

# Groton Daily Independent

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## Upcoming Events

### Thursday, March 5, 2020

Girls' Basketball Region at highest seed

### Friday, March 6, 2020

Region 1A Boys Basketball, Redfield at Groton Area, 7 p.m.

State Debate at Huron

### Saturday, March 7

State Debate at Huron

Regional DI Competition at Groton Area

### Sunday, March 8, 2020

2:00pm- 6:00pm: Open Gym at GHS Arena

2:00-4:00 PM Grades JK-8 (Students must be accompanied by an adult) 4:00-6:00 PM Grades 6-12

### Monday, March 9, 2020

School Board Meeting, 7 p.m.

Girls SoDak 16

## **OPEN:** Recycling Trailer in Groton

The recycling trailer is located at 10 East Railroad Ave. It takes cardboard, papers and aluminum cans.

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## Groton Area dominates Region 1A opening game

Groton Area dominated the first round of the Region 1A game on Tuesday with a 62-41 win over Aberdeen Roncalli. The game was broadcast live on GDILIVE.COM, sponsored by Aberdeen Chrysler Center, BaseKamp Lodge, Bierman Farm Sales, BK Custom T's & More, Blocker Construction, Groton American Legion Post #39, Groton Chiropractic Clinic, Groton Ford, Groton Vet Clinic, Harr Motors - Bary Keith, K&K Pharis Partnership, Lori's Pharmacy, Milbrandt Enterprises, Olson Development, Professional Management Services, S & S Lumber & Hardware Hank, SD Army National Guard, Subway of Groton, Tyson DeHoet Trucking. Brooke Gengerke and Alyssa Thaler provided the play-by-play of the game.

Brodyn DeHoet and Jonathan Doeden team for the opening three-pointers and the Tigers were off and running with a 6-0 lead. The Cavaliers were limited to two field goals in the first quarter as the Tigers took an 18-5 lead at the break. Both teams about doubled their scores in the second quarter which allowed the Tigers to double the lead over the Cavaliers at half time, 36-12. The Cavaliers, again, made only two field goals in the second quarter.

Roncalli doubled its score in the third quarter but the Tigers led by 20 at the break, 44-24.

DeHoet had a double-double night with 29 points (making four three-pointers), 13 rebounds, three assists and four steals. Kaden Kurtz made three three-pointers and finished the night with 12 points, one rebound and two assists. Jonathan Doeden made one three-pointer and had 11 points, five rebounds, four assists and one steal. Austin Jones had five points and five rebounds. Isaac Smith had three points, three rebounds, two assists and one steal. Cade Guthmiller had five rebounds, two assists and one steal. Jayden Zak had one rebound and one assist, Lane Tietz had three rebounds and one steal, Jackson Cogley had one rebound, Lucas Simon had two points and one assist, Tate Larson had two points and Kannon Coats had one rebound.

Groton Area made 14 of 31 field foals for 45 percent, eight of 26 three-pointers for 31 percent and was 12 of 19 from the line for 63 percent. The Tigers had 38 rebounds.

Roncalli was led by Gray Imbery with 20 points followed by Zeezrom Mounnga with nine, Dawson Hoellein had six, Tommy O'Keefe had three, Harrison Kieffer two and Maddox May one.

The Cavaliers made 13 of 38 shots for 34 percent and was 11 of 18 from the line.

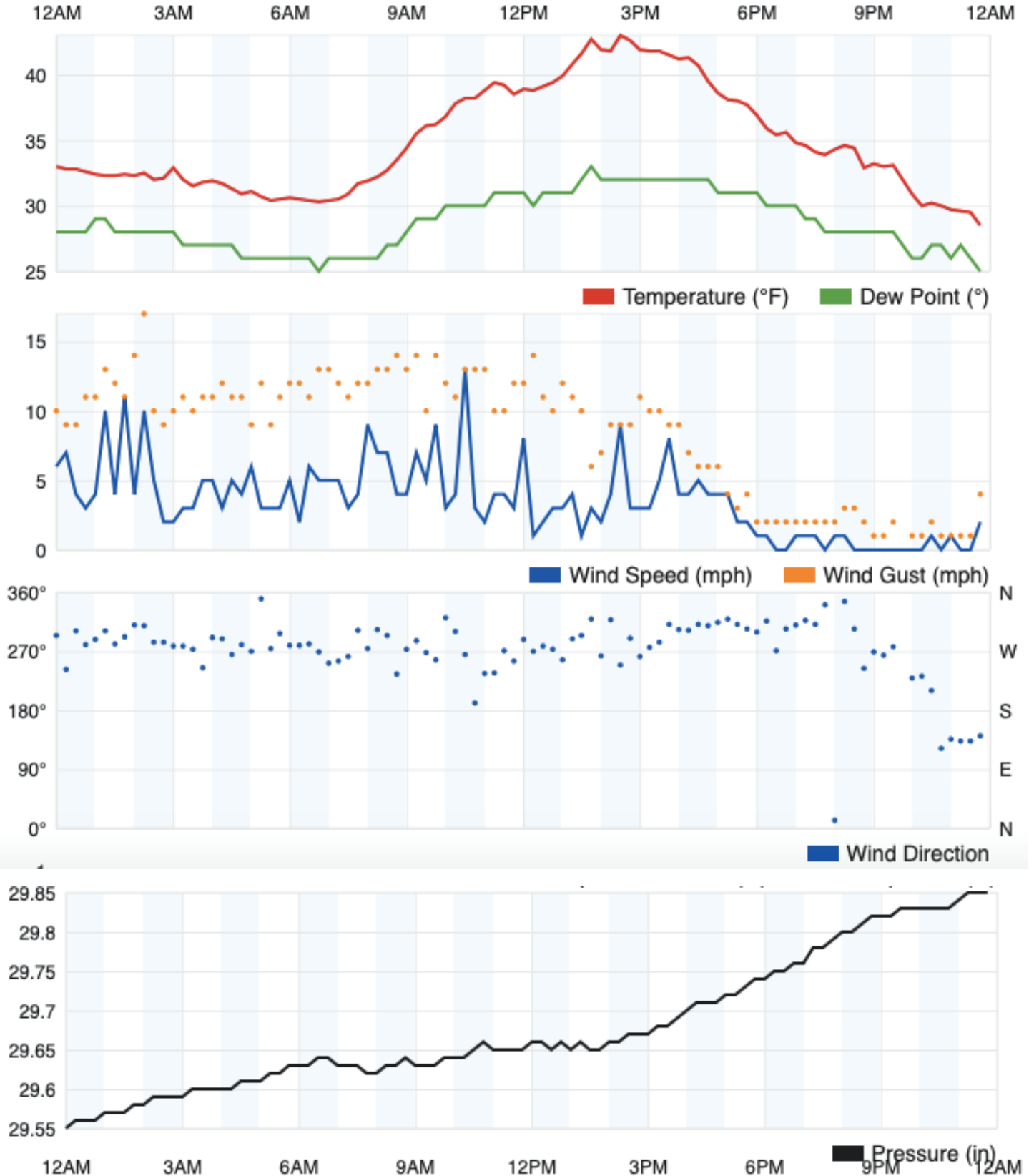
Groton Area had nine turnovers and the Cavaliers had 13.

Groton Area, now 17-4, will host Redfield on Friday in the next Region 1A Game. Roncalli finishes its season 1-20.

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## Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs



# Broton Daily Independent

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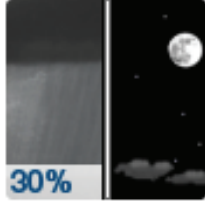
Today



Mostly Sunny

High: 39 °F

Tonight



30%  
Chance Showers then Mostly Clear

Low: 30 °F

Thursday



Mostly Sunny and Breezy

High: 37 °F

Thursday Night



Mostly Clear

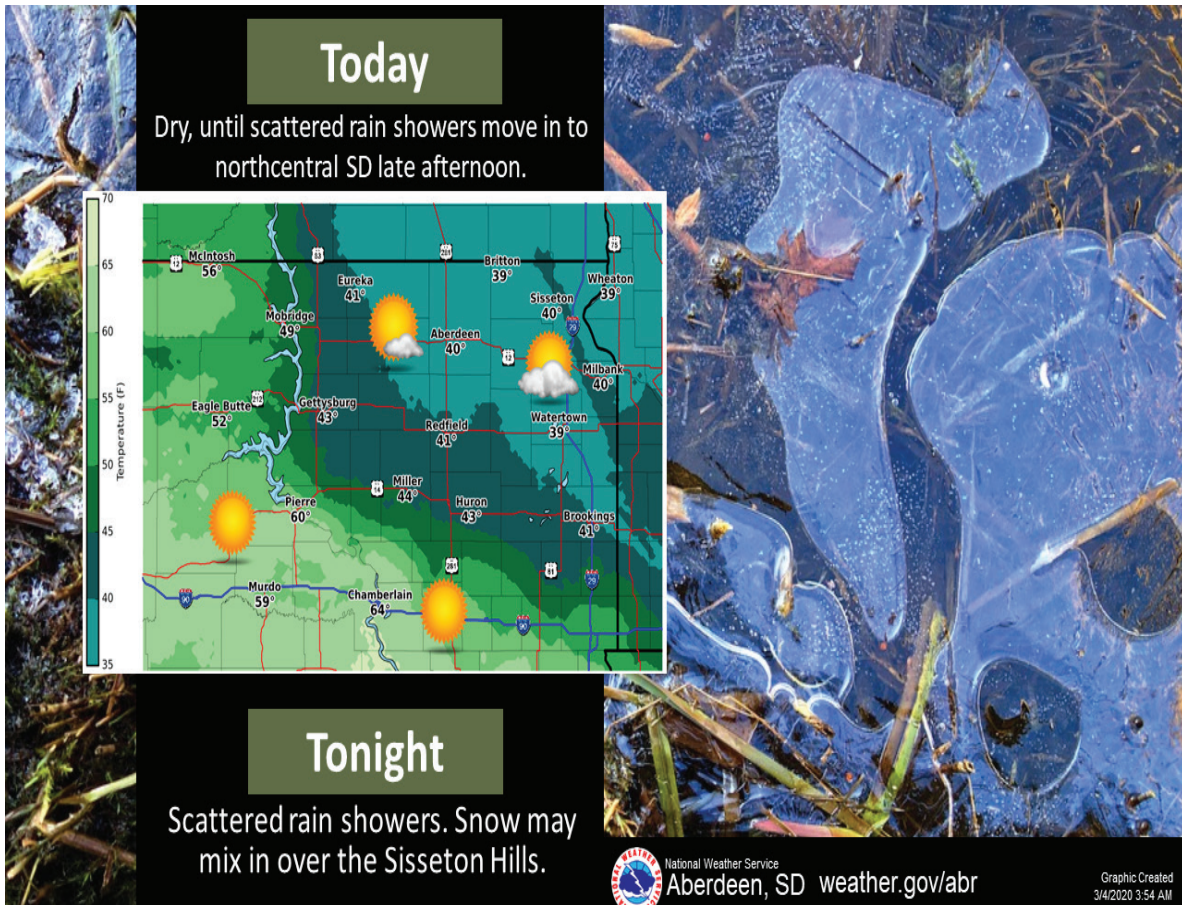
Low: 16 °F

Friday



Sunny

High: 40 °F



We'll warm into the 40s today, with 50s to near 60 degrees west of the Missouri River. While much of the day will be dry, scattered rain showers will move over north central South Dakota late this afternoon. Expect the light rain showers to expand across the rest of the area tonight. Snow may briefly mix in over the Sisseton Hills.



## Today in Weather History

March 4, 1994: Two to five inches of snow fell across northeast and part of central South Dakota from the 3rd into the 4th. This new snowfall, combined with the already deep and expansive snowpack and winds of 20 to 40 mph, brought widespread blowing and drifting snow. Visibilities were reduced to near zero at times, making travel treacherous. Snowdrifts blocked many roads. Many schools, as well as several highways, were closed. Several vehicles became stuck and had to be pulled out. Some snowfall amounts included 4 inches at Clear Lake, Britton, Waubay, and Wilmot; and 5 inches at Onida, Blunt, Highmore, Miller, and Milbank.

1873: The second inauguration of Ulysses S. Grant remains Washington, DC's, record cold March day. The low was 4 degrees, and by noon with the sunshine, the temperature was 16 degrees. Wind chills were around 30 degrees below zero. The 40 mph winds made his inaugural address inaudible to most on the platform with him.

1899: Cyclone Mahina, aka "The Bathurst Bay Hurricane" in Australia, was credited with having produced the highest storm surge on record in the world. The cyclone, with an estimated central pressure of 911 millibars or 26.90 inches of mercury, caused a 42.6-foot surge when it came ashore on the coast of northern Australia. The storm killed as many as 400 people and is currently Australia's deadliest cyclone.

1983: Brownsville, Texas recorded a high of 100 degrees, the earliest the city has ever hit the century mark.

1909 - Though fair weather was forecast, President Taft was inaugurated amidst a furious storm. About ten inches of wet snow disrupted travel and communications. The storm drew much criticism against the U.S. Weather Bureau. (David Ludlum)

1953 - Snow was reported on the island of Oahu in Hawaii. (The Weather Channel)

1966 - A severe blizzard raged across Minnesota and North Dakota. The blizzard lasted four days producing up to 35 inches of snow, and wind gusting to 100 mph produced snow drifts 30 to 40 feet high. Bismarck ND reported zero visibility for 11 hours. Traffic was paralyzed for three days. (2nd-5th) (The Weather Channel)

1987 - Rain and high winds prevailed in the northwestern U.S. A wind gust to 69 mph at Klamath Falls OR was their highest in 25 years, and winds at the Ashland Ranger Station in the Siskiyou Mountains of northern California reached 85 mph. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1988 - Snow and freezing rain made travel hazardous in Ohio and Indiana. A six car pile-up resulted near Columbus OH, with seven injuries reported. Up to two inches of ice glazed central Indiana. Up to ten inches of snow blanketed northern Ohio. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1989 - Thunderstorms produced severe weather in the Lower Mississippi Valley. A strong (F-3) tornado injured five persons near Brownsville MS, and killed seven cows and two hogs in one pasture. Thunderstorm winds gusted to 90 mph at Canton MS. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1990 - A Pacific cold front working its way across the western U.S. produced heavy snow over parts of Idaho, Nevada and Utah. Up to eleven inches of snow blanketed the valleys of northwest Utah, while 12 to 25 inches fell across the mountains of northern Utah. Up to six inches of snow blanketed the valleys of east central Nevada, while more than a foot of snow was reported in the high elevations. In Idaho, 6 to 8 inches of snow was reported around Aberdeen and American Falls. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

2004 - An F0 tornado 2 miles north of Muldrow breaks a record stretch of days without a reported tornado, 292 days.

2008 - Only two days after reaching 78 degrees, St. Louis receives nearly a foot of snow in seven hours, the biggest snowstorm in 15 years.

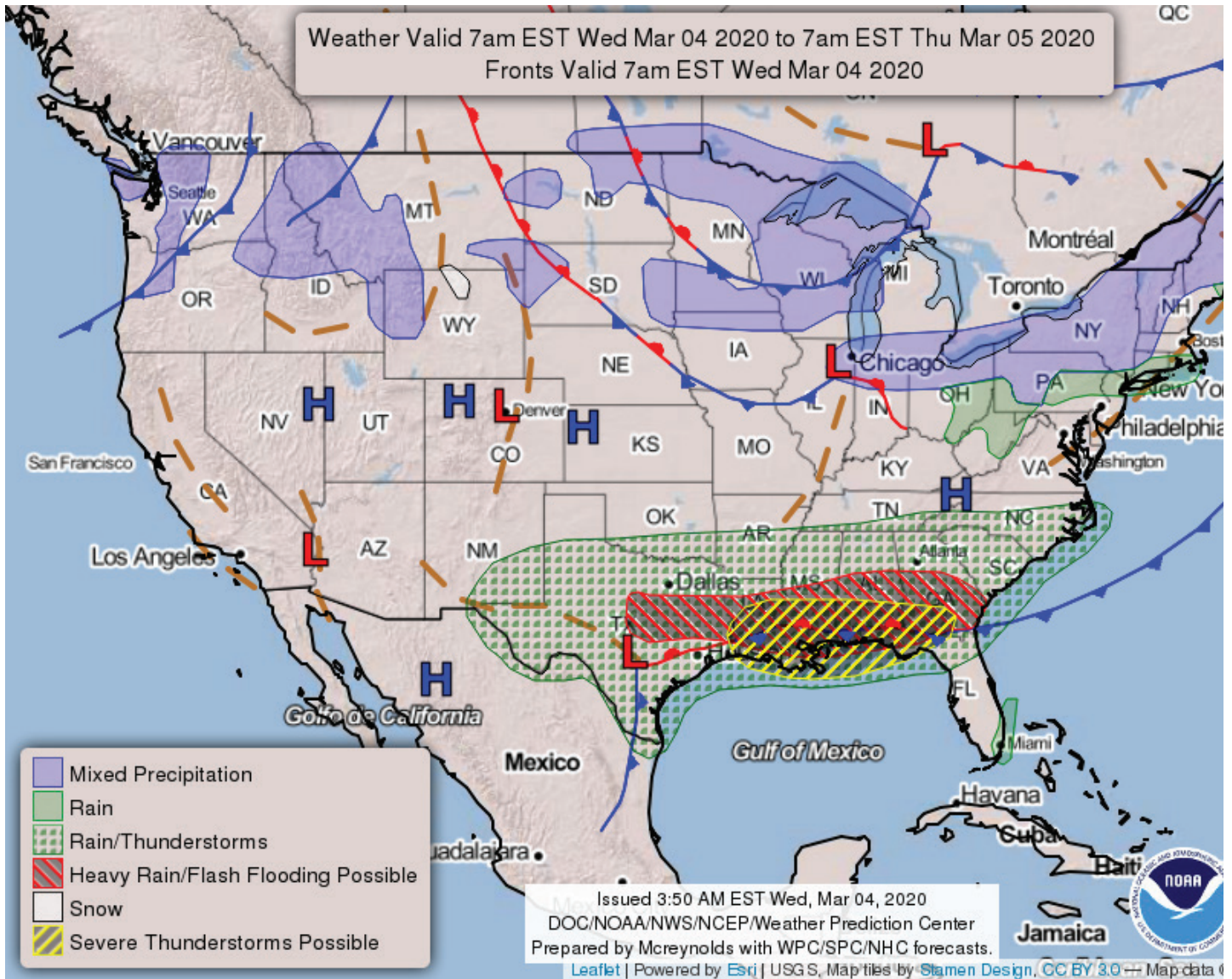
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## Yesterday's Groton Weather Today's Info

**High Temp: 43 °F at 2:26 PM**  
**Low Temp: 28 °F at 11:52 PM**  
**Wind: 17 mph at 2:13 AM**  
**Snow**

**Record High: 73° in 1905**  
**Record Low: -23° in 1917**  
**Average High: 34°F**  
**Average Low: 15°F**  
**Average Precip in March.: 0.09**  
**Precip to date in March.: 0.00**  
**Average Precip to date: 1.11**  
**Precip Year to Date: 0.35**  
**Sunset Tonight: 6:26 p.m.**  
**Sunrise Tomorrow: 7:04 a.m.**



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## FAITH FACTOR

The family gathered around the table for the Sunday meal after church. Young James appeared as though he was deep in thought. Finally, he said, "Dad, we have thermometers and barometers. Wouldn't it be great if we had faithometers?"

