

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, March 5, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 247 ~ 1 of 77

- [1- Upcoming Events](#)
- [2- Athletic directors to consider girls' wrestling](#)
- [3- March Lazy Farmers 4-H Meeting](#)
- [3- Bowling Scores](#)
- [4- Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs](#)
- [5- Weather Pages](#)
- [8- Daily Devotional](#)
- [9- 2020 Groton Events](#)
- [10- News from the Associated Press](#)

"WHEN YOU RE-READ A CLASSIC YOU DO NOT SEE IN THE BOOK MORE THAN YOU DID BEFORE. YOU SEE MORE IN YOU THAN THERE WAS BEFORE."

-CLIFTON FADIMAN



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.

© 2019 Groton Daily Independent

Athletic directors to consider girls' wrestling

By Dana Hess

For the S.D. Newspaper Association

PIERRE — When the athletic directors from the state's high schools have their annual meeting later this month, they'll consider a proposal to add girls' wrestling to the roster of sports already sanctioned by the South Dakota High School Activities Association.

SDHSAA Assistant Executive Director John Krogstrand told the association board Wednesday at its March meeting that the wrestling advisory committee was going to make the recommendation to add girls' wrestling.

The proposal calls for including four weight classes for girls at the state wrestling championships in 2020-21. Each weight class would include the top eight seeded participants from across the state, regardless of classification or region.

The advisory committee noted that there are more than 100 athletes registered for the girls' division of the State Youth Wrestling Championship tournament later in March. During the current school year there were more than 35 female wrestlers competing in South Dakota at the high school level.

It's likely the high school girls who competed in wrestling in the last year wrestled a variety of opponents, both girls and boys, Krogstrand said.

"We fully expect that once this is offered it will explode," Krogstrand said.

Interest in the sport is already high in western half of the state. Krogstrand said Rapid City Stevens has taken athletes to compete in a girls' wrestling tournament in Colorado and Hot Springs offers a girls' division.

South Dakota would likely follow the example set in Missouri where schools had two years to add girls' wrestling and gauge interest in the sport.

"We'll have two years to see where the interest is," Krogstrand said.

The association is also gauging interest in E-sports, planning to make presentations to athletic administrators and school superintendents about the future adoption of the sport and budgetary guidelines.

Participants in E-sports may need a special "sports activities" designation, according to Krogstrand. They would be subject to academic and transfer eligibility rules, but not out-of-season guidelines.

"It's pretty tough to tell kids they can't play video games," Krogstrand said.

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, March 5, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 247 ~ 3 of 77

March Lazy Farmers 4-H Meeting

The March meeting was called to order by Travis Townsend at the Northern Electric building at Bath, South Dakota on March 2, 2020 at 4 o'clock. 11 members were present and answered the question what's your favorite activity for roll call. Travis Townsend let us in the US flag pledge. Lane Krueger led us in the 4-H flag pledge. The secretary report was read by Lane Krueger, where Alicia Davis made a motion to approve the minutes and Kayla Lehr seconded the motion. Treasures report was read by Alicia Davis, where Lexi Osterman made the motion to Motion to approve the minutes and only should I have a setting in the motion. Oh business which fruit sales like you see a testing and I am a max of kindness month new business was newshound seniors in the club important dates and the new found friend in clinic in the new town and able nights will be the date for Groton's FFA CD. April meeting for lazy farms for each club overhead April 5, 2020 at 4:30 at Northern Electric and Bath South Dakota. Jarret made the motion to adjourn the meeting and Jayla Jones just in the motion. Lexi Osterman did a talk on "10 benefits of being in 4-H" and " Why showing livestock is more than banners and ribbons." Cody Lehr did a talk about " Alternative current versus direct current and " Teenage Safety." Travis Townsend did a talk on the "history of GT 40 race cars." Jayla Jones did a talk on "equine labor and delivery." Delayne Jones did a talk on "barrel racing resolutions." Porter Jones did a talk on "getting ready for motocross." Kayla Lehr did a talk on "how to accessorize your outfit." Jayla Jones gave a demonstration on "what tools you should use to groom your horse" and Delayne Jones gave a demonstration on "parts of a horse bridle."

Reporter: Lexi Osterman

Groton Prairie Mixed

March 4 Team Standings: Chipmunks 7, Foxes 7, Shih Tzus 6, Jackelopes 6, Coyotes 6, Cheetahs 4

Men's High Games: Doug Jorgensen 231, Randy Stanley 226, Brad Waage 208, Roger Colestock 200, Chad Kampa 200

Women's High Games: Sue Stanley 178, Darci Spanier 174, Dar Larson 174

Men's High Series: Randy Stanley 597, Doug Jorgensen 567, Brad Waage 557

Women's High Series: Sue Stanley 490, Nicole Kassube 474, Darci Spanier 467

Groton Coffee Cup League

March 3 Team Standings: Ten Pins 25, Biker Chix 23, James Valley 19, Kens 13

High Games: Joyce Walter 181, 159, Nancy Radke 166, Sandi Bistedeau 159

High Series: Joyce Walter 468, Nancy Radke 456, Sandi Bistedeau 441

Conde National League

March 2 Team Standings: Cubs 32, Mets 24, Tigers 20, Giants 20, Braves 19, Pirates 17

Men's High Games: Lance Frohling 214, Butch Farmen 196, 192, Ryan Bethke 183

Men's High Series: Butch Farmen 560, Lance Frohling 515, Larry Frohling 475

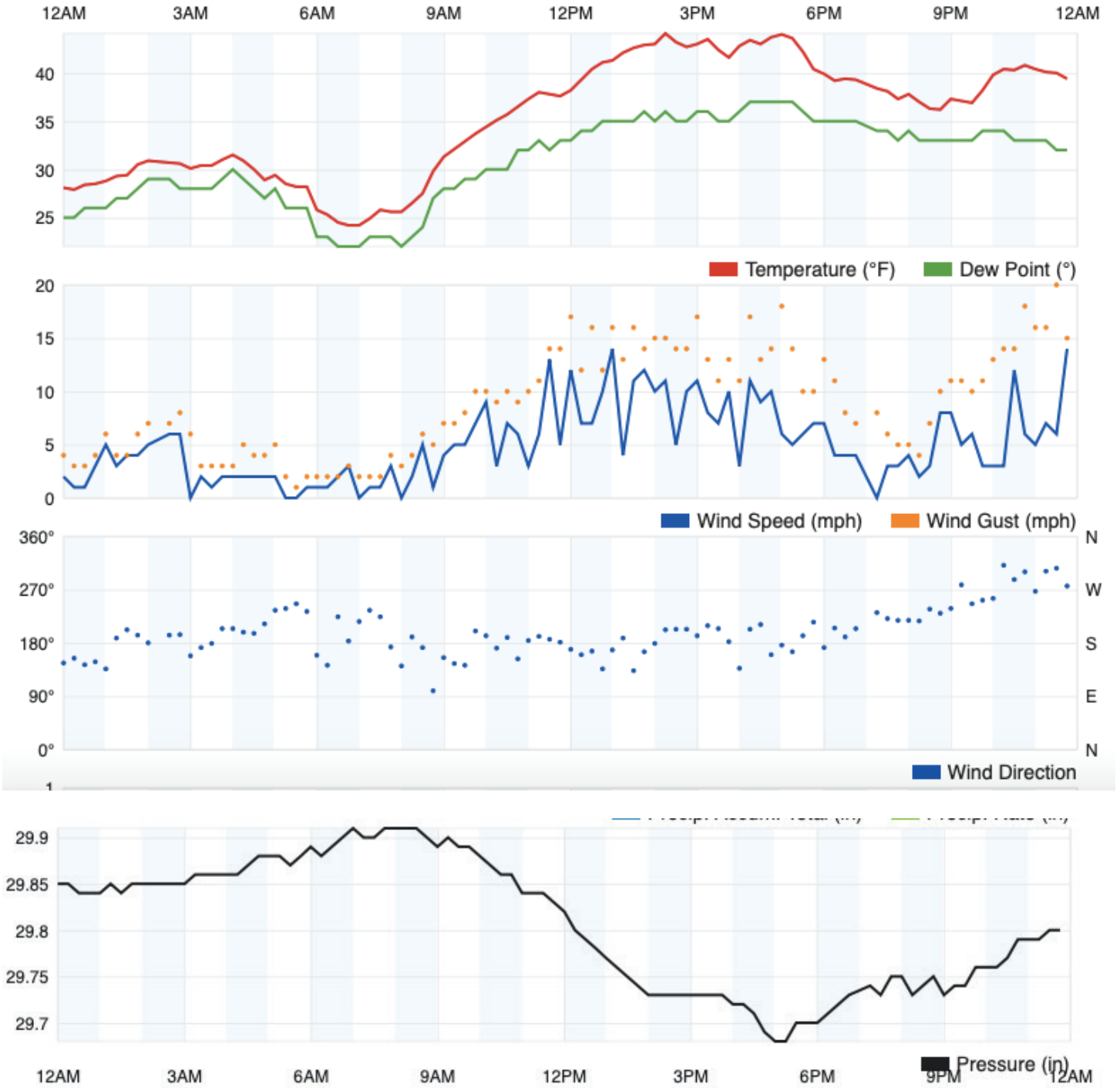
Women's High Games: Michelle Johnson 191, Nancy Radke 182, Mary Larson 176

Women's High Series: Michelle Johnson 487, Nancy Radke 481, Mary Larson 477, Vickie Kramp 477

Groton Daily Independent






Thursday, March 5, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 247 ~ 4 of 77

Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs



Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, March 5, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 247 ~ 5 of 77

Today	Tonight	Friday	Friday Night	Saturday
				
Chance Sprinkles and Windy	Partly Cloudy	Becoming Sunny	Mostly Clear	Mostly Sunny
High: 37 °F	Low: 14 °F	High: 41 °F	Low: 33 °F	High: 45 °F

WINDY TODAY

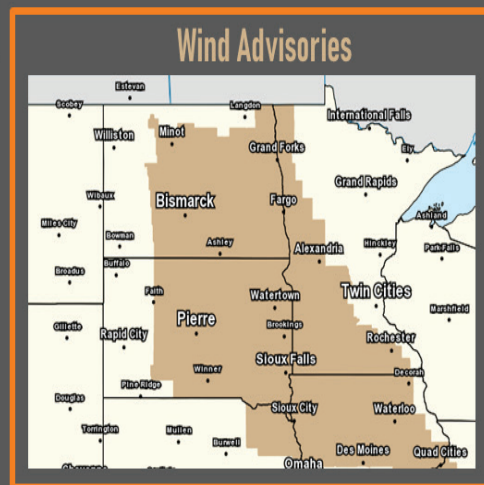
- Winds 20 to 35 mph, with gusts up 40 to near 50 mph.
- Winds to weaken over central SD this afternoon, and e SD/w MN from mid to late afternoon.



Scattered light morning snow over ne SD, potentially mixed with light freezing rain or rain.



Otherwise Sunny & Dry over Central SD



Winds of 20 to 35 mph, with gusts up to 40 to near 50 mph will continue today. Expect winds to weaken over central South Dakota this afternoon, and eastern South Dakota/west central Minnesota from mid to late afternoon. Scattered light morning snow over northeastern South Dakota may mix with light freezing rain or rain at times.

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, March 5, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 247 ~ 6 of 77

Today in Weather History

March 5, 1966: The historic blizzard of 1966, which started on March 2, comes to an end in the Dakotas. North Dakota saw severe livestock losses with an estimated 18,500 cattle, 7,500 sheep, and 600 hogs killed. On a farm in eastern North Dakota, 7,000 turkeys perished. The total damage to livestock was estimated at near \$4 million. In South Dakota, an estimated 50,000 cattle, 46,000 sheep, and 1,800 hogs were killed. Most of the deaths occurred in the central and northern central part of the state.

1894: The low temperature of 36 degrees at San Diego, California, on this day was their lowest on record for March.

1959: Near blizzard conditions occurred over northern and central Oklahoma. Up to seven inches of snow fell and winds up to 50 mph created snow drifts 4 to 8 feet deep. In Edmond, a bus slid off the road into a ditch and overturned, injuring 16 people.

1966: A plane crashes near Mount Fuji in Japan after encountering severe turbulence. The pilot veered a few miles off course to give the passengers a better view of Mount Fuji when it tremendous wind gusts. All 124 people on board the aircraft were killed.

1972: Palm Springs, California recorded a high of 100 degrees, the earliest the city has ever hit the century mark.

1989: A F2 tornado killed one person and injured six others in Heard County, Georgia. A stronger, F3 tornado injured 23 persons and caused more than 5 million dollars damage around Grantville, Georgia.

2007: The morning temperature dropped to 51 degrees below zero at Key Lake, Saskatchewan, Canada.

1960 - Eastern Massachusetts greatest March snowstorm of record began to abate. The storm produced record 24 hour snowfall totals of 27.2 inches at Blue Hill Observatory, 17.7 inches at Worcester, and 16.6 inches at Boston. Winds gusted to 70 mph. (3rd-5th) (The Weather Channel)

1962 - A tremendous storm raged along the Atlantic coast. The great Atlantic storm caused more than 200 million dollars property damage from Florida to New England. Winds along the Middle Atlantic Coast reached 70 mph raising forty foot waves, and as much as 33 inches of snow blanketed the mountains of Virginia. The Virginia shoreline was rearranged by historic tidal flooding caused by the combination of the long stretch of strong onshore winds and the Spring Tides. (David Ludlum)

1987 - A storm in the western U.S. produced heavy rain and high winds in California. Up to six inches of rain soaked the San Francisco Bay area in 24 hours, and winds gusted to 100 mph at the Wheeler Ridge Pumping Plant near the Tehachapi Mountains. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1988 - While snow blanketed eastern Kansas and northern Oklahoma, eight cities in North Dakota reported new record high temperatures for the date. The afternoon high of 61 degrees at Bismarck ND was 27 degrees warmer than that at Chanute KS. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1989 - Thunderstorms produced severe weather in the southeastern U.S. A strong (F-2) tornado killed one person and injured six others in Heard County GA. A strong (F-3) tornado injured 23 persons and caused more than five million dollars damage around Grantville GA. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1990 - Thunderstorms over eastern Colorado, developing ahead of a major storm system, produced up to three inches of small hail around Colorado Springs in the late morning and early afternoon. Strong thunderstorms swept through southeastern sections of the Denver area during the evening hours. These strong thunderstorms also produced up to three inches of small hail, along with wind gusts to 50 mph, and as much as 2.4 inches of rain. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

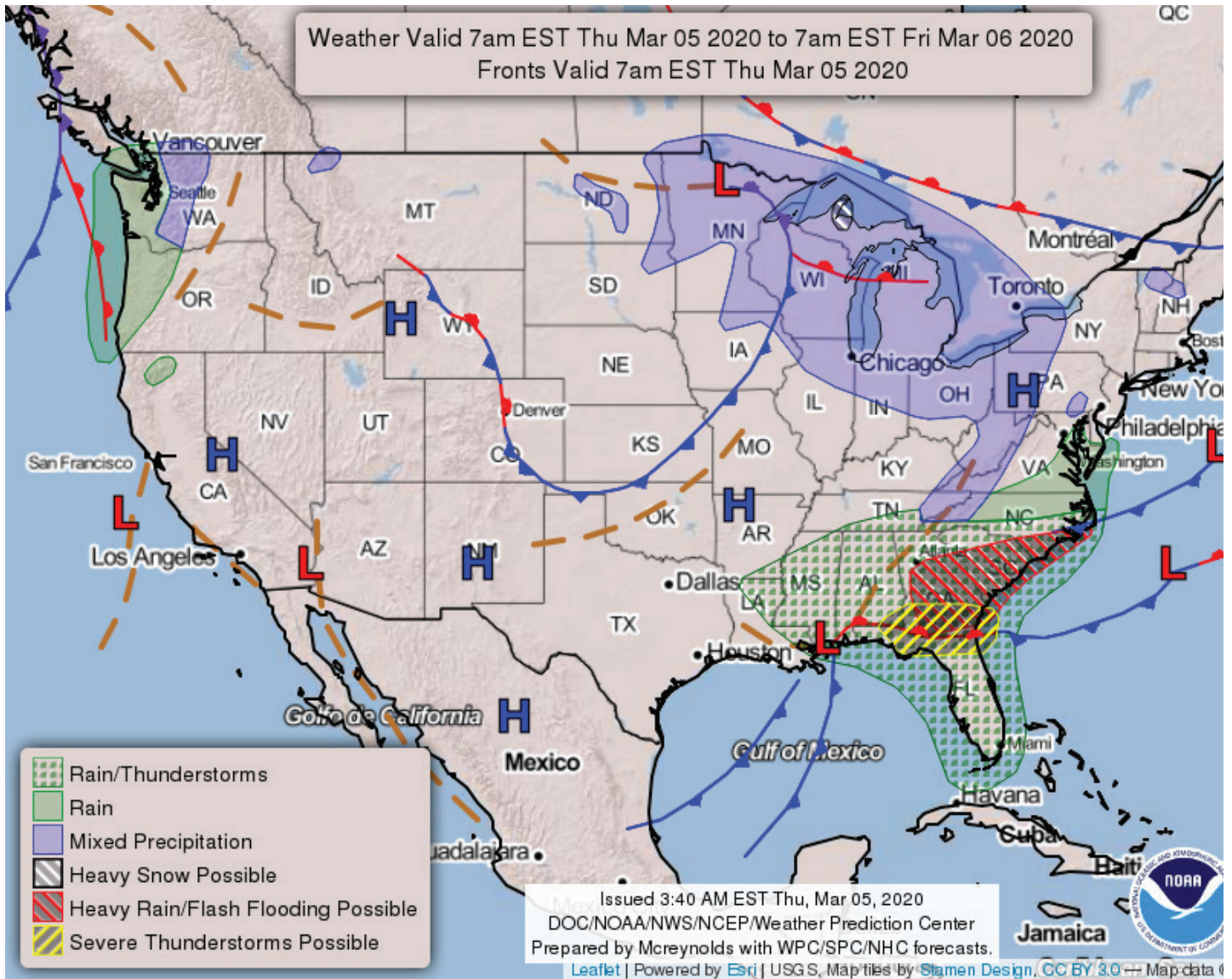
Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, March 5, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 247 ~ 7 of 77

Yesterday's Groton Weather Today's Info

High Temp: 44 °F at 2:15 PM
Low Temp: 24 °F at 6:35 AM
Wind: 18 mph at 4:55 PM
Snow

Record High: 74° in 2000
Record Low: -22° in 1919
Average High: 35°F
Average Low: 15°F
Average Precip in March.: 0.11
Precip to date in March.: 0.00
Average Precip to date: 1.13
Precip Year to Date: 0.35
Sunset Tonight: 6:27 p.m.
Sunrise Tomorrow: 7:02 a.m.



Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, March 5, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 247 ~ 8 of 77



GOD'S WILL

Following the morning sermon, a young college student asked the pastor for a few minutes of his time. Agreeing, the pastor asked the student to meet him in his study.

"Pastor," the student began, "I did not completely understand what you meant by Christians being willing to do God's will. What is God's will for my life?"

Handing the student a sheet of paper with nothing on it, the pastor said, "It's signing your name at the bottom of this blank sheet of paper and letting God fill it in as He chooses."

God has a special, specific plan for each of us. It is a good plan, a pleasing plan, and a perfect plan that He designed for every day of our lives. One problem most of us have, however, is that we go to Him with what we want or want to do, and then ask Him to agree with us. That is not the way He works. Our plans are to come from Him.

We can only be what He wants us to be and do what He wants us to do if we go to Him with a blank sheet of paper and ask Him to "fill it in." We must spend time with Him in prayer and read His Word carefully, asking Him to open our minds to His ways. We must go to Him, trusting Him for His best for our lives, and then have open minds, willing hearts and listening ears, waiting for Him to speak.

Prayer: Help us, Father, to be willing to be able to give up anything and everything for You, but not give You up for anything. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: Romans 12:1-2 Don't copy the behavior and customs of this world, but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think. Then you will learn to know God's will for you, which is good and pleasing and perfect.

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, March 5, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 247 ~ 9 of 77

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

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, March 5, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 247 ~ 10 of 77

News from the Associated Press

SD Lottery

By The Associated Press

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

Dakota Cash

10-14-16-22-34

(ten, fourteen, sixteen, twenty-two, thirty-four)

Estimated jackpot: \$20,000

Lotto America

05-06-18-22-24, Star Ball: 10, ASB: 2

(five, six, eighteen, twenty-two, twenty-four; Star Ball: ten; ASB: two)

Estimated jackpot: \$8.5 million

Mega Millions

Estimated jackpot: \$70 million

Powerball

18-43-58-60-68, Powerball: 14, Power Play: 2

(eighteen, forty-three, fifty-eight, sixty, sixty-eight; Powerball: fourteen; Power Play: two)

Estimated jackpot: \$90 million

Native American journalist, activist Chuck Trimble dies

By The Associated Press

Charles "Chuck" Trimble, a former leader of the National Congress of American Indians and founder of the American Indian Press Association, has died at age 84.

The Oglala Lakota journalist and activist died of natural causes Monday in Omaha, Nebraska, his daughter, Kaiti Fenz-Trimble, said on Facebook.

Trimble was born in Wanblee, South Dakota, on the Pine Ridge Reservation, and attended the then-Holy Rosary Mission boarding school. He graduated from the University of South Dakota, served in the U.S. Army and later studied journalism at the University of Colorado.

Trimble founded the American Indian Press Association in the 1970s, citing a lack of coverage of Native American issues, Indian Country Today reported. It operated a news service for tribal newspapers across the U.S.

He was then elected executive director of the National Congress of American Indians, an organization established to protect tribes' sovereign rights. He held the position from 1972 to 1978, calling it both a stressful and deeply rewarding time.

"I was fortunate to have served through the decade most prolific in the enactment of legislation for new policy, programs, and resources, as well as executive actions favorable to Indian tribes and off-reservation Indian communities," Trimble wrote in an address for the group's 2009 convention. "These included the Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act, the Indian Financing Act, the Indian Health Care Improvement Act and unprecedented return of significant lands to tribes."

Among his many accomplishments, Trimble helped start a newspaper on the Colville Reservation in Washington state to inform people about the implication of termination, the federal government's effort from the 1940s to the 1960s to disband tribes, Indian Country Today reported. It chronicled the tribe's eventual rejection of the policy.

He was also known for his columns on topics ranging from tribal politics and languages to aging.

"His passing has left a big hole in the field of Native American journalism," fellow Oglala Lakota journalist and publisher Tim Giago wrote in the Rapid City Journal.

Trimble was inducted into the South Dakota Hall of Fame in 2013 and received several honorary degrees. Jack Marsh, former Argus Leader editor and Freedom Forum executive, said Trimble was admired by Native and non-Native journalists alike.

"He was an honorable, fine and decent man who did much to promote reconciliation and advance a greater understanding of Native people and Native issues," Marsh wrote on Facebook. "He was a role model for many in the field of media and journalism, including me, a gifted teacher and an excellent writer."

In addition to his daughter and her husband, Trimble is survived by his wife, Anne.

Man arrested in killing of Sioux Falls pizza delivery driver

SIoux FALLS, S.D. (AP) — A 21-year-old Sioux Falls man was arrested Wednesday in connection with the fatal shooting of a pizza delivery driver, authorities said.

Casey Bonhorst, 30, was killed Feb. 26 while he was making a delivery to a home on the city's east side. As Bonhorst walked back to his car, he was approached by a man with a gun who attempted to rob him.

Police said Bonhorst was shot during the attempted robbery and died. Police said at the time that the suspect ran away.

A \$25,000 reward was being offered for information leading to an arrest. Police said Wednesday that several tips came in and a man was arrested.

Native American school proposal defeated in House committee

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) — A South Dakota House committee on Wednesday rejected a proposal to start four schools focused on Native American language and culture despite the bill receiving unanimous support from the Senate.

House lawmakers voted 9-5 to effectively kill the bill after representatives from the Oglala Lakota County school district, which is on the Pine Ridge Reservation, opposed it. They said they had not been consulted on the proposal. Other education groups also opposed the bill, arguing that it would hamper their ability to raise funds for facilities.

Educators who are pushing for the proposal held out hope that it could be revived through a rarely used legislative maneuver on Thursday. One-third of the House would have to support bringing it to the floor for debate.

The proposal would allow four Oceti Sakowin schools that would teach a curriculum centered around Lakota, Dakota, and Nakota language and culture. A group of educators proposed the schools as a way to address the low rates of high school graduation and higher education attendance in some Native American communities.

They argued that the culturally relevant style of education could transform education among Native Americans. Gov. Kristi Noem supported the proposal.

South Dakota virus prep includes in-house tests; webinars

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) — South Dakota health officials said on Wednesday they have acquired the ability to test for coronavirus and will consider shutting schools if an outbreak is detected.

The state's had no confirmed cases but officials in charge of preparations say the situation is "rapidly changing." Health Secretary Kim Malsam-Rysdon said they assume virus infections are inevitable.

