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Lost Ring

Lost: Man's Gold ring with Large Black Onix insert with a diamond in the Onix. Believe lost at the Veterans Day Memorial Program at the Groton School Nov. 8th. Generous Reward. Contact George Alberts Jr. at 605-380-4568 or 605/397-8161.

State Athletic Events will continue

The SDHSAA is aware of the COVID-19 cases reported in South Dakota Tuesday afternoon. All of our post-season events remain on as scheduled. We will continue to work with state departments to monitor the situation, and encourage people to follow CDC recommendations regarding hygiene, personal space, and staying home if you are sick.

Middle School Music Department to host 4th Annual Talent Show

On Thursday March 12th, the Groton MS School Music Department will be hosting our Country Western Talent Show. The event will be held at the Groton High Old Gym at 7:00 pm. The talent show is a fundraiser for the MS Music Students to earn money for their future music trips. The show will consist of talent acts made up of middle school students and popcorn. For people that purchase tickets in advance there will be a drawing for special prizes at the end of the show. The general admission cost is \$5.00. Tickets will not be sold at the door, but a \$5.00 donation will be requested. The 6th Grade Band, 6th Grade Band Girls, 6th Grade Band Boys, JH Band, and JH Show Choir will also perform. You can get your tickets from any MS Music Student. Come enjoy a fun-filled night of talent and music. Thank you all for your support!

OPEN: Recycling Trailer in Groton

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

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SOUTH DAKOTA'S TOP SCHOOL DISTRICTS

Groton Area rated 11th best school in South Dakota

Recent test scores presented cause for concern for South Dakota educators as results indicated that less-than-half of the state's students are proficient in math and science. Nevertheless, there are public school districts where things are going right, and students perform at a level well above state standards. Here's a closer look at the best school districts in South Dakota.

The best school district in South Dakota is Brandon Valley School District, which consists of seven schools located across five cities near the state's eastern border. Last year, BVSD logged a 94% graduation rate, which is a testament to the district's quality.

Yankton School District 63-3 is the 2nd best school district in South Dakota. Comprising four elementary schools, one middle school, and one high school in Yankton County. Students in the district benefit from a progressive education with access to state-of-the-art technology, including a large number of computers (2.5 to 1 student-to-computer ratio) and SMART boards in all core elementary and middle school classes.

Earning the 3rd spot is Harrisburg School District, consisting of nine schools in the Sioux Falls suburb of Harrisburg. The district's students display a higher-than-state-average rate of proficiency in English language arts, mathematics, and science.

Watertown School District places 4th among South Dakota school districts. Made up of five elementary schools, one intermediate school, one middle school, and one high school, WSD has a graduation rate of 86% and a 62% rate of proficiency in reading language arts.

Filling out South Dakota's top five is Mitchell School District, a high-performing district with an enrollment of around 2,800. Although a large percentage of MSD students experience economic hardship, the district regularly manages graduation rates above 95%.

The Aberdeen School District 06-1 was rated seventh, the Groton Area School District 06-6 was rated 11th, Webster Area was 12th, Warner was 27th, Britton-Hecla was 35th, Frederick Area was rated 47th.

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Make your own hand sanitizer

If you've been watching the news, you know that hand sanitizers have been flying off the store shelves. And even if you can find it, prices have soared, with a two-pack of Purell bottles selling for as much as \$149.

But here's good news: you don't have to pay exorbitant prices. And you don't have to drive for miles, looking for a store that has them in stock.

That's because you can make hand sanitizer yourself.

Simply mix 3/4 cup rubbing alcohol with 1/4 cup aloe vera gel.

To use, rub the solution on your hands until they are dry. This typically takes about 20 seconds.

And remember to wash your hands often ... drink lots of water... and take immune-boosting herbs.

Silver Skates Annual Meeting

Please plan to attend the Carnival of Silver Skates Annual Meeting this Sunday, March 15, at 1:00 at the warming house! Parents of all skaters are encouraged to attend. If your child enjoys being a part of this valuable community activity, then we need your help! If you cannot attend on Sunday, but are willing to serve on the board, please contact Lindsey Tietz. Thanks for your help in continuing this community tradition!

2019-20 NEC Boys All-Conference Team

Two Groton Area basketball players were named to the Northeast Conference All-Conference team. Jonathan Doeden was named to the second team and Brodyn DeHoet was named to the third team.

1st Team:

Jamison Pratt - Tiospa Zina - Senior

Gray Imbery - Aberdeen Roncalli - Junior

Caleb White - Tiospa Zina - Senior

Stone Burke - Clark/Willow Lake - Senior

Max McCulloch - Milbank - Senior

2nd Team:

Cole Fosness - Britton-Hecla - Senior

Jonathan Doeden - Groton Area - Senior

Jaxson Frankenstein - Redfield - Junior

Nate Holida - Hamlin - Senior

Kaleb Marx - Webster Area - Junior

3rd Team:

Payton Halseide - Tiospa Zina - Senior

Tyler Oneill - Clark/Willow Lake - Sophomore

Bennett Schwenn - Milbank - Sophomore

Brodyn DeHoet - Groton - Senior

Dylan Goodhart - Sisseton - Junior

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Even South Dakotans panic

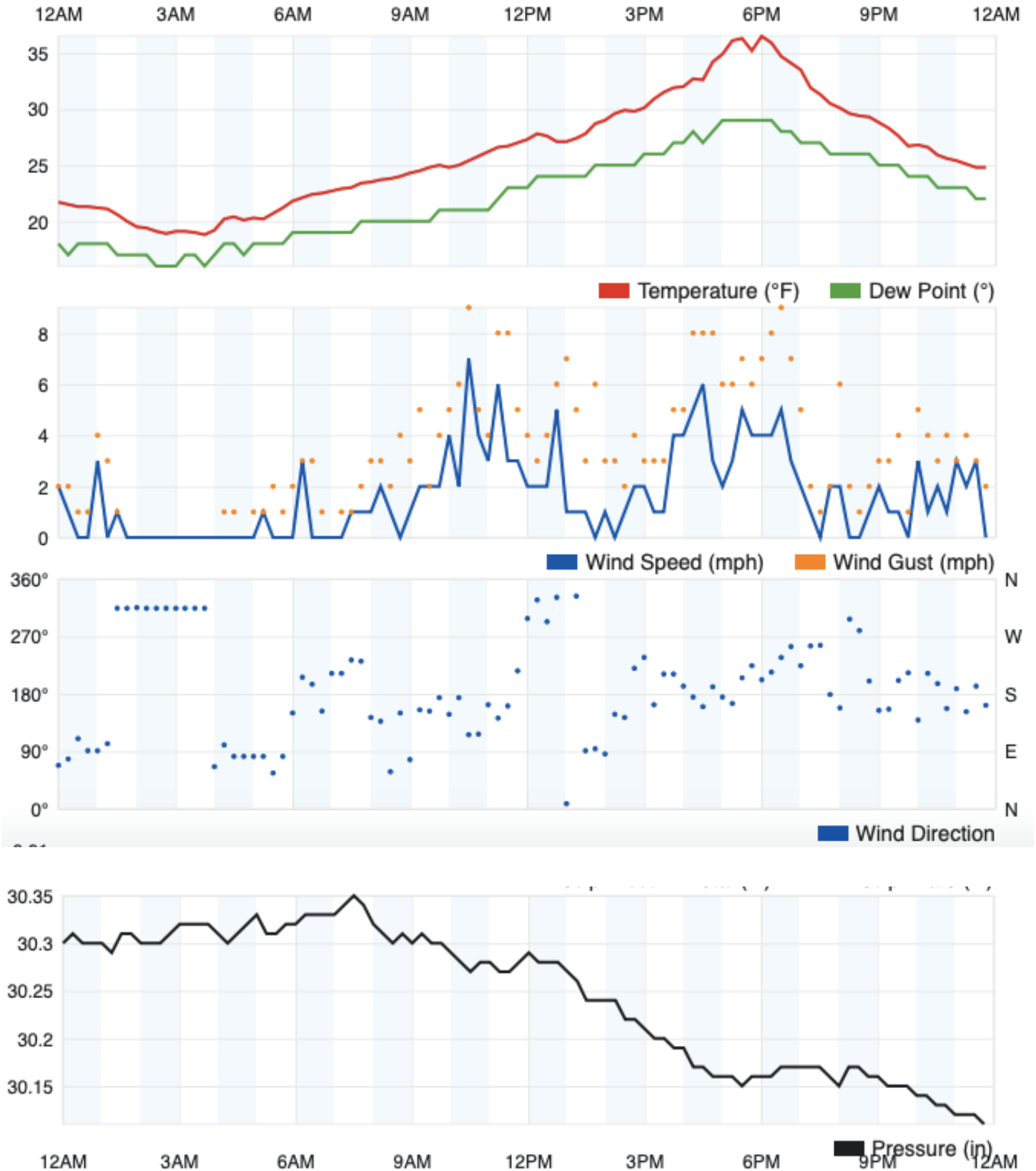
These photos were taken by Julie Bruckner showing the toilet paper all sold out at Walmart in Aberdeen in the top photo and all of the hand sanitizer products in the bottom photo all gone. There have been five confirmed cases of the Coronavirus Virus in South Dakota. None in Brown County at this time.



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Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs



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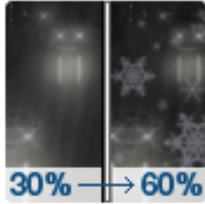
Today

Tonight

Thursday

Thursday
Night

Friday



Patchy Fog
then Mostly
Cloudy

Chance Rain
then
Rain/Snow
Likely

Breezy.
Slight Chance
Snow then
Mostly Sunny

Mostly Clear

Sunny

High: 47 °F

Low: 32 °F

High: 41 °F

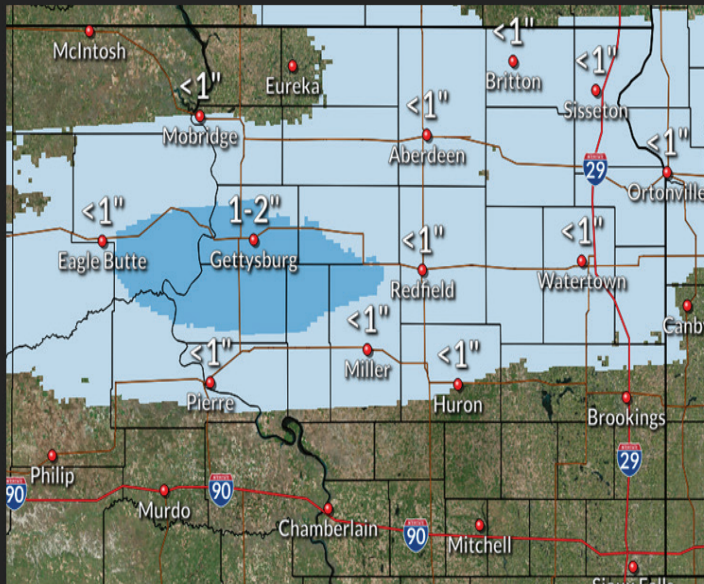
Low: 22 °F

High: 35 °F

Light Snow Today



Area of Accumulating Snow Today



What

A low pressure will spread light, accumulating snow today. Snowfall amounts under an inch is expected for most locations. Central South Dakota could see 1 to 2 inches, mainly on grassy areas. The snow may be mixed with light rain later this afternoon.

Impacts

The visibility may be reduce with the falling snow.

An area of low pressure will cross the region today, bringing light, accumulating snow to some locations. Central South Dakota will have the potential of seeing one to two inches of snow, mainly during this morning. Snowfall amounts of an inch or less are expected elsewhere.

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Today in Weather History

March 11, 1991: A developing winter storm, centered to the south of the Black Hills, caused heavy snow to fall on the northern Black Hills the evening of March 11 until the morning of March 12th. Snowfall totals of 3-9 inches were reported, including 9 inches at Custer, 8 inches at Deerfield, and 8 inches at Lead.

March 11, 2011: A very intense low-pressure area moving across North Dakota brought widespread blizzard conditions to central and northeast South Dakota. The low-pressure area brought 1 to 3 inches of snowfall to the region. This new snow combined with 30 to 50 mph winds with gusts to 60 to 70 mph brought widespread whiteout conditions. Traffic was brought to a standstill, with many motorists having to be rescued and taken to a shelter. Hundreds of cars were stranded on mainly Highway 12 and Interstate-29. Two people traveling on Highway 10 in McPherson County told about how they became stuck and were picked up by another vehicle and that it took them over 2 1/2 hours to travel just a few miles to safety. Interstate-29 was closed from Watertown to Sisseton from 6 pm on the 11th until noon on the 12th. Many events were affected, including the Girls State Basketball Tournament in Watertown. There were several overturned semis along with several vehicle accidents across the area. Some of the highest wind gusts included 56 mph at Watertown; 58 mph at Mobridge, Sisseton, and Faulkton; 59 mph at Aberdeen; 61 mph at Bowdle; 66 mph near Hillhead, and 71 mph west of Long Lake.

1888: The Great Blizzard of 1888 paralyzed the east coast from the Chesapeake Bay to Maine on March 11 through the 14th. The blizzard dumped as much as 55 inches of snow in some areas, and snowdrifts of 30 to 40 feet were reported. An estimated 400 people died from this blizzard.

1897: The coldest March reading at Medicine Hat, Alberta Canada, occurred as the temperature dropped to 38 degrees below zero.

1911: Tamarack, California, reported 451 inches of snow on the ground, a record for the U.S.

1948 - Record cold followed in the wake of a Kansas blizzard. Lows of -25 degrees at Oberlin, Healy and Quinter established a state record for the month of March. Lows of -15 at Dodge City, -11 at Concordia, and -3 at Wichita were also March records. (The Weather Channel)

1962 - One of the most paralyzing snowstorms in decades produced record March snowfalls in Iowa. Four feet of snow covered the ground at Inwood following the storm. (David Ludlum)

1987 - Unseasonably cold weather prevailed in the southeastern U.S., and a storm over the Gulf of Mexico spread rain and sleet and snow into the Appalachian Region. Sleet was reported in southern Mississippi. (The National Weather Summary)

1988 - A blizzard raged across the north central U.S. Chadron NE was buried under 33 inches of snow, up to 25 inches of snow was reported in eastern Wyoming, and totals in the Black Hills of South Dakota ranged up to 69 inches at Lead. Winds gusted to 63 mph at Mullen NE. Snow drifts thirty feet high were reported around Lusk WY. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1989 - Twenty-one cities in the central and southwestern U.S. reported new record high temperatures for the date. The afternoon high of 95 degrees at Lubbock TX equalled their record for March. (The National Weather Summary)

1990 - Forty-four cities in the central and eastern U.S. reported record high temperatures for the date. Record highs included 71 degrees at Dickinson ND and Williston ND, and 84 degrees at Lynchburg VA, Charleston WV and Huntington WV. Augusta GA and Columbia SC tied for honors as the hot spot in the nation with record highs of 88 degrees. A vigorous cold front produced up to three feet of snow in the mountains of Utah. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

2006 - Phoenix's record run for dry days finally ends at 143 days. The last measured rain fell on October 18, 2005. Not only did the rain break the dry spell, the 1.40 inches that fell was a record amount for the date.

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Yesterday's Groton Weather Today's Info

High Temp: 37 °F at 5:56 PM

Low Temp: 19 °F at 3:45 AM

Wind: 10 mph at 6:18 PM

Snow

Record High: 71° in 2016

Record Low: -27° in 1948

Average High: 37°F

Average Low: 18°F

Average Precip in March.: 0.30

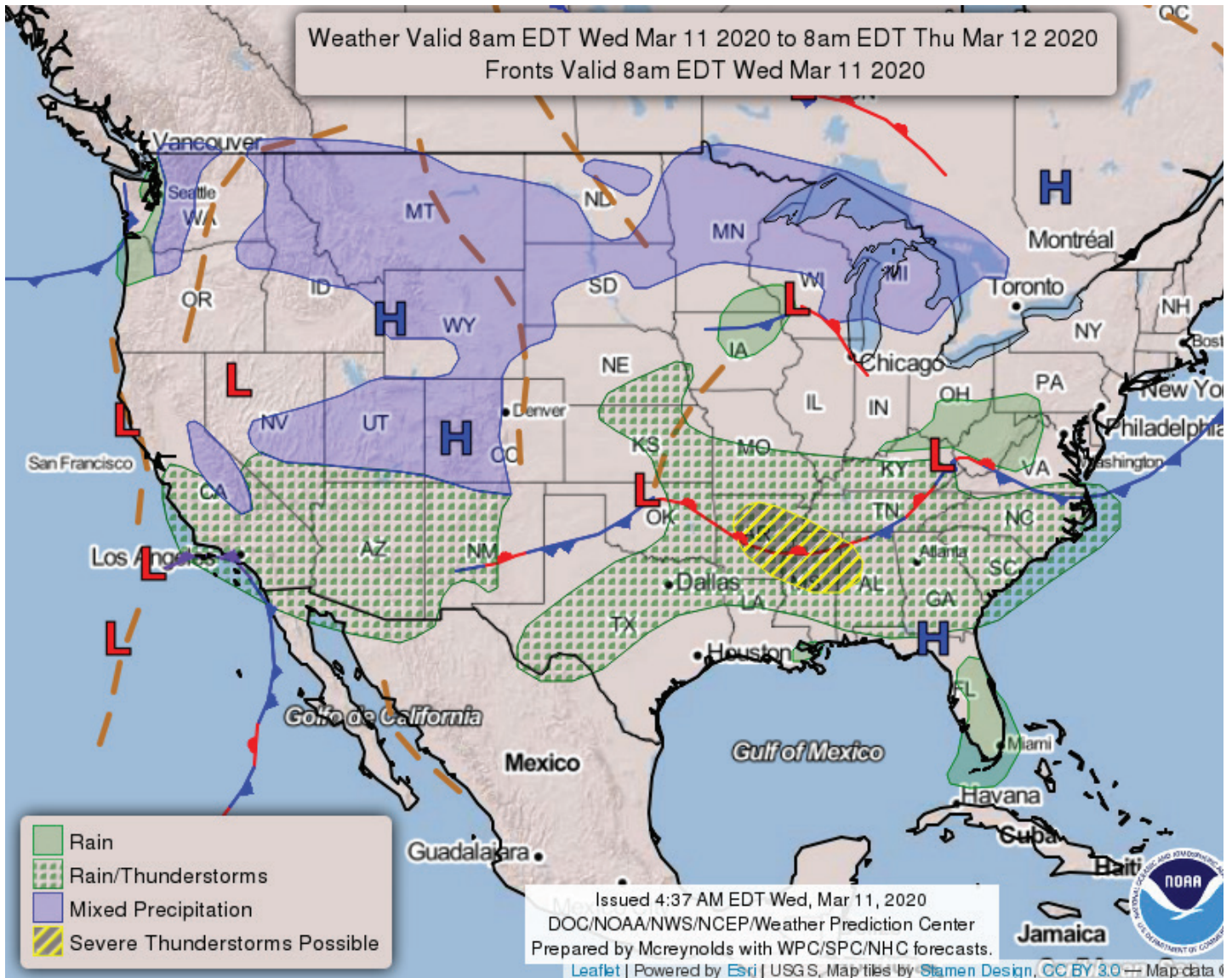
Precip to date in March.: 0.00

Average Precip to date: 1.32

Precip Year to Date: 0.35

Sunset Tonight: 7:35 p.m.

Sunrise Tomorrow: 7:51 a.m.



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KEEP ON KEEPING ON!

Once, during a live performance, a string on the violin of Itzak Perlman, one of the world's greatest violinists broke, making a loud noise. The "snap" of the string echoed throughout the auditorium, stunning the conductor, the orchestra, and the audience. The conductor stopped the performance immediately. Everyone waited in silence, wondering what would happen. It seemed as though they were expecting Perlman to leave the stage and replace the broken string.

Quickly, and without hesitation, he motioned to the conductor and requested that they continue playing the concerto at the precise point where they had stopped. Perlman then joined them using only three strings.

At the conclusion of the concert, the audience gave him a long, standing ovation for his brilliant performance. Finally, when they paused he said, "Sometimes it is the artist's responsibility to find out how much music he can make with what he has left after a tragedy."

Often we are tempted to focus on how little we may have after experiencing a loss in our lives. We sometimes pout and ponder, grumble and gripe, questioning God's wisdom rather than focusing on how much God has given us. We emphasize our fears and failures rather than God's grace and goodness. We look into the mirror and say, "If I had one more string, I could play brilliantly and finish the concert." Or, "God, why didn't you break someone else's string?" Or, "God, why did you do this to me when things were going so well?" Or...or...or...

God gives us opportunities and options, skills and talents, strength and power to meet every situation in life. Too often we willingly give up or give in and look for ways out of a situation where God has placed us, rather than to meet the challenge by calling on Him for His strength and power to overcome difficult times!.

Prayer: Lord, may we choose to rely on Your strength and power to stand fast and face life's obstacles. Help us to rely on You and Your Word, and the gifts You have given us to succeed. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: Romans 12:1 And so, dear brothers and sisters, I plead with you to give your bodies to God because of all he has done for you. Let them be a living and holy sacrifice—the kind he will find acceptable. This is truly the way to worship him.

