

Groton Daily Independent

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It's Boys' Basketball Action on GDILIVE.COM



**Sisseton
Redmen**

VS



Groton Area Tigers

AT SISSETON

5:00 p.m.: Boys C Game - Sponsored by Ed & Connie Stauch

6:15 p.m.: Boys JV Game - Sponsored by Olson Development

7:30 p.m.: Boys Varsity Game

Sponsored by the Aberdeen Chrysler Center

Upcoming Events

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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When Two Cultures Collide

As I was researching the history of Native American health care, I took note of the various terms used early on by indigenous people to describe European immigrants. Initially, the references had to do with skin color. Several tribes labeled Europeans as "white skinned," or "yellow-hided." Some tribes still use the term "umseh-wah," meaning "bleached wood."



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

Other tribes described Europeans as "hairy mouthed," "hair faces" and "dog faces," referencing facial hair on European men. Ears were also important in naming. One tribe characterized the immigrants as "ears sticking out" because they did not have long hair covering their ears as did Native Americans. Some say that the ear label referred to that tribe's word-meaning for donkey or mule.

As time went on, Native Americans began to describe Europeans based not only on how they looked, but on how they behaved. A Lakota word for Europeans is "wasichu," which means, "taker of the fat, or a greedy individual." Recognizing the transgression over the last two centuries, I can't blame the Lakota for choosing the label, "wasichu."

These Native American words reflect the impact of two cultural world's colliding and reveal a disharmony resulting from the loss of access to traditional hunting and farming lands, the loss of family and language as children were shipped to boarding schools, the loss of self-respect with isolation on the reservation and much more. The result of all this has been decades of health disparities. For example, American Indians are 50 percent more likely than white people, to have a substance abuse disorder, 60 percent more likely to commit suicide, twice as likely to smoke cigarettes or to die of childbirth, three times more likely to die from diabetes and five times more likely to die of tuberculosis.

But change is coming. Revered Oglala Lakota medicine man, Black Elk, prophesized that with the seventh generation following the tragic Wounded Knee massacre of 1890, Native American people would begin to recover from the historical trauma experienced since the collision of these cultures in the mid-19th century.

From 1890 to 2020, that's one hundred and thirty years. Divide that by seven and, right now, you have 19-year-olds who constitute that seventh generation. It's time for those of us with ears sticking out and those without, people of all skin colors and cultures, to create an environment that allows all people to come out of poverty and help make positive changes in Native American health care.

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.prairiedoc.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.

Monson in state semifinals

Dragr Monson is in the semifinals of the state b wrestling tournament. He will be wrestling a kid from Canton who he beat earlier in the year. Thanks to Scott Thorson for the update.

Groton Area wins four games by six points at Deuel

It was exciting basketball action Thursday at Clear Lake as it was a double header with the Deuel Cardinals. Groton area won four games by six points. The boys won all of their games, winning the varsity game, 45-43, the junior varsity game, 25-24, and the C game, 41-39, while the girls junior varsity team won its game, 25-24. Deuel made eight of 10 free throws in the closing minutes to pull away from the Groton Area girls team, 47-34.

Jonathan Doeden had a late game steal and scored and then Kaden Kurtz made a shot with 43 seconds left to lift the boys varsity team to its two-point win. The Tigers led the lead for the first quarter, 12-8. Deuel rallied in the second quarter to tie the game at 16 and then the lead changed hands three times before the Cardinals took a 25-24 lead at halftime. Deuel opened up a seven-point lead in the third quarter, 31-24, and Groton Area cut the lead to four at the end of the third quarter, 35-31. The Cardinals had a six-point lead, 41-35, before the Tigers started to claw its way back into the game. Groton Area tied the game at 43 with 2:11 left in the game and the winning shot went in with 43 seconds left. Deuel fouled the Tigers several times in the final 11 seconds, but needed to do it three times before the Tigers were sent to the line and by that point, only 4 seconds were left in the game.

Kaden Kurtz led the Tigers with 15 points, two rebounds and one steal. Jonathan Doeden had 12 points, five rebounds, one assist,



Gracie Traphagen and Deuel's Haley Winter battle for the opening tip-off. (Photo by Paul Kosel)

two steals and one blocked shot. Cade Guthmiller had eight points, five rebounds, two assists, two steals and two blocked shots. Austin Jones had four points, one rebound, two assists and one steal Tristan Traphagen had four points, six rebounds and two blocked shots Lane Tietz, who started for the first time, had two points, two rebounds, one assist and one steal.

Groton Area made 18 of 31 field goals for 58 percent, one of 11 three-pointers for 91 percent, and was six of 12 from the line for 50 percent off of Deuel's 16 team fouls. Both teams had 25 rebounds. The Tigers had 11 turnovers, eight of which were steals. Deuel had 15 turnovers of which



Kaden Kurtz passes the ball to teammate Cade Guthmiller.

(Photo by Paul Kosel)

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nine were steals.

Seven players scored for the Cardinals with Sutton Fritz leading the way with 11 points followed by Dylan Brandt with eight, Layton Eide with seven, Cooper Schiernbeck and Dalan Dahl each had six points, Tanner Preheim had three and Zane Bingham added two points.

The game was carried live on GDILIVE.COM, sponsored by Aberdeen Chrysler Center.

Deuel made a basket with 1.1 seconds left in the game as the junior varsity team hung on to win its game, 37-36. Groton Area led at the quarterstops at 13-7, 24-11 and 28-22.

Scoring for Groton Area: Isaac Smith 14, Jayden Zak 6, Wyatt Hearnen 5, Chandler Larson 3, Jacob Zak 3, Lucas Simon 2, Kan-non Coats 2, Tate Larson 2. Deuel was led by Zane Bingham with 16 points.

The junior varsity game was broadcast live on GDILIVE.COM, sponsored by the Carson and Julie Larson family. The junior varsity team is 13-5 on the season.

Groton Area hung on to win the boys C game, 41-39, to remain undefeated at 8-0. Groton Area led at the quarterstops at 9-6, 21-14 and 28-22. Scoring for Groton Area: Wyatt Hearnen 15, Tate Larson 9, Jackson Cogley 7, Jacob Zak 5, Cole Simone 3, Cade Larson 2.

The girls varsity team had a good first quarter, but then struggled for the rest of the game as the Deuel Cardinals posted a 47-34 win. Groton Area shot 46 percent in the first quarter and held a 13-12 lead at the end of the first quarter. The shooting percentage tanked in the second quarter to 17 percent as the Cardinals took a 25-20 lead at half time. Both teams shot 30 percent in the third quarter as Deuel still led by five points at the end of the third quarter, 34-29. Free throws down the stretch allowed the Cardinals to pull away at the end for the final 47-34 win.



Austin Jones and Deuel's Sutton Fritz battle for the opening tip-off.

(Photo by Paul Kosel)



Deuel's Britney Lovre and Groton Area's Allyssa Locke have a momentary staredown. (Photo by Paul Kosel)

Gracie Traphagen led the Tigers with 15 points, nine rebounds, two assists and one steal. Alyssa Thaler had 11 points, four rebounds, four assists and one steal. Brooke Gengerke had three points, four rebounds, two assists and one steal. Madeline Fliehs had three points and three rebounds. Allyssa Locke had two points, seven rebounds and one assist. Kaycie Hawkins had six rebounds and one steal and Trista Keith had one rebound and one assist.

Groton Area made 12 of 34 field goals for 35 percent, was two of 17 in three-pointers for 12 percent and was four of six from the line.

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Alyssa Thaler shoots the ball over the Deuel defense. (Photo by Paul Kosel)

The Tigers had 32 rebounds, 13 turnovers, 10 assists, four steals and 11 team fouls.

Deuel was led by Britney Lovre with 22 points followed by Saycia Sime with 14, Harley Hennings six, Josie Anderson three and Sarah Ronne two. The Cardinals made 15 of 51 field goals for 29 percent and was 10 of 12 from the line. Deuel had seven turnovers and seven team fouls.

The game was carried live on GDILIVE.COM, sponsored by Locke Electric and the South Dakota Army National Guard.

The girls junior varsity team hung on to win its game, 25-24, after Deuel made a three-pointer with 23 seconds left in the game.

Scoring for Groton Area: Maddie Bjerke 9, Trista Keith 8, Anna Fjeldheim 4, Aspen Johnson 2 and Shallyn Foertsch 2. Josie Anderson led Deuel with 12 points. The game was carried live on GDILIVE.COM, sponsored by Larry and K a t h y Harry.

- Paul Kosel

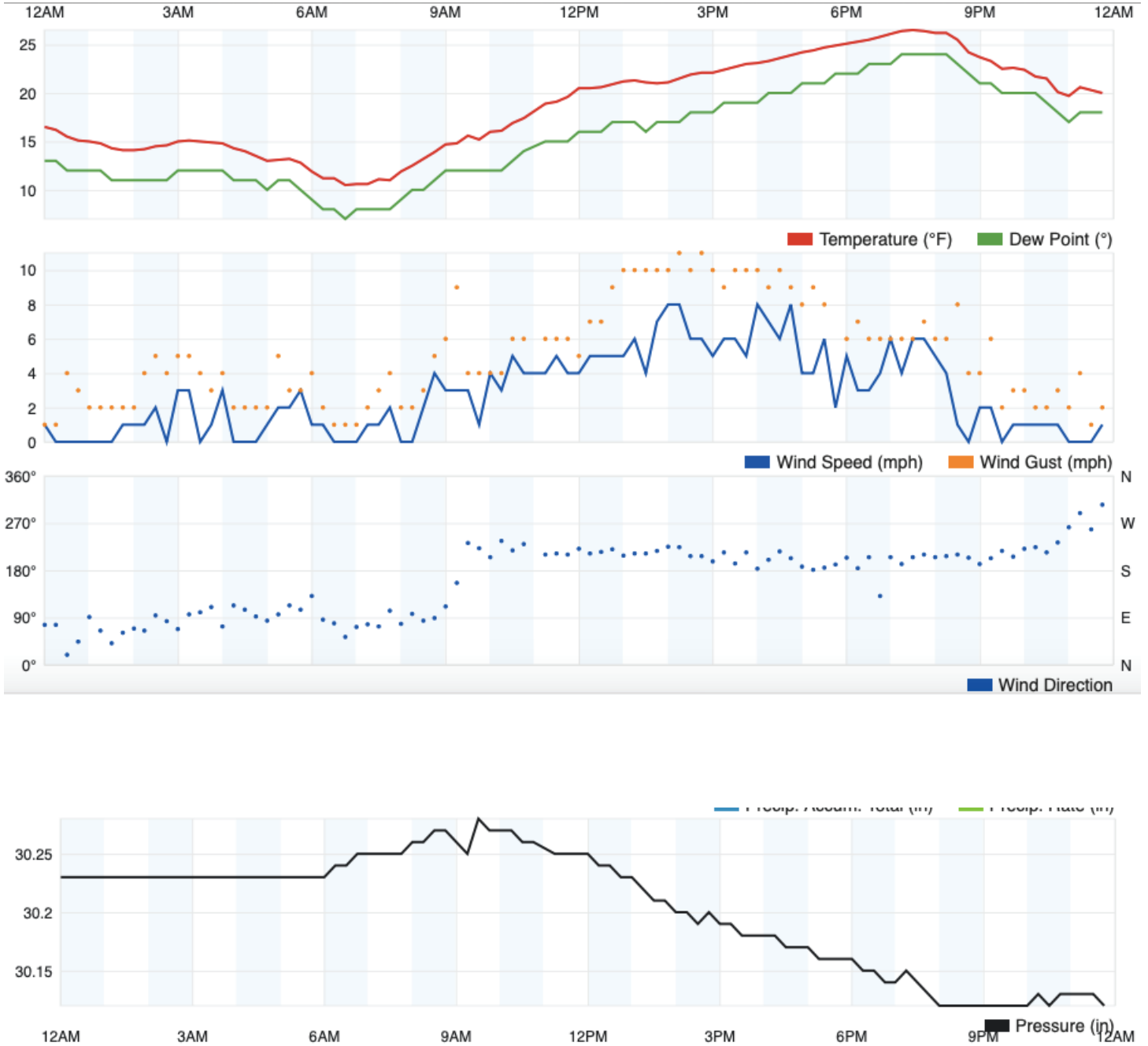


Jonathan Doeden looks to see who is open for the Tiger offense. (Photo by Paul Kosel)

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Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs



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Today

Tonight

Saturday

Saturday
Night

Sunday



Slight Chance
Snow and
Areas Fog
then Mostly
Cloudy

High: 33 °F



Mostly Cloudy

Low: 18 °F



Partly Sunny

High: 40 °F



Mostly Cloudy

Low: 24 °F

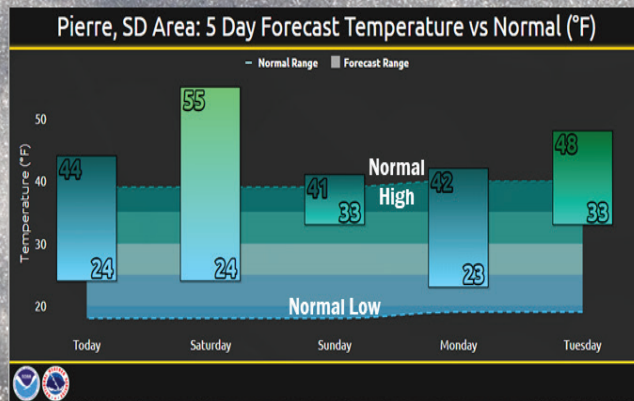
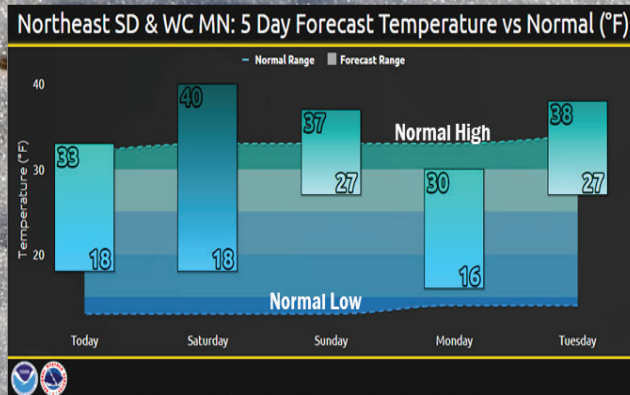


Partly Sunny
then Partly
Sunny and
Breezy

High: 37 °F

**Normal to Above
Normal Temperatures
Expected
into Next Week**

**Will start a slow snow melt
that will continue over the
next couple of weeks**



Temperatures will be normal to above normal across the area, which will start a slow snow melt that will continue into next week. In addition, expect little to no precipitation through next Tuesday.

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Today in Weather History

February 28, 2007: Another late February strong low-pressure area moving across the central plains spread heavy snow of 6 to 11 inches across northeast South Dakota and west-central Minnesota. Many schools and college classes were canceled, and many events were postponed. Road conditions became deplorable, with some accidents occurring along with ditched vehicles. The snow continued into the first day of March and ended between in the morning. Snowfall amounts included 6 inches at Aberdeen, 7 inches at Wilmot and Artichoke Lake, 8 inches at Conde, Watertown, and Milbank, 9 inches at Browns Valley and Wheaton, and 11 inches at Clark. This heavy snow event was followed by more snowfall along with blizzard conditions that developed across the area during the afternoon and evening of March 1st.

1792: Heavy snow collapsed the Ashley River Bridge in Charleston, South Carolina.

1900: A massive storm spread record snows from Kansas to New York State. Snow fell for over 24-hours in Toledo, Ohio. When it was all over, the 19 inches set a single storm record for the city. Topeka, Kansas, reported 18.7 inches of snow in 24 hours to set their record for most snow in 24 hours. Thirty-six inches of snow at Astoria, Illinois, set a new state 24-hour snowfall record. Northfield, Vermont, picked up 31 inches of snow. Snowfall totals ranged up to 17.5 inches at Springfield, Illinois, and 43 inches at Rochester, New York. Sixty inches fell in parts of the Adirondack Mountains of New York State.

1962: Wilmington, North Carolina, reached a high temperature of 85 degrees. This is the warmest temperature on record during February.

2007: A severe storm, named Xynthia, blows into France, Portugal, and Spain, smashing sea walls, destroying homes, polluting farmland with saltwater, and devastating the Atlantic coast's oyster farms. Winds reach about 125 mph on the summits of the Pyrenees and up to nearly 100 mph along the Atlantic Coast. Wind speeds of 106 mph are measured atop the Eiffel Tower in Paris. The hardest-hit area was in the Vendee and Charente-Maritime regions in southwestern France. The storm is blamed for 52 deaths in France. A Napoleonic sea wall collapsed off the coastal town of La'Aiguillon-sur-Mer. A mobile home park close to the sea wall was particularly hard hit.

1900 - A massive storm spread record snows from Kansas to New York State. Snowfall totals ranged up to 17.5 inches at Springfield IL and 43 inches at Rochester NY, with up to 60 inches in the Adirondack Mountains of New York State. (David Ludlum)

1952 - An intense storm brought coastal sections of southeastern Massachusetts to a halt, stranding 3000 motorists on Lower Cape, and leaving ten thousand homes on the Cape without electricity. Winds gusting to 72 mph created mountainous snowdrifts of the 18 inches of snow which buried Nantucket and Hyannis. A barometric pressure reading of 29.02 inches was reported at the center of the storm. (The Weather Channel)

1987 - A powerful storm produced severe thunderstorms in Louisiana and Mississippi early in the day. About mid morning a monstrous tornado touched down near Moselle MS and grew to a width of two miles as it passed near Laurel MS. The tornado traveled a distance of 40 miles killing six persons, injuring 350 others, and causing 28.5 million dollars damage. The tornado swept homes right off their foundations, and tossed eighteen wheel trucks about like toys. Strong straight line winds associated with the powerful storm system gusted to 70 mph at Jonesboro AR and Carbondale IL. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1988 - Thunderstorms in California produced severe weather during the early morning hours. Strong thunderstorm winds, gusting to 74 mph, downed trees in the Sacramento area. Unseasonably mild weather prevailed in the northwestern U.S. The afternoon high of 71 degrees at Portland OR was a February record. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1989 - Thunderstorms in the southeast corner of the nation produced winds gusts to 58 mph at Fort Lauderdale FL, and a total of seven inches of rain. Heavy snow whitened parts of the Northern Plateau and the Northern Rockies, with ten inches reported at Marion MT. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

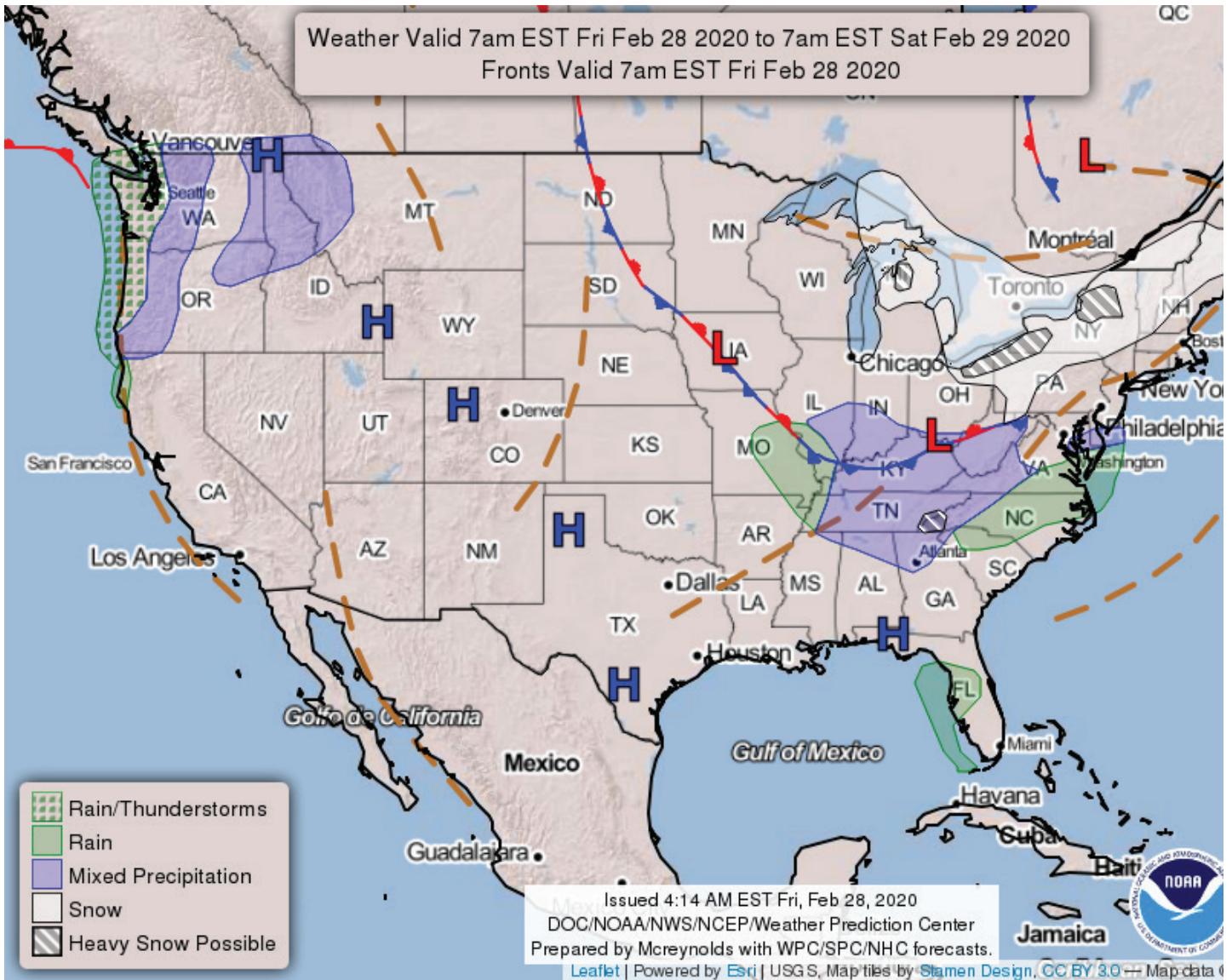
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Yesterday's Groton Weather Today's Info

High Temp: 27 °F at 7:23 PM
Low Temp: 10 °F at 6:47 AM
Wind: 11 mph at 1:34 PM
Precip:

Record High: 59° in 1934
Record Low: -27° in 1962
Average High: 33°F
Average Low: 13°F
Average Precip in Feb.: 0.52
Precip to date in Feb.: 0.00
Average Precip to date: 0.99
Precip Year to Date: 0.35
Sunset Tonight: 6:19 p.m.
Sunrise Tomorrow: 7:13 a.m.



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ON BEING AN EXAMPLE

Gilbert Stewart was one of America's greatest artists. He became famous because of the magnificent portraits he painted. In fact, he painted the portraits of the first six presidents of the United States. His work was easily recognized because of its beautiful coloring. On one occasion, a group of his competitors stole his colors thinking that they could match his work if they had his paints.

When Benjamin West, another artist, heard that other artists stole his paints, he went to them and said, "It's no use to steal his colors. If you want to paint as he paints, you must steal his eyes."

In Paul's letter to the Corinthians, he challenged them to "follow my example and do as I do." This is a rather bold statement, and we may think he is better than us and is asking us to copy his lifestyle. Not so. Paul encouraged the Corinthian Christians, and us today, to do as he did: imitate Christ. He was willing and able and empowered to imitate Him because he read and meditated on God's Word, spent time with Him in prayer and worship. And if we, as His disciples, want to imitate Christ, we must do as Paul did: study, meditate, pray. Only as we come to know Him, love Him and worship Him will we be able to imitate Him. And, if we want to know Him as Paul knew Him, we spend time with Him.

Prayer: Lord, grant us a passion to want to love You, know You, serve You, and finally imitate You. May we willingly surrender our lives to You and become like You. In Jesus' Name, Amen!

Scripture For Today: 1 Corinthians 4:14-16 For I became your father in Christ Jesus when I preached the Good News to you. So I urge you to imitate me.

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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

Ward carries ND St. over S. Dakota St. 71-69 in OT

FARGO, N.D. (AP) — Tyson Ward scored 24 points and Rocky Kreuser had a key blocked shot as North Dakota State won its 10th consecutive home game, edging South Dakota State 71-69 in overtime on Thursday night in a battle of the top teams in the Summit League.

Ward, who made two free throws with 33 seconds left in regulation to force overtime, made a layup with 20.7 seconds left to put the Bison on top 70-69, the seventh lead change of the extra session. Kreuser then came up with a block in the lane with seven seconds to go and grabbed the rebound.

