.

"We'll miss her, baby. She's very special," Bollettieri told the AP in an interview last year, when Sharapova returned to his academy as she worked her way back from her latest shoulder procedure. "The tour will miss her. ... Always competitive. All business."

Sharapova burst onto the tennis scene at 17 by upsetting Serena Williams to win Wimbledon in 2004. She would beat Williams again at that year's season-ending tour championship to improve to 2-1 against the American — and never won another one of their matchups, dropping the next 19 in a row.

Powerful at the baseline, and famous for a never-give-up attitude, Sharapova reached No. 1 for the first time at 18 in 2005. After adding her second major trophy at the U.S. Open the following year, she collected an Australian Open title in 2008, and then won the French Open in 2012 and 2014.

Sharapova is one of only six women in the professional era to win each major tennis title at least once. She made 10 Grand Slam finals in all, going 5-5; the last came in 2015 at the Australian Open, where she was the runner-up to Williams.

At the 2016 Australian Open, where Williams beat her in the quarterfinals, Sharapova tested positive for the newly banned drug meldonium.

After initially being given a two-year suspension, Sharapova appealed to the Court of Arbitration for Sport, which reduced the penalty, ruling she bore "less than significant fault" in the case and could not "be considered to be an intentional doper."

Since returning from that suspension in 2017, Sharapova managed to reach only one Slam quarterfinal.

Her 6-3, 6-4 loss to Donna Vekic at Melbourne last month sent Sharapova's ranking tumbling outside of the top 350 — she is 373rd this week.

Asked after that defeat whether it might have been her last appearance at the Australian Open, Sharapova repeatedly replied with, "I don't know."

"I put in all the right work. There is no guarantee that even when you do all of those things, that you're guaranteed victory in a first round or in the third round or in the final. That's the name of this game," Sharapova said after what turned out to be her final match. "That's why it's so special to be a champion, even for one time."

A little more than a month later, she told the world she was done with her playing career. "Tennis showed me the world — and it showed me what I was made of. It's how I tested myself and how I measured my growth," Sharapova wrote on Twitter on Wednesday. "And so in whatever I might choose for my next chapter, my next mountain, I'll still be pushing. I'll still be climbing. I'll still be growing."

Follow Howard Fendrich on Twitter at <http://twitter.com/HowardFendrich>

More AP tennis: <https://apnews.com/tag/apf-Tennis> and https://twitter.com/AP_Sports

Satellite almost on empty gets new life after space docking

By **MARCIA DUNN AP Aerospace Writer**

CAPE CANAVERAL, Fla. (AP) — A communication satellite almost out of fuel has gotten a new life after the first space docking of its kind.

Northrop Grumman and Intelsat announced the successful link-up nearly 22,500 miles (36,000 kilometers) above Earth on Wednesday. It's the first time two commercial satellites have joined in orbit like this.

The recently launched satellite — Northrop Grumman's Mission Extension Vehicle, or MEV-1 — will serve as a guide dog of sorts for its aging Intelsat companion.

Company officials called it a historic moment for space commerce, akin to the three-spacewalker capture of a wayward Intelsat satellite 28 years ago.

"We're pushing the boundaries of what many thought would be impossible," said Tom Wilson, president of SpaceLogistics, a subsidiary of Northrop Grumman. "The impossible is now a reality. Today is a great example of that."

The Northrop Grumman satellite was launched from Kazakhstan in October. On Tuesday, it closed in on the 19-year-old Intelsat 901 satellite and clamped onto it. The duo will remain attached for the next five years.

This novel rescue was carried out at a slightly higher orbit to avoid jeopardizing other satellites if something had gone wrong. The Intelsat satellite was never designed for this kind of docking; officials said everything went well.

Once maneuvered back down into its operational orbit, the Intelsat satellite should resume operations in another month or two. MEV-1 will move on to another satellite in need once its five-year hitch is over.

Jean-Luc Froeliger, a vice president for Intelsat, said the satellite had just months of fuel remaining. It ended service late last year and was sent into the slightly higher orbit for the docking.

Officials declined to say how much the operation cost or what future rescues might cost. Intelsat CEO Stephen Spengler said "there was a solid business case" for undertaking the salvage attempt with five more years of operation ahead for the satellite.

It's reminiscent of another Intelsat rescue that unfolded closer to home.

Spacewalking astronauts captured the wayward Intelsat 603 satellite during Endeavour's maiden voyage in 1992. It took three men to grab the satellite with their gloved hands in perhaps the most dramatic shuttle mission of all time. An attached rocket motor ended up propelling the satellite from a low altitude to its proper orbit.

Northrop Grumman envisions satellite refueling and other robotic repairs in another five to 10 years. In the meantime, a second rescue satellite will be launched later this year.

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House makes lynching a federal crime, 65 years after Till

By **MATTHEW DALY** Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Sixty-five years after 14-year-old Emmett Till was lynched in Mississippi, the House has approved legislation designating lynching as a hate crime under federal law.