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2020 Groton SD Community Events

- 03/14/2020 Youth Girls/Boys Basketball Tourney Grades 4th-6th (Baseball/Softball Foundation Fundraiser)
 - 04/04/2020 Groton Lions Club Easter Egg Hunt - City Park (Saturday a week before Easter Weekend)
 - 04/04/2020 Dueling Piano's Baseball Fundraiser at the American Legion
 - 04/25/2020 Fireman's Stag (Same Saturday as GHS Prom)
 - 04/25-26/2020 Front Porch 605 Rural Route Road Trip
 - 04/26/2020 Father/Daughter dance.
 - 05/02/2020 Spring City-Wide Rummage Sales, (1st Saturday in May)
 - 05/11/2020 Girls High School Golf Meet at Olive Grove Golf Course
 - 05/25/2020 Groton American Legion Post #39 Memorial Day Services
 - 06/05/2020 Athletic Fundraiser at Olive Grove Golf Course
 - 06/8-10/2020 St. John's VBS
 - 06/19/2020 SDSU Golf at Olive Grove Golf Course
 - 06/20/2020 Shriner's Golf Tournament at Olive Grove Golf Course
 - 06/22/2020 Olive Grove Golf Course Ladies Invitational
 - 06/26/2020 Groton Businesses Golf Tournament at Olive Grove Golf Course
 - 07/04/2020 Firecracker Golf Tourney at Olive Grove Golf Course
 - 07/12/2020 Summer Fest/Car Show
 - 07/16/2020 Olive Grove Golf Course Pro Am Golf Tourney
 - 07/31-08/04/2020 State American Legion Baseball Tournament in Groton
 - 08/07/2020 Wine on Nine Event at Olive Grove Golf Course
 - 09/12/2020 Fall City-Wide Rummage Sales (1st Sat. after Labor Day)
 - 09/13/2020 Olive Grove Golf Course Couples Sunflower Classic
 - 10/09/2020 Lake Region Marching Band Festival (2nd Friday in October)
 - 10/10/2020 Pumpkin Fest (Saturday before Columbus Day)
 - 10/31/2020 Downtown Trick or Treat
 - 10/31/2020 Groton United Methodist Trunk or Treat
 - 11/14/2020 Groton Legion Annual Turkey Party (Saturday closest to Veteran's Day)
 - 11/26/2020 Community Thanksgiving at the Community Center
 - 12/05/2020 Olive Grove Golf Course Tour of Homes & Holiday Party
 - 12/05/2020 Santa Claus Day at Professional Management Services
 - 01/--/2021 83rd Annual Carnival of Silver Skates
-
- Bingo every Wednesday 6:30pm at the American Legion Post #39
 - Groton Lions Club Wheel of Meat, American Legion Post #39 7pm (Saturday nights November 30th thru April 11th)
 - Groton Lions Club Wheel of Pizza, Jungle Lanes 8pm (Saturday nights November 30th thru April 11th)
-
- All dates are subject to change, check for updates here

News from the Associated Press

Flu and coronavirus: Similar symptoms, different fears

By **MARILYNN MARCHIONE** AP Chief Medical Writer

Is it the flu, a cold or the new coronavirus? Patients and doctors alike are parsing signs of illness to figure out who needs what tests or care and how worried they should be.

"You have three different major viruses floating around at the same time," causing somewhat similar symptoms — but different levels of concern, said Dr. Gary LeRoy, president of the American Academy of Family Physicians.

So what's the biggest danger? And why are we responding to them so differently?

FAMILIAR FOE

COVID-19, the disease caused by the new coronavirus, is a flu-like illness that has killed a small fraction of the number of people that the flu kills every year. Through the first four months of the outbreak, coronavirus has killed about 4,300 people. Flu kills 290,000 to 650,000 every year around the world, according to the World Health Organization.

To some, that comparison seems comforting because flu is such a familiar foe. President Donald Trump regularly brings it up, noting in a tweet how many more Americans die from flu and adding, "Nothing is shut down, life & the economy go on ... Think about that!"

But to public health experts, the huge number of flu deaths is exactly why extraordinary steps should be taken to try to prevent the new coronavirus from spreading widely.

The flu's annual return can't be stopped because it's already so embedded in the population. There is still a chance COVID-19 cases can be limited or spread slowed while treatments are developed.

HOW DEADLY ARE THE VIRUSES?

Flu kills about 0.1% of those it infects, but that's still hundreds of thousands of people each year because it infects millions.

Researchers are still trying to understand just how deadly the new coronavirus is. The mortality rate from infection with the virus isn't known yet because the cases caught in an early part of an outbreak are often the most severe, people with mild or no symptoms aren't being tested, and sometimes overwhelmed hospitals struggle to care for the sickest patients. Various reports have estimated the fatality rate from less than 1% to as high as 4% among cases diagnosed so far, depending on location.

Most people infected by the new coronavirus develop mild or moderate symptoms and recover after about two weeks.

SO WHAT DO I HAVE?

Flu, cold and coronavirus often share certain symptoms, but differences in intensity and how they appear can offer clues to which one is causing the misery. Doctors can test for the flu and get results within a day, but coronavirus testing is still limited by availability in the United States.

Colds are often suspected because adults get about two on average each year, said LeRoy, a family medicine doctor and associate dean at Wright State University in Dayton, Ohio.

"The common cold just starts out with a sore or scratchy throat, cough, runny nose, stuffy nose" and any fever is usually mild, he said.

Flu symptoms are more intense and usually come on suddenly, the Yale New Haven Health System advises. They can include a high fever (over 100.5 degrees), extreme exhaustion, muscle or body aches, a dry cough and chills.

"It really hits you like a bus," and people may start a day well but feel terrible by afternoon, LeRoy said.

Flu symptoms can include a runny or stuffy nose, headaches and possibly vomiting or diarrhea, though the latter two are more common in children than adults, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention says.

Symptoms of COVID-19 may appear more slowly. They usually include fever, a dry cough and noticeable

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shortness of breath, according to the World Health Organization. A minority of cases develop pneumonia, and the disease is especially worrisome for the elderly and those with other medical problems such as high blood pressure, obesity, diabetes or heart conditions.

One study of hospitalized patients in China found that about half did not have a fever when they were admitted but nearly all developed one.

WHAT TO DO IF YOU'RE SICK

Don't go straight to your doctor's office -- that just risks making more people sick, officials urge. Call ahead, and ask if you need to be seen and where.

Fever, cough and noticeable shortness of breath -- "if you have those three components, especially if it's associated with some recent travel or someone you know who's been exposed to COVID-19, those things should prompt you to call for medical attention," LeRoy said.

"Mildly ill patients should be encouraged to stay home," the CDC's Dr. Sue Gerber told doctors on a conference call last week. People having difficulty breathing should seek care, and older people or those with other conditions should contact their doctors early in the course of illness, she said.

PREVENTION

To protect yourself, wash your hands well and often, keep them away from your face, and avoid crowds and standing close to people.

There's one big difference between flu and coronavirus: A vaccine exists to help prevent the flu and it's not too late to get it. It won't protect you from catching the coronavirus, but may put you in a better position to fight it.

"You don't want to have a compromised immune system if you were to encounter coronavirus," LeRoy said.

Marilynn Marchione can be followed on Twitter at <http://twitter.com/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.

SD Lottery

By The Associated Press

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

Mega Millions

06-17-48-54-69, Mega Ball: 12, Megaplier: 5

(six, seventeen, forty-eight, fifty-four, sixty-nine; Mega Ball: twelve; Megaplier: five)

Estimated jackpot: \$75 million

Powerball

Estimated jackpot: \$110 million

N. Dakota St. dismantles N. Dakota for Summit crown

SIoux FALLS, S.D. (AP) — For the fifth time in school history, North Dakota State is headed to the NCAA tournament, and this time it was never in doubt.

The top-seeded Bison led from start to finish and overwhelmed No. 6 North Dakota 89-53 in the Summit League Tournament championship game on Tuesday night and secured the automatic tournament bid.

NDSU's leading scorer, Vinnie Shahid, led the Bison with 25 points on 8-of-14 shooting. Shahid entered the game averaging 18.2 points per game, but he blew by that early in the second half. Tyson Ward scored 15 of his 23 points in the second half for the Bison. He finished with a double-double by also grabbing a game-high 13 rebounds.

"It's contagious. We had confidence in each other," Shahid said. "When one guy sees the ball go in, it boosts the confidence for everybody."

NDSU (25-8) raced to a 13-0 lead and had North Dakota down 21-2 in the first eight minutes of the game.

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The Bison continued to pour it on in the first half, building the lead to as many as 27 points at the break.

North Dakota State was never threatened the rest of the way and continued to build on the lead in the second half, pushing the margin to as many as 39 when Shahid scored to make it 86-47 with three minutes to play. NDSU shot 55% from the field.

"What you're telling your team in those first timeouts is that there's a lot of time left," said North Dakota coach Paul Sather. "You can come back from a 16-18-20 point deficit, but you gotta start stringing some stops together. It just didn't feel like we could string anything together."

The Bison used a solid defensive effort in the first half to create the big separation that North Dakota was never able to overcome. Down 26-7 with nine minutes to play, the Fighting Hawks were just 2 of 14 from the floor. But credit NDSU for some of those shooting woes. North Dakota was better in the second half, shooting 35% from the field, but it was much too late for a comeback.

North Dakota's Marlon Stewart entered the game as the league's top scorer at 18.6 points per game, but struggled against the stingy NDSU defense in the early going. Stewart was just 2 of 8 from the floor with six points at halftime. He finished with 12 points and was never a factor. De'Sean Allen-Likens led the Fighting Hawks with 17 points.

"That's a version of us that we're capable of," NDSU coach David Richman said of the defensive effort. "It was fun especially on this stage."

North Dakota finished shooting 38% from the field, their worst shooting effort in over two months. They were just 3 of 19 from beyond the three-point line, a season-low for the Fighting Hawks.

"It's the biggest stage we're going to play on all year up to this point, and we just played extremely well," Richman said. "Our guys understand moments. When you get that taste like we got last year, that's all that's in your head. You just want that."

BIG PICTURE

North Dakota: The Fighting Hawks finished sixth in the Summit League during the regular season and tried to become the first No. 6 seed to win the Summit League tournament since 2002.

North Dakota State: The Bison qualify for their fifth NCAA tournament in school history. North Dakota State defeated North Carolina Central 78-74 in a First Four victory before losing 85-62 to Duke last season.

STAT OF THE NIGHT

North Dakota State shot 52% from the field in the first half, including an 8-for-11 effort from the 3-point line. NDSU's 49 first-half points ties a Summit League championship game record for points in a first half.

QUOTABLE

"I get accused of not smiling enough, so I'm just going to sit up here and smile," NDSU Coach David Richman said.

UP NEXT

North Dakota: The Fighting Hawks finish the season 16-17.

North Dakota State: The Bison will await the selection show on Sunday where they will find out their NCAA tournament opponent.

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

Tuesday's Scores By The Associated Press

BOYS BASKETBALL=

Class A SoDak 16=

State Qualifier=

Crow Creek 68, Custer 51

Dakota Valley 73, Mobridge-Pollock 60

Dell Rapids 52, Vermillion 45

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Madison 68, Red Cloud 62
Sioux Falls Christian 70, Milbank 54
Sioux Valley 72, Parker 59
St. Thomas More 64, Clark/Willow Lake 51
Tiospa Zina Tribal 64, Pine Ridge 55
Class B SoDak 16=
State Qualifier=
Aberdeen Roncalli 64, Warner 38
Canistota 59, Arlington 58
DeSmet 63, Colman-Egan 42
Faith 81, Marty Indian 76, OT
Platte-Geddes 54, Timber Lake 47
Sully Buttes 58, Herreid/Selby Area 23
Viborg-Hurley 63, Elkton-Lake Benton 40
White River 59, Lyman 46

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

South Dakota announces 5 cases of coronavirus, 1 death

By **STEPHEN GROVES** Associated Press

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) — A South Dakota man with underlying health problems who tested positive for COVID_19 has died, and four others from across the state have tested positive for the virus, officials announced on Tuesday.

Gov. Kristi Noem said the man died Tuesday, but officials have not confirmed if his death was caused by the virus. He was in his 60s and from Pennington County in the western part of the state.

The four other cases confirmed on Tuesday were in separate locations stretching across the state — Beadle, Charles Mix, Davison, and Minnehaha Counties. Health officials said they have not found a link between the cases. The patients were both male and female and in their 30s, 40s and 50s. They are being treated in their homes. Officials are sending the positive samples to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention for further confirmation.

Gov. Kristi Noem said the people had recently traveled, though not necessarily overseas, and that health officials are working to identify those who came into “close contact” with people who tested positive for the virus.

“Our team has been preparing for weeks, and I am confident we have the right people in place to address this fluid situation,” Noem said in a statement. “Without panicking, I encourage all South Dakotans to take this seriously — now is the time to prepare and to stay informed.”

Noem encouraged people to wash their hands and to remotely contact their physician if they experience symptoms of the virus.

For most people, the new coronavirus causes only mild or moderate symptoms, such as fever and cough. For some, especially older adults and people with existing health problems, it can cause more severe illness, including pneumonia.

The vast majority of people recover from the new virus. According to the World Health Organization, people with mild illness recover in about two weeks, while those with more severe illness may take three to six weeks to recover. In mainland China, where the virus first exploded, more than 80,000 people have been diagnosed and more than 58,000 have so far recovered.

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

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

House lawmakers want \$10 million for county roads

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) — The South Dakota House on Tuesday passed a measure to allot \$10 million to county roads as lawmakers decided how to spend \$13 million of one-time spare change in the state budget.

The money is far from a done deal — the Senate would still need to approve the proposal. As the deadline to pass a budget looms on Thursday, Gov. Kristi Noem and lawmakers from the House and Senate are all bartering for their respective funding priorities.

"At this point in time, everyone has the cards on the table," said Rep. Caleb Finck, a Tripp Republican. "This is going to be a piece of that conversation."

Finck said the money would be valuable to cash-strapped counties recovering from last year's flooding. Lawmakers had been casting about this session for ways to help counties and townships repair washed out roads.

The bill contains a funding formula that, among other factors like population and bridges, prioritizes counties with gravel roads. Farmers rely on those roads to transport their crops and livestock, said Finck.

The state's most populous counties would still get the bulk of funding under the formula.

Democrats opposed the bill, arguing the money was not enough to make a real difference and being used as a bargaining chip.

"It's a symbolic gesture," said House Minority Leader Jamie Smith, a Sioux Falls Democrat.

He also raised concerns that the allotment could jeopardize other budget priorities like funding for a School of Health Sciences at University of South Dakota and college scholarships for students.

Rep. Spencer Gosch, a Glenham Republican, said the proposal could be reconsidered by the House as budget negotiations continue this week.

Sjerven, No. 17 South Dakota women win Summit title 63-58

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — Hannah Sjerven scored nine of her 15 points in the fourth quarter and 17th-ranked South Dakota earned a return trip to the NCAA Tournament with a 63-58 win over second-seeded South Dakota State in the Summit League championship game on Tuesday.

The Coyotes trailed 47-45 when South Dakota State scored the last seven points of the third quarter but they held the Jackrabbits to one field goal in the first nine minutes of the fourth quarter to grab their third NCAA berth.

Sjerven scored the first seven points of the fourth quarter and the Coyotes' first nine. South Dakota, only 4 of 11 from the field in the quarter, made 10 of 15 free throws but just 4 of 8 in the final minute.

South Dakota State, seeking its 12th NCAA berth, was 3 of 9 from the field and had five turnovers in the fourth quarter.

The rivals were meeting in the title game for the third year in a row and sixth time overall with South Dakota State (23-10) winning the previous five. Last season the Coyotes (30-2) became the first Summit team to earn an at-large bid.

South Dakota, which won the regular-season meetings by 35 and 10 points, trailed 32-27 at halftime for just its fourth deficit at intermission.

Tagyn Larson scored 16 points for the Jackrabbits and Rylie Cascio Jensen scored 13 points, hitting four 3-pointers, with eight rebounds and five assists.

South Dakota State made 6 of 9 3-pointers in the first half but just 2 of 8 in the second and was outscored by 11 at the foul line.

More AP women's basketball: <https://apnews.com/Womenscollegebasketball> and https://twitter.com/AP_Top25

Excerpts from recent South Dakota editorials

By The Associated Press undefined

Black Hills Pioneer, Spearfish, March 7

Coronavirus no laughing matter

Since its rapid rise around the globe, people have been poking fun at the coronavirus because of its name and the lengths to which some people will go to prevent being infected.

But officials with the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention say the disease is no laughing matter.

The virus has been named "SARS-CoV-2" and the disease it causes has been named "coronavirus disease 2019" (abbreviated "COVID-19").

Coronavirus is a respiratory illness that can spread from person to person. Symptoms are similar to that of the flu, fever, runny nose, headache, sore throat and cough. Some patients get pneumonia in both lungs, multi-organ failure, and in some cases die from the disease.

Let's put into perspective just how this compares with other remarkable disease events in our nation's history.

There have been about three influenza pandemics in each century for the last 300 years, the most recent one being the 2009 flu pandemic.

The 1918 influenza pandemic in the U.S. remains a benchmark for being the most severe in recent history. It was caused by an H1N1 virus. Although there is not universal consensus regarding where the virus originated, it spread worldwide during 1918-1919.

In the United States, it was first identified in military personnel in spring 1918. It is estimated that about 500 million people or one-third of the world's population became infected with this virus. The number of deaths was estimated to be at least 50 million worldwide with about 675,000 occurring in the United States.

As of Friday, there were 100,713 coronavirus cases; 3,412 deaths and 55,995 people who have recovered from the virus across the globe. But without a known cure at this time that number could skyrocket.

People need to remember that advances in medical technology may lead us to a vaccine sooner rather than later.

Within two weeks of the recent outbreak, scientists had identified it as a coronavirus, sequenced its genome, and discovered that the most likely animal hosts were bats. This information, which was published by a Chinese team, was instantly shared across the scientific community, allowing research labs around the world to begin the long and complicated process of understanding the virus, and finding a vaccine and a cure.

The South Dakota Department of Health is being proactive in fighting the spread of the disease.

On Wednesday the DOH gave an informational briefing for the Legislature's Health and Human Services Committee. Then, on Thursday, the DOH hosted a webinar for healthcare providers statewide about the coronavirus. They also have launched a website with information about the coronavirus at doh.sd.gov/news/Coronavirus.aspx

You can do your part to help curb the spread of the virus, said Dr. Joshua Clayton, South Dakota's state epidemiologist.

"South Dakotans can help stop the spread of germs by washing your hands often, covering coughs and sneezes, cleaning surfaces regularly, and staying home if you are sick," he said.

So, be safe, practice good health habits and take warnings about the virus seriously. This is no laughing matter.

Aberdeen American News, March 7

Are you ready for the rewards of fostering?

Foster families are something special.

Just look at reporter Elisa Sand's story on the front page for an idea of how selfless, generous and helpful they are. Crucial, even.

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It's easy to come up with reasons not to be a foster family, and it's certainly not for everybody. But many of the obstacles some of us see aren't really valid obstacles at all.

"The biggest objection I always hear is ... " Brian La Croix started before his wife Debra finished his thought.

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

It would likely be profoundly sad to take a child into your home, grow to know and love that young person and live and learn together for weeks, months or even years before he or she gets to return home. But that's the job. And the goal. That means success. So thank heaven there are people willing to answer the call.

Watertown foster parent Andrea Shupe shares the calling with the La Croix family of Aberdeen. The arguments against being a foster parent just don't wash to her.

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

In other words, it's about the kids.

Brian La Croix was certainly clear about that.

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

South Dakota has a shortage of foster families. And that certainly doesn't set us apart from other places.

But providing love and stability — and maybe even safety and regular meals — to kids who might not know those things is one of the finest services we can think of.

It takes money, even though the state helps. It takes time. It involves allowing strangers in your home. It involves calls to and from the state and others. It's not exactly convenient.

There's no way — no possible way — it's not heartbreaking at times.

But it's so much more. It's allowed the La Croixs to expand their family. In all, they have adopted seven children. Two sibling groups they initially fostered.

They wouldn't foster let alone adopt young people if there wasn't ample reward.

So here's the question: Is that reward something you would be interested in? Do you have the heart to help? The patience? The strength? The room in your home? If you think you might, it's time to have a serious talk with your spouse, if you have one. But being single doesn't preclude you from fostering. Shupe is single.

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

She, too, is part of a village of love and support. Foster families exemplify those traits, or at least they should. There's no price tag that can be attached to the service they provide. If things go well, they are repaid in love.

That's a pretty great currency. Sometimes it seems the world is running a little short of it. So who can blame those who want to hoard it?

Foster parenting isn't for everybody. But it's not just for those who are perfect or rich or married or "ready," whatever that means.

It's not just for pastors or doctors or counselors or those who are already parents.

If you think it might be for you, call the state Department of Social Services or visit fosterone.sd.gov. Or reach out to the La Croixs or Shupe or a foster family you might know. We feel sure they'll be happy to visit with you.

South Dakota has a need for foster families. It's not easy work, but it sure is important. Maybe you can help make a difference in the lives of children.

Madison Daily Leader, March 3

Making a case to shorten early voting

We've all read that today is "Super Tuesday," the day when 14 states cast primary ballots to nominate

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candidates for the Democratic nominee for president.

One of biggest of those states is Texas, which allows early voting, sometimes known as "no-excuse absentee voting." South Dakota also allows early voting.

About 700,000 Texas voters voted before Super Tuesday, which became a problem when two prominent Democratic primary candidates -- Amy Klobuchar and Pete Buttigieg -- dropped out. Voters who cast their ballots for those two candidates essentially wasted their vote.

We've written in this space before about early voting regret, in which voters change their minds about candidates, usually based on new information or some other factor.

The reasons for allowing voting before election day include a planned absence, avoiding long lines, or other reasons of convenience. Supporters say more people vote when offered this convenience, and they are probably correct.

But we believe the voting window is too wide: In South Dakota, voters can vote as early as 46 days before an election. For this year's presidential election, a South Dakota voter could cast a ballot as early as Sept. 18. A lot of things could happen in the last six and a half weeks. There may be a particular speech, debate or event that causes a voter to think differently about a candidate.

For some local elections, campaigning doesn't even start until after Labor Day. Do we want them to be forced to campaign earlier?

We heard an alternative idea yesterday, which would be clearly impractical. A Texas voter who had voted early for Klobuchar suggested that a voter would vote for up to three candidates in order of preference. If the top choice drops out of the race, the second choice would be counted. We don't think it would work at all.

We believe in early voting, but just not so early. A more reasonable time frame -- like two weeks -- should be able to accommodate virtually everyone. Maybe add a provision that a person could vote a little earlier than that with a reason, like traveling for that entire period. That's the way all absentee voting used to be handled, and could be used again.

We think legislators in future years should considered making changes to South Dakota early voting protocols to improve the process.

Prosecutors argue to include DNA evidence in old murder case

SIoux FALLS, S.D. (AP) — Prosecutors are asking a judge to deny a defense request to exclude DNA evidence used to charge a Sioux Falls woman with killing her newborn nearly 40 years ago.

Attorneys for Theresa Bentaas want to suppress DNA evidence obtained from her trash because investigators didn't have a search warrant.

Prosecutors in Minnehaha County argue there is no "blanket rule" from the U.S. and South Dakota Supreme Courts on giving trash constitutional protection against unreasonable searches, the Argus Leader reported.

Bentaas, 58, was charged with first- and second-degree murder last year after investigators say they used advances in DNA evidence and genealogy sites to determine she was the mother of an infant found abandoned in a cornfield ditch in Sioux Falls in 1981. The baby died of exposure.