Kreuser was fouled and made one free throw but Brandon Key was fouled for the Jackrabbits. He missed his first free throw and with just two seconds left was forced to miss his second on purpose.

Vinnie Shahid had 12 points for North Dakota State (21-8, 12-3) and Kreuser added 11 points. Ward hit 9 of 12 shots and grabbed seven rebounds.

Noah Freidel had 23 points and eight rebounds for the Jackrabbits (22-9, 13-3), whose regular season and eight-game win streak came to an end. Matt Dentlinger added 20 points.

South Dakota State defeated North Dakota State 78-73 on Jan. 22. North Dakota State finishes out the regular season against Nebraska Omaha at home on Saturday in hopes of tying the Jackrabbits for the league title.

For more AP college basketball coverage: <https://apnews.com/Collegebasketball> and http://twitter.com/AP_Top25

Elements of this story were generated by Automated Insights, <http://www.automatedinsights.com/ap>, using data from STATS LLC, <https://www.stats.com>

Thursday's Scores By The Associated Press

BOYS BASKETBALL=

Burke 63, Gayville-Volin 51
Dell Rapids 77, Garretson 50
Groton Area 45, Deuel 43
Little Wound 82, Bennett County 48
Marshall, Minn. 59, Watertown 36
McCook Central/Montrose 70, Baltic 38
McLaughlin 64, Takini 50
Parkston 61, Parker 60
Pine Ridge 47, Mitchell 45
Rapid City Stevens 65, Sturgis Brown 21
Sioux Falls Washington 57, Sioux Falls O'Gorman 47
West Central 72, Elk Point-Jefferson 57
Winner 75, Stanley County 60

GIRLS BASKETBALL=

Chamberlain 61, Mobridge-Pollock 31
Deuel 47, Groton Area 34
Garretson 64, Dell Rapids 45
Harrisburg 53, Sioux Falls Lincoln 52, OT
Milbank 53, Tiospa Zina Tribal 30

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Parkston 41, Parker 21
Rapid City Central 61, Spearfish 48
Rapid City Stevens 65, Sturgis Brown 21
Sioux Falls O'Gorman 56, Sioux Falls Washington 47
West Central 54, Elk Point-Jefferson 47
Winner 60, Stanley County 15
Class B Region 1=
SoDak 16 Qualifier=
Langford 51, Northwestern 33
Waverly-South Shore 54, Waubay/Summit 48
Class B Region 2=
SoDak 16 Qualifier=
Faulkton 50, Sully Buttes 34
Highmore-Harrold 53, Herreid/Selby Area 49
Class B Region 3=
SoDak 16 Qualifier=
Castlewood 66, Deubrook 36
DeSmet 42, Estelline/Hendricks 33
Class B Region 4=
SoDak 16 Qualifier=
Ethan 55, Hanson 44
Howard 49, Colman-Egan 36
Class B Region 5=
SoDak 16 Qualifier=
Irene-Wakonda 52, Bridgewater-Emery 46
Viborg-Hurley 50, Freeman 44
Class B Region 6=
SoDak 16 Qualifier=
Avon 62, Kimball/White Lake 44
Corsica/Stickney 59, Tripp-Delmont/Armour 28
Class B Region 7=
Quarterfinal=
Lyman 59, Edgemont 28
New Underwood 53, Philip 18
Wall 61, Kadoka Area 53
White River 68, Oelrichs 37
Class B Region 8=
Quarterfinal=
Dupree 55, Harding County 33
Faith 57, Bison 42
Newell 68, Timber Lake 41
Wakpala 72, Lemmon 63

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

What's dead, what's likely to become law in South Dakota

By STEPHEN GROVES Associated Press

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) — South Dakota lawmakers wore black attire on Thursday in a playful tradition of mourning the bills that didn't survive this year. Lawmakers have just nine days of meetings left this year

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to determine what will become law in South Dakota.

The Legislature hit a deadline on Thursday to clear all bills out of the chamber in which they were introduced. As lawmakers hit crunch time, here's a look at what's dead, what's clinging to life, and what has a good shot of becoming law.

DEAD:

— TRANSGENDER TREATMENT BAN

Lawmakers were preoccupied in the first few weeks of the session with a proposal to ban doctors from giving puberty-blockers, hormone therapy and surgeries to children under 16 who wanted to change their gender. The proposal quickly cleared the House, but was held up in the Senate Health and Human Services committee where moderate Republicans killed the bill.

— COMMERCIAL SURROGACY BAN

The Senate Health and Human Services committee again proved to be a barricade to House bills supported by conservative Republicans when the committee narrowly blocked a bill aiming to ban commercial surrogacy. The bill would have criminalized agents who facilitate surrogacy contracts, but lawmakers said they would rather regulate the practice and may study the issue before next year's session.

— DEMOCRAT PROPOSALS

The handful of Democrats in the House made a last-minute push this week to have their proposals considered by the Republican-dominated House. At a press conference on Thursday, Democratic legislative leaders complained about the difficulty they had in getting their bills scheduled for a hearing. Democrats said the delay in scheduling put them at a disadvantage.

"It doesn't give us the time that other bills have been afforded to try to work through some of their issues," said House Minority Leader Jamie Smith, a Sioux Falls Democrat.

Republicans on Thursday killed several Democrat proposals: allowing people with felonies to vote while they are paying restitution but have completed the rest of their sentence; requiring South Dakota schools to accommodate the educational needs of deaf students; and adding clergy and dental hygienists to the list of professions that are required to report suspected child abuse.

NOT DEAD YET:

— DEMOCRAT PROPOSALS

A couple proposals from Democrats have survived. A bill to add interns to the list of people protected against sexual harassment and discrimination in job applications sailed through the House. The House passed another bill that requires the Department of Education to include all children with hearing loss in its reporting on accommodations for deaf students.

— LIMIT ON PRESUMPTIVE PROBATION

Attorney General Jason Ravnsborg has made it his mission to curtail a program that gives certain low-level felons automatic probation rather than prison time. He says the roll back would allow law enforcement to address the state's meth problem. He introduced two bills — one bill died, the other survived. A proposal to require people with low-level drug felonies to cooperate with law enforcement in order to qualify for probation is still on the table after passing by three votes in the Senate; the other would have disqualified people from presumptive probation if they have more than two felonies in a 10-year period, but didn't pass a Senate committee.

— NATIVE AMERICAN SCHOOLS

A proposal to create four schools that would teach an Oceti Sakowin curriculum centered around Lakota, Dakota, and Nakota language and culture unanimously passed the Senate this week.

Senate Minority Leader Troy Heinert, a Democrat from Mission, was visibly moved by the support it received, saying it could mark a historical moment of Native Americans in the state reclaiming education. The governor also supports the idea.

But supporters still face opposition from education groups and have to convince the House that the schools are a good idea.

ALIVE

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— HEMP

A bill to legalize the growth and processing of industrial hemp has broad support in the Legislature, but faces a final question from Gov. Kristi Noem — will the Legislature pay the \$3.7 million she wants to get the program up and running?

Some lawmakers argue that figure is way too high.

House Majority Leader Lee Qualm, a Platte Republican, said that supporters of the bill are planning to meet with the governor's office on Monday to hammer out a final figure.

— BAN ON FACULTY UNION

Both the House and Senate have passed separate bills that would ban state university faculty from forming a union. Republicans say the union keeps the schools from being flexible, while opponents argue that the initiative threatens the schools' ability to recruit top professors.

— NOEM'S ZONING BILL

Noem will turn her attention to the House in pushing her proposal to overhaul how counties make decisions on feedlots and other projects. She has argued that it will bring investment across the state, but opponents argue it takes away locals ability to object to controversial projects.

— RIOT BOOSTING

Several Native American tribes have made it clear they don't want to see Noem revamp the state's riot laws ahead of expected construction of the Keystone XL pipeline, but most Republicans in the House supported the proposal. It will now be taken up in the Senate. A few lawmakers have said they will be taking a closer look, especially after a judge found parts of a "riot boosting" law passed last year to be unconstitutional.

House OKs proposal to ban special elections for school bonds

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) — The South Dakota House passed a bill Thursday that would require school bond elections to be held in conjunction with general or primary elections.

Republican Rep. Tim Goodwin, the bill's sponsor, said it's intended to get more people voting in those elections. But opponents contend school boards set the dates in order to begin construction if the bonds are approved by voters.

Goodwin claimed some of the election dates chosen by school boards resulted in "voter suppression." He referenced a bond election held this month in Rapid City, saying it may have discouraged voting by retired people who leave the area during winter.

That bond proposal failed by four percentage points.

Groups representing school boards and county commissioners opposed the bill.

Wade Pogany, a lobbyist for the Associated School Boards, told lawmakers Monday that the special elections don't suppress the vote, but help voters focus on the school bond rather than all the other items that appear on general election ballots.

"Voters will come to the polls on things that are important to them," Pogany said.

The free-market group Americans for Prosperity has pushed the proposal, pointing out that special elections cost taxpayers more money.

South Dakota governor pushes for broadband expansion

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) — Gov. Kristi Noem on Thursday continued her push for expanding broadband internet access in the state.

She said that some rural communities do not have access to high-speed internet and is asking for \$5 million in the state budget to encourage its expansion. She requested the same amount of money last year.

The Republican governor called broadband access a "change of way of life" for rural people that can help them access education, job opportunities and grow businesses. The state currently ranks 35th in the country in the percentage of population with access to high-speed internet. About 88% of people in the state have access.

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Mona Thompson, the general manager of the Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe telephone authority, said that the expansion of high-speed internet access to the town of Timber Lake has allowed kids to download videos for classes and businesses to process credit card transactions.

The Legislature will be finalizing the state budget in the next couple weeks.

Governor says state prepared for 'low' coronavirus threat

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) — Gov. Kristi Noem said on Thursday the state has created an internal task force to prepare South Dakota for the possibility of a new coronavirus outbreak.

The Republican governor called the threat of an outbreak in the state "very low." Shortly before Noem spoke, California officials announced a worrisome development — someone in California is infected, but does not appear to have the usual risk factor of travel abroad or exposure to another infected person.

Noem said the state's Department of Health is making sure that physicians can test for the virus and provide care if people are infected. Other state agencies across the United States are preparing for the virus, even while President Donald Trump has tried to minimize fears of an outbreak.

"We've identified supplies, made sure that we are adequately prepared," Noem told reporters.

South Dakota is working with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention to get testing equipment so that cases of the virus can be identified quickly. Florida had to send potential cases to Atlanta this week because it did not have the proper equipment to test for the virus.

Chicago man sentenced to life for fatal Sioux Falls overdose

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — A Chicago man accused of dealing the heroin laced with fentanyl that killed a man in Sioux Falls has been sentenced to life in federal prison.

A jury in November convicted Maurice Cathey, 39, also known as Short, on several counts, including distribution of a controlled substance resulting in death. He was sentenced on Monday.

Authorities said a 22-year-old man suffered a fatal overdose at a Sioux Falls apartment in January 2018. The man obtained the drugs from a friend who received them from Cathey.

Prosecutors cited several other cases when people overdosed on drugs that were distributed by Cathey and another man. None of them died, but several had to be revived by paramedics using the antidote naloxone.

"The sentencing of this career felon to life in prison brings a fitting end to one of the saddest chapters in the history of Sioux Falls," U.S. Attorney Ron Parsons said. "But the story of how our community came together to defeat the opioid crisis is not yet finished, and we all have much more work to do."

Postal worker accused of stealing mail put on probation

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — A South Dakota postal worker accused of stealing gift cards and other mail has been sentenced to two years of probation.

Kayla Ottmo, 36, of Pukwana, pleaded guilty in November to theft of mail by a postal service employee. Federal authorities say she stole letters, packages, bags and mail that were not addressed to her.

Ottmo, who was employed as a rural carrier associate, took the gift cards and converted them for her own use, prosecutors said. U.S. District Judge Karen Schreier ordered Ottmo to pay \$315 in restitution.

Coronavirus fear touches off a global run on face masks

By DEE-ANN DURBIN, ANNE D'INNOCENZIO and JOSEPH PISANI AP Business Writers

Fear of the spreading coronavirus has led to a global run on sales of face masks despite evidence that most people who aren't sick don't need to wear them.

Many businesses are sold out, while others are limiting how many a customer can buy. Amazon is policing its site, trying to make sure sellers don't gouge panicked buyers.

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In South Korea, hundreds lined up to buy masks from a discount store. Rumors that toilet paper and napkins could be used as masks have emptied store shelves in Asia of paper goods over the past few weeks.

People trying to protect themselves from the outbreak and medical centers alike are facing shortages.

The shortages are being attributed not just to high demand, but to disruptions in supply: An outside share of the world's surgical masks are made in China — 50%, by its own estimate. But even factories there that have ramped up production say they are hard pressed to meet local demand. The government has taken over manufacturers, and exports have plunged.

"Before the outbreak of the epidemic, we used to export 600,000-700,000 surgical masks a month, but now the amount is zero," David Peng, manager of Ningbo Buy Best International Trading Co. in Ningbo, south of Shanghai, said. The company's dozen or so suppliers in Hubei, near the center of the outbreak, have been ordered to prioritize government orders.

Apart from shortages of workers, manufacturers say they are struggling to get enough raw materials to make the masks.

"At present, we only receive inquiries from abroad and are trying to negotiate with overseas customers to see whether it is possible to deliver a few months later," said Tony Zhou, sales manager for Suzhou Sanical Protective Products Manufacturing Co.

In the U.S., Walgreens, Home Depot, Lowe's and True Value Hardware are reporting a sharp uptick in sales of masks over the past several weeks and say they are scrambling to get more from suppliers.

Home Depot, the nation's largest home improvement chain, has limited sales of N95 respirators to 10 per person. They have a close facial fit and more filtration material than general surgical masks, enabling them to keep out at least 95% of particles.

Marc Jaconski, owner of Stanley's True Value Hardware and Rental store in Philadelphia, said he saw a surge in demand for masks, particularly the N95, two weeks ago. But since Tuesday, when the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention warned that the virus will almost certainly spread in the U.S., sales went through the roof.

"We would be crazy busy with snow, but we are not getting snow," he said. "We're crazy busy with respirators."

Jaconski said his store has sold 1,000 masks of all kinds in the past two weeks. He has ordered more N95s, but customers are so desperate they are picking up lightweight dust masks or buying heavy-duty respirators used for asbestos cleanup that sell for up to \$60.

"It's usually the oldest folks who get a little crazed," he said. "This time, it is everybody."

The virus has sickened more than 82,000 people worldwide and killed more than 2,800, according to international health authorities.

Still, the CDC doesn't recommend that people wear masks to protect themselves from the virus. The CDC says people infected — or those showing symptoms such as fever and shortness of breath — should wear masks to avoid spreading it to others. Health care workers also need masks, the agency says.

Mike Gania of the American Society of Health-Systems Pharmacists said some hospital pharmacies are saying that they have only a one- to two-week supply of masks and that the major wholesalers are unable to fill orders.

Within hospitals, surgical masks are worn by operating room teams — doctors, nurses, anesthesiologists — and frequently by pharmacists. Staff members caring for patients with dangerous infections wear the N95 masks.

Dr. Sarah Boston, a veterinary surgical oncologist and author in Toronto, uses 10 to 15 surgical masks per week in her practice. She switched to a less comfortable brand when her usual supplier ran out.

"I've spoken to a lot of people who are worried that we're going to lose supply or not be able to get them," she said.

Boston sees a lot of people wearing them incorrectly — over their mouths but not their noses, for example — and said they should understand that other things would be more effective, like frequent hand-washing. Companies that make masks are struggling to keep up.

Medicom Group, a Montreal medical supply company, usually makes 150 million masks per year at its

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factory near Angers, France. At the beginning of February, the factory had orders for 500 million masks. Orders have only grown since then, the company said, and it has hired new workers and increased capacity at its plants, including two in Shanghai and one in Augusta, Georgia.

3M, the Minnesota-based manufacturer, said it has ramped up production of respirators at its facilities in the U.S., Europe, Asia and Latin America.

Many people in Asia routinely wear masks against allergies, colds and smog, and soaring demand has prompted other manufacturers to retool to begin making masks.

Taiwan manufacturer Foxconn, a major supplier of electronics to Apple, said it has begun making about 1 million masks a day for its own factories.

Dealmed, a New York company that makes and sells medical supplies, said it expects to sell out of face masks next week. It temporarily stopped taking orders from new customers a month ago and ended sales on Amazon and Walmart.com. It now is selling only to buyers that need them most, such as hospitals, doctors' offices or government agencies.

Sales of gloves, gowns and other items jumped as much as 300% in February from the year before, said Michael Einhorn, Dealmed's president. Sales of face masks are so astronomical, he said, he hasn't been able to calculate them.

In Italy, the site of Europe's biggest cluster of cases, the government met with the country's business lobby to work out a centralized distribution system to get masks to hard-hit areas.

Italy's financial police announced they busted 20 people based in Turin for selling masks that were falsely said to offer complete protection against the disease. They were selling for as much as 5,000 euro apiece, or about \$5,500.

On Amazon, the best-selling item in its health and household section Thursday was a pack of three cotton masks for \$19.99. Ten-packs of 3M masks were sold out. And a listing for 100 disposable masks said it would arrive at shoppers' doorsteps sometime in April or May.

Prices varied wildly on Amazon. Some sellers were charging \$98.50 or more for 50 disposable surgical masks; others were charging \$33 for a similar set. Hand sanitizers were also hard to find on the site, with some bottles of Purell and Amazon's own brand sold out.

Dr. John Huber, a clinical psychologist and chairman of the Austin, Texas-based nonprofit Mainstream Mental Health, said retailers need to do a better job of allaying customers' fears and sharing the CDC's advice.

"It's the fear of the unknown," Huber said. "Once we understand something, we tend not to be so fearful."

AP Medical Writer Linda A. Johnson, AP Business Writer Elaine Kurtenbach and AP researcher Yu Bing contributed to this story.

Virus outbreak in Iran sickens hundreds, including leaders

By JON GAMBRELL Associated Press

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates (AP) — After facing sanctions and the risk of war amid tensions with the United States, Iran's Shiite theocracy now has an enemy in the new coronavirus that infiltrated its leadership in plain view of state-controlled media and despite repeated denials of any looming threat.

The outbreak of the new virus in Iran has been dramatic — the head of Iran's task force to stop the illness, known as COVID-19, was seen coughing, sweating and wheezing across televised interviews before acknowledging he was infected. Then, days later, a visibly pale official sat only meters (feet) away from President Hassan Rouhani and other top leaders before she too reportedly came down with the virus.

The virus has also laid bare the challenges facing the Islamic Republic some 40 years after its founding. While its civilian government urges Shiite shrines to be closed, clerics keep them open and some circulate purported remedies to the virus that have no basis in science. Tehran's top-down government, where Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei has final say on all state matters, now has to come to terms with the highest death toll from the virus outside of China, days after insisting everything was fine.

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Iran's success — or failure — in combating the virus will have an impact far beyond the country's 80 million people as the majority of cases in the Mideast now link back to Iran.

"We will have a tough week ahead," Iranian Health Minister Saeed Namaki warned. "The main peak of the coronavirus will be in next week and coming days."

On Friday, Health Ministry spokesman Kianoush Jahanpour again reported a huge spike in cases, saying there were now 388 confirmed coronavirus cases in Iran and 34 deaths. In brief remarks from Tehran, he cautioned the number of cases would likely further spike as Iran now has 15 laboratories testing samples.

In Tehran and other cities, authorities canceled Friday prayer services to limit crowds. In the capital, Radio Tehran that typically carries the prayer played only traditional Iranian music. Universities are to remain closed another week. Schools will be closed for at least three days, Namaki said.

Meanwhile, Iranian state media made a point to show the government is addressing the crisis. In the city of Mashhad, at the Imam Reza Shrine, hazmat-suited cleaners fogged disinfectant across surfaces that the faithful kiss and touch as workers installed hand sanitizers. Trucks from Iran's paramilitary Revolutionary Guard sprayed down streets and sidewalks in the holy city of Qom, the epicenter of the country's outbreak.

But questions still remain over Iran's count. Experts, including at the World Health Organization, worry the Islamic Republic may be underreporting the number of cases in the country.

Iran denied for days that the virus was in the country acknowledging it just as it was trying to pump up enthusiasm for the country's parliamentary election — a vote that saw the lowest voter turnout since the 1979 Islamic Revolution.

By doing so, Iran likely allowed the virus to spread rapidly, reaching even into the upper echelons of its power structure as it sickened four lawmakers, top clerics and other officials.

On Thursday, word spread that one of Iran's many vice presidents, Masoumeh Ebtekar, had contracted the virus. Ebtekar, 59, is better known as "Sister Mary," the English-speaking spokeswoman for the students who seized the U.S. Embassy in Tehran in 1979 and sparked the 444-day hostage crisis.

Ebtekar on Wednesday attended a Cabinet meeting chaired by Rouhani, 71. Other top officials, most in their late 50s and 60s, sat within several meters (feet) from her as well. Jahanpour, the Health Ministry spokesman, said the average age of those killed by the virus and the illness it brings is over 60.

State media has not said what measures those attending the meeting with Ebtekar were now taking. However, the concern about the virus' spread among Iran's elite has reached into Austria, where Foreign Minister Alexander Schallenberg tested negative for it after a recent trip to Tehran.

Worries persist over Shiite shrines remaining open in the country. Saudi Arabia on Thursday took the unprecedented decision to close off the holiest sites in Islam to foreign pilgrims over the coronavirus, disrupting travel for thousands of Muslims already headed to the kingdom and potentially affecting plans later this year for millions more ahead of the fasting month of Ramadan and the annual hajj pilgrimage.

Some Iranian clerics also have offered advice with no basis in science, like Sheikh Abbas Tabrizian in Qom who told followers to give themselves a suppository of essential oils to ward off the virus.

Elsewhere, a major cycling race in the United Arab Emirates was canceled early Friday after two Italians tested positive for the new virus, setting off a quarantine that also ensnared four-time Tour de France winner Chris Froome of Britain. That pushed the overall number of confirmed cases to 21 in the UAE, a federation of seven sheikhdoms on the Arabian Peninsula.

In Cairo, authorities allowed a plane carrying 114 Chinese tourists into Egypt despite EgyptAir halting flights to China amid the outbreak. The tourists showed no symptoms of the virus and will be monitored during their weeklong vacation, said officials who spoke on condition of anonymity as they were not authorized to speak to journalists.

Lebanon has flights and barred citizens of China, Iran, Italy and South Korea from visiting the country, though Lebanese citizens and residents will be allowed back in. Qatar separately flew home its citizens from Iran and put them in a 14-day quarantine.

The Iran government's slow response and the unrelenting pressure Iranians face, especially as the country's rial currency this week hit its lowest value in a year against the U.S. dollar, has seen many Iranians turn to dark humor. Jokes spread fast across social media, including one saying a government that

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previously cracked down on demonstrators now will lock up the virus.

Then come the videos. Iraj Harirchi, who led Iran's coronavirus task force, sweated at the podium during a news conference and then later coughed all over the set of a state TV interview program, its female host looking down and away.

"I came from a cold place," Harirchi said, attempting to joke before bringing the crook of his arm to his face. "I made a mistake. I should cover my mouth like this."

Soon afterward, Harirchi acknowledged testing positive for the virus.

Associated Press writers Noha el-Hennawy in Cairo and Bassem Mroue in Beirut contributed to this report.

Market corrections; scary but sometimes a good thing

By STAN CHOE AP Business Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — After six days of being pounded by a virus-induced, global sell-off, U.S. markets hit a milestone this week.

The S&P 500 has dropped more than 10% from the record highs set just over a week ago as a fast-spreading new virus raises the specter of damaged economies and tumbling sales for companies in the U.S., Asia, Europe and elsewhere.

The S&P just went through a correction.

While that can be scary, particularly when a sell-off happens as fast as it did this week, corrections are fairly regular occurrences in the stock market. A correction can be a healthy event, eliminating excesses that have built up after extended runs of market optimism.

The stock market is still in the midst of its longest bull run on record, which began in March 2009 out of the ashes of the financial crisis.

The fear is that this correction may turn into another bear market: a drop of at least 20%.

Here's a look at what history shows about past corrections, and what market watchers are expecting going forward.

Q: HOW OFTEN DO CORRECTIONS OCCUR?

A: Every couple years, on average. Even within this nearly 11-year-long bull run for U.S. stocks, the S&P 500 has stumbled to five corrections prior to this one, according to CFRA. In some, the market came within a breath of falling into a bear market, including a 19.8% fall in late 2018.