"What do you mean, son?" he asked.

"Well, the preacher talked about having faith and trusting God to answer our prayers. How do we know how much faith we have when we pray and don't get any answers?" he asked. The father was unable to respond to his question. But our Lord did.

Jesus once said, "You can pray for anything and if you have faith you will receive it." This implies that Jesus is making an unconditional guarantee that God will hear and answer our prayers.

Prayer does three things for us. First, it enables us to do or accomplish things that we may have thought were beyond our abilities because we do not claim God's power and strength. Second, it can also enable us to accept life as Jesus did when He asked His Father to "let this cup pass from me," and it didn't. It was the agony of the cross that led to the glory of the resurrection. So, sometimes we have to suffer and do without. And, third, it prepares us to endure things and ultimately discover that "His grace is sufficient."

Prayer: Teach us, Father, to pray earnestly in faith believing, trusting only in You. May we come to accept the fact that Your grace and mercy can sustain us until we know Your will. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: Matthew 21:22 You can pray for anything, and if you have faith, you will receive it.



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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



## News from the Associated Press

### SD Lottery

By The Associated Press undefined

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) — These South Dakota lotteries were drawn Tuesday:

Mega Millions

08-12-33-56-64, Mega Ball: 2, Megaplier: 2

(eight, twelve, thirty-three, fifty-six, sixty-four; Mega Ball: two; Megaplier: two)

Estimated jackpot: \$65 million

Powerball

Estimated jackpot: \$80 million

### Gov. Noem's revival of riot laws heads to Senate vote

By STEPHEN GROVES Associated Press

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) — A South Dakota Senate committee on Tuesday advanced Gov. Kristi Noem's proposal to revive the state's riot laws with criminal and civil penalties for those who urge rioting.

Native American groups opposed to the Keystone XL pipeline warned that the initiative would stoke tensions that could lead to situations similar to the stand-offs over the Dakota Access Pipeline in North Dakota. The bill will next be voted on by the full Senate. It has already passed the House.

Candi Brings Plenty, a lobbyist for the American Civil Liberties Union, said the bill "sets the stage for a continuation of tensions."

Many tribal members spoke of their experiences of demonstrations at Standing Rock and described how law enforcement used violence and threats of incitement to riot charges against them. They argued that the bill represents another step in long-standing oppression of Native American people since the violation of treaties dating back to the 1800s.

Sen. Lee Schoenbeck, a Republican from Watertown, said that protesters also committed violence against law enforcement at Standing Rock.

The Legislature passed a so-called riot boosting law last year that attempted to prevent a situation similar to those demonstrations. The Republican governor wanted to pursue groups that fund demonstrations with criminal and civil penalties. But a judge found parts of last year's laws to be unconstitutional, in part because they were overly broad in limiting free speech and aimed specifically at demonstrations against the Keystone XL pipeline.

Noem came back this year with a bill that cleaned up the state's criminal and civil penalties for riot and incitement to riot, arguing that she is making sure everyone stays safe in the state. She is also pushing civil penalties so that the state, counties or municipalities can recoup damages caused by riots.

The governor's staffers argued that the bill does not infringe on people's rights to protest, but seeks to protect property and people from violence.

Katie Hruska, a lawyer with Noem's office, explained that the bill is designed to pass what's known as the Brandenburg test for free speech, which stipulates that authorities can't prosecute speech unless the speech is intended to cause force or violence, is likely to cause it, and the action is imminent.

Law enforcement groups, including the South Dakota Police Chiefs Association and the Sheriff's Association, spoke in support of the bill.

"As long as people don't incite lawless action, there is nothing to fear from this bill," said Dick Tieszen, a lobbyist for the Sheriff's Association.

Opponents of the bill spoke for over an hour-and-a-half in often-charged testimony. Opponents stood at several times to express respect for speakers, and women let out trills, a way Lakota women praise courage. After the meeting ended, opponents sang a Lakota prayer song while lawmakers filed out of the room.

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They raised a host of concerns with the proposed Keystone XL pipeline, saying that it threatens the health of the water and environment as well as people who would be put at increased risk of kidnapping, murder and sexual exploitation from the influx of temporary workers into small communities.

Noem has argued that the bill is not designed solely for the pipeline project, but to establish protections for any demonstrations in the state.

Opponents, and even some lawmakers who support the bill, disagreed with that argument.

"It's clear to me that the genesis of the bill has to do with the pipeline and what happened in North Dakota," said Sen. Lance Russell, a Hot Springs Republican who voted to approve the bill.

The lone Democrat on the committee opposed the bill and warned that he thought it may be challenged in court again.

Craig Kennedy, the Democrat from Yankton, said, "We're going to deal with an unconstitutional bill that is designed for the sole purpose of protecting the pipeline project."

## Tuesday's Scores By The Associated Press

### BOYS PREP BASKETBALL=

Class A Region 1=

First Round=

Groton Area 64, Aberdeen Roncalli 41

Milbank 56, Redfield 46

Sisseton 57, Webster 47

Class A Region 2=

First Round=

Clark/Willow Lake 63, Flandreau Indian 27

Deuel 56, Florence/Henry 54

Hamlin 43, Flandreau 42

Class A Region 3=

First Round=

Tri-Valley 64, Baltic 46

West Central 56, Garretson 42

Class A Region 4=

First Round=

Dakota Valley 73, Beresford 35

Tea Area 57, Elk Point-Jefferson 31

Vermillion 76, Canton 38

Quarterfinal=

Dakota Valley 72, Beresford 35

Class A Region 5=

First Round=

McCook Central/Montrose 54, Mt. Vernon/Plankinton 51, 2OT

Parkston 64, Wagner 34

Class A Region 6=

First Round=

Chamberlain 74, McLaughlin 66

Cheyenne-Eagle Butte 81, Stanley County 53

Mobridge-Pollock 73, Miller 47

Class A Region 7=

First Round=

Pine Ridge 82, St. Francis Indian 55

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Todd County 70, Little Wound 49  
Winner 69, Bennett County 33  
Class A Region 8=  
First Round=  
Belle Fourche 79, Hill City 40  
Custer 60, Hot Springs 28  
Rapid City Christian 66, Lead-Deadwood 23  
Class B Region 1=  
Quarterfinal=  
Aberdeen Christian 52, Langford 40  
Leola/Frederick 55, Britton-Hecla 52  
Northwestern 53, Waverly-South Shore 50  
Warner 40, Waubay/Summit 39  
Class B Region 2=  
Quarterfinal=  
Herreid/Selby Area 70, Highmore-Harrold 46  
Lower Brule 77, Faulkton 62  
Potter County 66, Ipswich 56  
Sully Buttes 58, Sunshine Bible Academy 30  
Class B Region 3=  
Quarterfinal=  
Arlington 79, Iroquois 34  
Wessington Springs 82, Castlewood 75  
Wolsey-Wessington 61, Lake Preston 51  
Class B Region 4=  
Quarterfinal=  
Colman-Egan 67, Dell Rapids St. Mary 49  
Elkton-Lake Benton 83, Ethan 65  
Hanson 54, Chester 37  
Sanborn Central/Woonsocket 57, Howard 52  
Class B Region 5=  
Quarterfinal=  
Bridgewater-Emery 43, Gayville-Volin 33  
Freeman Academy/Marion 61, Irene-Wakonda 34  
Scotland 61, Canistota 27  
Viborg-Hurley 80, Centerville 45  
Class B Region 6=  
Quarterfinal=  
Gregory 72, Burke 60  
Marty Indian 67, Bon Homme 37  
Platte-Geddes 67, Kimball/White Lake 49  
Tripp-Delmont/Armour 69, Corsica/Stickney 53  
Class B Region 7=  
Quarterfinal=  
Jones County 53, Oelrichs 39  
Kadoka Area 53, Crazy Horse 20  
Lyman 69, New Underwood 36  
White River 97, Wall 53  
Class B Region 8=

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Quarterfinal=  
Faith 79, Wakpala 44  
Harding County 77, Takini 51  
Lemmon 63, Tiospaye Topa 48  
Timber Lake 67, McIntosh 34

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

## Senate resolution on gun safety gets transformed

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) — A proposal brought by a South Dakota Democrat asking the Legislature to acknowledge the issue of gun deaths in the state was transformed by Senate Republicans on Tuesday to highlight reductions in accidental gun deaths.

Sen. Reynold Nesiba, a Sioux Falls Democrat, said he brought the resolution to “start a conversation” about deaths from guns in the state, but he found the conservative-dominated Senate a tough audience. The South Dakota Legislature has often moved in recent years to protect and expand gun rights.

Instead of passing Nesiba’s resolution that pointed out that the majority of suicides in the state involve guns and outnumber deaths from opioids, the Senate rewrote his proposal to point out statistics underscored by the National Rifle Association on dramatic reductions in accidental firearm deaths. The resolution called for gun owners to safely handle and store firearms.

South Dakota has the 12th highest rate of death from firearms in the country, according to the Centers for Disease Control.

Nesiba called the rewrite, known as “hog housing,” a “bullying move.” He said he thought he crafted the proposal, which included language acknowledging rights under the Second Amendment, in a way that gun rights advocates could support.

Sen. Jim Stalzer, the Sioux Falls Republican who proposed the bill’s rewrite, did not immediately respond to a phone call requesting comment.

## Legislature passes bill requiring acceptance of tribal IDs

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) — The South Dakota House on Tuesday passed a proposal to require South Dakota businesses to accept tribal IDs as proof of identity and age.

The bill has already passed the Senate and moves to Gov. Kristi Noem for final approval.

Rep. Peri Pourier, a Pine Ridge Democrat, said the requirement would remove any barriers that tribal members have to purchase age-restricted items or cash checks. She pointed out that tribal IDs are easier for tribal members to obtain because they are less expensive and available locally.

Tribes in South Dakota have enhanced the security and information on IDs in recent years, adding dates of birth, addresses, and holographics. The IDs can be used to go through security at airports and to verify identity at voting booths.

Pourier said there have been reports of some businesses not accepting tribal IDs, however. No one spoke in opposition to the bill before the House voted on it.

Lawmakers floated another proposal this year to add tribal IDs to the list of documents that can be used to register to vote, but that broke down after it became clear that the secretary of state would need to access tribal enrollment records in order to verify voter eligibility. Many tribes did not want that kind of arrangement.

## House OKs ban on unions for university faculty

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) — The South Dakota House on Tuesday passed a proposal to get rid of the faculty union at the state’s public universities.

The Senate passed the proposal last week. It also has the support of Gov. Kristi Noem, meaning it ap-



pears inevitable that the faculty union will soon be eliminated. The union argues that the ban will threaten academic freedom and the competitiveness of the state's university system, which employs about 1,400 faculty members across six universities.

Republican lawmakers brought the proposal, arguing that it would allow universities to adapt to tight budgets. They pointed to several other states, including Texas, Wisconsin and North Carolina, that have banned faculty unions but have renowned universities

The debate has centered on the union's opposition to the hiring of "professors of practice" — teachers who do not have advanced degrees but bring work experience to university classrooms.

Opponents have argued that the ban could have far-reaching effects and eventually threaten academic freedom and job protections like tenure.

Rep. Ray Ring, a Democrat from Vermillion and retired University of South Dakota professor, said he has heard from faculty members who said the proposal may prompt them to look for jobs outside the state.

Ring pointed out that states like Texas and North Carolina with faculty union bans have also invested heavily in their university systems.

## South Dakota voters to decide on Deadwood sports betting

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) — South Dakota voters will decide whether to allow sports betting in Deadwood after the House on Tuesday passed a proposal to put the question on the November ballot.

The proposal requires a change to the state constitution, meaning it must go before voters. The Senate already passed the resolution. Tribal casinos would also be allowed to offer sports betting if the measure passes.

In 2014, 57 percent of voters passed an amendment that made it possible for keno, craps, and roulette to be played in Deadwood. Neighboring states like Iowa have rolled out sports betting after the Supreme Court paved the way for legal wagering two years ago. South Dakota lawmakers in favor of the proposal argued that it was time to get in on the action.

Legislators pointed out that gambling in Deadwood brings in tax revenue that gets distributed across the state through the general fund and grants for historical preservation.

Opponents said they were worried about expanding gambling in the state. Gov. Kristi Noem opposed a similar proposal last year.

"We've been on this journey where we've just embraced gambling," said Rep. John Mills, a Volga Republican. "I just wonder when is it going to end?"

## Governor and lawmakers disagree on costs of legalizing hemp

By **STEPHEN GROVES** Associated Press

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) — South Dakota lawmakers and Gov. Kristi Noem floated vastly different cost estimates for legalizing industrial hemp on Tuesday, presenting a final hang-up to the resolution of their year-long dispute.

The governor's office argued that the legalization of industrial hemp would fundamentally change how the state enforces its marijuana laws and required an expansion of staff, drug testing and law enforcement across three state agencies. Lawmakers cast it as an agricultural program similar to other crops that would require oversight by just one person and part-time testing by law enforcement.

The divergence could threaten the Republican governor's concession to go against her better judgment and sign a bill to legalize industrial hemp this year, but only if it meets her requirements, including funding for the program.

Rep. Oren Lesmeister, a Democrat from Parade and a proponent of hemp, said the governor's office inflated the numbers based on a false presumption that drug cases would "sky-rocket" as a result of an industrial hemp program. He charged that the governor is using the high estimates as a tactic to thwart the bill.

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"It is how she wants to kill hemp," he said.

On Tuesday morning, Noem told a legislative committee that the program would need \$3.5 million to cover the cost of 15 full-time positions, new testing equipment, four police dogs and expanded drug storage space for the state's drug lab and Highway Patrol.

Lawmakers' estimates were more frugal: \$250,000 for the program, with about \$80,000 of that covered by licenses and fees paid by hemp farmers and processors.

Noem's staffers indicated that the lower estimate would not meet her demands for the hemp program.

The governor vetoed a bill to legalize hemp last year and made it clear she intended to veto the proposal this year because it could lead to the legalization of marijuana. But just before the session began, she changed her position and said she would allow industrial hemp if it is regulated by "four guardrails" to provide for enforcement, regulation, transportation permitting, and funding.

The governor's office helped write this year's bill, and it meets the first three requirements.

Secretary of Health Kim Malsam-Rysdon said hemp legalization would create an immediate need to expand the state's drug testing lab storage space and equipment to determine if the THC levels in hemp rise above the 0.3% allowed by federal Department of Agriculture guidelines. THC is the compound that produces a high in marijuana.

The legislator's estimate is based on information from neighboring states such as Montana and Nebraska that rely on tests that only determine if cannabis has THC levels above 1% or send samples to out-of-state labs.

House Majority Leader Lee Qualm, the Platte Republican who introduced the hemp bill this year, remained upbeat, saying he didn't think Noem would veto the bill and that hemp supporters would be meeting with the governor's office on Wednesday to work on the numbers.

"I know we can cover it the first year for fairly minimal costs," he said. "And then we'll have to revisit it next year and see what happens."

Qualm said farmers may not be able to plant a hemp crop this year, depending on weather conditions and how long it takes to get the state's plan approved by the USDA. He also pointed to a possible variable in the state's drug enforcement plans: referendums on recreational and medical marijuana that will be on the November ballot.

Legislative leaders in the Senate have said they want to see the funding issue settled before voting on the hemp legalization bill.

## Tax evader accused of working as guard without license

RAPID CITY, S.D. (AP) — A former state's attorney serving probation for felony tax evasion is now accused of working as a security guard without a license.

The Rapid City Attorney's Office says Ken Orrock didn't have a license when he worked for Black Hill Patrol and handcuffed a man.

The former Bennett County state's attorney could face up to 30 days in jail if convicted.

The Rapid City Journal says Orrock is serving five years of probation.

He must also make more than \$280,000 in restitution to the Internal Revenue Service for failing to pay taxes from 2011 and 2015.

He founded Black Hills Patrol in 2010.

## Ex-White Sox minor leaguer pleads not guilty to raping child

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — A former Chicago White Sox minor leaguer who went on to coach a South Dakota youth team after his playing career ended has pleaded not guilty to sexually assaulting a child and possession of child pornography.

KOTA-TV reports Juan Thomas Jr., who entered the plea Monday, is being held on a \$250,000 cash bond.

Thomas, 48, is charged in Lincoln County with raping a child younger than 13 and 10 counts of child porn possession.

He was a first-baseman and right fielder who played two seasons for the Seattle Mariners' Triple-A affiliate and later played for the Sioux Falls Canaries in the American Association of Independent Professional Baseball.

## Saudis ban Muslim pilgrimage in Mecca over fears about virus

By AMIR VAHDAT Associated Press

TEHRAN, Iran (AP) — Saudi Arabia has banned citizens and residents from performing the Muslim pilgrimage in Mecca over fears about new virus.

The announcement came on the state-run Saudi Press Agency on Wednesday, quoting an unnamed Interior Ministry official announcing the ban.

It gave no time frame for how long the suspension will stand.

Last week, Saudi Arabia closed off the holiest sites in Islam to foreign pilgrims over the coronavirus. That disrupted 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.

THIS IS A BREAKING NEWS UPDATE. The following is AP's previous story.

Friday prayers in Iran have been canceled across all provincial capitals amid the country's growing coronavirus outbreak, state television said.

Friday is the main congregational day of prayer in Islam, and traditionally an important event for Iran's clerical rulers.

The report Wednesday comes as Tehran and other areas canceled Friday prayers last week over the outbreak.

Iran earlier announced that the new coronavirus has killed 92 people amid 2,922 confirmed cases across the Islamic Republic, the highest death toll in the world outside of China.

Health Ministry spokesman Kianoush Jahanpour announced the new figures at a news conference in Tehran, raising Iran's death toll from the new illness to higher than Italy's, where there has also been a serious spike in infections.

There are now over 3,140 cases of the new virus across the Mideast. Of those outside Iran in the region, most link back to the Islamic Republic.

The virus has sickened top leaders inside Iran's civilian government and Shiite theocracy. Iran stands alone in how the virus has affected its government, even compared to hard-hit China, the epicenter of the outbreak. Worldwide, the virus has infected more than 90,000 people and caused over 3,100 deaths.

Experts worry Iran may be underreporting the number of cases it has.

"The virus has no wings to fly," Jahanpour said. "We are the ones who transfer it to each other."