She is scheduled for a three-week jury trial in April.

Italy's lockdown reshapes family life in time of coronavirus

By COLLEEN BARRY Associated Press

SOAVE, Italy (AP) — Italian Premier Giuseppe Conte's decision to lock down the entire country brought some welcome clarity to my family life after weeks of growing uncertainty about how to behave in a time of coronavirus.

I live that stereotype of the multi-generational Italian family, next door to in-laws, both over 80 and suffering from a collection of non-debilitating ailments common for their age. I also live with two teenagers, one of whom in particular has chafed against any suggestion that his social life should be curtailed just

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when the virus has freed him from that age-old adolescent burden: school.

So as I continued to commute to my job as an Associated Press correspondent based in Milan, the capital of Lombardy, from a small town in neighboring Veneto, the virus seemed both near and far.

Near, because the two regions were quickly identified as hot spots with growing numbers of infections and two so-called red zones — but far, because no one we knew was sick, and many of the restrictions were still theoretical. They boiled down to frequent hand-washing.

Virus fear escalated in mid-February as I covered Milan Fashion Week, shoulder-to-shoulder with fashion types from all over the globe, and where the closing show by Giorgio Armani was streamed without an audience as a precaution. But the closest cluster — not yet a red zone — was still an hour away.

As the first restrictions took effect in Veneto and Lombardy — closing schools, museums, cinemas and bars after 6 p.m. — we scoffed at the reactive panic shopping. What were people doing with all that toilet paper? We had flour and pasta aplenty at home. And who needs a shopping cart full of bottled water? The taps weren't being turned off.

The first day of the new measures was supposed to be the start of a three-day family break for Carnival in Nice, on the coast in neighboring France. But our sociable son woke up with a fever and stomach flu symptoms, and we decided it was better not to chance crossing the border as Italy became a focal point in coronavirus coverage.

Normally we would have gone, stomach flu or not, and instructed the teen to sleep in the car, reasoning that the sea air would do him good. The painful decision to cancel seemed particularly wise after hearing reports of Italian cars being stopped in France for temperature checks. Imagine being found out transporting a feverish 16-year-old: the personal horror, the probable headlines.

Back at work, I wrote about social distancing, about how Italians' habit of kissing could be part of the problem, before the 1-meter (yard) distancing rule started to gain currency. At home, we began a weeks-long struggle to impress upon invincible youth how vulnerable the elderly are to the virus.

I compensated for our dashed holiday by taking my daughter spring clothes shopping in teen-focused stores where we no longer had to queue for dressing rooms. We ate out in empty restaurants. We had facials. We had to order ice cream at a table, not at the counter. It was the same when we wanted a quick refreshment after 6 p.m. — sit at a table, don't just stand at the bar.

Cities were empty, parking places too easy to find, but we didn't feel particularly discouraged to be out. In fact, a hashtag began to circulate: #milanononsiferma, or #milandoesntstop. By being out -- as long as we washed our hands frequently -- we were doing our civic duty.

Then virus cases skyrocketed, with Italy registering the most infections outside of China. My in-laws stopped going to the grocery store, instead ordering online. And they stopped kissing their grandchildren every morning and evening, as has been their habit.

Finally, my children got remote homework assignments, and teachers started organizing video classes — even if the app sometimes failed. The notion of a holiday was over.

Then this past weekend, we saw the red zone expand from two distant dots on the map — east and west — to provinces just 30 minutes each direction. A Sunday family dinner with my kids' four cousins -- who are also going stir-crazy with no school — was canceled by the new travel ban out of Lombardy.

Also scratched were my plans to hop over on a free day and see Venice in its newfound quiet after a hotel owner with zero rooms booked because of the virus described the glassy surface of the Grand Canal absent boats transporting Venetians and their wares.

Finally, on Monday evening, the red ink of the restricted travel zone soaked through the entire map of Italy, which had become one big hot spot. The same day, the first confirmed case was announced on Facebook by the mayor of our town. Suddenly, the virus was just near. And Conte declared the new Italian motto: "I stay at home."

When I told my son, standing at his Playstation, about the national lockdown until April 3, he looked dejected. "How many days is that? What am I going to do for a month?" But for the first time in three weeks, he accepted he couldn't go out that night.

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

Russia passes bill allowing Putin to stay in power past 2024

MOSCOW (AP) — The Russian parliament approved a sweeping constitutional reform in the third and final reading Wednesday, a move that will allow President Vladimir Putin to stay in power for another 12 years after his current term ends in 2024.

The Kremlin-controlled lower house, the State Duma, endorsed a set of amendments to the constitution and a provision resetting the term count for Putin after the revised constitution goes into force. It passed by a 383-0 vote with 43 abstentions.

A nationwide vote on the proposed amendments is set for April 22.

Kremlin critics condemned the move as a cynical manipulation and called for protests.

Putin, a 67-year-old former KGB officer, has ruled Russia for more than 20 years. After serving for two consecutive four-year terms — a limit outlined in the current version of the constitution — Putin shifted to prime minister's seat in 2008, with his close ally Dmitry Medvedev becoming a placeholder president.

The length of the presidency was extended to six years under Medvedev, and in 2012 Putin returned to the Kremlin as president. In 2018, he was re-elected for another six years.

Putin has weathered several international storms during his 20 years in power. The 2014 annexation of the Crimean Peninsula, which prompted a drawn-out, years-long conflict with Ukraine, significantly boosted his approval ratings back at home.

As Moscow's relations with the West soured over the 2014 annexation and more scandals followed, the Kremlin kept Putin's popularity high by painting Russia as a besieged fortress in need of a strong leader to withstand the outside pressure.

The constitutional reform passed by the Duma on Wednesday would allow Putin to run for presidency two more times after 2024. Before the national vote, it will be reviewed by Russia's Constitutional Court.

The changes redistribute the executive powers of the Russian government in Moscow and further strengthen the power of the presidency, while also banning same-sex marriage and listing "a belief in God" as one of Russia's traditional values.

The proposal to restart the term clock for the current president was put forward by 83-year-old former Soviet cosmonaut Valentina Tereshkova, now a Duma deputy, during the second reading of the amendments on Tuesday. Following Tereshkova's speech, Putin quickly arrived at parliament to address the lawmakers and supported the idea.

The move prompted immediate calls for protests from various opposition groups. On Tuesday night, about 200 people gathered near the Kremlin and lined up to hold solo pickets — the only form of protest in Russia that is legal without prior authorization from the government — against the reform.

"It was clear from the start that it is being done to keep Putin in power forever," opposition activist Alexei Miniaylo, who called for the pickets on his Facebook page on Tuesday, told The Associated Press. "But the brazen manner in which it was done elicited outrage."

Two opposition groups called for a bigger rally in Moscow on March 21 or March 22 and applied for authorization with the city authorities. Soon after, Moscow City Hall announced banning outdoor events with attendance of more than 5,000 until April 10, saying it was part of precautionary steps to prevent the spread of the new coronavirus.

Activists remained unfazed, however, and on Wednesday morning refiled their requests, amending the maximum number of participants from 50,000 to 4,500. "Our position is that if the coronavirus is such a dangerous threat, then they should cancel the vote (on the constitutional reform), as it can expose millions of people to infection," Mikhail Svetov, leader of the Civil Society movement, told the AP. "And if it is not that dangerous, then rallies should be allowed."

Pickets and protests were being organized in other Russian cities as well, said Tatyana Usmanova, an

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activist with the "No" group formed two months ago to coordinate the opposition effort against the reform. "It gets to people, because it is totally out of line," Usmanova said.

Facing recession, Europe grasps for ways to limit damage

By DAVID McHUGH AP Business Writer

FRANKFURT, Germany (AP) — Suddenly staring recession in the face, European leaders are lining up an array of tax breaks, financial support for companies and likely central bank measures in the hope of preventing the coronavirus outbreak from dealing long-term damage to the economy.

Expectations have grown that European Central Bank officials will announce more monetary stimulus when they meet Thursday, after the Bank of England acted Wednesday and the U.S. Federal Reserve last week.

The European Commission plans to set up a 25 billion-euro (\$28 billion) investment fund to support the health care system, businesses and labor market measures. The Italian government is offering an aid package of about the same size.

Yet any such actions will likely be more damage limitation than cure.

Monetary stimulus and government spending can spur demand for goods. But the coronavirus deals a shock from the supply side by closing businesses and making people stay home, highlighted by Italy's dramatic decision this week to limit travel and public gatherings across the country. Lower interest rates or tax cuts cannot solve that.

Meanwhile, action to help the 19 countries that use the euro currency faces constraints from the lack of a large central treasury, a hurdle other large economies like the U.S. and China do not face.

"The world is facing a medical emergency that monetary and fiscal policy cannot fix," said Holger Schmieding, chief economist at Berenberg private bank.

The best policymakers can do for the economy is to prevent the virus from dealing prolonged damage even after the outbreak ends, to keep small- and medium-sized companies that provide most of the jobs in the economy from going out of business due to a short-term issue beyond their control.

Among the most affected are companies involved in travel. The number of people going through European airports is expected to fall by 187 million this year, hurting hotels, restaurants, cabdrivers and airlines. Lufthansa is cutting up to half of its flights from April. Ryanair suspended all flights to and from Italy. Exhibition centers have seen trade fairs postponed and football matches are taking place in empty stadiums.

The investment fund announced Tuesday night by European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen is drawn from the existing EU budget. The 25 billion size of the fund is only around 0.1% of the annual 18.8 trillion euro (\$20.7 trillion) EU economy.

Von der Leyen said national leaders including German Chancellor Angela Merkel and French President Emmanuel Macron agreed during a video conference Tuesday to "use all the tools at our disposal so that the European economy weathers this storm." That includes being flexible in EU rules limiting debt and coming up with clear guidelines on permissible state aid to companies.

"We will make sure that state aid can flow to the companies that need it," she said.

At the national level, Italy, which has been hit hardest by far by the virus outbreak, is earmarking 25 billion euros to confront the crisis. It will support health services, ensure people do not lose jobs due to travel restrictions and support families by, for example, delaying payments on mortgages and taxes. More detail on the aid is due Friday.

Britain, no longer a member of the European Union but still an important trade partner, is expected to announce fiscal stimulus and business support measures when the budget is announced Thursday. The Bank of England added stimulus by cutting a key interest benchmark to 0.25% from 0.75%.

Even Germany is softening its longstanding opposition to increasing government spending to boost growth. The cabinet has discussed a package of measures including 3.1 billion euros in extra investment spending per year from 2021 to 2024. That is only 0.1% of GDP but experts say it's a step in the right direction and can always be scaled up.

The German government meanwhile agreed to make it easier for companies to put workers on shortened

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hours. The short-time work program is credited with limiting job losses during the Great Recession in 2009 and with speeding the rebound afterward, since companies kept their workers on and did not need to reassemble a trained factory workforce. The government is also considering tax relief for companies if their sales fall suddenly.

Analysts say the European Central Bank is likely to take stimulus steps at its policy meeting Thursday. Possibilities include cutting its deposit rate benchmark deeper into negative territory, to minus 0.6% from minus 0.5%, effectively pushing banks to lend more money.

The ECB could also raise its current program of bond purchases from 20 billion euros (\$22 billion) a month to as much as 40 billion euros (\$44 billion) a month and focus more on bonds issued by companies, which would aim at lowering borrowing costs for the private sector. The central bank could also issue more cheap, long-term credit to banks on the condition the money is loaned to businesses.

Yet all this can only "limit the damage to demand," said Schmieding. He estimates that the eurozone economy could shrink 0.4% in the first quarter and 0.5% in the second, putting it in recession. A rebound in the second half would still leave the economy slightly smaller for the year.

Oliver Rakau, chief German economist at Oxford Economics, said Europe might be only beginning to face the need for new investment and financial aid.

"This is a broadly right and a welcome response limiting the hit to household incomes and firm profits," he said. "But we continue to think that more will be needed, once the fallout from the current economic shock becomes clearer."

10 Things to Know for Today

By The Associated Press undefined

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

1. **BIDEN HAS ANOTHER BIG PRIMARY NIGHT** The former vice president wins Michigan's Democratic primary, a key battleground state, as well as Missouri, Mississippi and Idaho, dealing a serious blow to Bernie Sanders and widening his path to the nomination.

2. **SANDERS CAMPAIGN AT A CROSSROADS** The face of the Democrats' far-left flank is suddenly staring up at a wall of opposition from his own party, an urgent call to unify against President Trump and a growing delegate disadvantage.

3. **'THE EPICENTER — THE NEW CHINA — IS EUROPE'** In the U.S., the new coronavirus caseload passes 1,000 while in Europe, an increasingly locked-down Italy counts more than 10,000 infections and records soaring deaths among its aging population.

4. **AMERICANS TAKE NEW SAFEGUARDS AGAINST VIRUS** Some governors and other leaders are scrambling to slow the coronavirus' spread, banning large public gatherings, enforcing quarantines and calling National Guard troops.

5. **GLOBAL SHARES MIXED AS WORRIES COUNTER FISCAL STEPS** European markets open higher after Asian shares mostly decline, as governments ramp up aid for economies reeling from the virus outbreak.

6. **RUSSIA PASSES PRO- PUTIN BILL** The Russian parliament approves a sweeping constitutional reform, a move that will allow Vladimir Putin to stay in power for another 12 years after his current term ends in 2024.

7. **WEINSTEIN FACES SENTENCING, PRISON** The final act for the once-powerful film producer begins in New York when he will be sentenced following his conviction in the landmark #MeToo rape trial.

8. **AFGHANS SET TO RELEASE 1,500 TALIBAN** The delayed decree by President Ashraf Ghani is a goodwill gesture to get intra-Afghan negotiations started.

9. **EARTH GETTING CONSIDERABLY WARMER** The head of the U.N. weather agency says last year was the second warmest on record, the past decade the hottest in human history and January the warmest January since 1850.

10. **WHAT LOS ANGELES OPERA FOUND 'CREDIBLE'** A probe into sexual harassment allegations against □Plácido Domingo finds that the legendary tenor engaged in "inappropriate conduct" with multiple women

over three decades there.

Weinstein faces sentencing, prison in landmark #MeToo case

By MICHAEL R. SISK and TOM HAYS Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Harvey Weinstein is back in court Wednesday for the final act of the rape trial that landed him behind bars: a sentencing hearing where the once-powerful film producer will learn just how long he'll stay in prison for his landmark #MeToo conviction.

Weinstein is scheduled to be sentenced in New York City. He faces a minimum of 5 years and a maximum of 29 years in prison for raping an aspiring actress in 2013 and forcibly performing oral sex on a TV and film production assistant in 2006. A second criminal case is pending in California.

Both women that Weinstein was convicted of assaulting are expected to be in court to give victim impact statements before he is sentenced. Weinstein will also have a chance to speak. He opted not to testify at his trial, but at sentencing he won't have to worry about getting grilled by prosecutors.

Other women who've accused Weinstein — including some who testified at his trial — are not permitted to speak at his sentencing under state law. One of those witnesses, Tarale Wulff, who accused Weinstein of raping her in 2005, said in a statement Tuesday that she will still attend and hopes that the sentence "sends a clear message that times have changed."

Weinstein was convicted on two counts: criminal sex act for the 2006 assault on the production assistant and rape in the third degree for a 2013 attack on another woman. On the criminal sex act count, he faced a minimum of five years in prison and a maximum of 25 years in prison, while the third-degree rape count carries a maximum penalty of four years in prison.

Weinstein was acquitted of first-degree rape and two counts of predatory sexual assault stemming from actress Annabella Sciorra's allegations of a mid-1990s rape. Weinstein maintains his innocence and contends that any sexual activity was consensual.

Newly unsealed documents show the 67-year-old former film producer sought help from billionaires Jeff Bezos and Michael Bloomberg as sexual misconduct allegations against him piled up in October 2017, and that he considered issuing a statement at the time claiming that he was suicidal. There is no evidence to suggest either man responded.

The New York case was the first criminal matter against Weinstein to arise from accusations of more than 90 women, including actresses Gwyneth Paltrow, Salma Hayek and Uma Thurman. Many of Weinstein's accusers say he used his Hollywood prestige to befriend them, dangling movie roles to gain their trust.

Weinstein's lawyers are seeking the minimum sentence of five years in prison because of his age and frail health.

Weinstein, who turns 68 next week, used a walker throughout the trial following recent back surgeries. After his Feb. 24 conviction, he split time between a hospital and a jail infirmary unit, and had a stent inserted last week to unblock an artery.

"Given his age and specific medical risk factors, any additional term of imprisonment above the mandatory minimum — although the grave reality is that Mr. Weinstein may not even outlive that term — is likely to constitute a de facto life sentence," Weinstein's lawyers wrote in a sentencing memorandum filed Monday.

Once Weinstein is sentenced, he'll be transferred from the city's jail system to the state prison system. The agency that runs New York's state prisons said every inmate is evaluated to determine which facility meets his or her security, medical, mental health and other needs.

Martin Horn, the city's former corrections commissioner, said Weinstein's celebrity status could make him a target for another inmate looking to make a name for himself, while the gravity of his convictions and sentence could raise suicide concerns.

"No jail wants to have the next Jeffrey Epstein," said Horn, who now teaches at John Jay College of Criminal Justice. "They're going to make sure that nothing happens to him while he's in their custody. Not because he's important, but just from a public relations point of view, it would be awfully embarrassing."

Prosecutors did not ask for a specific number of years in prison in their sentencing memorandum, but

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said that Weinstein deserves severe punishment to account for allegations dating to the 1970s that didn't lead to criminal charges.

In their letter, prosecutors outlined 16 examples they said showed Weinstein "trapped women into his exclusive control" so he could sexually assault them, starting when he was working as a music producer in Buffalo in 1978.

Fordham University law professor Cheryl Bader said she expects Judge James Burke to impose a harsh sentence.

"One of the underlying principles of the law of punishment is promoting general deterrence," Bader said. "I think Judge Burke will want to send a message to 'would be' sexual predators that the hammer of the law will come down hard on you if you use your power — physical and otherwise — to manipulate and sexual abuse victims."

Just as jury selection was about to get under way in the New York case in January, authorities in California announced they were also bringing criminal charges against Weinstein.

Weinstein was charged in California with raping a woman at a Los Angeles hotel on Feb. 18, 2013, after pushing his way inside her room, then sexually assaulting a woman in a Beverly Hills hotel suite the next night.

On Twitter, follow Mike Sisak at twitter.com/mikesisak and Tom Hays at twitter.com/aptomhays

AP VoteCast: Electability boosts Biden, Sanders falls short

By JOSH BOAK and HANNAH FINGERHUT Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Joe Biden went into Tuesday's primaries riding a wave of voter confidence about his chances of victory in November — and that propelled him to wins in Michigan, Missouri and Mississippi.

Democratic primary voters in those states were more likely to think the former vice president could defeat President Donald Trump in the general election, compared with Biden's top rival, Vermont Sen. Bernie Sanders, according to AP VoteCast surveys of voters.

The Associated Press also called Biden the winner in Idaho.

The surveys showed Biden built a coalition that crossed the spectrum of Democrats. African Americans and older voters continued to be a reliable foundation of support for Biden. He also drew support from blue-collar workers, rural voters, city dwellers, women, the highly educated, moderates, conservatives and even the "somewhat liberal," according to AP VoteCast.

Sanders, meanwhile, preserved his strength with voters younger than 30 and those who consider themselves "very liberal." But he failed in his push to drive up turnout among those groups and couldn't overcome the concerns of moderate and conservative Democrats who are focused first and foremost on expelling Trump from the White House.

AP VoteCast surveys are designed to capture voters' views regardless of when or how they voted, accounting for the many voters in Michigan and other states who voted early. Here's a look at voters' opinions as they cast their ballots in half of the six contests on Tuesday.

ELECTABILITY

Voters generally view Biden as the better match against Trump. About 80% in Michigan and Missouri believe Biden could beat the incumbent, while roughly 90% in Mississippi feel that way. Just about 60% of voters in each state think Sanders would be likely to defeat the incumbent president.

Still, there is some notable indecision among primary voters about whom they'll cast a ballot for in November. Roughly 80% in each state say they will definitely vote for the Democratic candidate against Trump no matter who is nominated. But close to 20% say their decision depends on which candidate becomes the nominee.

In Michigan, a state that flipped Republican in 2016, those undecided voters looked more like potential Trump voters than liberals unhappy with the prospect of a Biden nomination. Among voters saying their November decision depends on the nominee, about 2 in 10 describe themselves as conservative and

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roughly half say they are moderate. That's largely true in Republican-leaning Missouri as well.

WHO IS VOTING?

In the Democratic presidential contests, it's all about what women want.

About 60% of Democratic primary voters in Michigan, Missouri, Mississippi were women. This fits a pattern in most states where a firm majority of voters are women. This has helped boost Biden, who has beating Sanders among women voters.

Other key Democratic demographics showed up for Biden on Tuesday. In Mississippi, about 70% of voters were African American, and Biden won 86% of their votes, compared with Sanders' 11%. About 70% of Mississippi voters described themselves as moderate or conservative, another base of Biden support.

THE YOUNG AND THE RESTLESS

Sanders still gets love from voters under 30, but he has not delivered on his strategy of getting them to the polls.

He won 72% of this group in Missouri and 65% in Michigan. But the under-30 crowd was just 14% of voters in Missouri and 13% in Michigan — about the same share as in previous primaries contests. In other bad news for Sanders, he showed no particular strength with voters age 30 to 44, typically a larger share of the vote than the very young.

In all three states, older voters dominated. At least 60% of voters were 45 and older, a group Biden has won over handily.

BLUE COLLAR LOYALTIES

Both Biden and Sanders have claimed to be the working-class candidate. On Tuesday, Biden assembled a coalition that could back him up.

About 60% of voters in Missouri and Michigan don't have a college degree, and Biden won about 60% of their votes in both states. At least 40% of voters earn less than \$50,000; Biden won a majority of their votes.

Biden's strength among voters without a college degree crossed race and gender, suburbs and cities. Only young people defied the trend. Sanders appeared to beat Biden with voters under 45 who don't have a college degree.

YOU SAY YOU WANT A REVOLUTION

Voters in New Hampshire and Iowa wanted to change the U.S. political system. That turned out to be an outlier as the nomination battle spread to other states.

In the opening two contests, about two-thirds of voters wanted a Democratic nominee who would transform the government, compared with roughly a third who would rather return to a time before Trump. But as Biden climbed to the pole position, the answers to this question have shifted. Voters on Tuesday were about evenly split on the question of change versus restoration, or even leaned more toward a restoration of the way things were, as in Mississippi.