The department is hosting regular webinars for physicians and encouraging people to take precautions like washing their hands and getting flu vaccines in order to free up hospital beds for a coronavirus outbreak.

The death toll from the virus in the United States climbed to 11 on Wednesday. The virus has been especially severe in Washington, where researchers believe it may have spread for weeks without being detected.

South Dakota lawmakers reject anti-probation-only measure

By **STEPHEN GROVES** Associated Press

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) — An unusual coalition of South Dakota Democrats and conservative Republicans narrowly rejected a bill Wednesday that would have barred people convicted of low-level drug felonies from receiving probation-only sentences if they refused to cooperate with law enforcement.

The bill, which was backed by the state's conservative Republican attorney general, Jason Ravnsborg, was narrowly passed by the state Senate last week but was voted down by the House Judiciary Committee on a 8-5 vote.

Lawmakers are searching for ways to curb what they describe as an epidemic of meth addiction in South Dakota, but they disagree on whether the state's limited funds would be better spent on treating addiction or locking up users.

Ravnsborg is a critic of the state's presumptive probation program, which requires that people convicted of certain low-level drug felonies be sentenced to probation rather than prison. He argued that the program encourages users to not cooperate with law enforcement and hampers his ability to go after drug dealers.

"I believe we cannot incarcerate our way out of this problem, but I also believe we cannot treat our way out of this problem," he told lawmakers Wednesday's vote.

But lawmakers who rejected the measure felt otherwise, including some who worried about the cost of imprisoning more drug users. According to an estimate from the Legislative Research Council, if the bill became law, it would have led to about 88 more people going to prison at a cost to the state of \$8.48 million in incarceration costs over 10 years.

Conservative groups, including the American Conservative Union and Americans for Prosperity, and liberal ones, including the American Civil Liberties Union, opposed the bill, saying incarceration isn't the answer to addiction.

Public defenders also opposed the measure, saying it would threaten the safety of low-level drug offenders who would be pressured by police into taking part in drug stings. Eric Witcher, the director of the Pennington County public defender's office, said the state already has the nation's toughest drug laws and that he thinks state funds would be better put toward treating addiction. He said the charge his office most often sees is meth possession.

Noem's bill streamlining feedlot permits heads to final vote

By **STEPHEN GROVES** Associated Press

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) — Gov. Kristi Noem's proposal to overhaul how South Dakota counties make permit decisions for feedlots and other projects was headed towards a final vote in the House after a committee approved it Wednesday.

The Republican governor cast the bill as part of a push for economic development, saying that it would "set the rules of the game" on how permits are issued and pave the way for investment in feedlots, energy projects, and other agriculture infrastructure. As the bill headed towards the Republican-dominated House, opponents argued that the bills erodes the control that counties have over permit decisions and would open the state up to more feedlots that pollute the environment.

Permits for feedlots, which can hold thousands of animals in a small area, have resulted in acrimonious county disputes. The governor wants to step in to create what she calls a "fair, open process" with set timelines on moving the projects forward. But as the bill gains momentum, opponents are appealing to conservatives, who hold a supermajority, by arguing that the bill infringes on "local control."

They pointed out that the bill gets rid of stringent requirements for permits in some counties, stipulating that those counties cannot require a two-thirds majority vote to have a permit approved. The bill would also make it more difficult to appeal decisions.

Noem made the unusual move of testifying before the House committee on Wednesday morning. She also put her presence behind the bill as she ushered it through the Senate.

The governor charged that opponents were being "disingenuous" in arguing that the bill decreases local

control. Noem said the bill doesn't touch local zoning requirements but encourages them to set up those requirements beforehand, then follow them without devolving into disputes.

The proposal would clarify that counties can establish a "special permitted use" process that would allow them to grant zoning permits based on a checklist of requirements without holding public meetings.

Rebecca Terk, a lobbyist for a conservation organization called Dakota Rural Action, said feedlots impact counties in a variety of ways and local boards should be able to have stringent vote requirements and the ability to decide on permits in a case-by-case basis.

"That's why we don't want to streamline a process, we want to have a thorough process for understanding the local impact on things like roads," she told lawmakers.

Republicans on the committee remained convinced that the streamlined process was a good idea and would prompt development. A couple of conservatives voted against the proposal, saying they supported the idea as a whole, but took issue with a few phrases that further tipped power to those in favor of granting permits.

Yankton man gets life in killing, dismemberment of woman

YANKTON, S.D. (AP) — A Yankton man who was convicted of killing his girlfriend and dismembering her body has been sentenced to life in prison without the chance for parole.

Stephen Falkenberg was sentenced Monday in last year's death of Tamara LaFramboise, 46. A jury convicted him of second-degree murder earlier this year.

Falkenberg's attorney told the Yankton Press and Dakotan that he's planning to appeal.

Prosecutors say Falkenberg killed LaFramboise on March 1, 2019 during an argument in her apartment, then brought her to his brother's farm in Michigan, where he dismembered and dumped her remains.

Her torso was found in a rural Michigan creek two weeks later by two boys walking their dog. Authorities identified the body by her tattoos. Her head, hands and feet have not been recovered.

Her mother, Mary LaFramboise, addressed Falkenberg in court on Monday, saying: "My daughter is gone. The mother of my grandchildren is gone. ... Please give up her head, hands and feet so she can be buried whole. Please tell us where those things are so that we can put her body to rest."

There was no visible reaction from Falkenberg, who opted not to address the court.

Sanford Health has \$209 million building plan

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — Sanford Health has a \$209 million plan to build two new clinics and an orthopedic hospital over the next three years.

The health care system announced Tuesday it's plans include an orthopedic hospital at Sanford's main campus in Sioux Falls that will have 12 operating rooms. Ground breaking is expected in the summer of 2021 with completion by 2023.

Sanford Heart Hospital is also undergoing a makeover this month, adding 16 additional patient rooms, the Argus Leader reported.

Sanford will also build its first clinic in the growing city of Harrisburg and a new clinic in Sioux Falls.

"For us this is getting the message out that we are going to enhance our existing service lines," said Paul Hanson, CEO and President of Sanford Sioux Falls. "We see an opportunity where the community is growing."

The projects are part of the health care system's effort to provide more services to parts of the city and the surrounding area that are gaining thousands of new residents each year.

10 Things to Know for Today

By The Associated Press

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

1. **WORLD GIRDS FOR MONTHS OF CORONAVIRUS TROUBLE** Its unrelenting spread — primarily in South Korea, Italy and Iran — brings ballooning infections, economic fallout and sweeping containment measures.
2. **US VIRUS DEATHS CLIMB; FEDS PROBE NURSING HOME** Federal agencies will investigate the Seattle-area nursing home at the center of an outbreak of the new coronavirus to determine whether the facility followed guidelines for preventing infections.
3. **HOW TO LOWER VIRUS ANXIETY** Experts say there are ways that people can minimize the risk of overreaction. One of them is not to constantly scour the internet for information.
4. **'SUPER' SHOWING CHANGES BIDEN VIBE** A front-runner status has the former vice president feeling confident and scrappy, promising to unite the Democratic Party and defeat Donald Trump.
5. **RUSSIA, TURKEY TO HOLD TALKS** Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, faced with mounting losses for his troops in Syria and a potential wave of refugees fleeing fighting in northwestern Syria, is eager for a cease-fire and Vladimir Putin is ready to bargain.
6. **CHINESE-MADE TECH DEVICES TAINTED BY COERCED UIGHUR LABOR** The mostly Muslim ethnic group who work in a factory in Nanchang city are isolated within a walled compound that is fortified with security cameras and guards at the entrance, AP finds.
7. **HOW WASHINGTON VIEWS TALIBAN PEACE DEAL** U.S. officials stress there was always the expectation that there would be hiccups in the process and that scattered violations would not necessarily crater the deal or the intra-Afghan talks.
8. **STIMULUS PUSHES GLOBAL SHARES HIGHER** Shares in Europe and Asia advance as governments and central banks take more aggressive measures to fight the virus outbreak and its effects on the economy.
9. **NETFLIX CANCELS SXSW SCREENINGS** The streaming service, which had planned to screen the feature film "Uncorked" and four docuseries, is pulling out of the annual festival amid virus concerns.
10. **WARRIORS STAR MAKES LONG AWAITED DEBUT** Two-time NBA MVP Stephen Curry is scheduled to return from a more than four-month absence with a broken left hand to play for Golden State against Toronto.

Russian, Turkish presidents meet as Syria violence continues

By VLADIMIR ISACHENKOV Associated Press

MOSCOW (AP) — The Turkish and Russian presidents on Thursday sat down for talks in Moscow aimed at ending hostilities in northwestern Syria involving their forces along with proxies that threaten to pit Turkey against Russia in a direct military conflict

Before the latest crisis, President Vladimir Putin and his Turkish counterpart President Recep Tayyip Erdogan had managed to coordinate their interests in Syria even though Moscow backed Syrian President Bashar Assad while Ankara supported its foes throughout Syria's nine-year war. Both Russia and Turkey appear eager to avoid a showdown, but the sharply conflicting interests in Idlib province make it difficult to negotiate a mutually acceptable compromise.

Both leaders underlined the need to reach agreement at the start of the Kremlin talks. Putin said they need to work out steps to end fighting and prevent damage to bilateral relations. Erdogan also voiced hope for finding a settlement and pointed at blossoming Russia-Turkey trade.

A Russia-backed Syrian offensive to regain control over Idlib — the last opposition-controlled region in the country — has pushed nearly a million Syrians toward Turkey. Erdogan responded by opening Turkey's gateway to Europe in an apparent bid to coerce the West to offer more support to Ankara.

Turkey has sent thousands of troops into Idlib to repel the Syrian army, and clashes on the ground and in the air that have left dozens dead on both sides. Russia, which has helped Assad reclaim most of the country's territory, has signaled it wouldn't sit idle to see Turkey rout his troops.

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, March 5, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 247 ~ 15 of 77

Putin offered his condolences to Erdogan over Turkish losses in a Syrian airstrike, but noted that Syrian troops also suffered heavy losses.

"We need to discuss the situation to prevent any such incidents and also not to damage Russia-Turkey relations that we cherish," the Russian leader said.

"The world's eye are on us," Erdogan said. "The steps we will take, the right decisions we will take here today will help ease (concerns in) the region and our countries."

Just before sitting down with Erdogan, Putin discussed the situation in Idlib with European Council head Charles Michel who met the Turkish president in Ankara on Wednesday. The Kremlin said Michel informed Putin about the EU's efforts to block the flow of migrants.

After Turkey had downed several Syrian jets, Moscow warned Ankara that its aircraft would be unsafe if they enter Syrian airspace — a veiled threat to engage Russian military assets in Syria.

Russian warplanes based in Syria have provided air cover for Assad's offensive in Idlib.

Opposition activists in Idlib blamed Russian aircraft for Thursday's strike on a rebel-held village which they said killed at least 15 people, including children, and wounded several others. The Russian military had no immediate comment on the claim, but it has staunchly denied similar previous claims insisting it hasn't targeted residential areas.

The fighting in Idlib comes as the most severe test to Russia-Turkey ties since the crisis triggered by Turkey's downing of a Russian warplane near the Syrian border in November 2015. Russia responded with an array of sweeping economic sanctions, cutting the flow of its tourists to Turkey and banning most Turkish exports — a punishment that eventually forced Turkey to back off and offer apologies.

Turkey can't afford a replay of that costly crisis, far less a military conflict with a nuclear power, but it has a strong position to bargain with. Moscow needs Ankara as a partner in a Syrian settlement and Russia's supply routes for its forces in Syria lie through the Turkish Straits.

Moscow also hopes to use Ankara in its standoff with the West. Last year, Turkey became the first NATO country to take delivery of sophisticated Russian air defense missile systems, angering the United States. Turkey has put its deployment on hold amid the crisis in Idlib.

The talks in Moscow will mark the 10th encounter in just over a year between Putin and Erdogan, who call each other "dear friend" and have polished a fine art of bargaining.

Last October, they reached an agreement to deploy their forces across Syria's northeastern border to fill the void left by President Donald Trump's abrupt withdrawal of U.S. forces. Prior to that they had negotiated a series of accords that saw opposition fighters from various areas in Syria move into Idlib and in 2018 carved out a de-escalation zone in Idlib.

They blamed one another for the collapse of the Idlib deal, with Moscow holding Ankara responsible for letting al-Qaida linked militants launch attacks from the area and Turkey accusing Moscow of failing to rein in Assad.

A possible compromise on Idlib could see Assad retain control over the key M5 highway, which his forces claimed in the latest offensive. The road that spans Syria linking Damascus with Aleppo, the country's commercial capital, is essential for Assad to consolidate his rule.

In a sign that the Kremlin firmly intends to secure control of the M5, earlier this week Russian military police have deployed to a strategic town of Saraqeb sitting on the highway to ward off any Turkish attempt to retake it.

In return, Putin could accept the presence of Turkey-backed militants in the areas alongside the border and put brakes for now on Assad's attempts to claim full control over Idlib.

Suzan Fraser in Ankara, Turkey, contributed to this report.

Five years on, ill-prepared EU sees migrants on its borders

By LORNE COOK Associated Press

Brussels (AP) — Thousands of migrants massed on Greece's borders with Turkey, and security forces struggling to keep them at bay. Five years on it feels like *deja vu*, yet the European Union seems just as ill-prepared as it was last time around.

In 2015, hundreds of thousands of people moved on Greece's land and sea borders, most fleeing from war in Syria or Iraq in search of safety in a prosperous Europe.

But this time, the Europeans say, they've been blackmailed by a ruthless Turkey that invaded northern Syria and because of a growing number of battlefield casualties has begun transporting thousands of desperate people, few of them Syrians, toward the EU.

"The tens of thousands of people who tried to enter Greece in the past few days did not come from Idlib. They have been living safely in Turkey," Greek Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis said this week. "Europe will not be blackmailed by Turkey over the refugee issue."

As he spoke at a podium near the border zone, top EU officials stood proudly side by side, praising his country as a "shield" protecting the 27-nation bloc and upholding sacrosanct European values.

Under normal circumstances, those values would include the right for people in fear of their lives to apply for international protection and not to be pushed back from the borders.

But these are not normal times. Greek security abuses or its suspension of asylum applications - illegal under international and European law, according to the U.N.'s refugee agency - appear to have been set aside for now. These are "exceptional circumstances," ministers and commissioners say.

While acknowledging that both Greece and Turkey need help to cope with their migrant challenges, the International Organization for Migration said Thursday that "international legal obligations must be upheld, in particular with respect to those who may be in need of international protection."

Still, it should never have come to this. For all the EU promises about never allowing the 2015 migrant influx to happen again, it quite simply has and far too easily. In five years, the EU has failed to solve a key political riddle: who should be obliged to process and host asylum-seekers and should European partners not on the front line be forced to help?

"Europe has not been up to the task of dealing with the migration crisis. I hope this crisis will serve as a wake-up call for everyone to assume their responsibilities," Mitsotakis said.

The 2015 migrant emergency was eminently manageable. Turkey hosts more refugees than all EU countries combined. But Greece and Italy felt abandoned by their partners; countries like Hungary that erected fences, or Austria, which turned back migrants bound for Germany or Sweden.

A quota system meant to share the refugee burden failed.

Since taking office late last year, European Commission migration officials have been working on a new Pact for Migration, aimed at kick-starting a vital reform of Europe's asylum rules, which has been stalled for years.

They say the reform must be all encompassing rather than piece-meal and should involve countries that migrants leave or transit to reach Europe, as well as "robust borders and meaningful and effective solidarity" between EU nations. More people who don't qualify to stay would be sent home.

But it's tough to draw up effective policy in a time of crisis, when national interests make compromise difficult, and the expected unveiling of the pact has been delayed, officials at migrant agencies familiar with its aims say.

"This, I dare to say, will be our last chance. Europe cannot fail twice," European Commission Vice President Margaritis Schinas said, underlining the importance of getting the balance right this time. The failure after 2015 sparked a backlash, with far-right and anti-migrant parties reaping the benefits at the ballot boxes.

But for this kind of policy to succeed, EU countries will rely increasingly on unpredictable allies of convenience like Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan. Turkey has troops in Syria, but also in lawless Libya — another source of people trying to reach Europe — giving him great political leverage.

Erdogan wants more refugee money beyond the 6 billion euros (\$6.7 billion) that the EU has agreed to

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, March 5, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 247 ~ 17 of 77

provide, but he also wants European help to establish a safe area in northern Syria where people can find shelter and, ultimately, where Syrians in Turkey might be sent back.

Despite the accusations of blackmail more, not less, European help is likely.

After emergency talks Wednesday, EU interior ministers acknowledged "the increased migratory burden and risks Turkey is facing." They affirmed support for the EU-Turkey migrant deal, saying that both sides "stand to benefit from the continuation of this cooperation and commitment."

World braces for months of trouble as virus pushes west

By **MATT SEDENSKY AP National Writer**

BANGKOK (AP) — People around the world braced for months of disruptions from the new virus Thursday as its unrelenting spread brought ballooning infections, economic fallout and sweeping containment measures.

"Countries should be preparing for sustained community transmission," Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, leader of the World Health Organization, said of the 2-month-old virus outbreak. "Our message to all countries is: This is not a one-way street. We can push this virus back. Your actions now will determine the course of the outbreak in your country."

In places around the globe, a split was developing. China has been issuing daily reports of new infections that are drastically down from their highs, factories there are gradually reopening and there is a growing sense that normalcy might not be that far off. Meanwhile, countries elsewhere are seeing escalating caseloads and a litany of cancellations, closures, travel bans and supply shortages.

There are about 17 times as many new infections outside China as in it, WHO said, with widening outbreaks in South Korea, Italy and Iran responsible for a majority.

"The virus doesn't care about race and belief or color. It is attacking us all, equally," said Ian MacKay, who studies viruses at the University of Queensland in Australia. "We're looking at a pandemic in all practical reality."

Desperate to keep a crisis from expanding within their borders, countries have been further tightening travel restrictions.

Australia said Thursday that it is banning travel from South Korea by those who aren't Australian citizens or permanent residents, following similar bans for China and Iran. Indonesia announced restrictions on travelers from specific parts of Iran, Italy and South Korea after previously banning travel from China. The United Arab Emirates warned its people not to travel anywhere abroad and said those who do could be subject to quarantines when they return.

Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe said visitors from China and South Korea would need to complete a two-week quarantine at a government facility and be barred from public transit. Sri Lankans arriving from Italy, South Korea and Iran will be quarantined at a hospital for leprosy patients, health authorities announced. And in Iran, where the case count rose to 3,513 and the death toll climbed to 107, checkpoints were to be set up to limit travel between major cities.

Still, no country has matched China's willingness to turn to draconian measures to keep the virus from spreading, but around the world, governments took drastic steps.

Italy closed all schools and universities and forbade fans from attending sporting events. Saudi Arabia barred citizens from Islam's holiest sites. In the United States, where 11 have died from the virus, hundreds of people were placed in self-quarantines due to cases in a New York suburb.

In places around Europe and the U.S., anxiety was causing supplies of hand sanitizer and face masks to sell out, as people stood in snaking lines to stock up on food and water.

"A new risk is always scarier than one we're familiar with because it has elements of the unknown," said David Ropeik, who authored the book "How Risky Is It, Really?"

South Korea, which has the highest number of infections outside China, announced strict controls on face masks, which have been in such high demand that people have stood in line for hours to buy them. Beginning Friday, exports of masks will be prohibited and South Koreans will be limited to buying two

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, March 5, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 247 ~ 18 of 77

masks a week, and only on specific days determined by the year of their birth.

"The supply side hasn't been able to keep up," said Kim Yong-beom, the vice finance minister in South Korea, which reported 467 new infections Thursday, bringing its total to 6,088.

North Korean leader Kim Jong Un sent a letter to South Korean President Moon Jae-in to express condolences over the health crisis. Officials in Seoul said Kim "underlined his unwavering friendship and trust toward President Moon and said that he will continue to quietly send his best wishes for President Moon to overcome" the outbreak. It wasn't clear if the letter was an attempt to improve strained ties.

Markets in Asia and Europe rose Thursday after a surge on Wall Street, but fear of economic fallout from the virus' spread remained. Ministers from the oil-producing countries in OPEC were weighing slashing output to control plunging prices exacerbated by the outbreak. And the U.S. Federal Reserve reported the virus has impacted tourism, lowered demand for aircraft and brought supply-chain disruptions.

Iranians were urged to reduce their use of paper money and to stay in their cars and have gas station attendants fill their tanks to limit the possibility of virus transmission.

In the biblical city of Bethlehem, the Church of the Nativity, built on the site where Christians believe Jesus was born, was being closed over virus fears. The Palestinian Authority said it was preventing all tourists from entering the West Bank.

Even the joyful Indian celebration of Holi, in which Hindu revelers celebrate the arrival of spring with bursts of color, including bright powders smeared on faces, was impacted by the virus. Prime Minister Narendra Modi and other leaders said the virus would keep them from attending Holi events Tuesday, and the Holi Moo Festival in New Delhi was canceled.

The string of bad news related to the virus was weighing on people. Iranian President Hassan Rouhani urged state television to offer "happier" programs to entertain those stuck at home in a country with a worsening outbreak. Some 2,900 have been sickened and 92 have died in Iran.

"I urge all artists, scientists, psychologists and all who can bring smiles to people's faces, come into the social media," he said. "Today, words that make people tired are no longer advantageous."

In China, where hospitals were releasing hundreds of recovered patients, officials reported 139 new cases of infection and 31 more deaths. In all, the country has reported 80,409 cases and 3,012 deaths. More than two-thirds of those in China who contracted the virus have been discharged from hospitals, officials said. Of those who remain hospitalized, about 6,000 are in serious condition.

A state visit to Japan by Chinese President Xi Jinping was postponed as both countries deal with the virus. The trip, set for April, was to be the first for a Chinese leader since Hu Jintao visited in 2008.

Worldwide, some 95,000 people in about 80 countries have been infected.

Contributing to this report were Kim Tong-Hyung and Hyung-jin Kim in Seoul, South Korea; Mari Yamaguchi in Tokyo; Bharatha Mallawarachi in Colombo, Sri Lanka; Ken Moritsugu in Beijing; Aniruddha Ghosal and Ashok Sharma in New Delhi; and Jon Gambrell in Dubai, United Arab Emirates.

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

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

Turkey deploying special forces to border amid migrant surge

By SUZAN FRASER Associated Press

ANKARA, Turkey (AP) — Turkey said Thursday it would deploy special forces along its land border with Greece to prevent Greek authorities from pushing back migrants trying to cross into Europe, after Turkey declared its previously guarded gateways to Europe open.

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, March 5, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 247 ~ 19 of 77

Thousands of migrants and refugees have tried to cross into Greece from the Turkish land and sea border in the past week. Clashes have been frequent, with Greek police firing tear gas, stun grenades and water cannon to repel thousands of people trying to breach the border. Greek authorities say Turkish police have also fired tear gas at them in an effort to disperse border guards.

Turkey says Greek authorities were also firing live ammunition at the migrants, and Interior Minister Suleyman Soyly said Wednesday Turkey would make a case in the European Court of Human Rights for a migrant it says was shot dead by Greek authorities on the border. The Greek government has denied any such incident occurred, calling it "fake news."

Soyly, who visited the border area Thursday, said Turkey would deploy 1,000 special forces along its land border to prevent Greek authorities from pushing back those attempting to cross.

"As of this morning ... we are bringing 1,000 fully equipped special forces police (along) the Meric river system to prevent the push backs," Soyly said. "With the help of Zodiac boats they will (prevent) those who mistreat people."

Soyly said Greece had tried to push back around 4,900 migrants in violation of international conventions, and accused the European Union and Europe's border protection agency Frontex of remaining silent.

An estimated 4,000-5,000 people were near the Pazarkule border crossing, opposite the Greek village of Kastanies, and were being prevented from crossing, Soyly said.

"It is a border gate, they are obliged to take them in. They are obliged to take in asylum-seekers," the minister said.

But he added the migrants were not obliged to use the official border crossing and could cross anywhere along the roughly 200 kilometers (125-mile) long border. Much of the border is demarcated by a river, and many migrants have tried wading, rowing or swimming across it.

"I want to say that there is no rule that says they have to cross from Pazarkule," Soyly said.

The minister asserted that more than 130,000 migrants had crossed into Greece since Feb. 27, when Turkey made good on a threat to open its borders and allow migrants and refugees to head for Europe. He said around 20-25% of those who reached Greece were Syrians.

There was no evidence to support the claim. Although hundreds of people have managed to cross, most appear to have been caught by Greek authorities. Many have said they have been summarily pushed back into Turkey after being detained.

Greek authorities said that from Saturday morning until Thursday morning, they had thwarted 34,778 attempts to cross the border, and 244 people had been arrested. That includes 6,955 attempts to cross the border in the 24 hours between Wednesday morning and Thursday morning.

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's decision to open its gateways to Europe has raised concerns within the European Union, which was holding a foreign ministers' meeting in Zagreb, Croatia.

His move to open the border to 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.