But each time, stocks regained their footing and resumed climbing again.

This is the 24th time in the last 50 years that the S&P 500 has fallen at least 10%, including both bear markets and milder corrections.

Q: DO THEY ALWAYS HAPPEN SO FAST?

A: No, this one has been particularly swift. Looking only at corrections since World War II, not at bear markets, it's taken an average of 76 days for the S&P 500 to lose 10%, according to CFRA.

The S&P 500 has dropped 12% in a little more than a week.

Q: WHAT USUALLY HAPPENS AFTER A DROP LIKE THIS?

A: Looking only at corrections that managed to right themselves before turning into a bear market, the S&P 500 has taken an average of 135 days to find a bottom and lost 14% along the way, according to CFRA. But the ensuing recoveries have often been quick, and the index has taken an average of 116 days to recoup all its losses.

For declines that metastasize into bear markets, the damage is much worse. Going back to 1929, the average bull market has taken an average of 21 months to complete and brought with it a loss of nearly 40% for the S&P 500, according to S&P Dow Jones Indices.

Q: WHAT CAUSED THE LAST CORRECTION?

A: In late 2018, when investors were worried that the Federal Reserve was raising interest rates too quickly and could force the economy into a recession. They were also worried about the U.S.-China trade

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war, which was running hot at the time.

Q: WHAT HAPPENED AFTER THAT?

A: After hitting a bottom on Dec. 24, 2018, the stock market rocketed to one of its best years in decades. The S&P 500 returned 31.5% in 2019, including dividends.

The Federal Reserve halted its rate increases and cut rates three times last year, the first such cuts in more than a decade. Investors see low rates as steroids for stocks because they can boost profits, while also making rival investments such as bonds less attractive.

Q: WHAT'S THE FED DOING NOW?

A: The Fed has been on hold since last fall, but traders are increasingly betting that it will have to cut rates again soon to prop up the economy.

Expectations for such aid from China's central bank and others around the world helped stocks hold up in the first few weeks of the virus outbreak. But doubts are rising now about how effective lower interest rates can be when the problem is people getting sick around the world.

Q: SO HOW BAD CAN THIS GET?

A: No one knows.

Medical experts can't say how far the virus will spread and what its ultimate toll will be. With so much uncertainty, investors are left to guess how many factories will be shut, how many customers of companies will be quarantined and by how much corporate profits will ultimately be shorn. In the face of so much uncertainty, the impulse has been to sell stocks now and run to the safety of U.S. government bonds instead.

Some experts say the market was already primed for a decline, even before the threat of the virus escalated.

Stocks had become expensive, particularly when compared with how much profit companies are producing, leaving them more risky and vulnerable. Doug Ramsey, chief investment officer of the Leuthold Group, said he was also unnerved by recent signs of over-confidence in some corners of the market by retail investors.

"We could have had this size of a drop based on sentiment alone, without the coronavirus," he said. "This could not have come at a worse time."

AP Business Writer Alex Veiga contributed.

Global stocks fall again on fear of virus impact on economy

By JOE McDONALD AP Business Writers

Global stock markets plunged further Friday on spreading fears over the impact of the new coronavirus, with some indexes set to close out their worst week since the depths of the financial crisis in 2008.

Germany's DAX skidded as much as 5% before stabilizing, Tokyo and Shanghai closed 3.7% lower. Wall Street looked set for more losses a day after enduring its biggest one-day drop in nine years. Futures for the Dow Jones Industrial Average and S&P 500 were down 0.4%.

Investors had been growing confident the disease that emerged in China in December might be under control. But outbreaks in Italy, South Korea, Japan and Iran have fueled fears the virus is turning into a global threat that might derail trade and industry.

Anxiety intensified Thursday when the United States reported its first virus case in someone who hadn't traveled abroad or been in contact with anyone who had.

Virus fears "have become full-blown across the globe as cases outside China climb," Chang Wei Liang and Eugene Leow of DBS said in a report.

In Europe, London's FTSE 100 sank 2.9% to 6,599 and Frankfurt's DAX tumbled 3.3% to 11,955. France's CAC 40 lost 2.7% to 5,346. The Stoxx Europe 600 index is heading for its sharpest weekly drop since October 2008.

Markets in China and Hong Kong had been doing relatively well despite virus fears. Mainland markets were flooded with credit by authorities to shore up prices after trading resumed following an extended

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Lunar New Year holiday. Chinese investor sentiment also has been buoyed by promises of lower interest rates, tax breaks and other aid to help revive manufacturing and other industries.

But now, major companies are issuing profit warnings, saying factory shutdowns in China are disrupting supply chains. They say travel bans and other anti-disease measures are hurting sales in China, an increasingly vital consumer market.

In Asian trading on Friday, the Nikkei 225 in Tokyo tumbled 3.7% to 21,142.96 and the Shanghai Composite Index also fell 3.7%, to 2,880.30. Hong Kong's Hang Seng lost 2.5% to 26,129.93.

The Kospi in Seoul fell 3.3% to 1,987.01 and Sydney's S&P-ASX 200 sank 3.2% to 6,441.2. India's Sensex skidded 3.6% to 38,331.87. New Zealand and Southeast Asian markets also retreated.

On Thursday, the S&P 500 fell 4.4% to 2,978.76. The index is down 12% from its all-time high a week ago, putting the market into what traders call a correction.

Some analysts have said that was overdue in a record-setting bull market, though Mizuho Bank noted hitting that status in just six days was "the fastest correction since the Great Depression" in the 1930s.

Investors came into 2020 feeling confident the Federal Reserve would keep interest rates at low levels and the U.S.-China trade war posed less of a threat to company profits after the two sides signed a truce in January.

The market's sharp drop this week partly reflects increasing fears among many economists that the U.S. and global economies could take a bigger hit from the coronavirus than previously thought, weakening consumer confidence and depressing spending.

The Dow shed 1,190.95 points on Thursday, its largest one-day point drop in history, bringing its loss for the week to 3,225.77 points, or 11.1%. To put that in perspective, the Dow's 508-point loss on Oct. 19, 1987, was equal to 22.6%.

"It is a race to the bottom for U.S. indices," Jingyi Pan of IG said in a report. "It may still be too early to call a bottom given the uncertainty around the matter of the coronavirus impact."

U.S. bond prices soared Thursday as investors fled to safe investments. The yield on the benchmark 10-year Treasury note, or the difference between the market price and what an investor will be paid if the bond is held to maturity, fell to a record low of 1.16%.

A shrinking yield caused by investors shifting money into the relative safety of bonds and pushing up their market price is a sign of weakening confidence in the economy.

Most access to the city of Wuhan, a manufacturing hub of 11 million people at the center of the outbreak, was suspended Jan. 23. The Lunar New Year holiday was extended to keep factories and offices closed. The government told the public to stay home.

China has begun trying to reopen factories and other businesses in areas with low risk after shutting down much of its economy to stem the spread of the infection. Travel controls remain in effect in many areas and elsewhere governments are tightening anti-disease controls as new cases mount.

Japan is preparing to close schools nationwide and officials on the northern island of Hokkaido, where there are more than 60 confirmed cases of the virus, declared a state of emergency and asked residents to stay home over the weekend if possible. Saudi Arabia has banned foreign pilgrims from entering the kingdom to visit Islam's holiest sites. Italy has become the center of the outbreak in Europe.

"The more countries that are faced with fighting a pandemic, the wider the potential for economic disruption and potential for increased recessionary risks," said Tai Hui of J.P. Morgan Asset Management in a report.

In energy markets Friday, benchmark U.S. crude fell \$1.35 to \$45.74 per barrel in electronic trading on the New York Mercantile Exchange. The contract lost \$1.64 on Thursday. Brent crude oil, used to price international oils, sank \$1.11 to \$50.62 per barrel in London. It declined \$1.25 the previous session.

The dollar rose to 108.74 yen from Thursday's 109.58 yen. The euro dropped to \$1.0991 from \$1.0998.

Turkey threatens Europe with refugees after 33 troops killed

By MEHMET GUZEL and ANDREW WILKS Associated Press

REYHANLI, Turkey (AP) — The presidents of Turkey and Russia spoke over the phone on Friday, a day after Syrian government airstrikes killed 33 Turkish troops, significantly ratcheting up tensions between Ankara and Moscow. It was the highest number of Turkish soldiers killed in a single day since Ankara first intervened in the Syrian conflict in 2016.

The development was the most serious escalation in the conflict between Turkish and Russia-backed Syrian forces and raised the prospect of all-out war with millions of Syrian civilians trapped in the middle.

NATO envoys held emergency talks at the request of Turkey, a NATO member, and scores of migrants began converging on Turkey's border with Greece seeking entry into Europe after Turkey said it was "no longer able to hold refugees." Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, whose country already hosts more than 3.5 million Syrian refugees, has long threatened to "open the gates" for millions of refugees eager to flee to Europe unless more international support was provided.

Refugees, meanwhile, headed to the land border with Greece, taking minibuses and taxis from Istanbul. Dozens waited at the Turkish side of the border gate at Pazarkule and dozens of others were in no-man's land between the two countries.

Others headed to Turkey's west coast to attempt to reach the Greek islands, a short distance away. Several rubber dinghy boats with groups of people clambering aboard were seen on Friday, heading for the island of Lesbos after apparently setting off from Ayvacik, northwest Turkey in broad daylight.

A Greek police official said dozens of people had gathered on the Turkish side of the land border in Greece's northeastern Evros region, shouting "open the borders." Greek police and military border patrols were deployed on the Greek side to prevent anyone trying to cross without authorization.

The official spoke on condition of anonymity as they were not authorized to speak to the press on the record.

At one point, Greek police said they used tear gas and flash grenades to move migrants back, after an estimated 450 people gathered at the Turkish side of the Kastanies border crossing. The crossing was closed temporarily.

Turkish Foreign Ministry spokesman Hami Aksoy warned the movement of migrants to the West could continue if the situation in Idlib deteriorated.

"Some asylum seekers and migrants in our country, worried about developments, have begun to move towards our western borders," he said. "If the situation worsens this risk will continue to increase." However, he added that there was "no change" in Turkey's migration policy.

Bulgaria said it was also beefing up security on its border with Turkey to counter a possible migrant influx, deploying "army units, national guard and border police staff," Prime Minister Boyko Borissov said after a Cabinet meeting. "There is a real threat" of a new migrant wave from Turkey, he said.

The latest crisis stems from a Russian-backed Syrian government military campaign to retake Syria's Idlib province, which is the last opposition-held stronghold in Syria. The offensive, which began Dec. 1, has triggered the largest single wave of displacement in Syria's nine-year war, sending nearly 950,000 people fleeing to areas near the Turkish border for safety. Ankara, the Syrian rebels' last supporter, sealed its borders in 2015 and under a 2016 deal with the European Union agreed to step up efforts to halt the flow of refugees.

Turkey has had 54 soldiers killed in Syria's northwestern Idlib province since the beginning of February, including the latest fatalities, and now feels the need to respond strongly.

Omer Celik, spokesman for Erdogan's ruling party, said Turkey was "no longer able to hold refugees" following the Syrian attack — reiterating a standing threat by Ankara.

The Thursday night attack in Idlib sharply raises the risk of direct military confrontation between Turkey and Russia, although Turkish officials blamed Syria, not Russia, for the attack. The Turkish stock market fell 10% in the wake of the airstrike, while the Turkish lira slid against the dollar.

Turkey is a main backer of the Syrian opposition while Russia has been giving military support to the

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weeks-long Syrian government offensive in Idlib.

The Kremlin said Erdogan and Russian President Vladimir Putin discussed implementing agreements in Idlib.

Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov, speaking in Moscow, said Russia remains committed to the agreements reached by Putin and his Turkish counterpart. Commenting on the deaths of the Turkish troops in Idlib, Lavrov said that if the agreements between the two countries' armies — "including sharing of accurate coordinates of the Turkish troops' location" — had been implemented in full, "such tragedies could have been avoided."

Russia's Defense Ministry said the Turkish troops that came under fire in Idlib were deployed among "terrorist battle formations." They were in the area of Behun, and according to coordinates given to Russia's Reconciliation Center in Syria, "there were no Turkish military units in the area ... and there weren't supposed to be," the ministry said,

Russian air forces did not carry out airstrikes in the area, the statement added, and after receiving information about Turkish casualties, "the Russian side took all the necessary measures in order for the Syrian forces to stop the fire."

Meanwhile, two Russian frigates carrying cruise missiles have been deployed to Syria, Russian navy officials said Friday. Admiral Makarov and Admiral Grigorovich of the Black Sea Fleet are en route to the Syrian coast with Kalibr cruise missiles on board. Both warships previously took part in Russia's offensive in Syria.

Syrian state news agency, SANA, carried a brief report saying Turkey has acknowledged its forces were killed "in operations of the Syrian Arab Army against a terrorist organization," adding that Syrian troops at the time were repelling attacks by "terrorist groups backed by Turkey."

Erdogan held a six-hour emergency security meeting in Ankara late on Thursday, the Anadolu news agency reported. Turkish Foreign Minister Mevut Cavusoglu spoke to NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg by telephone while Erdogan's spokesman Ibrahim Kalin, who plays a senior role in foreign affairs, spoke to U.S. National Security Advisor Robert O'Brien.

The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, a war monitoring group, said after the attack on Turkish troops, Turkey's armed forces shelled Syrian army positions in different parts of Idlib, killing at least 16 soldiers. It gave no further details and there was no comment from Syria's state media.

In recent weeks, Turkey has sent thousands of troops as well as tanks and other equipment to Idlib. As recently as Wednesday, Erdogan gave the Syrian government until the end of February to pull back from its recent advances or face Turkish "intervention".

Turkey provides some of the militants with direct support and has accused Syria of breaking a 2018 agreement to reduce the conflict in Idlib. Russia and Syrian President Bashar Assad have said Turkey has failed to honor a deal to separate extremist groups from other fighters in the region.

On Thursday, the Turkey-backed Syrian opposition fighters retook a strategic northwestern town from government forces, cutting a key highway just days after the government reopened it for the first time since 2012.

Despite losing the town of Saraqeb, Assad's forces made major gains to the south. Assad now controls almost the entire southern part of Idlib province after capturing more than 20 villages Thursday, state media and opposition activists said. It's part of a weeklong campaign backed by Russian air power into Syria's last rebel stronghold.

Wilks reported from Ankara, Turkey. Associated Press writers Daria Litvinova in Moscow; Albert Aji in Damascus, Syria; Bassem Mroue in Beirut, Costas Kantouris in Thessaloniki, Greece, and Veselin Toshkov in Sofia contributed to this report.

Prayers at fire-bombed mosques as India's riot toll grows

By SHEIKH SAALIQ and EMILY SCHMALL Associated Press

NEW DELHI (AP) — Muslims in a northeastern neighborhood of India's capital returned for weekly prayers

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at fire-bombed mosques on Friday, two days after a 72-hour clash between Hindus and Muslims that left at least 40 dead and hundreds injured.

Five days after the riots started, authorities have not said what sparked the worst communal violence in New Delhi in decades. Hospitals were still trying to identify the dead as the toll continued to rise, and residents of the areas affected by the riots were still seeking loved ones.

"If they burn our mosques, we will rebuild them again and pray. It's our religious right and nobody can stop us from practicing our religion," said Mohammad Sulaiman, who was among about 180 men who prayed on the rooftop of a mosque that was set on fire in the unrest.

Tensions between Hindu hard-liners and Muslims protesting the Hindu-first policies of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government had been building for months when the violence exploded Sunday night, on the eve of U.S. President Donald Trump's first state visit to India.

Kapil Mishra, a local leader of Modi's Bharatiya Janata Party who lost his Delhi state assembly seat in recent elections, demanded at a rally Sunday that police shut down a Muslim-led protest in the city or else he and his followers would do it themselves.

And it appears they did.

Hindus and Muslims attacked each other with guns and swords, metal rods and axes, leaving the streets where the rioting occurred resembling a war zone.

Al-Hind hospital, a small clinic with two doctors, was the nearest medical facility for many of the victims. When the riots broke out, it turned into a chaotic emergency ward, its doctors dealing for the first time with injuries such as gunshot wounds, crushed skulls, stabbings and torn genitals.

"It was horrific, as if evil had pervaded and housed itself in the hearts of the mob," said M.A. Anwar, the doctor on duty,

Religious tensions in the area where the clashes occurred still simmered on Friday, tempered by a heavy police presence. On one riot-torn street, Hindus shouted "Jai Shri Ram," or Long Live Ram, the Hindu god, as Muslims attempted to reach a mosque damaged in the riots.

Several Muslim residents told The Associated Press that most Muslim families had locked their homes and fled the area.

The passage of a citizenship law in December that fast-tracks naturalization for some religious minorities from neighboring countries but not Muslims earlier spurred massive protests across India that left 23 dead.

The protest violence is the latest in a long line of periodic communal clashes that date to the British partition of the Indian subcontinent in 1947, when the country was split into secular, Hindu-majority India and the Islamic state of Pakistan.

The protection of India's religious, cultural and linguistic diversity is enshrined in its constitution. But communal tensions have occasionally flared into deadly riots, beginning with partition itself, when Hindus living in what is now Pakistan migrated to India, and Muslims in modern India to Pakistan.

Clashes claimed hundreds of thousands of lives, including Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs and people of other religions.

This week's death toll marked 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 Ram's birthplace. Nearly 2,000 people were killed across the country in the riots that followed.

The religious polarization that followed saw Modi's right-wing Hindu Bharatiya Janata Party emerge as the single largest party in India's Parliament.

In 2002, the western Indian state of Gujarat erupted in violence when a train filled with Hindu pilgrims was attacked by a Muslim mob. 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.

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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. That violence left three dozen people injured.

Ashutosh Varshney, a professor at Brown University who wrote a book about Indian riots, said the worst has been averted — at least for now.

"If it had reached the scale of Delhi 1984 or Gujarat 2002, it would have doomed Indian politics for many years to come and brought India closer to the kind of Hindu-Muslim polarization that the current ruling party would ideally want, but is finding it hard to manufacture," Varshney said.

BJP leaders, who have sought to demonize Muslim protesters as a threat to India, may see some gain from the violence, Varshney said.

But it comes at a cost, the international perception that India under Modi has become ungovernable, he said.

Government spokesman Raveesh Kumar denied the Modi government had inflamed religious tensions and failed to protect Muslims.

"These are factually inaccurate and misleading, and appear to be aimed at politicizing the issue," he said. "Our law enforcement agencies are working on the ground to prevent violence and ensure restoration of confidence and normalcy."

He added that Modi had "publicly appealed for peace and brotherhood."

"We would urge that irresponsible comments are not made at this sensitive time," he said.

Associated Press writer Anirrudha Ghosal contributed to this report.

Financial pain deepens as nearly 60 countries report virus

By FOSTER KLUG and MATT SEDENSKY Associated Press

TOKYO (AP) — A deepening health crisis became an economic one too Friday, with the virus outbreak sapping financial markets, emptying shops and businesses, and putting major sites and events off limits.

As the list of countries hit by the illness edged toward 60 with Belarus, Lithuania, New Zealand, Nigeria, Azerbaijan and the Netherlands reporting their first cases, the threats to livelihoods were increasingly eyed as warily as the threats to lives.

"It's not cholera or the black plague," said Simone Venturini, the city councilor for economic development in Venice, Italy, where tourism already hurt by historic flooding last year has sunk with news of virus cases. "The damage that worries us even more is the damage to the economy."

Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, director general of the World Health Organization, said the outbreak "has pandemic potential," but whatever terminology officials used, the rippling effects were clear.

Attractions including Tokyo Disneyland and Universal Studios Japan announced closures and events that expected tens of thousands, including a tour by the K-pop group BTS, were called off.

Investors watched warily as stocks fell across Asia and girded to see if Wall Street's brutal run would continue, while businesses both small and large saw weakness and people felt it in their wallets.

"There's almost no one coming here," said Kim Yun-ok, who sells doughnuts and seaweed rolls at Seoul's Gwangjang Market, where crowds were thin Friday as South Korea counted 571 new cases — more than China. "I am just hoping that the outbreak will come under control soon."

In Italy, where the count of 650 cases is growing, hotel bookings were dropping and Premier Giuseppe Conte raised the specter of recession. Shopkeepers like Flavio Gastaldi, who has sold souvenirs in Venice for three decades, wondered if they could survive the blow.

"We will return the keys to the landlords soon," he said.

The economic hurt came with anger in Bangkok, where tenants at the Platinum Fashion Mall staged a flash mob, shouting "Reduce the rent!" and holding signs that said "Tourists don't come, shops suffer."

Kanya Yontarak, a 51-year-old owner of a women's clothing store, said her sales have sunk as low as 1,000 baht (\$32) some days, making it a struggle to pay back a loan for her lease. She's stopped driving

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to work, using public transit instead, packs a lunch instead of buying, and is cutting her grocery bills. The situation is more severe than the floods and political crises her store has braved in the past.

"Coronavirus is the worst situation they have ever seen," she said of the merchants.

Some saw dollar signs in the crisis, with 20 people in Italy arrested for selling masks they fraudulently claimed provided complete protection from COVID-19, the disease caused by the virus. Police said they were selling them for as much as 5,000 euros (\$5,520) each.

Japan's schools prepared to shutter and the country's Hokkaido island declared a state of emergency, with its governor urging residents to stay home over the weekend. The Swiss government banned events with more than 1,000 people, while at the Cologne Cathedral in Germany, basins of holy water were emptied for fear of spreading germs.

Globally, more than 83,000 people have fallen ill with the coronavirus. China, though hardest hit, has seen lower numbers of new infections, with 327 additional cases reported Friday, bringing the country's total to 78,824. Another 44 people died there for a total of 2,788.

South Korea has recorded 2,337 cases, the most outside of China. Emerging clusters in Italy and in Iran, which has had 34 deaths and 388 cases, have in turn led to infections of people in other countries.

Sedensky reported from Bangkok. Contributing to this report were Hyung-jin Kim and Tong-hyung Kim in Seoul, South Korea; Mari Yamaguchi in Tokyo; Preeyapa Khunsong in Bangkok; Renata Brito and Giada Zampano in Venice, Italy; Angela Charlton in Paris; and Frank Jordans in Berlin.

10 Things to Know for Today

By The Associated Press

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

1. GLOBAL STOCKS TUMBLE ON VIRUS FEARS Outbreaks in Italy, South Korea and Iran fuel fears the coronavirus is turning into a worldwide threat that might derail trade and industry.

2. VIRUS EPIDEMIC HITS SCHOOLS, CONCERTS, PARKS Japan's schools prepare to close for almost a month and entertainers, topped by K-pop superstars BTS, cancel events as a virus epidemic extends its spread through Asia, Europe and into Africa.

3. VIRUS FEARS TOUCH OFF RUN ON FACE MASKS Sales are surging, despite the advice from medical experts that healthy people don't need them, prompting Amazon to try to make sure sellers don't gouge panicked buyers.

4. WHERE SANDERS CAN'T AFFORD A BIG LOSS As Virginians head to the polls on Super Tuesday, the self-described democratic socialist is facing an electorate that has long favored moderates over populists.

5. TURKEY RAISES DEATH TOLL IN SYRIAN AIRSTRIKE Ankara says 33 of its troops perished in northwestern Syria, a serious escalation in the conflict between Turkish and Russia-backed Syrian forces, prompting NATO to hold emergency talks.

6. HOW AFGHANS SEE PEACE DEAL The war-torn nation views the expected signing of a U.S.-Taliban accord with a heavy dose of well-earned skepticism.

7. 'IF I DON'T GET A REPLY IT WORRIES ME' Parents of thousands of African students thought to be stranded in China's locked-down city of Wuhan are concerned that they are running out of food and money.

8. 'ALWAYS PUT HIS FAMILY'S NEEDS BEFORE HIS OWN' The five men who were killed by a co-worker at a Milwaukee brewery include an electrician, a Navy veteran, a father of two small children, a fisherman and a family-loving grandfather.

9. DANGER LURKS FOR 'INTO THE WILD' ADVENTURERS Families of some of those who died trying reach the dilapidated bus chronicled in the book and movie are proposing a footbridge to make it easier to complete the perilous journey, but locals fear it may not be enough.

10. USOPC WATCHING VIRAL OUTBREAK CLOSELY U.S. Olympic and Paralympic Committee managers have been gathering information from individual sports, trying to figure out what events are being affected by the coronavirus.