WHERE IS THE ENTHUSIASM?

Even if Democratic primary voters like their odds in November, enthusiasm isn't overwhelming. Just about half of voters in Michigan and Missouri and roughly two-thirds in Mississippi say they are very enthusiastic about the candidate they are supporting in the primary. In all three states, roughly a third are somewhat enthusiastic. As many as 1 in 10 expressed little to no enthusiasm.

In Missouri and Michigan, Sanders' supporters are more enthusiastic than Biden's. About two-thirds of Sanders' voters said they were very enthusiastic about supporting their candidate, compared with about half of Biden's supporters saying the same.

TOP ISSUES

Despite fears that the coronavirus could stop the longest economic expansion in U.S. history, there does not yet appear to be a spike in voters' concern about the economy. Just about 1 in 10 voters in Missouri said the economy was the most important. Only 17% in Michigan described the economy and jobs as most critical, roughly comparable to the share saying that of climate change.

In Mississippi, where a majority of voters were African American, about a quarter viewed the economy

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as the top issue. That's about the same share as in Alabama, which voted last week.

Health care was the top issue for voters in all three states, as it has been in other Democratic presidential contests. Close to half of voters in Missouri, and about 40% of voters in Michigan and Mississippi, name health care the top priority.

UNFAIR ECONOMY

Still, economic inequality is a key concern for Democrats.

Roughly three-quarters of voters in each state consider the economic system in this country to be unfair, similar to Democratic voters in contests earlier this year. Many — a third or more — call the system "very unfair."

About a quarter of voters said they were "falling behind" financially, while majorities felt they were holding steady. Roughly half of voters in Michigan, and about 60% of voters in Missouri and Mississippi, who are "falling behind" called the system highly unfair.

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.

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

Joe Biden has another big primary night, wins 4 more states

By WILL WEISSERT and LAURIE KELLMAN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Joe Biden decisively won Michigan's Democratic presidential primary, seizing a key battleground state that helped propel Bernie Sanders' insurgent candidacy four years ago. The former vice president's victory there, as well as in Missouri, Mississippi and Idaho, dealt a serious blow to Sanders and substantially widened Biden's path to the nomination.

Biden again showed strength Tuesday with working-class voters and African Americans, who are vital to winning the Democratic nomination. Sanders' narrow hopes for good news rested on North Dakota and Washington state. Washington's primary was too early to call, and because all votes there are cast by mail or by dropping them off in a ballot box, many ballots were marked for candidates who have since dropped out of the race.

The six-state contest Tuesday marked the first time voters weighed in on the primary since it effectively narrowed to a two-person race between Sanders and Biden. And the first four states on Tuesday went to Biden, a dramatic reversal for a campaign that appeared on the brink of collapse just two weeks ago. Now it is Sanders, whose candidacy was ascendant so recently, who must contemplate a path forward.

Addressing supporters in Philadelphia, Biden noted that many had "declared that this candidacy was dead" only days ago, but "now we're very much alive." He also asked Sanders supporters to back him going forward.

"We need you, we want you, and there's a place in our campaign for each of you. I want to thank Bernie Sanders and his supporters for their tireless energy and their passion," Biden said. "We share a common goal, and together we'll beat Donald Trump."

It marked a high point for the former vice president's staff. They sipped beer and broke into an impromptu dance party after his speech, which was held close to his Philadelphia headquarters.

Even as the contours of the race came into shape, however, new uncertainty was sparked by fears of the spreading coronavirus. Both candidates abruptly canceled rallies in Ohio that were scheduled for Tuesday night. That set the stage for Biden's remarks in Philadelphia, while Sanders flew home to Vermont and didn't plan to address the public.

Sanders' campaign also said all future events would be decided on a case-by-case basis given public health concerns, while Biden called off a scheduled upcoming Florida stop. Still, the former vice president said Tuesday night that he'd be announcing plans to combat the coronavirus later this week.

The Democratic National Committee also said that Sunday's debate between Sanders and Biden would

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be conducted without an audience.

Among former White House hopefuls and leaders of powerful liberal groups, however, Biden's momentum is now undeniable.

Bradley Beychok, president and co-founder of American Bridge 21st Century, a liberal super PAC, said his group "will be ALL IN to elect @JoeBiden as our next president." The organization is spending millions of dollars trying to win over people who backed President Donald Trump in key states in 2016.

Guy Cecil, chairman of the flagship Democratic outside political organization Priorities USA, tweeted: "The math is now clear. Joe Biden is going to be the Democratic nominee for President and @prioritiesUSA is going to do everything we can to help him defeat Donald Trump in November."

There were other major warning signs for Sanders on Tuesday. He again struggled to win support from black voters. About 70% of Mississippi's Democratic primary voters were African American, and 86% of them supported Biden, according to an AP VoteCast survey of the electorate.

After Sanders upset Hillary Clinton in Michigan four years ago, his loss there Tuesday was particularly sobering. It undermined his argument that he could appeal to working-class voters and that he could expand the electorate with new young voters.

One of the few bright notes for Sanders was his strength among young voters, but even that has a downside because they didn't turn out enough to keep him competitive. Sanders won 72% of those under 30 in Missouri and 65% in Michigan, according to AP VoteCast. The senator was also about even with Biden among voters ages 30 to 44.

"There's no sugarcoating it. Tonight's a tough night," New York Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, one of Sanders' highest-profile supporters, said on Instagram. "Tonight's a tough night for the movement overall. Tonight's a tough night electorally."

Another top Sanders backer, Minnesota Rep. Ilhan Omar, tweeted: "Yes we are a family, united in restoring our democracy and committed to defeating Trump, but that doesn't mean we should stop fighting for the candidate that best represents our policy priorities in this Primary."

According to an Associated Press analysis, Biden had picked up at least 153 new delegates: 53 in Michigan, 40 in Missouri, 29 in Mississippi, five in North Dakota, 17 in Washington and nine in Idaho on Tuesday. Sanders got 89: 35 in Michigan, 23 in Missouri, two in Mississippi, seven in Idaho, five in North Dakota and 17 in Washington.

Although six states voted, Michigan, with its 125 delegates, got most of the attention. Trump won the state by only 10,704 votes during the general election, his closest margin of victory among Michigan, Pennsylvania and Wisconsin. Those states gave Trump the narrow edge in the 2016 Electoral College after Clinton won the popular vote.

Sanders has vowed not to drop out regardless of Tuesday's results and frequently railed against the "Democratic establishment" that he says has aligned against him.

In addition to the powerful groups now siding with Biden, the former vice president has picked up the endorsements of many of his former presidential rivals, including Sen. Kamala Harris, Sen. Cory Booker and, as of Tuesday, entrepreneur Andrew Yang. Michigan Gov. Gretchen Whitmer, sometimes mentioned as a possible vice presidential choice, also endorsed Biden and campaigned with him ahead of Tuesday's primary.

Biden also gave a nod to all his former competitors, saying, "We're bringing this party together."

"That's what we have to do," he said.

Not every Democrat was lining up behind Biden, though. Michigan Rep. Debbie Dingell, who represents a sprawling district from the college town of Ann Arbor to the Detroit suburbs, said Tuesday that she's staying neutral.

"I remember what it was like four years ago and the vitriol and the anger, the people mad at each other the whole election cycle. We can't afford that," Dingell said. "It's about getting out and voting in November."

Like Sanders, Biden has no public events scheduled for Wednesday. And though he's celebrating a growing delegate lead, he's still confronting voters who question his positions, which include a gun control plan that reinstates an assault weapons ban and includes a voluntary buyback program for assault weapons.

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That issue was at the center of a testy exchange with a worker while Biden was rallying earlier Tuesday in Detroit. The man accused him of “actively trying to end our Second Amendment right.” Biden shot back, “You’re full of shit,” but went on to say that while he supports the Second Amendment, “Do you need 100 rounds?”

Associated Press writers Mike Householder in Detroit and Seth Borenstein in Washington contributed to this report.

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

Italy passes 10,000 infections as clusters spur worry in US

By NICOLE WINFIELD and MATT SEDENSKY Associated Press

ROME (AP) — Expanding clusters of the new coronavirus were eyed warily Wednesday as the outbreak upended daily life and reshaped everything from the United States presidential race to Pope Francis’ travel.

In the U.S., the caseload passed 1,000, and outbreaks on both sides of the country were stirring alarm, while in Europe, an increasingly locked-down Italy counted more than 10,000 infections and recorded soaring deaths among its aging population.

“Right now, the epicenter — the new China — is Europe,” said Robert Redfield, the head of the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Rome’s usual boisterous hum was reduced to a whisper as Italy’s 62 million people were told to mostly stay home. Though shops, cafes and restaurants remained open, police around the country were enforcing rules that customers stay 1 meter (3 feet) apart and certain businesses shutter by 6 p.m.

Authorities said 631 people have died of COVID-19 in Italy, with an increase of 168 fatalities recorded Tuesday. The health crisis was dealing a serious blow to the country’s economy — the third-largest of the 19 countries using the euro — and threatened instability worldwide.

Markets across Asia dropped Wednesday despite Wall Street’s gains a day earlier. Investors seemed encouraged by promises by U.S. President Donald Trump of a relief package to cushion economic pain from the outbreak. Governments around Asia and elsewhere have also announced billions of dollars in stimulus funds, including packages revealed in Japan on Tuesday and Australia on Wednesday.

“Investors are still worried that those fiscal stimulus packages may not be able to contain the virus outbreak as well as to mitigate the impact on the economy,” said Louis Wong of Philip Capital Management.

For most, the coronavirus causes only mild or moderate symptoms, such as fever and cough. But for a few, especially older adults and people with existing health problems, it can cause more severe illnesses, including pneumonia. More than 119,000 people have been infected worldwide and over 4,200 have died.

The virus has disrupted travel, closed schools and halted manufacturing in places around the globe.

The Vatican’s representative to the half-island nation of East Timor said Wednesday that an expected visit by Pope Francis, though never made official, would not happen later this year.

Francis’ Wednesday audience — typically a boisterous affair that fills St. Peter’s Square or the Vatican auditorium with tens of thousands — was instead held in the privacy of his library and shared by livestream. The square was empty, with Vatican City adopting Italy’s lockdown measures.

In the U.S., dozens of cases were being tied to a conference in Boston, and leaders in multiple states were announcing curbs on large events. Colleges around the country emptied their classrooms as they moved to online instruction and uncertainty surrounded the upcoming opening of the major league baseball season and college basketball’s championships. Even the famed buffets of Las Vegas were affected, with some of the Strip’s biggest being closed in a precautionary measure.

“It’s terrifying,” said Silvana Gomez, a student at Harvard University, where undergraduates were told to leave campus by Sunday. “I’m definitely very scared right now about what the next couple days, the next couple weeks look like.”

New York’s governor said National Guard troops would scrub public places and deliver food to a suburb

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where infections have spiked. In Washington state, where a Seattle-area nursing home was the center of an outbreak, officials said the virus had spread to at least 10 other long-term care facilities. In California, thousands of restless passengers remained stuck aboard a cruise ship, waiting for their turn to disembark to begin quarantines.

Two men vying to take on Trump in the U.S. presidential election abruptly canceled rallies Tuesday and left open the possibility that future campaign events could be impacted, too. Trump's campaign insisted it would proceed as normal, though Vice President Mike Pence conceded future rallies would be evaluated "on a day to day basis."

It was all evidence of the continuing westward push of the virus. In China, where it first cropped up, officials said they'd counted only 24 new cases on Wednesday.

In a reversal of positions, China is seeing new cases brought in from overseas. In Beijing, the capital, all the new cases of COVID-19 reported on Wednesday came from outside the country, five from Italy and one from the United States.

"The epidemic situation is at a low level and the prevention and control are continuously going well," said Mi Feng, spokesman for the National Health Commission.

The province at the center of China's virus outbreak said Wednesday that manufacturers, food processors and other businesses deemed essential to the national economy or providing daily necessities can resume operation.

The other major outbreak site in Asia, South Korea, continued to report improving numbers, too, with 242 new cases announced Wednesday. Still, a cluster of infections connected to a call center in one of the busiest areas of that country's capital was raising alarms.

Sedensky reported from Bangkok. Contributing to this report were Associated Press writers John Leices-ter in Paris; Joe McDonald and Ken Moritsugu in Beijing; Yuri Kageyama in Tokyo; and Kim Tong-hyung in Seoul, South Korea.

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>

Global shares mixed as worries counter hope for fiscal steps

By YURI KAGEYAMA AP Business Writer

TOKYO (AP) — European markets opened higher Wednesday after Asian shares mostly declined, as governments were ramping up aid for economies reeling from the virus outbreak.

France's CAC 40 gained 2.5% to 4,750.03, while Germany's DAX rose 2.3% to 10,712.97. Britain's FTSE 100 added 1.4% to 6,043.49. U.S. shares were set to open lower with Dow futures down 1.0 and S&P 500 futures 1.1% lower.

The Bank of England cut its key interest rate by half a percentage point to 0.25% as an emergency measure in response to the outbreak of the COVID-19 virus. The central bank said the move would "help support businesses and consumer confidence at a difficult time."

Countries are shifting into damage-control as infections spread, prompting sweeping controls on travel, closures of schools and cancellations or postponements of sports events and many other public activities.

Australia's government announced a \$1.6 billion virus-fighting package and reportedly plans an additional \$6.5 billion in economic stimulus. Japan and Thailand also have announced fresh help for businesses and workers.

But pessimism prevailed in Asia.

Japan's benchmark Nikkei 225 lost 2.3% to finish at 19,416.06. Australia's S&P/ASX 200 plunged 3.6%

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to 5,725.90. South Korea's Kospi shed 2.8% to 1,908.27. Hong Kong's Hang Seng fell 0.6% to 25,231.61, while the Shanghai Composite dipped 0.9% to 2,968.52.

India's market bucked the trend, with the Sensex picking up 0.9% after reopening following a holiday on Tuesday.

"After the strong rebound yesterday, Asian markets were quite flat this morning. There is consistent fear about the spread of the coronavirus in the U.S. as well as in Europe," said Louis Wong of Philip Capital Management.

"Investors are still worried that those fiscal stimulus packages may not be able to contain the virus outbreak as well as to mitigate the impact on the economy," he said.

Worries are growing that a prolonged outbreak may bring on recession.

While they won't cure illnesses or get quarantined workers back into factories, spending and stimulus programs would put cash into the hands of households and businesses while health experts try to corral the virus.

For most people, the new coronavirus causes only mild or moderate symptoms, such as fever and cough. For some, especially older adults and people with existing health problems, it can cause more severe illness, including pneumonia.

The vast majority of people recover from the new virus. According to the World Health Organization, people with mild illness recover in about two weeks, while those with more severe illness may take three to six weeks to recover. In mainland China, where the virus first exploded, more than 80,000 people have been diagnosed and more than 58,000 have so far recovered.

But because the virus is new, experts can't say for sure how far it will ultimately spread. That has investors worried about a worst-case scenario for corporate profits and the economy, where factories and supply chains are shut around the world due to quarantines and people stay huddled at home instead of working or spending.

ENERGY: Oil prices, which plunged 25% on Monday amid a price war between producers, have steadied in the past two days. Brent crude, the international standard, fell 32 cents to \$36.90 per barrel. It rose \$2.86, or 8.3%, to \$37.22 a barrel on Tuesday. Benchmark U.S. crude fell 48 cents to \$33.88 a barrel. It rose \$3.23 to \$34.36 a barrel on Tuesday.

CURRENCIES: The dollar fell to 105.10 Japanese yen from 105.64 yen on Tuesday. The euro rose to \$1.1323 from \$1.1283.

Katie Lam in Hong Kong 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.

In Pakistan, criticism grows dangerous as dissent stifled

By KATHY GANNON Associated Press

ISLAMABAD (AP) — Being a dissident — or even raising a critical voice — in Pakistan is growing more dangerous, regardless of whether the target is political parties, the judiciary or the powerful military and security agencies.

Intimidation of dissidents has increased on multiple fronts, rights workers and journalists say. A number of rights activists have been arrested and charged with sedition. Protesters have been jailed, including a member of parliament. Newspapers and journalists have faced violence, harassment and warnings from security officials not to cover anything that might show the military in a harsh light.

Rights groups say the civilian government of Prime Minister Imran Khan, elected in 2018, has failed to protect freedom of speech, imposing legislation to restrict online media, even dictating who can appear on television talk shows, while at the same time ceding authority for curbing freedom of speech to the

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powerful military.

"In recent years, the space for dissent in Pakistan has shrunk to the point of suffocation," warned Omar Warriach, Amnesty International's Deputy South Asia director.

"The Pakistani military has demonstrated that it can still call the shots without directly being in power. ... Taking part in a peaceful protest can now lead to arrest and charges of sedition. Many activists have been forced into exile, fearing for their safety. What was once a lively media landscape has narrowed to exclude critical voices," he said.

Pakistan's government has denied allegations it's stifling free speech. It said it was simply cutting spending when it recently pulled all its advertising from two prominent media houses, Dawn and Jang, that frequently criticize the military's involvement in civilian affairs. Khan's government has also criticized the previous administration for using public money on advertising to promote itself.

Government advertising is one of the leading sources of revenue for newspapers and media houses in Pakistan and is often used to squeeze critical media.

In a March 2 statement, Steven Butler, the Asia program director for the Committee to Protect Journalists, said the government was using advertising "as a cudgel to punish and reward news outlets based on their editorial stance in this way," and demanded the practice stop.

Butler was denied entry into Pakistan last year despite holding a valid visa. The government has remained silent on the move, but Pakistani officials say that particular decision was taken without the prime minister's knowledge. The officials spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to speak to the media.

Khan was elected in July 2018, amid widespread criticism from international rights groups and political opponents that the country's powerful military and intelligence aided his campaign. The military was widely accused of intimidating the media and campaigning against Khan's strongest opponent, the Pakistan Muslim League, whose leader Nawaz Sharif had fallen out with the army after openly accusing it of supporting militants.

At a recent meeting with international journalists, Khan's adviser on communication, Firdous Ashiq Awan justified action against those who would attack the military, even charging them with sedition, saying the country's military was sacrosanct according to the constitution.

One journalist, Aziz Memon, disappeared this month on the way to his work at a small newspaper in Pakistan's southern Sindh province. He was found dead just hours later. A few months earlier, Memon tweeted that he had been threatened by local police and a prominent political party over his reporting.

The Brussels-based International Federation of Journalists this week called for the arrest of Memon's killers and strongly criticized a police report that said he died of "natural causes." An autopsy report later listed his death as strangulation.

"The post-mortem report proves beyond a doubt that Aziz was brutally murdered," the federation statement said. "We reiterate our demand that the authorities take urgent action to arrest the killers and those who ordered his killing."

In other cases, intelligence agencies have reportedly forced newspaper sellers into not delivering papers to certain areas and warned television anchors against interviewing certain politicians.

The military's public relations wing, known as the Inter-Services Public Relations, has repeatedly denied interfering in television programming or disrupting newspaper distribution, although it has justified muzzling news of a dissident ethnic Pashtun movement called the Pashtun Tahafuz (Protection) Movement, or PTM, claiming it impacts national security, without explaining exactly how.

Authorities have often targeted the PTM, which has accused the army of using the decades-long war on terror to profile, intimidate, harass and arrest ethnic Pashtuns, who dominate Pakistan's northwestern regions bordering Afghanistan.

In late January, a protest of barely 100 people — small by Pakistani standards — took place outside the National Press Club in the capital Islamabad to protest the arrest of a young PTM leader. The protesters had begun to disperse when police arrived, grabbing protesters and throwing them into waiting trucks.

Among the men and women rounded up was Mohsin Dawar, a member of parliament from Pakistan's

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North Waziristan border region.

"I said I would go with them. I wasn't resisting, but still they grabbed me, kicked me and punched me," he said in an interview following his release. In all, 29 people were arrested, all of them ordered released in early February by the Islamabad High Court, which reprimanded police for charging many of them with sedition, without reason.

Rights groups have also criticized the liberal use of Pakistan's sedition and anti-terrorism act.

Gulalai Ismail, a rights activist, was charged under the anti-terrorism act after she criticized army actions in the border regions, including a report that complained of military harassment of women and girls, a charge the army has denied.

Ismail has fled to the United States, but her elderly parents continue to be harassed. Her father was jailed for two weeks and her mother, Uzlifat Ismail, was added to a list of individuals unable to leave Pakistan on charges of hiding her daughter.

Ismail's father, professor Mohammad Ismail, said intelligence agents and police have raided his home in Islamabad six times without a court order. His domestic employees have been harassed and he appears regularly in court fighting charges of anti-state activities related to his support for his daughter.

Harris Khalique, head of the independent Human Rights Commission of Pakistan, said that while previous civilian governments have at times stood up to the military to protect rights, the current prime minister has failed to do so.

"The current political government is more responsible for what is happening in terms of freedom of speech, freedom of expression, freedom of association and assembly than any one particular institution, whether it be the military or the bureaucracy," said Khalique. "At the at the end of the day they got elected to run this country, if they are ceding their space, they are equally responsible, if not more."

Japan marks tsunami anniversary, no govt memorial amid virus

By MARI YAMAGUCHI Associated Press

TOKYO (AP) — Some residents along the Japanese northern coast stood on roadsides overlooking the sea, offering silent prayers for their loved ones lost in a massive earthquake and tsunami nine years ago Wednesday. But in Tokyo and many other places around Japan, the day was being remembered without a main government ceremony due to the coronavirus outbreak.

On March 11, 2011, a magnitude 9.0 earthquake and subsequent tsunami devastated large swaths of Japan's northern coast and triggered a meltdown at a nuclear power plant in Fukushima, contaminating large areas and dislocating many residents.

For the past eight years, residents and officials have gathered at local town halls to pray, while in Tokyo, the government held a main memorial attended by the Imperial Family members, televised live nationwide. This year, memorial events have been called off following Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's request to cancel, postpone or downsize gatherings as part of measures to fight the coronavirus outbreak.

In Tokyo, Abe and his ministers gathered at the Prime Minister's Office and offered a silent prayer at 2:46 p.m., the moment the offshore earthquake struck nine years ago. At the outset of his speech, Abe apologized over the cancellation of the government ceremony. Japan has confirmed more than 1,200 cases of the coronavirus, including 696 from a cruise ship and 19 deaths.

Abe said reconstruction of the disaster hit areas is now "at its finishing stage."