Iranian President Hassan Rouhani meanwhile acknowledged that the virus was in nearly all of Iran's 31 provinces while speaking at a Cabinet meeting Wednesday.

"This disease is a widespread one," he said, according to a transcript. "It encompasses almost all of our provinces and is, in a sense, a global disease that many countries in the world have become infected with, and we must work together to tackle this problem as quickly as possible."

Meanwhile Wednesday, Saudi Arabia's Deputy Health Minister Abdel-Fattah Mashat was quoted on the state-linked news site Al-Yaum saying that groups of visitors to Mecca from inside the country would now also be barred from performing the pilgrimage, known as the umrah. The crowds typically are made up of foreign residents going as large groups. Individuals and families in the kingdom can still travel to Mecca.

Saudi Arabia last week 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.

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Associated Press writers Aya Batrawy and Jon Gambrell in Dubai, United Arab Emirates, contributed.

## Syrian, Turkish armies engage in new deadly clashes in Idlib

By SUZAN FRASER and VLADIMIR ISACHENKOV Associated Press

ANKARA, Turkey (AP) — Turkey said that two more of its soldiers were killed Wednesday in a Syrian government attack in northwestern Syria, as steady clashes between the two national armies continued to rack up casualties.

Turkey has sent thousands of troops into the area to support Syrian insurgents holed up there, but hasn't been able to stop the Russian-backed Syrian government offensive to retake the Idlib province.

A Syrian opposition war monitor said nine Syrian soldiers were also killed in Turkish drone attacks in the northwestern area.

The Turkish Defense Ministry's statement said that the latest Syrian attack on its troops also wounded six soldiers. It did not provide further details.

The assault came as Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan is scheduled to depart for Moscow where he says he aims to broker a cease-fire in Syria with Russian President Vladimir Putin.

Turkey and Russia are the two main power brokers in Syria and each of them support rival sides in the nine-year conflict.

"We expect to reach a shared view of the cause of the current crisis, its consequences and agree on a set of measures to overcome it," Russian presidential spokesman Dmitry Peskov said about the upcoming meeting with the Turkish leader.

Russian officials have said they hold Turkey responsible for the collapse of a cease-fire agreement reached in Sochi, Russia in 2018. They say Ankara has failed to honor the deal and rein in militants who continued attacking Syrian and Russian targets.

Earlier Wednesday, Russian Defense Ministry spokesman Maj. Gen. Igor Konashenkov assailed Turkey for shielding "terrorists" in Idlib, a statement that reflected Moscow's forceful posture ahead of the Syria talks.

In a statement, Konashenkov pointed out that under the 2018 agreement with Russia, Turkey was obliged to ensure that militants in Idlib pull 15-20 kilometers (10-12 miles) away from the de-escalation zone along with their heavy weapons. Instead of that, he argued, al-Qaida-linked militants "and other terrorist groups pushed moderate rebels north toward the border with Turkey."

Konashenkov also assailed the West for turning a blind eye to Turkish military action in Syria "in violation of international law" and treating Turkish threats to destroy Syrian army units as a "legitimate self-defense."

Syrian opposition activists reported intense clashes near the government-held town of Saraqeb that sits on a major highway that links Syria's two largest cities, Damascus and Aleppo. The Britain-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, an opposition war monitor, said Turkish drone attacks near Saraqeb killed nine Syrian soldiers.

The Russian military said in a statement Wednesday that "a group of terrorists" made a failed attempt to detonate ammunition placed next to chemical storage tanks in the western part of Saraqeb two days ago. It claimed that the failed attempt was a bid to blame the Syrian government for launching a chemical attack.

The Russian military said the militants got poisoned when one of the tanks leaked before they could detonate the explosives.

Clashes between Turkish and Syrian forces in northwestern Syria have killed 58 Turkish troops in the past month, including 33 soldiers killed Thursday in a single airstrike.

Isachenkov reported from Moscow. Associated Press writers Albert Aji in Damascus, Syria and Bassem Mroue in Beirut contributed to this report.

## S. Korea hunts sick beds as West braces for long virus fight

By MATT SEDENSKY and LORI HINNANT Associated Press

BANGKOK (AP) — South Korea struggled to find enough beds for its sick, Italy grappled with a rising number of deaths and concern grew over an expanding outbreak in the United States on Wednesday as



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the new virus that tormented China expanded elsewhere.

As the number of new cases drops precipitously in China, attention has shifted to South Korea, Italy and Iran, sites of major clusters of contagion that the World Health Organization says account for 80% of new cases outside China.

"People are afraid and uncertain. Fear is a natural human response to any threat," said WHO's leader, Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus. "But as we get more data, we are understanding this virus and the disease it causes more and more."

WHO said the death rate from COVID-19 was about 3.4%, making it more fatal than the common flu, though data suggest it's not as easy to catch.

In Daegu, the South Korean city at the center of that country's outbreak, a shortage of hospital space meant about 2,300 patients were being cared for in other facilities while they awaited a hospital bed. Attending a meeting on quarantine strategies in Daegu, Prime Minister Chung Se-Kyun assured his country, saying "We can absolutely overcome this situation. ... We will win the war against COVID-19."

South Korea reported 435 new infections Wednesday, far smaller than its high of 851 a day earlier.

A total of 5,621 people in South Korea have contracted the virus and 32 have died.

Italy reported 45 fatalities Tuesday, bringing its total to 79. The outbreak in Italy has been concentrated in the northern region of Lombardy, but fear over the virus' spread led even the Vatican to insist Pope Francis was not infected.

The pontiff became ill last week, but the Vatican said Francis only had a cold.

The expanding problem in Europe and beyond has led some governments to try to control supplies of necessities. The governments of the Czech Republic, Russia and Germany announced bans Wednesday covering various protective gear like masks.

India, meantime, tightened the export of 26 key drug ingredients used in pharmaceutical manufacturing, a potentially disruptive move taken as its caseload rose to 28 Wednesday from an earlier tally of just 5.

China reported 119 new cases Wednesday, all but five in the outbreak's epicenter of Wuhan. In a sign of the shifting threat, Beijing's health commissioner said two new cases in the Chinese capital were apparently infected abroad, in Iran and Italy.

The state-run Xinhua News Agency said Hubei province, where Wuhan is located, was expected to gradually shut down its hastily built temporary hospitals, where thousands of beds were empty.

"We believe this decline is real," WHO outbreak expert Maria Van Kerkhove said of China. The country has reported 80,270 infections and 2,981 fatalities. It has about 85% of the world's cases and 95% of deaths from the COVID-19 illness.

Doctors working in Wuhan told reporters by video conference Wednesday that hospitals there have an increasing number of empty beds but cautioned there is always the possibility of a new spike of infections.

"The war is not over," said Dr. Cao Bin, who specializes in respiratory research. "The disease is not only a Wuhan disease, and not only a China disease, but also a global disease."

The outbreak was blamed for market instability around the globe. Asian stock markets were mixed Wednesday after Wall Street continued its zigzag performance, despite an interest rate cut by the Federal Reserve. Businesses of all types were experiencing pain as travel and tourism were spurned and worried consumers changed their habits.

"People are afraid to touch anything or take anything from us," said Maedeh Jahangiri, a perfume seller at an upscale mall in the Iranian capital of Tehran. "Everyone is at a loss."

Iran's count of infected people rose by more than 600 Wednesday to 2,922, including members of the government.

Some 92 people have died in Iran, the highest death toll outside of China.

In Spain, dozens of health workers were quarantined or being monitored after at least five were infected with the new virus. In France, the Louvre reopened after managers offered new anti-virus measures to coax employees back to work. In the United Kingdom, Prime Minister Boris Johnson warned cases could spread, unveiling a 25-page plan for a worst-case scenario in which retired doctors and nurses would be

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called back to work and police could stop investigating minor crimes to help deal with an outbreak.

"We're committed to doing everything possible ... to prepare for all eventualities," Johnson said.

In the U.S., more than 120 cases have been reported. Nine people have died, all in and around Seattle, Washington. On Capitol Hill, lawmakers were expected to finalize an agreement Wednesday on a \$7.5 billion emergency bill to fund work on a virus vaccine and other measures.

Hinnant reported from Paris. Contributors include Kim Tong-Hyung and Hyung-jin Kim in Seoul, South Korea; Yanan Wang and Ken Moritsugu in Beijing; Aniruddha Ghosal in New Delhi; John Leicester in Paris; and Maria Cheng in London.

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

## Biden claims 9 Super Tuesday victories, including Texas

By STEVE PEOPLES and WILL WEISSERT Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — A resurgent Joe Biden scored victories from Texas to Massachusetts on Super Tuesday, revitalizing a presidential bid that was teetering on the edge of disaster just days earlier. But his rival Bernie Sanders seized the biggest prize with a win in California that ensured he — and his embrace of democratic socialism — would drive the Democrats' nomination fight for the foreseeable future.

And suddenly, the Democratic Party's presidential field, which featured more than a half-dozen candidates a week ago, transformed into a two-man contest.

Biden and Sanders, lifelong politicians with starkly different visions for America's future, were battling for delegates as 14 states and one U.S. territory held a series of high-stakes elections that marked the most significant day of voting in the party's 2020 presidential nomination fight.

It could take weeks — or months — for the party to pick one of them to take on President Donald Trump in the November general election. But the new contours of the fight between Biden and Sanders crystallized as the former vice president and the three-term Vermont senator spoke to each other from dueling victory speeches delivered from opposite ends of the country Tuesday night.

"People are talking about a revolution. We started a movement," Biden said in Los Angeles, knocking one of Sanders' signature lines.

Without citing his surging rival by name, Sanders swiped at Biden from Burlington, Vermont.

"You cannot beat Trump with the same-old, same-old kind of politics," Sanders declared, ticking down a list of past policy differences with Biden on Social Security, trade and military force. "This will become a contrast in ideas."

Trump took to Twitter Wednesday to call Biden's strong Super Tuesday showing "a perfect storm" and amplify his long-running argument that the Democratic Party would move to stop Sanders from winning the nomination.

"The Democrat establishment came together and crushed Bernie Sanders, AGAIN!" Trump tweeted.

Biden's victories were powered by Democratic voters who broke his way just days before casting their ballots — a wave of late momentum that scrambled the race in a matter of hours. In some states, the late-deciders made up roughly half of all voters, according to AP VoteCast, surveys of voters in several state primaries. He drew support from a broad coalition of moderates and conservatives, African Americans and voters older than 45.

Sanders' success proved he could deliver in perhaps the greatest test of his decadeslong political career. His success was built on a base of energized liberals, young people and Latinos. But he was unable to sufficiently widen his appeal to older voters and college graduates who make up a sizable share of Democratic voters, according to AP VoteCast.

The other two high-profile candidates still in the shrinking Democratic field, New York billionaire Mike Bloomberg and Massachusetts Sen. Elizabeth Warren, were teetering on the edge of viability. Warren fin-

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ished in an embarrassing third place in her home state, and Bloomberg planned to reassess his candidacy on Wednesday after spending more than a half-billion dollars to score one victory — in American Samoa.

The balance of Super Tuesday's battlefield — with Biden winning at least eight states and Sanders four — raised questions about whether the Democratic primary contest would stretch all the way to the July convention or be decided much sooner.

Biden's strong finish punctuated a dramatic turnaround in the span of just three days when he leveraged a blowout victory in South Carolina to score sweeping victories on Tuesday that transcended geography, class and race. And lest there be any doubt, he cemented his status as the standard-bearer for the Democrats' establishment wing.

The former vice president showed strength in the Northeast with a victory in Massachusetts. He won delegate-rich Texas in the Southwest, Minnesota in the upper Midwest and finished on top across the South in Virginia, Alabama, North Carolina, Tennessee and Arkansas — in addition to Oklahoma.

Sanders opened the night as the undisputed Democratic front-runner and was in a position to claim an insurmountable delegate lead. And while he scored the night's biggest delegate-prize in California, he scored just three other decisive victories, winning his home state of Vermont, along with Utah and Colorado.

Biden racked up his victories despite being dramatically outspent and out-staffed. Moderate rival Bloomberg, for example, poured more than \$12 million into television advertising in Virginia, while Biden spent less than \$200,000.

The Democratic race has shifted dramatically as Biden capitalized on his commanding South Carolina victory to persuade anxious establishment allies to rally behind his campaign. Former rivals Amy Klobuchar and Pete Buttigieg abruptly ended their campaigns in the days leading up to Super Tuesday and endorsed Biden.

In Biden and Sanders, Democrats have a stark choice in what kind of candidate they want to run against Trump.

Sanders is a 78-year-old democratic socialist who relies on an energized coalition of his party's far-left flank that embraces his longtime fight to transform the nation's political and economic systems. Biden is a 77-year-old lifelong leader of his party's Washington establishment who emphasizes a more pragmatic approach to core policy issues like health care and climate change.

Across the Super Tuesday states, there were early questions about Sanders' claims that he is growing his support from his failed 2016 presidential bid.

Biden bested him in Oklahoma, though Sanders won the state against Hillary Clinton four years ago. In Virginia, where Democratic turnout this year surpassed 2016's numbers by more than 500,000 votes, Sanders' vote share dropped significantly. And in Tennessee, Democratic turnout was up more than 30% from 2016, but Sanders' raw vote total was only a few hundred votes greater than four years ago.

Meanwhile, Bloomberg was trying to look beyond the primary to the November election against Trump, who racked up easy victories in lightly contested Republican primaries across the country.

"We have the resources to beat Trump in swing states that Democrats lost in 2016," Bloomberg said Tuesday night while campaigning in Florida.

The billionaire former New York mayor, who threw more than a half a billion dollars into the Super Tuesday states, will reassess his campaign on Wednesday, according to a person close to his operation who spoke on the condition of anonymity to describe internal deliberations.

Warren was also fighting to be optimistic.

Facing a roaring crowd in Michigan before news of her disappointing home-state finish was announced, she called on her supporters to ignore the political pundits and predictions as her advisers insist she's willing to go all the way to a contested convention in July even if she doesn't claim an outright victory anywhere.

"Here's my advice: Cast a vote that will make you proud. Cast a vote from your heart," Warren declared. She added: "You don't get what you don't fight for. I am in this fight."

With votes still being counted across the country, The Associated Press has allocated 453 delegates to Biden, 382 to Sanders, 50 to Warren, 44 to Bloomberg and one for Rep. Tulsi Gabbard. The numbers are

expected to shift as new states report their numbers and as some candidates hover around the 15% vote threshold they must hit to earn delegates.

The ultimate nominee must claim 1,991 delegates, which is a majority of the 3,979 pledged delegates available this primary season.

Associated Press writers Zeke Miller and Brian Slodysko in Washington and Kathleen Ronayne in Los Angeles contributed to this report.

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

## **Analysis: Biden's stunning turnabout remakes Democratic race**

**By JULIE PACE AP Washington Bureau Chief**

WASHINGTON (AP) — Less than a month ago, Joe Biden's campaign was in free fall. Even after he mounted a comeback in South Carolina, he confronted the reality of competing in crucial Super Tuesday contests with little money and no discernible campaign infrastructure.

It didn't matter.

The former vice president swept to victory in Democratic primary contests across the country, from New England to the Atlantic seaboard swing states, from the Upper Midwest to the Deep South. His coalition was broad, with black voters, women, older and college-educated voters all drawn to his campaign.

Biden's stunning performance cemented a remarkable turnabout, remaking the Democratic presidential primary with head-spinning speed. A candidate once on the brink of collapse, Biden is now a favorite for his party's nomination.

"I'm here to report, we are very much alive," Biden declared at a raucous rally in Los Angeles.

California, the night's biggest prize, was one of the few states Biden lost to Vermont Sen. Bernie Sanders. But Biden picked off Texas, the second-biggest state up for grabs, as well as eight other contests. His victories in Virginia and North Carolina, two crucial general-election states, were particularly decisive.

Biden's show of force puts him on a collision course with Sanders that will test who Democrats view as more electable in November. Sanders, a liberal firebrand, has spent decades calling for sweeping overhauls of economic and health care systems, while Biden, a moderate, is running less as an ideologue and more as a candidate who can reset the nation after President Donald Trump's divisive administration.

Sanders' fast start in this primary season — he won in New Hampshire and Nevada and effectively tied in Iowa — rattled centrist Democrats who fear he is out of step with vast swaths of the electorate and would not only cost the party the White House, but also the House and the Senate.

Many in the party quickly recognized that Sanders was benefiting from a crowded field of more moderate candidates who were dividing up the rest of the Democratic electorate. But it wasn't until Biden's commanding victory in South Carolina on Saturday that they began to see him as the best alternative.

The speed at which Biden's standing has shifted is virtually unprecedented in recent memory.

In the days since South Carolina, high-profile Democrats have flocked to Biden's campaign with dizzying speed, including several former rivals whose campaigns once appeared promising. Pete Buttigieg, Sen. Amy Klobuchar and Beto O'Rourke all endorsed Biden on Monday in a forceful show of party unity.

Much-needed money is also pouring in, including from some wealthy donors who have fretted for months about Biden's vulnerabilities coming off the sidelines. That influx of cash will allow Biden to build out the kind of campaign operations in upcoming states that he lacked in the Super Tuesday contests.

Indeed, the resource gap between Biden and some of his rivals on Tuesday was staggering, making his successes all the more striking.

In Minnesota and Massachusetts, billionaire Mike Bloomberg plunged roughly \$17 million into TV. Biden carried both states without spending a dollar, according to TV advertising data released late last week.

In Virginia, a key general election state where Biden won by more than 25 percentage points, the former vice president spent less than \$200,000 to Bloomberg's \$12 million, the data shows.



A similar pattern emerged in Texas, where Bloomberg spent \$47.8 million to Biden's \$291,000, and in North Carolina, where Bloomberg outspent Biden 28 times over.

Bloomberg ended the night without winning a single state, though he picked up a smattering of delegates. He planned to huddle with advisers in New York on Wednesday to reassess whether to press on with his campaign.

Also facing reality: Massachusetts Sen. Elizabeth Warren, who finished a disappointing third in her home state. Though she's vowed to take her campaign to a contested convention, it was unclear how she would justify continuing with little to cling to out of the Super Tuesday results.

That leaves Biden and Sanders, two white men in their late 70s, to battle it out to become the standard-bearer for an increasingly diverse party.

The race has echoes of Sanders' face-off in 2016 against Hillary Clinton, a more moderate candidate who was deemed a safer choice until her stunning loss to Trump in the general election. Sanders and his supporters are urging the party against taking a similar path this time around.

But Biden's surge has underscored just how many Democrats fear the prospect of a Sanders nomination. If Bloomberg were to drop out in the coming days, it's likely he would plunge his fortune into helping Biden and blasting Trump with millions of dollars in television advertising through the fall.

To be sure, Biden remains a candidate with risk. He has struggled to mobilize young voters and at times seems out of step with his party's energized left flank. He has also proven to be an uneven campaigner, often delivering unwieldy, rambling speeches.