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Sanders' appeal tested in moderate Virginia on Super Tuesday

By ALAN SUDERMAN and WILL WEISSERT Associated Press

RICHMOND, Va. (AP) — Rep. Elaine Luria is the kind of up-and-comer the Democratic Party would like to keep in Congress.

But the former Navy commander with a moderate bearing, who flipped a coastal Virginia House seat in 2018, said she's afraid that will be far more difficult if her party nominates Vermont Sen. Bernie Sanders for president.

"When I talk to people across our district, they are very pragmatic, middle of the road," said Luria, who has endorsed former Vice President Joe Biden. "They don't want free everything for everyone or policy positions that are unrealistic."

Like Luria's district, which includes Virginia Beach, where Sanders is holding a rally Saturday night, her state presents a vital test for Sanders' ability to consolidate his position as the clear Democratic 2020 front-runner by winning in a swing state with moderate leanings.

She is among the dozen or so freshman members of Congress with national security backgrounds who persuaded voters to throw out an incumbent Republican, and Democrats are counting on them to help maintain control of the House in November.

Virginia is not currently a priority for President Donald Trump's reelection campaign, but there is concern among Democrats that if Sanders is his opponent, it will threaten down-ballot races. Still, Virginia is among the few states on Super Tuesday that are considered possibly competitive in the fall.

A good showing would bode well for Sanders' ability to expand his appeal beyond his progressive base to win both the primary and the general election. But weak Virginia results may reinforce fears from many in his own party's establishment that Sanders will struggle to win over legions of centrists he'll likely need against Trump.

"The person who wins Virginia is a person who shows they can really put together a coalition that can beat Trump," said Terry McAuliffe, a former Virginia governor. McAuliffe said the state's diverse voter blocs, its mix of rural, urban and suburban areas and its many military and veteran voters make it a "perfect" test for Sanders' appeal.

Once a more evenly split swing state, Democrats have won every statewide election in Virginia for the last decade while flipping partisan majorities in the state legislature and congressional delegation. Voter antipathy toward the Republican president, particularly in the state's fast-growing suburbs outside Washington, D.C., have helped fuel that shift.

Several Democratic candidates have lavished attention on the state, and none more than Mike Bloomberg, the billionaire former mayor of New York. He spent more than \$2.5 million funding groups that helped the Democrats wrest control of the Virginia General Assembly and spent more than \$12 million just on television advertising in the state.

In the past, Virginians have tended to avoid political extremes. Hillary Clinton trounced Sanders in the state during the Democratic presidential primary four years ago. In 2017, former congressman Tom Perriello won widespread attention running for governor as an unapologetic liberal answer to Trump and was endorsed by Sanders. He was soundly defeated in the Democratic primary by a low-key moderate, Ralph Northam, who easily won the general election.

Luria is not the only newly elected congressional Democrat from Virginia to distance herself from Sanders. Jennifer Wexton, who represents a district in the well-to-do northern Virginia suburbs, has said she won't support Sanders on Super Tuesday. The decision came after Republicans vying for their party's nomination to unseat her suggested she sided with Sanders on key issues.

Sanders, meanwhile, has vowed to build a "multiracial, multi-generational movement" based on appealing to working-class voters who were the backbone of his 2016 campaign but also to minorities he struggled to impress while facing off with Clinton in 2016.

His campaign says outreach to blacks and Hispanics fueled his victory in Nevada — but there's a far stiffer test in Virginia, where nearly 20% of the population is black and where Hispanics and Asians make

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up nearly 17%.

Virginia also features highly distinct electorates based on geography. The Washington suburbs are where Trump backlash helped the Democrats take control of the House in 2018. Massachusetts Sen. Elizabeth Warren, whose views on "Medicare for All" universal health coverage and tuition-free college are as progressive as Sanders', drew thousands to a recent rally in Arlington. But Pete Buttigieg, the former mayor of South Bend, Indiana, then staged his own rally nearby that also attracted thousands, and another moderate, Biden, has used the area for frequent fundraisers.

Other parts of the state are more rural and tend to be more conservative — though there's also a left-leaning libertarian streak that Sanders could exploit.

Sanders stopped Thursday in Richmond — the state capital and onetime capital of the Confederacy — and is holding a rally on Saturday afternoon in Springfield, just outside the Beltway and home to a fast-expanding Hispanic population, before heading to Virginia Beach.

Yaheiry Mora, director of CASA in Action, which has endorsed Sanders and identifies itself as the largest electoral organization advocating for immigrant and Latino rights in the Mid-Atlantic, will have volunteers canvassing on the senator's behalf in Woodbridge and Annandale, Virginia, on Saturday, close to Sanders' Springfield rally. She said those knocking on doors find that the senator's support for Medicare for All, ending the Trump administration's tough immigration policies and raising the federal minimum wage to \$15 per hour resonates with voters of color.

"All over the state, we have folks that are undecided. They express, 'I love Bernie, but I just don't know where I can beat Trump,' and that's where I think our persuasion message has been working," Mora said. "We focus on those three areas and it helps."

At Sanders' Richmond rally, insurance agent Nicole Long said that Virginia voters are worried more about their future than the last time the senator was on the ballot and that they are now more open to the "radical change" he's offering. Still, she acknowledged he's facing an uphill fight in the state.

"I'm hopeful but hesitant," she said.

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

Parents of 'terrified' Africans stranded in China want help

By **RODNEY MUHUMUZA** and **PATRICK ONEN** Associated Press

KAMPALA, Uganda (AP) — She wakes every day long before dawn to chat with her three stranded daughters on the other side of the world in China's locked-down city of Wuhan, anxious to see they have started a new day virus-free.

"If I don't get a reply it worries me, but if I get a reply from any of them I say, 'Thank you, Jesus,'" Margaret Ntale said.

Many countries evacuated citizens from Wuhan after the virus outbreak started there, but thousands of students from African countries have been left behind. Despite pleas with governments for evacuation, several African countries have said it's safer to stay in place.

More than 4,000 African students have been estimated to be in Wuhan, a result of China's push to expand its influence on the youthful African continent.

Bringing them home, governments say, is risky in sub-Saharan Africa, which on Friday confirmed its first case of the virus, in Nigeria's city of Lagos. Just two cases have been confirmed in North Africa, in Egypt and Algeria. Health systems can be weak, and quarantining dozens or hundreds of returning people is a major challenge.

That leaves African students stuck on ever-emptier campuses in Wuhan, worrying about running out of food or the money to buy it. Some governments have begun sending thousands of dollars to help them get by.

"I have a few friends who are not able to get things like detergent, sanitary towels, and then also not having food, like such things like that," said one of Ntale's daughters' roommates, Joanna Aloyo, via a

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messaging app.

On Thursday, Ntale joined other parents in Uganda's capital, Kampala, to talk to local reporters about their fears. And she started to cry.

"You can never know what is going to happen tomorrow. This is what scares me," Ntale said. "The students are traumatized and equally terrified. It makes all of us break down."

The uncertainty about their children is "psychological torture," another parent said. At least 70 Ugandan students are stranded in Wuhan.

Uganda's health minister, Jane Aceng, could not be reached immediately. But two weeks ago she said the ministry was looking at the cost to "isolate, monitor and manage in the event of an outbreak among the group if repatriated."

Meanwhile she has said the government would send \$60,000 in emergency funds to be distributed among students in Wuhan.

But the parents said their children had not received the money.

"It is a bit upsetting that it appears no serious action has taken place," said one parent, Cecilia Oyet. "I think that kind of inaction or slow action sends a message to those students out there, and even to the youth within the country. It sends a message either that we as fellow Ugandans, we don't care or that they as the youth, they don't matter, and we feel it is not okay."

The parents communicate with their children by phone and the occasional video chat. They are increasingly alarmed as the death toll from the virus has grown, though some speak of trying to remain positive.

Oyet, whose daughter is a medical student at Wuhan University of Science and Technology, recalled that about two weeks ago a student sent a message saying that "people are dying here in large numbers and the bodies are being cremated. Can you imagine us dying here and you don't even see our bodies? Please do something before we become part of the statistics."

Other countries have announced plans to send students money. Botswana's government has said each of its students in Wuhan will receive an additional allowance of about \$144 a month and a local company will be engaged to deliver food, water, face masks and even provide "psychosocial support services."

But that's not enough, some students and parents say. After some called Ghana's government "callous" for not evacuating its students, President Nana Akufo-Addo last week said it had not been ruled out but it would be done in a way to avoid "fear and panic among the public."

In Ethiopia, where some worried families gathered in the capital, Addis Ababa, seeking evacuations, Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed this week said Chinese President Xi Jinping assured him in a phone call that China would provide "special care and support" to stranded students.

Chinese authorities have issued statements saying students are receiving food and other necessities. But Kenya's government raised eyebrows last week when it announced on Twitter that any communication from the government to stranded Kenyans in Wuhan "must be done through the Chinese government."

Spirits among some students have been low. Until Thursday night when South Africa announced that more than 130 citizens in Wuhan would be evacuated, the small island nations of Seychelles and Mauritius were the only countries in sub-Saharan Africa to bring citizens home.

In an open letter to Nigeria's president published earlier this month by the Sahara Reporters website, a Nigerian stranded in Wuhan, Ayodeji Adetunji Idowu, made an urgent plea, saying the "mood here is fast turning to frustration, helplessness, and despondency because of our failure to receive diplomatic support to be evacuated."

While Nigeria's ambassador sent the community a personal donation of about \$2,850, "it saddens us that days and weeks have gone past ... to get a favorable response from authorities," Idowu wrote.

AP journalists Cara Anna in Johannesburg and Francis Kokutse in Accra, Ghana, contributed.

Grandfather, Navy vet among 5 victims of Wisconsin shooting

By AMY FORLITI Associated Press

The five men who were killed by a co-worker at a Milwaukee brewery include an electrician, a Navy veteran, a father of two small children, a fisherman and a grandfather who is being remembered as someone who "always put his family's needs before his own."

Authorities said the five men were working at Molson Coors Brewing Co. on Wednesday when they were killed by a co-worker, who then turned his gun on himself. Milwaukee police Chief Alfonso Morales identified the victims on Thursday as Jesus Valle Jr., 33, of Milwaukee; Gennady Levshetz, 61, of Mequon; Trevor Wetselaar, 33, of Milwaukee; Dana Walk, 57, of Delafield; and Dale Hudson, 60, of Waukesha.

The gunman, 51-year-old Anthony Ferrill, was also identified Thursday. He was an electrician at Molson Coors and his motive remains a mystery. Police say the case is still under investigation, and they have yet to release details about how the shooting unfolded.

Molson Coors chief executive officer Gavin Hattersley said employees were grieving for the five who were lost.

"They were powerhouse operators, they were machinists and they were electricians," he said. "But more important, they were husbands, they were fathers and they were friends. They were part of the fabric of our company and our community and we will miss them terribly."

Some family members of victims reached by The Associated Press did not wish to comment for this story, but some details about their loved ones' lives were starting to emerge in online death notices and social media pages.

Walk was an avid fisherman and Green Bay Packers fan who loved spending time with his family at a nearby lake, according to a death notice.

Walk is survived by his wife of 35 years, as well as a son and two daughters.

"He was always listening to his music while working on his hobbies, home projects and anything he could do to help others," his death notice said. A funeral Mass will be held Friday in Pewaukee.

Hudson had been an electrician at Miller Coors since 2008, according to his LinkedIn page. Hudson's page also said he attended MATC Milwaukee, WCTC Pewaukee and the University of Phoenix, but did not graduate. His Facebook profile said he is married, and lists that he attended Elkhorn Area High School. His Facebook page also lists several hunting photos.

A woman who answered a phone number for Hudson had no comment when reached by The Associated Press.

A LinkedIn in Wetselaar's name says he has worked as an engine room operator with Miller Coors since June 2018, and before that he was a nuclear reactor operator with the U.S. Navy. It also says he was a submarine qualified leading petty officer of a reactor control division on board a U.S. Navy submarine.

A Wisconsin alumni magazine class update published in 2012 confirmed that Wetselaar graduated from the university in 2009 and was serving in the Navy.

Levshetz's death notice said he was married and is survived by two children and two grandchildren. It said he would be remembered as a "kind, caring, and giving person who always put his family's needs before his own." His funeral was scheduled for March 1.

Levshetz's neighbor, Martha Siegman, described him as quiet and peaceful, and someone who would use his snowblower to help out others and wave every time he left the driveway. Siegman said Levshetz was also particular about his yard and loved to run his lawnmower. She said she called him "Grandpa."

A woman who answered the phone at a listing for Valle identified herself as his sister. She declined to give her name, but said he leaves behind a wife and two small children. She was crying and other people could be heard crying in the background. She declined to comment further.

Associated Press writers Gretchen Ehlke, Carrie Antlfinger and Steve Megaree in Milwaukee, Tim Sullivan in Minneapolis, Tammy Webber in Chicago, Scott Bauer in Madison, and news researchers Monika Mathur and Randy Herschaft in New York contributed to this report.

Virus fears lead K-pop superstars BTS to cancel Seoul shows

By HYUNG-JIN KIM Associated Press

SEOUL, South Korea (AP) — K-pop superstars BTS canceled an upcoming concert series in South Korea's capital as the country that exports entertainment worldwide tries to contain a soaring virus outbreak.

It follows a near-shutdown of entertainment in hard-hit parts of China, the world's second-biggest economy and second-biggest box-office market.

BTS, which performed at the Grammys and at New York's Grand Central Terminal for "The Tonight Show" in recent weeks, is seen as an emblem of South Korea's cultural and economic power. Local media said the canceled concerts were the inaugural leg of the band's new world tour.

"We regret to announce that the BTS MAP OF THE SOUL TOUR ... has been cancelled," the band's agency Big Hit Entertainment said in a statement.

The management agency said the COVID-19 outbreak in South Korea, which has more than 2,000 cases so far, made it impossible to predict the scale of the outbreak by April.

The seven-member boy band was scheduled to perform April 11-12 and April 18-19 at Seoul's Olympic Stadium. The agency said it had to consider the health and safety of the artists, the production crews and the more than 200,000 concertgoers expected.

The South Korean government and others affected by the epidemic have pushed to restrict massive public events to try to avoid situations where the virus might spread.

Disney said Friday its parks in Tokyo would close for two weeks, adding to closures of its parks in Shanghai and Hong Kong.

Cinemas in China already were shuttered, which affected the Chinese release of "Sonic the Hedgehog" and the Beijing premiere and a promotional tour of the James Bond film "No Time to Die" among other impacts.

The Walt Disney Co.'s anticipated live-action "Mulan" remake is due to open in China on March 27.

The U.S.'s National Symphony Orchestra canceled performances in Japan, after earlier canceling concerts in Beijing and Shanghai. That followed cancellations by the Boston Symphony Orchestra and Hong Kong Philharmonic.

South Korean agencies have been canceling K-pop events at home and abroad in response to requests from fans about artists' safety.

Artists such as Taeyeon and boy bands WINNER and NCT Dream had previously canceled shows in Singapore and Macao, and GOT7 postponed concerts in Bangkok and Singapore.

U.S. band Green Day postponed upcoming Asia shows as well, citing health and travel concerns in its announcement on Twitter.

BTS has a large international following and was the first K-pop act to debut atop the Billboard Album chart in 2018 with "Love Yourself: Tear."

Asia stocks tumble on virus fears after Wall Street plunge

By JOE McDONALD AP Business Writers

Asian stock markets plunged further Friday on spreading virus fears, deepening an global rout after Wall Street endured its biggest one-day drop in nine years.

Tokyo's benchmark plummeted by an unusually wide margin of 3.7% and Seoul and Sydney dropped by more than 3%. Hong Kong and Shanghai saw losses of over 2.5%. Oil prices slumped on expectations industrial activity and demand might contract.

Investors had been confident the disease that emerged in China in December might be under control. But outbreaks in Italy, South Korea and Iran have fueled fears the virus is turning into a global threat that might derail trade and industry.

Anxiety intensified Thursday when the United States reported its first virus case in someone who hadn't traveled abroad or been in contact with anyone who had.

On Wall Street, the benchmark S&P 500 index is down 12% from its all-time high a week ago.

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A growing list of major companies are issuing profit warnings and say factory shutdowns in China are disrupting supply chains. They say travel bans and other anti-disease measures also are hurting sales in China, a major consumer market.

Virus fears "have become full-blown across the globe as cases outside China climb," Chang Wei Liang and Eugene Leow of DBS said in a report.

Tokyo's Nikkei 225 tumbled to 21,025.76 while the Shanghai Composite Index lost 2.6% to 2,914.31. Hong Kong's Hang Seng lost 2.6% to 26,081.87.

The Kospi in Seoul fell 3.4% to 1,984.10 and Sydney's S&P-ASX 200 sank 3.3% to 6,441.20. India's Sensex was trading 2.8% lower at 38,653.65.

New Zealand and Southeast Asian markets also retreated.

Markets in China and Hong Kong had been doing relatively well in recent weeks despite anxiety over the virus. On the mainland, authorities flooded markets with credit to shore up prices after trading resumed following an extended Lunar New Year holiday.

Chinese investor sentiment also has been buoyed by promises of lower interest rates, tax breaks and other to help revive manufacturing and other industries.

However than confidence was shaken as the S&P 500 fell 4.4% on Thursday to 2,978.76.

The Dow Jones Industrial Average shed 1,190.95 points, its largest one-day point drop in history, bringing its loss for the week to 3,225.77 points, or 11.1%. To put that in perspective, the Dow's 508-point loss on Oct. 19, 1987, was equal to 22.6%.

"It is a race to the bottom for U.S. indices," Jingyi Pan of IG said in a report. "It may still be too early to call a bottom given the uncertainty around the matter of the coronavirus impact."

Investors came into 2020 feeling confident the Federal Reserve would keep interest rates at low levels and the U.S.-China trade war posed less of a threat to company profits after the two sides signed a truce in January.

The S&P 500's decline puts the index into what market watches call a correction.

Some analysts have said that was long overdue in a record-setting bull market, though Mizuho Bank noted it was "the fastest correction since the Great Depression" in the 1930s.

U.S. bond prices soared as investors fled to safe investments. The yield on the benchmark 10-year Treasury note fell as low as 1.24%, a record low, according to TradeWeb. When yields fall, it's a sign that investors are feeling less confident about the strength of the economy.

China shut down much of its economy to stem the spread of the infection.

Most access to the city of Wuhan, a manufacturing hub at the center of the outbreak, was suspended Jan. 23. The Lunar New Year holiday was extended to keep factories and offices closed. The government told the public to stay home.

Authorities are shifting to trying to reopen factories and other businesses in areas with low disease risk but travel controls still are in effect in many areas.

Elsewhere, governments are tightening anti-disease controls as new cases mount.

Japan may close schools nationwide. Saudi Arabia banned foreign pilgrims from entering the kingdom to visit Islam's holiest sites. Italy has become the center of the outbreak in Europe, with the spread threatening the financial and industrial centers of that nation.

Goldman Sachs on Thursday said earnings for companies in the S&P 500 index might not grow at all this year, after predicting earlier that they would grow 5.5%.

Stocks are already trading at high levels relative to their earnings, raising the risk. Before the virus worries exploded, investors had been pushing stocks higher on expectations that strong profit growth was set to resume for companies after declining for most of 2019.

The S&P 500 recently traded at its most expensive level, relative to its expected earnings per share, since the dot-com bubble was deflating in 2002, according to FactSet. If profit growth doesn't ramp up this year, that makes a highly priced stock market even more vulnerable.

Traders are increasingly certain Federal Reserve will be forced to cut interest rates to protect the economy. They are pricing in a 96% probability of a cut at the Fed's next meeting in March. Just a day before, they

were calling for only a 33% chance, according to CME Group.

The market's sharp drop this week partly reflects increasing fears among many economists that the U.S. and global economies could take a bigger hit from the coronavirus than previously thought. It also likely will weaken Americans' confidence in the economy, analysts say, possibly depressing consumer spending.

In energy markets, benchmark U.S. crude fell \$1.42 to \$45.07 per barrel in electronic trading on the New York Mercantile Exchange. The contract lost \$1.64 on Thursday to settle at \$47.09. Brent crude oil, used to price international oils, sank \$1.45 to \$50.28 per barrel in London. It declined \$1.25 the previous session to \$52.18 a barrel.

The dollar declined to 108.83 yen from Thursday's 109.58 yen. The euro rose to \$1.1006 from \$1.0998.

US schools start planning for possible spread of coronavirus

By COLLIN BINKLEY AP Education Writer

Schools across the United States are canceling trips abroad, preparing online lessons and even rethinking "perfect attendance" awards as they brace for the possibility that the new coronavirus could begin spreading in their communities.

Districts have been rushing to update emergency plans this week after federal officials warned that the virus, which started in China, is almost certain to begin spreading in the U.S. Many are preparing for possible school closures that could stretch weeks or longer, even as they work to tamp down panic among students, parents and teachers.

President Donald Trump has worked to minimize fears about the virus, but on Wednesday he also recommended that schools to start planning for arrival of the COVID-19 virus "just in case."

"It's the perfect time for businesses, health care systems, universities and schools to look at their pandemic preparedness plans, dust them off, and make sure that they're ready," Trump said Wednesday at a White House news conference.

School letters sent home from Florida to California this week sought to assure parents that, in most communities, the risk of exposure to the virus is still very low. Most suggested the same precautions used to combat the flu: Wash hands frequently, cover sneezes and coughs, and stay home if fever or other symptoms arise.

At schools, cleaning crews have been told to pay extra attention to door knobs, keyboards and other surfaces that students touch through the day. Some districts have invested in handheld disinfectant sprayers that are used in hospitals. Others are adding traditional hand sanitizers in schools and buses.

But even as they work on prevention, schools are also starting to prepare for the worst. Many are making plans to teach students online in case the virus spreads so widely that schools are forced to close. Officials are considering how they would handle large numbers of absences among students or teachers, and how to make up days that could be missed because of the virus.

At least one school temporarily closed Thursday over fears tied to the virus. Bothell High School, near Seattle, canceled classes after a staffer's family member was placed in quarantine for showing symptoms of possibly contracting the virus. Officials said the school was being cleaned and disinfected "out of an abundance of caution."

In Miami, public school leaders said they're readying 200,000 laptops and tablets for students in case buildings close and force classes online. They're also directing new international students to register at two reception centers instead of at school buildings, where students have typically registered.

"If there is one place where a contagion can actually spread, it could be the schoolhouse," Alberto Carvalho, superintendent of Miami-Dade County Public Schools, said at a Wednesday news conference. "We are ready. We have protocols in place."

The district is also among many halting or scaling back foreign travel over concerns about the virus. Miami officials opted to cancel upcoming field trips to Italy and Scotland, while Virginia's Fairfax County announced it's suspending all trips to countries where the virus has spread.

In Colorado, where state law requires schools to provide 160 days of instruction per year, education

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officials are promising flexibility. A Wednesday letter from the state's education department says it will support schools that "experience a prolonged closure."

Many districts say they're awaiting instruction from their state health departments and the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Dallas' public school district said it's "reviewing and modifying crisis response plans should an outbreak occur." Public schools in San Francisco say they're preparing for exposure of the virus in the district but have "no such cases at this time."

Districts already have plans to deal with natural disasters, flu outbreaks and other emergencies, and many have planned for widespread infections before, most notably during the 2009 H1N1 influenza pandemic. But most have never faced the prospect of closing for weeks at a time, as has happened in China and other countries working to prevent the virus from spreading.

On Thursday, the virus prompted Japan's prime minister to ask all of the nation's schools to close for a month as officials work to control the spread of the new virus in the country.

Some U.S. districts say they already have online learning systems that could be used to provide classes online, but not all schools have that technology. Some have started preparing lessons that could be emailed to students instead or sent home in packets.

If schools are forced to close for long stretches, it could have a heavy impact on students who rely on school meals and for parents who use their schools' child care programs, said Francisco Negrón, chief legal officer for the National School Boards Association. The group is urging school leaders to discuss those issues with local authorities and develop contingency plans.

The group is also asking districts to reconsider attendance awards that are sometimes given to students who don't miss a day of class for an entire year or semester. Some schools have previously abandoned the practice amid fears that it encourages students to come to school sick, but some still award gift cards, cash or raffle prizes to students with perfect attendance.

"School districts may want to revisit what it means to have perfect attendance," Negrón said. "We certainly wouldn't want sick kids to come to school just because their parents are shooting for that perfect attendance award."

In many districts, nurses are being asked to serve as the front line in combating the virus. Officials at Denver Public Schools said nurses have been trained on guidelines for managing an outbreak and will be respond to any cases and report to health authorities.