"I would like many people from around the world to experience the reality of the disaster-hit areas on their way to recovery through upcoming Olympics, Paralympics and other occasions," Abe said. His government has said the 10th anniversary next year will be the last it will organize.

Many residents, however, especially those in Fukushima, are far from recovery. The two towns that are home to the wrecked Fukushima nuclear plant are still off-limits and unlivable, while many residents in the surrounding areas had to provide their land to build facilities to store nuclear waste for decades-long storage.

The quake and tsunami left more than 18,000 people dead and destroyed many houses and businesses.

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The meltdown at the Fukushima plant sent more than 160,000 people fleeing the region. More than 40,000 are still unable to return home due to radiation contamination and concerns.

In disaster-hit towns in Iwate, Miyagi and Fukushima, desks were put out for visitors to sign messages and lay flowers. Residents visiting their family graveyard, parks and towns all stopped, bowed and prayed in silence.

Hundreds of people gathered at Tokyo's Hibiya Park to mark the anniversary with musical performances. In Tokyo's posh shopping district of Ginza, pedestrians and visitors, many of them wearing face masks, stopped at an intersection of a clock tower and bowed in silence.

Kiminari Suzuki, a 44-year-old evacuee from Fukushima who was at the memorial event at the park, said he feels that the community of disaster-hit residents is shrinking and the memories are fading nine years after the disaster.

"I came here because I had nowhere else to go to share our feelings," said Suzuki, who had to abandon his damaged home and move into a shelter before ending up in Tokyo recently.

"The time has still frozen at that moment when the quake hit, and I often think of the nuclear power problem," he said. "My life still hasn't returned to normal, and I wonder if it's because of the disaster or because of my own fault."

Associated Press videojournalists Emily Wang and Haruka Nuga contributed to this report.

Follow Mari Yamaguchi on Twitter at <https://www.twitter.com/mariyamaguchi>

Afghans set to release 1,500 Taliban; US wants less violence

By RAHIM FAIEZ and TAMEEM AKHGAR Associated Press

KABUL, Afghanistan (AP) — After a series of delays, Afghan President Ashraf Ghani issued a decree early Wednesday promising to release 1,500 Taliban prisoners as a goodwill gesture to get intra-Afghan negotiations started.

A recent peace deal signed between the United States and the Taliban called for the release of up to 5,000 prisoners ahead of the much sought-after negotiations.

There was no official response from the Taliban, but The Associated Press saw a letter that Mullah Nooruddin Turabi, the head of the Taliban's Prisoners Commission, sent to the prisoners, their families and Taliban leaders promising there would be no intra-Afghan talks until all the prisoners are released.

The Pashto-language letter was sent last weekend. It says the Taliban would verify that each prisoner released is among those on the list given to an American delegation.

However, the presidential decree went on to say the first round of 1,500 prisoners will be selected based on age, health and the length of their sentences already served. The released prisoners, who will be biometrically identified, will also have to give a written guarantee that they will not return to the battlefield.

The remaining 3,500 prisoners will be released after intra-Afghan negotiations begin and 500 will be released every two weeks providing the Taliban reduce violence on the battlefield, Ghani's decree said.

However, even if the Taliban agree to start negotiations, Kabul's political turmoil and relentless bickering between Ghani and his main rival, Abdullah Abdullah, who has also sworn himself in as Afghanistan's president, have left Kabul struggling to come up with a united negotiating team.

Ghani's decree came as the U.S. State Department issued a statement saying that the level of violence is "unacceptable," and that while the Taliban have stopped attacks against the U.S.-led coalition forces and in Afghan cities, the violence in the countryside remains too high.

The statement also said Afghanistan's "presidential electoral crisis" — an apparent reference to the two inaugurations and political chaos — has delayed the establishment of a national negotiating team and the start of intra-Afghan talks, which were to begin on Tuesday in Oslo, Norway.

Despite the political chaos in Kabul and increased violence on the battlefield, the United States has started withdrawing its troops in keeping with the deal it signed on Feb. 29 with the Taliban. In the first phase,

Washington will reduce its troops contingent to 8,600, down from the current 13,000.

If the Taliban adhere to their commitments to deny terrorists safe havens in Afghanistan, Washington will withdraw the remainder of its troops over 14 months, according to the agreement.

When it was signed, the U.S.-Taliban deal was touted as Afghanistan's best chance at finding peace after 40 years of relentless war while offering the United States an exit after nearly 19 years and its longest war.

President Donald Trump has expressed increasing frustration with the Afghan government and its security forces' inability to police and manage their own affairs. But almost from the beginning the unraveling began as the Taliban returned to the battlefield and Afghanistan's politicians stepped up their feuding as Washington's Special Envoy Zalmay Khalilzad scrambled to find a way out of the impasse.

In the end, both Ghani and Abdullah declared themselves president. The United States and other international players attended Ghani's ceremony while urging both men to negotiate a single government.

Associated Press writer Kathy Gannon in Islamabad contributed to this report

US heart surgeon treats children lacking care in Libya's war

By **MSTYSLAV CHERNOV** and **FELIPE DANA** Associated Press

TRIPOLI, Libya (AP) — Yazan, a 1-year-old Libyan boy, was born with congenital heart disease. With just one chamber, the organ pumped so little blood that when Yazan cried, his skin turned black. Without surgery, he would not survive.

But Yazan's country, Libya, has only one heart surgeon who can't possibly perform surgeries on 1,200 or so infants born every year with heart defects. Of those, typically some 150 are in dire need of surgery and die in their first year, said William Novick, an American pediatric cardiac surgeon.

His international team of experts, part of the Novick Cardiac Alliance, regularly flies into Libya to perform surgery on patients like Yazan.

"To me this is simply an unacceptable situation that needs our attention," said Novick, who lives in Memphis, Tennessee.

The medical trips help prop up Libya's fragile health care system, which the World Health Organization has described as overburdened, inefficient and short of medicine and equipment.

Libya has been plunged into chaos since 2011, when a civil war toppled longtime dictator Moammar Gadhafi, who was later killed. Eastern-based opposition forces attacked Tripoli last spring to wrest it from control of the weak U.N.-backed government. The fierce round of fighting has killed hundreds of civilians, including at least 13 children since mid-January.

Novick's team was the best, and perhaps last, hope for Yazan. But that meant his family had to travel to the most dangerous place in the war-ravaged country — the capital Tripoli, where the Tajoura National Heart Center is located.

Yazan's odyssey from his small desert hometown barely skirted the war's front lines. With key highways blocked because of fighting, his family took a 1,500-kilometer (932-mile) detour.

"You can't come to Tripoli like before," said Yazan's father, Im Saleh Mohamed Abudulfetah.

On Feb. 26, Yazan's perilous trek culminated in a five-hour surgery. Yazan is one of 1,000 children treated by Novick's group since it first came to Libya after the 2011 uprising.

In the operating room, Novick and his team chatted calmly as they cut open Yazan's chest. They sewed together two large veins carrying blood from Yazan's head and connected them to his pulmonary artery. That sent oxygenated blood straight to his lungs.

Eventually, exhausted nurses wheeled Yazan out of the operating theater, his tiny body covered in bandages and tubes, to tell his parents the news. They expected Yazan to recover well, and with a follow-up operation, live a normal life.

Under the fluorescent light of the intensive care unit, Abudulfetah touched his baby's soft hair, murmuring words of prayer. Yazan's belly rose and fell with steady breath. His cheeks were even flushed a subtle pink.

As a young medical resident at the University of Alabama, Novick, now 66, witnessed the suffering of

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children with congenital heart disease and the staggering disparities in health services. He became determined to try to give children with heart problems the care they need, no matter where they're born.

While still a resident, Novick began recruiting experts to help him trek to places where treatable heart disease means death due to a shortage of specialists and other restrictions.

Over nearly three decades, Novick and his colleagues have made hundreds of trips to 32 countries including Ukraine, Nigeria, Iraq, Iran and Columbia.

Novick's Libya team in February consisted of 20 volunteers: cardiologists, surgeons, nurses and anesthesiologists. The Associated Press accompanied them as they performed 10 complex open-heart surgeries in the country's west. The group flies home from Tripoli next week after completing dozens more operations.

Political power in Libya today is divided between the two rival governments in the east and west of the country and a patchwork of armed groups and foreign countries that support either administration.

"We're on both sides of the conflict zone," said Novick. "And that is a specific goal of ours, to be apolitical and help the children."

Novick's group not only drops in a few times a year, but also trains Libyan doctors and nurses to build up the country's critical health care system.

"We're not going to be here forever and we shouldn't be here forever," he said.

US states race to contain coronavirus as cases near 1,000

By **MARINA VILLENEUVE** and **OLGA R. RODRIGUEZ** Associated Press

As coronavirus cases crop up across the United States, some governors and other leaders are scrambling to slow its spread, banning large public gatherings, enforcing quarantines and calling National Guard troops.

With new deaths reported and the number of confirmed U.S. cases closing in on 1,000, lawmakers and health officials set up containment zones and quarantine areas and sought to limit contact with those who might be infected.

In Washington state, the governor was expected to ban gatherings of more than 250 people in virtually the entire Seattle metro area, home to some 4 million people. Schools and houses of worship were shuttered in a New York City suburb where a cluster of cases could be the largest in the nation, and the governor sent National Guard troops to help clean public spaces and deliver food.

The moves came as the battle to stop the virus from spreading intensified. More schools and universities, including UCLA, Yale and Stanford, have announced plans to send students home and move classes online.

The virus has infected more than 800 people in the U.S. and killed at least 30, with one state after another recording its first infections in quick succession.

For most people, the virus causes only mild or moderate symptoms such as fever and cough. For some, especially the elderly and people with existing health problems, it can cause more severe illness, including pneumonia. Most people recover in a matter of weeks, as has happened with three-quarters of those infected in China.

For those in the middle of a quarantine, it's an anxious time waiting for the threat to pass.

Judy Aqua, who's in her 60s, is quarantining herself at home in New Rochelle, outside New York city, after possibly being exposed to someone with the virus.

"People are really afraid to go to the supermarket. They're afraid to go to the cleaner," she said. When her husband made a recent run to a post office, she told him to wear gloves.

Life in many places went on as usual, but many major events were canceled or postponed, including the Coachella music festival that draws tens of thousands to the California desert near Palm Springs every April.

The United Nations announced it would close its New York headquarters to the public and suspend all tours, and one of the biggest resort operators in Las Vegas, MGM Resorts International, said it would close buffets at all of its Las Vegas Strip casinos as a precaution, although the casinos were staying open.

The ban on gatherings in Washington state would apply to sporting events such as Seattle Mariners baseball and Seattle Sounders soccer games, a person familiar with the decision told the Associated Press on condition of anonymity because they weren't authorized to discuss the matter publicly. It could be just

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the beginning of disruptions to sports: Already, some college sports games will be played without fans in Ohio and California, and the NCAA said it would "make decisions in the coming days" about its men's and women's basketball tournaments after two conferences banned fans from their championships and the Ivy League cancelled its basketball tournaments altogether.

Massachusetts Gov. Charlie Baker declared a state of emergency as cases statewide jumped from 51 to 92. Of that number, 70 are now connected to a meeting held last month by biotech company Biogen at a hotel in downtown Boston.

Baker said the state of emergency will give him greater authority to take such actions as shutting down large events, gaining access to buildings or stockpiling protective gear. Santa Clara County in California, home to San Jose and Silicon Valley, has banned on all gatherings of 1,000 people or more.

Presidential candidates Bernie Sanders and Joe Biden abruptly canceled rallies in Cleveland because of worries about the virus.

As many people considered whether it's prudent to travel, the news that everyone on a flight from Italy may have been exposed had health officials urging those passengers to self-isolate. A woman from suburban Houston flew home after testing positive to consult her own doctor, and now everyone on the two flights she took could be at risk.

Some airport workers are also dealing with the outbreak, with several Transportation Security Administration officers at Mineta San Jose International Airport testing positive. They were receiving medical care and all TSA employees who had contact with them over the past 14 days are being quarantined at home, the agency said.

In Oakland, California, restless passengers on a coronavirus-struck cruise ship awaited their turn to disembark. After being forced to idle for days off the California coast, the ship docked Monday with about 3,500 passengers and crew, including at least 21 who tested positive for the virus. Passengers from Canada and other countries were to be flown home, while Americans were being sent to military bases in California, Texas and Georgia for testing and 14-day quarantines, and others were still waiting to get off.

"We're trying to stay calm and were trying to stay positive, but it's getting harder and harder. They can't make up their minds how to keep us safe," said passenger Beryl Ward, 77, of Santa Fe, New Mexico.

By Tuesday night, Princess Cruises said about 1,400 people had gotten off the ship. About 1,100 crew members were to remain aboard.

California Gov. Gavin Newsom urged the state's nearly 40 million residents to avoid sporting events, concerts and large gatherings and adamantly warned the elderly to stay away from cruise ships.

Rodriguez reported from San Francisco. Associated Press writers Rachel La Corte in Olympia, Washington; Jake Seiner in Surprise, Arizona; Steve LeBlanc in Boston; Mike Stobbe and Adam Geller in New York; Edith M. Lederer at the United Nations; Janie Har, Jocelyn Gecker and Juliet Williams in San Francisco; Robert Jablon in Los Angeles; and Rob Gillies in Toronto contributed to this report.

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

Coronavirus clusters swell on both sides of the US

By **MARINA VILLENEUVE** and **OLGA R. RODRIGUEZ** Associated Press

Alarming clusters of the coronavirus swelled on both coasts of the U.S. on Tuesday, with more than 70 cases now tied to a biotech conference in Boston and infections turning up at 10 nursing homes in the hard-hit Seattle area.

Presidential candidates Bernie Sanders and Joe Biden abruptly canceled rallies because of worries about

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the virus, and New York's governor announced he is sending the National Guard to scrub public places and deliver food in a New York City suburb that is at the center of the nation's biggest known cluster of infections.

On Wednesday, Washington Gov. Jay Inslee will announce a ban on gatherings and events of more than 250 people in virtually the entire Seattle metro area to try to stop the spread of the outbreak, said a person involved in the planning of the decision. The ban would apply to sporting events like Seattle Mariners baseball and Seattle Sounders soccer games.

The order would not prohibit the operation of workplaces and is not expected to include school closures, said the person, who spoke on condition of anonymity because they weren't authorized to discuss the matter publicly.

Santa Clara County in California, home to San Jose and Silicon Valley, on Monday announced a ban on all gatherings of 1,000 people or more.

Also in California, three Transportation Security Administration officers at Mineta San Jose International Airport have tested positive for COVID-19, the agency said Tuesday. They were receiving medical care and all TSA employees who had contact with them over the past 14 days are being quarantined at home, the agency said.

At least 24 people have died in Washington from COVID-19, most in the Seattle metro area. Nineteen of the deaths are linked to one suburban Seattle nursing home and authorities in King County said the virus has spread to at least 10 long-term care facilities.

Late last month Inslee declared a state of emergency over the virus outbreak. There are more than 260 confirmed cases in the state, most in the three counties that would be affected by Inslee's new order.

Massachusetts Gov. Charlie Baker declared a state of emergency as cases statewide jumped by 51 from the day before, to 92. Of that number, 70 are now connected to a meeting held last month by biotech company Biogen at a hotel in downtown Boston.

Baker said the state of emergency will give him greater authority to take such actions as shutting down large events, gaining access to buildings or stockpiling protective gear.

The moves came as the battle to stop the virus from spreading intensified. More schools and universities sent students home, while conferences and other events were canceled. The United Nations announced it would close its New York headquarters to the public and suspend all tours. The Coachella music festival that draws tens of thousands to the California desert near Palm Springs every April was postponed until October. And one of the biggest resort operators in Las Vegas, MGM Resorts International, said it would close buffets at all of its Las Vegas Strip casinos as a precaution.

A top federal health official pointed to Europe, rather than the virus' point of origin in China, as the likely source for the infection's continued spread to the U.S.

"Right now the epicenter — the new China — is Europe," Robert Redfield, director of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, said on Capitol Hill. "And there's a lot of people coming back and forth from Europe that are now starting to seed these communities."

Authorities in Washington state reported two new deaths from the virus — a man and woman, both in their 80s, who were residents of a nursing home and a senior center. Of the 24 deaths in the state, 19 have been tied to a single nursing home, Life Care Center of Kirkland. But the state officials said they are now working with 10 nursing facilities where residents or workers have been tested positive.

Washington Gov. Jay Inslee announced new nursing-home rules that would limit visitors and subject health care workers to screening.

Similarly, in Kentucky, Gov. Andy Beshear said state-run nursing homes will severely restrict visitors, with private operators strongly urged to follow suit. Six cases have been diagnosed in the state.

The decisions by both Democratic presidential candidates to call off rallies in Cleveland came as voters headed to the polls for a primary election in neighboring Michigan.

"We are heeding the public warnings from Ohio state officials, who have communicated concern about holding large, indoor events during the coronavirus outbreak," Sanders campaign spokesman Mike Casca

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said in a statement. "All future Bernie 2020 events will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis."

New York Gov. Andrew Cuomo said three schools and other gathering places will be shut down for two weeks in a containment zone in New Rochelle, the epicenter of an outbreak of more than 100 cases. Officials said the National Guard troops will help clean public spaces and deliver food to people quarantined at home in the zone, which extends a mile in all directions from a synagogue connected to some of the cases.

Officials would not say how many National Guard members would be involved, and there was no immediate sign of any troops on the streets. Apart from those who are under quarantine, residents and visitors to the community of 79,000 will be able to come and go freely, with no checkpoints, and businesses can remain open, officials said.

"It is a dramatic action, but it is the largest cluster of cases in the country," Cuomo said. "The numbers are going up unabated, and we do need a special public health strategy."

New Rochelle and surrounding Westchester County account for the majority of the state's 173 coronavirus cases. New York City, with 100 times the population of New Rochelle, has 36 known infections.

The virus has infected more than 800 people in the U.S. and killed at least 29, with one state after another recording its first infections in quick succession. New Jersey reported its first coronavirus death Tuesday. Worldwide, about 118,000 have been infected and over 4,200 have died.

For most people, the virus causes only mild or moderate symptoms such as fever and cough. For some, especially older adults and people with existing health problems, it can cause more severe illness, including pneumonia. Most people recover in a matter of weeks, as has happened with three-quarters of those infected in China.

On Wall Street, stocks surged Tuesday after suffering staggering losses the day before, with the Dow Jones Industrial Average gaining more than 1,100 points on hopes the Trump administration would take steps to cushion the economy from the damage caused by the outbreak.

In Oakland, California, thousands of restless passengers who have been stuck aboard a cruise ship hit by the coronavirus waited their turn to get off the vessel and go to U.S. military bases or back to their home countries for two weeks of quarantine.

"I'm bored and frustrated," said Carolyn Wright, 63, of Santa Fe, New Mexico. "All of a sudden a two-week vacation has turned into a five-week vacation."

After being forced to idle for days off the California coast, the ship docked Monday in Oakland with about 3,500 passengers and crew, including at least 21 who tested positive for the virus. Authorities said foreign passengers would be flown home, while Americans would be flown or bused to military bases in California, Texas and Georgia.

About 1,100 crew members, 19 of whom tested positive for the virus, will be quarantined and treated aboard the ship, which will dock elsewhere after passengers are unloaded, Gov. Gavin Newsom said.

Rodriguez reported from San Francisco. Associated Press writers Rachel La Corte in Olympia, Washington; Steve LeBlanc in Boston; Mike Stobbe and Adam Geller in New York; Edith M. Lederer at the United Nations; Janie Har, Jocelyn Gecker and Juliet Williams in San Francisco; Robert Jablon in Los Angeles; and Rob Gillies in Toronto contributed to this report.

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This story has been corrected to show that the number of dead is at least 29 because a South Dakota death hasn't been definitively linked to coronavirus.

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2020 primary takeaways: Joe Biden's nomination to lose

By **BILL BARROW** and **JOSH BOAK** Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Joe Biden's path to the Democratic presidential nomination widened significantly Tuesday with commanding victories in Mississippi, Missouri and Michigan, a state that his rival Bernie Sanders won four years ago. Key takeaways:

IT'S BIDEN'S NOMINATION TO LOSE

Biden has become the reliable Buick of this race.

His momentum accelerated as he broadened his delegate lead over Sanders with a series of decisive victories. The former vice president's solid win in Michigan came in a state Sanders was depending on both to bolster his case going forward and for the practical delegate math involved. He came into the day about 96 delegates behind Biden, and Michigan was his best shot at preventing that lead from getting any wider. (Democrats require 1,991 delegates for nomination.)

As it is, Sanders lost a big state where his upset of Hillary Clinton four years ago gave him reason to continue his presidential bid through the end of the nominating calendar in June. This time, the first round of voting after Super Tuesday ended the same way as last week's surprise outcome: with a Biden celebration and an increasingly steep climb for Sanders.

Biden isn't just leaning on his base of African Americans. AP VoteCast surveys in Michigan and Missouri also show he topped Sanders in suburbs and, notably, across small-town and rural counties, where Sanders had led Clinton in 2016.

"We need you, we want you, and there's a place in our campaign for each of you," Biden said Tuesday night. "I want to thank Bernie Sanders and his supporters for their tireless energy and their passion. We share a common goal, and together we'll beat Donald Trump."

Sanders' bad March can be explained this way: Biden's net delegate gains out of Alabama last week and Mississippi on Tuesday — two Republican-dominated states — essentially cancel out the delegate advantage that Sanders pulled out of California, which has the largest delegate trove.

DOES BERNIE HAVE A PATH OR A PROTEST?

Sanders stayed in the race until June four years ago, fueled in no small part by his Michigan primary victory. This time, the path going forward looks much different.

The Vermont senator faces a fraught choice. Does he try something new: going after Biden even more aggressively as an establishment figure, a relative foreign policy hawk, a budget centrist who threatens Social Security? There's little evidence over the last two weeks that any of that would change the fundamentals of the contest.

Another option: Sanders can continue advocating for the issues that his supporters hold dear, like "Medicare for All" and free college, not explicitly ceding the nomination but using his base to pressure a Biden-led party to move as far left as possible.

He was back at his home in Vermont Tuesday night.

BLACK VOTE AGAIN PROVES UNATTAINABLE FOR SANDERS

It can't be emphasized enough. Black voters are as crucial for picking Democratic nominees as any demographic in the party's coalition.