Erdogan, whose country currently houses more than 3.5 million Syrian refugees, had frequently threatened to open Turkey's borders and send migrants and refugees into Europe. He maintains the EU has not upheld its end of a more than 6 billion euro deal designed to stem the flow of migrants into Europe, after more than a million people crossed into the EU in 2015.

"We are no longer preventing crossings into Greece and Europe," Soyly said. "Those who come can come, those who can cross can cross."

"For some nine years, Turkey has shouldered a humanitarian tragedy that the world has ignored," the minister said. "I am sad to say that it has shouldered this despite the fact that countries that consider themselves to be civilized have turned their backs."

Greece's government has called the situation a direct threat to the country's national security and has imposed emergency measures to carry out swift deportations and freeze asylum applications for one month — moves which have come under criticism from human rights groups and refugee aid agencies.

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, March 5, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 247 ~ 20 of 77

German Foreign Minister Heiko Maas said in a statement before heading to the foreign ministers' meeting it was important that Greece not be left alone and that a "united European answer" be found for the situation on the Turkish-Greek border.

"As always, the weakest always pay the highest price for the current condition. Therefore, we must use our possibilities to quickly help especially unprotected children," Maas said.

He added: "For us it's clear: the EU must continue to financially and increasingly support the efforts of Turkey when it comes to the admission of refugees and migrants."

Greece has also come under migration pressure from the sea, with hundreds heading to Greek islands from the nearby Turkish coast. A child died when the dinghy he was in capsized off the coast of the Greek island of Lesbos earlier this week.

Soylu, the interior minister, said he had received instructions from Erdogan for Turkish authorities to prevent migrants from crossing by sea to avert drownings.

In past days, Greek authorities have said coast guard notifications to the Turkish coast guard about boats crossing have been met with no reaction, while they say in some cases migrants boats have been escorted to the edge of Turkish territorial waters by Turkish patrol boats. There were no crossings to Greek islands on Wednesday. The weather was particularly bad in the area, with high winds and rough seas.

Elena Becatoros in Athens and Kirsten Grieshaber in Berlin, contributed to this report.

Black voters power Joe Biden's Super Tuesday success

By KAT STAFFORD and HANNAH FINGERHUT Associated Press

DETROIT (AP) — Joe Biden's presidential campaign spent the past month on the verge of collapse after disappointing finishes in the overwhelmingly white states that launched the Democratic primary. As he watched the turmoil unfold from Gadsden, Alabama, Robert Avery thought the race would change dramatically when it moved into the South.

"He knows us, he cares about us," the 71-year-old community organizer said. "People have given us no credit as to knowing what's going on or being involved, and that's the furthest thing from the truth."

It turns out Avery's instinct was right.

After a brutal February for Biden, black voters throughout the South transformed Biden's White House bid over the course of three days. A back-of-the-pack operation surged to front-runner status powered by support from black voters, starting with Biden's commanding win Saturday in South Carolina and coming into full focus on Super Tuesday as he racked up wins in Virginia, North Carolina, Alabama and Tennessee.

Biden is now in a tight race with progressive rival Bernie Sanders, who emerged as the initial Democratic leader after strong performances in Iowa, New Hampshire and Nevada last month. Activists said Biden's success is a reminder that the path to victory in the Democratic contest runs straight through their communities.

"You can't win the Democratic presidential nomination without winning the South, and you can't win the South without the black vote, and you can't win the black vote without winning the black women's vote," said Melanie Campbell, president and CEO of the National Coalition on Black Civic Participation. "We believe all roads to the White House must come through the South."

Black voters strongly aligned behind Biden over other candidates, according to AP VoteCast surveys across eight Super Tuesday states. In Alabama, where African American voters made up a majority of the Democratic primary electorate, roughly 7 in 10 supported the former vice president. That support held across ages and gender.

In other states, like Texas, Virginia and North Carolina, black voters made up a smaller but sizable share of Democratic primary voters. While a majority of both black men and women supported Biden, Sanders did pull about even with Biden among black voters under 45.

Biden will be looking to carry that momentum into next week's six primaries that will include states like Michigan and Mississippi, which are also home to significant populations of black voters. More than 78%

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, March 5, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 247 ~ 21 of 77

of residents in Detroit, Michigan's largest city, are African American.

The former vice president's success also poses warning signs for Sanders. The Vermont senator's 2016 presidential campaign was unsuccessful in part because he couldn't line up enough support from black voters in the South to win the Democratic nomination.

Since 2016, Sanders has focused on building relationships with black leaders and voters. He frequently speaks of a multiracial coalition that will help him win the nomination and the White House. But Tuesday's results — combined with his distant second-place finish in South Carolina — suggest he could face similar challenges in 2020.

Sanders has warned in recent days that the party's elite establishment is aligning to thwart his campaign. But Biden allies pointed to their success with a diverse set of voters on Tuesday to rebut that.

"I just did not know that African Americans in the South were considered part of the establishment," said Louisiana Democratic Rep. Cedric Richmond, Biden's campaign co-chairman.

"African Americans voters have made a conscious decision that we fought and earned through civil rights," Richmond said, because they understand the importance of "nominating a person that they know, nominating a person that can win."

Niambi Carter, a political science professor at Howard University, said the race shifted in Biden's favor after he nabbed an endorsement from South Carolina Rep. Jim Clyburn, the highest-ranking black member of Congress. Carter said Clyburn is a beloved and trusted figure in the black community, and she believes it potentially gave black voters in states like Alabama and Virginia the necessary push to support Biden.

"Older black voters are an important constituency for Democrats," Carter said. "I think people underestimate the importance of having a steadfast core group of supporters, and Joe Biden had that. I think this sort of narrative that it's just about black people voting their fears is perhaps not necessarily the case. Black people are not just pragmatic, they're strategic."

Trudy Lucas, the religious affairs and external relations manager at National Action Network South Carolina, agreed.

"We listen to Jim Clyburn, and we've been doing that for years now," Lucas said.

That rings true for Sheryl Threadgill-Matthews, a member of the Alabama New South Coalition Inc. who voted for Biden. Threadgill-Matthews said it initially wasn't an easy choice, but as candidates began to drop out of the race, her choice became clear.

"I really think across the nation that people will start to galvanize," Threadgill-Matthews said. "I grappled with it initially, but when I thought about his record and the integrity that he's always shown through his vice presidency, I decided to vote for him. I think Biden would be a candidate that a diverse electorate could support."

Associated Press writer Bill Barrow in Los Angeles contributed to this report.

Kat Stafford is a member of The Associated Press' Race and Ethnicity team. Follow her on Twitter at https://twitter.com/kat__stafford

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

Iran says virus deaths reach 107 amid 3,513 confirmed cases

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates (AP) — Iran will set up checkpoints to limit travel between major cities and urged citizens on Thursday to reduce their use of paper money to fight a spreading outbreak of the new coronavirus, which has killed at least 107 people across the Islamic Republic.

The announcement in Iran came as Palestinian authorities said the storied Nativity Church in the biblical city of Bethlehem, built atop the spot where Christians believe Jesus was born, will close indefinitely later in the day over coronavirus fears. The church was expected to draw tens of thousands of visitors and worshippers next month for the upcoming Easter holiday.

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, March 5, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 247 ~ 22 of 77

These mark the latest disruptions of life across the Mideast from the new virus, which has seen over 3,740 confirmed cases.

Iran's Health Minister Saeed Namaki announced his country's new restrictions at a televised press conference. He added that schools and universities will remain closed through Nowruz, the Persian New Year, on March 20.

He said people should stay in their vehicles at gas stations and allow attendants to fill their gas tanks to avoid the spread of the virus.

Iran and Italy have the world's highest death tolls outside of China.

The Palestinian Health Ministry meanwhile said it was preventing all tourists from entering the West Bank. The ministry did not specify for how long. Most tourists to the West Bank visit the biblical city of Bethlehem, where the Nativity Church is located, and Jericho.

The measures come after suspicions that four Palestinians had caught the new coronavirus. A Palestinian official said the four had tested positive for the virus but that the tests were sent to Israel to verify the results. The official spoke on condition of anonymity because he wasn't authorized to discuss the issue with the media. They would be the Palestinian territories' first cases if confirmed.

The Palestinian Health Ministry also said churches and places of worship in Bethlehem will be closed for two weeks.

Earlier Thursday, the United Arab Emirates warned its citizens and its foreign residents not to travel anywhere abroad amid the ongoing worldwide coronavirus outbreak, a stark warning for a country home to two major long-haul airlines.

The country's Health and Community Protection Ministry warning comes as its capital, Abu Dhabi, sent 215 foreigners it evacuated from hard-hit Hubei in China to a quarantine set up in its Emirates Humanitarian City. They include citizens of Egypt, Sudan and Yemen.

Health officials warned that those traveling abroad could face quarantine themselves at the discretion of authorities. The UAE is home to some 9 million people, with only about 1 million estimated to be Emirati citizens.

The UAE is home to Emirates, the government-owned airline based at Dubai International Airport, the world's busiest for international travel. Abu Dhabi also is home to Etihad, the country's national carrier. Both airlines have encouraged staff to take time off as international travel has dropped due to the virus.

The coronavirus outbreak has disrupted Islamic worship in the Middle East, as Saudi Arabia on Wednesday banned its citizens and other residents of the kingdom from performing the pilgrimage in Mecca, while Iran canceled Friday prayers in major cities.

Associated Press writers Jon Gambrell in Dubai, United Arab Emirates, Amir Vahdat in Tehran, Iran, and Mohammed Daraghmeh in Ramallah, West Bank, contributed.

US worshippers grapple with virus burdens others have borne

By DAVID CRARY AP National Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — A rising number of churches across the United States are making changes in response to the coronavirus outbreak, including a decision by numerous Catholic dioceses to suspend the serving of wine during Communion.

Thus far, there's been no indication of any widespread cancellations of worship services. However, Jamie Aten, a psychologist who is executive director of the Humanitarian Disaster Institute at Wheaton College, said it would be wise for faith leaders to start preparing for that eventuality.

"Some faith communities already stream services or communicate with each other over social media," Aten noted. "Though there aren't any perfect solutions and such discussions can be difficult to have, it's better to have them now and not later."

Among the Catholic bishops ordering changes was Archbishop Paul Etienne of Seattle, whose region is the worst hit in the U.S. The Washington state health department has confirmed more than 30 cases of

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, March 5, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 247 ~ 23 of 77

the coronavirus in the Seattle area, and at least 10 deaths.

In a letter to parish leaders, Etienne said wine should not be distributed during Communion until further notice, and church-goers should receive the Communion wafer in their hand, not on their tongue.

The archbishop urged Catholics to stay home from Mass if they are sick; to practice good hygiene, including frequent hand washing; and to avoid hand-to-hand contact during moments in the church service when churchgoers traditionally shake hands with those near them in the pews.

Many other dioceses around the U.S. are taking similar steps - even in areas such as Pittsburgh where no cases of coronavirus have been confirmed. Among the many dioceses and archdioceses making the changes were those in Atlanta, Boston, Joliet, Illinois, San Antonio and Newark and Paterson, New Jersey.

In Chicago, the Catholic archdiocese not only suspended the serving of Communion wine from a chalice, it also ordered priests, deacons and other personnel to wash their hands before Mass and use an alcohol based anti-bacterial solution before and after distributing Communion.

"Assure the faithful that if they are sick or are experiencing symptoms of sickness, they are not obliged to attend Mass, and even that out of charity they ought not to attend," the archdiocese told its priests.

Archbishop John Wester of Santa Fe, New Mexico, was among the bishops ordering that the Communion wafer be placed in the recipient's hand, not on the tongue, for the time being.

"How we receive, while very personal to the individual communicant, is not crucial," Wester wrote on the diocese website. "Receiving Communion in the hand is every bit as respectful as receiving on the tongue."

The U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops has shared with its member bishops some suggested steps that could be taken in response to the outbreak, but it has left it up to individual bishops to decide if and how to implement those steps. Some dioceses said they would leave some decisions to the discretion of their parish priests.

The virus outbreak was prompting changes in many other faiths as well — in the U.S. and around the world.

Saudi Arabia on Wednesday banned its citizens and other residents of the kingdom from performing the pilgrimage in Mecca, while Iran canceled Friday prayers in major cities.

Several imams in the U.S. advised Muslim worshippers that it is religiously permissible to pray at home rather than attend Friday group prayers, which are generally considered obligatory for adult men.

After the prayers, Muslim congregants typically greet one another with hugs, handshakes and cheek kisses. Now, some mosque leaders are halting the custom of shaking the imam's hand after prayer and are advising worshippers to find alternative greetings.

"For the time being, it may be worth avoiding touch and switching to a hand on the heart, a respectful nod, and a warm smile," Omar Ricci, spokesman of the Islamic Center of Southern California, wrote in an email to congregants.

Sally Hiller, a Virginia-based deaconess with Lutheran Church Missouri Synod, wrote to regional colleagues with detailed suggestions for worship services.

"Consider putting smaller bottles of hand sanitizer in each pew," she wrote. "As you greet one another or exchange greetings during the sharing of peace, consider a simple head bow, a wave, or a fist bump."

In the event the outbreak worsens, Hiller said churches should ensure that a communication system is in place that could spread the word if services are canceled or church-run schools are shut down. In the event of school closures, she said plans should be in place to offer online classes.

"If you are going to use e-learning, develop procedures and practice it before you launch into it," Hiller wrote. "Communicate with your families — often."

The actions in the U.S., and elsewhere, mirror some of those taken in Asia by churches who were the first to grapple with the effects of the coronavirus outbreak. In Hong Kong, the Catholic Church suspended public Masses two weeks and urged churchgoers to watch them online. A Protestant church in Seoul shut its doors and switched entirely to online worship services.

Not everyone is taking drastic steps.

At the Church of the Redeemer, an Anglican congregation in Nashville, Tennessee, pastor Thomas McKenzie advised churchgoers that he planned to continue offering wine during Communion, with the chalice

being carefully wiped by a cloth between each use.

"Scientists have shown that the risk of transmitting disease in this way is very low," McKenzie wrote.

He also indicated his church would continue to hold services even if the outbreak worsened.

"Please know that we will worship on Sunday morning no matter what," he wrote. "Some other church events might be canceled -- as we sometimes do in bad weather -- at the request of local authorities. However, we Anglicans have long continued to worship even in the face of bombs, persecutions, earthquakes, fires, floods and, yes, disease."

Religion News Service reporter Aysha Khan contributed from Boston.

Associated Press religion coverage receives support from the Lilly Endowment through the Religion News Foundation. The AP is solely responsible for this content.

China-made phones, tablets tainted by coerced Uighur labor

By DAKE KANG and YANAN WANG Associated Press

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

However, experts say that like the internment camps, the program is part of a broader assault on the

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, March 5, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 247 ~ 25 of 77

Uighur culture, breaking up social and family links by sending people far from their homes to be assimilated into the dominant Han Chinese culture.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

FROM FARMERS TO FACTORY WORKERS

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

At first the program targeted young, single women, because the state worried that Uighur women raised in pious Muslim families didn't work, had children early and refused to marry Han men. But as stories of poor pay and tight restrictions trickled back, police began threatening some parents with jail time if they didn't send their children, six Uighurs told the AP.

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

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, March 5, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 247 ~ 26 of 77

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

ANSWERING THE GOVERNMENT'S CALL

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

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

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

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

OFILM is one of Nanchang's biggest employers, with half a dozen factory complexes sprinkled across the city and close ties with the state. Investment funds backed by the Nanchang city government own large stakes in OFILM, corporate filings show. The Nanchang government told the AP that OFILM recruits minorities according to "voluntary selection by both parties" and provides equal pay along with personal and religious freedom.

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

Mandarin is heavily emphasized, the site says, as well as lessons in history and "ethnic unity" to "compre-

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, March 5, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 247 ~ 27 of 77

hensively improve their overall quality." The site features pictures of Uighurs playing basketball on factory grounds, dancing in a canteen and vying in a Mandarin speech competition.

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

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

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

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

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

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

THEY TOOK MY CHILD TO INNER CHINA

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

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

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

Months later, H. and his family fled China.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

it in an ashtray.

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

Dogs, cats can't pass on coronavirus, but can test positive

HONG KONG (AP) — Pet cats and dogs cannot pass the new coronavirus on to humans, but they can test positive for low levels of the pathogen if they catch it from their owners.

That's the conclusion of Hong Kong's Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department after a dog in quarantine tested weakly positive for the virus Feb. 27, Feb. 28 and March 2, using the canine's nasal and oral cavity samples.

A unidentified spokesman for the department was quoted in a news release as saying. "There is currently no evidence that pet animals can be a source of infection of COVID-19 or that they become sick."

Scientists suspect the virus known as SARS-CoV-2 that causes the disease originated in bats before passing it on to another species, possibly a small wild mammal, that passed it on to humans. However, experts from the School of Public Health of The University of Hong Kong, the College of Veterinary Medicine and Life Sciences of the City University of Hong Kong and the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE) have unanimously agreed that the dog has a low-level of infection and it is "likely to be a case of human-to-animal transmission."

The dog, and another also in quarantine which has tested negative for the virus, will be tested again before being released. The department suggested any pets, including dogs and cats, from households where someone has tested positive for the virus should be put into quarantine.

In general, pet owners should maintain good hygiene, including washing hands before and after handling animals, their food and supplies and no kissing them. People who are sick should avoid contact with pets and a veterinarian's advice should be sought if changes in a pet's health conditions are detected.

"Apart from maintaining good hygiene practices, pet owners need not be overly concerned and under no circumstances should they abandon their pets," the spokesman said.

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.

Russia-Turkey talks a last chance to avert Idlib calamity

By SUZAN FRASER and ZEINA KARAM Associated Press

ANKARA, Turkey (AP) — A summit between the Turkish and Russian leaders on Thursday may be the last chance to work out a deal that avoids further calamity in Syria's northwest.

Faced with mounting losses for his troops in Syria's Idlib province and a potential wave of refugees fleeing the fighting, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan is eager for a cease-fire, and Vladimir Putin is ready to bargain.

With a looming new migration crisis at Europe's borders, all eyes will be on Moscow, where the two main power brokers in Syria will see if they can hammer out yet another deal carving up northern Syria, tailored to their own agendas.

Whatever deal they can work out, it will likely bring only a temporary halt in the punishing Moscow-backed onslaught by the military of Syrian President Bashar Assad, which threatens continued suffering for the 3 million people trapped in Idlib.

"The main problem in Idlib is the desire of Assad ... to establish full control of the area and block the border with Turkey, while also having pushed 3 million of the Sunni population, unfriendly to Assad, out onto Turkish soil," said Vladimir Frolov, an independent Russian foreign affairs analyst.

The fight in Idlib, the last opposition-controlled region of Syria, has already been catastrophic for the population. Nearly a million people have fled their homes since Dec. 1, when the latest government offen-

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, March 5, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 247 ~ 29 of 77

sive began, in the biggest single wave of displacement since Syria's civil war began nine years ago. With nowhere to go, many have crowded up against the border with Turkey, which already hosts 3.6 million Syrian refugees and has refused to let new ones in.

It has also brought Turkey, a NATO member, dangerously close to war with Russia.

In the past month, Syrian and Turkish troops have repeatedly clashed on the ground and in the skies, killing scores on both sides. For Turkey, which sent thousands of troops to Syria in the past few weeks, the intervention has been disastrous: 58 Turkish troops killed in the past month, including 33 in one air-strike last week.

Outraged, Erdogan threw open Turkey's borders with Greece, declaring he would no longer hold back migrants and refugees wishing to go to Europe. Some European leaders have accused him of using refugees to blackmail the West into backing Turkey.

Analysts say the move showed Erdogan's desperation, especially after failing to get the desired assistance from NATO, and is likely to backfire as dramatic scenes reminiscent of the 2015 migrant crisis play out at the gates of Europe.

"The Turkish side was compelled by necessity in the hope that the pressure created as such would twist Europe's arm," said Ahmet Kasim Han, professor of International Relations at Istanbul's Altinbas University.

As his isolation deepens, Erdogan is likely to settle for less than what he aspires to at Thursday's talks. Asked about his expectations, he told reporters Tuesday that the main topic will be to "rapidly achieve a cease-fire in the region."

Moscow, too, appears keen on restoring some kind of status quo in Idlib.

"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," Putin's spokesman Dmitry Peskov said.

Erdogan and Putin met repeatedly the past few years to coordinate their moves in Syria. In September 2018, they struck a de-escalation deal on Idlib that averted a Syrian offensive. The agreement created a security zone free of heavy weapons and monitored by Turkish troops to halt fighting. But the deal ultimately collapsed.

In October, a deal between the two leaders carved up the zone further east along the border, each deploying forces to fill the void after President Donald Trump's abrupt order to withdraw U.S. forces there.

Erdogan's top motivation now is to prevent a new wave of refugees into Turkey. His main leverage with Putin is Moscow's desire for strong ties with Turkey to counterbalance U.S. influence in the region.

Putin has signaled Russia's willingness to accommodate Turkish security concerns. Having already secured Moscow's interests and those of his Syrian allies by recapturing key cities and securing the country's gas and phosphate reserves, he can afford to appease Erdogan to some extent on Idlib.

After last week's deadly airstrike on Turkish troops, Russia stepped aside to allow Turkish drones and aircraft to pummel the Syrians temporarily, giving Turkey a chance to save face. But on Monday, Russia stepped back in, helping the Syrians to retake the strategic town of Saraqeb, which sits on the main Damascus-Aleppo highway. Russian military police quickly moved into the town, in a clear sign to Turkey not to attempt to retake it.

Soner Cagaptay, director at the Washington Institute for Near East Policy, said the Moscow talks will likely come up with a deal based on the current situation on the ground, reflecting the major gains made by the Syrian government forces — thought it won't be to the liking of Turkey, which wants Assad's forces to roll back.

"Assad will take a good chunk of Syria. Erdogan will end up with a good chunk of the population," he said.

Erdogan wants to return to the boundaries of the 2018 agreement and for Assad to halt attacks. It will be difficult for Russia to say yes to all of these demands. To get that, Erdogan would have to convince Putin that he's risking deep damage in ties with Turkey — or even direct conflict.

Numan Kurtulmus, deputy leader of Erdogan's ruling party, summed up the president's thinking in an interview Tuesday with CNN-Turk television.

"The Russians must see that Turkey and Russia have great investments in this region. I don't believe

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, March 5, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 247 ~ 30 of 77

they would want Turkey as a total adversary for the sake of a regime that is on the verge of collapse.”

Han said Erdogan is playing an “escalated game of chicken.”

“The fundamental assumption of this brinkmanship is that Russia would not want to enter a conflict with Turkey,” he said.

Karam reported from Beirut. Associated Press writers Daria Litvinova and Vladimir Isachenkov in Moscow contributed.

Science Says: How risky is that virus? Your mind may mislead

By MALCOLM RITTER Science Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Anna Alexander, a property manager in Virginia Beach, Virginia, started the day Monday thinking that she might avoid shaking hands because of the coronavirus outbreak. Then somebody stuck out a hand to shake.

She took it.

“I’m a business person,” Alexander, 65, explained. “But if somebody else does it next time, I might try to be careful because of the coronavirus.”

As the viral infections spread across the globe, everybody has to make a decision: How worried should I be about getting infected, and what should I do about it?

Those decisions can have wide impacts. “Seriously people — STOP BUYING MASKS!” tweeted U.S. Surgeon General Dr. Jerome M. Adams on Feb. 29. He explained masks aren’t effective in protecting the general public “but if healthcare providers can’t get them to care for sick patients, it puts them and our communities at risk!”

The right degree of concern for somebody who lives near a coronavirus hotspot might very well differ from that of somebody who lives far from one. In any case, say experts in how people gauge risk, it’s not a simple, cold statistical calculation. Instead, it is colored by our emotions and other psychological factors.

“Emotions are the filters through which we see the facts,” says David Ropeik, a retired Harvard instructor on risk communication.

And this virus outbreak presents a list of “hot buttons ... that ramp up our perception of risk” and sometimes make those perceptions differ from the evidence-based conclusions of medical officials, says Paul Slovic, a psychology professor at the University of Oregon.

For example, it’s new and unfamiliar, unlike the usual seasonal flu that kills a lot more people every year than coronavirus has. It doesn’t appear to be fully understood. And it seems hard to control, either by public health authorities or our own actions.

“We see there is no vaccine that can prevent it,” he said. It can spread through airborne droplets released by infected people, but we can’t be sure the people we meet are truly healthy, which also undercuts any sense of personal control, he said.

As Ropeik put it, in the face of a new and poorly understood threat “we start feeling like we don’t know what we need to do to protect ourselves, and that feels like powerlessness, a lack of control, like driving down the road but with your eyes closed.”

Meanwhile, the information people get from the news and social media is “not particularly reassuring,” Slovic said. “The geographic risk of this seems to be rapidly expanding” and within any country the case numbers start relatively small and then grow, without any known upper bound, he said. And reports focus on people getting sick and dying, not those who’ve become infected and had only mild symptoms, he said. “We’re getting only the scary information.”

What’s more, Ropeik said, “everybody is telling everybody about it” in news and social media, which amplifies the perceived risk.