A national association of school superintendents said it's pressing the CDC for more detailed guidance for schools as they confront the virus. In the meantime, the American Association of School Administrators issued a letter on Thursday telling schools to use "common sense strategies" focusing on prevention.

The letter urged districts to focus on personal hygiene, to develop procedures for reporting cases and to consider canceling trips to any areas in the U.S. or abroad where there have been outbreaks.

"The classroom is a wonderful breeding ground for viruses," said Dan Domenech, executive director of the group. "That's why we need to plan what we're going to do when we begin to see incidents of the coronavirus in our schools and in our communities."

World harshens its virus response as epidemic worsens by day

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 as a new virus troubled places around the globe.

With 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.

"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 outbreaks grew sharply Europe and the Middle East, 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,

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leaders 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 military sent hundreds of its doctors and soldiers to aid in treatment and quarantines. K-pop superstar band BTS canceled a series of Seoul concerts planned for April.

The global count of those sickened by the virus exceeds 82,000, with China still by far the hardest-hit country. Recent days have seen sharp spikes in South Korea, Italy and Iran.

South Korea reported 256 additional cases Friday, raising its total to 2,022, with most occurring in the region around the city of Daegu. Many cases there have connections to a church and health workers are testing thousands of its members.

China’s National Health Commission reported 327 new cases and 44 deaths over the previous 24 hours, most of them in Wuhan, the city where the COVID-19 illness emerged in December. Mainland China’s total cases are now 78,824 with 2,788 deaths.

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.

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.

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.

It wasn’t just governments that were taking action: Cologne Cathedral, one of Germany’s main religious sites, was emptying its basins of ‘holy water’ to prevent the spread of infection. And Facebook canceled its annual conference for developers.

COVID-19’s global creep had some countries warning people to obey containment measures.

Singapore charged a former Wuhan resident who has the virus and his wife 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.

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.

29 Turkish soldiers killed in northeast Syria air strike

By **BASSEM MROUE** and **ANDREW WILKS** Associated Press

BEIRUT (AP) — An air strike by Syrian government forces killed 29 Turkish soldiers in northeast Syria, a Turkish official said Friday, marking the largest death toll for Turkey in a single day since it first intervened in Syria in 2016.

The deaths were a serious escalation in the direct conflict between Turkish and Russia-backed Syrian forces that has been waged since early February.

Rahmi Dogan, the governor of Turkey's Hatay province bordering Syria's Idlib region, said 29 troops were killed and others were seriously wounded in the attack late Thursday. He said 39 injured were being treated in Turkish hospitals.

Three Turkish soldiers were killed earlier Thursday in Idlib. At least 50 have now been killed in Idlib since the start of February.

U.N. Secretary-General reiterated his call for an immediate cease-fire and expressed serious concern about the risk to civilians from escalating military actions," U.N. spokesman Stephane Dujarric said.

"Without urgent action, the risk of even greater escalation grows by the hour," Dujarric said.

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan was holding an emergency security meeting in Ankara, state-run Anadolu news agency reported. Meanwhile Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu spoke to NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg by telephone.

Erdogan's spokesman Ibrahim Kalin, who plays a senior role in foreign affairs, also spoke to U.S. National Security Advisor Robert O'Brien.

The air strike came after a Russian delegation spent two days in Ankara for talks with Turkish officials on the situation in Idlib, where a Syrian government offensive has sent hundreds of thousands of civilians fleeing towards the Turkish border.

The offensive has also engulfed many of the 12 military observation posts Turkey has in Idlib.

Fahrettin Altun, Erdogan's communications director, said "all known" Syrian government targets were under attack by Turkish air and land forces in response to the deaths.

Turkish television news channels aired black-and-white footage of air strikes on Syrian targets.

Omer Celik, spokesman for Erdogan's ruling party, said NATO should stand by Turkey's side. Ankara recently called for U.S. Patriot missiles to be deployed to defend its forces in Syria.

In a message seemingly aimed at Europe, he added: "Our refugee policy is the same but there's a situation there, we're no longer able to hold refugees."

Turkey hosts some 3.6 million Syrians and under a 2016 deal with the European Union agreed to step up efforts to halt the flow of refugees to Europe. Since then Erdogan has repeatedly threatened to "open the gates" in several disputes with European states.

Angry crowds gathered outside the Russian consulate in Istanbul, Anadolu said. Standing in front of a line of riot police and a water cannon, they chanted "Murderer Russia, murderer Putin."

The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said at least 34 Turkish soldiers were killed in air strikes on Idlib on Thursday. It said the attacks occurred in an area between the villages of al-Bara and Baliun near the Jabal al-Zawiya region in the southern Idlib countryside. The Britain-based Observatory monitors the Syria war through a network of activists on the ground.

The air strike came after Turkey-backed Syrian opposition fighters retook a strategic northwestern town from government forces on Thursday, opposition activists said, cutting a key highway just days after the government reopened it for the first time since 2012.

Despite losing the town of Saraqeb, Syrian President Bashar Assad's forces made major gains to the south. Assad now controls almost the entire southern part of Idlib province after capturing more than 20

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villages Thursday, state media and opposition activists said. It's part of a weeklong campaign backed by Russian air power into Syria's last rebel stronghold.

Violence in Idlib province also left three more Turkish soldiers dead, according to Turkey's President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, raising the number of Turkish troops killed in Syria this month to 21. Thousands of Turkish soldiers are deployed inside rebel-controlled areas of Idlib province, which is dominated by al-Qaida-linked militants.

Turkey's U.N. Ambassador Feridun Sinirlioglu told the Security Council on Thursday that Turkey was committed to upholding a fragile cease-fire agreement that Turkey and Russia reached on Idlib in 2018.

The Syrian government troops' "deliberate attacks on our forces has been a turning point. We are now determined more than ever to preserve Idlib's de-escalation status."

Syria's Defense Ministry said insurgents were using Turkey-supplied portable surface-to-air missiles to attack Syrian and Russian aircraft. It did not elaborate. Earlier this month, Turkish-backed opposition fighters shot down two helicopter gunships belonging to the Syrian military.

The Britain-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, an opposition war monitoring group, said 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.

Saraqeb's loss is a big setback for Assad. It sits on the strategic M5 highway linking the northern city of Aleppo with the capital, Damascus. Syrian troops recaptured the last rebel-controlled section of the M5 earlier this month. Officials had hailed the reopening of the motorway as a major victory in the nine-year conflict.

The Syrian government's military campaign to recapture Idlib province has triggered a humanitarian catastrophe and the war's largest single wave of displacement. According to the United Nations, almost 950,000 civilians have been displaced since early December, and more than 300 have been killed. Most have fled farther north to safer areas near the Turkish border, overwhelming camps already crowded with refugees in cold winter weather.

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 government forces launched a counteroffensive later Thursday 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."

State TV later Thursday confirmed that insurgents have cut the highway, adding that fighting is ongoing in the area.

The Observatory also reported on the more than 20 villages captured Thursday by the government. It added that Syrian troops have now besieged another Turkish observation post in an area known as Sheer Maghar.

The government-controlled Syrian Central Military Media said government forces advancing from northern parts of Hama province met Thursday with forces moving from southern Idlib, bringing wide areas under Syrian army control.

If government forces now turn north, they can eventually reach another major highway known as the M4 that links Syria's coastal region with the country's west. Assad has vowed to retake all of Syria.

Assad's forces have captured dozens of villages over the past few days, including major rebel strongholds. However, Erdogan said Thursday that, "The situation in Idlib has turned in our favor."

Wilks reported from Ankara, Turkey. Associated Press writers Albert Aji in Damascus, Syria, and Edith M. Lederer at the United Nations contributed to this report.

AP decides not to declare Iowa caucus winner after recount

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Iowa Democratic Party on Thursday released updated results of the Iowa caucuses after the completion of a recount requested by the campaigns of Bernie Sanders and Pete Buttigieg.

In the new results, Buttigieg has 562.954 state delegate equivalents and Sanders has 562.021 state delegate equivalents out of 2,151 counted. That is a margin of 0.04 percentage points.

The Associated Press has reviewed the updated results and will not call a winner, given remaining concerns about whether the results as reported by the party are fully accurate. The Feb. 3 caucuses were beset by technical glitches that led to a delay in reporting the results, inconsistencies in the numbers and no clear winner.

The party plans to certify the results on Saturday. At that point, the caucuses will formally end, and no further changes to the results will be made.

Iowa awards 41 national delegates in its caucuses. As it stands, Buttigieg has 13 delegates and Sanders has 12. Elizabeth Warren won eight, Joe Biden won six and Amy Klobuchar won one.

A final delegate will be awarded to Buttigieg as the candidate with the most state delegate equivalents. The AP will update its tally of the national delegates won in Iowa with that final delegate on Saturday, once the Iowa Democratic Party formally votes to certify the results.

Iowa Democratic Party Chairman Troy Price resigned after the caucus fiasco, saying that Democrats deserved better and that he bore responsibility for any failures. Iowa Democrats selected Iowa state Rep. Mark Smith as interim chairman after Price's resignation.

This isn't the first time the AP has decided against calling a race, though it is rare.

The most notable example was in 2000, when the results of the race between George W. Bush and Al Gore were too close to call at the end of election night. The AP decided not to call the race for either candidate. The ensuing recount dispute eventually reached the Supreme Court, which effectively cleared the way for Bush to become president.

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

Neighbors: Brewery gunman a 'gentleman'; no motive yet known

By **GRETCHEN EHLKE** and **TODD RICHMOND** Associated Press

MILWAUKEE (AP) — A Milwaukee electrician who police identified Thursday as the man who fatally shot five co-workers at one of the nation's largest breweries enjoyed building guns, according to neighbors.

Authorities said 51-year-old Anthony Ferrill opened fire at the Molson Coors Brewing Co. complex on Wednesday, killing five male employees before turning his gun on himself. His motive remains a mystery; police say the case is still under investigation. They also haven't released details about how the shooting unfolded.

Milwaukee police Chief Alfonso Morales said during a news conference that the victims were all from the Milwaukee area. He identified them as Jesus Valle Jr., 33, of Milwaukee; Gennady Levshetz, 61, of Mequon; Trevor Wetselaar, 33, of Milwaukee; Dana Walk, 57, of Delafield; and Dale Hudson, 60, of Waukesha.

Ferrill's neighbors said he was a married father of two adult children and one younger daughter. They said he had worked at the brewery for about 15 years as an electrician. The Milwaukee Journal Sentinel reported he served in the U.S. Coast Guard from 1987 to 1991 and was honorably discharged.

His brother, Benjamin Ferrill, of The Colony, Texas, told The Associated Press: "It's a tragic loss to everybody. We're still trying to digest it."

Erna Roenspies, who lived next door to Ferrill, described him as a nice guy and helpful neighbor who enjoyed building guns with mail-order parts.

Several years ago Ferrill slipped off or fell off a ladder at the brewery and hurt his shoulder, forcing him to miss work. He told Roenspies that "spies" from the brewery were lurking in the neighborhood, watching his activities to make sure he wasn't faking the injury. Once he pointed out the spies' car to her, she said. The spying "irritated" him, she said.

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Still, Roenspies, 82, said Ferrill was a "gentleman" who checked up on her to make sure she was all right. "I considered him a son," she said. "He wasn't violent. He wasn't a drunk. He was a gentleman. I just can't believe it."

Another neighbor, Elizabeth LaPine, described Ferrill as a quiet person who walked his Doberman pinscher every day, and would sometimes throw a ball around for his dog in the street. She said she lived across the street from Ferrill for 11 years.

"It's heartbreaking," she said.

LaPine said Ferrill had several cars and always kept them shiny. She said that the last time she saw Ferrill was Sunday, and he had polished up his burgundy Chrysler, which she called his "Sunday car," and took it for a ride.

The shooting happened at an 82-acre (33-hectare) complex that includes a mix of corporate offices and brewing facilities and employs more than 1,000 people. It's 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 said the victims all worked together as electricians and machinists in the complex's powerhouse.

"They were a part of the fabric of our company and community and we will miss them deeply," Hattersley said.

Hudson's Facebook page states that he was married and attended Elkhorn Area High School. A woman who answered the phone at his home had no comment.

Walk's Facebook page states that he attended Kettle Moraine High School and contains photos of fishing and sailing.

Wetselaar's LinkedIn page says he graduated from UW-Madison and he worked as an engine room operator with Miller Coors since 2018. Before that he served as a nuclear reactor operator in the U.S. Navy.

Levshetz's obituary identified him as married with two children and two grandchildren. It said he would be remembered as a "kind, caring, and giving person who always put his family's needs before his own."

A woman who answered a call to a possible listing for Valle said she was his sister. She declined to give her name, but said he leaves behind a wife and two small children. She was crying and the sounds of others crying in the background could be heard. She declined further comment.

The Molson Coors complex features a 160-year-old brewery, 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 that towers over it is a well-known symbol in a city where beer and brewing are intertwined with local history.

Associated Press reporters Carrie Antfinger and Teresa Crawford in Milwaukee, Tim Sullivan and Amy Forliti in Minneapolis and Scott Bauer in Madison Wisconsin, and news researcher Rhonda Shafner in New York contributed to this report.

The ages for Levshetz and Hudson have been corrected.

States ramp up virus preparations, try to reassure public

By DAVID A. LIEB Associated Press

As worries about the new coronavirus grow in the U.S., state officials are ramping up efforts to prepare for a possible outbreak while simultaneously trying to assure the public that they are well-positioned to handle it.

Governors and legislators in several states have proposed pumping millions of dollars into programs to combat the virus that causes the COVID-19 illness. State health officials are checking on stockpiles of supplies such as face masks and respirators and arranging potential isolation sites for sick patients.

Some states received federal approval Thursday to conduct tests for the virus at their own labs, which could confirm or rule out potential cases more rapidly than waiting on results from federal labs.

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Governors in several states — including the three most populated, California, Texas, and Florida — sought to ease concerns about the virus Thursday at news conferences.

“We have an extremely robust, well-informed, activated force prepared for any potential outcome that we may have to deal with,” Republican Texas Gov. Greg Abbott said. Texas is one of the states where coronavirus patients who traveled abroad are being treated in isolated facilities before returning to their homes.

State officials are walking a fine line between not stirring unnecessary anxieties while still keeping the public informed.

Republican Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis, for example, pledged to notify the public if anyone tested positive for the new virus in his state. But the state’s surgeon general declined to confirm if any suspected cases had been investigated. He and the governor cited state laws for withholding any statistical information.

That did not sit well with some other elected officials. Democratic U.S. Rep. Stephanie Murphy, who represents the Orlando area, called for more transparency.

“As a top tourist destination and home to many vulnerable seniors, Florida is uniquely at risk from the threat of this illness,” she said after the governor’s news conference.

Top health officials from many states met this week in Washington with members of President Donald Trump’s administration. While the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has warned public institutions, businesses and individuals to get ready for the disease, Trump has said there is no need to panic and that the U.S. is “very, very ready” to handle any outbreak.

The virus causes fever and coughing and, in serious cases, shortness of breath or pneumonia. Some symptoms are similar to influenza, which the CDC says has sickened tens of millions of U.S. residents and led to thousands of deaths since last fall.

Though the number of COVID-19 cases remains low in the U.S., the spread of the virus from China through Asia and elsewhere has alarmed some state and local officials.

“Now is the time for a sense of urgency,” Republican Ohio Gov. Mike DeWine said Thursday while encouraging state agencies and individuals to take greater sanitary precautions, such as disinfecting public places.

A new coronavirus case announced Wednesday in California could be the first in the U.S. that has no known connection to foreign travel or another known case, a possible sign the virus is spreading in a U.S. community, health officials said. Even before then, some cities and counties in California preemptively declared local health emergencies.

Federal health officials have already burned through \$105 million in emergency funding while preparing for the coronavirus. Trump has requested an additional \$2.5 billion to combat the virus, while congressional Democrats have proposed nearly four times that amount. But some state officials are not waiting for Congress to act.

New York Gov. Andrew Cuomo, a Democrat, has said he will ask lawmakers to approve \$40 million to respond to the threat, including hiring additional state health workers and buying supplies such as protective masks and gloves. In New York City alone, more than 1.5 million protective masks already have been given to health care workers and first responders, and the city is seeking more.

Several other states also are looking to set aside additional money because of the coronavirus.

Democratic Hawaii Gov. David Ige has asked lawmakers to allocate \$7.2 million for the next four months for disease surveillance, lab testing, a multimedia communications campaign and basic equipment such as thermometers. In Minnesota, Republican state Sen. Jerry Relph plans to seek to add \$5 million to the state’s emergency account for public health.

Different budget plans in the Washington state House and Senate each include \$5 million to \$10 million of state funding that could go to establish a dedicated call center, monitor known coronavirus cases and provide support for local health officials.

Delaware Public Health Director Karyl Rattay said it’s “incredibly important” that states receive additional federal funding to respond to the coronavirus.

“Already, we are seeing our capacity maxed out,” Rattay said. “Staff are spending many, many hours on

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this, and there's still core public health work that needs to be completed. We can't just stop everything else that we do on a regular basis."

New Hampshire Gov. Chris Sununu sent a letter Wednesday to the state's congressional delegation urging that additional coronavirus funding be approved quickly. "Now is not a time for partisan games and grandstanding," he wrote.

Health officials in many states told The Associated Press that their preparations rely on current staff and budgets and existing public health frameworks. One key exception is that most states have so far been unable to run their own laboratory tests on potential coronavirus cases, because they have not received federal clearance to do so. States instead have had to send samples to the CDC, which has delayed the response time.

But that could change soon. Missouri received word Thursday that it has been approved to start running tests at its own medical laboratory, and similar notices should be arriving at other states, said Bill Whitmar, director of the Missouri health lab and president-elect of the Association of Public Health Laboratories.

"If every state would be able to perform those tests, they'd be able to perform them much more rapidly," Whitmar said.

Lieb reported from Jefferson City, Missouri. Associated Press writers Jim Vertuno in Austin, Texas; Bobby Caina Calvin in Tallahassee, Florida; Mark Gillispie in Cleveland; Steve Karnowski in St. Paul, Minnesota; Rachel La Corte in Olympia, Washington; Randall Chase in Dover, Delaware; Audrey McAvoy in Honolulu, Hawaii; and Holly Ramer in Concord, New Hampshire, contributed to this report.

NBC renews 'Law & Order: SVU,' 'Chicago' dramas for 3 years

LOS ANGELES (AP) — NBC is giving three-year renewals to its drama series from veteran producer Dick Wolf, including the perennial "Law & Order: Special Victims Unit."

The pickups for the "Law & Order" series and Wolf's three Chicago-set dramas are part of a new five-year deal to keep his Wolf Entertainment production company at Universal Television.

Universal Television has been his studio home base for 36 years, NBC said Thursday.

"Dick Wolf has proven time and time again that he makes shows audiences love," NBC Entertainment Chairman Paul Telegdy said in a statement.

"Law & Order: SVU," which stars Mariska Hargitay and is in its 21st season, already holds the record for longest-running, live-action prime-time TV series. The other renewed series, "Chicago Fire," "Chicago P.D." and "Chicago Med," are relative kids, ranging from five to eight seasons so far.

Wolf's deal follows his recent agreement with NBCUniversal's upcoming streaming service, Peacock, which will make the "Law & Order" and "Chicago" series franchises available to its users.

Wolf's series produced for other networks include CBS' "FBI" and newcomer "FBI: Most Wanted."

Plácido Domingo revises apology, as Spain drops more shows

By JOCELYN GECKER and ARITZ PARRA Associated Press

SAN FRANCISCO (AP) — Opera star Plácido Domingo amended his apology to the multiple women who have accused him of sexual misconduct, adding several caveats Thursday to a statement two days earlier in which he said he took "full responsibility" for his actions.

In a statement on his Facebook page, posted as several European concert halls moved to cancel his appearances, the legendary tenor said he wanted "to correct the false impression generated by my apology."

"My apology was sincere and heartfelt, to any colleague who I have made to feel uncomfortable, or hurt in any manner, by anything I have said or done," he wrote. "But I know what I have not done, and I'll deny it again. I have never behaved aggressively toward anyone, and I have never done anything to obstruct or hurt anyone's career."

In his Tuesday statement, Domingo had said he respected the women who came forward, and "I want

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them to know that I am truly sorry for the hurt that I caused them. I accept full responsibility for my actions, and I have grown from this experience.”

Domingo’s spokeswoman, Nancy Seltzer, offered no immediate comment when asked how to reconcile the dual statements.

Two of Domingo’s accusers, opera singers Patricia Wulf and Angela Turner Wilson, called the reversal of his apology “extremely insulting.”

“The world knows he is guilty of his predatory behavior and yet, he continues to deny that he groped and propositioned us and retaliated against us when we rejected his advances,” Wulf and Wilson said in a joint statement, issued by their attorney.

Domingo’s initial statement came in response to the findings of an investigation by the U.S. union representing opera performers, which found the star had behaved inappropriately over the course of two decades when he held senior management positions at Washington National Opera and Los Angeles Opera.

His words set off a backlash in Spain, which became the first country in Europe to cancel on the mega-star since the sexual harassment allegations by Wulf, Wilson and multiple other women surfaced last year in two stories by The Associated Press.

On Thursday, Madrid’s main opera house, Teatro Real, said it had scheduled a meeting to decide what to do about Domingo’s five upcoming appearances in May, but that the singer opted to withdraw himself from the performances. The company added that it “reaffirms its policy of zero tolerance of harassment and abuse of any kind, and its permanent solidarity with the victims.”

The announcement came as other Spanish public institutions and theaters severed ties with the 79-year-old singer, a native son who has long been a source of pride for many in the country.

Many commentators, politicians and fellow artists in Spain had defended Domingo, as did concert halls across Europe, even as U.S. companies swiftly moved to cancel performances and sever ties with the singer in the wake of the harassment allegations.

The first to take action in Spain was the government itself. On Wednesday, the Spanish Culture Ministry said it was calling off two mid-May performances by Domingo at Madrid’s Teatro de la Zarzuela light opera house. The ministry said that “given the seriousness of the deeds,” it was acting “in solidarity with women affected” to take a stand against sexual harassment.

More cancellations followed Thursday. A musical association in the Spanish city of Úbeda said it was canceling Domingo’s May 3 performance in light of the week’s developments, and the Palau de les Arts, a publicly funded, state-of-the-art opera house in the eastern Spanish city of Valencia, said that, “in line with the values of the institution,” it would strip the tenor’s name from its popular training program for opera singers. It also ruled out any future contracts with Domingo.

“The institution considers that any conduct against the integrity of women, whether moral, sexual ... is intolerable,” a statement said.

The full results of the investigation by the American Guild of Musical Artists have not been made public, but people familiar with the findings told the AP that investigators found 27 people who said they were sexually harassed or witnessed inappropriate behavior by Domingo. The people familiar with the findings spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to speak publicly.

They said the allegations included unsolicited physical touching that ranged from kisses on the mouth to groping, late-night phone calls in which Domingo asked women to come to his residence, and inviting women to go out with him socially with such persistence that some felt they were being stalked.

The leak of the report’s findings has prompted an internal investigation at AGMA, whose leaders say it upended an agreement they had been negotiating with Domingo, according to internal emails obtained by the AP. The emails said the agreement called for Domingo to pay the union a \$500,000 fine, issue a public apology, take mandatory sexual harassment training and agree to an 18-month suspension from the union, “premised on AGMA’s promise to maintain confidentiality over the details” of the investigation.

Debra Katz, the attorney who represents Wulf and Wilson, called on AGMA to stop being secretive about its findings, to release the full report of its investigation and to “hold Domingo accountable once and for all.”

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Another investigation, still ongoing, was launched by LA Opera, where Domingo had been general director since 2003 before resigning in October.

There have been no other performance cancellations in Europe, where Domingo's next scheduled show is March 22 in Hamburg, Germany.

On Thursday, Italy's Verona Arena said its policy is to not cancel events already on the published program and for which tickets have been on sale for 10 months. Domingo is scheduled to conduct "Aida" there on June 25 and to sing in a gala dedicated to him on July 7.

AP writer Aritz Parra contributed from Madrid and Colleen Barry contributed from Milan.

In scramble to stop virus, testing raises tough questions

By MIKE STOBBE and ADAM GELLER Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Health officials confronted tough questions and doubts Thursday about testing to intercept the fast-spreading virus, with scrutiny focused on a four-day delay in screening an infected California woman despite her doctors' early calls to do so.

The questions are global: not just who, when and how to test for the illness, but how to make sure that working test kits get out to the labs that need them. All those issues apparently came in to play in the treatment of the woman in northern California, a case officials say may be the first community-spread instance of the disease in the U.S.