And Sanders just can't get over the hump. It happened again in Mississippi on Tuesday, just like Southern Super Tuesday states last week and South Carolina before that. According to AP VoteCast, about 70% of Mississippi's Democratic primary voters were African American; 86% of them supported Biden.

The reality remains: Sanders has not made enough inroads in that critical Democratic constituency to have a clear path to becoming the nominee.

BIDEN HAS AN EDGE ON SANDERS' BIGGEST ISSUE

Sanders has made universal health care his main policy focus. But when it comes to whom people trust on health care, voters on Tuesday were somewhat more comfortable with Biden.

When asked who would best be able to handle health care as president, 41% of Michigan voters said they preferred Biden, according to AP VoteCast. Just 31% liked Sanders. Biden also led on health care in

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Mississippi, while Missouri was evenly split between both of them.

CORONAVIRUS CURVEBALL

Biden and Sanders cancelled campaign rallies because of the spread of coronavirus, a rare example of an external event bringing a presidential race to a temporary halt. Both men had planned to address supporters Tuesday night at watch parties, but cited public health warnings. And their plans going forward are up in the air.

Their debate scheduled for Sunday in Arizona is still on, but will not have an audience as previously planned.

That likely affects Sanders more, since the Vermont senator, much like President Donald Trump, campaigns as a populist who addresses large rallies with thousands of supporters. But Biden has just started to draw large crowds as well.

At the least, Biden and Sanders now have plenty of money to continue television and social media advertising in coming primary states. They will need it for a lineup of states that includes Illinois, Ohio, Florida and Arizona.

Asian shares mostly lower despite hopes for US economic aid

By YURI KAGEYAMA AP Business Writer

TOKYO (AP) — Stocks were mostly lower in Asia on Wednesday despite gains on Wall Street on hopes the Trump administration will act to cushion the economic pain of the virus outbreak.

Japan's benchmark Nikkei 225 lost 1.4% in morning trading to 19,581.83. Australia's S&P/ASX 200 plunged 2.2% to 5,806.50. South Korea's Kospi shed 1.4% to 1,937.10. Hong Kong's Hang Seng was 10 points higher at 25,402.40, while the Shanghai Composite rose 0.3% to 3,006.50.

Markets are likely to remain unsteady, said Jingyi Pan of IG.

"Firstly, the details of the fiscal support off the US remains uncertain at this point," she said in a commentary. "With the virus reaching the shores of the U.S. in a more significant manner only late into February, the economic indicators from the month could altogether be regarded as backward looking at this point and any disappointments potentially not be taken very well."

On Wall Street, the day's moves were a microcosm of the severe swings that have dominated recent weeks. Market watchers say investors want to see a big, coordinated response from governments and central banks to shore up the virus-weakened economy.

The S&P 500 surged as much as 3.7% in the morning, only to see the gains evaporate by midday. The index then bounced up and down before turning decisively higher after President Donald Trump pitched his ideas for a break on payroll taxes and other economic relief to Senate Republicans.

By the end of trading, the S&P 500 was up 4.9%. It erased three-fifths of Monday's loss, which was the sharpest since 2008, when global authorities banded together to rescue the economy from the financial crisis.

The volatility reflected the mood of a market just as preoccupied with the virus as the rest of the world. Since U.S. stocks set their record high just a few weeks ago, traders have crossed over from dismissing the economic pain created by COVID-19 — thinking it's similar to the flu and could stay mostly contained in China — to being in thrall to it — worrying that it may cause a worldwide recession.

While they won't cure illnesses or get quarantined workers back into factories, spending and stimulus programs would put cash into the hands of households and businesses while health experts try to corral the virus. That could stave off or at least moderate a possible recession.

Investors saw glimmers of a coordinated response, which led to Tuesday's optimism.

At a White House press briefing Monday night, Trump said his administration would be asking Congress to cut payroll taxes and pass other quick measures aimed at easing the impact of the coronavirus on workers.

Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin also met with House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, whose support would be needed for any deal in a deeply divided Congress. Mnuchin called the meeting productive.

In Japan, a task force set up by the prime minister approved a 430 billion yen (\$4.1 billion) package

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Tuesday with support for small to medium-sized businesses. Other governments in Asia have announced billions of dollars' worth of stimulus and other measures to help protect their own struggling economies.

But as markets waited on Tuesday for details about Trump's plan, prices oscillated sharply.

After a meeting with major health insurers, Trump said the government is working with the cruise line industry, one of the hardest hit by the virus. That helped lift the market, which had earlier flipped to losses amid doubts that the government would announce anything soon.

"I would expect the authorities to pull out all the stops to reduce uncertainty," said Alec Young, managing director of

Treasury yields pushed higher on Tuesday but fell back early Wednesday. The bond market rang warning bells about the virus long before the stock market, and a rise in yields signals fear has receded a bit.

The 10-year Treasury yield fell to 0.68% from 0.79%. A week ago, it had never been below 1%.

The S&P 500 rose 4.9% to 2,882.23. The Dow Jones Industrial Average advanced 4.9% to 25,018.16, and the Nasdaq composite jumped 5%, to 8,344.25.

That pulled the market a bit further from the brink of a bear market, signified by a drop of 20% from a record. The S&P 500 is down 14.9% from its high. If it can rally back to that point, it would extend the longest-ever bull market, which began its climb after the market hit bottom on March 9, 2009.

Oil prices, which plunged 25% on Monday amid a price war between producers, have steadied in the past two days.

For most people, the new coronavirus causes only mild or moderate symptoms, such as fever and cough. For some, especially older adults and people with existing health problems, it can cause more severe illness, including pneumonia.

The vast majority of people recover from the new virus. According to the World Health Organization, people with mild illness recover in about two weeks, while those with more severe illness may take three to six weeks to recover. In mainland China, where the virus first exploded, more than 80,000 people have been diagnosed and more than 58,000 have so far recovered.

But because the virus is new, experts can't say for sure how far it will ultimately spread. That has investors worried about a worst-case scenario for corporate profits and the economy, where factories and supply chains are shut around the world due to quarantines and people stay huddled at home instead of working or spending.

ENERGY: Brent crude, the international standard, rose \$1.25 to \$38.47 per barrel. It rose \$2.86, or 8.3%, to \$37.22 a barrel on Tuesday. Benchmark U.S. crude rose 90 cents to \$35.26 a barrel. It rose \$3.23 to \$34.36 a barrel on Tuesday.

CURRENCIES: The dollar fell to 104.72 Japanese yen from 105.64 yen on Tuesday. The euro rose to \$1.1333 from \$1.1283.

AP Business Writers Stan Choe, Alex Veiga and Damian J. Troise contributed to this report.

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Disappointing results leave Sanders campaign at crossroads

By STEVE PEOPLES AP National Political Writer

PHILADELPHIA (AP) — Bernie Sanders has a choice.

The face of the Democrats' far-left flank is suddenly staring up at a towering wall of opposition from his own party, an urgent call to unify against President Donald Trump and a growing delegate disadvantage.

And as unlikely as it may seem less than two weeks after losing his front-runner status, Sanders is now being forced to consider whether he will continue his increasingly uphill fight for the Democratic Party's 2020 presidential nomination.

The Vermont senator did not publicly address his supporters Tuesday night after suffering a devastat-

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ing primary defeat in Michigan and decisive losses in Missouri and Mississippi. He was instead hunkered down at home in Vermont after being forced to cancel a rally in Cleveland because of concerns over the new coronavirus.

At the same time, chief rival Joe Biden celebrated in Philadelphia, surrounded by giddy campaign staff sipping beer. In his victory speech, he invited his rivals, even Sanders' supporters, to join his coalition.

"This campaign is taking off," Biden declared. After the speech, dozens of staffers broke into an impromptu dance party.

The Biden and Sanders campaigns may be going in opposite directions, but a Sanders exit in the coming days would be a surprise. The 78-year-old democratic socialist is nothing if not willing to take on the political establishment against all odds. Four years ago, under similar pressure in a primary match-up against Hillary Clinton, Sanders fought on for months before ultimately backing Clinton in July.

The Democrats' desperate desire to defeat Trump may change his calculus in 2020, however. Should Sanders get out soon, he could save Democrats months of a messy and expensive primary fight. But an early departure would also deprive the Democrats' most passionate supporters, including many young people, of the one man who embodies the dramatic change they crave. And there is reason to question whether they would rally behind Biden.

As the former vice president's confidence surged, leading Sanders allies acknowledged that his campaign was facing an existential threat.

"Bernie Sanders has a mandate not to abandon the movement. He needs to stay in this race no matter what," said RoseAnn DeMoro, former executive director of National Nurses United and a Sanders confidant. "Heroes aren't made, they're cornered. He is cornered."

Sanders' most prominent ally in Congress, New York Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, couldn't hide her disappointment.

"There's no sugarcoating it. Tonight's a tough night," she said in an Instagram live post. "Tonight's a tough night for the movement overall. Tonight's a tough night electorally."

There was concern even before polls closed Tuesday night. Sensing disaster, the Progressive Change Campaign Committee issued an afternoon statement calling for Sanders to not drop out — or at least not before this Sunday's debate.

"To defeat Trump our nominee must prove that they can go the distance, and that means no quick Biden coronation," PCCC spokeswoman Maria Langholz said. "Win or lose tonight, Bernie should stay in the race until the March 15th debate at the earliest."

Yet Sanders was increasingly isolated in his party facing a primary calendar that will get no easier next week as four more states vote. None of them is bigger than Florida, which Sanders' team has long worried about privately.

The three-term senator earned his first congressional endorsement in nearly three weeks on Tuesday. Biden, by comparison, has earned nearly 50 congressional endorsements in the last 11 days.

And beyond elected officials, the party's infrastructure began lining up behind Biden in a more formal way in the wake of his second consecutive strong Tuesday.

The head of the most powerful super PAC in Democratic politics, Priorities USA, pledged allegiance to Biden as the scope of his latest victory set in.

"The math is now clear. Joe Biden is going to be the Democratic nominee for president," tweeted Priorities Chairman Guy Cecil, vowing that his organization would do "everything we can to help him defeat Donald Trump in November."

He added: "I hope others will join us in the fight."

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

AP source: MLB prefers teams flip sites if virus shuts parks

By RONALD BLUM AP Baseball Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — If Major League Baseball can't play in front of fans at a team's home ballpark because of the virus outbreak, the sport's first preference likely would be to switch games to the visiting team's stadium if possible, a person familiar with the deliberations told The Associated Press.

The person spoke on condition of anonymity Tuesday because no decisions have been made.

MLB starts its season on March 26. Among the games on opening day is Texas at Seattle — the Seattle area has been hit hard by the virus, with 24 deaths.

MLB anticipates government officials will decide whether it is safe to play in front of fans in each city. If changes to the schedule are necessary, MLB would make determinations at the point when a ballpark has been ruled out.

Washington Gov. Jay Inslee plans to ban gatherings and events of more than 250 people in virtually the entire Seattle area, a person familiar with the decision told The Associated Press on Tuesday night. The person was not authorized to disclose the decision and spoke on condition of anonymity.

Inslee scheduled a news conference for late Wednesday morning. The Mariners and MLB had no immediate comment.

"I hope it doesn't turn into us missing games or pushing scheduled games back," Baltimore Orioles first baseman Chris Davis said.

Baseball's preference is to play in front of fans and not in empty stadiums, the person familiar with the deliberations said. Players and management don't like the lack of energy in empty ballparks.

"It wouldn't be the same. It really wouldn't," said Dave Martinez, manager of World Series champion Washington.

Flipping home and road dates is easier to do at the start of the season, when there are many series between teams who face each other later in the year.

The Rangers are scheduled to open Globe Life Field, their new retractable roof ballpark, against the Los Angeles Angels on March 31. Texas general manager Jon Daniels said Monday there hadn't been any discussion with MLB or the Mariners about swapping home dates for that opening series between AL West rivals, but said the new ballpark would be ready if it is needed.

Exhibition games against St. Louis are scheduled at the new stadium on March 23 and 24.

Rangers catcher Robinson Chirinos said Tuesday he is "a little bit" concerned about traveling to face the Mariners.

"I know the season starts in Seattle, and we know how Seattle is right now," Chirinos said.

Several high-profile soccer games in Europe have been played in empty stadiums, including Atlanta's win at Spain's Valencia on Tuesday night that advanced the Italian club to the Champions League semifinals. Paris Saint-Germain's home match against Germany's Borussia Dortmund on Wednesday night also will be behind closed doors.

All Spanish first- and second-division league matches will be played without fans for the next two weeks. After some Serie A games were played in empty stadiums in recent weeks, the Italian government called off all sporting events until April 3.

AP Sports Writer Jake Seiner and AP freelance writers Mark Dittler and Chuck King contributed to this report.

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

Lawmakers resist Trump's proposed payroll tax break

By LISA MASCARO and ZEKE MILLER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump's proposed payroll tax break met with bipartisan resistance on Capitol Hill as pressure mounts on the administration and Congress to work more vigorously to

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contain the coronavirus outbreak and respond to the financial fallout.

Flanked by his economic team, Trump on Tuesday pitched his economic stimulus ideas privately to wary Senate Republicans on another grueling day in the struggle against expanding infections. Fluctuating stock markets rebounded but communities discovered new cases and the two top Democratic presidential candidates, Bernie Sanders and Joe Biden, canceled Tuesday primary night rallies in Ohio.

The president's GOP allies have been cool to additional spending at this stage, especially for cutting taxes that would have to be reimposed later — presumably after the November election. Democrats prefer their own package of low- or no-cost virus testing, unemployment insurance and sick pay for workers struggling to keep paychecks coming as the outbreak disrupts workplaces.

"We're taking this unbelievably seriously," Trump said after his meeting at the Capitol. "It will go away, just stay calm."

Asked why he has not yet been tested for the virus, after having been in close contact with several advisers and members of Congress who are now self-quarantined after exposure, Trump said: "I don't think it's a big deal" and "I feel very good."

White House officials have been blindsided by the president's sudden moves. As Trump headed to Capitol Hill, two administration officials said the proposals he was putting in play had not been completed. They were unauthorized to discuss the planning and requested anonymity.

Trump's team offered few specifics at the closed door GOP lunch on the size of the payroll tax break or its duration, senators said. Trump has long promised to bring about an election year "tax cuts 2.0," and seemed to be seizing on the virus fears as a way to bring about a victory on that front before November. Behind closed doors he discussed the coming elections in swing states like Arizona and Montana where GOP senators face tough races.

In addition to payroll tax relief, Trump has said he wants help for hourly-wage workers to ensure they're "not going to miss a paycheck" and "don't get penalized for something that's not their fault." He's also mentioned small-business loans. But details are slight.

So far, the president's approach, based on tax breaks, is receiving a cool response. Some Republicans endorsed Trump's suggestion that help be provided to the beleaguered cruise-ship and airline industries, while others spoke up for other industries, including energy and gas. Some pushed for broader economic stimulus from a bipartisan highway bill they said was shovel-ready and popular. The payroll tax plan remains a work in progress.

"They didn't get into specifics," said the No. 2 Republican, Sen. John Thune of South Dakota.

Increasingly, it appears a solution will originate in the House, where Speaker Nancy Pelosi told House Democrats they would keep working this week despite concerns about the risk of infection at the Capitol.

"We are the captains of the ship," Pelosi said during a closed-door meeting, according to a person in the room unauthorized to discuss the private caucus and granted anonymity. "We are the last to leave." But time is short as Congress heads toward its scheduled break next week.

Trump tapped Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin to meet with Pelosi, whose support will be needed for any deal in the divided Congress, where Republicans hold the Senate majority but Democrats hold the House.

Mnuchin declared the meeting with Pelosi "productive" and said they'd "work together on a bipartisan basis to figure out how we can get things done quickly."

Pelosi insisted the "threshold" for any proposal must be its ability to respond to the virus. Her team was preparing to come out with a package in the next day or so.

Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell was noncommittal after the meeting with Trump, emphasizing the path forward rests in the talks between Mnuchin and Pelosi. "We're hoping that he and the speaker can pull this together," he said.

That reflected divisions even within the administration on the best approach. The payroll-tax plan found support from Trump's son-in-law and adviser Jared Kushner and trade adviser Peter Navarro, among others. Other aides, including Mnuchin and Larry Kudlow advocated more modest measures. Trump prefers the payroll tax holiday "last through the end of the year," Kudlow said.

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For most people, the new coronavirus causes only mild or moderate symptoms, such as fever and cough. For some, especially older adults and people with existing health problems, it can cause more severe illness, including pneumonia.

The vast majority of people recover from the new virus. According to the World Health Organization, people with mild illness recover in about two weeks, while those with more severe illness may take three to six weeks to recover. In mainland China, where the virus first exploded, more than 80,000 people have been diagnosed and more than 58,000 have so far recovered.

In Washington, there were mixed signals about the public mood. Tourists still arrived for visits while marquee events, including this weekend's Gridiron Club dinner, an annual mingling of political Washington, was postponed.

At the U.S. Capitol, some senators said they resisted shaking Trump's hand when he arrived for lunch. Lawmakers were given new instructions on how to protect themselves, with the House's attending physician asking them to stop shaking hands or touching people during greetings. He recommended the split-fingers Star Trek greeting instead.

Crowds are the norm in the Capitol and handshakes are coin of the realm there, even between political foes. But about a half dozen lawmakers — including Trump confidantes — have placed themselves in quarantine after being exposed to someone who had the virus, and the norm has been upended.

One, GOP Rep. Matt Gaetz, who self-quarantined after having traveled with the president from Florida on Air Force One on Monday, said he had tested negative for the disease. He said he would remain quarantined as a precaution. Another, Trump's incoming chief of staff, Rep. Mark Meadows, R-N.C., remains on quarantine.

During House Democrats' closed session, one lawmaker, California Rep. Raul Ruiz, who is a doctor, raised concerns about the situation, noting that the average age in Congress is 57. Some lawmakers have underlying health conditions and their work requires them to fly back and forth between home and the capital.

Still, Pelosi implored lawmakers to keep working to strengthen the country's defenses.

But House and Senate leaders have made it clear there will be no voting by proxy. Quarantined lawmakers will be missing votes. Lawmakers were told up to 10,000 staff members could telework, if need be.

The Securities and Exchange Commission, which monitors financial markets, encouraged employees at its Washington headquarters to work from home after an employee there had respiratory symptoms and was referred for coronavirus testing.

And Defense Secretary Mark Esper postponed a trip to India, Pakistan and Uzbekistan that was to begin Monday, citing the coronavirus crisis, Pentagon press secretary Alyssa Farah said Tuesday. She said he would remain in the U.S. to help manage the Pentagon response.

Associated Press writers Luran Neergaard, Andrew Taylor, Kevin Freking, Jill Colvin, Bob Burns, and Mary Clare Jalonick contributed to this report.

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

Arsenal-City game called off with players in self-isolation

By **ROB HARRIS** AP Global Soccer Writer

LONDON (AP) — Members of Arsenal's playing squad went into self-isolation in a coronavirus precautionary move, forcing the postponement of the Premier League game at Manchester City later Wednesday.

It is the first game to be called off since the outbreak of the virus in the English top division, which has not played games without fans unlike in other parts of Europe. It was also the first time players in a major sports league had gone into isolation because of possible exposure.

The decision was taken due to the low risk of infection after Arsenal players came into contact with a rival team owner who announced Tuesday that he had contracted COVID-19. They met Olympiakos owner

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Evangelos Marinakis after the Greek team won at Arsenal in the Europa League on Feb. 27.

"The medical advice we have received puts the risk of them developing COVID-19 at extremely low," Arsenal said in a statement. "However, we are strictly following the government guidelines which recommend that anyone coming into close contact with someone with the virus should self-isolate at home for 14 days from the last time they had contact.

"As a result, the players are unavailable for tonight's match against Manchester City and the Premier League has decided the game should be postponed. The players will remain at their homes until the 14-day period expires. Four Arsenal staff, who were sitting close to Mr. Marinakis during the match will also remain at home until the 14 days are complete."

Arsenal did not say how many players were affected but did not indicate an immediate threat to the next game going ahead on Saturday — more than two weeks after the contact with Marinakis.

"We look forward to the players and staff returning to work on Friday in preparation for our match at Brighton," Arsenal said.

The Premier League is talking to government officials about contingencies for shutting fans out of stadiums but has yet to announce the need for that, saying City-Arsenal is a one-off postponement.

"All necessary measures are being taken and the Premier League currently has no plans to postpone any other matches," the league said in a statement.

Since Arsenal players came into contact with Marinakis, Arsenal has played an FA Cup game at Portsmouth and hosted West Ham in the Premier League.

Marinakis, who is also owner of Nottingham Forest, went to the English second-tier club's game in London against Millwall on Friday. The club said he was diagnosed on Monday after first showing symptoms on his return to Greece.

Another Premier League club, Wolverhampton, is due to play Olympiakos in the Europa League in an empty stadium in Athens on Thursday night. UEFA rejected a request from Wolves for the last-16 game to be called off completely, with the English club stressing the "good health of our pack and the general public" is more important than football.

"Our position is that the trip poses unnecessary risks to our players, staff, supporters and the families of all who travel, at such critical and uncertain times," Wolves said. "Our concern is also for our opponents, whose players and staff have today been tested, and will now be expected to play their part in an important fixture, under the difficult and challenging circumstances of their owner suffering with the virus."

More AP sports: <https://apnews.com/apf-Sports> and https://twitter.com/AP_Sports

Court: House entitled to Mueller probe grand jury testimony

By ERIC TUCKER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Justice Department must give Congress secret grand jury testimony from special counsel Robert Mueller's Russia investigation, a federal appeals court ruled Tuesday, giving the House a significant win in a separation-of-powers clash with the Trump administration.

The three-judge panel said in a 2-1 opinion that the House Judiciary Committee's need for the material in its investigations of President Donald Trump outweighed the Justice Department's interests in keeping the testimony secret. The opinion authorizes access to information that Democrats have sought since the conclusion of Mueller's investigation, enabling lawmakers to review previously-undisclosed details from the two-year Russia probe.

Writing for the majority, Judge Judith Rogers said that with Mueller himself having "stopped short" of reaching conclusions about Trump's conduct to avoid stepping on the House's impeachment power, the committee was able to persuasively argue that it needed access to the underlying grand jury material to make its own determinations about the president's actions.

"Courts must take care not to second-guess the manner in which the House plans to proceed with its impeachment investigation or interfere with the House's sole power of impeachment," Rogers wrote, calling

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the committee's request for the grand jury material "directly linked to its need to evaluate the conclusions reached and not reached by the Special Counsel."