But his vastly improved prospects appear to have refocused Biden. He was visibly energized as he blitzed the Super Tuesday states, relishing an outpouring of support from voters and party leaders who had appeared ready to send him into retirement just days ago.

"They don't call it Super Tuesday for nothing!" Biden exclaimed.

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EDITOR'S NOTE — AP Washington Bureau Chief Julie Pace has covered the White House and politics for the AP since 2007. Follow her at <https://twitter.com/jpaceDC>.

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Associated Press writer Brian Slodysko contributed to this report.

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

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This story has been corrected to show Biden spent less than \$200,000, not \$291,000, in Virginia.

## Supreme Court takes up 1st big abortion case of Trump era

By MARK SHERMAN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Supreme Court is taking up the first major abortion case of the Trump era, an election year look at a Louisiana dispute that could reveal how willing the more conservative court is to roll back abortion rights.

The outcome could have huge consequences at a time when several states have passed laws, being challenged in the courts, that would ban abortions after a fetal heartbeat is detected, as early as six weeks.

The justices on Wednesday are examining a Louisiana law requiring doctors who perform abortions to have admitting privileges at a nearby hospital. A federal judge found that just one of Louisiana's three abortion clinics would remain open if the law is allowed to take effect.

It is similar to one in Texas that the Supreme Court struck down in 2016. Since then, though, Donald Trump was elected president and he appointed two justices, Neil Gorsuch and Brett Kavanaugh, who have shifted the court to the right. Even with those two additions to the court, Chief Justice John Roberts almost certainly holds the deciding vote.

When the justices temporarily blocked the Louisiana law from taking effect a year ago, Roberts joined the court's four liberal justices to put it on hold. Kavanaugh and Gorsuch were among the four conserva-

tives who would have allowed the law to take effect.

Those preliminary votes do not bind the justices when they undertake a thorough review of an issue, but they often signal how a case will come out.

Roberts has generally voted to uphold abortion restrictions in more than 14 years as chief justice, including in the Texas case four years ago.

It is for now unclear whether Roberts' outlook on the Louisiana case has been affected by his new role as the court's swing justice since Justice Anthony Kennedy's retirement, his concern about the court being perceived as a partisan institution and his respect for a prior decision of the court, even one he disagreed with.

The chief justice asked an intriguing question about precedent Tuesday, wondering whether a 10-year-old decision would help determine the outcome of a case about the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau. "Do you think that recent precedent should have a binding effect on how the Court addresses this case?" Roberts asked.

Louisiana, the Trump administration and anti-abortion groups have all firmly answered that question with a resounding, "No."

Louisiana Attorney General Jeff Landry said the Louisiana and Texas laws are not identical. "Louisiana abortion providers have a record of non-compliance with basic safety regulations, and now they want a special exemption from generally accepted medical standards that apply to similar surgical procedures in our state," Landry said.

The Trump administration also argued in court papers that the high court could overrule the Texas case if necessary.

Julie Rikelman, the Center for Reproductive Rights lawyer who will argue the case on behalf of a clinic in Shreveport, Louisiana, said a trial judge found that abortions in Louisiana are safe and that the law provided no health benefits to women.

"This is a law that restricts a constitutional right for no good reason," Rikelman said.

The court also has agreed to review whether abortion providers have the right to go into court to represent the interests of women seeking abortions. A ruling in favor of the state's argument that the providers lack the right to sue in these circumstances, known as third-party standing, would be a devastating blow to abortion rights advocates since doctors and clinics, not individual women who want abortions, file most challenges to abortion restrictions.

A decision is expected by late June.

## Clashes erupt on Greece-Turkey border as migrants seek entry

By **COSTAS KANTOURIS** undefined

KASTANIES, Greece (AP) — Greek authorities fired tear gas and stun grenades Wednesday morning to repulse a push by migrants to cross its land border from Turkey, as pressure continued along its frontier after Turkey said its own border with Europe was open to whoever wanted to cross.

Turkish authorities said one person was killed and five were wounded by fire coming from the Greek side — an assertion the Greek government strongly rejected, saying it was "fake news."

The clashes were near the border village of Kastanies, along a border fence that covers much of the land border not demarcated by the Evros river running along the frontier.

Turkey made good on a threat to open its borders and send migrants into Europe last week. Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's action triggered days of violent clashes and scenes of chaos at the land border, where thousands of migrants and refugees have gathered.

The governor's office for the Turkish border province of Edirne said one migrant was killed and five others wounded after Greek police and border units fired tear gas, blank bullets and live rounds at a group of migrants gathered at an area between the Turkish and Greek gates of Pazarkule and Kastanies.

A statement from Gov. Ekrem Canalp's office said three migrants were injured in the foot, one in the groin and one in the head. A sixth migrant who was hit in the chest died in hospital, it said, adding the

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incident occurred as the Turkish parliamentary committee on human rights was visiting the area.

Greek government spokesman Stelios Petsas categorically denied any migrants had been wounded or killed by Greek authorities.

"The Turkish side creates and disperses fake news targeted against Greece. Today they created yet another such falsehood," he said, adding that he categorically denied anyone was injured or killed. "There is no such incident with fire from the Greek authorities," he said.

It was not immediately possible to independently confirm the conflicting official statements.

During the clashes earlier Wednesday, reporters on the Greek side of the border heard what sounded like gunfire, though it was unclear whether this was live ammunition. A group of people could be seen carrying something which could have been a person between them, and running to the Turkish border post. Shortly afterward, an ambulance was heard leaving.

Reporters on the Turkish side of the border saw at least four ambulances leave the area.

Greece's sea border with Turkey has also come under pressure. In the past few days hundreds of people have headed to Greek islands from the nearby Turkish coast in dinghies. One child died when the rubber dinghy he was in capsized off the coast of the Greek island of Lesbos earlier this week.

The government has called the situation a direct threat to Greece's national security and has imposed emergency measures to carry out swift deportations and freeze asylum applications for one month. Migrants have been reporting being summarily pushed back across the border into Turkey.

Turkey's announcement that it wouldn't stop those wishing to cross into Europe came amid a Russia-backed Syrian government offensive into Syria's northwestern Idlib province, where Turkish troops are fighting.

The offensive has killed dozens of Turkish troops and sent nearly a million Syrian civilians toward Turkey's sealed border. However, Oleg Zhuravlev, head of the Russian military's coordination center in Syria, said Tuesday the claims about a humanitarian crisis in Idlib were false.

Zhuravlev said Turkish authorities were "herding" about 130,000 refugees, who were in temporary camps near the Turkey-Syria border, toward the border with Greece. He said most were not from Syria.

On Greece's land border with Turkey, Greek authorities said Turkish police were firing tear gas at the Greek border and the authorities guarding it, and supplied video they said backed their assertion.

Turkey, for its part, accused Greece of mistreating refugees.

"Greece treats refugees horribly and then turns around to blame Turkey," Fahrettin Altun, the communications director of Turkey's presidency, tweeted Tuesday night. "This is the kind of double standards and hypocrisy we have gotten used to over the years. The country that just suspended temporary protection and tear gassed migrations has no moral authority to speak of!"

In an address to legislators from his ruling party on Wednesday, Erdogan called on Greece and other European nations to respect migrants' rights. He screened a photograph depicting Greeks who reportedly found refuge in Syria in 1942, saying: "Greeks who try all kinds of methods to keep refugees away from their countries — from drowning them at sea to shooting at them with bullets — should not forget that they may need to be shown the same mercy some day."

He also accused EU countries of hypocritical behavior, saying they had rushed to Greece's help "with money, boats and soldiers" to prevent a new influx of migrants but ignored Turkey's plight concerning 3.7 million Syrian refugees on its territory.

Meanwhile, European Council head Charles Michel was scheduled to meet with Erdogan in Ankara Wednesday, while EU Vice President Josep Borrell and Commissioner for Crisis Management Janez Lenarcic will hold talks with Turkish Vice President Fuat Oktay.

Top EU officials, including Michel and European Commission head Ursula von der Leyen, visited the Greek border area Tuesday along with Greek Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis, who said Turkey "has systematically encouraged and assisted tens of thousands of refugees and migrants to illegally enter Greece."

Greek authorities said there were about 15,000 people along the Greek-Turkish land border on Wednesday. They said that between Saturday morning and Wednesday morning, they had blocked 27,832 attempts to

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cross the border, and had arrested a total of 220 people who managed to cross.

Von der Leyen expressed support for Greece, noting the border wasn't just a national one but an external border of the EU. Those trying to cross into Greece had "been lured by false promises into this desperate situation," she said.

Ankara has come under harsh criticism from some European countries.

"The people are being used by President Erdogan as a political football, as weapons and as instruments of pressure on the European Union," Austrian Chancellor Sebastian Kurz said Tuesday.

Suzan Fraser in Ankara, Turkey, and Elena Becatoros in Athens, contributed to this report.

## AP VoteCast: Late deciders aid Biden, young loyal to Sanders

By JOSH BOAK and HANNAH FINGERHUT Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Joe Biden's surprise victories on Super Tuesday were powered by Democratic voters who broke his way just days before casting their ballots — a wave of late momentum that scrambled the race in a matter of hours.

The late deciders helped Biden win Massachusetts, Minnesota, North Carolina, Texas and Virginia, among several other states. In some states, they made up roughly half of all voters, according to AP VoteCast surveys of voters in eight state primaries. And the surveys show they lined up behind the former vice president. In Virginia, where nearly half of the voters waited to make up their minds, Biden won two-thirds of the late deciders.

The surveys show the power of a well-timed surge in a race that has been defined by a crowd of candidates and confused voters agonizing over the best challenger to President Donald Trump in November. Biden's big win in South Carolina on Saturday revived his struggling campaign and within 72 hours pushed three of his rivals toward the exit and swung the opinions of voters in distant states.

Yet Vermont Sen. Bernie Sanders found a way to blunt the impact. By organizing aggressively and banking early votes from his liberal, young and Latino coalition, Sanders won Colorado and California. About 80% of Sanders voters in California said they picked their candidate before the final stretch.

Here's a snapshot of Democratic voters in Alabama, California, Colorado, Massachusetts, Minnesota, North Carolina, Texas and Virginia — who they are and how they voted — based on preliminary results from AP VoteCast surveys, conducted for The Associated Press by NORC at the University of Chicago.

### BIDEN'S COMEBACK COALITION

The former vice president's coalition came into clear focus Tuesday. He did well with moderates and conservatives, voters older than 45 and African Americans. In many states, he enjoyed an advantage among women and college graduates. He ran strong with voters who attend church at least once a month.

And he successfully channeled sentimental attachments to former President Barack Obama. About half of North Carolina voters, for example, wanted a president who would restore politics to a pre-Trump era — and Biden won the majority of this group.

There's little doubt Biden's ties to black voters were critical to his rebound. Biden cleaned up in Alabama on Tuesday night by winning close to 70% of African Americans, a majority of Democratic voters in that state.

Perceptions about electability may also be key to Biden's support. In Minnesota, for example, where Biden benefited from home-state Sen. Amy Klobuchar's exit from the race, about 60% of voters said it would be harder for a nominee with strong liberal views to win in the general election.

Even in his California loss, there were signs of newfound energy for Biden. Of voters there who picked their candidate in the last three days, Biden had a slight advantage.

Biden also flashed some crossover appeal in places that matter. In Virginia, a state likely to be a top battleground in November, Biden won more than half of voters who say they voted in the 2016 Republican primary. Mike Bloomberg won close to 20%.

STICKING TO SANDERS



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The Vermont senator is holding on to his coalition of liberal voters, Latinos and voters under 30. In states with sizable populations of each, he fared well. In Virginia and North Carolina, where majorities were older and more likely to identify as moderate, Sanders came up short.

Sanders' strength with Latinos was clearest in California, where the group made up about 30% of the vote. Sanders won close to half of that group in California — roughly double Biden's share.

Sanders has benefited from a youth movement. In California and Colorado, he won about 60% of voters under 30. His voters there are also somewhat more likely than Biden's to feel as though they're falling behind financially. He won about 40% of Texas and Minnesota voters who said that recent economic gains had bypassed them.

Aside from their youth, Sanders supporters stand out for their skepticism of most other candidates in the race. At least half of his voters in North Carolina said they would be unhappy with Biden or Bloomberg as the nominee. Majorities of them in California, Colorado, Massachusetts and Virginia felt the same.

## BLOOMBERG'S BUST

More than \$500 million in spending on ads could not buy Bloomberg much love.

Bloomberg fared better among voters older than 65 compared with those younger, and similarly among those who think of themselves as moderate or conservative more so than liberals. But even among these groups, he was edged out by Biden.

The former New York mayor was the Democrat voters were least enthusiastic about nominating.

More than half of voters in Minnesota, Colorado and Massachusetts — his birthplace — said they would be dissatisfied if Bloomberg was the Democratic candidate. Roughly half in California, North Carolina and Virginia would also be displeased. By comparison, majorities in each of those states said they would be satisfied if Sanders was the nominee.

Only in Alabama and Texas would a majority be satisfied by Bloomberg.

## LOOKING TOWARD NOVEMBER

The Democratic contests do appear to be drawing some potential swing voters. Close to 20% of voters or more said they are waiting to see who wins the nomination before deciding how they'll vote in November. That was true in seven of the eight states AP surveyed. The share was somewhat smaller — 15% — in Minnesota, a state Trump is trying to flip.

Most of this group identified as moderates or conservatives, a sign that they might be open to Trump or consider not voting for any candidate in November.

Another closely watched group is suburbanites — a constituency that could make up more than half the general election electorate. Sanders and Biden battled it out for those voters on Tuesday, neither jumping ahead with a clear advantage.

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AP VoteCast is a survey of the American electorate conducted by NORC at the University of Chicago for The Associated Press and Fox News. The surveys were conducted for seven days, concluding as polls closed.

## 10 Things to Know for Today

By The Associated Press undefined

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

1. **BIDEN HAS MOST WINS, SANDERS BIGGEST PRIZE** A resurgent Joe Biden scores nine victories across the country — including Texas — while progressive rival Bernie Sanders seizes Super Tuesday's biggest prize with a win in California.

2. **BIDEN'S STUNNING TURNABOUT REMAKES DEMOCRATIC RACE** A candidate on the brink of collapse less than a month ago, the former vice president is now a favorite for his party's nomination.

3. **'PEOPLE ARE AFRAID AND UNCERTAIN'** As the number of new cases drop precipitously in China, attention shifts to South Korea, Italy and Iran, sites of major clusters of contagion that account for 80% of new cases outside China.

4. **CHINA'S SCHOOLS, FORCED ONLINE BY VIRUS, RUN INTO CENSORS** Lesson plans have been sty-

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mied by the ruling Communist Party's strict online regulators, with history and politics classes among the most vulnerable.

5. **WHAT SECTOR VIRUS IS HAMMERING** A steep drop in business trips is dealing a gut punch to the already reeling travel industry, squarely hitting airlines and hotels, and costing the business travel industry \$47 billion per month.

6. **SUPREME COURT TAKES UP FIRST BIG ABORTION CASE OF TRUMP ERA** The outcome could have huge consequences at a time when several states have passed severe restrictions, including a ban on abortions after a fetal heartbeat is detected.

7. **WHERE CLASHES HAVE ERUPTED** Greek authorities are firing tear gas and stun grenades to repulse a push by migrants to cross its land border from Turkey, as pressure continues along its frontier.

8. **'WE CAN'T GO WITHOUT EATING'** From Hawaii to Pennsylvania, states are scrambling to curb the impact of a new Trump administration rule that could cause nearly 700,000 people to lose food stamp benefits.

9. **A MURDER TRIAL MADE FOR HOLLYWOOD** After a film about him, an HBO documentary full of seemingly damning statements, and decades of suspicion, multimillionaire real estate heir Robert Durst is now on trial for murder.

10. **ADHD DIAGNOSES INCREASING IN AFRICAN AMERICAN KIDS** For the first time, a U.S. survey finds that black children appear to be more likely than white kids to be diagnosed with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder and other learning disabilities.

## Takeaways from Super Tuesday: Joe Biden's big bounce

By **NICHOLAS RICCARDI** Associated Press

DENVER (AP) — Super Tuesday is the biggest day on the primary calendar, and the results seem very likely to reshape the Democratic presidential race in ways few people could have predicted a couple of weeks ago.

Here are some takeaways from the results.

### BIDEN STORMS BACK

It is hard to overstate the speed and depth of the comeback of former Vice President Joe Biden. He was embarrassed in Iowa, New Hampshire and Nevada and left many Democrats looking for an alternative.

A decisive victory in South Carolina left him buoyant but also highly vulnerable heading into Super Tuesday, with 14 primaries spread from Maine to California. He had little money and only limited organization in place.

Mike Bloomberg had placed a \$500 million bet that Biden would falter. Sen. Bernie Sanders had built his own kind of firewall — not in a small state like South Carolina, but in the biggest of them all, California.

But Sanders' perceived strength and Bloomberg's weakness drove many Democrats into Biden's arms. In a remarkable 24 hours, Biden secured the endorsements of three former competitors who appeared at show-of-force events in Dallas, and he harnessed the elusive power of momentum.

Biden's night started with an emphatic, 30-point victory in Virginia, a state where the profile of the electorate includes many of the college-educated suburban voters who powered Democratic victories in the 2018 midterm elections. Bloomberg spent more than \$12 million in television ads in Virginia and millions more on field organization. Biden spent about \$200,000.

Biden built on that throughout the night, in North Carolina, Minnesota, Massachusetts and across the South. Biden's success fundamentally reset the race, with the contest almost certainly now between him and Sanders, who ran strong in the two largest states, winning California and finishing second to Biden in Texas.

They seem destined for a long, state-by-state fight defined by their starkly different visions of what Democrats need to defeat President Donald Trump.

### SANDERS UNBOWED

Sanders claimed the night's largest trophy, California, a state where he had committed substantial time

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and effort, while Biden had only a minimalist campaign. It was a measure of how strategic the Sanders campaign has been and why he remains so formidable.

It was also a place where he assembled a coalition that included young voters and Latinos, something he was able to do in Texas, the second biggest delegate prize of the night, as well.

Winning California was critical for Sanders, who had long held a strong lead in the polls there.

But he lost in a number of states his campaign had been banking on, from Minnesota to Massachusetts. The Sanders campaign has gambled that, with a divided electorate, he could use his unshakable base to power him to plurality victories across the country. That theory showed flaws on Super Tuesday.

And there were warning signs beyond his big losses in the south, a region where Sanders has always struggled. He lost Minnesota and Oklahoma, two mostly white states that he won during his 2016 insurgent run against Hillary Clinton. That suggests Sanders is seeing erosion in his white support from his prior races. Even in his home state of Vermont, Sanders didn't perform as well as he did in 2016.

Now Sanders finds himself in much the same place as four years ago, a defiant insurgent with passionate support facing off against the favorite of the party establishment.