Ropeik said the coronavirus triggers thinking about years of warnings about lethal pandemics. “This idea of the new disease being a major killer is an idea that has been burned into our recent fear memory,” he said.

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, March 5, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 247 ~ 31 of 77

Vincent Covello, director of the Center for Risk Communication, based in New York, provided a list of 17 psychological factors that he said can influence how individuals gauge the risks of coronavirus. For example, he said, people are often more concerned about events if they don't trust the authorities or institutions in charge. They're more concerned about involuntary things, like exposure to an infected person, than voluntary ones, like smoking or sunbathing. And they're often more concerned about risks that have delayed effects, like the lag time between infection and symptoms, than those with an immediate effect, like poisoning.

So how can people minimize the risk of overreaction in themselves and others? Don't spread the word about every little development, including minor missteps by government authorities, Ropeik says. And "don't just share the scary parts," but also include things like infection usually causing only mild to moderate symptoms.

Finally, "don't be a 24/7 information victim," he said. "Log off, put your phone down, pick up a book ... Shut down your risk radar screen for a while.... You're probably just as much at risk or safe tomorrow as you are now, whether you stay online all the time or not."

Ben Finley in Norfolk, Virginia, contributed to this story.

This Associated Press series was produced in partnership with the Howard Hughes Medical Institute's Department of Science Education. The AP is solely responsible for all content.

Amid tornado devastation, surviving homes beacons of hope

By **TRAVIS LOLLER** Associated Press

COOKEVILLE, Tenn. (AP) — In the early hours of Tuesday morning, Darrell Jennings walked out his front door and heard screaming.

A tornado had just torn through his quiet Tennessee neighborhood, and the house next door, along with numerous others, had been leveled to its foundations.

Except for a few broken windows, however, the Jennings' house was still standing. It quickly became a shelter for those who were suddenly left with nothing. The next-door neighbors, who had miraculously survived, straggled over. Others joined them.

"It's like we were a beacon," Amy Jennings said in an interview Wednesday. "We had a house full of muddy people in their pajamas. A lot of little babies were screaming. Our teenage kids were amazing. They went into action. They held those kids and got them calm."

The monstrous tornado tore a 2-mile-long (3.2-kilometer-long) path through the county early Tuesday, killing 18 people, including five children under 13. Another 88 were injured, some of them critically. Crews were still sifting through debris on Wednesday and county officials warned that the death toll could still rise.

About 80 miles (130 kilometers) to the west, a tornado reaching EF-3 stage at some points with winds up to 165 mph (266 kmh) had barreled along a 50-mile (80 kilometer) path that began in Nashville, where it killed two people and wrecked homes and businesses. It continued into nearby Wilson County, which saw three deaths, and into Smith County. Benton County, to the west of Nashville, had one storm-related fatality.

But no place saw more destruction than pockets of Putnam County, where the Jennings' home, and the few other houses left standing, became impromptu support centers for neighbors left homeless.

Darrell Jennings, a trained EMT and firefighter, had awakened his wife, Amy, and their three kids and hurried them into a hallway just before the tornado struck. It was over in seconds.

When he ventured outside, Jennings expected to see a few downed trees and some scattered debris. What he found was total devastation.

"There were no houses left," he said.

Sitting on their couch Wednesday afternoon, with massive destruction just outside the door, Darrell and Amy Jennings teared up as they recalled the previous night's scene. Three of the children who sheltered

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, March 5, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 247 ~ 32 of 77

in their home had head injuries, Darrell Jennings said. Without power or cellphone service, he used his radio to call for help.

"I told them, 'Everything is destroyed around us. Send us everything you've got.' I've probably had about 30 firefighters tell me that's how they woke up."

Because their road was impassible, first responders set up a base at a church just up the road. Those who could walk made their way from the Jennings' house through the darkness, stumbling over the remains of their homes and belongings in pouring rain and sleet.

"We gave away all our shoes, because everyone was barefoot," Amy Jennings said. "One little girl said, 'I don't want to leave the house that stayed up.'"

Some carried the children in their arms. Another neighbor drove his truck through yards and over fences to carry an older neighbor to the church. With the nearest neighbors safe, Darrell Jennings began searching the rubble for survivors.

He said he pulled several people out. One of those he tried to help was a small girl who didn't survive. "All the lives lost, it's unbelievable, unfathomable. It was hard to sleep last night, thinking of them and their loss."

In his 32 years as a volunteer EMT and firefighter, Jennings said he had been to about 10 different tornado sites, and "this is about the worst I've ever seen."

Wednesday afternoon was warm and sunny. The neighborhood was filled with the sound of chainsaws as hundreds of volunteers worked to clear fallen trees and sort debris into piles. A neighbor's outbuilding lay on its side in the Jennings' driveway, someone's cat was holed up in their bathroom, and cases of bottled water and snacks for neighbors and volunteers kept pouring in, filling their porch.

The Jennings' children, two high school seniors and an eighth grader, sprang into action, Amy Jennings said. "They're learning that they have the power to do good and help others, even in the midst of our crisis."

Jennings said she has been helping to recover personal items from what remains of her neighbors' homes. Several have already said they aren't going to rebuild because the memories of the tornado are too terrible. Among what she found: stuffed animals that remained miraculously dry under a mattress and a statue of a husband and wife that looked totally unscathed.

"The little things I salvage from their past can help them build their future," she said.

U.S. virus death toll hits 11; feds investigate nursing home

By GENE JOHNSON, RACHEL LA CORTE and MARTHA BELLISLE Associated Press

SEATTLE (AP) — Federal authorities announced an investigation of the Seattle-area nursing home at the center of an outbreak of the new coronavirus as the U.S. death toll climbed to 11, including the first fatality outside Washington state.

Officials in California's Placer County, near Sacramento, said Wednesday an elderly person who tested positive after returning from a San Francisco-to-Mexico cruise had died. The victim had underlying health problems, authorities said. California Gov. Gavin Newsom late Wednesday declared a statewide emergency due to coronavirus. Washington and Florida had already declared emergencies, and Hawaii also joined them Wednesday.

Washington also announced another death, bringing its total to 10. Most of those who died were residents of Life Care Center, a nursing home in Kirkland, a suburb east of Seattle. At least 39 cases have been reported in the Seattle area, where researchers say the virus may have been circulating undetected for weeks. Vice President Mike Pence was expected to meet with Washington Gov. Jay Inslee near Olympia on Thursday.

Seema Verma, head of the federal Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, said the agency is sending inspectors to Life Care along with experts from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention to figure out what happened and determine whether the nursing home followed guidelines for preventing infections.

Last April, the state fined Life Care \$67,000 over infection-control deficiencies following two flu outbreaks that affected 17 patients and staff. An unannounced follow-up inspection in June determined that Life Care

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, March 5, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 247 ~ 33 of 77

had corrected the problems, Verma said.

Meanwhile, public officials in Washington came under pressure to take more aggressive steps against the outbreak, including closing schools and canceling large events. While the state and Seattle have declared emergencies, giving leaders broad powers to suspend activities, they have not issued any orders to do so.

"We have encouraged people who are responsible for large gatherings to give consideration whether it really makes sense to carry those on right now," Gov. Jay Inslee said. "Right now, we are deferring to the judgment ... of these organizations."

While some individual schools and businesses have shut down, the governor said large-scale school closings have not been ordered because "there are so many ramifications for families and businesses," especially for health care workers who might not be able to go to work because of child care responsibilities.

Local and state health officials have not recommended school closings unless the schools have had a confirmed case of the disease.

"School closures have been part of the pandemic response kit for a long time," said Dr. Jeff Duchin, health officer for Seattle and King County. "We don't have strong evidence about how important school closures are."

Jennifer Hayles, 41, of Kirkland, said she was appalled that Inslee and health officials haven't canceled next week's Emerald City Comic Con. The four-day cosplay and pop-culture event draws close to 100,000 people each year, and some participants, including D.C. Comics and Penguin Random House, have pulled out over the virus.

Hayles said she spent hundreds of dollars on tickets and other items related to the event but will have to skip it because she has a compromised immune system.

"There's a lot of people who are talking about the economic cost of people forced to pull out of Comic Con, but if we have an explosion of cases of coronavirus, the economic cost is going to be much higher," Hayles said.

Comic Con's organizer, Reedpop, announced Wednesday that it would make an exception to its no-refunds policy for those who want their money back, but said it remained committed to holding the event unless local, state or federal officials change their guidance.

Lakshmi Unni said that she was keeping her son, an eighth-grader at Redmond Middle School in Seattle's eastern suburbs, home on Wednesday and that she had urged the school board and principal to close.

"Yesterday at least three kids were coughing," Unni said. "We don't know if they were sick with the virus, but if they do become sick, the chances of spreading are very, very high."

Some schools, businesses and other employers aren't waiting.

Seattle and King County public health officials urged businesses to allow employees to work remotely if possible, and the county said it will allow telecommuting for some of its workers for the next three weeks.

The Fred Hutchinson Cancer Research Center in Seattle announced it is canceling events at the complex and requiring nonessential staff to work remotely at least through the end of the month to lessen the chance of infection among patients with weakened immune systems.

School officials in Renton, south of Seattle, announced that Hazen High School will close for the rest of the week after a student tested positive for the coronavirus. Online petitions urged officials to close other schools on Seattle's east side.

The F5 technology company closed its 44-story tower in downtown Seattle after learning an employee had been in contact with someone who tested positive for the virus. Outdoor recreation giant REI shut down its Seattle-area operations for two days as a precaution.

Health officials in North Carolina reported that a person from Wake County tested positive for the illness after visiting the nursing home. The patient's flight from the Seattle area to the Raleigh-Durham airport raised fears other passengers were exposed to the virus.

"My understanding is we have the manifest. Now the trick is to go find them," said Robert Redfield of the CDC.

Life Care Center said on its website that it is screening employees for symptoms before they start work and as they leave. The nursing home is prohibiting visits from residents' family members.

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, March 5, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 247 ~ 34 of 77

Shortly before the California death was announced, Princess Cruise Lines notified passengers of its Grand Princess that federal health officials are investigating a "small cluster" of coronavirus cases connected to the ship's mid-February voyage. It asked current passengers to stay in their cabins until they were cleared by medical staff and said those who had been on the previous voyage should contact their doctor if they develop fever or other symptoms.

The Grand Princess is at sea off Mexico and will return early to San Francisco, where CDC and company officials will meet to determine the course of action, the cruise line said. California planned to fly COVID-19 testing kits out to the ship, which won't be allowed to dock until the test results are completed, Gov. Gavin Newsom said Wednesday.

In Los Angeles, a contract medical worker who was conducting screenings at the city's main airport has tested positive for the virus. The person wore protective equipment while on the job so it was unclear how the worker contracted the virus, Homeland Security officials said.

In New York, health officials put hundreds of residents in self-quarantine after members of two families in the New York City suburb of New Rochelle were diagnosed with the virus. Gov. Andrew Cuomo said the disease appeared to have spread from a lawyer to his wife, two children, a neighbor and two others.

The new results brought the number of confirmed cases in the state to 11.

Associated Press Writer Carla K. Johnson in Seattle contributed to this report.

Flare-up in Afghan violence shows fragility of peace deal

By **MATTHEW LEE** and **LOLITA C. BALDOR** Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Less than 24 hours after President Donald Trump said he had a "very good talk" with a top Taliban leader and insisted the group wants to cease violence, a U.S. military drone on Wednesday targeted the militant group — retaliation for an uptick in Taliban attacks against Afghan forces.

The mixed signals underscored the fragility of the U.S.-Taliban deal signed last weekend that aims at ending America's longest war.

U.S. officials said Wednesday's airstrike was intended as a message to the Taliban to continue to enforce a reduction in violence commitment they had agreed to ahead of intra-Afghan peace talks that are supposed to begin next week. They stressed there was always the expectation that there would be hiccups in the process and that scattered violations would not necessarily crater the deal or the intra-Afghan talks.

Officials noted that the deal signed in Doha, Qatar, does not include a full-on cease-fire but rather leaves negotiations on a comprehensive nationwide truce to the intra-Afghan talks. In the meantime, the reduction in violence commitment had been expected to be respected. It does not, however, say that the truce or completion of a peace accord are required conditions for the withdrawal of American troops.

Defense Secretary Mark Esper told a Senate panel Wednesday that the Taliban are honoring the agreement by not attacking U.S. and coalition forces, "but not in terms of sustaining the reduction in violence." He added: "Keeping that group of people on board is a challenge. They've got their range of hard-liners and soft-liners and so they're wrestling with that too, I think."

Esper, who was in Kabul on Saturday with Afghan leaders while the peace agreement was signed in Doha, said the document allows the U.S. to act in defense of the Afghan forces. "It's the commitment I made to the Afghans when I was there on Saturday. We would continue to defend the Afghans," he said.

The peace deal calls for a comprehensive nationwide cease-fire to be negotiated in the intra-Afghan talks, and it says the U.S. must begin withdrawing more than 4,000 U.S. troops from Afghanistan in the next week or so.

Still, a surge in Taliban attacks since the peace deal was signed, coupled with the refusal thus far of the Afghan government to release thousands of Taliban prisoners, may have imperiled the planned March 10 start of the Afghanistan negotiations.

And, as the renewed violence complicated the situation, U.S. lawmakers expressed concern that the U.S.-Taliban agreement gives away too much for too little and may threaten America's national security.

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, March 5, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 247 ~ 35 of 77

They also complained about two annexes to the agreement that have not been made public that lay out the process for the withdrawal of American and allied troops

"I read the secret annexes to the Taliban deal today. Bottom line: the administration is telling a terrorist group the conditions (such as they are) of our withdrawal from Afghanistan, but not telling the American people. This is wrong. And it serves no national security purpose," said Rep. Tom Malinowski, D-N.J., a former State Department official.

Even Trump allies like Sen. Lindsey Graham, R-S.C., and Rep. Liz Cheney, R-Wyo., have aired doubts.

At a congressional hearing on Tuesday Cheney made a point similar to Malinowski's. "The documents have been seen by the Taliban, so I believe that the American people deserve to know what agreement has been entered into our name with the terrorists" who harbored those behind the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks, she said.

Graham accused the Taliban of violating the deal. "Always suspicious of the Taliban when it came to any peace agreement, but can't believe they're this stupid," Graham tweeted, adding that the violence "not only violates the spirit of the alleged peace deal, it violates the letter of the agreement."

U.S. military spokesman Col. Sonny Leggett said in a tweet that Wednesday's "defensive" strike was aimed at countering a Taliban assault on Afghan government forces in southern Helmand province. He said Taliban forces had conducted 43 attacks on Afghan troops on Tuesday in Helmand, where the local governor's official said two police officers were killed.

The Afghan Interior Ministry said four civilians and 11 troops were killed Wednesday in a wave of Taliban attacks across the country.

In his account of the call with Mullah Abdul Ghani Baradar, a co-founder of the Taliban and head of their political office in Qatar, Trump told reporters that his relationship with Baradar is "very good" and that the Taliban "want to cease the violence."

The White House readout of the call was more restrained. It said Trump had "emphasized the need to continue the reduction in violence" and urged the Taliban to participate in the intra-Afghan talks.

In a tweet Wednesday, the U.S. special representative, Zalmay Khalilzad, said he had met with Baradar and other Taliban members before the call with Trump. "We all agreed the purpose of the US-Taliban agreement is to pave the path to a comprehensive peace in Afghanistan," he said.

Trump has looked to the agreement as a step toward making progress on his campaign pledge to extract U.S. troops from "endless wars."

Although the agreement signed in Doha says the phased drawdown of American and allied troops is dependent on the Taliban entering intra-Afghan negotiations and taking them seriously, the withdrawals are only specifically contingent on the Taliban meeting its counterterrorism commitments, including a rejection of al-Qaida and other groups.

How winning turned Biden into a confident candidate

By BILL BARROW Associated Press

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Joe Biden strode confidently to the podium, shutters clicking, a bank of cameras beaming to a national audience.

"Those of you who have been knocked down, those of you who have been knocked out, this is your campaign," Biden said Wednesday. "We welcome all of those who want to join us. We're building a movement."

The former vice president has found his stride and his voice as he becomes a front-runner for the Democratic presidential nomination.

Gone is the sometimes mumbling, almost wistful 77-year-old, standing before small Iowa crowds full of voters lamenting the state of the union. "What in God's name is happening?" he'd ask, after deviating from anything approaching prepared remarks.

Instead, there's a confident candidate, jabbing at Bernie Sanders, his chief rival for the Democratic nomination, yet reserving his biggest swings for the Republican president he hopes to topple in the fall. "If we give this man another four years in the White House, he will forever and fundamentally change the

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, March 5, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 247 ~ 36 of 77

character of this nation," Biden said Wednesday.

But Biden also tries to seem above the trenches, promising to unify a fractious Democratic Party and a general electorate roiled by Donald Trump's presidency.

It's part scrappy Joey Biden, the kid from Scranton, Pennsylvania, who learned to navigate a severe stutter but still talks of the searing humiliation. It's part Delaware senator, the deal-maker promising to replace Washington churlishness with comity, dignity and diplomacy. It's part two-term vice president, the national officeholder who believes "with every fiber of my being" that he can return in the top spot this time and "heal the nation." And it's part devoted husband and father, wearing personal loss as public grief.

Of course, Biden's Super Tuesday surge was aided in part by the unceremonious fall of billionaire Mike Bloomberg, who entered the race because Biden appeared headed toward an uninspiring finish. Similarly, he benefited from party moderates' fears about Sanders, whose democratic socialist identity mainstream Democrats see as a November albatross. That was enough for two competitors, Amy Klobuchar and Pete Buttigieg, to drop out and endorse Biden, with former candidate Beto O'Rourke making it an endorsement trifecta on Super Tuesday eve.

Nonetheless, the former vice president put himself in position to take advantage of those dominoes, tapping personal and political strengths and muting at least some of his weaknesses to make a comeback unparalleled in modern presidential campaigns.

Those close to him describe a candidate and campaign jolted into abandoning a "Rose Garden" campaign — the kind of effort an incumbent president might run by using the trappings of the office — that had come off as cautious and, worse, presumptuous.

"I wouldn't disagree with that Rose Garden description," said Rep. Cedric Richmond, one of Biden's campaign co-chairmen.

"It was very vice presidential ... cautious," said another campaign chair, Eric Garcetti. The Los Angeles mayor recalled giving Biden some tough encouragement after he finished fourth in Iowa. "I said, 'Just be you. Get rid of the ropes, the handlers, go be Joe,'" Garcetti recalled, and "'start talking about the future more than the past.'"

It wouldn't happen in New Hampshire, where Biden acknowledged in a debate that he'd probably "take a hit here, too." He did, finishing fifth. But then the race turned to Nevada and South Carolina. The former vice president always had been comfortable in front of working-class audiences and with African Americans and Latinos.

In Nevada, he relished "back of the house" tours at casinos up and down the Las Vegas Strip. He was the only candidate at the Clark County party dinner to thank the workers who made the event happen, and the only one to mention the worst gun massacre in modern American history that had occurred just 1,000 feet away in 2017.

"We will beat the NRA," he roared.

He finished a distant second. But it was enough to keep his "firewall" intact in South Carolina, where his decades of long relationships with political figures — black and white — and his service as Barack Obama's vice president yielded a deep reserve of goodwill.

"He was sort of our third senator," said South Carolina Democrat Boyd Brown.

That was exactly his welcome at Scott's barbecue, a small but famous joint in Hemingway, South Carolina. Days before his primary romp, Biden bounded into the restaurant as customer and solicitor. He wanted sandwiches for the staff and votes for himself. It was a smaller gathering than those endless Iowa town halls, but more energy than he typically found in the first caucus state.

"He's a good man," said co-owner Ella Scott. "Just a good man."

More of the recommendations Garcetti and others gave him came through as he campaigned for seven days straight in South Carolina, and then three more before his Super Tuesday celebration. "People need to believe in their politicians," Garcetti said. "I said to him: 'Don't assume everybody knows your story.'"

Biden tapped that advice in a CNN town hall in an exchange with the Rev. Anthony Thompson, whose wife, Myra, was killed in the 2015 gun massacre at Mother Emanuel church in Charleston. Thompson asked

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, March 5, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 247 ~ 37 of 77

Biden about his faith.

"I kind of know what it's like to lose family," Biden said, recalling both the 1972 car wreck that killed his first wife and young daughter, and then the death of his adult son Beau to cancer during his second term as vice president.

"I don't know how you've dealt with it, Reverend," Biden continued. "I've only been able to deal with it by realizing they're part of my being" and because faith "gives me some reason to have hope and purpose."

The devoted father showed himself again days later in Dallas, where Buttigieg came to campaign with and endorse his former rival, twice his age. Biden heaped praise upon the 38-year-old Buttigieg, saying the military veteran "reminds me of Beau," a note the former vice president said is his "highest compliment."

Biden also capitalized in recent weeks in black churches.

"The black church is about hope," he said, drawing affirmative nods at Royal Missionary Baptist Church in North Charleston, South Carolina.

A week later, he was in Selma, Alabama, to commemorate the Voting Rights March and Bloody Sunday of 55 years prior. He was greeted with a standing ovation and sat on the dais alongside the ministers, while Bloomberg sat below on a pew and Sanders wasn't in attendance at all — a metaphorical preview of the Super Tuesday returns that showed Biden winning clear majorities of black voters in state after state.

"We know Joe, and more importantly, Joe knows us," said Rep. Jim Clyburn, the South Carolina Democrat, when he endorsed his longtime friend.

Those moments on the campaign trail counter the litany of other instances that Biden would prefer to forget — his misspeaking, the factual errors, sometimes growing testy with reporters or occasionally even voters — and that circulate online, often courtesy of aggressive Republican Party operatives. There are still plenty of "here's the deal" and "look, folks," and "not a joke," the verbal crutches Biden won't ever escape. And Biden's aides and top supporters know there are likely more fumbles to come, more that Republicans will exploit.

Yet now they have a candidate who doesn't just believe in his own case. He's got results to show voters are starting to believe it, too.

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

Pérez de Cuéllar, Peruvian two-term UN chief, dies at 100

By FRANKLIN BRICENO Associated Press

LIMA, Peru (AP) — Javier Pérez de Cuéllar, the two-term United Nations secretary-general who brokered a historic cease-fire between Iran and Iraq in 1988 and who in later life came out of retirement to help re-establish democracy in his Peruvian homeland, has died. He was 100.

His son, Francisco Pérez de Cuéllar, said his father died Wednesday at home of natural causes. Current U.N. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres called the Peruvian diplomat a "personal inspiration."

"Mr. Pérez de Cuéllar's life spanned not only a century but also the entire history of the United Nations, dating back to his participation in the first meeting of the General Assembly in 1946," said Guterres in a statement late Wednesday.

Pérez de Cuéllar's death ends a long diplomatic career that brought him full-circle from his first posting as secretary at the Peruvian embassy in Paris in 1944 to his later job as Peru's ambassador to France.

When he began his tenure as U.N. secretary-general on Jan. 1, 1982, he was a little-known Peruvian who was a compromise candidate at a time when the United Nations was held in low esteem.

Serving as U.N. undersecretary-general for special political affairs, he emerged as the dark horse candidate in December 1981 after a six-week election deadlock between U.N. chief Kurt Waldheim and Tanzanian Foreign Minister Salim Ahmed Salim.

Once elected, he quickly made his mark.

Disturbed by the United Nations' dwindling effectiveness, he sought to revitalize the world body's faulty peacekeeping machinery.

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, March 5, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 247 ~ 38 of 77

His first step was to "shake the house" with a highly critical report in which he warned: "We are perilously near to a new international anarchy."

With the 1982 Israeli invasion of Lebanon, and with conflicts raging in Afghanistan and Cambodia and between Iran and Iraq, he complained to the General Assembly that U.N. resolutions "are increasingly defied or ignored by those that feel themselves strong enough to do so."

"The problem with the United Nations is that either it's not used or misused by member countries," he said in an interview at the end of his first year as U.N. secretary general.

During his decade as U.N. chief, Pérez de Cuéllar would earn a reputation more for diligent, quiet diplomacy than charisma.

"Le ton fait la chanson," he was fond of saying, meaning that melody is what makes the song and not the loudness of the singer.

"He has an amiable look about him that people mistake for through and through softness," said an aide, who described him as tough and courageous.

Faced early in his first term with a threatened U.S. cutoff of funds in the event of Israel's ouster, he worked behind the scenes to stop Arab efforts to deprive the Jewish state of its General Assembly seat. There was muted criticism from the Arab camp that he had given the Americans the right of way in the Middle East.

In dealing with human rights issues, he chose the path of "discreet diplomacy." He refrained from publicly rebuking Poland for refusing to allow his special representative into the country to investigate allegations of human rights violations during the Warsaw regime's 1982 crackdown on the Solidarity trade union movement.

In July 1986, Pérez de Cuéllar underwent a quadruple coronary bypass operation, putting in question his availability for a second term. From the outset, Pérez de Cuéllar had insisted that he would be a one-term secretary-general.