The bill, introduced by Illinois Rep. Bobby Rush and named after Till, comes 120 years after Congress first considered anti-lynching legislation and after dozens of similar efforts were defeated.

The measure was approved 410 to 4 on Wednesday. The Senate unanimously passed virtually identical legislation last year, although that bill wasn't named for Till. President Donald Trump is expected to sign the bill, which designates lynching as a federal hate crime punishable by up to life in prison, a fine, or both.

Rush, a Democrat whose Chicago district includes Till's former home, said the bill will belatedly achieve justice for Till and more than 4,000 other lynching victims, most of them African Americans.

Till, who was black, was brutally tortured and killed in 1955 after a white woman accused him of grabbing her and whistling at her in a Mississippi grocery store. The killing shocked the country and stoked the civil rights movement.

"The importance of this bill cannot be overstated," said Rush, a member of the Congressional Black Caucus. "From Charlottesville to El Paso, we are still being confronted with the same violent racism and hatred that took the life of Emmett and so many others. The passage of this bill will send a strong and clear message to the nation that we will not tolerate this bigotry."

Rep. Bennie Thompson, D-Miss., who represents the area where Till was abducted and murdered, called the anti-lynching bill long overdue, but said: "No matter the length of time, it is never too late to ensure justice is served."

House Majority Leader Steny Hoyer, D-Md., used similar language to urge the bill's passage. "It is never too late to do the right thing and address these gruesome, racially motivated acts of terror that have plagued our nation's history," he said, urging lawmakers to "renew our commitment to confronting racism and hate."

The bill was unanimously supported by Democrats. Three Republicans — Louie Gohmert of Texas, Thomas Massie of Kentucky and Ted Yoho of Florida — opposed the bill, along with independent Rep. Justin Amash of Michigan.

Gohmert said he supported the bill's concept, but preferred that those accused of lynching in Texas be tried in state court, where they could face the death penalty.

Massie said he opposed the expansion of federal hate-crime laws. "A crime is a crime, and all victims deserve equal justice," he said in a statement. "Adding enhanced penalties for 'hate' tends to endanger other liberties such as freedom of speech."

Democratic Rep. Karen Bass of California, who chairs the Congressional Black Caucus, called lynching a lasting legacy of slavery.

"Make no mistake, lynching is terrorism," she said. "While this reign of terror has faded, the most recent lynching (in the United States) happened less than 25 years ago."

Although Congress cannot truly rectify the terror and horror of these acts, Bass said, a legislative body that once included slave owners and Ku Klux Klan members will belatedly "stand up and do our part so that justice is delivered in the future."

Democratic Sens. Kamala Harris of California and Cory Booker of New Jersey applauded House passage of the bill, which mirrors legislation they co-sponsored in the Senate along with Sen. Tim Scott, R-S.C. The three are the Senate's only black members.

"Lynchings were horrendous, racist acts of violence," Harris said in a statement. "For far too long Congress has failed to take a moral stand and pass a bill to finally make lynching a federal crime. This justice is long overdue."

Booker called lynching "a pernicious tool of racialized violence, terror and oppression" and "a stain on the soul of our nation." While Congress cannot undo lynching's irrevocable damage, "we can ensure that we as a country make clear that lynching will not be tolerated," Booker said.

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Congress has failed to pass anti-lynching legislation nearly 200 times, starting with a bill introduced in 1900 by North Carolina Rep. George Henry White, the only black member of Congress at the time.

Kristen Clarke, president of the Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under Law, said passage of the anti-lynching legislation "marks a milestone in the long and protracted battle against white supremacy and racial violence in our country."

The bill "makes clear that lynchings occupy a dark place in our country's story and provides recognition of thousands of victims of lynching crimes," including Emmett Till and many others, Clarke said.

Today in History By The Associated Press

Today in History

Today is Thursday, Feb. 27, the 58th day of 2020. There are 308 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On Feb. 27, 1922, the Supreme Court, in *Leser v. Garnett*, unanimously upheld the 19th Amendment to the Constitution, which guaranteed the right of women to vote.

On this date:

In 1801, the District of Columbia was placed under the jurisdiction of Congress.

In 1814, Ludwig van Beethoven's Symphony No. 8 in F major, Op. 93, was first performed in Vienna.

In 1933, Germany's parliament building, the Reichstag (RYKS'-tahg), was gutted by fire; Chancellor Adolf Hitler, blaming the Communists, used the fire to justify suspending civil liberties.

In 1939, the Supreme Court, in *National Labor Relations Board v. Fansteel Metallurgical Corp.*, effectively outlawed sit-down strikes.