His national footprint, loyal following and strong fundraising mean he's still in a solid position despite the Super Tuesday bruising. But Sanders may need a different approach going forward other than railing against the leaders of the party whose voters will determine whether he's their nominee.

## BLOOMBERG'S CHECKS BOUNCE

Bloomberg has often described himself as a data-driven manager. By any measure, the numbers look very bad for the billionaire former mayor of New York.

He is highly unlikely to win a state and is not on track to accumulate a serious number of delegates.

According to AP VoteCast, a majority of Democrats in several states would be disappointed if Bloomberg were the nominee. Even in Virginia, where he helped fund gun control efforts and elect women to state legislative and congressional seats, he dramatically underperformed.

He has no clear path ahead, and given that his reason for running was predicated on a Biden failure, the rationale for continuing is not readily apparent. He is competing with Biden for anti-Sanders votes, while the Biden campaign worries that Bloomberg's unorthodox strategy is depriving him of delegates he would need to overtake Sanders.

In Florida on Tuesday Bloomberg insisted he's staying in, but it will get harder for him to make that argument if he starts approaching the status of John Connally, another big-spending party switcher who flopped in the 1980 GOP primary and only netted a single delegate.

## WARREN PLAN FOR WINNING YIELDS LOSING

Sen. Elizabeth Warren did not win a single state Tuesday and finished an embarrassing third in her home state, Massachusetts.

Her once ascendant campaign has been on a consistent downward trajectory, languishing at the bottom of the field in many states — sometimes even below Bloomberg, the object of her repeated scorn.

She was in Michigan on Tuesday night, delivering her standard stump speech as if nothing had changed.

Her supporters hope she accumulates enough delegates to be a player and possible consensus nominee at a brokered convention. But candidates run for president, not convention broker.

## THE DEVIL IS IN THE DELEGATE COUNT

Candidates don't become the nominee by winning states, they do it by winning delegates. And it may be days — or weeks — before we know exactly where everyone stands in that ranking.

Much of that is because California, with its whopping 415 delegates, counts extremely slowly. The state has a permissive voting system that requires ballots mailed in on election day to be counted, and the tallying could stretch into April.

Many in California voted early, before Biden's resurgence, so he may gain as the count drags. But Sanders' backers are usually a late-voting cohort — on election night in 2016 he was losing the state to Clinton by double digits but was only down by about 7% in the final results released weeks later. So it's hard to know how to parcel out the state's bounteous rewards.

Other states like Colorado may take multiple days to finish their count and reward delegates. It's likely this hurts Sanders long term — the western states where he was strongest take the longest time, while the eastern ones where Biden romped reported results quickly, helping solidify the image of the former vice president's comeback.

## VOTERS GET OFF THE FENCE

The Democratic electorate has spent 15 months in paralysis as voters agonized over which of a sprawling, diverse field was most likely to beat Trump. On Tuesday, about one-third of Democrats had to make a decision. Many of those who waited until the last minute picked Biden.

From about a quarter of voters in Texas to just over half in Minnesota, much of the Super Tuesday electorate hadn't made up their minds until the final days, according to AP VoteCast. In North Carolina and Minnesota, about half went to Biden. In Virginia, two-thirds did. Biden won all three states.

In many states, these late deciders were somewhat older, slightly more likely to have graduated college and more likely to identify as moderate or conservative. They were helped by strong signals from the Democratic establishment. Biden's centrist rivals, former South Bend, Indiana, Mayor Pete Buttigieg and Minnesota Sen. Amy Klobuchar, dropped out and endorsed him, and the former vice president racked up nods from dozens of Democratic luminaries in the 72 hours after his commanding win in South Carolina on Saturday night.

For much of the cycle, Democrats indicated they hadn't made up their minds on whom to support. If they continue to lock in on Biden in the states that vote after Super Tuesday, it could provide a critical advantage.

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

## Doctors try 1st CRISPR editing in the body for blindness

By **MARILYNN MARCHIONE** AP Chief Medical Writer

Scientists say they have used the gene editing tool CRISPR inside someone's body for the first time, a new frontier for efforts to operate on DNA, the chemical code of life, to treat diseases.

A patient recently had it done at the Casey Eye Institute at Oregon Health & Science University in Portland for an inherited form of blindness, the companies that make the treatment announced Wednesday. They would not give details on the patient or when the surgery occurred.

It may take up to a month to see if it worked to restore vision. If the first few attempts seem safe, doctors plan to test it on 18 children and adults.

"We literally have the potential to take people who are essentially blind and make them see," said Charles Albright, chief scientific officer at Editas Medicine, the Cambridge, Massachusetts-based company developing the treatment with Dublin-based Allergan. "We think it could open up a whole new set of medicines to go in and change your DNA."

Dr. Jason Comander, an eye surgeon at Massachusetts Eye and Ear in Boston, another hospital that plans to enroll patients in the study, said it marks "a new era in medicine" using a technology that "makes editing DNA much easier and much more effective."

Doctors first tried in-the-body gene editing in 2017 for a different inherited disease using a tool called zinc fingers. Many scientists believe CRISPR is a much easier tool for locating and cutting DNA at a specific spot, so interest in the new research is very high.

The people in this study have Leber congenital amaurosis, caused by a gene mutation that keeps the body from making a protein needed to convert light into signals to the brain, which enables sight. They're often born with little vision and can lose even that within a few years.

Scientists can't treat it with standard gene therapy -- supplying a replacement gene -- because the one needed is too big to fit inside the disabled viruses that are used to ferry it into cells.

So they're aiming to edit, or delete the mutation by making two cuts on either side of it. The hope is



that the ends of DNA will reconnect and allow the gene to work as it should.

It's done in an hour-long surgery under general anesthesia. Through a tube the width of a hair, doctors drip three drops of fluid containing the gene editing machinery just beneath the retina, the lining at the back of the eye that contains the light-sensing cells.

"Once the cell is edited, it's permanent and that cell will persist hopefully for the life of the patient," because these cells don't divide, said one study leader not involved in this first case, Dr. Eric Pierce at Massachusetts Eye and Ear.

Doctors think they need to fix one tenth to one third of the cells to restore vision. In animal tests, scientists were able to correct half of the cells with the treatment, Albright said.

The eye surgery itself poses little risk, doctors say. Infections and bleeding are relatively rare complications.

One of the biggest potential risks from gene editing is that CRISPR could make unintended changes in other genes, but the companies have done a lot to minimize that and to ensure that the treatment cuts only where it's intended to, Pierce said. He has consulted for Editas and helped test a gene therapy, Luxturna, that's sold for a different type of inherited blindness.

Some independent experts were optimistic about the new study.

"The gene editing approach is really exciting. We need technology that will be able to deal with problems like these large genes," said Dr. Jean Bennett, a University of Pennsylvania researcher who helped test Luxturna at the Children's Hospital of Philadelphia.

In one day, she had three calls from families seeking solutions to inherited blindness.

"It's a terrible disease," she said. "Right now they have nothing."

Dr. Kiran Musunuru, another gene editing expert at the University of Pennsylvania, said the treatment seems likely to work, based on tests in human tissue, mice and monkeys.

The gene editing tool stays in the eye and does not travel to other parts of the body, so "if something goes wrong, the chance of harm is very small," he said. "It makes for a good first step for doing gene editing in the body."

Although the new study is the first to use CRISPR to edit a gene inside the body, another company, Sangamo Therapeutics, has been testing zinc finger gene editing to treat metabolic diseases.

Other scientists are using CRISPR to edit cells outside the body to try to treat cancer, sickle cell and some other diseases.

All of these studies have been done in the open, with government regulators' approval, unlike a Chinese scientist's work that brought international scorn in 2018. He Jiankui used CRISPR to edit embryos at the time of conception to try to make them resistant to infection with the AIDS virus. Changes to embryos' DNA can pass to future generations, unlike the work being done now in adults to treat diseases.

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Marilynn Marchione can be followed on Twitter: @MMarchioneAP

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## **Virus hammers business travel as wary companies nix trips**

**By DAVID KOENIG and DEE-ANN DURBIN AP Business Writers**

Amazon and other big companies are trying to keep their employees healthy by banning business trips, but they've dealt a gut punch to a travel industry already reeling from the virus outbreak.

The Seattle-based online retail giant has told its nearly 800,000 workers to postpone any non-essential travel within the United States or around the globe. Swiss food giant Nestle told its 291,000 employees worldwide to limit domestic business travel and halt international travel until March 15. French cosmetics maker L'Oréal, which employs 86,000 people, issued a similar ban until March 31.

Other companies, like Twitter, are telling their employees worldwide to work from home. Google gave

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that directive to its staff of 8,000 at its European headquarters in Dublin on Tuesday.

Major business gatherings, like the Geneva International Motor Show and the Mobile World Congress in Barcelona, have also been canceled.

On Tuesday, Facebook confirmed it will no longer attend the South by Southwest conference in Austin, Texas, which is scheduled to begin March 13. And the 189-nation International Monetary Fund and its sister lending organization, the World Bank, announced they will replace their regular spring meetings in Washington — scheduled for mid-April — with a “virtual format.”

Michael Dunne, the CEO of ZoZo Go, an automotive consulting company that specializes in the Chinese market, normally travels from California to Asia every six weeks. But right now he’s not planning to cross the Pacific until June.

“With everything at a standstill, I do not feel a sense of missing the action,” Dunne said. “But there is no better catalyst for business than meeting people in person.”

Robin Ottaway, president of Brooklyn Brewery, canceled a trip to Seoul and Tokyo last week. He has indefinitely suspended all travel to Asia and also just canceled a trip to Copenhagen that was scheduled for March.

“I wasn’t worried about getting sick. I’m a healthy 46-year-old man with no preexisting conditions,” Ottaway said. “My only worry was getting stuck in Asia or quarantined after returning to the U.S. And I’d hate to be a spreader of the virus.”

The cancellations and travel restrictions are a major blow to business travel, which makes up around 26% of the total travel spending, or around \$1.5 trillion per year, according to the Global Business Travel Association.

The association estimates the virus is costing the business travel industry \$47 billion per month. In a recent poll of 400 member companies, the group found that 95% have suspended business trips to China, 45% have cut trips to Japan and South Korea and 23% have canceled trips to Europe.

“It’s a big deal,” said Henry Harteveltdt, a travel industry analyst in San Francisco who estimates that airlines get 55% of their revenue from business travelers, since they’re more likely to sit in pricier business or first-class seats.

“On a long-haul flight to Europe or Asia, a business-class traveler can be five times more profitable than someone in coach,” Harteveltdt said.

Figures from the Airlines Reporting Corp. indicate that airline ticket sales fell about 9% during one week in late February, compared with a year earlier.

Hotels are also worried about declines in business travel. In the U.S. alone, hotel bookings for business travel were expected to reach \$46.8 billion this year, according to Phocuswright, a travel research firm.

In the week through Feb. 22, San Francisco saw an 11% decline in hotel occupancy, according to STR, a hotel data company. AT&T, Verizon and IBM were among the companies that pulled out of the city’s RSA cybersecurity conference, which began Feb. 24.

Backing out of industry events can be a tough call for businesses. Luke Sorter, owner of Pavel’s Yogurt, spent last weekend agonizing over whether his company should attend Natural Products Expo West, a major industry gathering in Anaheim, California.

Sorter spent nearly \$20,000 on conference fees and travel expenses, but then rumors began circulating that nearly all the major retailers he was hoping to pitch were pulling out.

“This was going to be our big push to make some sales and open up some new accounts, and we were really disappointed because all of the major buying groups had pulled out of the show,” said Sorter, whose San Leandro, California-based company pulls in about \$1.2 million to \$1.5 million in revenue per year.

On Tuesday, Expo West announced it would be postponed until a later date.

“I was relieved because it just didn’t seem safe to put 50, 60, 70,000 people in a building together and the whole show is predicated on sharing and sampling food and handshakes, and person-to-person interaction,” Sorter said.

Some experts say it’s smart for companies to curtail travel before things get worse. Worldwide, 92,000 people have been sickened by the virus and 3,100 have died.

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"If you knowingly put your employees in harm's way during travel, you can be held responsible for their injury or their death," said Kevin Mitchell, chairman of the Business Travel Coalition, which advocates for corporations and governments that hire travel management companies.

In some cases, workers themselves are demanding a halt to travel. The pilots' union at American Airlines sued last month to make the airline stop flying to China. American agreed to suspend flights to mainland China but initially tried to keep serving Hong Kong. Pilots wouldn't do it.

When pilots began reporting nervousness about going to Milan and flights were less full, American suspended that service much more quickly, said Dennis Tager, a spokesman for the union.

In some cases, companies are also asking employees to cancel meetings with outside visitors to cut down on the risk of transmission. In a memo sent to Ford Motor Co.'s nearly 200,000 employees Tuesday, Ford CEO Jim Hackett asked employees to meet with suppliers and others by phone or virtually.

Ford also said only the most critical travel will be approved for employees through March 27.

Business Writers Cathy Bussewitz and Tali Arbel in New York, Foster Klug in Tokyo and Tom Krisher in Detroit contributed to this report.

## Sanders wins California, Super Tuesday's biggest prize

By ADAM BEAM Associated Press

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Bernie Sanders won Super Tuesday's biggest prize, taking California on a night he sought to blunt the momentum of a suddenly surging Joe Biden in the race for the Democratic presidential nomination.

California was only one of 14 states that voted Tuesday, but its more than 400 delegates made it the most coveted primary in the narrowing Democratic field. But it is not clear how many delegates Sanders will claim from California, given the state's complicated process for awarding them. The final tally won't be sorted out for days as state officials still must count late arriving mail-in ballots.

In early returns, Sanders led with 29% of the vote. Biden was second with nearly 19% while former New York Mayor Mike Bloomberg was third with just under 18%. Massachusetts Sen. Elizabeth Warren was fourth with 12%.

Sanders went all-in on California four years ago, hoping the deep-blue state would give him the surge he needed to defeat establishment candidate Hillary Clinton. He lost on election night in 2016, but his sophisticated campaign operation never left. He opened field offices across the state, including far-flung outposts in the state's Central Valley, areas traditionally ignored by presidential campaigns.

He aggressively courted Latino voters, who make up 40% of the state's population, and he worked hard to make sure voters who were not registered with a political party knew how to request a ballot and vote for him.

"Tonight I assure you with absolute confidence, we are going to win the Democratic nomination," Sanders told supporters in Vermont on Tuesday. "What we need is a new politics that brings working class people into our political movement which brings young people into our political movement and which in November will create the highest voter turnout in America's political history."

Tuesday's election came just days after voters in South Carolina resurrected Biden's candidacy, forcing moderate rivals Pete Buttigieg and Amy Klobuchar to end their campaigns and endorse the former vice president. The reshuffled field gave many of California's 20 million registered voters reason to rethink their ballots.

The Associated Press called the race for Sanders on Tuesday before any votes were counted, relying on AP VoteCast, a wide-ranging survey of the American electorate.

Sanders' strongest supporters tend to be younger and Hispanic, two groups that don't usually vote early. But the survey saw Sanders had a big lead in ballots that were mailed before election day. Many of those ballots were sent before Biden's victory in South Carolina led Klobuchar and Buttigieg to quit the race.

That means any candidate chasing Sanders would have to make up lots of ground in ballots cast in

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person on Election Day, but VoteCast found Sanders had an edge in those votes, too.

Biden reveled in his wins in other states, including Virginia, Oklahoma, Tennessee and Alabama — states where Biden did not have a big campaign presence.

Speaking to supporters in Los Angeles, a jubilant Biden mocked critics who declared his campaign dead. "We were told, 'Well, when you got to Super Tuesday it would be over,'" Biden said. "Well it may be over for the other guy."

California continued a disappointing night for billionaire Bloomberg, who skipped the early primary states to focus his fortune on Super Tuesday. His ads dominated the airwaves in the state's expensive media markets, but it wasn't enough to surpass Sanders.

Warren, who had been battling with Sanders for the heart of the party's progressive wing, picked up a late endorsement from Jennifer Siebel Newsom, wife of Gov. Gavin Newsom. The boost might be enough for the Warren campaign to get above the 15% threshold required to win delegates.

President Donald Trump, who lost California by over 4 million votes in 2016, faced only token opposition in the state's Republican primary. Meanwhile, California Republicans were trying to position themselves to retake a string of U.S. House seats that Democrats seized in 2018.

In the 25th Congressional District, Republicans were hoping to recapture a seat won in 2018 by former Democratic U.S. Rep. Katie Hill, who resigned last year following a House ethics probe and sex scandal.

Democrat Christy Smith was leading Republican Mike Garcia in a special election to finish the remainder of Hill's term, and also in a separate primary election for the next term of Congress.

In the 50th Congressional District, former Republican U.S. Rep. Darrell Issa was leading a trio of other Republicans. The seat was left vacant after the resignation of former Rep. Duncan Hunter, who stepped down after pleading guilty to a corruption charge.

And a statewide ballot measure to borrow \$15 billion to modernize and update public schools was losing in early returns, with millions of votes in Los Angeles and San Francisco yet to be counted.

Speaking at a Sacramento polling place, Gov. Gavin Newsom declined to say who he voted for on Tuesday. But he predicted the party would unify as before come November.

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Associated Press journalists Michael R. Blood and Cuneyt Dil contributed to this report.

## China's schools, forced online by virus, run into censors

By YANAN WANG Associated Press

BEIJING (AP) — Less than 30 minutes into a lecture on bioinformatics, Chu Xinjian's class was abruptly cut short.

It was the first day of an unusual semester. Across China, schools are shut indefinitely in a bid to contain a new virus that has killed some 3,000 people. Chu's class was one of tens of thousands of courses, from grade school to university, that have been forced online.

Chu's professor was painstakingly sending voice recordings to the class group chat when, without warning, the system disbanded the group for violating China's Internet regulations — a pervasive, almost mundane part of life under Communist Party rule.

The students were puzzled. Was it because of something about the subject matter? Bioinformatics is the science of collecting and analyzing complex biological data. "I'm not sure exactly what phrases triggered it," said Chu, who recounted the incident. "I guess we touched on some sensitive topic."

Major social media platforms including Facebook, YouTube and Twitter are blocked in China, while home-grown ones such as Weibo and WeChat are heavily monitored and scrubbed for offensive content by the state Cyberspace Administration and police.

Now, the sudden arrival of public education onto platforms that are generally the domain of celebrity livestreamers has thrown the controls into stark relief. Classrooms are confronting the ubiquity and often arbitrary nature of the ruling Communist Party's online censorship.

Biology courses have been blocked for "pornographic content." History and politics classes are among



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the most vulnerable; subjects such as the Cultural Revolution and the Great Leap Forward are regularly censored in classes and online discussions.

Daily life in the world's most populous nation has undergone a radical transformation in the past six weeks. Once-bustling streets are empty, fast-food restaurants offer only takeout service and group activities have been replaced with remote everything — remote work, remote fitness class, remote schooling.