"This was a clear gap in our preparedness, and the virus went right through the gap," said Dr. Ali Khan, dean of the University of Nebraska College of Public Health.

In the wake of the latest California case, U.S. health officials on Thursday expanded their criteria for who should get tested, and took steps to increase testing.

The debate over testing has taken on added urgency as the number of cases worldwide climbed past 82,000, including 2,800 reported deaths. The rapid spread pushed officials in Saudi Arabia to cut travel to Islam's holiest sites, triggered tougher penalties in South Korea for people who break quarantines and ratcheted up pressure on investors as U.S. stock markets extended their week-long plunge. The Dow Jones Industrial Average sank nearly 1,200 points Thursday, its worst one-day drop since 2011.

With the illness rippling across 47 nations in every continent but Antarctica, public health officials emphasized the need for rapid intervention.

"Aggressive early measures can prevent transmission before the virus gets a foothold," World Health Organization chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said. He cited a study in China of more than 320,000 test samples that enabled health officials to zero in on the 0.14 percent that screened positive for COVID-19, the disease caused by the virus.

But catching the disease early will require countries to invest in rapid diagnostics, said Dr. Gagandeep Kang, a microbiologist who heads the Translational Health Science And Technology Institute in India.

Test kits used by the World Health Organization cost less than \$5 each, said Michael Ryan, the group's emergencies programs director. But that figure does not include the expense of medical staff and validation screening, and making such investments effective goes well beyond the expense involved.

"As we can see from the new sparks on Italy, Iran, Korea, is that early identification of cases is crucial. There, the first persons with infection were missed," said Marion Koopmans of the Erasmus Medical Center in the Netherlands.

Doctors at the University of California Davis Medical Center were mindful of the need for early identification on Feb. 19 when the hospital admitted a female patient on a ventilator who showed symptoms of a viral infection. They asked she be tested for the new coronavirus, according to an email hospital officials sent to their employees, but a test was not administered because she did not fit federal test criteria. The test was not done until four days later, on Feb. 23, and the results did not come back until Wednesday, a full week after she was admitted, the hospital said.

The federal agency in charge of testing, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, took issue

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with that account late Thursday. The agency said it was still investigating, but that a preliminary review showed it had not been informed of the case until Feb. 23, when it requested specimens for testing. It said criteria in place at the time could have allowed the woman to be tested earlier.

The case highlights the fact that most testing in U.S. up to now has been limited to those who, in addition to showing symptoms, have a history of travel to countries affected by the disease or contact with those who have done so, said Lauren Sauer, director of operations at Johns Hopkins University's Office of Critical Event Preparedness and Response.

"In the U.S., people are sticking pretty closely to that definition," Sauer said. But the increasing cases on other continents "are demonstrating we need to do a better job than just where the outbreak originated."

On Thursday, the CDC updated its testing criteria on its website — a move that had been in the works for days, according to a federal official familiar with the change.

The CDC will continue to advise testing people who have traveled to certain outbreak areas and have fever and certain other symptoms. But now testing is also appropriate if such symptoms exist and flu and other respiratory illnesses have been ruled out and no source of exposure has been identified.

As part of that, CDC has expanded the list of countries that are red flags for testing to include not only China but Iran, Italy, South Korea and Japan.

Last month, the CDC said it had developed a test kit that could be sent to state and big city public health labs, so they could broaden testing to more people. Early this month, the agency got authorization to begin distribution of the kit to government public health labs in the 50 states and some cities and counties.

But most of the kits proved to be faulty, providing inconclusive results to test samples that should have tested positive. The problem was blamed on one of three reagents used in the testing. CDC said it was trying to manufacture new reagents, but gave no firm timetable for when that would occur.

Only about a half dozen state and local public health labs had fully functional kits as of early this week.

As weeks passed, the problem became more and more frustrating, said Scott Becker, the chief executive of the Association of Public Health Laboratories.

On Monday, Becker's organization sent a letter to the U.S. Food and Drug Administration, basically asking permission for state labs to develop their own tests. On Wednesday, FDA officials responded that labs would be allowed to rely on the two other reagents, meaning that as many as 40 state and local labs could be up and running with their tests in the next few days, Becker said.

The California case, and remarks by Italian officials that they were rethinking how to classify people who test positive for the illness but show no symptoms, highlighted the questions that surround large-scale screening for the disease.

The test being used by U.S. health officials takes just four to six hours to perform once it's in a lab. But up to now, those tests have been sent to federal testing centers, often significantly extending the time to get results.

"Testing protocols have been a point of frustration," California Gov. Gavin Newsom said Thursday. He said federal officials had assured their state counterparts that capacity to test will be growing "exponentially" in the next few days, but he wasn't more specific.

Federal official likely limited testing early on because of concerns about a deluge of false positives, which could panic communities and become counterproductive, said Khan, a former top disease investigator for the CDC.

But he suggested that a tiered testing system might be the answer, in which a positive test would have to be verified by another lab before a case is diagnosed and counted.

The challenge is complicated by a slowness to distribute test kits.

Newsom said Thursday the state had just 200 testing kits on hand and "that's simply inadequate." He said he spoke to CDC officials and they assured him they were working to make testing more broadly available in California.

In Italy, where an outbreak has depressed tourism and fueled panic, officials said Thursday they would change their reporting and testing practices in ways that could lower the country's reported caseload.

Italian authorities plan from now on to distinguish between people who test positive for the virus and

patients showing symptoms, since the majority of the people in Italy with confirmed infections aren't actually sick. They said they would follow urging by the WHO and hold off on certifying cases screened only at a regional level, until they can be confirmed by national officials.

"The cases that emerge from the regions are still considered suspect and unconfirmed," said Walter Ricciardi, a WHO adviser to the Italian government.

But U.S. experts said the crisis requires more rapid testing, and a willingness by officials to revise their criteria. Sauer pointed to a case in Canada, where officials zeroed in on a traveler from Iran with COVID-19 soon after that country announced its first cases.

"Let our really smart doctors do what they do really well," Khan said. "If they are really suspicious that a pneumonia or influenza-like illness does not quite look like an influenza-like illness, allow them to test!"

Associated Press writers Luran Neergaard in Washington, Frank Jordans and Kirsten Grieshaber in Berlin, Aniruddha Ghosal in New Delhi, Olga Rodriguez in San Francisco, and Frances D'Emilio and Nicole Winfield in Rome contributed to this report.

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

Former Michigan wrestlers urge more victims to 'speak up'

By **MIKE HOUSEHOLDER** and **LARRY LAGE** Associated Press

SOUTHFIELD, Mich. (AP) — The whistleblower whose letter to University of Michigan athletic director Warde Manuel alleging sexual assault sparked an investigation into a former school doctor says he was inspired by the women who testified against convicted Michigan State physician Larry Nassar.

An attorney for Tad DeLuca said Thursday that his client complained to his wrestling coach in 1975 that Dr. Robert E. Anderson molested him during medical exams. In response, then-coach Bill Johannesen humiliated DeLuca, kicked him off the team and effectively removed his financial assistance, the attorney said.

"I spoke up again by letter in 2018 after hearing an NPR story about the MSU gymnasts, women who I am in awe of," DeLuca said at a news conference in suburban Detroit. "Once again, the University of Michigan ignored me.

"I'm here today to speak up again, to let the University of Michigan know that I will not be ignored."

DeLuca's 2018 letter of complaint about Anderson, now deceased, led to a university police investigation that became public last week. Two other former Michigan wrestlers who allege they were abused by Anderson also spoke to reporters Thursday: Tom Evashevski and Andy Hrovat, the first athlete to publicly say Anderson molested him.

Evashevski was in school with DeLuca at Michigan in the mid-1970s. Hrovat was a star wrestler in the late 1990s for the Wolverines and went on to compete for the U.S. at the 2008 Olympics.

"These were and are physically and mentally tough men," said attorney Parker Stinar, who represents the trio. "But they were all victims of sexual abuse and victims of an institution that ignored warning after warning after warning about a predator preying on young individuals."

DeLuca put his complaints about Anderson in writing in 1975 in a letter to Johannesen. Subsequently, Johannesen read DeLuca's letter to his teammates in an effort to humiliate him, kicked him off the team and took away his scholarship, according to Stinar.

Johannesen denied in interviews this week with The Associated Press that any of his student-athletes ever told him Anderson touched them inappropriately.

"You can't call him a coach," said DeLuca, a retired teacher in northern Michigan. "Coach' is a term of endearment."

Stinar, who met with the school's general counsel Thursday afternoon, predicts "hundreds of more victims" will emerge, and that his firm already represents more than a dozen.

Several other law firms have spent the past week talking to potential accusers about legal action. Among

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them are attorneys Michelle Simpson Tuegel and H. James White, who represented more than 60 people who were abused by Nassar at Michigan State.

White said Thursday that the number of potential Anderson victims is "extremely troubling," adding that "the University of Michigan and the community at large should brace itself."

Stinar, who is based in Denver, said the university must explain its years of inaction.

"For nearly four decades, the University of Michigan allowed Dr. Anderson to prey on vulnerable young individuals away from home for the first time," he said. "I ask the University of Michigan this: Why didn't you act in 1975 or earlier to prevent the sexual abuse of possibly hundreds of other victims?"

Hours after the news conference, the University of Michigan released a statement.

"The three brave men who came forward today to share their stories delivered a powerful message," the statement read. "We want to encourage everyone harmed by Robert E. Anderson or who has evidence of his misconduct to come forward. At the University of Michigan, we want to hear your voices."

School officials have acknowledged some school employees were aware of accusations against Anderson prior to DeLuca's 2018 complaint. Last week, the university's president apologized to "anyone who was harmed" by Anderson and offered counseling services.

The school launched an investigation into the doctor's behavior following abuse allegations from five people and also established a hotline for those who came into contact with Anderson.

DeLuca hopes more people follow his lead.

"Everybody who was abused by this doctor, the doctor everyone knew was doing this, was abusing athletes and students, should speak up and let everyone know they will not be ignored," DeLuca said. "It just, it has to stop. Period."

Separately, the Ann Arbor school district said it's investigating whether Anderson had a role with local schools. A police report suggested he performed sports physicals years ago.

"This is the first time we have heard this information," Superintendent Jeanice Swift said.

The Flint district said it confirmed that someone with Anderson's name was an employee at some point, but "we do not have information about his employment history."

"We encourage anyone with information regarding this matter to contact local law enforcement," the district said.

Associated Press writer Ed White in Detroit contributed to this report.

[Click here](#) for more stories on the allegations against Anderson.

Nazi cautionary dramas wade into political, factual disputes

By LYNN ELBER AP Television Writer

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Hollywood mustered its creative forces in the 1940s when Adolf Hitler's Nazi Germany sought to conquer the world, with Humphrey Bogart standing up to the fascist regime in "Casablanca" and director Ernst Lubitsch mocking it and its dictator in "To Be or Not to Be."

More than 70 years later, an increase in hate crimes, emboldened white supremacists and political upheaval have prompted TV and film makers to revisit Nazism. The works are varied and their receptions mixed, but they share a goal: to use fiction to learn from 20th-century totalitarianism and its horrors, including the Holocaust that claimed the lives of 6 million Jews.

In Amazon's "Hunters," an unlikely group of 1970s New Yorkers target German Nazis who have brought their genocidal quest to America. HBO's "The Plot Against America" is based on Philip Roth's novel that posits a repressive early 1940s U.S. government led by Charles Lindbergh, the real-life aviation hero and anti-Semitic isolationist. The Oscar-winning "Jojo Rabbit" is in Lubitsch's satirical mode, deepened by tragedy.

Preceding them was "The Man in the High Castle," the 2015-19 Amazon series based on Philip K. Dick's sci-fi novel of the same name about a fallen America ruled by WWII victors Germany and Japan.

The war has had other screen comebacks. During the political and social turmoil of the mid- to late-

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1960s, cynical and irreverent films including "King Rat" and "What Did You Do in the War, Daddy?" were released alongside traditional battle epics such as the star-laden "Battle of the Bulge."

"We seem to have waves of interest in both the Holocaust and World War II, not always at the same time," said Sharon Willis, a film scholar and professor at the University of Rochester in New York. "I feel that, collectively, we return to these terrains when we have some kind of problem to work out that we think is related to them."

David Simon, executive producer of "The Plot Against America," unabashedly labels the six-episode series debuting March 16 "a political piece." The cast includes Winona Ryder and John Turturro, and early reviews were admiring.

"It's a critique of xenophobia and demagoguery and the use of 'the other,' the fear of 'the other' to drive political power and to create a political dynamic," Simon said, a pattern that he said predates President Donald Trump. "The demonization of the immigrant cohort has been going on for as long as the republic."

Ironically, he'd originally passed on bringing Roth's novel to the screen because it appeared irrelevant.

"The first time somebody approached me about the adaptation was in 2013, right after (President Barack) Obama's second inauguration. And I thought to myself that it seemed like an artifact" in an increasingly inclusive society, Simon said. The subsequent election and its results forced him to reconsider that view, he said, citing restrictive immigration policies as an area of profound concern.

The late Roth's book proved "allegorical to what we're dealing with now, and the vulnerable cohorts now are not necessarily Jewish Americans, although anti-Semitism has increased," Simon said. "The real vulnerable (groups) are people with black and brown skin, immigrants and Muslims."

As for why he's asking viewers to seek clarity in the rear-view mirror, Simon said that history provides a sturdy, well-vetted foundation on which to build a meaningful allegory. "If we can't apply it to the future, then all that history is pretty useless," he said.

David Weil, creator of "Hunters" starring Al Pacino and Logan Lerman, shares Simon's belief in the power of such storytelling.

"I think sometimes the best way for us to grapple with the truths of our reality and our present is to see it through a different prism and a different lens," said Weil. "So I used the lens of 1977 America to speak about the kind of racism and xenophobia and anti-Semitism that we're continuing to face today, to allow people to really try and take a step back."

Weil's direct inspiration was his grandmother, Sara Weil, a survivor of Auschwitz-Birkenau and Bergen-Belsen, which were among the concentration camps where the German-ordered mass killings of Jews and millions of others were carried out. The stories of hardship that he heard from her as a child eventually fueled Weil's desire to honor her experience and, through his work, become a Holocaust avenger and a "superhero, in some way."

There have been Oscar-worthy films about the Holocaust, Weil said, but he wanted to dramatize the tragedy and its aftermath in an unconventional way. He described his approach as "bold and pulpy and fresh," one that invites a new audience to enter the story through the perspective of characters such as Lerman's young hunter, Jonah.

"In doing so, they'll begin to learn about the truth of the Holocaust and the plight of Jewish people and the plight of all 'others,'" Weil said.

Creative license may be allowed for tone or even the wholesale creation of a band of Nazi hunters, but tampering with the facts of a hallowed event crosses the line for some. A scene in which inmates of the Auschwitz camp in Poland act out a fatal chess game never occurred, according to the site's museum and memorial, which in a recent statement called such inventions "dangerous foolishness and caricature."

Weil responded that the drama was not a documentary and he'd carefully avoided borrowing a specific moment from an actual person's life. That failed to satisfy Rabbi Marvin Hier, founder of the Simon Wiesenthal Center in Los Angeles that's named for the death camp survivor and real-life Nazi hunter.

While dramas can help educate people about Nazism, Hier said, such projects must be labeled a fictional account of a real event or risk giving fodder to Holocaust deniers.

Pete Simi, co-author of "American Swastika: Inside the White Power Movement's Hidden Spaces of Hate"

and a professor at Chapman University in Southern California, sees potential in Hollywood's focus on Nazi Germany. One reason: it can help expose the followers who are "rebranding" themselves in a bid to make white supremacy palatable.

"The more we understand what the Nazis represented, the more we are able to analyze the contemporary versions of Nazis" and avoid being deceived by their efforts to subvert "what they actually represent," Simi said.

Simon said he'd like to see "The Plot Against America" make waves of its own.

"In a perfect world, this project gets off the entertainment pages and is argued on the editorial pages or op-ed pages," he said. "That's the reason to do it, is to have the argument now, because civil liberties are being affronted now. American institutions and American norms are under duress right now."

This story corrects the setting of "The Plot Against America" to the 1940s.

Lynn Elber can be reached on Twitter at <http://twitter.com/lynnelber>.

AP-NORC poll: How Americans describe 2020 Democrats, Trump

By HANNAH FINGERHUT Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Competent, a fighter, good. Old, out of touch, disingenuous. And, of course: Who's that?

As the 2020 campaign intensifies, a poll from The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research asked Americans to say what word or phrase comes to mind when they think of the top candidates, including incumbent President Donald Trump.

Each received both positive and negative responses; In some cases, a sizable share didn't know enough about the candidate to give a description.

Here's a look at how Americans characterized the contenders:

BIDEN

Many Americans think of the former vice president's job when asked about Joe Biden, but one response ranked above all others: He's "old." Sixteen percent of those thinking of a phrase to describe Biden mention his age, including comparable shares of Democrats and Republicans.

One 34-year-old Democrat said he is "living in the past," and others called him "past his prime."

About 1 in 10 either identify him as former vice president or think of former President Barack Obama. Biden has spent much of the campaign drawing on his connection to the first African American president.

Another 5% criticize his intellect or speaking skills, like calling him "bumbling," as one 78-year-old did, or mentioning gaffes.

Still, about 2 in 10 speak fondly of Biden, including many saying he is experienced or "good."

"Kind heart. Good man," said one 41-year-old man.

BLOOMBERG

The billionaire is known for just that: About 3 in 10 of those describing former New York City Mayor Mike Bloomberg mentioned his wealth, or suggested he was buying the election. Many simply said "money" or "rich." A 62-year-old Democrat described him as "buying votes."

Some others described Bloomberg as dishonest, calling him names like "liar."

Still, close to 2 in 10 Democrats included positive words on Bloomberg, including "action oriented," and "intelligent."

BUTTIGIEG

Pete Buttigieg sees more variation in the types of words people use to describe him. About 1 in 10 call out his age, saying he's "young." Roughly another 1 in 10 mention that he's smart and a similar share call him inexperienced. The 38-year-old former mayor of South Bend, Indiana, entered the contest distinguishing himself from his septuagenarian rivals, and advocating for Democrats to turn the page.

"Capable but inexperienced," said one 73-year-old Democrat.

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Another Democrat considered his age a benefit, not a flaw: "Young and new ideas," the 40-year-old said. Also distinguishing Buttigieg: He would be the first openly gay U.S. president. About 1 in 10 mention his sexual orientation.

Overall, about 4 in 10 Americans don't have something to say about Buttigieg.

KLOBUCHAR

Amy Klobuchar is a moderate, a midwesterner and among those running to be the first woman president of the United States. While those who describe her think of these and more, none stands above the others.

No single response is used by more than 6% of those describing the Minnesota senator. About half of Americans, including about 4 in 10 Democrats, don't give a description.

Among Democrats, 1 in 10 think of her intellect, calling her "smart," and 6% mention her centrist ideology and "pragmatism." Some give negative reactions, including a few saying she is "mean to her staff" — a widely reported news story early in the campaign. Others just called her "ok."

But more are generally positive, using words like "reasonable," "strong" and "sincere."

"Rational and experienced," said one Democrat, 67.

SANDERS

About a quarter name liberalism, socialism or communism when asked to think about Bernie Sanders. The Vermont senator has forcefully pushed the Democratic Party left with grassroots campaigns in both 2016 and 2020, calling for overhauls to health care, Wall Street and higher education. While Republicans are especially likely to mention ideology, nearly 1 in 10 Democrats do, too.

Some call him "crazy." Like Biden, Sanders also gets knocked for his age, with roughly 1 in 10 calling him "old."

"Too extreme and too old" said one Democrat, 55.

But among Democrats, many describe Sanders as "smart," "great" or "honest," or make references to health care policy.

"Leader of the future," offered a 28-year-old Democrat. Another Democrat, 62, called him a "warrior for the people."

STEYER

Like Bloomberg, Tom Steyer is known for being "rich," with wealth mentioned by 14% of those who volunteer a word to describe him.

One 30-year-old Democrat says he is "trying to buy the election."

About 1 in 10 point out the businessman's first foray into politics, such as saying he is "inexperienced" or "unknown." Overall, about half of Americans don't know enough to give a reaction to Steyer.

Another Democrat, 72, focused not on his wealth but on his chances: "Down to earth but not up to challenge."

Five percent of Democrats mention climate change, an issue he has championed.

WARREN

Americans don't coalesce around one way of describing Elizabeth Warren. A sizeable share think of "dishonest" and "lies" — descriptions that are concentrated heavily among Republicans. Five percent of those describing her mention her left-leaning politics. Similar percentages call her "smart" or "strong."

Among Democrats, descriptions focus on strength, a willingness to fight and competence.

"Intelligent and well-seasoned," says one Democrat, 45.

"She has a plan!" says another, 60, referencing the early-adopted mantra of the Massachusetts senator's campaign.

TRUMP

As is the case for most measures of the president, the words offered to describe him are deeply partisan.

Close to 2 in 10 Republicans describe Trump's leadership or his presidency. Others called him "good" or "honest." Trump faces almost no challenge for the Republican nomination, and responses suggest that's just fine with his supporters.

"Greatest president ever," said one Republican, 63. Many volunteered Trump's 2016 campaign slogan:

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MAGA. A 68-year-old woman called him a "great leader."

Still, some Republicans went negative, including calling him "arrogant" or a "liar."

Meanwhile, Democrats volunteered those and many other negative words in reaction to the president. Many labeled him "evil," "racist," "corrupt" and a "bully."

The AP-NORC poll of 1,074 adults was conducted Feb. 13-16 using a sample drawn from NORC's probability-based AmeriSpeak Panel, which is designed to be representative of the U.S. population. The margin of sampling error for all respondents is plus or minus 4.2 percentage points.

No one to vote? Nevada Democrats puzzle over empty precinct

By SCOTT SONNER Associated Press

RENO, Nev. (AP) — What if a neighborhood precinct was voting in Nevada's presidential caucuses and nobody came?

Democrats in one county were left scratching their heads about the possibility they had stumbled onto a phantom precinct during the party's third-in-the-nation presidential contest last week.

Not only did no one cast a ballot during early voting in precinct No. 7321, but nobody from there showed up to participate at Saturday's caucus site at the University of Nevada, Reno, where hundreds gathered from six other precincts in Washoe County.

Worried about the potential for a meltdown like the one that delayed official results in Iowa, site leader Austin Daly said they were prepared for the possibility of glitches with the iPads that were used to tabulate results or other software-related emergencies.

"And I expected big turnout, but never thought there would be a precinct with zero votes," said Daly, head of the UNR Young Democrats.

Amy Travis, a Bernie Sanders supporter from a neighboring precinct, was given the task of filling in the "zeros" next to all the candidates' names in precinct 7321.

But she thought it was strange. She looked up a map of the precinct on her cellphone and found it consists entirely of a 600-acre county park just west of the Reno campus.

"I had to call state party headquarters and they had to transfer me to someone else to figure it out," Daly said.

It turns out there is one registered voter who lives at the lone residence in the precinct: a park employee.

The employee didn't return messages from The Associated Press seeking comment. Robert Holland, ranger of Rancho San Rafael Regional Park, confirmed the employee lives at the residence that's part of an old frontier ranch homestead, which can be rented for weddings and other special events.

State party officials determined the precinct's lone delegate would be recorded as "uncommitted" at the precinct caucus level but does not advance to the next round at the county convention.

"The delegate just goes away," party spokeswoman Molly Forgey said Thursday.

Having few or no registered voters in precincts is not as unusual as it sounds in sparsely populated Nevada. Unbeknownst to many, state election law caps the maximum number of active registered voters per precinct at 3,000, but there is no minimum.

In fact, 108 of Washoe County's 555 precincts have no registered voters, county Registrar of Voters Deanna Spikula said Wednesday. The areas are designated as precincts partly because of the potential for future development or construction of even a few new houses in a rural area.

Washoe County covers more than 6,500 square miles (16,834 square kilometers) stretching from Reno to the northwest corner of Nevada — an area more than three times the size of Delaware.

"Every piece of land within the county is assigned to a precinct, whether people live there or not — just wild horses and jackrabbits," Spikula said.

There are even 72 of 1,146 precincts with no voters in Clark County, which is Nevada's most populated and includes Las Vegas. Joe P. Gloria, the county's registrar of voters, said the voter-less precincts in and around Las Vegas commonly include airports, drainage basins and areas beneath freeway interchanges.

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Forgey, the state party spokeswoman, said she wasn't aware of a precinct with no voters causing confusion or concerns at any other caucus sites.