Upset with what he viewed as member states' reluctance to pitch in to help the world body out of a financial crisis, he told the New York Times in September 1986, "I don't see any reason why I should preside over the collapse of the organization."

But he did come back for a second term after a groundswell of support for his candidacy, including a conversation with President Ronald Reagan, who — in the words of the U.N. chief's spokesman — expressed "his personal support for the secretary-general."

"Just about all the Western countries have told him they'd like to see him stay on," a Western diplomatic source said at the time. "There is no visible alternative."

Unlike his predecessor, Kurt Waldheim who was regarded as a "workaholic" and who spent long hours in his office, Pérez de Cuéllar liked to get away from it all. "He is very jealous of his own privacy," a close aide said.

"When I can, I read everything but United Nations documents," Pérez de Cuéllar confided to a reporter. Once on a flight to Moscow, an aide observed that "in the midst of it all, the secretary-general had time for splendid literature."

Trilingual, Pérez de Cuéllar read French, English and Spanish literature.

Pérez de Cuéllar spent much of his second term working behind the scenes on the hostage issue, resulting in the release of Westerners held in Lebanon, including the last and longest held American hostage, journalist Terry Anderson, who was freed Dec. 4, 1991.

All told, Pérez de Cuéllar's diplomacy helped bring an end to fighting in Cambodia and the 1980-88 Iran-Iraq war, and the withdrawal of Soviet troops from Afghanistan.

Shortly after midnight on Jan. 1, 1992, he walked out of U.N. headquarters to his waiting limousine, no longer the secretary-general, but having attained his final goal after hours of tough negotiations: a peace pact between the Salvadoran government and leftist rebels.

"Mr. Pérez de Cuéllar played a crucial role in a number of diplomatic successes — including the independence of Namibia, an end to the Iran-Iraq War, the release of American hostages held in Lebanon, the

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, March 5, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 247 ~ 39 of 77

peace accord in Cambodia and, in his very last days in office, a historic peace agreement in El Salvador," said Guterres.

Javier Pérez de Cuéllar was born in Lima on Jan. 19, 1920. His father a "modest businessman," was an accomplished amateur pianist, according to the former secretary-general. The family traced its roots to the Spanish town of Cuéllar, north of Segovia.

In Peru, the family belonged to the educated rather than the landowning class. "He went to the right schools," a countryman at the United Nations once said of Pérez de Cuéllar.

He received a law degree from Lima's Catholic University in 1943 and joined the Peruvian diplomatic service a year later. He would go on to postings in France, Britain, Bolivia and Brazil before returning to Lima in 1961, where he served in a number of high-level ministry posts.

He was ambassador to Switzerland and then became Peru's first ambassador to the Soviet Union while concurrently accredited to Poland. Other assignments included the post of secretary-general of the Peruvian Foreign Ministry and chief delegate to the United Nations.

After leaving the U.N. Pérez de Cuéllar made an unsuccessful bid for Peru's presidency in 1995 against the authoritarian leader Alberto Fujimori, whose 10-year autocratic regime crumbled in November 2000 amid corruption scandals.

At the age of 80, Pérez de Cuéllar emerged from retirement in Paris and returned to Peru to take on the mantle of foreign minister and cabinet chief for provisional President Valentin Paniagua.

His impeccable democratic credentials lent credibility to an interim government whose mandate was to deliver free and fair elections. Eight months later, newly elected President Alejandro Toledo asked him to serve as Ambassador to France.

Between foreign assignments, he was professor of diplomatic law at the Academia Diplomática del Perú and of international relations at the Peruvian Academy for Air Warfare.

Transferring to the United Nations in 1975, he was appointed by Waldheim as the secretary-general's special representative in Cyprus. During his two years on the divided island he helped to promote inter-communal peace talks between Greek and Turkish Cypriots.

After a brief stint as Peru's ambassador to Venezuela, he returned to the United Nations in 1979 as undersecretary-general for special political affairs. In that capacity, he undertook delicate diplomatic missions to Indochina and Afghanistan.

Pérez de Cuéllar resigned his U.N. post in May 1981 — just before the election campaign for U.N. secretary-general heated up — and returned to the Peruvian diplomatic service.

However, he encountered political problems at home when he was nominated by President Fernando Belaunde Terry to be ambassador to Brazil.

The nomination failed to win Senate approval. There was no public debate, but congressional sources in Lima said opposition came from Javier Alva Orlandini, Peruvian vice president and leader of the ruling Popular Action Party. The sources said Orlandini resented Pérez de Cuéllar's participation in the swearing in of the military junta that overthrew Belaunde Terry in 1968.

Pérez de Cuéllar maintained that, as secretary-general of the Peruvian foreign ministry at the time, he was required by protocol to take part in the ceremony even though he had no pro-junta leanings.

Belaunde Terry, restored to power in 1980, reaffirmed his confidence in Pérez de Cuéllar by recommending him for nomination as U.N. secretary-general.

Pérez de Cuéllar married the former Marcela Temple. He had a son, Francisco, and a daughter, Cristina, by a previous marriage.

His funeral will be held Friday.

—

Edith M. Lederer in the United Nations contributed to this report.

Asian shares rise following stimulus-led surge on Wall St

By YURI KAGEYAMA AP Business Writer

TOKYO (AP) — Asian shares rose Thursday, taking their cue from a surge on Wall Street as governments and central banks took more aggressive measures to fight the virus outbreak and its economic impact.

Japan's benchmark Nikkei 225 rose 0.8% to 21,262.49. Australia's S&P/ASX 200 added 1% to 6,390.60. South Korea's Kospi gained 0.7% to 2,073.99. Hong Kong's Hang Seng jumped 1.2% to 26,529.35, while the Shanghai Composite surged 1.4% to 3,053.91. Shares also rose in Southeast Asia.

The gains on Wall Street more than recouped big losses from a day earlier as wild, virus-fueled swings around the world's markets extended into a third week.

Shares in Chinese blue chips rose Thursday in Hong Kong, suggesting "investors' confidence was restored by the surge in U.S. markets. We don't have the panic selling evident last week when the market fell sharply," said Francis Lun, a stock analyst in Hong Kong.

Stocks rose sharply from the get-go, led by big gains for health care stocks after Joe Biden solidified his contender status for the Democratic presidential nomination. Investors see him as more business-friendly than Bernie Sanders.

The rally's momentum accelerated around midday after House and Senate leadership reached a deal on a bipartisan \$8.3 billion bill to battle the coronavirus outbreak. The measure's funds would go toward research into a vaccine, improved tests and drugs to treat infected people.

The S&P 500 rose 4.2% to 3,130.12. The benchmark index has had five days in the last two weeks where it swung by more than 3%. In all of last year, it had just one. The Dow Jones Industrial Average gained 4.5% to 27,090.86. The Nasdaq climbed 3.8%, to 9,018.09. The index, which is heavily weighted with technology companies, now has a slight gain for the year.

The Russell 2000 index of smaller company stocks rose 3%, to 1,531.20.

"Despite the specter of coronavirus lurking over the world's economy, all appears well with the world, judging by Wall Street's overnight performance," Jeffrey Halley of Oanda said in a commentary. "China's rate of new infections has plunged, even as coronavirus makes its presence felt in the far-flung corners of the globe."

Investors are also anticipating other central banks will follow up on the Federal Reserve's surprise move Tuesday to slash interest rates by half a percentage point in hopes of protecting the economy from the economic fallout of the new coronavirus. Canada's central bank cut rates on Wednesday, also by half a percentage point and citing the virus' effect.

Some measures of fear in the market eased. Treasury yields rose but were still near record lows in a sign that the bond market remains concerned about the economic pain possible from the fast-spreading virus. Companies around the world are already saying the virus is sapping away earnings due to supply chain disruptions and weaker sales, with General Electric becoming the latest to warn its investors.

Even though many investors say they know lower interest rates will not halt the spread of the virus, they want to see central banks and other authorities do what they can to lessen the damage. The S&P 500 sank 2.8% on Tuesday after a brief relief rally triggered by the Fed's rate cut fizzled.

"Monetary policy can only take us so far, but at least it's a step," said Jack Ablin, chief investment officer at Cresset. "Investors will take comfort in coordinated central bank action. I take comfort in knowing this isn't the plague, we'll eventually get through this."

The Bank of England has a meeting on March 26 on interest rates. The European Central Bank and others have already cut rates below zero, meanwhile, which limits their monetary policy firepower. But economists say they could make other moves, such as freeing up banks to lend more.

Data released Wednesday showed the U.S. economy still holding up, at least as of last month. The country's services industries grew at a faster rate last month than economists expected, according to a report from the Institute for Supply Management. Hiring at private employers was stronger than expected in February, according to a report from payroll processor ADP, though slower than January's pace. That could be an encouraging sign for the comprehensive jobs report coming from the government at the end

of the week.

ENERGY: Benchmark crude oil rose 55 cents to \$47.33 a barrel in electronic trading on the New York Mercantile Exchange. It fell 40 cents to settle at \$46.78 a barrel. Brent crude oil, the international standard, gained 71 cents to \$51.84 a barrel.

CURRENCIES: The dollar fell to 107.31 Japanese yen from 107.55 yen on Wednesday. The euro edged up to \$1.1138 from \$1.1131.

China's factories try to shield workers as output revives

By JOE McDONALD AP Business Writer

BEIJING (AP) — To keep his 40 employees indoors and away from China's virus outbreak, the manager of an electronics factory in Dongguan, near Hong Kong, says he hired a cook and arranged dormitories for them.

Cjtouch Electronic Co., which makes smartphone touch screens, is one of thousands of manufacturers trying to protect employees while they gradually reopen after anti-virus controls shut down much of the world's second-largest economy.

"We have adopted strict prevention measures," said its general manager, Zhang Feng.

Trying to curb the soaring cost of anti-virus controls, the ruling Communist Party has told local officials in areas deemed at low disease risk to help reopen factories that make the world's smartphones, toys and other consumer goods.

They were idled when Beijing extended the Lunar New Year holiday to keep workplaces empty in hopes of containing the virus that emerged in central China in December. Offices, restaurants, cinemas and shopping malls also were closed.

Officials have orders to prevent a spike in infections as millions of workers who returned to their hometowns for the holiday flow back to China's southeastern factory belt and big eastern cities.

Following government instructions, factory operators are buying face masks by the thousands and jugs of disinfectant. Employees are scrutinized for the virus's telltale fever.

Some manufacturers bar outsiders. Others remain closed due to a lack of employees or raw materials.

Cjtouch is in Guangdong province, home to thousands of export-driven factories. It is back to 90% of normal production, Zhang said. In the three weeks since it reopened employees have used more than 3,000 masks, he said.

"We hired someone to cook for employees so they don't need to eat outside and persuaded them to stay in dormitories and not go out," Zhang said.

The government has told anyone who can work from home to stay there, but factories need employees on their assembly lines.

Some still are stranded in their hometowns by the suspension of bus and train service or curbs on leaving areas deemed at high disease risk.

Mingliang Electronics Co. in the eastern city of Weifang in Shandong province resumed work this week with 20 of its 30 employees, said a manager who would give only her surname, Liu. The company makes circuit boards for U.S., European, South Korean and Japanese customers.

"The rest cannot make it due to restrictions on movement ordered by local authorities in the countryside," said Liu.

Those who are at work wear masks and are checked twice a day for fever, Liu said.

"We keep the place clean by disinfecting three times a day, mopping the floor and wiping computer screens with disinfectant," she said. "We ordered nearly 2,000 masks for employees."

The Yayuan Toy Factory, which makes plastic cars in the southeastern city of Yiwu, a hub for export manufacturers, still is shut down due to virus fears and the difficulty of finding employees, according to its owner, Cui Ting.

Cui said his workforce of 12 went home to Shanxi province in western China and Guizhou in the southeast for the holiday and have yet to return.

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, March 5, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 247 ~ 42 of 77

"We haven't resumed production yet, because I still worry about the infection risk due to asking my employees to travel," said Cui.

Cui said he expects to get new orders in a few weeks but is in no hurry.

"Life matters more," said Cui.

Despite the renewed activity, forecasters say China's economic growth will be flat to negative for the three months ending in March, a marked decline from the previous quarter's 6% growth.

UBS estimates factory output expanded only 1.2% in January and February from a year earlier. UBS economists Ning Zhang and Tao Wang say exports probably fell 17%.

Travel disruptions also are raising costs for manufacturers that have to pay higher wages to get or keep scarce employees.

The government has promised tax breaks, low-interest loans and other aid, but it is unclear how many companies might shut down for good due to the burden of paying rent and other expenses with no revenue.

Yinhong Protective Product Co. in the city of Xiantao in Hubei, the province at the center of the outbreak, is paying "super high" wages of up to 1,800 yuan (\$250) a day to attract workers, said its sales manager, Chen Jihao.

Demand for masks, protective clothing and disinfectant is soaring, but producers aren't reaping a wind-fall. Chen said Yinhong's output has increased by 20% to 1.2 million masks per day, but the government pays below-market prices.

Cjtouch in Dongguan kept paying employees during the shutdown, Zhang said.

Lesen Xiping Electronics Co. in the southern province of Hunan, which makes cosmetics equipment, is paying more for labor and for materials including LED display panels, said its sales manager, Flora Fang.

"We are paying extra to keep workers under the current circumstances," Fang said.

The company, which exports to the United States, Germany and Mexico, requires its workforce of 20 to wear masks and disinfects its factory daily.

"We do hope that everything will return to normal by the end of April," she said.

AP researcher Yu Bing in Beijing contributed.

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.

Cellphone alerts helped Tennessee couple escape to basement

By TERESA M. WALKER Associated Press

BAXTER, Tenn. (AP) — Billy Dyer's cellphone blared out an emergency alert, then his wife Kathy's phone followed, giving them just enough time to get downstairs and flip on a TV to check the news.

Then the tornado hit.

When the sun rose Tuesday morning, the Dyers emerged to find the walls around their corner bedroom gone. Their mattress was perched precariously on their bed's headboard, with only sky all around.

"Thank God we had enough time to get downstairs to the basement or we would probably not be here," Dyer said.

State emergency officials said 24 people died when fast-moving storms crossed Tennessee early Tuesday. Eighteen of them, including five pre-teen children, died in Putnam County, some 80 miles (130 kilometers) east of Nashville. Eighty-eight more were injured in the county.

The twister that hit Putnam County was classified EF-4, the second strongest, with winds of 175 mph, the National Weather Service said Wednesday evening.

The number of people unaccounted for dropped to three from 21, Putnam County Mayor Randy Porter said late Wednesday afternoon. The search is about 90% complete, Putnam County Sheriff Eddie Farris said.

"We have made some great progress today," Porter said, adding it was a "time-consuming process" tracking down those still unaccounted for.

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, March 5, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 247 ~ 43 of 77

People across Nashville were awakened by outdoor sirens warning of the tornado danger early Tuesday. Sirens also sounded in parts of Putnam County, but in the Dyers' Double Springs community, deep in the countryside, no such systems exist.

"If the cellphones didn't have the emergency call, it wouldn't have been good," Dyer said.

The twisters ripped off brick facades, bent metal poles and shredded more than 140 buildings while burying people in piles of rubble and wrecked basements.

John C. Tune Airport, a smaller airport in Nashville that generally serves corporate and private aircraft, estimated \$93 million in infrastructure damage, not accounting for 90 destroyed aircraft and other damaged vehicles. Nashville International Airport emerged unscathed.

In Nashville, 33,000 customers remained without power Wednesday, and Nashville Electric Service said most customers able to still receive power will be restored by Monday.

The storm has spurred an outpouring of private donations, including \$1 million from Tennessee Titans controlling owner Amy Adams Strunk and the Titans Foundation.

Dyer's own 34-year-old daughter, Brooke, sheltered in the basement of the house he grew up in next door, and then "called me screaming and crying." Moments after the tornado passed, he ventured out in the dark and freed her from the rubble.

"Thank God my mother had a basement, a very small basement," the 64-year-old Dyer said. "She was standing there between the crack of the door screaming and crying, top of the house gone."

Gov. Bill Lee declared an emergency, sent the National Guard to assist search-and-rescue efforts and ordered flags over the state Capitol to fly at half-staff until Friday for those killed. President Donald Trump, who plans to visit Friday, tweeted: "The USA stands with the people of Tennessee 100%, whatever they need!"

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, with wind speeds up to 165 mph (266 kmh). One twister wrecked homes and businesses across a 10-mile (16 kilometer) stretch of Nashville, including parts of downtown.

The tornado that struck Putnam County damaged more than 100 structures along a 2-mile (3.2-kilometer) path, wiping some homes from their foundations and scattering debris. The garage Dyer's father used as an auto mechanic was scraped off its concrete slab, with metal rafters falling on his red Mustang with an Elvis Presley license plate.

Terry Cooler, an elder at the Double Springs Church of Christ, found only a hole in his roof, which he thinks was caused by flying debris. Much worse was the fate of the mother of a deacon at his church, who lost her home in the storm and then was rushed to a hospital for angioplasty and a stent.

"I'm sure the stress didn't help her," Cooler said. "She's 86 and lost everything."

Dyer and his neighbors spent the hours afterward picking through shattered glass, busted walls and drenched belongings for anything to salvage.

After surveying the damage Tuesday, Tennessee's governor marveled at people's resilience.

"In the worst of circumstances, the best of people comes out, and that's what we're seeing," Lee said.

Associated Press contributors include Jonathan Mattise in Nashville and Kimberlee Kruesi, who traveled with the governor.

In Italy and beyond, virus outbreak reshapes work and play

By NICOLE WINFIELD and LORI HINNANT Associated Press

ROME (AP) — Italy closed all schools and universities and barred fans from all sporting events for the next few weeks, as governments trying to curb the spread of the coronavirus around the world resorted to increasingly sweeping measures that transformed the way people work, shop, pray and amuse themselves.

With the virus present in more than 80 countries, Saudi Arabia barred citizens from making the Muslim pilgrimage to Mecca, Iran canceled Friday prayers for a second week, and leader after leader pleaded with

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, March 5, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 247 ~ 44 of 77

citizens to put an end to that traditional symbol of mutual trust, the handshake.

The Italian government decreed that soccer games and other sporting events will take place without spectators until at least April 3. Italy is the epicenter of Europe's coronavirus outbreak. More than 3,000 have been infected and at least 107 have died, the most of any country outside China, where the illness began.

Italy also closed schools for 8.4 million students through March 15, after at least four other countries — Japan, the United Arab Emirates, Lebanon and Iraq — took similar action.

"I know it's a decision with an impact. As education minister, I obviously want my students back in school as soon as possible," said Education Minister Lucia Azzolina.

Italy, Iran and South Korea confronted fast-growing clusters of the disease that accounted for about 80% of new cases outside China, according to the World Health Organization. In all, more than 95,000 people have contracted the virus worldwide, with more than 3,200 deaths.

In the United States, the death toll reached 11.

Iran reported 92 deaths among its more than 2,900 cases, though many fear the outbreak is far bigger. Among the ill are dozens of members of the government. The Islamic republic canceled Friday prayers to avoid public gatherings.

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

WHO said about 3.4% of people infected with the COVID-19 virus globally have died, making it more lethal than the common flu. But that figure was met with skepticism, with scientists noting that large numbers of mild cases have probably gone undetected or unreported. A study last week in the *New England Journal of Medicine* of data from more than 30 Chinese provinces estimated the death rate at 1.4%.

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. Prime Minister Chung Se-Kyun sought to assure people in the southeastern city, saying, "We will win the war against COVID-19."

South Korea reported 145 new infections Thursday, raising its total to 5,766, second-highest in the world.

In Europe, officials told French soccer players to simply disperse — without shaking hands — after lining up, and referees and coaches will no longer shake hands either. In Paris, the Louvre finally reopened after closing because of fears among workers about catching the virus from visitors, but it will no longer accept cash, because of the danger of germs.

A news conference at Milan's Triennale contemporary art and design museum looked like an exhibit itself, with journalists' chairs spaced more than a yard (meter) apart.

In Israel, the country's chief rabbi urged observant Jews to refrain from kissing the mezuzah, the small box containing a prayer scroll that is posted by Jews on their doorposts. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu also urged people to adopt the Indian greeting of "namaste," with hands together, rather than a handshake.

Businesses of all types suffered a downturn as travel and tourism plummeted and worried consumers changed their habits.

"People are afraid to touch anything or take anything from us," said Maedeh Jahangiri, a perfume seller at a mall in Tehran.

China reported 139 new cases Thursday and 31 deaths, raising its totals to 80,409 cases and 3,012 deaths. The number of cases was higher than Wednesday's figure, but new deaths were lower, as the illness continues to decline in the country. While hardest-hit Hubei province had most of the new cases and deaths, hospitals there released another 1,923 patients who were declared cured.

Doctors working in Wuhan, Hubei's capital where the illness emerged in December, said hospitals there have an increasing number of empty beds but cautioned a new spike of infections was always possible. "The war is not over," said Dr. Cao Bin, who specializes in respiratory research.

Hinnant reported from Paris. Contributors include Matt Sedensky in Bangkok; Kim Tong-Hyung and

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, March 5, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 247 ~ 45 of 77

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 and Jill Lawless 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.

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

'Bob Durst killed his wife,' prosecutor says at his trial

By ANDREW DALTON AP Entertainment Writer

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Robert Durst has never been charged in the 1982 New York disappearance of his wife Kathie Durst, who was later declared dead despite no body being found, but on Wednesday a prosecutor in a Los Angeles courtroom repeatedly told a jury that he killed her.

"Bob Durst killed his wife," Deputy District Attorney John Lewin said at one point during his opening statement at the trial of the real estate heir Durst, who is charged only with the murder of his friend Susan Berman in 2000.

The judge in the case has ruled that the prosecution can provide evidence and say that Durst killed his wife to establish motive for Berman's killing, and Lewin took full advantage, repeating and emphasizing the statement.

"On the day that Durst killed her," Lewin said as he opened one part of his presentation. "They were married at the time he killed her," he said in another part, "Durst killed Kathie when they were spending the weekend together," he said later.

He said it so much that it drove Durst's attorney Dick DeGuerin to interrupt.

"I've got to object to this conclusion that Bob Durst killed Kathie," said DeGuerin, who said it was an impermissible legal argument and not a presentation of evidence. He was overruled.

It was one of many clashes the two lawyers had on a day that at one point got out of control.

"You present what you want to present and I'll present what I want to present!" Lewin shouted directly at DeGuerin after a morning of constant objections and interruptions to his opening statements.

DeGuerin is the attorney who got Durst acquitted in his first murder trial in 2003 in Texas, when Durst testified that he had dismembered and disposed of his neighbor Morris Black, but his death had been an accident in a struggle over a gun.

The 76-year-old Durst, who looked frail and walked very slowly when he entered the courtroom, has denied killing Berman or having anything to do with his wife's disappearance.

He has long said that on Jan. 31, 1982, the last day anyone saw Kathie Durst, he had spent the day with her at their suburban home in South Salem, New York, then put her on a train to Manhattan, where they had a penthouse and where Kathie had a shift at a clinic in her work as a medical student.

"The evidence will show that there are no witnesses or evidence that Kathie ever got on that train," Lewin told jurors. "We'll demonstrate that Kathie Durst never left that house. He came home, and he killed her."

Lewin gave the jury a chronology of the disintegration and descent into domestic violence of Durst's marriage to Kathie, a middle-class woman nine years his junior.

The prosecution played several clips of Durst admitting to pushing, shoving and pulling the hair of his wife, taken from interviews Durst did in 2010 for "The Jinx: The Life and Deaths of Robert Durst," the HBO documentary series that helped lead to his arrest in 2015.

"I remember dragging her by her hair, and grabbing her arm," Durst said on the video shown to the jury. He also is heard saying, "The hair pulling wasn't even the worst."

Lewin also played a clip from a DVD commentary Durst did with the filmmakers of 2010's "All Good Things," which starred Ryan Gosling and Kirsten Dunst as characters based Robert and Kathie Durst. In one scene on a rainy night, Gosling terrorizes Dunst so much that she climbs out the window on to the

terrace of their Manhattan penthouse.

"This is more or less accurate," Durst says.

Prosecutors alleged that just days after Kathie Durst's death, her husband enlisted his best friend Berman to act as his media spokeswoman and to help him cover up her killing, at one point posing as Kathie Durst in a phone call to her medical school to demonstrate that she was still alive.

Prosecutors allege that 19 years later, when New York police had reopened the investigation and were about to interview Berman, Durst shot and killed her.

Lewin gave the jury biographies of Durst and Berman, who met as students at UCLA in the 1960s, casting him as the careless millionaire son of a real estate giant who didn't believe rules applied to him, and her as the daughter of a Las Vegas mobster who learned from her father that nothing was more important than loyalty.

"She adopted the idea from the mafia that you were always loyal to her friends," Lewin said. "She maintained a strict code of honor."

That code drove her to keep Durst's secrets, knowledge that would lead to her death, prosecutors said.

The evidence also shows that Berman, who was paranoid and never answered the door for strangers, had allowed her killer into her house in Beverly Hills, Lewin said.