In 1943, during World War II, Norwegian commandos launched a successful raid to sabotage a German-operated heavy water plant in Norway. An explosion inside a coal mine near Bearcreek, Montana, killed 74 miners and one rescue worker. The U.S. government, responding to a copper shortage, began circulating one-cent coins made of steel plated with zinc (the steel pennies proved unpopular, since they were easily mistaken for dimes).

In 1951, the 22nd Amendment to the Constitution, limiting a president to two terms of office, was ratified.

In 1960, the U.S. Olympic hockey team defeated the Soviets, 3-2, at the Winter Games in Squaw Valley, California. (The U.S. team went on to win the gold medal.)

In 1973, members of the American Indian Movement occupied the hamlet of Wounded Knee in South Dakota, the site of the 1890 massacre of Sioux men, women and children. (The occupation lasted until the following May.)

In 1982, Wayne Williams was found guilty of murdering two of the 28 young blacks whose bodies were found in the Atlanta area over a 22-month period. (Williams, who was also blamed for 22 other deaths, has maintained his innocence.)

In 1991, Operation Desert Storm came to a conclusion as President George H.W. Bush declared that "Kuwait is liberated, Iraq's army is defeated," and announced that the allies would suspend combat operations at midnight, Eastern time.

In 1998, with the approval of Queen Elizabeth II, Britain's House of Lords agreed to end 1,000 years of male preference by giving a monarch's first-born daughter the same claim to the throne as any first-born son.

In 2002, at the Grammy Awards in Los Angeles, Alicia Keys won five prizes, including song of the year for "Fallin'"; Irish rockers U2 won four Grammys, including record of the year for "Walk On"; album of the year went to the "O Brother, Where Art Thou?" soundtrack.

Ten years ago: In Chile, an 8.8 magnitude earthquake and tsunami killed 524 people, caused \$30 billion in damage and left more than 200,000 homeless. Steven Holcomb drove USA-1 to the Olympic gold medal in four-man bobsledding in Vancouver, ending a 62-year drought for the Americans in the event.

Five years ago: Actor Leonard Nimoy, 83, world famous to "Star Trek" fans as the pointy-eared, purely

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logical science officer Mr. Spock, died in Los Angeles. In Tyrone, Missouri, Joseph Jesse Aldridge, 36, a man who authorities said might have been unhinged by the death of his ailing mother, was found dead of a self-inflicted gunshot wound after apparently killing seven people in a house-to-house shooting rampage. Boris Nemtsov, a charismatic Russian opposition leader and sharp critic of President Vladimir Putin, was gunned down near the Kremlin.

One year ago: President Donald Trump and North Korean leader Kim Jong Un projected optimism as they opened high-stakes talks in Vietnam about curbing Pyongyang's pursuit of nuclear weapons. In testimony to a House panel, Michael Cohen, President Donald Trump's former lawyer, cast Trump as a racist and a con man who had used his inner circle to cover up politically damaging allegations about sex, and who had lied during the election campaign about his business interests in Russia. The House approved a measure requiring federal background checks for all firearms sales and transfers, as a handful of Republicans joined Democrats in the first major gun control legislation considered by Congress in nearly 25 years. (The legislation was not taken up by the Senate.)

Today's Birthdays: Actress Joanne Woodward is 90. Consumer advocate Ralph Nader is 86. Actress Barbara Babcock is 83. Actor Howard Hesseman is 80. Actress Debra Monk is 71. Rock singer-musician Neal Schon (Journey) is 66. Rock musician Adrian Smith (Iron Maiden) is 63. Actor Timothy Spall is 63. Rock musician Paul Humphreys (Orchestral Manoeuvres in the Dark) is 60. Country singer Johnny Van Zant (Van Zant) is 60. Rock musician Leon Mobley (Ben Harper and the Innocent Criminals) is 59. Basketball Hall of Famer James Worthy is 59. Actor Adam Baldwin is 58. Actor Grant Show is 58. Rock musician Mike Cross (Sponge) is 55. Actor Noah Emmerich is 55. Actor Donal Logue (DOH'-nuhl LOHG) is 54. Rhythm-and-blues singer Chilli (TLC) is 49. Rock musician Jeremy Dean (Nine Days) is 48. Rhythm-and-blues singer Roderick Clark is 47. Country-rock musician Shonna Tucker is 42. Chelsea Clinton is 40. Actor Brandon Beemer is 40. Rock musician Cyrus Bolooki (New Found Glory) is 40. Rock musician Jake Clemons (Bruce Springsteen and the E Street Band) is 40. Rhythm-and-blues singer Bobby Valentino is 40. Singer Josh Groban is 39. Banjoist Noam (cq) Pikelnny is 39. Rock musician Jared Champion (Cage the Elephant) is 37. Actress Kate Mara is 37. TV personality JWoww (AKA Jenni Farley) is 34. Actress Lindsey Morgan is 30.

Thought for Today: "I am indeed rich, since my income is superior to my expenses, and my expense is equal to my wishes." — Edward Gibbon, English historian (1737-1794).

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