Wayne Thorley, deputy secretary of state for elections, said he didn't immediately have the total number of voter-less precincts available statewide but confirmed that individual precincts must be established "to cover every part of the state."

"There are certain areas, particularly in urban areas, where nobody will ever live," he said. "It happens a lot when cities annex new areas, and it creates these weird no-man lands."

This story has been corrected to show that "uncommitted" delegates from precincts with no voters do not advance to the next round at the county convention.

Ben Affleck on the pain and catharsis of 'The Way Back'

By JAKE COYLE AP Film Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Of the many stories that have stuck with Ben Affleck from his Alcoholics Anonymous meetings, one has especially resonated for the actor. Recovery is often described as a process of removing a damaging habit from your life. One man articulated it in a more positive way. He said he quit drinking so he could be a free man.

"That's one of the most moving things that's stayed with me," says Affleck. "The desire for that freedom, and so I can be accountable to my kids."

After a turbulent few years, Affleck, 47, is trying to reclaim his life and reorder his career. In Affleck's new film, "The Way Back," both missions converge powerfully. He plays a former high-school basketball star brought back to coach his alma mater's team in Gavin O'Connor's movie, which opens March 6. The film has obvious similarities to Affleck's life. It's about a man struggling with alcoholism, divorce and midlife disappointment. It's about the hard road to recovery, a path that Affleck has been walking, with a few stumbles along the way, the last three years.

"I don't know all the answers. I'm only an expert in my own failings," Affleck says. "But the more expert you become in your own failings, interestingly, the less likely you are to repeat them, I've found. That is how my life has been getting better. I have a better relationship with my kids today than I did three years ago. I have a better relationship with my ex-wife, I think, than I did three years ago. I think I'm a better actor. I think I'm a more interesting person because most of the growth that I've had has come from pain."

Affleck smiles. "You notice how you never succeed and all your wildest dreams come true and you go: 'I got to change something!' It's when you hit a stumbling block that you say: 'OK, let's be really honest.'"

And honesty is what Affleck is now practicing, to a degree rarely seen in Hollywood, let alone for someone whose personal ups and downs have been such regular fodder for tabloids. In an interview early last week, Affleck was candid and clear-eyed about his battle for sobriety and the roots of his drinking. He met with The Associated Press at a New York high school after taping a special with Diane Sawyer and shortly before The New York Times published an intimate profile on him. Occasionally his voice quavered but mostly Affleck spoke earnestly and straightforwardly. He seemed freshly unburdened. Making "The Way Back," he said, helped him.

"Sometimes just feeling those feelings again purges them a little bit and frees you a little bit," says Affleck. "This movie was hard to make. Sometimes it was painful. And sometimes I was embarrassed. And sometimes I couldn't believe my life had any similarity to this."

When Brad Ingelsby's script came to Ben Affleck, it was titled "The Has-Been." Affleck was being pitched to direct. Coming off the best picture-winning "Argo," he last helmed the Prohibition-era crime thriller "Live by Night," an ambitious gangster film that made a modest impression at the box office. Affleck immediately connected with the character: Jack Cunningham, a former star athlete whose alcoholism, isolation and grief is lifted by a reluctant return to basketball.

If he made it, Affleck knew he'd get questions about parallels between the film and his life. "But, frankly, I get asked about that stuff, anyway," he shrugs.

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"Unfortunately, I had actually lived that life and done the research. I brought a certain perverse expertise because I knew what it was like to feel in thrall to a compulsion that wasn't good for me," Affleck says. "I knew how hopeless that can feel. And I knew how enormously frustrating it is. But I also knew something really important which is: People get better. You can get better."

Affleck appealed to O'Connor to direct. The two previously collaborated on the 2016 thriller "The Accountant," and O'Connor ("Warrior," "Miracle") has proven adept at channeling larger themes through sports dramas. But until they began working on "The Way Back," O'Connor didn't know the extent of Affleck's problem.

"Once we started to prep the movie, he went into rehab. He sort of fell off the wagon. So now we were prepping the movie while he was in rehab and we thought it was going to fall apart," said O'Connor. "But he still wanted to do it. When he got out, he was incredibly raw and vulnerable and I think a little lost just in regard to having to confront the demons."

Affleck says his drinking worsened around the time his marriage to Jennifer Garner was falling apart. Garner and Affleck, who have three children together, separated in 2015 and divorced in 2018. In those years, Affleck has made several trips to rehab. Last October, he was captured drunk on camera, which he then granted was "a slip."

"The times that I've relapsed, personally, have been not been because I've had some bad thing happen. It's been when I thought I had it licked," Affleck says. "I'm fixed! I've been fine! It's been a year and a half, who cares! I can have a glass of wine! And the next thing, you're on TMZ and it's a disaster. That teaches me that it's just not something I can do."

Coming to terms with that has been a humbling journey for Affleck. His track record, he grants, hasn't been perfect. "But for the last three years, 99% of my life I've spent sober," he says.

"It takes time to learn all the things you need to learn. And it also takes time to suffer enough until at some point there's something inside you that says, 'No mas. I give,'" says Affleck. "What it really is, personally in me and what I've seen in others that I want for myself, is a profound sense of humility. You are not stronger than the thing you're addicted to. It is stronger than you. It will always be stronger than you."

All of that pain, and then some, went into "The Way Back." For a scene in which Jack makes amends to his wife, O'Connor told Affleck he was just going to let the camera roll.

"It was probably the second take, Ben just had a breakdown. I'm getting chills thinking about it. It was like the dam broke and everything came out," says O'Connor. "I just remember the crew, everyone was frozen, watching him bear his soul. It was obviously real. A lot of things that he probably had to say in his own life, or maybe he had said, I don't know."

The scene remains in the movie but O'Connor didn't keep it all. It was too raw. "It would be too hard for an audience to watch, too personal," says O'Connor.

For Affleck, making "The Way Back" wasn't just about dealing with his own alcoholism, but also his father's. He got sober when Affleck was 19, but that childhood experience had ever since colored Affleck's impression of his dad. Affleck realized that he had been carrying a big chip on his shoulder from that time. "And it wasn't doing me any good," he says. "It was doing me harm."

"He was what you call a very low-bottom drunk. He needed to get really, really far down before he could get sober," says Affleck. "Unfortunately, those were really formative years for me. So I know how important these years are right now for my kids. These are the absolute most critical, vital years. I want to be there for absolutely as much of it as I possibly can."

Affleck has come to realize his father was just doing his best. His grandmother, too, he says, killed herself with barbiturates and alcohol in a hotel on Sunset Boulevard. His uncle, his father's brother, was an addict who shot himself in the chest. "Less and less do I see any real distinction between what the substance is that you're using to medicate but just the fact that you're medicating," says Affleck.

O'Connor credits Warner Bros. Chairman Toby Emmerich with green-lighting "The Way Back," a rarely seen thing in today's Hollywood: an intensely personal, adult-driven studio-made drama. It was made relatively inexpensively, with a budget of \$25 million, and it marks a clear pivot for Affleck. About a year ago, Affleck left behind Batman after several "Justice League" films. The standalone Batman film, once to

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star and be directed by Affleck, is instead being made by Matt Reeves with Robert Pattinson in the role. "When I had the opportunity to direct and star in the Batman stand-alone movie, I realized I wasn't passionate about it. And, A, if you're not passionate about it, you're probably not going to make a good movie. And, B, that movie absolutely deserves to be made by someone for whom it's their lifelong passion and dream," says Affleck. "My tastes have changed. I'm interested in different kinds of movies."

His new course, which he jokes is "obviously not the most profitable path you can possibly be on," is making human stories with pain and redemption. He's been busy. Affleck's brief stop in New York followed shooting "Deep Water," a Patricia Highsmith adaptation co-starring Ana de Armas, and preceded production on "The Last Duel," a medieval revenge drama directed by Ridley Scott. Affleck wrote it with Matt Damon (their first script together since "Good Will Hunting") and Nicole Holofcener.

Battles with alcoholism are never over, but they can get gradually easier to win. For now, at least, Affleck feels like he's grown. He's humbler. More honest. And closer to feeling free.

"I would not wish it on myself principally because of my children and because it has caused them pain, which I would give anything to change," says Affleck. "But I can't change the past. I can go from today. I can make sure today I'm good. That's what I've got. I'm a guy doing good today."

Follow AP Film Writer Jake Coyle on Twitter at: <http://twitter.com/jakecoyleAP>

US economy grew at 2.1% rate in Q4 but virus threat looms

By MARTIN CRUTSINGER AP Economics Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — The U.S. economy grew at an annual rate of 2.1% in the final quarter of last year, but damage from the spreading coronavirus is likely depressing growth in the current quarter and for the rest of the year.

The overall pace of growth in the October-December quarter was unchanged from its initial estimate a month ago, though the components were slightly altered, the Commerce Department said Thursday. A slowdown in business restocking was less severe than first believed. But a cutback in business investment in new equipment was more of a drag on growth than initially thought.

Economists have been downgrading their forecasts for the first quarter of this year as fears of the impact of the virus has escalated. Stock markets have plunged this week on news that the number of coronavirus cases worldwide has now topped 81,000.

On Thursday, the Dow Jones Industrial Average plunged 4.4%, intensifying a weeklong market rout as investors worried that the coronavirus outbreak will seriously damage the global economy.

The virus, which started in Wuhan, China, has spread to more than 30 countries, including the United States, Italy and South Korea.

Vital supply chains from China that companies in the United States and elsewhere depend on have been disrupted, and that problem is expected to worsen. Microsoft and Apple have warned about adverse impacts from the supply chain disruptions.

U.S. companies with sizeable operations in China are being impacted directly. McDonald's has closed hundreds of stores there. Starbucks has closed more than half of its locations. While it's begun to open stores in China where the outbreak has abated, it is now spreading faster outside of China.

In a report to investors Thursday, Goldman Sachs said the fallout from the virus would likely wipe out all the earnings growth it had been predicting for 2020 if the virus continues to spread. David Kostin, a strategist for the firm, said his baseline estimate is now for zero growth in S&P 500 earnings per share this year, down from an earlier forecast of 5.5% earnings growth.

The rising fears about the economic damage the virus can do have inflicted the worst losses on U.S. stocks in two years, less than a week after Wall Street was hitting record highs. To try to demonstrate the government's resolve to deal with the spread of the virus, President Donald Trump announced Wednesday that he was appointing Vice President Mike Pence to take the lead in coordinating U.S. actions.

But economists are warning that if the virus turns into a global pandemic, the impact could be severe

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enough to push the global economy and the U.S. economy into recessions.

"The global economy was already very weak because of the trade war, and it would not take much to shove it on its heels," said Mark Zandi, chief economist at Moody's Analytics.

Zandi said his baseline forecast, which optimistically assumes that the outbreak remains largely contained in China and dissipates by spring, projects that global growth will slow to 2.4% this year — 0.4 percentage point lower because of the virus.

He expects the annual pace of U.S. growth to slow to 1.3% in the current quarter, down by 0.6 percentage point because of the virus. He said for the year, he is forecasting U.S. growth of 1.7%. That would be the slowest annual growth of the Trump presidency and far below the 3%-plus growth that Trump had promised to deliver during the 2016 campaign.

Because of the market turbulence and the rising potential of adverse effects from the virus, expectation of interest rate cuts by the Federal Reserve have risen. The CME Group tracker of investment sentiment has put the possibility of a quarter-point cut as early as March at 37%, up from just 7% a week ago.

Diane Swonk, chief economist at Grant Thornton, said the possibility of two rate cuts this year "has gone up dramatically" because of the virus threats.

Until recently, many economists had expected that the Fed could keep rates unchanged the whole year after three rate cuts last year, when it was struggling to cushion the impact of Trump's trade war with China and a slowing global economy.

The estimated 2.1% annual growth pace in the October-December quarter followed an identical gain in the third quarter. For 2019 as a whole, the economy grew by 2.3%, the slowest pace since a 1.6% increase in 2016.

Trump is counting on a strong economy to propel him to re-election in November. But for each year of his presidency, economic expansion has fallen below the levels he had promised to deliver during the campaign, when he derided the growth rates achieved under President Barack Obama.

While growth did jump to 2.9% in 2018, propelled by the 2017 tax cut and increased government spending, it returned last year to near the average achieved by Obama.

Thursday's report from the Commerce Department was its second of three estimates of economic growth for the October-December quarter. It showed that consumer spending, which accounts for 70 percent of economic growth, grew at a 1.7% annual rate in the fourth quarter, down from an initial estimate of 1.8% growth.

Business investment on new plants and equipment was also lower, falling at a 2.3% rate, worse than the initial estimate of a 1.5% drop. These weaker numbers were offset by more business restocking of store shelves and upward revisions to residential investment and federal government spending.

Feds cite new evidence against former Mexico security chief

By JIM MUSTIAN Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — New evidence against Mexico's former top security official has been uncovered since he was charged with taking tens of millions of dollars in bribes to protect Joaquin "El Chapo" Guzman's notorious Sinaloa cartel, federal prosecutors said Thursday.

"The strength of the government's case has only increased" since a grand jury indicted Genaro Garcia Luna last year on charges he conspired to traffic cocaine and made false statements, prosecutors wrote in court filings.

Prosecutors wrote they have additional witnesses that will testify Garcia Luna "agreed to assist the Sinaloa Cartel in exchange for millions of dollars in bribes."

The testimony is corroborated, the government said, by newly discovered financial records that show Garcia Luna had been living off those bribes since moving to the United States with his family several years ago.

Garcia Luna denies the charges and says he intends to fight them at his New York City trial. His defense attorney, Cesar de Castro, has said the case is built upon the discredited — and self-serving — accounts

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of drug traffickers.

The new details came as prosecutors asked a federal magistrate in Brooklyn to reject Garcia Luna's request to be released on \$1 million bond while awaiting trial.

De Castro argued it would be "nearly impossible" for Garcia Luna to flee the United States, saying he also is under investigation in Mexico and would be arrested upon entering that country. Garcia Luna has surrendered his passport, he added.

"The government comes in and says he's a flight risk because he's Mexican and has access to corrupt Mexican officials," de Castro said. "He is not a flight risk."

Prosecutors countered that Garcia Luna has "every incentive" to flee prosecution, saying he faces a mandatory minimum of 10 years behind bars on each of three conspiracy counts. "This incentive is only further amplified by the strength of the government's evidence in this case," they wrote.

U.S. Magistrate Judge Robert M. Levy did not rule out the possibility of Garcia Luna being released on bond, but said he wants to know more about the sureties who would be on the hook financially should he abscond before trial.

Garcia Luna is accused of accepting tens of millions of dollars in bribes — often stuffed in briefcases full of cash — to shield the Sinaloa cartel from law enforcement.

Prosecutors allege that Garcia Luna amassed a fortune allowing Guzman's narco-trafficking syndicate to operate with impunity in Mexico. Before convicting Guzman last year, jurors in his New York trial heard former cartel member Jesus Zambada testify that he personally made at least \$6 million in hidden payments to Garcia Luna, on behalf of his older brother, cartel boss Ismael "El Mayo" Zambada.

Guzman was sentenced to life in prison last year after a jury convicted him in a massive drug conspiracy involving murder and mayhem.

The cartel shipped multi-ton drug loads to New York and other American cities, including the federal district covering Brooklyn and Queens, prosecutors say.

Garcia Luna, who lived in Miami before being charged, led Mexico's Federal Investigation Agency from 2001 to 2005, and from 2006 to 2012 served as Mexico's secretary of public security.

Biggest explosion seen in universe came from black hole

By **MARCIA DUNN AP Aerospace Writer**

CAPE CANAVERAL, Fla. (AP) — Astronomers have discovered the biggest explosion seen in the universe, originating from a super-massive black hole.

Scientists reported Thursday that the blast came from a black hole in a cluster of galaxies 390 million light-years away.

The explosion was so large it carved out a crater in the hot gas that could hold 15 Milky Ways, said lead author Simona Giacintucci of the Naval Research Laboratory in Washington.

It's five times bigger than the previous record-holder.

Astronomers used NASA's Chandra X-Ray Observatory to make the discovery, along with a European space observatory and ground telescopes. They believe the explosion came from the heart of the Ophiuchus cluster of thousands of galaxies: a large galaxy at the center contains a colossal black hole.

Black holes don't just draw matter in. They also blast out jets of material and energy.

The first hint of this giant explosion actually came in 2016. Chandra images of the Ophiuchus galaxy cluster revealed an unusual curved edge, but scientists ruled out an eruption given the amount of energy that would have been needed to carve out such a large cavity in the gas.

The two space observatories, along with radio data from telescopes in Australia and India, confirmed that the curvature was, indeed, part of a cavity.

"The radio data fit inside the X-rays like a hand in a glove," co-author Maxim Markevitch of NASA's Goddard Space Flight Center in Maryland, said in a statement. "This is the clincher that tells us an eruption of unprecedented size occurred here."

The blast is believed to be over by now: There are no signs of jets currently shooting from the black hole.

More observations are needed in other wavelengths to better understand what occurred, according to the team.

The findings appeared in the *Astrophysical Journal*.

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

Amid virus, Saudis close Islam's holiest sites to foreigners

By JON GAMBRELL Associated Press

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates (AP) — Saudi Arabia on Thursday closed off the holiest sites in Islam to foreign pilgrims over the coronavirus, disrupting travel for thousands of Muslims already headed to the kingdom and potentially affecting plans later this year for millions more ahead of the fasting month of Ramadan and the annual hajj pilgrimage.

The unprecedented move, which wasn't taken even during the 1918 flu epidemic that killed tens of millions worldwide, showed the growing worry about the virus across the Middle East, which has more than 360 confirmed cases.

The region's hardest-hit nation is Iran, which is Saudi Arabia's biggest nearby rival, with the death toll reaching at least 26, the largest behind only China, where the epidemic began.

The number of infections in Iran has spiked by over 100 to at least 254, but a World Health Organization official said he believes that figure is "a substantial underestimate of the true number."

Those Iranians who have fallen ill include Vice President Masoumeh Ebtekar, better known as "Sister Mary," the English-speaking spokeswoman for the students who seized the U.S. Embassy in Tehran in 1979 and sparked the 444-day hostage crisis, state media reported.

Saudi Arabia barred 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. Authorities also suspended entry to travelers holding tourist visas from nations affected by the virus.

"We expect that this will give Saudi Arabia a chance to really strengthen their own disease control measures for the moment," said Rick Brennan, the WHO's emergency director for the Eastern Mediterranean.

The kingdom's Al Saud ruling family stakes its legitimacy in overseeing and protecting the sites, and it appeared to reflect worries about pilgrims spreading the virus.

The outbreak's epicenter in Iran is the holy city of Qom, where the faithful are drawn to a famous Shiite shrine that has stayed open despite calls by the civilian government for it and other sites to be closed. Authorities have canceled Friday prayers in Qom, Tehran and other cities.

There have been no confirmed cases of the virus in Saudi Arabia, although infected Saudis are under care in neighboring Bahrain.

"We ask God Almighty to spare all humanity from all harm," the Saudi Foreign Ministry said in a statement announcing the decision.

By leaving the suspension of travel to the holy sites open-ended, Saudi Arabia has raised the possibility of disruption for Ramadan and the hajj.

The news shocked the world's Muslims, many of whom 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.

Some of them who are already headed to Saudi Arabia heard about the ban as they reached airports in Pakistan, Indonesia and Turkey.

Authorities at Cairo's international airport said the decision created "intense confusion" and "extreme anger" among thousands of passengers waiting for flights. Reinforcements were called to control the crowd as the news broke, according to security officials who spoke on condition of anonymity because they weren't allowed to talk to reporters.

"This is a long-awaited journey for me and my four members of family," said Achmad Warsito, a disappointed pilgrim in Indonesia. "No words can describe how I feel today."

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Disease outbreaks have always been a concern surrounding the hajj, which is required of all able-bodied Muslims once in their lives. Pilgrims fought off a malaria outbreak in 632, cholera in 1821 killed an estimated 20,000, and another cholera outbreak in 1865 killed 15,000 before spreading worldwide.

More recently, Saudi Arabia faced danger from a different coronavirus, one that causes the Middle East respiratory syndrome, or MERS. The kingdom increased its public health measures during the hajj in 2012 and 2013, urging the sick and the elderly not to take part.

In recent years, Saudi officials also instituted bans on pilgrims coming from countries affected by the Ebola virus.

Since the new coronavirus emerged in December, it has sickened 82,000 people globally and caused more than 2,800 deaths from the illness that has been dubbed COVID-19.

While millions attend the hajj, which this year is set for late July into early August, millions more visit the kingdom's holy sites year round. 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 fasting month of Ramadan, which begins at the end of April. The exact dates for the hajj and Ramadan always depend on the sighting of the moon due to the lunar calendar.

Pilgrims spend upward of 10 days at holy sites, mingling in tight quarters. Many are older, have pre-existing diseases and come from countries "with suboptimal disease surveillance," according to a letter Thursday in *The Lancet* medical journal. Respiratory infections already are the most-common illnesses.

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

Dr. Ziad A Memish, a Saudi professor who studies infectious diseases and co-signed the letter, 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," he said, "especially since the Iranian example illustrates how a religious crossroads can so quickly amplify the spread and reach of the virus."

Dalia Samhuri of the WHO's regional health emergencies department told AP that the Middle East "is plagued by emergencies," adding that two-thirds of its 22 countries are "directly or indirectly facing complex emergencies."

She said weak health systems increase the vulnerabilities of populations and the risk of disease spread so that they "may not have the capacity to early detect and rapidly respond to the COVID-19."

Brennan, the WHO regional director, said "the biggest area of concern" was Iran.

"We believe the figure 250 is a substantial underestimate of the true number," he said. "And that's because our disease surveillance now, our documentation, hasn't really caught up with the disease yet. But we expect in the coming days that the numbers will increase substantially."

Iran's Health Ministry spokesman Kianoush Jahanpour seemed to address that, saying new labs in Iran were conducting tests and the number of confirmed cases could continue to rise.

Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei praised medical workers, calling their efforts "very invaluable."

The virus has struck the official in charge of Iran's response, as well as at least two lawmakers.

The state-run IRNA news agency reported that Ebtekar, the Iranian vice president and hostage-takers' spokeswoman, had been infected and had quarantined herself at home. She had attended a Cabinet meeting Wednesday with President Hassan Rouhani and other top officials and appeared pale in video on state media.

During the 1979 hostage crisis, Ebtekar threatened to "destroy" the Americans if a military raid tried to rescue them.

IRNA separately reported 81-year-old cleric Hadi Khosroshahi, Iran's former ambassador to the Vatican,

died of the coronavirus infection at a Tehran hospital after falling ill in Qom. ____

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

UK court blocks Heathrow expansion over climate concerns

By **DANICA KIRKA** Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — Heathrow Airport's plans to increase capacity of Europe's biggest travel hub by over 50% were stalled Thursday when a British court said the government failed to consider its commitment to combat climate change when it approved the project.

The ruling throws in doubt the future of the 14 billion-pound (\$18 billion) plan to build a third runway at Heathrow, the west London hub that already handles more than 1,300 flights a day.

While Heathrow officials said they planned to appeal, Prime Minister Boris Johnson's government indicated it wouldn't challenge the ruling by the Court of Appeal.

"We won!" said London Mayor Sadiq Khan, a long-time opponent of the project who joined other local officials and environmental groups in challenging the national government's approval of Heathrow's expansion plans.

At stake is a project that business groups and Heathrow officials argue is crucial for the British economy as the U.K. looks to increase links with countries from China to the United States after leaving the European Union. Heathrow has already reached the capacity of its current facilities, and a third runway is needed to serve the growing demands of travelers and international trade, they say.

Environmental campaigners, however, challenged the project because of concerns that a third runway would encourage increased air travel and the carbon emissions blamed for global warming. The British government has committed to reducing greenhouse gas emissions as a signatory to the 2016 Paris Agreement, which seeks to limit temperature increases to 1.5 degrees Celsius over pre-industrial levels.

The court upheld the appeal, saying the government had failed to consider its commitments under the Paris Agreement when it approved a national policy on airport capacity in southeastern England that paved the way for a third runway at Heathrow. That policy statement backed the Heathrow project over a competing plan from Gatwick Airport, 30 miles (50 kilometers) south of central London, and a proposal to build a new airport in the Thames estuary east of London.

In a narrowly written opinion, the three-judge panel stressed that it wasn't ruling on the merits of the Heathrow project. Instead, the court said the national policy statement would be suspended until the government has reviewed the findings in accordance with Britain's obligations under the Paris Agreement.