"She was unafraid," Lewin said as he showed jurors a photo of Berman lying dead in a pool of blood in her bedroom. "She wasn't scared. And then she was executed."

The prosecution's opening statement is scheduled to resume Thursday.

Follow AP Entertainment Writer Andrew Dalton on Twitter: <https://twitter.com/andyjamesdalton>.

Roberts chides Schumer for 'dangerous' remarks on 2 justices

WASHINGTON (AP) — Chief Justice John Roberts on Wednesday criticized as "inappropriate" and "dangerous" comments that Senate Democratic leader Chuck Schumer made outside the Supreme Court earlier in the day about Justices Neil Gorsuch and Brett Kavanaugh.

Roberts was responding to Schumer's remarks at a rally outside the court while a high-profile abortion case was being argued inside. "You have released the whirlwind, and you will pay the price. You will not know what hit you if you go forward with these awful decisions," Schumer said, naming the two appointees of President Donald Trump, according to video of the rally available online.

In a statement, Schumer spokesman Justin Goodman criticized Roberts, saying that "to follow the right wing's deliberate misinterpretation of what Sen. Schumer said" shows the chief justice "does not just call balls and strikes."

Goodman said Schumer's comments "were a reference to the political price Senate Republicans will pay for putting these justices on the court, and a warning that the justices will unleash a major grassroots movement on the issue of reproductive rights against the decision."

He noted that the chief justice remained quiet in recent weeks when Trump questioned the impartiality of Justices Ruth Bader Ginsburg and Sonia Sotomayor.

Trump himself weighed in on Schumer's comments later Wednesday, tweeting: "If a Republican did this, he or she would be arrested, or impeached. Serious action MUST be taken NOW!"

Roberts, who in 2018 rebuked Trump for the president's criticism of an "Obama judge," had jumped to his colleagues' defense after Schumer's remarks. "Justices know that criticism comes with the territory, but threatening statements of this sort from the highest levels of government are not only inappropriate, they are dangerous," Roberts said in a statement.

The justices are currently weighing 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.

Roberts is expected to be the deciding vote.

Associated Press writer Mary Clare Jalonick contributed to this report.

Noose placed on Wisconsin brewery shooter's locker in 2015

By **TODD RICHMOND** Associated Press

MADISON, Wis. (AP) — Someone placed a noose several years ago on the locker of a Wisconsin brewery employee who opened fire on his co-workers last week, the brewery operator said Wednesday. Police quickly warned that it's too early to conclude that racism was a factor in the attack.

Anthony Ferrill, an electrician at the sprawling Molson Coors brewery in Milwaukee, fatally shot five co-workers before killing himself on the campus last week. His motive remains unknown. Ferrill was black. Four of the victims were white. The fifth was Latino.

Milwaukee police said in a statement Wednesday that detectives are still investigating and so far "neither race nor racism has been identified as a factor in this incident." They also said they haven't yet found anything that suggests the victims were involved in any racist behavior toward Ferrill.

But they cautioned that the investigation into the Feb. 26 shooting is still ongoing.

"It is imperative to wait for the facts of the investigation to be released rather than speculating and generating a false narrative that could negatively impact the lives of the family members of the victims and of the suspect, as well as the employees of Molson Coors," the statement said.

Local media have reported over several days on speculation that the attack was racially motivated, interviewing current and former Molson Coors employees anonymously complaining about longstanding discrimination against black workers.

The company on Wednesday confirmed that a noose was placed on Ferrill's locker in 2015. Ferrill wasn't working that day but was told about it, the company said.

Molson Coors spokesman Adam Collins said the company investigated but there was no security surveillance video showing who placed the noose on the locker. The company explained to employees that such actions weren't acceptable and shared channels for filing discrimination or harassment complaints. He said there's no evidence to suggest any of the shooting victims were involved in the noose incident.

Collins called the incident "disgusting" but said there's no record of Ferrill filing any complaints with the company or the federal Equal Employment Opportunities Commission.

Christine Saah Nazer, an EEOC spokesperson, said in an email that confidentiality laws mean the office cannot confirm or deny complaints unless the EEOC files suit against an employer, "which is usually a last resort." No suit appeared to have been filed regarding Ferrill, she said.

The Ferrill family's attorney, Craig Mastantuono, declined comment.

Messages left by The Associated Press with the law firm representing the Ferrill family weren't immediately returned Wednesday.

Nooses can evoke the lynch mobs that targeted black people in the South between Reconstruction and the mid-20th century.

Miller Brewing Co., which Molson Coors took over in 2008, paid \$2.7 million to settle a lawsuit by black employees who alleged that racial harassment ran unchecked at its Volney, New York, plant. Among the black workers' complaints were nooses found at the plant's gate.

Collins said Molson Coors has "a lot of work to do to build the open, welcoming and inclusive culture this company values. We've already started some of that work by listening to employees over the last few days."

He urged people to be patient while police investigate.

"It's understandable in the absence of facts there are rumors out there," he said. "But we have the same kinds of questions everyone else does."

Two former brewery employees, Robert Powell and Lonnie Carl Jones, told the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel for a story published Tuesday that a few months after the noose was found, several racist notes were slipped into Ferrill's locker.

Asked if he could confirm whether anyone put racist notes in Ferrill's locker, Collins again said the company isn't aware of any complaints Ferrill may have filed with the EEOC, his managers or Molson Coors'

human resources about discrimination or harassment.

Jones told the AP in a telephone interview that he worked at the brewery from 2013 until 2019. He said Ferrill mentioned to him that someone had placed an ace of spades playing card on his locker in 2016 or 2017.

"We knew what that meant," Jones said. "It's calling you black, like a spade."

He said workers of different races clustered together in cliques. He noticed racist graffiti directed toward blacks on bathroom stalls and said a Hispanic employee refused to train him on how to use a machine that filled bottles with beer because he is black. He never filed any formal complaints with human resources personnel, he said, but he did complain verbally to them. Nothing was done, he said.

Jones said the culture was so toxic that it drove him to smoke marijuana and fail a drug test, resulting in his firing in 2019.

"I still get mad about it to this day," Jones said. "What could you do? Tell HR, they say, 'We'll look into it.' I can't run to HR 10 times a day. ... They had bad seeds and they never tried to weed them out."

He described Ferrill as a quiet man who was focused on his work. He never fooled around because he didn't want to give his managers any reason to fire him, Jones said.

"That man was a nice guy," Jones said. "He wasn't crazy. He was normal like everybody else. They (just) pushed Tony too far."

Messages the AP left on social media sites for Powell on Wednesday weren't immediately returned.

Associated Press writers Amy Forliti and Tim Sullivan in Minneapolis and Scott Bauer in Madison contributed to this report.

The name of a Molson Coors employee has been corrected to Lonnie Carl Jones, instead of Lonnie Carl James.

FDA bans shock device used on mentally disabled patients

By MATTHEW PERRONE AP Health Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — Federal officials on Wednesday banned electrical shock devices used to discourage aggressive, self-harming behavior in patients with mental disabilities.

The announcement from the Food and Drug Administration follows years of pressure from disability rights groups and mental health experts who have called the treatment outdated, ineffective and unethical. The agency first announced its intent to ban the devices in 2016.

For years, the shock devices have been used by only one place in the U.S., the Judge Rotenberg Educational Center of Canton, Massachusetts, a residential school for people with autism and other psychiatric, developmental or mental disabilities. The FDA said Wednesday it estimates 45 to 50 people at the school are currently being treated with the device.

School administrators have called the shocks a last resort to prevent dangerous behaviors, such as head-banging, throwing furniture or attacking teachers or classmates. The center has continued to use the shock devices under a decades-old legal settlement with the state of Massachusetts, but needs court approval before beginning use on each resident.

School officials said in a statement they plan to challenge the government ban in court. A parents' group also defended the practice and said it would fight the ban.

"FDA made a decision based on politics, not facts, to deny this life saving, court-approved treatment," the school said.

Electric shocks and other painful or unpleasant treatments known as "aversive conditioning" were more widely accepted decades ago. But mainstream psychiatry now relies on behavioral modification, prescription drugs and other therapies that have proven more effective.

"Through advancements in medical science, there are now more treatment options available to reduce or stop self-injurious or aggressive behavior," said Dr. William Maisel, a director in the FDA's device center,

in a statement.

The Rotenberg school has used shock devices carried in students' backpacks, which were attached to their arms and legs via electrodes. School staffers could trigger a two-second shock to a patient's skin by using a remote controller.

Some patients from the Rotenberg center have compared the shocks to a bee sting or worse. The school has faced several lawsuits brought by families who said their children were traumatized by the shocks.

Other parents say that the technique is the only thing that prevents violent, sometimes life-threatening behavior in their children.

"We will continue to fight to keep our loved ones safe and alive and to retain access to this treatment of last resort which has allowed them to live a productive life," said members of the Rotenberg's parents association, in a statement. "There is simply no alternative."

The FDA, echoing psychiatric experts, said that the shock therapy can exacerbate dangerous behaviors and lead to depression, anxiety and post-traumatic stress disorder. Patients have also suffered burns and tissue damage due to the device, the agency said.

Regulators said patients should instead receive treatments that focus on eliminating factors that trigger the behaviors or teaching patients coping skills to deal with them.

The FDA has only banned two other products in more than 40 years of regulating medical devices -- powdered surgical gloves, which can cause allergic reactions, and fake hair implants, which caused infections and didn't work.

Typically, the FDA addresses safety issues by adding new warning labels or modifying instructions for devices. But the agency concluded that the problems with the shock devices could only be addressed by banning them.

Follow Matthew Perrone on Twitter: @AP_FDWriter

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.

China's virus slowdown offers hope for global containment

By LINDSEY TANNER AP Medical Writer

The slowdown in coronavirus cases out of China offers a sliver of hope that the global outbreak can be controlled, but whether that can happen anytime soon without drastic measures remains to be seen, public health authorities say.

With China accounting for the overwhelming majority of the world's 94,000 infections and 3,200 deaths since the virus first surfaced there in late December, it's hard to see the country as a success story. But some experts believe the easing of the crisis — there are now more new cases being reported outside China than inside it — suggests containment is possible.

World Health Organization outbreak expert Maria Van Kerkhove, who recently traveled to China as part of a team from the U.N. health agency, said the international experts noted a drop in cases there since the end of January.

"We scrutinized this data and we believe this decline is real," she said, adding that the extraordinary measures undertaken in China — including the unprecedented lockdown of more than 60 million people — had a significant role in changing 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.

But the path to containment outside China is sure to be rocky, and no one is predicting when the outbreak might end.

There is some consensus among public health experts: The virus is likely to be around for quite some time, perhaps many months, and will continue to spread to many places, but it can probably be controlled

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, March 5, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 247 ~ 50 of 77

with standard public health measures, though not as quickly as in China.

There is another consensus: China's outbreak has given other countries the advantage of knowing what they're up against. The virus was an unknown entity when it appeared in China, and authorities there discounted the possibility of human-to-human transmission.

The Chinese experience has bought other countries time to prepare and knowledge to better understand the nature of the virus.

But Dr. Amesh A. Adalja, a senior scholar at Johns Hopkins Center for Health Security, said there is a more ominous message from the Chinese outbreak: "Authoritarian, free-speech restricting, individual rights-violating policies can panic populations, make conditions in an outbreak zone worse, and still fail to contain worldwide spread of a virus of this nature."

Emergency medicine physician Dr. Leana Wen, a public health professor at George Washington University, said widespread quarantines, lockdowns and travel bans of the sort ordered by China's regime are unlikely to be used in other countries. How those less-aggressive approaches will play out is unclear, she said.

As China's numbers have stabilized, "we are seeing this rapid escalation around the world. At this point I believe things will get much worse before they get better," Wen said Tuesday, "and we have no idea what the trajectory will look like now that there is person-to-person transmission around the world."

While the crisis appears to be easing in China, alarming clusters have turned up in Italy, Iran South Korea and Japan. The U.S. has more than 120 cases in at least 15 states, with 11 deaths, all but one of them in Washington state.

Dr. Albert Ko, a professor and department chairman at the Yale School of Public Health, said there were signs that the spread in China might have started slowing down even before authorities there implemented a travel ban and closed off Wuhan, the epicenter, in late January. That's an argument for more conventional public health measures, including widespread testing, limiting of social gatherings and the closing of some schools.

"Travel bans and lockdowns of cities, those are drastic measures that have really large costs with respect to social disruption, stigmatization and so forth," Ko said.

Encouraging the public to take action may be more effective, he said.

"The lowest-hanging fruit for us is really beefing up what people can do, why it's important to stay home when you're sick, why it's important to do hand-washing" and other preventive hygiene, Ko said.

Dale Fisher of the University of Singapore said the four large outbreaks outside China suggest what the next few weeks of the COVID-19 epidemic might look like.

"I think the virus is behaving very much as we would expect it to," he said. "There are now four parts of the world with heavy transmission rates, and there will probably be one or two more next week. One or two of these might come under control, but there will likely be activity elsewhere."

Mistakes and slowness in the U.S. effort to start large-scale testing for the virus have limited officials' ability for the moment to get a handle on the scope of its spread, said Dr. Carlos Del Rio, a specialist in infectious diseases and chairman of the global health department at Emory University in Atlanta.

Many state labs have yet to develop their own tests because of early federal restrictions, since removed. It is still taking four to five days to get results back from tests that must be sent on to more distant labs, Del Rio said. And federal guidelines, though revised recently, continue to limit who gets tested, he said.

Federal health officials "dropped the ball, period," he said.

The high number of deaths in Washington state relative to the few dozen infected suggests that many people with the disease are being missed, he said. Aggressive testing is likely to reveal many more cases, Del Rio said.

"I don't think we're going to limit community transmission, but my hope is that we're not going to have community transmission everywhere," he said.

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services said Wednesday it is providing \$35 million to 28 states and localities to help their public health departments respond to the outbreak and increase their surveillance for the virus. Some of the funding is earmarked for such things as monitoring of travelers, lab

equipment and surge staffing.

AP Medical Writer Maria Cheng, Ricardo Alonso-Zaldivar and National Writer Adam Geller contributed.

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.

Jury decides Tavis Smiley must pay PBS in #MeToo dispute

By COLLEEN LONG Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — A jury decided Wednesday that former television talk show host Tavis Smiley, who was fired amid allegations of workplace sexual misconduct at the height of the #MeToo movement, must pay about \$1.5 million to his former employer, the Public Broadcasting Service.

Smiley was suspended in December 2017 and later fired from the PBS after the network said it had received multiple, credible allegations of misconduct by Smiley on his late-night interview show. He was on air with PBS for more than a decade, broadcast to more than 200 stations nationwide. Smiley, who is black, was the only minority to have served as the solo host in the history of the network, according to his lawsuit.

He was fired amid the wave of #MeToo reports of sexual misconduct in the workplace by powerful figures in movies, media and politics that began with allegations against Harvey Weinstein and also led to the departure of Smiley's fellow PBS talk-show host Charlie Rose. Weinstein has been convicted in New York City of rape and sexual assault against two women and will be sentenced next week.

Smiley first sued PBS in D.C. Superior Court, contending that racial bias contributed to his dismissal and he was wrongly terminated without proof. He acknowledged having romantic relationships with colleagues over his career, but says they were consensual. He sought \$1 million. The network counter-sued, arguing in part that Smiley owed the network for a season that didn't air.

At issue was the network's "morals" clause, which bars romantic relationships in the office and also disallows employees from acting in a way that would impact the employee or network in a negative way.

Jurors heard testimony from six female employees who described misconduct claims. Smiley denied the allegations. The jury deliberated for about a day before reaching a verdict in the civil case.

Smiley's attorneys said they would appeal. "We are disappointed in the jury's verdict but respect the process," said attorney John Rubiner.

PBS later said in a statement the network was pleased with the jury's decision.

"PBS expects our producing partners to provide a workplace where people feel safe and are treated with dignity and respect," the network said. "It was important for us to ensure that the courageous women who came forward were able to share their stories and that we continue to uphold the values and standards of our organization."

Critics of Oprah book club title put new novel on trial

By HILLEL ITALIE AP National Writer

TUCSON, Arizona (AP) — When Oprah Winfrey chose the novel "American Dirt" for her book club, she imagined engaging in an impassioned television dialog about the narrative, which follows a Mexican mother and her son fleeing to the United States.

Instead, Winfrey ended up organizing a show that put the book, author Jeanine Cummins and Winfrey herself on trial. After critics complained about the novel's portrayal of Latinos, she turned the forum into a debate about the marginalization of Latino voices, the lack of diversity in publishing and the question of who is best suited to tell a given story.

Just a few months ago, the book was one of 2020's most welcome releases, described as a modern-day version of John Steinbeck's classic "The Grapes of Wrath." But criticism quickly mounted and made it

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, March 5, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 247 ~ 52 of 77

Exhibit A in grievances against the industry. The Mexican-American writer Myriam Gurba condemned the novel as a "Trumpian" charade crammed with Mexican stereotypes.

Winfrey and Cummins were joined on the show by three prominent critics of the book. The Associated Press was allowed to attend the taping of the highly anticipated program last month in Tucson, not far from where Cummins wrote and researched parts of the novel. The program airs Friday on Apple TV Plus.

Speaking to the AP after the show, Winfrey lamented the controversy.

"This has taken up a lot of my energy, a lot of her (Cummins') energy, and it's taken away my attention from why people want to read books," she said.

Future book club picks, she said, will almost certainly include Latino authors — she has only chosen a handful since founding her club in 1996. She promised a more thorough approach that anticipated possible backlash, saying she was not going "to wade into that water" again.

Cummins said the conversation was "productive."

"It was civil. I really understood where they were coming from, the women who were there in opposition to the book. I hope that they also understood where I was coming from," she said.

Published Jan. 21, the book has been a bestseller, fulfilling the hopes of the Macmillan-owned Flatiron Books, which outbid several competitors and paid seven figures for the manuscript. Sales have exceeded 200,000 copies.

But the publisher has retreated from any grand literary claims. The blurb comparing the story to "The Grapes of Wrath" has been removed from the cover, and Flatiron's president and publisher, Bob Miller, apologized for the book's promotion, including a luncheon last year that featured barbed wire centerpieces based on the book's jacket design.

In her opening remarks, Winfrey defended her choice of "American Dirt," saying the book had made her feel personally connected to the stories of immigrants. But she acknowledged the criticisms and said her response was to "lean in" and embark on a conversation without "having to cancel, to dismiss or to silence anyone."

After introducing Cummins, Winfrey was openly sympathetic but directly raised the many issues of recent months. The author was visibly tense — her expression grim and unchanging, her hands and fingers entwined — as Winfrey read from social media postings that called Cummins "clueless" and her novel a "whitewash" of a human rights crisis.

Winfrey asked if Cummins regretted her author's note, in which she speculated that someone "brownier" might have been worthier to write the novel. Cummins called her language "regrettable" and said she had used "a very clumsy phrase." She also did not dispute that she had enabled the "conflation" of her Irish husband's wait for citizenship — she described him in the note simply as an "undocumented immigrant" — with the far more dire battles many face at the U.S.-Mexico border.

The two were then joined by Esther Cepeda, a Washington Post syndicated columnist; Julissa Arce, an activist, commentator and author of the bestselling "My American Dream"; and Reyna Grande, whose books include the bestselling memoir "The Distance Between Us."

Grande said the industry was giving "American Dirt" a level of attention far beyond what she and other Latinos have received. Arce chastised Cummins for writing an essentially apolitical book, omitting any direct criticisms of the Trump administration.

"For some reason, someone who has a name like Jeanine Cummins can write about anything," Cepeda said. "Someone with a name like ours, well, we can only write about immigration."

Cepeda faulted Winfrey for the virtual absence of Latino writers in her club. "You are a king and queen maker," Cepeda said.

"Well, I am guilty of not looking for Latinx writers," Winfrey said. "I will now, because my eyes have been opened to see, to behave differently."

During the taping, Winfrey called the show a "seminal moment" that she hoped would lead to lasting change.

In a recent telephone interview, Cepeda said she wished some of the answers, especially about how

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, March 5, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 247 ~ 53 of 77

Winfrey and Macmillan would improve diversity, were more specific. Added Arce, in an email to the AP: "Jeanine or Oprah were not there to answer questions. They were there to defend the book. I understand it. When we tried to push Oprah and Jeanine, they were unwilling to really dig deep."

Cummins is the author of three previous works, including a memoir about her cousins' murder and two novels that draw upon her own Irish heritage and time lived in Ireland. The recent criticism has changed her future plans.

In a pre-publication interview with the AP, Cummins had said she was working on a novel set, at least in part, in Puerto Rico. She now expresses doubt about that book.

"I'm not a glutton for punishment," she said, explaining that her greatest concern is in keeping her literary "voice" and "making sure that the experience of this moment doesn't make me second-guess or subvert the stories that move my heart."

On stage, Winfrey mentioned that she was deeply shaken by an online letter endorsed by dozens of authors that urged her to drop "American Dirt." But she told the AP that she never considered changing her mind.

"If I dropped the book because of pressure and not because I felt something was wrong, then anybody is subject to being rescinded, silenced, erased," she said.

Winfrey's book club has been an industry blessing and flashpoint since she launched it nearly a quarter-century ago to make public her passion for sharing books among friends.

The club was a hit beyond anyone's expectations. Authors saw hundreds of thousands of copies of a given book sell. They anticipated a call from Winfrey like would-be lottery winners. In 1999, she received an honorary National Book Award for her belief that great literature "must become the province of many."

Critics have closely scrutinized her picks, if only because her word matters so much. She has been chastised for ignoring newer books and older ones, for sentimentality and even gullibility, as in 2005, when her selection of James Frey's addiction memoir "A Million Little Pieces" proved disastrous after Frey acknowledged published reports that substantial parts of the book were false.

After ending her syndicated talk show in 2011, Winfrey launched Oprah 2.0, a more Internet-focused initiative that included joint promotion with Amazon.com.

Audience guests in Tucson included the Flatiron editor who acquired Cummins' novel, Amy Einhorn, and Macmillan President Don Weinberg.

Einhorn said she loved the book in part because its story of a parent and child connected to her own experiences as a mother. (Grande offered similar praise even as she criticized the publication overall).

Einhorn said Cummins had been unfairly singled out for an industry problem far broader than "American Dirt." She also suggested that the author's lucrative deal — the object of much resentment — would not have happened had so many publishers not bid for it.

Weinberg insisted that diversity was a priority at Flatiron and spoke of bringing in strategists and "all different sorts of people" to address the issue.

Did those people suggest you hire more Latinos? Cepeda asked. "It sounds simple, but it's not simple," Weinberg responded, saying that Macmillan had to become a "different kind of company," on all levels.

He rejected a specific idea raised by Winfrey — that Macmillan establish a Latino division. (Winfrey herself has an imprint at Flatiron).

"I resist any special divisions," he said. "I want everybody to be able to do everything."

In the second half of the show, Winfrey brought in other voices — taped segments with Central America immigrants who risked their lives to enter the U.S. and officials from the International Rescue Committee. She also invited questions from an audience diverse in age and background and composed almost entirely of women. Individuals were chosen through a combination of local outreach and invitations to those who engaged online with the book club.

Most of the audience praised the book, with one speaker saying it reminded her of African American ancestors who had fled slavery. Paulina Aguirre-Clinch, branch manager of the nearby Pima County Public Library, said "American Dirt" was less a literary work on the level of Steinbeck than a thriller with notable flaws.

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, March 5, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 247 ~ 54 of 77

"And to be 100 percent honest with you, because it was a thriller, I felt like it touched upon a lot of things, but it didn't really go deeply into it" them, Aguirre-Clinch said.

"If you had told me it was a thriller," Winfrey added, "I wouldn't have read it."

Arce challenged Cummins about her intentions for the book, which Cummins has called a "bridge" to other communities. To which communities? "Who did you write this book for?" Grande asked, saying that she didn't feel "American Dirt" was meant for her.

"I wrote this book for the people in this room," Cummins said.

Whose minds did you want to change? Arce wondered.

"Mine," called out one audience member. "Mine," said a second, then a third and a fourth and several others.

"Mine." "Mine." Mine." "Mine."

Raphael fever hits Italy but art isn't immune from virus

By FRANCES D'EMILIO Associated Press

ROME (AP) — The paintings, drawings, tapestries and sketches in the most ambitious exhibition of Renaissance superstar Raphael's works are collectively insured for 4 billion euros (\$4.4 billion) against theft, vandalism or other damages.

But no money can guarantee that Italy's outbreak of coronavirus, the largest in Europe, won't play havoc with the three-month run in Rome of this year's eagerly-awaited art blockbuster.

Nervousness was palpable at a preview Wednesday that the Italian government's increasingly restrictive measures aimed at containing the outbreak might prematurely shut down the "Raffaello" exhibition, which is being mounted to mark the 500th anniversary of his death.

The project brings together 120 works by Raphael, including from collections ranging from those of Queen Elizabeth II to some of the world's most prestigious museums. Entitled "Raffaello 1520-1483," the exhibition opens Thursday in the Scuderie del Quirinale, an 18th-century former stables converted into an elegant palazzo.