"Classes have stopped but learning will not," the Education Ministry said in a February notice. It has established 24,000 free online courses on 22 web platforms, covering both undergraduate and vocational disciplines.

Yet many lesson plans have been stymied by the country's strict online regulators.

Louis Wang, a middle school history teacher in northeast China, said his workload has ballooned because of an arduous approval process for online classes.

While teachers have some leeway to facilitate spontaneous discussion in a classroom setting, online classes can be recorded, with the potential for clips to be taken out of context and circulated online.

"Every word that is spoken in a video recording must be pre-approved," Wang said.

For him, that means writing word-for-word his entire lecture — about 5,000 Chinese characters — for review by school administrators.

Even seemingly non-controversial statements can run afoul of the censors.

Wang said one of his colleagues, a politics teacher, was trying to upload a document for his students with "socialism with Chinese characteristics" in its title. The phrase was championed by former leader Deng Xiaoping and is still frequently used by the government today.

For reasons unexplained, the cloud platform blocked the document. It could be uploaded only after the overtly political phrase was removed.

Teachers are using workarounds to skirt a variety of digital obstacles. On the messaging app WeChat, documents can be rejected for transmission to a group chat if a file fails a "safety inspection."

The same documents, however, can often be shared in direct messages, so some teachers have resorted to sending files to parents and students one-by-one.

"Teachers having their online classes blocked, that's funny, because it's too absurd," Wang Yuechi, a well-known Chinese comedian wrote on his verified account on Weibo, an app similar to Twitter.

"This is not normal — it's because there's no freedom of speech," he wrote. "Just like how it's not normal that this post will also be deleted. I hope everyone can be aware of this. The absence of freedom of speech will impact our education, our lives. This has already happened. It's not so funny now, is it?"

As Wang predicted, his post can no longer be viewed on Weibo.

Not every online class mishap involves censorship. Sometimes technical difficulties are the culprit.

Cheng Yufan, a university student in the southern province of Jiangsu, inadvertently became the host of a lecture on the first day of online classes last month.

When class was set to start, her philosophy professor was nowhere to be found, Cheng said. The professor was logged onto a different platform; meanwhile, the other one had designated Cheng as group administrator.

Their professor fared no better on the second platform. Internet connection issues resulted in Cheng and her classmates tuning into two hours of silence.

Afterwards, the unwitting professor wrote in their class group chat, "See you next time!"

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

## States scramble to prepare ahead of food stamps rule change

By SOPHIA TAREEN Associated Press

CHICAGO (AP) — Having food stamps offers Richard Butler a stability he's rarely known in his 25 years. He was in state custody at age 2, spent his teen years at a Chicago boys' home and jail for burglary, and

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has since struggled to find a permanent home.

The \$194 deposited monthly on his benefits card buys fresh produce and meat.

"It means the world to me," said Butler, who shares a one-bedroom apartment with two others. "We can go without a lot of things, like phones and music. We can't go without eating."

But that stability is being threatened for people like Butler, who are able-bodied, without dependents and between the ages 18 and 49. New Trump administration rules taking effect April 1 put hundreds of thousands of people in his situation at risk of losing their benefits. They hit particularly hard in places like Illinois, which also has been dealing with a separate, similar change in the nation's third-largest city.

From Hawaii to Pennsylvania, states are scrambling to blunt the impact, with roughly 700,000 people at risk of losing benefits unless they meet certain work, training or school requirements. They've filed a multi-state lawsuit, expanded publicly funded job training, developed pilot programs and doubled down efforts to reach vulnerable communities, including the homeless, rural residents and people of color.

Social service agencies say they won't be able to fill the gap, making increased homelessness and more hospital visits among the biggest concerns. Experts say they've already seen troubling signs in some states.

"This is a cascading effect," said Robert Campbell, managing director at Feeding America, which runs hundreds of food banks nationwide. "It will increase demands on the emergency food system, food banks and pantries."

Currently, work-eligible, able-bodied adults without dependents under 50 can receive monthly benefits if they meet a 20-hour weekly work, job training or school requirement. Those who don't are limited to three months of food stamps over three years.

However, states with high unemployment or few jobs have been able to waive time limits. Every state except Delaware has sought a waiver at some point, according to the National Conference of State Legislatures.

The new rules make it harder to get waivers. They're the first of three changes to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, or SNAP, which feeds 36 million people nationwide.

The Trump administration has touted the change as a way to get people working and save \$5.5 billion over five years. Able-bodied adults without dependents are 7% of SNAP recipients.

But states fighting the change say that argument is misguided.

"Not everyone is in a position to get a job tomorrow, and taking away access to food is only going to make that more difficult," said Pennsylvania Department of Human Services Secretary Teresa Miller. "We're going to have more hungry people in the state."

Pennsylvania — where as many as 100,000 people could be affected — is working with social services groups to create 30 job training programs for SNAP recipients.

However, experts say work opportunities are limited.

More than half of SNAP recipients have a high school diploma, but about one-quarter have less, according to the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities. Available jobs are more likely to have low pay, shifting schedules that might not offer enough qualifying hours and few benefits like paid sick leave.

"Work requirements really don't really do much to affect the rate at which people are working," said Elaine Waxman at the Urban Institute, a nonprofit research organization. "If people can work and consistently, they pretty much are."

Some states are focusing on rural areas, which have less access to transportation and services.

Hawaii, for instance, wants to develop a pilot program to help 400 Molokai residents keep benefits. The rural island once had a waiver because of high unemployment, but the new rules assign Molokai to the same job market as nearby, more prosperous Maui, even though a 30-minute plane ride is the only way to travel between the islands.

The program would use education, training and volunteering to fulfill the work requirement. It's modeled after similar programs used in remote Alaska, which is seeking waivers for less-populated areas. Roughly 5,000 in Alaska could lose benefits.

Attorneys general in nearly 20 states and Washington, D.C., have sued to block the rules. They argue

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the changes will force people to divert their limited funds, leading to homelessness and health problems.

People with food insecurity spend 45% more on medical care annually than those who are food secure, according to a 2018 report by the nonprofit Center on Budget and Policy Priorities.

Experts say critics' worries are founded and point to Kentucky as a case study.

Like a handful of states, Kentucky has voluntarily instated time limits for SNAP benefits since 2017. More than 13,000 people in Kentucky lost benefits because they reached the three-month limit, according to a 2019 Urban Institute report.

Anecdotally, there's been an increase in food pantry visits.

In Fayette County, which lost its waiver in 2018, the average number of monthly household visits to food pantries jumped from 1,800 to 2,000, according Michael Halligan, CEO of God's Pantry Food Bank in Lexington.

"Starving people does not help them get employment," said Mary Frances Charlton, a Chicago Coalition for the Homeless attorney.

It's a double whammy for Illinois as Cook County lost its waiver this year because of low unemployment, something that has happened in other states as economic conditions improve. Roughly 90,000 statewide will be affected by the Trump rule change at the same time another approximately 58,000 will risk losing benefits in the Chicago area.

For Charlton, it's been worrisome as many of her clients lack access to mail and internet, and they might not find out until they go grocery shopping and discover a \$0 balance on their Illinois Link cards. She's working to get exemptions for as many as possible.

For instance, Butler may qualify because of mental health issues that have made it difficult for him to keep a job. He's among the residents affected by the county change, but would have faced the same fate under the Trump administration rules.

In trying to deal with the volume of questions about the issue, Illinois has dedicated an email address just for the food stamps changes and hopes to add more job training.

Inspiration Corporation, a nonprofit, runs a training kitchen and restaurant out of a converted Chicago warehouse. It has proposed increasing its number of spots for SNAP participants from 35 to 45.

On a recent day, fractions used in measuring were scrawled on a white board near the kitchen, which serves Southern-inspired fare like grits.

Trainee Anthony Redmond, 44, started receiving food stamps when he was released from prison last summer. With the help, he was able to leave a halfway house and find his own place. After the training, he hopes to find employment and keep his benefits.

He dreams of opening a fleet of food trucks.

"If you take something that a person really needs and depends on and they don't have any other life skills to get a job, to benefit their family," he said, "it's just going to cause trouble."

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Associated Press writers Audrey McAvooy in Honolulu and Becky Bohrer in Juneau, Alaska, contributed to this report.

## ADHD diagnoses increasing in black kids, report suggests

By MIKE STOBBE AP Medical Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — For the first time, a U.S. survey found that black children appear to be more likely than white kids to be diagnosed with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder and other learning disabilities.

Previous studies had found the diagnosis was far more likely in white kids.

It's not known what might have driven the change described in Wednesday's report, said lead author Benjamin Zablotsky of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

In past studies that found higher rates of ADHD diagnoses in white kids, researchers hypothesized there were racial differences in access to health professionals or perhaps racial differences in attitudes that make white parents more likely to seek an ADHD diagnosis than black parents.

The new study is based on three years of data — 2016 through 2018 — from a national in-person survey, and represents about 23,000 children ages 3 to 17. About 17% of black children had ever been diagnosed, compared with about 15% of white kids and about 12% of Hispanic kids, the report found.

The survey question asked about ADHD and “other learning disabilities” but didn’t define what they might be. Some examples might include dyslexia or reading comprehension problems. It’s not clear to what extent the bottom-line statistics are influenced by conditions other than ADHD, Zablotzky said.

Paul Morgan, a Penn State University researcher, noted the CDC report is based only on what parents said. The researchers didn’t look at medical records to confirm the rates.

But there are good reasons why ADHD may be as or more common in black kids, he said. Experts have long believed black kids were under-diagnosed, and that they are at higher risk of conditions that can lead to ADHD, such as lead poisoning or low birthweight.

ADHD has been called the most commonly diagnosed mental health disorder in U.S. children, with more than 6 million kids diagnosed. The condition makes it hard for children to pay attention and control impulsive behaviors. It’s often treated with drugs, behavioral therapy, or both.

Children living in poor families were more likely to be diagnosed with ADHD or other learning disabilities than kids in affluent households, the new CDC report found.

The children of parents with less than a high school education were similarly more likely to have a diagnosis, the report said.

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## Democrats: Judge extends Tennessee voting in storm-hit area

By **ADRIAN SAINZ** Associated Press

MEMPHIS, Tenn. (AP) — A judge has extended voting hours in a Nashville-area county after four Democratic presidential candidates sued to keep Super Tuesday polls open after tornado damage there, a Democratic party spokeswoman said Tuesday.

Later Tuesday, the Lawyers’ Committee for Equal Protection Under Law sued Tennessee Gov. Bill Lee and state election officials, seeking a judge’s order to extend primary voting for three more days to allow voters who did not have a chance to cast ballots in three storm-damaged counties to make it to the polls.

A Davidson County Chancery Court judge ruled that polling locations in the county whose seat is Nashville must remain open until 8 p.m. CST. Two so-called megasites, where anyone in the tornado-hit county can go to vote, will be open until 10 p.m. local time under the judge’s ruling, Tennessee Democratic Party spokeswoman Emily Cupples said.

The county is Tennessee’s second-largest.

Tennessee Democrats and campaigns for Joe Biden, Mike Bloomberg, Bernie Sanders and Elizabeth Warren had sued to extend the hours. Voting locations in Davidson County had opened an hour later — at 8 a.m. local time — after an early morning tornado damaged more than a dozen polling places and voters were advised to go to other locations to cast ballots.

Cupples said some voters showed up at 7 a.m., but their polling locations were not open and they had to leave without being able to vote. Also, some locations opened after 8 a.m. because of storm damage, and those voters were not able to cast ballots either.

Lines were long at some locations that were unprepared for additional voters and people left without casting their ballots, Cupples added.

“This is a victory for all voters and this decision will ensure that everyone has the opportunity to participate in this historic election,” said Mary Mancini, chair of the Tennessee Democratic Party, in a statement.

The extension of voting hours means election results may not be reported until early Wednesday morning, Davidson County Administrator of Elections Jeff Roberts said.

With the extended hours, some 1,500 poll workers who had been counting on going home after polls



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closed at 7 p.m. will be working much later. Roberts said the average age of poll workers in the county is 66 years old.

"Some of those folks are going to feel a little uncomfortable being out in unfamiliar neighborhoods at that late hour, but we recognize it's important to make sure everyone has an opportunity to vote," Roberts said.

Poll officers taking voting totals from individual precincts to the central office where the votes will be counted are going to have to use caution as they navigate closed streets, Roberts said.

Meanwhile, the lawsuit filed by the Lawyers' Committee for Equal Protection Under Law on behalf of the Tennessee State Conference of the NAACP and three voters who were unable to vote asks a judge to extend primary voting until the end of the week because of storm damage in Davidson, Putnam and Wilson counties.

It was not immediately clear late Tuesday when, or if, a court hearing will be held on the new lawsuit.

Tornadoes ripped across downtown Nashville and other parts of Tennessee as families slept early Tuesday, shredding more than 140 buildings and burying people in piles of rubble and wrecked basements. At least 24 people were killed, some in their beds, authorities said. Officials had earlier reported 25 dead but later said one fatality counted earlier was not storm-related.

In east Nashville, the Cleveland Park Community Center had only one voting machine in operation when it began taking in voters whose regular polling locations had no power. At one point, the waiting line was well over 100 people, snaking through a very warm gymnasium.

Jerry Hilton, 86, said it took him about two hours to get through the line at Cleveland Park.

"I was surprised by how patient people were, that people would stand in line without getting upset," he said.

In Putnam County, tornado damage at polling places led officials to redirect voters to a central site in the county seat of Cookeville, about 80 miles (128 kilometers) east of Nashville.

Jennifer Rollins, 39, said going to vote at the Putnam County Election Commission — the central site — was the one thing residents could do with people being asked to stay off the roads.

Voting there was closer to her home than her usual precinct, she said.

"It's been a surreal day all around," Rollins said.

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Kristin M. Hall in Nashville and Teresa Walker in Cookeville contributed to this report.

## Virus crisis ebbs in China, spreads fear across the West

By **LORI HINNANT** and **KEN MORITSUGU** Associated Press

PARIS (AP) — The coronavirus epidemic shifted increasingly westward toward the Middle East, Europe and the United States on Tuesday, with governments taking emergency steps to ease shortages of masks and other supplies for front-line doctors and nurses.

"We are concerned that countries' abilities to respond are being compromised by the severe and increasing disruption to the global supply of personal protective equipment, caused by rising demand, hoarding and misuse," said World Health Organization Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus. "We can't stop COVID-19 without protecting our health workers."

Deaths in Italy surged to 79, making it the deadliest reported outbreak outside China. Twenty-three members of Iran's Parliament and the head of the country's emergency services were reported infected. South Korea expanded drive-thru testing and confirmed hundreds of new cases. And in Spain's Basque region, at least five doctors and nurses were infected and nearly 100 health care workers were being held in isolation.

The mushrooming outbreaks contrasted with optimism in China, where thousands of recovered patients were going home and the number of new infections has been dropping.

Worldwide, more than 93,000 people have been infected and over 3,100 have died, the vast majority of them in China. The number of countries hit by the virus exceeded 70, with Ukraine and Morocco reporting their first cases.

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Virus clusters in the United States led schools and subways to sanitize and spread fears among nursing home residents, who are especially vulnerable. The number of the infections in the U.S. topped 100 and the death toll climbed to nine. All of the deaths were in Washington state, and most of them were residents of a Seattle-area nursing home.

The U.S. Federal Reserve announced the biggest interest-rate cut in over a decade to try to counter the expected damage to the economy, and stocks rose briefly on Wall Street in reaction before slumping again. Fed Chairman Jerome Powell said the virus "will surely weigh on economic activity both here and abroad for some time."

Other Group of Seven countries appeared reluctant to follow suit with their own cuts, probably because many of their interest rates are already near or below zero.

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration gave health care workers the OK to use an industrial type of respirator mask often used to protect construction workers from dust and debris.

Iran's supreme leader ordered the military to assist health officials in fighting the virus, which authorities said has killed 77 people. Among the dead are a confidant of Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, Iran's former ambassador to the Vatican and a recently elected member of Parliament.

Iran's judiciary chief, Ebrahim Raisi, said some people are stockpiling medical supplies for profit and urged prosecutors to show no mercy. "Hoarding sanitizing items is playing with people's lives, and it is not ignorable," he said.

France's president announced the government will take control of current and future stocks of face masks to ensure they could go to health workers and coronavirus patients, and the finance minister warned that binge-shopping for household essentials could trigger shortages. The country reported a total of more than 200 cases and four deaths.

"In this period we're going through — we have entered a phase that will last weeks and, undoubtedly, months — it is indispensable to have clarity, resilience, sangfroid and determination to stop the epidemic" French President Emmanuel Macron said during a visit to the government's virus crisis center.

South Korea confirmed another 142 cases Wednesday morning, raising its total to 5,328, the second-highest in the world. At drive-thru virus testing centers, workers dressed head-to-toe in white protective suits leaned into cars with mouth swabs to check for the virus. Troops sprayed disinfectant on streets and alleys across the city.

In China, the count of new cases dropped again Wednesday, with just 119 reported. It is still by far the hardest-hit country, with over 80,000 infections and about 95% of the world's deaths.

"We scrutinized this data and we believe this decline is real," said WHO outbreak expert Maria Van Kerkhove, who traveled to China as part of a team from the U.N. agency. She said the extraordinary measures taken there, including the lockdown of more than 60 million people, had a significant effect on the direction of the outbreak.

"We believe that a reduction of cases in other countries, including Italy, Korea, Iran, everywhere, that this is possible," she said.

China's ambassador to the United Nations said the country is winning its battle against COVID-19. "We are not far from the coming of the victory," Zhang Jun said.

In Japan, questions continued to build about the fate of the Olympics.

The country's Olympic minister, Seiko Hashimoto, said Japan is "making the utmost effort" to proceed with the games' opening on July 24 in Tokyo. But she told parliament that the country's contract with the International Olympic Committee specifies only that the games be held in 2020, meaning they could be postponed to later in the year if necessary.

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Hinnant reported in Paris. Contributors include Martin Crutsinger and Christopher Rugaber in Washington; Jamey Keaten in Geneva; Maria Cheng in London; Matt Sedensky in Bangkok; Nicole Winfield and Frances D'Emilio in Rome; Aritz Parra in Madrid; Chris Grygiel in Seattle; Kim Tong-Hyung and Hyung-jin Kim in Seoul, South Korea; Stephen Wade in Tokyo; Nasser Karimi in Tehran, Iran; and Jon Gambrell in

Dubai, United Arab Emirates.

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

## Death toll from Tennessee tornadoes climbs to at least 24

By TRAVIS LOLLER and KIMBERLEE KRUESI Associated Press

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (AP) — Rescuers searched through shattered Tennessee neighborhoods for bodies Tuesday, less than a day after tornadoes ripped across Nashville and other parts of the state as families slept. At least 24 people were killed, some in their beds, authorities said.

The twisters that struck in the hours after midnight shredded more than 140 buildings and buried people in piles of rubble and wrecked basements. The storms moved so quickly that many people in their path could not flee to safer areas.