House Democrats cheered the opinion, with Rep. Jerrold Nadler, the Judiciary Committee chairman, saying the panel "remains committed to holding the President accountable to the rule of law and preventing improper interference in law enforcement investigations."

House Speaker Nancy Pelosi called the ruling a rejection of the president's "insistence that he is above the law" and a further rebuke to Attorney General William Barr. Last week, another federal judge scolded Barr in a separate case for what he said were misleading public statements by the attorney general about Mueller's findings.

Judge Thomas Griffith issued a separate concurring opinion in Tuesday's appeals court decision. Judge Neomi Rao, a Trump appointee, dissented, suggesting that the need for the testimony could have waned after Trump's acquittal at a Senate impeachment trial last month.

"After all, the Committee sought these materials preliminary to an impeachment proceeding and the Senate impeachment trial has concluded. Why is this controversy not moot?" Rao wrote.

It is unclear when the materials might actually be turned over. The Trump administration can ask the full appeals court to rehear the case, and can appeal to the Supreme Court. Justice Department spokeswoman Kerri Kupec said the department was reviewing the decision.

The ruling softens the blow of a loss the House endured two weeks ago when judges on the same court refused to force former White House counsel Don McGahn to testify before Congress. The split decisions leave neither the administration nor Congress with a clear upper hand in the ongoing inter-branch dispute that federal courts have been grappling with.

Though the ruling is a major win for Democrats who have fought the Justice Department for nearly a year, it's unclear what the House will actually do with the material.

Lawyers for the Democrats have said the grand jury material could potentially be used for additional articles of impeachment, though the Senate impeachment trial over the president's interactions with Ukraine ended weeks ago in an acquittal.

The case is one of several disputes between the Trump administration and Congress that courts have grappled with in recent months.

The two sides had been similarly at odds on the question of whether McGahn could be forced to testify about Trump's behavior during the Russia investigation. The appeals court ruled in a recent 2-1 decision that judges had no role to play in that dispute and dismissed the case.

Mueller issued a 448-page report last April that detailed multiple interactions between the 2016 Trump campaign and Russia and that examined several episodes involving the president for potential obstruction of justice. Mueller said his team did not find sufficient evidence to establish a criminal conspiracy between the campaign and the Kremlin to tip the election, though pointedly noted that he could not exonerate the president for obstruction.

Portions of the report were blacked out, including grand jury testimony and material that Mueller said could harm ongoing investigations or infringe on the privacy of third parties.

Grand jury testimony is typically treated as secret, in part to protect the privacy of people who are not charged or are considered peripheral to a criminal investigation. But several exceptions allow for the material to be turned over, including if it is in connection with a judicial proceeding.

The House argued that the impeachment inquiry met that definition, and it sought grand jury testimony that Mueller referenced in his report. Chief U.S. District Judge Beryl Howell sided with the House last October in ordering that the material be turned over.

The Justice Department appealed that decision, with lawyers arguing that the material sought by the House had no relevance to the impeachment inquiry and that the House already had ample information about the investigation.

Several dozen witnesses appeared before Mueller's grand jury, including former Trump campaign chairman Paul Manafort.

Associated Press writer Mark Sherman in Washington contributed to this report.

Follow Eric Tucker on Twitter at <http://www.twitter.com/etuckerAP>

LA Opera finds harassment reports against Domingo 'credible'

By JOCELYN GECKER Associated Press

SAN FRANCISCO (AP) — An investigation commissioned by the Los Angeles Opera into sexual harassment allegations against Plácido Domingo has found that the legendary tenor engaged in "inappropriate conduct" with multiple women over the three decades he held senior positions at the company, which he helped found and later led.

Investigators say 10 women accused the star of engaging in inappropriate conduct between 1986 and 2019. Investigators deemed the allegations credible, according to a summary released Tuesday by LA Opera.

The findings did not detail any of the allegations, but said the "level of discomfort reported by the women varied, ranging from some women stating they were not uncomfortable to others who described significant trauma."

The six-month investigation, conducted by outside lawyers, also found "no evidence that LA Opera ever ignored, failed to address, or covered up sexual harassment complaints," the summary said.

The accusations echo those of a separate independent investigation released two weeks ago by the American Guild of Musical Artists, the U.S. union that represents opera performers.

Both investigations were launched after the publication of Associated Press stories last year in which multiple women accused Domingo of sexual harassment and abusing his power. Dozens of people told the AP that his behavior was an open secret in the opera world, where men in positions of authority have long behaved with impunity.

Domingo, now 79, has been regarded as one of the greatest opera singers of all time and a key power broker in the industry. He served as general director at Washington Opera from 2003-2011 and helped found LA Opera in the 1980s before becoming an artistic adviser, then artistic director and finally general director from 2003 until his tenure was cut short by the allegations last year.

The LA Opera investigation, conducted by the law firm Gibson, Dunn & Crutcher, said Domingo was one of 44 people interviewed and that the singer had "denied all allegations of unwanted contact and maintained that all his interactions were consensual."

The report added that investigators "often found him to be sincere in his denials but found some of them to be less credible or lacking in awareness."

It also said that investigators "found no evidence that Mr. Domingo ever engaged in a quid pro quo or retaliated against any woman by not casting or otherwise hiring her at LA Opera."

Nancy Seltzer, a spokeswoman for Domingo, said he had no immediate comment on the findings.

Two weeks ago, Domingo issued a pair of conflicting statements after the American Guild of Musical Artists concluded that he had "engaged in inappropriate activity, ranging from flirtation to sexual advances, in and outside of the workplace."

The union did not release specific findings. But people familiar with the investigation who spoke on condition of anonymity told the AP that investigators found 27 people were sexually harassed or had witnessed inappropriate behavior by Domingo in the 1990s and 2000s while he held senior management positions at the LA Opera and the Washington National Opera.

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

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

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The cancellations in Spain were the first in Europe, where reaction to the misconduct allegations was more muted than in the U.S., where Domingo's performances were swiftly canceled.

More cancellations have followed. London's Royal Opera House said in a statement last week it had mutually agreed with Domingo that he withdraw from a July production of "Don Carlo."

The Hamburg State Opera said Tuesday that Domingo had canceled planned appearances in late March and early April because of the coronavirus outbreak. The German company said the cancellation was due to medical recommendations stemming from his age and other factors and that it "understands and respects this decision."

Coachella festival postponed as concerts grapple with virus

By MESFIN FEKADU AP Music Writer

The uber-popular Coachella music festival has been postponed from its usual two-weekend-run in April to October due to concerns about the growing coronavirus.

The festival's producer Goldenvoice made the announcement Tuesday, also confirming that Stagecoach, a country music festival, will also be postponed. Coachella, held in Southern California, will now take place on Oct. 9-11 and Oct. 16-18, while Stagecoach will take place Oct. 23-25.

"At the direction of the County of Riverside and local health authorities, we must sadly confirm the re-scheduling of Coachella and Stagecoach due to COVID-19 concerns. While this decision comes at a time of universal uncertainty, we take the safety and health of our guests, staff and community very seriously. We urge everyone to follow the guidelines and protocols put forth by public health officials," Goldenvoice said in a statement.

The company said all passes for original dates will be honored for the rescheduled shows, and customers will be notified by Friday on how to obtain a refund if they cannot attend.

Rage Against the Machine, Travis Scott and Frank Ocean were originally announced as headliners of Coachella; Goldenvoice didn't say if the performance lineup would change or stay intact. Others announced to perform include Calvin Harris, Lana Del Rey, Thom Yorke, 21 Savage, Disclosure, Summer Walker, Lil Uzi Vert and FKA twigs.

Riverside County, which has six coronavirus cases, declared a public health emergency on Sunday.

"No doubt it will impact many people, but my top priority is to protect the health of the entire community," said Riverside County Public Health Officer Dr. Cameron Kaiser.

For most people, the new coronavirus causes only mild or moderate symptoms, such as fever and cough. For some, especially older adults and people with existing health problems, it can cause more severe illness, including pneumonia.

The vast majority of people recover from the new virus. According to the World Health Organization, people with mild illness recover in about two weeks, while those with more severe illness may take three to six weeks to recover. In mainland China, where the virus first exploded, more than 80,000 people have been diagnosed and more than 58,000 have so far recovered.

The move came the same day Carlos Santana, Zac Brown Band and Pentatonix canceled concerts because of the coronavirus outbreak.

Santana said he had canceled the European tour dates of his Miraculous 2020 World Tour and that refunds will be available through point of purchase. The tour was scheduled to start March 17 in Poland.

Pentatonix was also set to launch its world tour in Poland — a day before Santana's show — but posted a statement saying they would have to cancel the European leg of the tour.

"Despite our best efforts and intentions, it is, simply, no longer possible for us to execute this tour the way we want to: safely, confidently and completely," the Grammy-winning vocal group said in a statement.

Zac Brown Band said it was postponing the spring leg of its The Owl Tour, which would have kicked off Thursday in St. Louis.

"This was an extremely difficult decision, but the well-being of our fans is always our top priority," the country group said in a statement. "We ask that our fans retain their tickets as they will be honored on

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the new dates. At this time, our "Roar With The Lions" Summer 2020 tour dates (commencing in May) will be performed as planned."

Santana, Zac Brown Band and Pentatonix join a long list of singers who have canceled or postponed shows in the U.S. and outside of the region, including Pearl Jam, Madonna, Ciara, BTS, Khalid, Mariah Carey, Green Day and more. The South by Southwest festival in Austin, Texas, has been canceled, and the Ultra electronic dance music festival in Miami has been postponed.

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.

Lawyer says Durst found body of slain friend, will testify

By ANDREW DALTON AP Entertainment Writer

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Robert Durst's defense lawyer said Tuesday that the multimillionaire real estate heir found the body of the friend he is charged with killing, and told jurors that Durst will testify at his trial.

It was the first time defense attorneys have publicly said Durst discovered the body of Susan Berman, his best friend who was fatally shot in her home in 2000, and the first time they have even conceded that he was in the Los Angeles area at the time.

"Bob Durst did not kill Susan Berman, and he doesn't know who did," attorney Dick DeGuerin told jurors at the beginning of his opening statement. "He did find her body, shortly after someone had shot her in the back of the head."

The admission offered the first glimpse at the planned defense for Durst, though his attorneys had signaled they would take the approach during the run-up to trial, when they conceded that Durst mailed a note to authorities with only Berman's address and the word "cadaver" written in capital letters. Durst had long denied sending the letter.

"When Bob showed up and found her dead, he panicked," DeGuerin said. "He wrote the anonymous letter, so her body would be found, and he ran. He's run away all his life."

DeGuerin then shifted to the death soon after in Galveston, Texas, of Morris Black and the last time he represented Durst and put him on the stand, something he told jurors he would do again in the Berman trial.

"Bob Durst is going to testify," DeGuerin said Tuesday, stunning his courtroom audience.

Having the defendant take the stand and be subjected to cross-examination at a murder trial is considered risky. In the case of Durst, whose candid, say-anything style was on display in clips from police and television interviews during the prosecution's opening statement, it would seem to be especially ill-advised.

But it worked the first time. Durst was acquitted in the 2003 Texas trial, where he testified that he had dismembered and disposed of Black's body after Black was accidentally shot during a struggle.

DeGuerin said Tuesday that Black's dismemberment was the "elephant in the room" that threatens to overwhelm all the other evidence.

"There was a dead man on the floor of his apartment. And that man had been shot with his gun. And he decided that the police would never believe him. So he decided he had to get rid of the body," DeGuerin said. "Bob doesn't make good decisions."

The prosecution, whose three-day opening statement ended Monday, is being permitted to allege in this case that Durst deliberately killed Black because Black had learned that Durst, who was disguising himself as a woman, was in fact a wealthy real estate heir who was on the run.

The prosecution is also allowed to allege that Durst killed his wife, Kathie, whose 1982 disappearance has brought him decades of suspicion and media attention, because they say Durst had confided that he had killed his wife to Berman, who had helped him cover it up. Durst denies having anything to do with the New York disappearance of his wife, who has since been declared dead despite no body being found.

Another Durst attorney, David Chesnoff, emphasized to the jury that the prosecution's case was entirely circumstantial.

"There is no forensic evidence whatsoever linking Bob to Mrs. Durst's disappearance, or more importantly to Miss Berman's killing," Chesnoff said, then repeated a line he used throughout his presentation to declare Durst's innocence. "Absence of evidence is evidence."

Police and prosecutors for years have tried without success to place Durst in Los Angeles at the time of Berman's killing. On Tuesday, the defense declared openly that he was there.

Durst's attorneys told jurors that he had flown to Northern California in December 2000, and from there he drove to Bakersfield in central California, where he called Berman and planned to meet her and have breakfast at a Los Angeles cafe the following morning, the day Berman would be killed.

Chesnoff said Durst had a key to Berman's apartment, used it to enter her home, found her dead, and ran out of the house because he thought the killer might still be inside.

Chesnoff said Durst was left in an impossible situation where he knew he would be a suspect.

"Here we go again," Chesnoff told jurors. "Since 1982 without any evidence whatsoever, he's been blamed for the disappearance of his wife."

Chesnoff said Durst fled back to San Francisco, where he and Berman had planned to go together, but before that, "he decided to mail a letter to police with the word 'cadaver' on it, hoping that alone would lead police to the residence."

Witness testimony at the trial begins Wednesday.

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

As Americans take virus precautions, Trump flouts advice

By JILL COLVIN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — At the Pentagon, top military brass have begun "social distancing" to avoid spreading disease. At the Capitol, legislators have been encouraged to forgo hand shakes and flash the "Star Trek" Vulcan greeting instead.

But at the White House, President Donald Trump is flouting his own government's advice on how to stay safe. He continues to shake hands with supporters and visitors, hold large events and minimize the threat posed by a coronavirus outbreak that has infected more than 115,000 people and killed over 4,000 worldwide.

Public health officials said Trump was sending the wrong message with his behavior and potentially putting the public at risk by sowing confusion and undermining efforts to keep people safe, especially if the situation grows worse.

"I think it's beholden upon our leaders to follow the public health recommendations that the CDC, the government, public health are recommending and to emulate those practices," said Dr. Jason Farley, a nurse epidemiologist and professor at the Johns Hopkins School of Nursing. He said that it sends "mixed messaging to the public" when recommendations aren't heeded.

When it comes to Trump, he added, "There's nothing special about being the president of the United States that protects you from a virus like this unless you're following the practices recommended for every 70-year-old."

Trump has repeatedly played down the risk, both to the public and himself, even as he claims that his administration is "taking this unbelievably seriously."

"It will go away. Just stay calm," Trump told reporters Tuesday. "Everybody has to be vigilant and has to be careful. But be calm. It's really working out. And a lot of good things are going to happen."

When it comes to Trump's continued glad-handing, Vice President Mike Pence said Tuesday that's unlikely to change despite going against the administration's "broad recommendation" for other Americans.

"In our line of work, you shake hands when someone wants to shake your hand," he said. "And I expect the president will continue to do that. I'll continue to do it."

For most people, the new coronavirus causes only mild or moderate symptoms, such as fever and cough. But for some, especially older adults and people with existing health problems, it can cause more severe

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illnesses, including pneumonia.

Trump, at 73, is considered at higher risk, although his press secretary said Monday he “remains in excellent health.”

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention urges those at higher risk of getting the virus to take “everyday precautions to keep space between yourself and others,” avoid crowds, handshaking and non-essential air travel.

“During a COVID-19 outbreak in your community, stay home as much as possible to further reduce your risk of being exposed,” the CDC writes.

Overall, the CDC has suggested that workplaces encourage employees to stop shaking hands, use videoconferences for meetings when possible and hold meetings in well-ventilated spaces if meetings are necessary.

That hasn’t happened at the White House, where Trump, a self-professed “germophobe,” sat shoulder-to-shoulder Tuesday with aides and health insurance executives, traveled to Capitol Hill for a Senate lunch and awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom at a well-attended ceremony, where he also shook hands with those in the front row.

On Monday, Trump was spotted shaking hands with supporters on a tarmac in Florida. And on Thursday, he’s set to travel to the West Coast, where he’ll attend fundraisers and the annual gathering of the Republican Jewish Coalition in Las Vegas.

All that, despite the fact that Trump has already had personal contact with several individuals known to have been exposed to the virus. They include Florida Rep. Matt Gaetz, who traveled aboard Air Force One with the president on Monday and found out midflight that he was among a handful of GOP lawmakers who were exposed to a person who tested positive for the virus after last month’s Conservative Political Action Conference.

Gaetz voluntarily quarantined himself, as have several other legislators who had contact with the infected person at CPAC, including Trump’s incoming chief of staff.

“The President’s physician, United States Secret Service, and White House Operations have been working closely with staff and various agencies to ensure every precaution is taken to keep the President, First Family and the entire White House Complex safe and healthy at all times,” White House spokesman Judd Deere said in response to questions. He did not provide specifics about the nature of those precautions, though the White House has repeatedly cited Trump’s propensity for hand-washing, and Trump has joked that he’s avoided touching his face so long he’s missed it.

“As we are all doing, Americans should continue to follow the CDC’s guidance on travel and public gatherings, which includes staying home if you feel ill, as well as frequently washing your hands with soap and water,” he said.

The White House has begun to install hand-sanitizer dispensers around the building, and some visitors to the building have been asked to report where they’ve traveled recently — though many who interact with the president regularly have received no kind of heightened screening.

Lawrence Gostin, a public health expert and professor at Georgetown University, said he believed it would be appropriate to implement enhanced screening at the White House to keep the president and Cabinet safe.

“This is no different than being protected by a bullet from the Secret Service,” he said. “Not only should they be following general health advice we give to the public, they should be following much more rigorously ... because we can’t be in a political crisis at the same time we’re in a public health crisis.”

Elsewhere across government, the response has been more robust. At the Pentagon, Defense Department officials have been sitting at least six feet apart, in line with health guidance. And on Tuesday, reporters’ chairs were spread out for a news briefing. On Capitol Hill, Democratic lawmakers were barred from helping themselves to a breakfast buffet or touching serving utensils, and told to avoid kissing, hugging and shaking hands.

But not Trump — a pattern that Robert Blendon, a professor of health policy at the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health and the Harvard Kennedy School of Government, said appeared motivated by Trump’s desire to protect the economy in an election year.

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"Right or wrong, the president's decided he wants to minimize the economic impact of this pandemic. ... He's trying to do everything he can to protect the economy by saying, 'It will be over,' 'It's not that bad,' 'Feel free to go places,'" Blendon said. While much uncertainty remains, "if it turns out to be more serious, the president's contributing to people not protecting themselves."

"The president should be keeping us safe. He shouldn't be amplifying the risk," added Gostin of Georgetown University.

"The message should be: Let's have social distancing, let's avoid the usual cultural symbols of shaking hands, let's separate from one another and avoid either contracting or transmitting a very dangerous infection," Gostin said. "And it's baffling to me that the president, who should be the model of good behavior, is modeling exactly the opposite."

Follow Colvin on Twitter at <https://twitter.com/colvinj>

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

Conspiracy theorist Alex Jones arrested for DWI in Texas

AUSTIN, Texas (AP) — Conspiracy theorist Alex Jones was arrested in Texas on a misdemeanor charge of driving while intoxicated after his wife called police to their house over an argument, according to court records released Tuesday.

The Infowars founder was booked into an Austin jail shortly after midnight and released on bond a few hours later, Travis County Sheriff's Office spokeswoman Kristen Dark said. Jones, 46, had a "strong odor of alcohol" coming from him and his blood-alcohol level was recorded at .076 and .079, according to court records.

In Texas, the legal blood alcohol limit is .08 percent. Jones was also allegedly unable to complete sobriety tests, losing his balance and failing to touch heel to toe.

In an arrest affidavit, the sheriff's deputy said he was originally responding to a family disturbance call at Jones' home just after 10 p.m. Monday. "Dispatch advised the disturbance now was only verbal but earlier in the day 'it was physical,'" the affidavit said.

An attorney for Jones did not immediately return a message seeking comment Tuesday. An article posted on his Infowars website suggested he was pulled over for going five miles over the speed limit. The article mentions Jones having a "small amount of sake" with his wife at dinner but does not mention an argument.

The deputy said when he arrived he saw Jones' Dodge Charger leaving the neighborhood and pulled him over. Jones allegedly said he and his wife got into an argument over dinner and that he ended up walking about three miles home from the restaurant. Jones allegedly said the argument continued when he got home, so he set off for another downtown residence he owns "to get away from his wife," according to the affidavit.

Jones is being sued in Austin by the parents of a 6-year-old victim of the 2012 Sandy Hook massacre who claim the Infowars host used his show to promote falsehoods that the shooting was a hoax.

Jones founded Infowars and produces his radio show in Austin.

Virus lockdown tests Italians' commitment to the common good

By NICOLE WINFIELD Associated Press

ROME (AP) — Over the weekend, the Fiorentino butcher in downtown Rome was so packed with shoppers you could no longer smell the tangy scent of raw meat. By Tuesday, customers stood in an orderly

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queue a meter (yard) apart out the door and into the Campo dei Fiori piazza, politely directing newcomers to the back of the line.

Italians are known as notorious tax cheats and rule breakers with a long history of distrusting government institutions that have often failed them. Now, the country is at the epicenter of the coronavirus outbreak in Europe, and slowing infections has meant asking Italians to place their individual interests at the service of the common good.

Faced with a nationwide health crisis, many Italians appeared to have fallen in line, finally sensitized — and scared to death — into respecting draconian measures aimed at limiting its spread.

No, this is no China-style lockdown. Italy is a Western democracy and scofflaws will be scofflaws. At most, Italians risk a fine if they violate the new regulations and it's likely that if they drag on, violators will abound.

But some train service was cut, and police were out in force checking documents Tuesday and enforcing a strict 6 p.m. closure of restaurants and cafes — evidence that the government was getting very serious.

The new regulations essentially require Italians to stay home except for work, health reasons or other "necessities" such as grocery shopping. The measures extended a lockdown imposed in the virus-hit north over the weekend to the rest of the peninsula.

They became necessary after Italy's infection rate continued its exponential rise — passing 10,000 on Tuesday — despite the quarantine of a dozen towns in Lombardy and Veneto where the first cases were registered on Feb. 21.

On Day 1 of the national lockdown, shopper Marinella Faccioli, a communications specialist standing in line to buy veal cutlets, said the gravity of the moment hit her with the government's back-to-back lockdown orders over 48 hours. She suggested their confused and chaotic late-night roll-outs actually lent credibility to the urgency of the moment.