There was reason to be nervous. Italy closed all schools and universities Wednesday and barred fans from all sporting events for nearly the next month to try to tamp down the deadliest coronavirus outbreak outside of China. So far, over 3,000 people have been infected in Italy and 107 of them have died.

On April 6, 1520, at the height of a brilliant career as a painter and architect in Rome, Raphael succumbed, on his 37th birthday, to eight days of fever and was buried in Rome's Pantheon.

Some 40 of the paintings and sketches come from the Uffizi Galleries in Florence, whose director, Eike Schmidt, sought to tamp down apprehension about viewing the show. He stressed that the recommended one-meter (yard) distance between people in public places would be respected to reduce risks of any contagion and hand sanitizers were affixed to exhibit walls.

He was interviewed in front of one of the show's top draws, "Portrait of Pope Leone X." The painting underwent a painstaking, three-year-restoration that enhanced the rich hues of the scarlet cap and cape of the pontiff, one of Raphael's patrons, and the cardinal-red robes of two cardinals. So exquisite is Raphael's detailing that a silver bell near the pontiff's left hand looks like you could pick it up and ring it.

Pausing in front of Raphael's creations – including preparatory sketches as breathtakingly beautiful as the paintings that ensued – viewers feel caught in the gaze of the artists' subjects.

Schmidt noted that while Michelangelo was "constantly interested in the anatomy of the human body," and Leonardo da Vinci was "principally interested in the scientific analysis of the world," Raphael's interest "was really the psychology of his sitters" for portraits. Raphael was intent on exploring "how can you express a human character, a soul, through painting, which is very difficult, if not impossible."

But, Schmidt added, switching to Raphael's Italian name "if anyone came close to do it, that was Raffaello."

Drawings, with ink or red or black chalk, provide ample examples of Raphael's success in infusing human figures with emotion. Two of Raphael's celebrated portraits have inspired countless musings about

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, March 5, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 247 ~ 55 of 77

the women who posed for a painter known for his lively love life.

One, informally known as "Fornarina," or the baker's daughter, was said to be his mistress and was painted in his last year of life. A finger on her right hand appears to point to an slim armband on her bare arm with the artist's name. Nearby is "Portrait of a woman called 'La Velata,'" or the veiled woman.

When Italy's COVID-19 outbreak surfaced last month, more than 70,000 tickets had already been sold for the "Raffaello" exhibit.

Organizers on Wednesday said "the number of visitors accessing the halls will be controlled" to dilute the risks of any visitors transmitting the new coronavirus.

But if "Raffaello" was forced to temporarily close its doors or slash entrance numbers, it's be highly unlikely that it could be extended.

While the Uffizi has so many Raphael works it could lend 40 and still keep its Raphael room open in the Florence museum, other lending institutions, among them the Prado, the Louvre, the National Gallery in London and the National Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C., would be reluctant to deprive for more weeks their own visitors of an opportunity to view their Raphael works in their own collections.

The viral outbreak has already inconvenienced art lovers in Italy.

Last week, admirers of Caravaggio, the Baroque master painter, found themselves locked out of a church in Rome, St. Louis of the French, which has three of the painter's works. A priest at the church had tested positive for the virus after passing through Italy's north, the heart of the outbreak in Europe. When the church re-opened on Wednesday, several tourists wore face masks.

Earlier in Italy's outbreak, the government ordered museums in the hard-hit northern regions temporarily closed. When Turin's renowned Egyptian Museum re-opened this week, director Christian Greco decided to extend its opening hours to better space out visitors.

"The museum is for everyone, and we're here for them," Greco told state radio Tuesday. The mood among his relieved staff was "happy to come back."

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

Returning to acting, Jagger plays a man of wealth and taste

By JAKE COYLE AP Film Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — It's been nearly 20 years since Mick Jagger last acted, but as the new film "The Burnt Orange Heresy" shows, his chops have gathered no moss.

In the film, which Sony Pictures Classics will release Friday, Jagger co-stars alongside Claes Bang and Elizabeth Debicki as a devilish art collector who cunningly convinces an art journalist (Bang) to use a rare interview with a reclusive artist (Donald Sutherland) as an opportunity to steal one of his paintings. It's Jagger's first film since 2001's "The Man From Elysian Fields." And, he says, it might be his last.

"I wish I had done a lot more acting. I've just done bits and pieces here and there whenever I've been able to," Jagger said in an interview by phone. Then he chuckles. "You know, I have another job. I have several other jobs, really."

When the 76-year-old hasn't been performing with the Rolling Stones, Jagger has carved out a peripatetic but adventurous career in movies. He's favored more experimental filmmakers, working with Jean-Luc Godard, Nicolas Roeg and Werner Herzog. Acting a little less than David Bowie but more than Bob Dylan, Jagger's film career has been consistently intrepid. He's a very good actor, even if his big-screen performances will always be dwarfed by the gyrating spectacle of his kinetic stage persona.

"I always liked the idea of it," Jagger, speaking by phone from France, says of acting. "I enjoy the change of pace and the change of focus of your performance. When I'm performing these days, it's mostly in very large places in front of lots of people, whereas when you're on a small set, you're performing much more subtly and not such elaborate gestures. You have to really tone it down."

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, March 5, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 247 ~ 56 of 77

Sometimes, fate (and tour scheduling) has intervened. Jagger's performance in Herzog's famously delirious "Fitzcarraldo" (1982) was cut because the original lead, Jason Robards, got sick. When shooting restarted in the Peruvian jungle, Jagger had a conflicting Stones tour. His part was cut and Klaus Kinski took over for Robards. Herzog has called Jagger's departure "one of the biggest losses I've ever experienced as a director." (Bits of Jagger's performance be seen in documentaries like "Burden of Dreams" and "My Best Friend.")

"It was a pity about that. That was a shame," says Jagger. "So Klaus Kinski did the job on that and did it better than I. Nevertheless, it was an experience."

But the timing and the script lined up for "The Burnt Orange Heresy." It's directed by Italian filmmaker Giuseppe Capotondi, whose twisty 2009 debut film "The Double Hour" proved his talent for conjuring a noirish atmosphere of intrigue and mystery. "The Burnt Orange Heresy," based on Charles B. Willeford's 1971 novel, is an elegant, stylish kind of film seldom made anymore, with glamorous actors in a glamorous setting (Italy's Lake Como).

When Capotondi first met Jagger in London to discuss the part, he was struck by the rock star's humility. "He said, 'Look, I haven't done this in 20 years. I might be rusty,'" recalled Capotondi.

Jagger found ways to shape the character, giving him slicked-backed hair and a slightly menacing Chelsea accent from the 1960s. In the film, Jagger's art dealer presents Bang's writer with a kind of Faustian bargain, and things get darker from there. Capotondi considers the character a version of the devil -- an apropos role for the writer of "Sympathy for the Devil."

"To play the devil is something that can appeal to most actors. It's such a serpentine character," says Capotondi. "Given the Rolling Stones discovery, I think it's quite fitting."

Jagger is less sure about the connections between "The Burnt Orange Heresy" and the band's classic 1968 single, which was partially inspired by Mikhail Bulgakov's beloved Russian novel about Beelzebub in 1930s Moscow, "The Master and Margarita," and a Baudelaire poem. But Jagger's art dealer is, for sure, "a man of wealth of taste," and one that playfully trades on Jagger's demonic charisma.

"It was in my grasp to do this character. I thought it would be fun to do," says Jagger. "He basically charms and threatens him to do what he wants. It's not a lot of screen time but he's the one who sets off the action."

One of Jagger's first films remains one of his most celebrated: Roeg's hallucinatory 1970 film "Performance," in which he played a drug-addled, gender-bending rock star. Critically slammed upon release, it's steadily grown a cult following with Jagger's performance often ranking among the best by a musician in a film.

He played the title character in Tony Richardson's "Ned Kelly," the "bonejacker" in Victor Vacendak's cyberpunk "Freejack" (1992) and a drag queen in "Bent." He was an executive producer on the short-lived HBO series "Vinyl," and produced the James Brown biopic "Get on Up." And then there are the many documentaries that have indelibly captured the Stones, including "Gimme Shelter," about the tragic 1969 Altamont concert; Martin Scorsese's "Shine a Light," Brett Morgan's "Crossfire Hurricane" and Godard's intimate but chaotic doc, "Sympathy for the Devil."

"I used to say to Jean-Luc, 'What's the rest of the movie like? Can you explain to me what the rest of the movie is like?' And he really couldn't. I don't think he really knew. It was like: What a genius," says Jagger.

"When I was really young, I used to watch a lot of foreign cinema," he adds. "I watched early Roman Polanski movies when I was a student and we used to think ourselves great intellectuals and just watch foreign films and New Wave. We were very into that."

Jagger, who last year had heart surgery, is currently prepping the North American leg of the Rolling Stones' "No Filter" tour this summer. His day job, again, calls.

Jagger, of course, is certain to remain a regular soundtrack to cinema. The Stones' remain an irresistible needle drop to countless filmmakers. (Most recently, "Sweet Virginia" lent a luminous lilt to the finale of "Knives Out.") But Jagger acknowledges "The Burnt Orange Heresy" could be his big-screen swan song.

"If I don't get offered another decent role, it might be," Jagger says. Then he laughs. "It's not planned. If someone offered me something to do in the autumn, I'm sure I'd do it if it was a good part."

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, March 5, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 247 ~ 57 of 77

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

Kim Kardashian West, former prisoners visit White House

WASHINGTON (AP) — Kim Kardashian West visited the White House on Wednesday along with three women who had their sentences commuted by President Donald Trump last month, allowing them early release from federal prison.

Kardashian West tweeted that she and the women planned to “discuss more change that our justice system desperately needs!”

The three women — Tynice Nichole Hall, Crystal Munoz and Judith Negron — were nonviolent federal offenders serving long sentences. All had their cases championed by Alice Johnson, a Tennessee grandmother convicted on felony drug and money laundering charges in 1996. Johnson was released from prison in June 2018 after Kardashian West asked Trump to grant her clemency.

Johnson said the president had asked her for a list of other women who deserved clemency. Johnson, Hall and Munoz had all had commutation requests denied by then-President Barack Obama.

Obama undertook an unprecedented effort to reduce the sentences of nonviolent federal drug offenders during his presidency, releasing 1,715 prisoners, more than any other president in history.

Obama repeatedly called on Congress to pass a broader criminal justice fix, but Republican lawmakers resisted. Trump was able to get more Republicans in the Senate to vote for a criminal justice bill that gave judges more discretion when sentencing some drug offenders and boosted prisoner rehabilitation efforts. Trump has been citing the bill in his efforts to win support from more African American voters.

Ivanka Trump tweeted a photo of herself and husband Jared Kushner with the women during Wednesday’s visit, saying “these 3 mothers were granted clemency by @realDonaldTrump last month and are already using their second chance to pay it forward!”

Virus halts pilgrimages to Mecca, Friday prayers in Iran

By AMIR VAHDAT and JON GAMBRELL Associated Press

TEHRAN, Iran (AP) — The coronavirus outbreak disrupted Islamic worship in the Middle East as Saudi Arabia on Wednesday banned its citizens and other residents of the kingdom from performing the pilgrimage in Mecca, while Iran canceled Friday prayers in major cities.

The decisions in Riyadh and Tehran affected both Sunni and Shiite Muslims alike.

The Saudi move expands a ban last week on foreigners visiting Mecca and Medina, home to the holiest sites in Islam. That decision alone disrupted travel for thousands of Muslims already headed to the kingdom and potentially affects plans later this year for millions more ahead of the fasting month of Ramadan and the annual hajj pilgrimage.

Even after that Feb. 27 announcement, people already in Saudi Arabia could still travel to Mecca’s Grand Mosque, where pilgrims circle the black, cube-shaped Kaaba that Muslims around the world pray toward five times a day. The crowds were far smaller than usual before Wednesday’s statement from an unidentified Interior Ministry official that was carried by the state-run Saudi Press Agency.

Millions attend the annual hajj, which this year is set for late July into early August, and many more visit the kingdom’s holy sites year round. Those other pilgrimages are referred to as the umrah, which drew 7.5 million foreigners in 2019 alone.

It remains unclear how the ban will be enforced. The government described the suspension as “temporary,” but gave no hint at when it will be lifted. The ban also appeared to encompass the Prophet Muhammad’s Mosque in nearby Medina.

The decision seeks to “limit the spread of the coronavirus (COVID-19) epidemic and prevent its access to the Two Holy Mosques, which are witnessing a permanent and intense flow of human crowds, which makes the issue of securing these crowds of utmost importance,” the Saudi government said.

In Iran, authorities halted Friday prayers in all provincial capitals amid the country’s growing coronavirus

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, March 5, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 247 ~ 58 of 77

outbreak, which has killed at least 92 people amid 2,922 confirmed cases. Iran and Italy have the world's highest death tolls outside of China.

"This disease is a widespread one," Iranian President Hassan Rouhani told his Cabinet, 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."

The announcement came a week after a similar order affected Tehran and several other major cities.

While observant Muslims can pray at home, the devout prefer to attend Friday prayers as a community. Iran's Shiite theocracy also use the services to share ideological messages by clergymen selected by Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei.

There are now over 3,150 cases of the virus across the Mideast. Of those outside Iran in the region, most link back to the Islamic Republic.

Top leaders in Iran's civilian government and Shiite theocracy have become infected with the virus. The country 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 continue to worry that Iran may be underreporting its cases.

"The spread of the virus to almost all of Iran's provinces leave little doubt that the authorities are struggling to contain the outbreak," wrote Torbjorn Soltvedt, an analyst at the risk consultancy Verisk Maplecroft. "After a slow and politicized response to the outbreak, the government now faces a race against time to prevent a public health emergency from turning into an economic crisis."

Authorities in Iran said they arrested a man for posting a video online of bodies wrapped in white shrouds and zipped into black body bags at a cemetery in Qom on Monday.

The video purports to show over 30 corpses waiting to be washed per Islamic tradition, with a man's voice alleging all were "corona-infected."

Ali Ramezani, the executive manager of the Qom cemetery, later told state television that authorities were awaiting the outcome of coronavirus tests on them before they were prepared for burial. Bodies testing positive are buried by staff wearing gloves and protective gear, and the graves are lined with lime.

"If the test results are negative, then there is no need to bury them based on the protocol for the new coronavirus and the family can receive the body of their loved ones and bury it where they want," Ramezani said.

Eshaq Jahangiri, Iran's senior vice president, meanwhile banned all overseas trips for officials to attend international events, the semiofficial ISNA news agency reported. That did not affect Oil Minister Bijan Zangeneh, who traveled with an entourage to Vienna for an OPEC meeting.

Rouhani, in his Cabinet meeting, acknowledged the toll the outbreak was taking on the public. He called on state television to offer "happier" programs to entertain those stuck at home.

"I urge all artists, scientists, psychologists and all who can bring smiles to people's faces, come into the social media," he said. "Today, words that make people tired are no longer advantageous."

His request came as Iran's judiciary ordered Iranian filmmaker Mohammad Rasoulof, who just won the Berlin Film Festival's Golden Bear, to serve a one-year prison sentence over his movies.

In Israel, Chief Rabbi David Lau urged observant Jews to refrain from kissing the "mezuzah," a small item encasing a prayer scroll that is attached to doorposts. Observant Jews typically touch the item and then kiss their hands when walking through a doorway.

The Iraqi Health Ministry said an elderly woman in Baghdad who tested positive for the coronavirus has died. In Iraq's semi-autonomous Kurdish region, officials said they suspected a 70-year-old man near the border with Iran also died of the disease, although authorities in Baghdad had not confirmed his infection.

The United Arab Emirates helped evacuate Sudanese students stuck in the hard-hit Chinese city of Wuhan. They'll be held in the UAE in quarantine. And Egypt banned Qataris from entering the country following Doha starting a similar ban.

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, March 5, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 247 ~ 59 of 77

Gambrell reported from Dubai, United Arab Emirates. Associated Press writers Aya Batrawy in Dubai, Salar Salim in Irbil, Iraq, Samy Magdy in Cairo and Tia Goldenberg in Jerusalem contributed.

Warren reevaluates, Bloomberg drops out after Super Tuesday

By **STEVE PEOPLES** and **BILL BARROW** Associated Press

LOS ANGELES (AP) — New York billionaire Mike Bloomberg suspended his presidential campaign and Massachusetts Sen. Elizabeth Warren was reassessing her candidacy Wednesday as the winnowing process in the Democrats' 2020 nomination fight lurched forward after a consequential Super Tuesday.

Bloomberg became the third failed Democratic presidential contender to exit the race in three days. Like the others, he endorsed Joe Biden, the big winner on Super Tuesday with victories in 10 of 14 states, and called him the best chance to defeat President Donald Trump in November.

Sen. Bernie Sanders lashed back in a Wednesday news conference in Vermont, declaring himself in a "neck-and-neck" race with Biden, despite the former vice president's overwhelming support from the Democratic establishment.

"What this campaign I think is increasingly about is, Which side are you on?" Sanders said. "There has never been a campaign in recent history which has taken on the entire political establishment. That is an establishment that is working frantically to try to defeat us."

The new sense of urgency from Sanders and his allies came just hours after a resurgent Biden scored victories from Texas to Massachusetts, revitalizing a presidential bid that was teetering on the edge of disaster just days earlier.

Sanders seized the biggest prize with a win in California but won just three other states.

Warren, Sanders' progressive ally, was huddling with advisers on Wednesday to determine if there was a reason to stay in the race after her Super Tuesday wipe-out. She didn't win a single state and finished in third place, after Biden and Sanders, in her own home state of Massachusetts.

Sanders confirmed that he spoke with Warren early Wednesday

"What Sen. Warren told me is she is assessing her campaign," he said. "She will make her own decision in her own time."

While Warren's future is unclear, Tuesday's round of voting helped clarify that the Democratic Party's presidential field, which featured more than a half-dozen candidates a week ago, had turned into a two-man contest.

Both men are expected to begin receiving Secret Service protection, according to Biden campaign chairman, Rep. Cedric Richmond, who said Wednesday that the House Homeland Security Committee has asked the Secret Service to provide protection to all remaining major presidential candidates.

Biden and Sanders already have Secret Service code names: Biden's is "Celtic" and Bernie's is "Intrepid"

Biden's campaign is embracing his renewed status as a Democratic front-runner and is going on the offensive against Sanders. Richmond blasted the Vermont senator for suggesting that the Democratic establishment is colluding against the progressive's White House bid. Richmond said Biden is earning his votes.

"I just did not know that African Americans in the South were considered part of the establishment," Richmond said, noting that Biden's overwhelming support among black voters gave him wide delegate gains in Alabama, North Carolina and Virginia, among other states.

African American voters, he continued, understand the importance of "nominating a person that they know, nominating a person that can win."

The Sanders campaign announced Wednesday that it would begin airing three new campaign ads in Arizona, Florida, Idaho, Illinois, Michigan, Mississippi, Missouri, Ohio and Washington, states that hold primaries March 10 and March 17.

One of the new ads features archived footage of former President Barack Obama praising Sanders. It's a not-so-subtle attempt by the Vermont senator to undercut Biden's frequently spotlighting his closeness to Obama.

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, March 5, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 247 ~ 60 of 77

Trump took to Twitter on 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.

Trump also called Warren "selfish" for staying in the race because it "hurts Bernie badly."

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.

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 victories in Massachusetts and Maine. 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 hoped to claim an insurmountable delegate lead. That didn't happen. And while he scored the night's biggest delegate-prize in California, he won just three other states: his home state of Vermont, 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.

In a statement announcing his departure, Bloomberg vowed to stay engaged in the 2020 election and his ultimate goal to ensure Trump is defeated this fall.

"I've always believed that defeating Donald Trump starts with uniting behind the candidate with the best shot to do it. After yesterday's vote, it is clear that candidate is my friend and a great American, Joe Biden."

Biden aides said they didn't immediately know what to expect out of Bloomberg's endorsement moving forward.

The former New York mayor has committed to turning his massive campaign operation toward the Democrats larger goal of defeating Trump this fall. It was not immediately clear if Bloomberg would use his resources and organization to help Biden in his nominating fight against Sanders.

Biden's deputy campaign manager Kate Bedingfield said Biden is "thrilled" to have Bloomberg's support. But she said conversations about what Bloomberg's endorsement means in practice are ongoing.

With votes still being counted across the country, The Associated Press has allocated 566 delegates to Biden, 501 to Sanders and 61 to Warren. 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, Will Weissert 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."

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.

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.

Supreme Court divided in 1st big abortion case of Trump era

By MARK SHERMAN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — A seemingly divided Supreme Court struggled Wednesday with its first major abortion case of the Trump era, leaving Chief Justice John Roberts as the likely deciding vote.

Roberts did not say enough to tip his hand in an hour of spirited arguments at the high court.

The court’s election-year look at a Louisiana dispute could reveal how willing the more conservative court is to roll back abortion rights. A decision should come by late June.

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 are weighing 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. The federal appeals court in New Orleans, though, upheld the law, setting up the Supreme Court case.

Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg noted, as she had before, that “among medical procedures, first trimester abortion is among the safest, far safer than childbirth.” The abortion clinic in Shreveport at the heart of the case reported transferring just four patients to a hospital out of roughly 70,000 it has treated over 23 years, Justice Elena Kagan noted.

Justice Samuel Alito said the clinic had once had its license suspended, in 2010.

Perhaps the biggest question is whether the court will overrule a 2016 decision in which it struck down a similar law in Texas. Since then, 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, 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 conservatives 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.

In more than 14 years as chief justice, Roberts has generally voted to uphold abortion restrictions, 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.

One possible outcome is that Roberts and the other conservative justices could find a way to allow

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, March 5, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 247 ~ 63 of 77

Louisiana to enforce the law, without overruling the decision from 2016 in which the court struck down a similar law in Texas. One avenue raised by lawyers for the state and the Trump administration is that the doctors didn't try hard enough to work out arrangements with the hospitals, even though the trial court found that doctors failed to secure admitting privileges at 15 hospitals over an 18-month period.

That result would be a defeat for abortion rights advocates who have argued that the laws are virtually indistinguishable. But it would allow Roberts something of a middle ground between taking a big step to limit abortion access and reaffirming the court's abortion rulings.

Roberts asked the same question, in slightly different form, to each of the three lawyers who argued before the court. The court in the Texas case found there was no benefit to the women the law was ostensibly intended to help and struck it down as an "undue burden" on women's right to an abortion in violation of the Constitution.

"I understand the idea that the impact might be different in different places, but as far as the benefits of the law, that's going to be the same in each state, isn't it?" Roberts asked Louisiana Solicitor General Elizabeth Murrill.

The Louisiana and Texas situations are not identical, Murrill told the court. "The laws are different, the facts are different, the regulatory structures are different," Murrill said.

Roberts' inquiry seemed to dovetail with questions from Kavanaugh, whose interest was in discerning whether admitting privileges laws would still impose an "undue burden" in a state that made it easy for abortion providers to get them.

"Could an admitting privileges law of this kind ever have a valid purpose, in your view?" Kavanaugh asked lawyer Julie Rikelman, representing the Shreveport clinic.

Rikelman replied: "No, Your Honor. The medical consensus against these laws is clear."

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.

But apart from Alito, the justices did not seem especially interested in resolving the case on the standing issue.

Outside the court, protesters on both sides filled the sidewalks just as they have for earlier high court cases on abortion.

Inside, Justice Stephen Breyer sought to capture searing debate over the issue. "I understand there are good arguments on both sides. Indeed, in the country people have very strong feelings and a lot of people morally think it's wrong and a lot of people morally think the opposite is wrong," Breyer said, though he left little doubt he would vote in favor of abortion rights.

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

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, March 5, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 247 ~ 64 of 77

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. Former New York City Mayor Mike Bloomberg won close to 20%.

STICKING TO SANDERS

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 they 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 at least 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, Texas and Virginia felt the same.

BLOOMBERG'S BUST

More than \$500 million in spending on ads could not buy much love for Bloomberg, who announced Wednesday that he was dropping out of the race and endorsing Biden.

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.

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, March 5, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 247 ~ 65 of 77

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.

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.

Netanyahu still short of majority after Israel's election

By TIA GOLDENBERG Associated Press

JERUSALEM (AP) — Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has fallen short of capturing the majority needed to form a government, near-final election results showed Wednesday, deepening a year of political deadlock and appearing to dash the long-serving leader's hopes for a decisive victory as his trial on corruption charges nears.

In an angry tirade, Netanyahu conceded that he did not have the parliamentary support to form a new government right away. But he still tried to claim victory as he lashed out at his main opponent and disparaged the leading Arab party — the third largest in parliament — as irrelevant.

"This is what the nation decided," he said. "The public gave me more votes than any other candidate for prime minister in the nation's history."

After failing to form a government following two general elections last year and with his legal woes closing in, Netanyahu had been hoping for a clear win in Monday's vote. With initial exit polls predicting a near majority for Netanyahu and his nationalist-religious allies, he declared a "great victory" to thousands of jubilant supporters under a torrent of confetti on election night.