"It hit so fast, a lot of folks didn't have time to take shelter," Putnam County Mayor Randy Porter said. "Many of these folks were sleeping."

The governor declared an emergency and sent the National Guard to help with search-and-rescue efforts. State emergency officials, who initially reported at least 25 dead, revised the toll to 24 fatalities on Tuesday evening after determining one death counted earlier was not storm-related.

An unspecified number of people were missing.

Early findings by National Weather Service survey teams indicated that the damage in Nashville and Wilson County to the east was inflicted by a tornado of at least EF-3 intensity, the agency said.

One twister wrecked homes and businesses across a 10-mile (16 kilometer) stretch of Nashville that included parts of downtown. It smashed more than three dozen buildings, including destroying the tower and stained glass of a historic church. Another tornado damaged more than 100 structures along a 2-mile (3.2-kilometer) path of destruction in Putnam County, wiping some homes from their foundations and depositing the wreckage far away.

Daybreak revealed landscapes littered with blown-down walls and roofs, snapped power lines and huge broken trees, making many city streets and rural roads impassable. More than a dozen polling stations were also damaged, forcing Super Tuesday voters to wait in long lines at alternative sites.

In Putnam County, 80 miles (some 130 kilometers) east of Nashville, houses and businesses were completely flattened. In one neighborhood, volunteers found five bodies. Neighbors and sheriff's officers were still looking for two more. Later, authorities imposed an 8 p.m.-8 a.m. curfew in the county and reported one looting arrest.

Nashville residents walked around on streets and sidewalks littered with debris, in neighborhoods where missing walls and roofs left living rooms and kitchens exposed. Mangled power lines and broken trees came to rest on cars, streets and piles of rubble.

"We are resilient and we're going to rebuild," Nashville Mayor John Cooper said.

During Gov. Bill Lee's tour of Putnam County, homeowners dug through debris, trying to salvage any items not destroyed. One young woman held up a clean green blouse while standing on a second floor of a home that had no roof.

President Donald Trump spoke with the governor by phone and pledged federal assistance, the White House said. Trump also announced plans to visit the disaster area on Friday.

In Nashville, the twister's path was mostly north and east of the heart of downtown, sparing many of the city's biggest tourism draws — the honky tonks of Broadway, the Grand Ole Opry House, the storied Ryman Auditorium and the convention center.

Instead the storm tore through the largely African American areas of Bordeaux and North Nashville as well as neighborhoods transformed by a recent building boom. Germantown and East Nashville are two of the city's trendiest hotspots, with restaurants, music venues, high-end apartment complexes and rising home prices threatening to drive out longtime residents.

"The dogs started barking before the sirens went off. They knew what was coming," said Paula Wade, of East Nashville. "Then we heard the roar ... Something made me just sit straight up in bed, and something came through the window right above my head. If I hadn't moved, I would've gotten a face full of glass."

The roof came crashing down on Ronald Baldwin and Harry Nahay in the bedroom of their one-story brick home in East Nashville. "We couldn't get out," Baldwin said. "And so I just kept kicking and kicking until we finally made a hole."

The roaring wind woke Evan and Carlie Peters, also in East Nashville, but they had no time to reach the relative safety of an interior bathroom.

"Within about 10 seconds, the house started shaking," Carlie Peters said. "I jumped on top of the ground. He jumped on top of me. The ceiling landed on top of him. ... we're grateful to be alive."

With more than a dozen Super Tuesday polling places in Nashville's Davidson County damaged, voters were sent to other locations, some of them with long lines. Election officials in Putnam County advised voters in eight precincts with damaged polling locations to vote at the main election office in Cookeville.

Hours later, a judge ruled that some Tennessee polls must extend voting hours after four Democratic presidential candidates sued to keep the polls open, a Democratic party spokeswoman said.

Lee said he observed numerous examples of people coming together to help one another. "In the worst of circumstances, the best of people comes out, and that's what we're seeing," he said.

Just as the governor stopped by to tour the devastation in Putnam County, a van of longtime customers at a local eatery — who proudly stated they ate there every morning — arrived to help clear debris.

In the small town of Baxter, Mike Stephens was awakened when a big tree crashed through the roof of his house. He started cleaning up as soon as the sun rose. He cut up one tree and had help from a neighbor with a backhoe and a man who stopped by with a chainsaw.

"I've only met him once, and he just happened to show up while we're out here," Stephens said of his neighbor. "And then this other guy he just happened to stop by. I don't know him."

Wayne Stephens, a technician at a local car dealership, had Tuesday off from his job. With no damage to his home, he got in his truck with his chainsaw. He's not related to Mike Stephens and had never met him. He said he only wanted to help "as much as I can."

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Associated Press writers Kristin Hall, Jonathan Mattise and Mark Humphrey in Nashville; Adrian Sainz in Memphis; Teresa Walker and Wade Payne in Cookeville; Rebecca Reynolds Yonker in Louisville, Kentucky; and Jay Reeves in Birmingham, Alabama, contributed to this report.

## Tensions rise as US death toll from coronavirus reaches 9

By **GENE JOHNSON and CARLA K. JOHNSON** Associated Press

SEATTLE (AP) — Tensions over how to contain the coronavirus escalated Tuesday in the United States as the death toll climbed to nine and lawmakers expressed doubts about the government's ability to ramp up testing fast enough to deal with the crisis.

All of the deaths have occurred in Washington state, and most were residents of a nursing home in suburban Seattle. The number of infections in the U.S. overall climbed past 100, scattered across at least 15 states, with 27 cases in Washington alone.

"What is happening now in the United States may be the beginning of what is happening abroad," said Dr. Nancy Messonnier of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, noting that in China, where the outbreak began more than two months ago, older and sicker people are about twice as likely to become seriously ill as those who are younger and healthier. Most cases have been mild.

The nursing home outbreak apparently seeded the first case in North Carolina, authorities said. A Wake County resident who had visited the Washington state nursing home tested positive but is in isolation at home and is doing well, according to the North Carolina governor's office.

In suburban Seattle, 27 firefighters and paramedics who responded to calls at the nursing home were tested for the virus Tuesday using a drive-thru system set up in a hospital parking area.



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Thirty-year-old firefighter Kevin Grimstad took care of two patients Jan. 29 at Life Care Center in Kirkland. He is among 10 from the Kirkland Fire Department who developed symptoms after calls to the nursing facility.

Grimstad, his wife and 6-month-old son have taken turns recovering from fevers, coughs and congestion. They're all feeling better, but wish they knew more about the virus.

"It's crazy. A couple of weeks ago, it seemed like a foreign thing and now we're getting tested," Grimstad said. "If I was exposed a month ago, the problem is more widespread than we know."

In the nation's capital, officials moved on a number of fronts.

A bipartisan \$7.5 billion emergency bill to fund the government's response to the outbreak worked its way through Congress.

The Federal Reserve announced the biggest interest-rate cut in over a decade to try to fend off damage to the U.S. economy from the factory shutdowns, travel restrictions and other disruptions around the globe. On Wall Street, stocks rallied briefly on the news, then went into another steep slide, with the Dow Jones Industrial Average losing 785 points on the day, or 2.9%.

"We have seen a broader spread of the virus. So, we saw a risk to the economy and we chose to act," Fed Chairman Jerome Powell said.

Also, the Food and Drug Administration sought to ease a shortage of face masks by giving health care workers the OK to use an industrial type of respirator mask designed to protect construction crews from dust and debris.

Lawmakers on Capitol Hill expressed skepticism about U.S. health officials' claims that testing for the new virus should be widely available soon. CDC test kits delivered to states and cities in January proved faulty.

Authorities have said labs across the country should have the capacity to run as many as 1 million tests by the end of the week.

But testing so far has faced delays and missteps, and "I'm hearing from health professionals that's unrealistic," Democratic Sen. Patty Murray of Washington state said at a Senate hearing.

The chief of the Food and Drug Administration, Dr. Stephen Hahn, said the FDA has been working with a private company to get as many as 2,500 test kits out to labs by the end of the week. Each kit should enable a lab to run about 500 tests, he said. But health officials were careful about making promises.

"I am optimistic, but I want to remain humble," said Dr. Anne Schuchat of the CDC.

In Washington state, researchers believe the virus may have been circulating undetected for weeks. That has raised fears that there could be hundreds of undiagnosed cases in the area.

But some people who want to be tested for the virus in the state are encountering confusion, a lack of testing options and other problems as health authorities scramble to deal with the crisis.

"The people across my state are really scared. I'm hearing from people who are sick, who want to get tested and don't know where to go," Murray said. "It's unacceptable that people in my state can't even get an answer as to whether or not they are infected."

One lab was already testing for coronavirus in Washington state and a second was scheduled to begin doing so Tuesday.

Amid the rising fears, a school district north of Seattle closed for training on conducting remote lessons via computer in case schools have to be shut down for an extended period, while a private school said it would conduct online-only classes through the end of March.

"We do not feel it is prudent to wait until there is a known case to take action," the school, Eastside Prep in the Seattle suburb of Kirkland, said on its website.

A Department of Homeland Security facility just south of Seattle instructed all its employees to work from home after a worker became ill after visiting the nursing home at the center of the outbreak.

An Amazon employee in Seattle tested positive for the new virus, The Seattle Times reported, citing a message from the company.

Elsewhere around the world, the crisis continued to ebb in China, where hundreds of patients were released from hospitals and new infections dropped to just 125 on Tuesday, the lowest in several weeks.

But the crisis seemed to shift westward, with alarmingly fast-growing clusters of infections and deaths in South Korea, Iran and Italy.

Worldwide, more than 92,000 people have been sickened and 3,100 have died, the vast majority of them in China. Most cases have been mild.

"What China shows is that early containment and identification of cases can work, but we now need to implement that in other countries," said Dr. Nathalie MacDermott, an infectious-diseases expert at King's College London.

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Associated Press writer Rachel La Corte contributed from Olympia, Washington.

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

## Looking for hand sanitizer? Good luck finding it

By JOSEPH PISANI AP Retail Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — The hand sanitizers on Amazon were overpriced. A Walmart this weekend was completely sold out. Only on his third try was Ken Smith able to find the clear gel — at a Walgreens, where three bottles of Purell were left. He bought two.

"I didn't want to hoard," says Smith, a retired biomedical technician in Wichita Falls, Texas.

Fear of the coronavirus has led people to stock up on the germ-killing gel, leaving store shelves empty and online retailers with sky-high prices set by those trying to profit on the rush. More is on the way, although it's not clear how long it will take retailers to restock.

Sales of hand sanitizers in the U.S. were up 73% in the four weeks ending Feb. 22 compared to the same period a year ago, according to market research firm Nielsen.

The alcohol-based gunk is convenient, but hand sanitizer isn't the best way to clean your hands. For that, soap and water still reigns supreme, according to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. The agency recommends first washing hands with warm or cold water and then lathering soap for 20 seconds to get it on the backs of hands, between fingers and under finger nails before rinsing off.

If you're not near a sink, hand sanitizer will do. But keep in mind that it doesn't kill all germs, the CDC says. Read the label and make sure you're using one that has at least 60% alcohol, the health agency says. After applying it, rub it all over your hands until they're dry. Another tip: don't touch your face, since health officials say viruses could enter your body from your eyes, mouth or nose.

Hospitals are more concerned about a shortage of face masks, which people have also been snatching up despite pleas from health officials. Patient and treatment rooms in hospitals always have a sink and soap to wash hands, says Nancy Foster, the American Hospital Association's head of quality and patient safety. But there are no good alternatives to masks for nurses and doctors.

Malls and sports arenas are adding more hand sanitizer stations. And some workplaces have said they are stocking up, too.

Purell, the best-selling hand sanitizer, is pumping up production. Walmart and other stores say they are talking to suppliers to stock up bare shelves, but didn't say how long that could take.

Purell says it has seen higher demand from health care facilities in addition to stores. It is adding more shifts and having employees work overtime at the two Ohio facilities where most Purell is made, says Samantha Williams, a spokeswoman for its parent company Gojo Industries.

Bath & Body Works, which sells hand sanitizers with scents like "vanilla rose" and "pineapple colada," says its been able to keep bottles in stock at its 1,700 stores. An executive for Bath & Body Works owner L Brands said last week that hand sanitizers made up 5% of its total business and that it's growing "at a very high rate."

Walmart has seen higher demand for cleaning supplies and other items, similar to when shoppers start preparing for a hurricane. The world's largest retailer says it is working with suppliers to stock up again

on those items, including hand sanitizer.

At a Costco in Los Angeles Tuesday, hand sanitizer was gone and shoppers clogged the back of the cavernous store where workers were wheeling out pallet after pallet of bottled water. "Don't believe the hype," one worker shouted.

On Amazon, most hand sanitizers were gone. Ones that remained were seriously overpriced, even though the company has said it is policing its site for price gougers. Two 8-ounce bottles of Purell, for example, were being offered for \$119 by a third-party seller; such vendors can list their items for sale on Amazon.com directly.

Gaelen Gates says she trekked to two Walgreens, a Safeway and a CVS this week and couldn't find any hand sanitizer.

The attorney, who lives in San Francisco, is not worried about the new virus, she's just trying to avoid getting a cold at a music and film festival she plans to attend later this month in Austin, Texas.

If she can't find any by the time of her trip, she has a plan: wash her hands more frequently and "try not to touch anything."

AP Writers Anne D'Innocenzio in New York; Linda A. Johnson in Trenton, New Jersey; and Justin Pritchard in Los Angeles also contributed to this story.

## **Plácido Domingo's name removed from Washington Opera program**

**By JOCELYN GECKER Associated Press**

Plácido Domingo's name has been removed from the Washington National Opera's young artist program "in light of recent developments," the opera house announced Tuesday, after an independent investigation found the legendary tenor had sexually harassed women while holding senior positions at the company.

Domingo was the leading figure at the WNO from 1996-2011 as artistic director and later general director. He created the young artists program in 2002 and it was named the Domingo-Cafritz Young Artist Program after him and The Morris and Gwendolyn Cafritz Foundation.

Last week, the American Guild of Musical Artists, the main union that represents opera performers, said its four-month investigation had found the 79-year-old singer had "engaged in inappropriate activity, ranging from flirtation to sexual advances, in and outside of the workplace."

"The results of the recently released independent investigation prompted the additional discussion and the subsequent decision" to drop Domingo's name from the program, WNO spokeswoman Rachelle Roe said.

In concert with the findings, Domingo apologized to the women who had accused him of misconduct, after denying the allegations for months. "I want them to know that I am truly sorry," he said. "I accept full responsibility for my actions."

But two days later, as several Spanish organizations moved to cancel his appearances, he issued a second statement saying his apology had generated a false impression that he wanted to correct. "I have never behaved aggressively toward anybody, nor have I ever done anything to obstruct or hurt the career of anybody," he said.

The opera union began its investigations after the publication of Associated Press stories in which multiple women accused Domingo of sexual harassment and abusing his power. A second investigation is still ongoing at the Los Angeles Opera, where Domingo was general director from 2003 until he resigned in October.

According to people who spoke to the AP on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to discuss the report, AGMA's investigation found that 27 people were sexually harassed or had witnessed inappropriate behavior by Domingo in the 1990s and 2000s, when he held senior management positions at the Washington and Los Angeles companies. They said another 12 people told investigators they were

aware of the star's reputation and that it was common knowledge at the companies.

WNO said the name of its program would be changed to the Cafritz Young Artists of Washington National Opera, adding in its statement that it "acknowledges Mr. Domingo's singular artistic legacy and contribution to the opera field and to WNO."

## What's Happening: Mask hoarders rebuked, Olympics delay eyed

BERLIN (AP) — As the new coronavirus continues spreading, people are being asked to stop hoarding masks and athletes are being advised to refrain from high-fives.

These are some of the latest developments Tuesday:

### MASK HOARDERS REBUKED

Mask hoarders, take note. The head of the World Health Organization says hoarding is disrupting the global supply of such personal protective equipment, which doctors and nurses need to care for patients infected with the new coronavirus. Panic buying of masks has been a problem in several countries. In France, the government is requisitioning supplies. In the U.S., officials moved to ease the shortage by giving health care workers the OK to use an industrial mask designed to protect construction workers from dust and debris. And as people wiped store shelves clean of hand sanitizers, Purell said it's pumping up production.

### US CUTS BENCHMARK RATE AS DEATHS CLIMB

Amid worries that spreading virus could trigger a recession, the Federal Reserve unexpectedly announced its biggest interest-rate cut in a decade. Just last week, several Fed officials had said they saw no urgent need to cut rates. But Fed Chairman Jerome Powell says there's since been a broader spread of the virus. "We saw a risk to the economy, and we chose to act," he says. The move comes as U.S. deaths tied to the virus inched up to nine. Most were residents of a nursing home in suburban Seattle.

### EYES ON THE OLYMPICS

Japan's Olympic minister says the country's contract to hold the Tokyo Games only specifies the event has to be held during the year 2020. Seiko Hashimoto's response to a question in the upper house of parliament implies the Summer Olympics could be held later in the year. But the International Olympic Committee pushed back at the idea, issuing a statement expressing its commitment to Tokyo Games "taking place from July 24 to Aug. 9, 2020."

### NO MORE NBA HIGH-FIVES

Deflating news for NBA fans hoping for a high-five from their favorite players: The league is recommending players avoid such contact to reduce the risk of getting sick. A memo to players also says not to take pens and jerseys from fans seeking autographs, and offers reminders on general best practices to reduce the spread of germs, like staying home when feeling ill. The advice comes after health officials in some parts of Europe advised against handshakes and cheek-kissing.

### BRITAIN COULD TAP RETIRED DOCTORS, NURSES

In a worst-case scenario, Britain warned millions could be infected and that retired doctors and nurses could be called back to work. The plans come as the coronavirus crisis appeared to push westward, with case counts growing with alarming speed in South Korea, Iran and Italy. China, by contrast, continued to see signs of relief as hundreds of patients were released from hospitals. The number of new infections in the country also dropped to 125 on Tuesday, the lowest in several weeks.

### AS VIRUS SPREADS, POLLUTION EBBS

As airlines cancel flights and employees work from home to contain the virus, China is experiencing clearer skies. The country has closed factories and curtailed travel, resulting in a noticeable reduction in emissions. Researchers in Finland say China's carbon emissions were 25% lower in the four weeks following the end of the Lunar New Year holiday compared with the same time last year. Experts say the trend is unlikely to hold.

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Ken Moritsugu in Beijing, Daria Litvinova in Moscow, Lori Hinnant in Paris, Jill Lawless in London, Tim



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Reynolds in Miami, Joseph Pisani in New York, Gene Johnson and Carla K. Johnson in Seattle, Christina Larson, Martin Crutsinger and Christopher Rugaber in Washington, D.C. contributed to this report.