"We have not found that a national policy statement supporting this project is necessarily incompatible with the United Kingdom's commitment to reducing carbon emissions and mitigating climate change under the Paris Agreement, or with any other policy the Government may adopt or international obligation it may undertake," the court said.

"The consequence of our decision is that the Government will now have the opportunity to reconsider the (national policy statement) in accordance with the clear statutory requirements that Parliament has imposed."

The Department for Transport said the government wouldn't challenge the ruling.

"We take seriously our commitments on the environment, clean air and reducing carbon emissions," the department said in a statement. "We will carefully consider this complex judgment and set out our next steps in due course."

Heathrow said the issue raised by court's ruling is "eminently fixable," and it will work with the government to resolve the problem. The airport also said it planned to appeal the ruling to the Supreme Court.

"Expanding Heathrow, Britain's biggest port and only hub, is essential to achieving the Prime Minister's vision of global Britain," the airport said in a statement. "We will get it done the right way, without jeopardising the planet's future."

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Thursday's ruling is just the latest twist in a 13-year battle over increasing airport capacity in and around London.

Choosing a project pits the economic benefits of expansion against the pollution, noise and congestion that it will produce. The issue is so toxic that politicians created an independent commission to weigh the options.

Amid furious public relations battles, the Airports Commission in 2015 backed a third runway at Heathrow. Parliament finally approved the airport policy statement in June 2018.

But things have changed since then. Most notably, perhaps, is Boris Johnson's election as prime minister last year. Johnson, a long-time opponent of Heathrow expansion, once promised to lie down in front of the bulldozers to prevent construction of the third runway.

Tony Travers, an expert on London issues at the London School of Economics, pointed out that the debate over Heathrow has been going on intermittently since the 1960s and choosing another option to expand airport capacity would take years.

Meanwhile, the government has staked its future on increasing trade with nations outside the EU, and in this context it makes little sense to ignore the Heathrow project.

"Brexit means trade with countries further away than you can get on a train," Travers said.

The Department for Transportation argued that the Heathrow 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.

Tim Alderslade, chief executive of Airlines U.K., an industry body representing U.K.-registered airlines, described Thursday's decision as "extremely disappointing."

"The economic prize is enormous if expansion is done right, with airlines ready to respond to the unlocking of new capacity by creating new routes and helping to connect the U.K. to new markets and destinations," he said.

The court dismissed appeals that dealt with issues such as noise and air pollution raised by Heathrow's neighbors.

But local campaigners, some of whom have been fighting expansion for decades, popped champagne corks and cheered when they heard the ruling. Many saw it as decisive.

"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, the local government body for a community in the flight path of the proposed runway. "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."

Fight by 2 Republicans for Georgia Senate seat unnerves GOP

By BEN NADLER and ALAN FRAM Associated Press

MARIETTA, Ga. (AP) — A Republican congressman's decision to challenge freshly appointed Sen. Kelly Loeffler is pitting two visions of the GOP's future against each other. So far, it's divided voters and been anything but polite.

Loeffler, 49, is a wealthy businesswoman and political newcomer who filled a vacant Senate seat in January after being appointed by Georgia's governor. Top Republicans hope she'll help the GOP lure back suburban women, a pivotal voting bloc that's fled the party in dismay over President Donald Trump's crude behavior and hard-edged policies.

But among those challenging Loeffler in a Nov. 3 special election is Rep. Doug Collins, a four-term congressman popular with the GOP's conservative base. Collins, 53, who makes frequent appearances on the right-leaning Fox News Channel, was one of Trump's fiercest defenders during the impeachment fight as the top Republican on the House Judiciary Committee, and he's portraying himself as more conservative and loyal to Trump than Loeffler is.

Against the backdrop of this year's presidential and congressional elections, the showdown looms as a test of which path makes sense for the GOP in a red-leaning state where Democrats have carved robust

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inroads. It's also left many voters struggling to make up their minds.

"Doug Collins has got a track record. Kelly is an unknown product," said Tony Casteel, an electrical contractor from Marietta, a bustling suburb in Cobb County, just northwest of Atlanta. "But you know, I understand why Gov. Kemp appointed Kelly. He's trying to reach out to suburban women. Cobb County has gone blue."

The fight has fed GOP worries of a battle that could wound Republicans in Georgia this fall. Trump, GOP Sen. David Perdue and the state's 14 House seats will also be on the ballot.

Instead of separate party primaries for Loeffler's seat, Georgia has lumped all candidates into a single contest Nov. 3. If no one receives half the vote, there will be a Jan. 5 runoff between the top two vote-getters, no matter their affiliation.

Republicans fret that a drawn-out battle between Loeffler and Collins will bloody both, leaving a Democrat unscathed and likely qualifying for the runoff. That could be the Rev. Raphael Warnock, who is backed by Washington Democrats and is pastor of the Atlanta church where Martin Luther King Jr. preached.

"If we're busy tearing ourselves apart in September and October, we could lose Sen. Perdue and lose the state for the president and lose" Loeffler's seat, too, former House Speaker Newt Gingrich, R-Ga., said in an interview. Gingrich is backing Loeffler.

Republicans control the Senate, 53-47. Democrats will need to gain at least four seats to capture the majority if Trump is reelected, one less if he's not. Democrats' chances of winning control seem uphill, and GOP-held seats in Colorado, Arizona, Maine and North Carolina are considered more at risk than Georgia's.

The faceoff between Loeffler and Collins has been intense.

On Thursday, the executive director of Senate Republicans' official campaign arm — which supports Loeffler — retweeted a report by The Atlanta Journal-Constitution that the organization was warning top GOP Senate aides to steer clear of a fundraiser Collins had planned for early March.

Kevin McLaughlin, who runs the National Republican Senatorial Committee, tweeted Thursday that Collins' campaign was a "kamikaze mission" whose staffers don't "give a damn about irreparable harm they're doing to Collins or POTUS," the acronym for president of the United States. The campaign committee is allied with Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, R-Ky., a Loeffler supporter.

As the Senate considered two GOP bills Tuesday curbing abortions — doomed votes that Collins' backers suspected were aimed at letting Loeffler burnish her conservative credentials — Collins' campaign was running digital ads. They accused Loeffler of backing abortion rights and said, "She should re-file to run as a Democrat."

The spots cited a 2018 promotion by the WNBA — Loeffler owns the Atlanta Dream, one of the women's basketball league's teams — in which money was distributed to groups including Planned Parenthood. One of Collins' ads included a doctored picture of Loeffler holding out a handful of cash under Planned Parenthood's logo.

Loeffler, who declined requests for interviews, spoke on the Senate floor during Tuesday's abortion debate. "I pray that the American people will recognize that lives hang in the balance," she said. She voted for both Republican bills to curb abortions.

Loeffler's supporters accused Collins of lingering resentment over his failed attempt to persuade Georgia Gov. Brian Kemp to select him for the vacant seat. Collins had Trump's support for the appointment, but it went to Loeffler.

In a reference to that episode, spokesman Jesse Hunt of the Senate campaign committee called Collins "everything Georgians hate about Washington: a swamp creature drunk off the bitter taste of sour grapes."

The committee also greeted Collins' entry into the race by warning it would do no business with his political consultants if they stayed with him. The organization, which spends over \$100 million every election cycle, has for years had a policy of protecting incumbents against GOP challengers.

"We've had to overcome the establishment from trying to kill us off, threatening our vendors," Collins said in an interview. "We're moving right ahead."

Loeffler took office Jan. 6 to replace GOP Sen. Johnny Isakson, 75, who retired in faltering health. She has stressed messaging focused on support for Trump and conservative causes like gun rights and build-

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ing a wall along the Mexican border.

Loeffler, whose husband runs a company that owns the New York Stock Exchange, has pledged to spend \$20 million of her own money on the campaign and already has ads blanketing TV.

"Kelly will invest whatever it takes to win," said spokeswoman Caitlin O'Dea.

McConnell has urged Trump to endorse Loeffler, according to one GOP consultant, while another said McConnell has told Trump he will back her no matter what the president does. Both Republicans spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss private conversations, and both said Trump gave no clear indication of what he will do.

Loeffler's supporters have tried persuading Collins to abandon the race, to no avail. In one suggestion that the White House has sought an alternative, Trump told reporters last week that he was considering nominating Collins as national intelligence director. That idea didn't bear fruit.

Republican presidential candidates have carried Georgia since 1996. Even so, the state's suburbs, echoing the rest of the nation's, have turned increasingly blue, which along with growing populations of Hispanics and other minorities have made Democrats more competitive and Republicans nervous.

"It's no secret that Republicans have been hurting among college-educated women in suburban communities across the nation, and Atlanta is filled with college-educated suburban women voters," said GOP pollster Whit Ayres.

In Collins' hometown of Gainesville, Georgia, retirees Angela and Louis Spear said they supported Collins. "He's been real effective in the House, and he's done a great job during the impeachment hearings," said Louis Spear.

Karyl McBurnett, a Republican from Rockmart, Georgia, said she was leaning toward Loeffler. She said Collins' familiarity among conservatives was irrelevant.

"It's what they stand for and the changes that they want to make," McBurnett said.

Fram reported from Washington.

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

Virus response in Mideast tainted by political views of Iran

By ZEINA KARAM Associated Press

BEIRUT (AP) — In the Middle East, even virus outbreaks are political.

The coronavirus has killed 26 people in Iran -- the highest toll outside of China where it originated. Many of the over 240 confirmed cases in the region have links to Iran, including dozens in Kuwait and Bahrain, six in Iraq and two in Lebanon.

That spread has put renewed scrutiny on Tehran, with many of its regional foes blaming it for mishandling the outbreak.

In sharp contrast to Europe, where countries kept borders with Italy open despite a cluster of virus cases there, Iran's neighbors have all announced measures to cut links with the country, either completely closing their borders and suspending air traffic or limiting travel. In an extraordinary move that reflects the growing concern, Saudi Arabia on Thursday banned foreign pilgrims from entering the kingdom to visit Islam's holiest sites in Mecca.

As the virus spreads, so has the criticism directed at Iran. But it has fallen along familiar political fault lines, with regional politics shaping the accusations.

In the Gulf countries where anti-Iran sentiment runs high, Saudi-funded media was quick to blame Iran.

"Something is rotten in the state of Persia: the Islamic Republic of Iran is engaging in a large-scale cover-up of the coronavirus epidemic that could wreak misery on the lives of millions," wrote Mohammed Alyahya, the editor-in-chief of Al-Arabiya English outlet based in Dubai.

He added: "This is not a government that can be trusted to tell the truth, even when lives are at stake."

One Dubai-based newspaper wrongly claimed in a front-page headline that all cases of the new coronavirus in the region came from the Islamic Republic. That would be convenient for the United Arab Emirates,

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a federation of seven sheikhdoms home to Dubai whose 13 coronavirus cases predominantly trace back to China.

The UAE has projected the Chinese flag on the world's tallest building and ensured long-haul flights by local carriers Etihad and Emirates continue to Beijing even as other airlines stopped flying to mainland China. That's in part due to hopes that Chinese tourists and investments will help the country's ailing real estate market and wider economy as oil prices remain low.

Blaming Iran for the outbreak increases Iran's isolation and also comes as both the UAE and Saudi Arabia have encouraged the harder line against Tehran that has been taken by U.S. President Donald Trump.

In countries like Iraq and Lebanon, where politicians and public opinion are sharply split between pro- and anti-Iran camps, the reaction has been predictable. Many Lebanese who support an Iran-allied political coalition led by the Shiite Muslim Hezbollah group have remained silent on the issue, while some backers of rival groups blame Tehran for the spread of the virus into the country.

"Thank you, Iran, for allowing a jet carrying people infected with coronavirus to enter our airspace. Is this the way countries cooperate and is this the help that your promised Lebanon?" said the editorial of the local MTV station, a harsh critic of Hezbollah.

The country's two coronavirus cases are two Lebanese women who returned home on a Feb. 20 flight from Qom, the Iranian city hit hardest by the virus.

Critics assailed Tehran and the Hezbollah-supported Lebanese government for allowing the plane to land in Beirut. Protesters picketed the Health Ministry on Wednesday, urging authorities to ban flights from countries with high infection rates.

Hezbollah's deputy secretary general Naim Kassem hit back, saying that politicizing the outbreak is "immoral" and that only people "with no conscience or humanity" would do so.

In neighboring Iraq, where anti-government protesters have also been railing against Iran's heavy-handed political influence in their country, many people have expressed open resentment at Tehran's handling of the crisis as well as the performance of their own Iran-allied caretaker government.

The government closed Iraq's borders to Iranian nationals after an Iranian religious student tested positive for the virus in the Shiite holy city of Najaf this week, but kept the frontier open to Iraqis. Since then, four more members of the same family in the northern city of Kirkuk and a young man in the capital of Baghdad have tested positive after returning from Iran.

"We sympathize with the Iranian people from a humanitarian point of view, but we will not sympathize with the Iranian government no matter what," said Muhammad Baqir, a 22-year-old protester from Najaf. "Iran did not offer anything to Iraq. All it did is steal and support militias and now it is exporting viruses," he added, saying the outbreak is sure to blunt the momentum of Iraq's protest movement over contagion fears.

Ihsan al-Shammari, an Iraqi political analyst, said the outbreak came at a time when Iraqis already were demonstrating against Iranian interference in their country.

"The appearance of the coronavirus and its arrival in Iraq via Iran exacerbates this anger and serves as yet another catalyst against Iran," he said.

Afghanistan confirmed its first coronavirus case Monday, and the victim had crossed into the country from Iran over the border into Herat province. There was general anger and blame that the government in Kabul was not doing enough to protect its citizens.

Shakeb Soroush, a 21-year-old university student in Kabul, said both China and Iran were careless and didn't act quickly enough to halt the spread of the virus but "we can't blame them for everything."

While Afghanistan has closed its borders with Iran, Soroush said there were unofficial crossing points that are not under government control.

"We are so concerned that the death toll could rise here because we don't have enough facilities," he added.

Associated Press writers Qassim Abdul-Zahra in Baghdad, Jon Gambrell in Dubai, the United Arab Emirates, and Rahim Faiez in Kabul, Afghanistan, contributed.

AP-NORC poll: Election security, integrity worry Americans

By **MARY CLARE JALONICK** and **HANNAH FINGERHUT** Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Americans have widespread concerns about the security and integrity of elections, with few saying they have high confidence that votes in the 2020 presidential election will be counted accurately.

A poll from The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research finds skepticism about the democratic process in the United States. While a third of Americans say they have high confidence in an accurate count, roughly another third are only moderately confident and a remaining third say they have little confidence.

“What’s to prevent old Vlad Putin from interfering in the election? I don’t know,” says Reid Gibson, an independent voter in Missouri, referring to the Russian president, who U.S. intelligence agencies say interfered in the 2016 election with a sophisticated operation to sow division and help elect Donald Trump, a Republican.

FBI Director Christopher Wray told Congress this month that Russia is still engaged in “information warfare” heading into the 2020 election but that law enforcement has not seen efforts to target infrastructure like voting machines.

Still, U.S. officials say one of Russia’s goals is to sow doubt about the integrity of U.S. elections, and the poll suggests that even if Russia isn’t targeting voting infrastructure it may be achieving that goal because of the lack of voter confidence following from the 2016 election.

Gibson, who says he leans Democratic, is pessimistic about the state of U.S. politics and has little confidence that votes in the 2020 presidential election will be counted accurately. He says he’s been concerned about the way elections are conducted since 2000, when voter problems in Florida delayed resolution of the presidential election and a Supreme Court decision to stop a ballot recount ultimately put George W. Bush, a Republican, in office.

In general, Americans have mixed feelings about the way the country’s political leaders are chosen, with about as many saying they are optimistic as saying they are pessimistic.

There also are widespread fears about security vulnerabilities as well as voter suppression and voter fraud. About half of Americans say they are highly concerned that the country’s voting systems might be vulnerable to hackers, and about that many also are strongly concerned about foreign governments interfering by tampering with election results or influencing American attitudes.

But concerns vary significantly by partisanship, with Democrats more likely than Republicans to express worries about the security of elections. About 6 in 10 Democrats say they are very or extremely concerned that voting systems might be vulnerable to hackers. Roughly two-thirds also are highly concerned that foreign governments will interfere in 2020 by tampering with results or influencing what Americans think about political candidates.

By contrast, fewer than half of Republicans express significant concern about hackers, and just about a quarter are highly concerned about any form of foreign interference.

U.S. intelligence agencies and special counsel Robert Mueller found that Russia interfered in the 2016 presidential election. Mueller charged 13 Russians in a covert social media campaign that prosecutors said was aimed at dividing public opinion on hot-button social issues as well as propping up Trump while denigrating Hillary Clinton, the 2016 Democratic nominee.

The government has said that Russian agents also searched for vulnerabilities within election systems in all 50 states during the 2016 election cycle, though there is no evidence that votes were changed.

Trump has often pushed back on the findings by his own intelligence agencies, saying frequently that investigations into interference were a “hoax.”

Voter fraud and voter suppression also elicit a wide partisan divide. Nearly 7 in 10 Republicans show concerns about voter fraud, saying people voting who are not eligible is a major problem in U.S. elections. That compares with about a quarter of Democrats.

Meanwhile, Democrats are concerned about voter suppression. Almost two-thirds say it is a major problem

that people who are eligible are not allowed to vote, while only about a third of Republicans say the same.

The opposing views come as Republicans in some states have implemented laws requiring voters to show identification, arguing that it will combat voter fraud. Democrats have fought many of those laws, saying they disenfranchise some voters.

With their candidate sitting in the Oval Office, Republicans are about twice as likely as Democrats to say they are optimistic about the way political leaders are chosen. Republicans also are more likely than Democrats to be strongly confident that votes will be counted accurately.

"I think it's about as fair as it could be," says Richard Merritt, 53, a Republican from Maine who supports Trump. "If someone was trying to hack into a voting system, the United States would be on top of that before you and I even knew it."

Views on election integrity and security also divide along racial lines. Roughly two-thirds of black Americans say they have little confidence that votes in 2020 will be counted accurately, compared with fewer than 4 in 10 white Americans or Hispanics saying the same. Wide shares of black Americans, more so than white Americans or Hispanics, are concerned about hackers and foreign interference.

Robert King, a 70-year-old African American man from Michigan, says he might not even vote this year "because of the tampering and all of this other stuff going on." He says he's concerned that his vote might not even be counted.

Nearly 8 in 10 black Americans also say it's a major problem that people who are eligible are not allowed to vote.

Richard Hasen, author of the book "Election Meltdown: Dirty Tricks, Distrust, and the Threat to American Democracy," says voter identification laws have led voters in both major political parties to believe that the other side is cheating. "There is increasingly incendiary rhetoric" on the voter fraud issue, he says.

Hasen says he believes many Americans' concerns about the process come after they tune into major news events, such as election problems in the recent Iowa caucuses or Mueller's investigation into Russian interference.

"I think there are threats to our system," Hasen says, "but I think the question of voter confidence is separate from the reality."

The AP-NORC poll of 1,074 adults was conducted Feb. 13-16 using a sample drawn from NORC's probability-based AmeriSpeak Panel, which is designed to be representative of the U.S. population. The margin of sampling error for all respondents is plus or minus 4.2 percentage points.

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.

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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.

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>

Today in History By The Associated Press

Today in History

Today is Friday, Feb. 28, the 59th day of 2020. There are 307 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On Feb. 28, 1953, scientists James D. Watson and Francis H.C. Crick announced they had discovered the double-helix structure of DNA.

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On this date:

In 1844, a 12-inch gun aboard the USS Princeton exploded as the ship was sailing on the Potomac River, killing Secretary of State Abel P. Upshur, Navy Secretary Thomas W. Gilmer and several others.

In 1917, The Associated Press reported that the United States had obtained a diplomatic communication sent by German Foreign Minister Arthur Zimmermann to a German official in Mexico proposing a German alliance with Mexico and Japan should the U.S. enter World War I. (Outrage over the telegram helped propel America into the conflict.)

In 1942, the heavy cruiser USS Houston and the Australian light cruiser HMAS Perth were attacked by Japanese forces during the World War II Battle of Sunda Strait; both were sunk shortly after midnight on March 1 with a total loss of more than 1,000 men.

In 1975, 42 people were killed in London's Underground when a train smashed into the end of a tunnel.

In 1983, the long-running TV series "M-A-S-H" ended after 11 seasons on CBS with a special 2½-hour finale that was watched by an estimated 121.6 million people.

In 1988, the 15th Olympic Winter Games held its closing ceremony in Calgary, Alberta.

In 1993, a gun battle erupted at a religious compound near Waco, Texas, when Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms agents tried to arrest Branch Davidian leader David Koresh on weapons charges; four agents and six Davidians were killed as a 51-day standoff began.

In 1996, Britain's Princess Diana agreed to divorce Prince Charles. (Their 15-year marriage officially ended in August 1996; Diana died in a car crash in Paris a year after that.)

In 2005, In Santa Maria, California, the prosecution and defense gave opening statements in the sexual molestation trial of Michael Jackson, who was later acquitted.

In 2013, Benedict XVI became the first pope in 600 years to resign, ending an eight-year pontificate. (Benedict was succeeded the following month by Pope Francis.)

In 2014, delivering a blunt warning to Moscow, President Barack Obama expressed deep concern over reported military activity inside Ukraine by Russia and warned "there will be costs" for any intervention.

In 2018, Walmart announced that it would no longer sell firearms and ammunition to people younger than 21 and would remove items resembling assault-style rifles from its website. Dick's Sporting Goods said it would stop selling assault-style rifles and ban the sale of all guns to anyone under 21.

Ten years ago: Sidney Crosby scored the winning goal in overtime to give Canada a 3-2 victory over the United States in the final event of the Vancouver Olympics. Canada earned its 14th gold medal, the most by any country at any Winter Olympics. The American silver was the 37th medal won by the United States at these games, also the most by any country at any Winter Olympics. (The U.S. won the medals race for the first time since 1932.)

Five years ago: Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro announced his country would shrink the size of the U.S. Embassy staff, limit the activities of U.S. diplomats and require American tourists to apply for visas, saying that "gringo" meddling had forced him to adopt the series of restrictive measures. An Egyptian court declared Hamas a "terror organization," further isolating the rulers of the Gaza Strip. Death claimed NFL player and coach Tom Bettis at age 81; baseball player Alex Johnson at age 72; and basketball player Anthony Mason at age 48.

One year ago: Talks between President Donald Trump and North Korea's Kim Jong Un collapsed after the two sides failed to bridge a standoff over U.S. sanctions; the two leaders' motorcades roared away from the summit site in the Vietnamese capital of Hanoi within minutes of each other. The Philadelphia Phillies signed free agent Bryce Harper to a 13-year, \$330 million deal that was, at the time, the largest contract in baseball history. (Mike Trout of the Los Angeles Angels would break that record weeks later.) Pianist, composer and conductor Andre Previn, whose work extended through Hollywood, jazz and classical music, died at his New York home; he was 89.

Today's Birthdays: Architect Frank Gehry is 91. Actor Gavin MacLeod is 89. Singer Sam the Sham is 83. Actor-director-dancer Tommy Tune is 81. Hall of Fame auto racer Mario Andretti is 80. Actor Frank Bonner is 78. Actress Kelly Bishop is 76. Actress Stephanie Beacham is 73. Writer-director Mike Figgis is 72.

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Actress Mercedes Ruehl is 72. Actress Bernadette Peters is 72. Former Energy Secretary Steven Chu is 72. Actress Ilene Graff is 71. Nobel Prize-winning economist Paul Krugman is 67. Comedian Gilbert Gottfried is 65. Basketball Hall of Famer Adrian Dantley is 65. Actor John Turturro is 63. Rock singer Cindy Wilson is 63. Actress Rae Dawn Chong is 59. Actress Maxine Bahns is 51. Actor Robert Sean Leonard is 51. Rock singer Pat Monahan is 51. Author Daniel Handler (aka "Lemony Snicket") is 50. Actress Tasha Smith is 49. Actor Rory Cochrane is 48. Actress Ali Larter is 44. Country singer Jason Aldean is 43. Actor Geoffrey Arend is 42. Actress Melanie Chandra (TV: "Code Black") is 36. Actress Michelle Horn is 33. MLB relief pitcher Aroldis Chapman is 32. Actress True O'Brien is 26. Actress Madisen Beaty is 25. Actress Quinn Shephard is 25. Actor Bobb'e J. Thompson is 24.

Thought for Today: "Three things in human life are important: the first is to be kind; the second is to be kind; and the third is to be kind." — Henry James (1843-1916).

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