But Wednesday's near-final tally painted a different picture. With over 99% of the votes counted, Netanyahu's Likud led the way with 36 seats, ahead of challenger Benny Gantz's Blue and White party, with 33 seats. Yet with his allies, Netanyahu's right-wing camp held a total of only 58 seats, three shy of the 61 needed to form a government and no clear path to reaching the threshold. Final results are expected later Wednesday.

In a stunning rebuke to Netanyahu, the Joint List, an umbrella group of Arab-led parties, finished third with 15 seats. It was an all-time high for the Joint List, boosted by voters furious at what was perceived as racist incitement by Netanyahu throughout the campaign against the country's Arab minority.

"Our public feels its power and it wants to exert that power," Joint List leader Ayman Odeh told Israeli Channel 13 TV. "We said no to Benjamin Netanyahu's approach."

In a meeting with his political allies Wednesday, Netanyahu continued to portray himself as a winner, despite the likely impasse he faces.

"The Likud under my leadership became the largest party in a knockout," he said. "The public's decision must be respected."

He did not respond to a reporter's question about lacking a parliamentary majority. But he again lashed out at the Joint List, saying it should not even be considered in the calculations for forming a new government.

The Joint List "isn't even part of the equation," he said, claiming its members are hostile to the state.

While the Arab parties have never sat in an Israeli coalition, they have worked to support policies from

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, March 5, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 247 ~ 66 of 77

the outside, a step they could take again if they can resolve their differences with Gantz.

Gantz also has ruled out a partnership with the Joint List, making it unlikely he can cobble together a coalition either. That means Israel appears headed for deadlock, extending nearly a year of political paralysis.

Netanyahu had been desperate for a strong showing ahead of his trial, which is scheduled to start March 17. Installing a new government would give him an important political boost and potentially allow him to legislate his way out of the legal quagmire.

"There isn't another politician in the world who could have won the largest number of votes after having failed twice to form a government and after having been indicted on three charges," political commentator Ari Shavit wrote on the Makor Rishon news site. "Nevertheless, Netanyahu and his partners ought to bear in mind that their goal of 61 seats has not been achieved yet. Their hope for a decisive victory was dashed."

Netanyahu was indicted last year on fraud, bribery and breach of trust charges in three separate corruption cases. He denies wrongdoing, saying the charges have been trumped up by a liberal media and a justice system looking to oust him. As prime minister, Netanyahu can not only use his position as a bully pulpit to rally public support but he and his allies also can try to craft legislation to delay or derail prosecution.

Under Israeli law, a sitting prime minister is not required to resign if indicted. But the law is fuzzy about whether a candidate for prime minister under indictment can be given authority to form a new government, and the country's Supreme Court is expected to weigh in on the matter.

Israel's president will soon begin consultations with the elected parties, which then recommend to him their preferred selection to lead the government. Typically, the candidate with the most recommendations is asked to try to form a government. As leader of the largest party, that is likely to be Netanyahu, even if as in the previous two elections his path is unclear.

In a bid to break the deadlock, Likud and its allies have been trying to find ways to bridge the gap. They have talked about luring "defectors" from opposition parties who could tick the right-wing bloc's numbers up. But so far, no one has come forward, and a number of rumored defectors have issued statements denying the speculation.

Blue and White meanwhile said it would consider promoting legislation that would prevent an indicted prime minister from forming a government. But passing such legislation, particularly in the two weeks before the president taps a candidate to form a government, appeared unlikely, especially following an opinion against the idea by the Knesset's legal adviser.

The most straightforward way out of the deadlock would be a power-sharing deal between Gantz and Netanyahu, whose parties together control a parliamentary majority. But Gantz has ruled out a partnership as long as Netanyahu heads Likud.

Netanyahu, on the other hand, insists on being prime minister of any unity government.

If neither candidate can form a government within the allotted time, Israel could face an unprecedented fourth straight election.

James Bond film release pushed back 7 months due to virus

LINDSEY BAHR AP Film Writer

LOS ANGELES (AP) — The release of the James Bond film "No Time To Die" has been pushed back several months because of global concerns about coronavirus.

MGM, Universal and producers Michael G. Wilson and Barbara Broccoli announced on Twitter Wednesday that the film would be pushed back from its April release to November 2020.

The announcement cited consideration of the global theatrical marketplace in the decision to delay the release of the film. "No Time To Die" will now hit theaters in the U.K. on Nov. 12 and worldwide on Nov. 25.

The Bond films make a significant portion of their profits from international markets. The last film, "Spectre," made over \$679 million from overseas theaters in 2015 with over \$84 million of that total coming from China.

Concerns had already been brewing around the imminent release and the global outbreak. Publicity plans in China, Japan and South Korea had previously been canceled. And on Monday, the popular James

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, March 5, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 247 ~ 67 of 77

Bond fan site MI6-HQ published an open letter to the producers urging them to delay the film's rollout. "It is time to put public health above marketing release schedules and the cost of canceling publicity events," the letter said.

Hollywood film release and production schedules have already been affected by the outbreak. Last week, Paramount Pictures halted production on the seventh "Mission: Impossible" film, which had been scheduled to shoot in Venice, Italy. The studio also postponed the Chinese release of "Sonic the Hedgehog."

The coronavirus outbreak emerged in China and has spread globally. In all, more than 94,000 people have contracted the virus worldwide, with more than 3,200 deaths.

Virus death rate still uncertain as mild cases are missed

By LAURAN NEERGAARD AP Medical Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — How deadly is the coronavirus that exploded from China? The answer reflects a hard reality about fast-moving outbreaks: As cases pop up in new places, the first to get counted are the sickest.

A straight count of deaths reported worldwide suggests the new virus may be more deadly than the flu, according to the head of the World Health Organization.

"Globally, about 3.4% of reported COVID-19 cases have died. By comparison, seasonal flu generally kills far fewer than 1% of those infected," said WHO Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus.

But the U.N. agency is reporting a number that health authorities know will keep fluctuating — and it's far too soon to predict whether it ultimately winds up worse than flu or about the same.

"In every outbreak there are at least two competing biases that make the case fatality rate look higher or lower," said Dr. Marc Lipsitch of Harvard's School of Public Health.

Some ill people may die while many people with mild or no symptoms are being missed, he explained, "because the testing has been so variable and not adequate in many places."

WHAT DO WE KNOW ABOUT THE DEATH RATE?

The WHO's latest estimate that 3.4% of patients have died is in line with what the agency has been reporting for over a week.

When it took a close look at what's happening in China, WHO concluded 2% to 4% of patients in the city of Wuhan — the outbreak's epicenter where a flood of early severe cases overwhelmed health centers — had died.

By the time people elsewhere in China were getting sick, authorities were better able to test for the virus and uncover people with mild cases. Consequently, the death rate in the rest of the country was strikingly lower, 0.7%.

That number has fluctuated since but is still pretty close — even though the number of deaths being reported every day in China is dropping as the outbreak stabilizes there.

WHAT ABOUT THE REST OF THE WORLD?

The outbreak has worsened in Iran, where as of Tuesday 4.4% of the more than 1,500 patients so far known to have COVID-19 have died. That number is helping to drive the global death calculation.

Outside of Hubei province in China and Iran, the death rate globally as of Tuesday was about 1%.

WHY ARE DEATH RATES HIGHER EARLIER IN AN OUTBREAK?

In most places dealing with a sudden jump in illnesses, testing people with the earliest mild symptoms — a fever or cough — is low on the priority list. That means death rates may appear artificially high until authorities get a better handle on how widespread the illness really is. The U.S., for example, is still trying to ramp up its capability to test widely, amid criticism that person-to-person spread was going undetected.

Further complicating all this math: Scientists have been taking in-depth looks at patients treated in different hospitals, an important step as authorities learn how to battle it. One such study in last week's New England Journal of Medicine examined 1,099 patients in 500 hospitals in China, many of them beyond Wuhan. They put the death rate at 1.4%.

In other words, who gets counted — and where — makes a difference.

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, March 5, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 247 ~ 68 of 77

HOW DOES COVID-19 COMPARE TO OTHER DISEASES?

A cousin of this new virus caused the severe acute respiratory syndrome outbreak in 2003, and about 10% of SARS patients died.

Flu is a different virus family, and some strains are deadlier than others. On average, the death rate from seasonal flu is about 0.1%, said Dr. Anthony Fauci of the U.S. National Institutes of Health.

Even if the right number for the new coronavirus is 0.7%, that's still worse than the average flu season.

But again, the number of infections matters. Millions of people get the flu every year around the world, leading to an annual death toll in the hundreds of thousands. There's no way to know how many people ultimately will get the new coronavirus.

WHO emergencies chief Dr. Michael Ryan says the new coronavirus isn't as transmissible as flu, so "it offers us a glimmer ... that this virus can be suppressed and contained."

What's the difference? Flu can be spread before symptoms appear, which helps fuel each year's influenza season. WHO insists asymptomatic spread doesn't appear to be driving the COVID-19 outbreak.

WHO'S MOST AT RISK FROM COVID-19?

Last week's report by National Health Commission of China scientists shows how easy it is for many cases to be missed early on: 44% of patients had fever when they were admitted to the hospital, but 89% ultimately developed it.

In all, 16% developed severe illness after hospital admission; about 5% were treated in an intensive care unit; and 2.3% needed machines to help them breathe.

Older people, especially those with chronic illnesses such as heart or lung diseases, are more at risk of severe illness, although some younger adults have died.

On average, WHO says people with mild cases recover in about two weeks, while those who are sicker can take anywhere from three to six weeks.

AP Chief Medical Writer Marilyn Marchione contributed to this report.

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

Food stamp change fuels anxiety as states try to curb impact

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 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 is dealing with a separate, similar change in the nation's third-largest city.

From Hawaii to Pennsylvania, states are scrambling to blunt the impact of the new rules, 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, a network

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, March 5, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 247 ~ 69 of 77

of 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 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

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, March 5, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 247 ~ 70 of 77

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."

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

Twitter preps ephemeral tweets, starts testing in Brazil

By BARBARA ORTUTAY AP Technology Writer

SAN FRANCISCO (AP) — Twitter is starting to test tweets that disappear after 24 hours, although initially only in Brazil.

The company says the ephemeral tweets, which it calls "fleets" because of their fleeting nature, are designed to allay the concerns of new users who might be turned off by the public and permanent nature of normal tweets.

Fleets can't be retweeted and they won't have "likes." People can respond to them, but the replies show up as direct messages to the original tweeter, not as a public response, turning any back-and-forth into a private conversation instead of a public discussion.

Despite having high-profile users such as President Donald Trump, Twitter has lagged behind other tech powerhouses like Facebook and Google in terms of user growth and advertising revenue. Twitter is hoping that by offering disappearing tweets, people will be more likely to share casual, everyday thoughts — and to do so more often.

The new feature is reminiscent of Instagram and Facebook "stories" and Snapchat's snaps, which let users post short-lived photos and messages. Such features are increasingly popular with social-media users looking for smaller groups and more private chats.

But Twitter often serves a different function than Instagram or Facebook, operating not only as a basis for conversation but as a platform for politicians and other public figures. Disappearing tweets could make it harder to hold such people accountable, monitor their posts and fact-check them.

Social media services often test new features in smaller markets before bringing them to the U.S. and elsewhere — if they do so at all.

Twitter said it may bring fleets to other countries depending on how the Brazil test goes. In its blog post Wednesday, Twitter said it will be looking into how the new feature "changes the way you interact and if it allows you to share what you're thinking more comfortably."

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 health agency says. Read the label and make sure you're using one that has at least 60% alcohol. 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. Kroger, which runs nearly 2,800 supermarkets across the country, is limiting the amount of hand sanitizer shoppers can buy to five.

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.

Others are trying to keep up, too. Coperalcool, a brand of hand sanitizer in Brazil, says it sold 1 million bottles last month, up from 200,000 in February 2019. The company that makes the brand says it is adding another shift at its factory in Piracicaba, Brazil. And it is considering exporting it for the first time after being approached by companies in China, South Korea and Thailand.

In the U.S., 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; Dan Sewell in Cincinnati; Mauricio Savarese in Sao Paulo; and Justin Pritchard in Los Angeles also contributed to this story.

Syrian, Turkish armies engage in new deadly clashes in Idlib

By SUZAN FRASER and VLADIMIR ISACHENKOV Associated Press

ANKARA, Turkey (AP) — Two more Turkish soldiers were killed Wednesday in a Syrian government attack in Syria's northwest, the country's Defense Ministry said, 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 a Russian-backed Syrian government offensive to retake Idlib province.

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

The Turkish Defense Ministry's statement said 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 was scheduled to depart for Moscow, where he said 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 supports 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 of the upcoming meeting.

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. Turkey has rejected the Russian assertion, saying Ankara was making progress against radical groups in Idlib when the Syrian government launched its offensive.

Earlier on 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 said that under the 2018 agreement with Russia, Turkey was obliged to ensure that militants in Idlib pull back 15-20 kilometers (9-12 miles) from the de-escalation zone along with their heavy weapons. Instead, 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 linking 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 chemi-

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, March 5, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 247 ~ 73 of 77

cal attack.

The Russian military said the militants were 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.

In an interview with Russian state TV channel Rossiya 24, Assad described the Turks as a "brotherly people" and asked them: "What's your problem with Syria? What is the problem that makes Turkish citizens die for (it)?" Assad was referring to Turkish troops killed recently in Syria.

Assad was making a point that there is no animosity on the part of Syria toward the people of Turkey but to the political leadership of President Recep Tayyip Erdogan. Syrian state media refer to Erdogan's government as the "Turkish regime."

"Syria and Turkey share common interests. There are many ethnic Syrians in Turkey and many ethnic Turks in Syria," Assad said. He claimed that Syria has not carried out any hostile acts against Turkey.

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

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.

Starbucks Corp. on Wednesday turned its party-like annual meeting scheduled for March 18 in Seattle, into a virtual affair. The event, which drew 4,000 shareholders last year, was supposed to be held at a theater in downtown Seattle. A virus cluster has emerged in Washington state, however, with nine deaths reported.

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

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, March 5, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 247 ~ 74 of 77

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.

"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 Tajer, 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, Joseph Pisani and Tali Arbel in New York, Foster Klug in Tokyo and Tom Krisher in Detroit contributed to this report.

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, March 5, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 247 ~ 75 of 77

Congressional primaries: Sessions in Alabama Senate runoff

By ALAN FRAM Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump used a scolding tweet Wednesday to undermine his former attorney general's attempt for a political comeback, hours after Jeff Sessions was forced into a Republican primary runoff for his old Senate seat in Alabama.

Trump's online outburst came as Sessions faces a March 31 matchup against former Auburn football coach Tommy Tuberville, a political novice. For that contest in the GOP stronghold, Sessions will need as much support as possible from Trump-friendly voters.

It was Trump's latest eruption over Sessions' 2017 decision, as head of the Justice Department, to withdraw from overseeing the investigation into Russia's efforts to assist Trump's 2016 presidential campaign.

"This is what happens to someone who loyally gets appointed Attorney General of the United States & then doesn't have the wisdom or courage to stare down & end the phony Russia Witch Hunt. Recuses himself on FIRST DAY in office, and the Mueller Scam begins!" Trump wrote in his tweet after Super Tuesday's races.

Voters in Alabama, North Carolina, Texas and California picked dozens of candidates for Election Day's contests for control of Congress. The races were giving party leaders an initial look at whether 2020 voters were reacting to the combative era of Trump by showing a preference for centrist or ideological candidates.

North Carolina Democrats chose establishment-backed moderate Cal Cunningham over a progressive challenger to battle GOP Sen. Thom Tillis, who was easily renominated. That set the stage for a pivotal November showdown that will help decide which party runs the Senate next year.

In Texas, MJ Hegar, backed by national Democrats, advanced to a runoff for her party's nod to oppose GOP Sen. John Cornyn, who cruised to renomination. Hegar's runoff rival was unclear in incomplete returns early Wednesday.

Sessions hoped the sour relationship he endured with Trump as his first attorney general wouldn't derail his Alabama comeback bid. In incomplete results, Sessions trailed Tuberville slightly and lagged behind the combined total for Tuberville and Rep. Bradley Byrne, his next nearest rival, by nearly 2-1, a clear danger sign for a household name like Sessions. Alabama requires a runoff if no candidate receives more than half the primary's votes.

Sessions was one of the most conservative senators when he joined Trump's Cabinet. Their relationship crumbled, and Sessions resigned in 2018.

In the primary, Sessions cast himself as a Trump loyalist anyway. Trump remained virtually silent, which didn't help Sessions. His rivals promoted their own fealty to Trump, with Tuberville saying in an ad, "God sent us Donald Trump."

The GOP primary winner will be favored in November against Sen. Doug Jones, a Democrat. Jones defeated former Alabama state Supreme Court Chief Justice Roy Moore in a 2017 special election after Moore was accused of inappropriate sexual behavior with teenagers decades ago when he was in his 30s. Moore limped this time to a weak fourth-place finish.

The congressional contests were undercards to the day's Democratic presidential primaries in 14 states and one territory. Moderate former Vice President Joe Biden was waging a reinvigorated fight against avowed democratic socialist Sen. Bernie Sanders, all but winnowing the field to a two-candidate competition over confronting Trump in November.

Still, Tuesday's races marked the start of months of congressional primaries.

North Carolina's Tillis is one of the GOP's most vulnerable incumbents as it defends its 53-47 Senate majority. He alienated conservatives by briefly opposing Trump's move to defy Congress and channel federal funds to building a wall along the Mexican border. Tillis' fate will hinge on how Trump, who's since endorsed him, fares in the swing state come November.

Cunningham is a former state senator who served as an Army lawyer in Iraq and Afghanistan and whose centrist stances were attractive to party leaders.

His closest competitor was liberal state Sen. Erica Smith, who waged a long-shot effort to become the

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, March 5, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 247 ~ 76 of 77

first African American woman elected to the Senate from the South. She was badly outspent, despite \$3 million disbursed on her behalf by allies of Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, R-Ky., who'd hoped to undermine Cunningham.

In Texas, Cornyn was nominated for a fourth term and seems difficult for Democrats to dislodge in November.

Hegar, the Democrat, lost a surprisingly close 2018 House race and was backed by her party's hierarchy after former Democratic Rep. Beto O'Rourke declined to challenge Cornyn. She was an Air Force helicopter pilot who was wounded in Afghanistan.

Her challengers included longtime state Sen. Royce West and Cristina Tzintzun Ramirez, a liberal political organizer endorsed by progressive luminaries such as Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, D-N.Y.

In a district wriggling from the Mexican border to San Antonio, eight-term Democratic Rep. Henry Cuellar, one of the House's most conservative Democrats, was trying to hold his sprawling South Texas district against liberal challenger Jessica Cisneros.

Around Fort Worth, 12-term GOP Rep. Kay Granger foiled a challenge from conservative Chris Putnam. Granger, who has helped cut budget compromises as top Republican on the House Appropriations Committee, was criticized as too moderate by Putnam, who drew support from the anti-spending Club for Growth.

Conservative Texas GOP Rep. Chip Roy will defend his district, which stretches west from Austin and San Antonio, against Democrat Wendy Davis. He will be favored against Davis, who is best known for her 13-hour 2013 filibuster against an anti-abortion bill in the state Senate.

Former Rep. Pete Sessions, defeated in his Dallas district in 2018 after 11 terms, made a GOP runoff for a more Republican-leaning open seat around Waco. Former Trump White House physician Ronny Jackson reached a Republican runoff for a North Texas district.

California, whose heavily Democratic 53-seat delegation is Congress' largest, featured all-party primaries Tuesday. Democratic Rep. Jimmy Gomez of Los Angeles might face a liberal challenger when each contest's top two finishers meet in November.

Associated Press writer Gary Robertson in Raleigh, North Carolina, contributed to this report

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

Today in History By The Associated Press

Today in History

Today is Thursday, March 5, the 65th day of 2020. There are 301 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On March 5, 1770, the Boston Massacre took place as British soldiers who'd been taunted by a crowd of colonists opened fire, killing five people.

On this date:

In 1766, Antonio de Ulloa arrived in New Orleans to assume his duties as the first Spanish governor of the Louisiana Territory, where he encountered resistance from the French residents.

In 1868, the impeachment trial of President Andrew Johnson began in the U.S. Senate, with Chief Justice Salmon P. Chase presiding. Johnson, the first U.S. president to be impeached, was accused of "high crimes and misdemeanors" stemming from his attempt to fire Secretary of War Edwin M. Stanton; the trial ended on May 26 with Johnson's acquittal.

In 1933, in German parliamentary elections, the Nazi Party won 44 percent of the vote; the Nazis joined with a conservative nationalist party to gain a slender majority in the Reichstag.

In 1946, Winston Churchill delivered his "Iron Curtain" speech at Westminster College in Fulton, Missouri, in which he said: "From Stettin in the Baltic, to Trieste in the Adriatic, an 'iron curtain' has descended across the continent, allowing police governments to rule Eastern Europe."

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, March 5, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 247 ~ 77 of 77

In 1953, Soviet dictator Josef Stalin died after three decades in power. Composer Sergei Prokofiev (pro-KAH'-fee-ehv) died in Moscow at age 61.

In 1963, country music performers Patsy Cline, Cowboy Copas and Hawkshaw Hawkins died in the crash of their plane, a Piper Comanche, near Camden, Tennessee, along with pilot Randy Hughes (Cline's manager).

In 1982, comedian John Belushi was found dead of a drug overdose in a rented bungalow in Hollywood; he was 33.

In 1983, Country Music Television (CMT) made its debut with the video "It's Four in the Morning," performed by Faron Young.

In 1998, NASA scientists said enough water was frozen in the loose soil of the moon to support a lunar base and perhaps, one day, a human colony.

In 2002, President George W. Bush slapped punishing tariffs of eight to 30 percent on several types of imported steel in an effort to aid the ailing U.S. industry.

In 2003, In a blunt warning to the United States and Britain, the foreign ministers of France, Germany and Russia said they would block any attempt to get U.N. approval for war against Iraq.

In 2013, Fox announced its 24-hour sports cable network called Fox Sports 1, which launched Aug. 17, 2013.

Ten years ago: Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton, visiting Guatemala, told reporters that demand for narcotics in the United States was fueling drug violence in Central America as she acknowledged a measure of U.S. responsibility for what she called "a terrible criminal scourge." New York Democratic Rep. Eric Massa, facing a harassment complaint by a male staffer, said he was stepping down from his seat with "a profound sense of failure." Andree Peel, 105, a member of the World War II Resistance, died in Bristol, England.

Five years ago: The U.S. Ambassador to South Korea, Mark Lippert, was slashed in the face and arm by an assailant in Seoul (sohl). Actor Harrison Ford crash-landed his vintage plane on a golf course in Los Angeles after reporting engine failure shortly after takeoff. Convicted murderer Jodi Arias was spared the death penalty as a jury in Phoenix voted 11-1 in favor of execution — not enough to send Arias to death row for the slaying of her lover, Travis Alexander. Islamic State militants continued their campaign targeting cultural heritage sites in territories they controlled in northern Iraq, bulldozing the historic city of Nimrud. Cardinal Edward Egan, 82, the former Archbishop of New York, died.

One year ago: The Santa Anita race course in southern California canceled racing indefinitely to re-examine its dirt surface after the deaths of 21 horses in the preceding two months; the track would remain closed for racing for nearly a month. Forbes magazine proclaimed 21-year-old Kylie Jenner to be the youngest-ever self-made billionaire. Michael Bloomberg, the billionaire former New York City mayor, announced that he would not join the crowded field of Democrats running for president in 2020. (Bloomberg would reverse course and formally announce his presidential bid in November.)

Today's Birthdays: Actor Paul Sand is 88. Actor James B. Sikking is 86. Actor Dean Stockwell is 84. Actor Fred Williamson is 82. Actress Samantha Eggar is 81. Actor Michael Warren is 74. Actor Eddie Hodges is 73. Singer Eddy Grant is 72. Rock musician Alan Clark (Dire Straits) is 68. Actress-comedian Marsha Warfield is 66. Magician Penn Jillette is 65. Actress Adriana Barraza is 64. Actress Talia Balsam is 61. Rock singers Charlie and Craig Reid (The Proclaimers) are 58. Pro Football Hall of Famer Michael Irvin is 54. Actor Paul Blackthorne is 51. Rock musician John Frusciante (froo-SHAN'-tee) is 50. Singer Rome is 50. Actor Kevin Connolly is 46. Actress Eva Mendes is 46. Actress Jill Ritchie is 46. Actress Jolene Blalock is 45. Model Niki Taylor is 45. Actress Kimberly McCullough is 42. Actress Karolina Wydra is 39. Singer-songwriter Amanda Shires is 38. Actress Dominique McElligott is 34. Actor Sterling Knight is 31. Actor Jake Lloyd is 31. Actor Micah Fowler is 22.

Thought for Today: "Tomorrow is a thief of pleasure." — Sir Rex Harrison, British actor (1908-1990).

Copyright 2020, The Associated Press. All rights reserved.