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

## Virus spread prompts Fed to slash rates in surprise move

By **MARTIN CRUTSINGER** and **CHRISTOPHER RUGABER** AP Economics Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — In a surprise move, the Federal Reserve cut its benchmark interest rate by a sizable half-percentage point Tuesday in an effort to support the economy in the face of the spreading coronavirus.

Chairman Jerome Powell said at a news conference that the virus “will surely weigh on economic activity both here and abroad for some time.”

It was the Fed’s first move since last year, when it reduced its key short-term rate three times. It’s also the first time it’s cut rates between policy meetings since the 2008 financial crisis, and it is the largest rate cut since then.

The Dow Jones Industrial Average, which had been down as much as 356 points shortly before the Fed’s announcement, initially jumped on the news. The surge was short-lived. By late afternoon, the Dow had tumbled more than 600 points in a sign of nagging worries about economic damage from the virus. Still, on Monday, the Dow had rocketed up nearly 1,300 points — its largest percentage gain since 2009.

The yield on the 10-year Treasury note briefly fell below 1% for the first time ever. Investors around the world bid up bond prices — which move in the opposite direction of yields — as they sought safety from the stock market’s turmoil.

The fear that coursed through financial markets after the Fed’s announcement underscored the worry that there are limitations to what the Fed and other central banks can do to resolve a crisis of this kind. Powell acknowledged as much when he observed that the “ultimate solution to this challenge will come from others, most notably health professionals.”

Indeed, the Fed’s announcement of a steep rate cut signaled its concern that the coronavirus, which is depressing economic activity across the world, poses an escalating threat and could trigger a recession. Rising uncertainty about how and when the threat will be resolved is pressuring markets. Powell said that since last week, when several Fed officials had said they saw no urgent need to cut rates, “we have seen a broader spread of the virus.”

“So, we saw a risk to the economy, and we chose to act,” he added.

At the same time, Powell sought to balance those concerns by noting that U.S. economy remained sturdy, with unemployment low and consumer spending solid.

“The economy continues to perform well,” he said. “We will get to the other side of this.”

The Fed’s statement announcing its rate cut said it would “act as appropriate to support the economy,” which economists saw as a sign it’s leaning toward an additional rate cut, perhaps at its next policy meeting in two weeks. Emergency cuts like Tuesday’s have typically been followed by further reductions soon afterward. Tuesday’s move, which the Fed’s policy committee backed unanimously, lowered its benchmark rate to a range of 1% to 1.25%.

On Tuesday, Australia’s central bank announced that it was cutting its official rate by a quarter-point to a record low of 0.5% and cited the coronavirus’ “significant effect” on the economy as the reason. Just as in Australia, central banks in Japan and Europe have almost no more room to provide stimulus through rate cuts because their benchmark rates are at or near zero — or even below.

The result is that pressure is rising on governments across the world to supply economic help through tax or spending policies.

China has taken action on several fronts to ease credit and stabilize the world’s second-largest economy in the face of the coronavirus.

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Members of the U.S. Congress are finalizing a \$7.5 billion emergency bill to fund the government's response to the coronavirus outbreak in a rare act of bipartisan cooperation. The legislation would speed development of a coronavirus vaccine, pay for preparedness by states and localities, help other countries fight the outbreak and seek to ensure that the vaccine is affordable when it's ready, though that could take a year.

Powell acknowledged that there are limits to the Fed's influence to deal with the economic repercussions of the virus — from closed factories to canceled business travel to disrupted company supply chains. But he said lower rates can help keep credit flowing, particularly to struggling businesses already laden with debt that would otherwise face higher borrowing costs. And he suggested that the Fed's intervention would boost consumer and business confidence and provide "a meaningful boost to the economy."

Many economists do see some benefit from the Fed's move.

"The Fed obviously cannot address the virus itself by cutting rates, but they can hope to short-circuit the potential for a negative response in financial markets that could make the economic impact of the virus even worse," said Eric Winograd, senior economist at AB.

Across the world, business is slowing and in some places stopping altogether as a consequence of the virus. Factories in China have been struggling to grind slowly back to life. Many European vacation destinations have been all but deserted as leisure and corporate travel has diminished. And major companies around the world bracing for the risk that the economic landscape could worsen before it improves.

Indeed, Powell noted that "you are hearing concerns from people in the travel business, the hotel business and things like that."

"We expect that will continue and probably will grow," he said.

Google told its 8,000 full-time staffers and contractors at its European headquarters in Dublin to work from home Tuesday. Irish news reports have said that a Google staffer is being tested for coronavirus. But the company issued only a brief statement that said it was continuing to take precautionary measures to protect the health and safety of its workforce.

President Donald Trump, who has repeatedly attacked the Fed and Powell in particular for not cutting rates more aggressively, doubled down in a new tweet after the Fed's announcement, saying, "More easing and cutting!"

Powell said the central bank is focused on its goal of supporting the economy and said, "We're never going to consider any political considerations whatsoever."

Earlier Tuesday, seven major economies had pledged to use "all appropriate tools" to deal with the spreading coronavirus but announced no immediate actions.

The group of major industrial countries, referred to as the G-7, said it was "ready to take actions, including fiscal measures where appropriate, to aid in the response to the virus and support the economy." The joint statement from the United States, Japan, Germany, Britain, France, Italy and Canada followed an emergency conference call among the finance ministers and central bank presidents, led by Powell and U.S. Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin.

The G-7 has issued similar joint statements during periods of extreme market turmoil, such as the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks and the 2008 financial crisis.

Last week, the Dow plunged 14% from recent highs, its worst week since the 2008 global financial crisis.

Global agencies have indicated this week that there will be a significant economic impact as the virus spreads.

On Monday, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development said that the coronavirus, which was first detected in China but has now spread to 60 nations in Europe, the U.S., Latin America and other parts of Asia, could cause the world economy to shrink this quarter for the first time since the international financial crisis more than a decade ago.

The OECD lowered its forecasts for global growth in 2020 by half a percentage point, to 2.4% — and said the figure could go as low as 1.5% if the outbreak is sustained and widespread. There are signs that the outbreak has begun to ebb in China.

## Medication fog can mimic or worsen dementia in the elderly

By **MARILYNN MARCHIONE AP** Chief Medical Writer

Claire Dinneen's daughters thought that worsening dementia was causing her growing confusion, but her doctor suspected something else.

Dr. Pei Chen asked them to round up medicines in the 89-year-old woman's home and they returned with a huge haul. There were 28 drugs ordered by various doctors for various ailments, plus over-the-counter medicines. Chen spent a year sorting out which ones were truly needed and trimmed a dozen.

To her daughters' surprise, Dinneen got better, able to remember more things and to offer advice on what to wear and how to raise their kids. Her symptoms were from "medication fog," not her dementia getting worse, Chen told one daughter.

"I was just stunned," Debbie Dinneen said. "No one had taken a look at the big picture" to see if medicines might be addling her mom, who lives near Berkeley, California.

"Unfortunately, it's not unusual," said Chen, a geriatrician at the University of California, San Francisco.

About 91% of people over 65 take at least one prescription medicine and 41% use five or more -- what doctors call polypharmacy.

The risk of side effects or interactions rises with the number of pills, and one doctor often is unaware of what others have already prescribed for the same patient. Dinneen, for example, had two prescriptions for the same drug at different doses from different pharmacies.

"It's very easy to miss medication side effects because they masquerade as all these other symptoms," said Dr. Michael Steinman, another UCSF geriatrician.

He recently helped update an American Geriatrics Society list of potentially inappropriate medicines for older adults that can mimic dementia or make symptoms worse.

"Potentially" is the key word -- the drugs on the list don't always pose a problem, and no one should stop using any medicine without first checking with a doctor because that could do serious harm, Steinman stressed.

But some medicines don't have a strong reason to be used and their risks may outweigh their benefits for older people, he and other doctors say. They often "de-prescribe" medicines that may no longer be needed or that once may have been OK but now may be causing problems.

The list includes certain types of muscle relaxants, antihistamines, allergy medicines, stomach acid remedies, antidepressants, anti-anxiety medicines, pain relievers, sleep aids and other common treatments.

Many of these drugs have anticholinergic effects -- that is, they reduce or interfere with a chemical messenger that's key to healthy nerve function. That can cause drowsiness, confusion, blurred vision, dizziness and other symptoms that impair thinking skills.

These drugs might be fine for a younger person, but "once someone is having even the tiniest difficulty with thinking and memory, then the effects of these drugs are just huge," said Dr. Andrew Budson of Boston University's Alzheimer's disease center.

Sometimes side effects appear right away but in other cases they only develop or show up with longer use. Patients may not make the connection between a drug they've used for many months and new symptoms. Age itself can be a culprit and make a long-used drug suddenly intolerable.

"The drug hasn't changed, the person has," said Dr. Greg Jicha, a dementia specialist at the University of Kentucky.

Family members will say, "well, she was on that for 20 years," but her brain, kidney, liver were younger too. She's no longer going to be able to metabolize that drug" like she used to, he said.

Jicha recalled a case last year when he was asked to give a second opinion on a woman recently diagnosed with Alzheimer's disease. He reviewed her medicines and "six jumped right out -- these are not good medications for someone over 65" let alone at the higher doses she was receiving, he said. Four turned out to be for problems she no longer had, and he was able to switch some others to safer alternatives.

The woman's score on a 38-point test of thinking skills rose from 18 before the medication changes to

33 after them, putting her at the low end of the normal range.

Now she can drive, which was "an absolute no-no six months earlier," Jicha said. "She clearly no longer meets criteria for dementia."

One of his colleagues, Dr. Daniela Moga, heads a study to see whether optimizing medicines can delay the start of dementia symptoms. At the Alzheimer's Association International Conference in Los Angeles in July, she described the federally funded research, which involves people who are 65 or older and taking at least one medicine on the geriatrics society list.

All have normal thinking skills although some showed signs on brain scans of possible dementia developing. Participants are given a sort of cognitive stress test -- they take exams for thinking skills while wearing a patch that oozes scopolamine, a motion sickness drug that has anticholinergic effects, and then four weeks later without the patch. If they do worse while on the patch, it means certain medicines might be harmful for them, Moga explained.

"We want to see if we can identify a specific group that might benefit most" by carefully managing medication use and possibly delay the start of dementia symptoms, she said.

To help avoid medication problems, doctors give these tips:

—Make sure you know all the medications someone is taking, including prescription, over-the-counter and vitamins or dietary supplements. Don't assume that some are safe just because they don't require a prescription.

—Keep a running list with the date each medicine is started and stopped and note any symptoms. The National Institute on Aging offers a worksheet for this.

—Review the total medication list with a doctor, a geriatrics specialist or a pharmacist.

—If you suspect a problem, bring it up and don't wait for your doctor to ask. The American Geriatric Society's Health in Aging Foundation has these tools and tips for finding alternatives to any medicines causing trouble.

Marilynn Marchione can be followed on Twitter: @MMarchioneAP

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.

## Mississippi seeks abortion ban for race, sex, genetic error

By EMILY WAGSTER PETTUS Associated Press

JACKSON, Miss. (AP) — Mississippi's Republican-led Legislature is trying to restrict the reasons women may seek abortion, after federal courts blocked time limitations that the state tried to put on the procedure the past two years.

Abortion would be prohibited if a woman is seeking one because of the race, sex or genetic abnormality of the fetus, under a bill that passed a state House committee Tuesday. The only exception would be in case of a medical emergency. Other states have been sued over similar laws, and opponents questioned whether Mississippi is inviting another lawsuit over abortion.

House Bill 1295 moves to the full House for more debate.

"We have had a solid record of supporting pro-life measures, and we wanted to continue that," House Judiciary B Committee Chairman Nick Bain, a Republican from Corinth, said in explaining why his committee passed the bill.

Anyone who performs an abortion because of race, sex or genetic abnormality could face one year to 10 years in prison. The woman having the abortion would not face penalties.

Democratic Rep. Sonya Williams-Barnes of Gulfport voted against the bill.

"Women should have a right to make a choice for themselves whether they want to have a child or not," Williams-Barnes said after the committee meeting.

She questioned whether women would even know about potential genetic abnormalities early enough



in a pregnancy to consider abortion. Mississippi law bans abortion at 20 weeks, about the midpoint of a full-term pregnancy.

Speaking of the genetic abnormality portion of the bill, Williams-Barnes said: "My concern is, you make the woman have the child that has these deficiencies, but yet are you going to give her any medical aid or home care assistance for the child?"

As of February, nine states have banned abortion based on the sex, two have banned it based on race and two have banned it when the fetus might have a genetic anomaly, according to the Guttmacher Institute, a research group that supports abortion rights.

Missouri is the only state that has banned all three. Kentucky's ban on all three reasons has been put on hold by court order.

Mississippi has long required a 24-hour waiting period for abortion. Minors also must obtain permission from their parents or a judge.

In 2018, Mississippi tried to enact a law that would ban most abortions at 15 weeks. The state's only abortion clinic sued soon after a bill was signed by then-Gov. Phil Bryant, a Republican. A federal district judge blocked the law from taking effect.

The same judge issued a more extensive ruling later, saying the 15-week ban is unconstitutional because it would prohibit abortion before viability, the point at which a fetus could survive outside the pregnant woman. A federal appeals court agreed with the district judge's ruling, and state officials have said they will ask the U.S. Supreme Court to consider the case.

With the addition of conservative justices to the U.S. Supreme Court in recent years, Mississippi is one of several states that have enacted abortion restrictions. Some laws are aimed at spurring court challenges seeking to overturn *Roe v. Wade*, the landmark 1973 Supreme Court ruling that legalized abortion nationwide.

Even as the legal fight over Mississippi's 15-week ban was still underway, the state's legislators passed a bill last year to ban most abortions once fetal cardiac activity can be detected, which can be at about six weeks — before some women know they are pregnant. Bryant signed the bill, which would have been one of the strictest abortion laws in the U.S.

Follow Emily Wagster Pettus on Twitter: <http://twitter.com/EWagsterPettus>.

## Trump allies in Americas block Africans' path to US asylum

By PETER ORSI, GONZALO SOLANO and ELLIOT SPAGAT Associated Press

TAPACHULA, Mexico (AP) — President Donald Trump isn't the only world leader making it virtually impossible for many Africans to get asylum in the United States. He's getting plenty of help from allies in the Americas.

Ecuador is closing its doors as one of the few countries in North and South America to welcome African visitors, depriving them of a starting point for their dangerous journeys north by land. If asylum-seekers make it to Mexico, they face a virtual barricade near its southern border with Guatemala.

Trump's allies are blocking a path for Africans fleeing violence in their homelands as those countries face a U.S. president who has used economic leverage to get help curtailing immigration. Ecuador is pursuing a trade deal with Trump, while Mexico is trying to stay in his good graces after his threat to increase tariffs prompted its crackdown on illegal immigration last year.

People from Cameroon, who are escaping bloodshed that has killed tens of thousands, often win asylum in the U.S. even more than other Africans, but they first must reach American soil. Most are English speakers fleeing torture inflicted by a French-speaking government at war with separatists.

Dozens of them are languishing in Tapachula, a Mexican city of about 300,000 people in a coffee- and banana-growing region along the Guatemalan border.

"I can't go back to my country. I can't go forward. I'm stuck. I don't know what to do," a 25-year-old Cameroonian said recently at a guest house where he's staying and relies on handouts to eat.

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The man spoke on condition of anonymity because he feared jeopardizing his immigration status in Mexico. Trump has called asylum "a scam" and adopted several policies to reduce claims, including denying asylum to anyone who passes through another country on the way to the U.S. without seeking refuge there first. Border arrests plummeted 78% in January from a 13-year high in May.

While Ecuador's 2008 constitution embraces "universal citizenship" that allows almost anyone to visit, its government said in August that people from 11 countries need a visa to come, including from Cameroon and six other African nations. Twelve countries already faced visa restrictions, half of them in Africa.

Jose Valencia, Ecuador's foreign affairs minister, said the latest visa restrictions followed a detailed study of migration trends.

"Universal citizenship is a principle that is not open to debate and not questioned in the sense that it is valid, an aspiration," he said in an interview published in El Universo newspaper. The challenge, he said, is "to avoid a regime of universal citizenship that is so open we have to be subject to threats that can affect us and third countries."

Ecuador's crackdown comes as Trump dangles a trade deal. He said he was working on it when President Lenin Moreno became the first leader of the small South American nation to meet with a U.S. president in Washington in 17 years.

Trump drew a contrast between Moreno and his leftist predecessor.

"Ecuador had a very unusual outlook on life but, with your great president, he realizes how important it is to get along with the United States," Trump told reporters of Moreno.

After the Oval Office meeting last month, the acting deputy U.S. Homeland Security secretary, Ken Cuccinelli, said on Twitter: "Hopefully we can all work together to reduce illegal immigration out of Ecuador."

Cameroonians won U.S. asylum in 81% of cases in the 2019 fiscal year, compared with 29% for all nationalities, according to court data analyzed by Syracuse University's Transactional Records Access Clearinghouse. Ethiopians had a 77% success rate; Eritreans, 67% and Nigerians, 58%.

To seek asylum in the U.S., Africans fly to South America and travel north by land, on journeys where many get robbed or die from hunger and thirst. It's faster than seeking refugee status, which has always been an extreme long shot with years of waiting — even more so now that Trump has dramatically cut the number of refugees the U.S. will take.

Bolivia, which is much farther from the U.S. than Ecuador, is the only country in the Americas that accepts people from Cameroon and Eritrea without a visa, according to the Henley Passport Index. People from Nigeria and the Democratic Republic of Congo are barred from all countries in the Americas without a visa.

English-speaking Cameroonians recently began coming to the U.S., perceiving an ally in Trump, said Alexandra Lamarche, an Africa expert at advocacy group Refugees International. Last year, the U.S. scaled back military assistance to Cameroon, a longtime ally, and Trump eliminated some trade benefits over human rights violations, including extrajudicial killings, arbitrary detention and torture.

Cameroonians also felt an affinity with the United States over a shared language, Lamarche said. Many have settled in the Washington, D.C., Dallas and Houston areas.

"Everyone had a connection," Lamarche said.

More than 2,400 Cameroonians visited Ecuador in 2019, more than three times the previous year, according to government records, including the 25-year-old man stuck in southern Mexico.

He fled Cameroon after being jailed twice on allegations of opposing the government, where he was beaten, forced to lay down in water and walk on his knees on a hard floor.

Being imprisoned in Cameroon "was a lot of stress," the man said. "You don't feel where they beat you. They kick you with a heavy boot. They smash my toes."

Once in South America, he walked six days through the lawless jungle of the notorious Darien Gap between Colombia and Panama. He ran out of food and saw friends swept away by rushing rivers. He said assailants raped women, robbed him of \$500 and stole watches and phones.

After three months of waiting for travel documents to leave southern Mexico for the U.S., he left without them in October and was jailed for two months after his bus was stopped at a government checkpoint.

Back in Tapachula, the largest Mexican city along Guatemalan border, he slept on the streets and begged