"That changed life completely," she said, as she directed a shopper to the back of the line.

Polls back her up. The SWG polling firm found Tuesday that nearly 55% of Italians were "very concerned" about the virus, compared to 37% a week ago.

Sociologists suggested that Italians will follow the rules when they understand that it's in their own interest to do so.

"What is prevailing is the collective interest, the idea that respecting rules is good for me, that taking care of everyone is taking care of me," said Michele Sorice, professor of political sociology at Rome's Luiss university. "They realize that respecting the rules is good for them."

An obvious parallel to draw is Italy's 2005 ban on smoking indoors in public places. At the time, the Health Ministry estimated that 26% of Italians lit up. Almost overnight with nary a protest, the air cleared in restaurants, bars and trains — hardly the expected outcome for a people often portrayed in popular culture as law-flouting mafiosi or cheats.

Yet Premier Giuseppe Conte fell into a similar stereotype when he appealed to Italians to avoid "furbizie," or being clever, in thinking they could skirt the government's measures. There was some truth to his admonition, since the limited lockdowns in the north failed to contain the virus, even if infection rates were beginning to slow in the initial "red zone" around Lodi, in hard-hit Lombardy province.

Plenty of Italians in the rest of the peninsula had brushed off his appeals to refrain from congregating, and the shopping scene this weekend at Il Fiorentino butcher was evidence that crowds weren't considered dangerous sources for infection. Some families went skiing after school was canceled nationwide. Students took advantage of not having to go to class by partying more.

But by Tuesday, sobriety had set in, along with the economic reality that commerce, retail and even pizza making were grinding to a halt in a country on the verge of recession, and would continue to suffer as long as the virus spread.

"Out of respect, out of seriousness, out of a sense of the collective," the Montecarlo Pizzeria announced it was closing for two weeks in a sign hung on its door Tuesday.

Massimiliano Panarari, a communications consultant and columnist for La Stampa daily, said he believed Italians would comply with the measures, citing the smoking ban as evidence that even notoriously indi-

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vidualistic Italians can adopt a “collective psychology” and enact radical change in their behavior overnight. “People can adapt because it’s the tendency of human nature to adapt to difficult conditions when the survival instinct becomes the priority,” he said in a phone interview.

He said the key would be for the government to communicate efficiently and quickly provide economic relief to soften the blow to businesses forced to close and workers forced to take unwanted, unpaid vacation.

“This isn’t China, and the imposition can only last up to a certain point and must be justified by questions of public order and public health,” he said.

And yet for Chinese nationals living in Italy, the government measures failed to impress.

“You call this a lockdown?” was the general sense of the WeChat social media group that Susan Gao belongs to along with other Chinese women living in Italy.

“Our husbands continue to go to work and they refuse to wear masks,” lamented Gao, a Beijing native who lives in Milan and is married to an Italian and has an 8-year-old daughter.

“China didn’t allow anyone (to go to work),” she said. “Everyone had to stay home. You had to ground yourself at home to reduce the risk of passing on the virus.”

She marveled that Milanese were still going skiing on the weekends — until the government abruptly closed all lifts this week — saying she has friends in Wuhan who still can’t leave their compound.

“Everybody wonders how they (Italians) can be so relaxed,” she said. “In our minds we think they are crazy.”

Karl Ritter contributed to this report.

‘The Hunt’ pits Red vs Blue in a violent, bipartisan farce

By JAKE COYLE AP Film Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Last fall, the violent satire “The Hunt” became ensnared by some of the very politics it so playfully parodies.

Universal Pictures pulled “The Hunt” from release after a series of deadly shootings and wave of right-wing criticism, including from President Trump. He called it a movie “made in order to inflame and cause chaos.” Conservative commentators came out in force against it. Fox News’ Dan Bongino declared that “the Hollywood hate machine appears to be taking its anti-Trump derangement syndrome to disturbing new levels.”

Now, the makers of “The Hunt” want a do-over. And they feel they have a movie worthy of not a second chance but a legitimate first impression.

The latest from the low-budget, high-impact horror production company Blumhouse Productions, “The Hunt” isn’t the liberal screed it was accused, sight unseen, of being. It’s a heightened, bipartisan farce that puts the red-vs-blue vitriol of social media into a bloody action-movie blender.

The film, penned by Damon Lindelof (“Watchmen,” “Lost”) and Nick Cuse, is a loose take on “The Most Dangerous Game,” in which wealthy liberals kidnap a dozen “rednecks” and “deplorables” to hunt on a private preserve. That may sound one-sided — its summary helped stoke the controversy — but “The Hunt” lampoons the left as much (if not more so) than the right.

It’s an absurdist melee in which liberals smugly brag of a tweet liked by Ava DuVernay and shout “Climate change is real!” while hunting their prey, and conservatives blame “crisis actor” migrants and “godless elites.” For anyone in the film spouting conspiracy theory or one-sided rhetoric, well, things don’t end well.

“The Hunt” may have gone from the frying pan into the fire. It opens in theaters Friday just as coronavirus fears are spiking in the U.S. But its filmmakers are just happy “The Hunt” is seeing the light of day.

“It’s coming out on Friday the 13th. It already is a zombie. It died and it is now back to life,” says Lindelof, who’s also a producer on the film. “I feel like it’s a huge victory that it’s just being released. Everything else is gravy.”

Universal initially pulled ads for “The Hunt” last year after a pair of shootings on Aug. 3, one at a Walmart in El Paso, Texas, the other in downtown Dayton, Ohio. The timing wasn’t right for a movie that conflated

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gun violence with sport. Once the movie became a target of political debate, the Sept. 27 release date was canceled. Jason Blum, founder and chief of Blumhouse and a producer on "The Hunt," says that decision was unanimous.

"But it was always the plan to bring it back," says Blum, who adds "not one frame, not one line" of the film has since been changed. "Everybody jumped to conclusions about what the movie was and nobody had seen the movie."

Still, the backlash caught the filmmakers off guard.

"I know this sounds ridiculous in hindsight, but I was genuinely surprised when what happened happened," says Lindelof. "I'm not someone who views myself as a provocateur. I knew that this movie was playing in quote-unquote 'dangerous' territory, but I didn't think that the movie was in and of itself dangerous or was advancing some sort of dangerous message."

Made for about \$15 million, "The Hunt" was inspired in part by Jordan Peele's "Get Out." Lindelof and Cuse were jolted by its combination of social satire, thriller and horror. They endeavored to channel the extreme divisions of American politics — and their own liberal biases — into something that audiences from both sides of the aisle could laugh at.

"As a liberal myself, I feel like I have more license to make fun of myself and the people I spend time with because I know them better," says Lindelof. "One of our weak spots, as a broad generality, is that we don't have a great sense of humor about ourselves about certain things and we do tend to be too finger-waggy at points. So I took those things that I don't like about myself and made them the villain of the movie."

The movie's star is Betty Gilpin, who plays Crystal, one of the hunted. She's ex-military, largely disinterested in politics and, through grit and cunning, turns the table on her captors, ultimately facing off with the group's leader (Hilary Swank). In a bit of wry casting, the native New Yorker Gilpin ("GLOW") is playing a Southerner, and Swank, who's from Nebraska, plays a big city liberal.

It's a confident, star-making performance by Gilpin. "When the movie was canceled, that was the thing that I was most sad about," says Lindelof. "People aren't going to get to see what Betty did."

Universal has revamped the marketing for "The Hunt," making its satirical nature more evident and playing up the past controversy. Trailers call it "the most talked about movie of the year is one that no one's actually seen."

Craig Zobel, the film's director, thinks the uproar was, in its way, perfect.

"We were living through a version of what happens in 'The Hunt,' in a way," says Zobel. "The movie has kind of proved its own thesis."

That thesis could be said to be that extreme partisanship will only lead to our mutual destruction.

"We're about to go into a fall that will be a torrent of media aimed to divide us during this election," Zobel says. "I think it's the perfect time for this movie to come out."

Few would call this weekend an ideal moment for any movie. With the spread of the coronavirus, health experts are advocating social distancing to limit exposure.

"I have more anxiety about people getting sick than if they go to the movies," says Blum. "It's too late because the media has been spent. But if you're asking me if I had a crystal ball, is now a good time to release a movie? The answer is no. But there's no way to reverse it because you've spent the media and you've got to go forward."

Lindelof is pleased mainly that "The Hunt" will finally be judged for its merits, not the chatter around it. "I've only always wanted the conversation to be: Is this movie good or not?"

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

Putin backs term limit freeze allowing him to stay in office

By VLADIMIR ISACHENKOV and DARIA LITVINOVA undefined

MOSCOW (AP) — Russian President Vladimir Putin revealed his tightly guarded political plans Tuesday and supported a constitutional amendment that would allow him to seek reelection in 2024 by restarting the term count.

The constitutional change would pave the way for the 67-year-old Putin to stay in office until 2036, if he desires.

A lawmaker who is revered in Russia as the first woman to fly in space proposed either scrapping Russia's two-term limit for presidents or stopping the clock so the law wouldn't apply to Putin's time in office.

The Russian leader and the lower house of parliament quickly endorsed the proposal put forward by 83-year-old former Soviet cosmonaut Valentina Tereshkova. Kremlin critics denounced the move as cynical manipulation and called for protests.

Lawmakers also passed a set of constitutional amendments proposed by Putin that include defining marriage as a heterosexual union and language pledging homage to "ancestors who bequeathed to us their ideals and a belief in God."

In a speech to lawmakers debating the package of amendments, Putin opposed doing away with the presidential term limit but backed stopping the count and restarting it in 2024, if the Russian Constitution is revised. Putin's second consecutive six-year term ends in 2024.

A nationwide vote on the amendments is scheduled for next month.

Putin has been in power for more than 20 years, and he is Russia's longest-serving leader since Soviet dictator Josef Stalin. After serving two presidential terms in 2000-2008, he shifted to the Russian prime minister's office while protege Dmitry Medvedev served as a placeholder president.

After the length of a presidential term was extended to six years under Medvedev, Putin reclaimed the presidency in 2012 and won another term in 2018.

Observers had speculated that to retain the presidency, Putin could use constitutional amendments he unveiled in January to scrap term limits; move into the prime minister's seat with strengthened powers; or continue calling the shots as the head of the State Council.

However, Putin had dismissed those suggestions, and it wasn't clear until Tuesday what option he might use to keep power. The Russian leader finally revealed his cards after Tereshkova, a legendary figure glorified for her pioneering 1963 space flight, offered her ideas.

"I propose to either lift the presidential term limit or add a clause that after the revised constitution enters force, the incumbent president, just like any other citizen, has the right to seek the presidency," she said to raucous applause in the State Duma.

After Tereshkova unveiled her proposal in an apparently choreographed move, Putin quickly arrived in parliament to address lawmakers.

He said he was aware of public calls for him to stay on as president and emphasized that Russia needs stability above all.

"The president is a guarantor of security of our state, its internal stability and evolutionary development," Putin said. "We have had enough revolutions."

However, he said that since the constitution is a long-term document, scrapping the term limit wasn't a good idea.

"In the long-term perspective, society must have guarantees of regular government rotation," he said. "We need to think about future generations."

And only then did Putin drop the bombshell, saying he positively viewed Tereshkova's alternate proposal to restart the term count when the revamped constitution enters into force.

"As for the proposal to lift restrictions for any person, any citizen, including the incumbent president, to allow running in future elections ... this option is possible," Putin said.

He added that the Constitutional Court would need to judge if the move would be legal, although the court's assent is all but guaranteed.

At the same time, Putin quashed speculation that the Kremlin might call an early parliamentary elec-

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tion for the fall, saying he considered it unnecessary. Moments later, the Duma's speaker could be heard directing his deputy to ask the lawmaker who proposed holding the early vote to withdraw his motion.

Putin's statement came as lawmakers were considering the amendments in a crucial second reading when changes in the document are made.

The Kremlin-controlled lower house, the State Duma, quickly endorsed the proposed amendments by a 382-0 vote with 44 abstentions. A vote on a third reading will be a quick formality. A nationwide vote on the proposed amendments is set for April 22.

Andrei Klishas, a senior lawmaker who co-chaired a Kremlin working group on the constitutional reform, told The Associated Press that the amendment allowing Putin to run again would be welcomed by many Russians who "worry they would lose certain things, including social security, after Putin steps down as president."

Russia's leading opposition figure, Alexei Navalny, mocked the proposed change.

"Putin has been in power for 20 years, and yet he is going to run for the first time," Navalny tweeted.

A group of opposition activists called for a March 21 protest rally in Moscow that they expect up to 50,000 people to attend.

"The country where the government doesn't change for 20 years has no future," the activists said in a statement,

After the group announced the rally, Moscow authorities quickly banned outdoor events with attendance of more than 5,000 until April 10, saying it was part of precautionary steps to prevent the spread of the new coronavirus.

Late Tuesday, several dozen opposition supporters showed up outside the Kremlin for single-person pickets, which don't require seeking advance permission. The pickets proceeded peacefully.

Putin's approval ratings have remained high despite a recent drop amid Russia's economic troubles and stagnant living standards. It's unclear if the fragmented and disorganized Russian opposition can mount a serious challenge to the Kremlin.

The ruble's sharp drop this week, caused by a steep fall in global oil prices in the wake of the collapse of OPEC's agreement with Russia to control crude output, could herald deeper economic problems and hurt Putin's popularity.

"It looks like this crisis situation has made Putin drop his mask and do something he had originally planned, and to do it quickly," said Abbas Gallyamov, an independent political analyst.

In a speech to lawmakers, Putin vowed that the new coronavirus outbreak and plummeting oil prices wouldn't destabilize Russia.

"Our economy will keep getting stronger and the key industries will become more powerful and competitive," he said.

Panda and poke: Restaurant trademarks can stir legal fights

By TERRY TANG Associated Press

GILBERT, Ariz. (AP) — When picking a name for their Asian-Mexican fusion restaurant in suburban Phoenix, Paul and Nicole Fan settled on "Panda Libre," hoping the mix of China's iconic bear and the Spanish word for "free" would signal to customers the type of cuisine it offered.

That decision could cost them dearly. Chinese takeout chain Panda Express sued them in federal court last month alleging trademark infringement.

The lawsuit showcases how trademark law can collide with an evolving dining landscape, where restaurateurs peddling Asian or Asian "inspired" foods often pick a name that instantly invokes a connection to that culture. But getting a trademark for the new name can lead to ugly and sometimes public clashes over ownership and cultural appropriation. In recent years, businesses have butted heads over whether a restaurant or food truck can legally own the right to use words rooted in Asian American Pacific Islander cultures like "aloha" and "poke."

The growing popularity of fast-casual restaurants like Thai, Indian or poke — diced and marinated raw

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fish — has led to a rush for ownership of certain aspects of that culture, said Telly Wong of IW Group marketing agency in New York City. Having a name that conveys authenticity is crucial when consumers make snap judgments, he said.

"Sometimes you need that cultural shorthand to convey that message," Wong said. "Otherwise, you're explaining to people, 'Oh, at Jack's, we sell southern Chinese food.'"

Panda Express' parent company, Rosemead, California-based Panda Restaurant Group, says it has owned the trademark for "Panda" for Chinese food services since 2001. The chain wants a court injunction and for Panda Libre to destroy signs, social media posts and other materials with the name.

"It would be like starting a new company. That alone there is hundreds of thousands of dollars in this restaurant," Nicole Fan said. "Going through this whole ordeal, the lawsuit, will bankrupt us."

On top of punitive damages and legal fees, Panda Express, which generated \$2 billion in sales last year, is asking for all of Panda Libre's profits since it opened last year in Gilbert, about 20 miles (32 kilometers) east of Phoenix.

"Oftentimes it's overstated — the damages — to get the attention of the defendant," said Charles Vauskas, a Chicago intellectual property attorney who has represented restaurants. "It's not like (Panda Express is) going to sit there and wait till every last penny is drained from a bank account."

Experts say Panda Express is within its right to trademark "Panda" for restaurant and food products.

"If you were selling pandas under the name 'Panda,' you probably wouldn't be able to do that because it's describing literally what you're doing," said Mark Simpson, a veteran intellectual property lawyer in Philadelphia. "It's like trying to trademark the words 'grocery store.' You could trademark 'Whole Foods' the grocery store."

Panda Express, which Andrew and Peggy Cherng launched in 1983 as an offshoot of their Panda Inn restaurants, has more than 1,900 locations nationwide. The company says it has a "legal obligation to consistently protect them" but is hopeful for a resolution.

"We believe there is a path forward that allows for this small business to operate while respecting our intellectual property rights, and we remain open to a conversation with those involved," the company said in an email.

Nicole Fan says nobody has entered Panda Libre thinking it was a Panda Express. She points to the logo — a panda dressed in a cape and mask like a Mexican wrestler — and the fact that there are other eateries that use "panda."

Panda Restaurant Group said it takes legal action on a "case-by-case basis." It also says it settled several trademark infringement issues without litigation last year.

Other efforts to trademark cultural words have been met with fierce online backlash.

In 2009, loyalists to chef Roy Choi's Kogi Korean taco truck went online to accuse Tex Mex chain Baja Fresh of stealing his concept. The Los Angeles-based truck's name came from a combination of "gogi," the Korean word for meat, and "K" for Korean BBQ. Baja Fresh had applied to trademark "Kogi" for its own line of Korean tacos and merchandise.

Within a day, the company publicly apologized for appearing to hijack Kogi. Baja Fresh said it would instead use gogi. It also dropped the trademark pursuit.

In 2018, Chicago-based Aloha Poke Co. trademarked its name and sent cease-and-desist letters to poke restaurants with "aloha" or "aloha poke" in their names. In Hawaii, the birthplace of the raw fish dish, locals decried a "mainlander" dictating how their community used their own language. A social media firestorm followed.

Jeff Sampson's Aloha Poke Shop in Honolulu was among those worried about a lawsuit. But he got a letter from Aloha Poke Co. attorneys that said he was "allowed" to use the term because of the geographic location.

"That was the worst business decision they made to go after 'aloha' and 'poke,'" Sampson said. "Hawaiian poke has been around for hundreds of hundreds of years. It's like a cheeseburger. You can't trademark cheeseburger."

Wong would advise anyone trying to trademark a word or term — be it for a food or a fashion line — to

make sure you're not going to be seen as culturally insensitive or appropriating.

"Consumers are just more informed and culturally aware now," Wong said. "It's just good business practice to be authentic."

Nicole Fan says she and her husband will try to fight the lawsuit and hang on to the Panda Libre name, which they had trademarked without problems.

But now, they are at risk for "doing the right thing," she said.

Terry Tang is a member of The Associated Press' Race and Ethnicity team. Follow her on Twitter at <https://twitter.com/ttangAP>

Somber events mark first anniversary of Ethiopian crash

By ELIAS MESERET Associated Press

TULUFERA, Ethiopia (AP) — Grim-faced, visibly grief-stricken and some crying, hundreds of family members gathered Tuesday for a memorial service at the site where one year ago an Ethiopian Airlines jet crashed into the rocky ground, killing all 157 on board.

The area of the disaster, about 40 miles (65 kilometers) southeast of Addis Ababa, the capital, was closed to the media as buses brought relatives of the victims to the commemoration, sponsored by Ethiopian Airlines and Boeing, the maker of the jet.

Residents of the rural Tulufera area, near Bishoftu, took a break from fetching water and milking cattle, to remember when the jet nose-dived into the earth.

"It was very chaotic and we were in distress," Tsegaye Workineh, who said he was one of the first people to reach the crash site, told The Associated Press. "It is a sight that I will never forget in my entire life. You're lucky that you haven't seen it. It was very shocking."

Big buses and smaller vehicles arrived on a newly built dirt road for the service where large tents have been erected.

Flight 302 took off from Addis Ababa airport on the morning of March 10 last year and the pilots quickly reported problems and sought permission to return to the airport. They struggled but failed to control the plane, which six minutes after takeoff hit the barren patch of land.

The Ethiopian crash came almost five months after a strikingly similar crash in Indonesia of the same model aircraft. Together the two crashes led to a grounding of all Boeing 737 Max jets, more than 380 planes used by more than 50 airlines around the world. Boeing initially expressed confidence that the planes would soon be returned to service, but no date has been set.

In an interim report released Monday, Ethiopian investigators mostly blame Boeing for the crash, saying there were design failures in the flight-control system which repeatedly pushed the nose of the plane down. The report also said Boeing had offered inadequate training for pilots.

"This is a disaster that could have been avoided. That's the hardest thing to come to terms with," said Bahru Zewde, a member of the Ethiopian Airlines Pilots' Association, at a memorial held by the group in Addis Ababa on Tuesday afternoon. "It was an unnecessary sacrifice they paid. They have become martyrs."

Getachew Tessema, father of the pilot of the crashed flight, spoke at the event.

"My son Yared was very happy to join Ethiopian Airlines. We were also filled with joy and pride. But now this happened," he said. "Yared was a hard-working person who was loved by many. He died at the tender age of 29. The only hope I have is to see him in the afterlife. Our wounds will never heal."

A fellow pilot told how the deceased captain had been the best man in his wedding and of his despair over the crash.

"I learned about the terrible news from TV," said Biniam Alemayehu. "The fact that Captain Yared was my best man makes it harder for me. First I was in denial. Then I cried and rolled over the ground. The fact that it was a new aircraft with seasoned cabin crew members and a safe airline makes it an open wound for all of us."

Spotty sick leave policies limit options for avoiding virus

By **KELVIN CHAN** and **MAE ANDERSON** AP Business Writers

LONDON (AP) — A barber in Beijing is supporting his wife and child by charging food and other expenses to a credit card while he waits for his employer's shop to reopen. A waiter at a barbecue restaurant in Kansas City, Missouri, washes his hands more often and hopes for the best. A parcel delivery driver in Britain worries about getting sick from the people who sign for their packages.

While white collar workers trying to avoid contagion can work from home or call in sick if they experience symptoms of the virus, that's not an option for the millions of waiters, delivery workers, cashiers, ride-hailing drivers, museum attendants and countless others who routinely come into contact with the public.

Their dilemma is often compounded by spotty sick leave policies or inadequate health insurance coverage, leaving them vulnerable to the fast-spreading coronavirus that has already claimed thousands of lives and put them in a financially precarious position.

"The recommendations on what people should be doing to protect themselves really gives a sharp indication of the divide between white collar and blue collar workers," said Shannon Liss-Reardon, a workers rights attorney in Boston. "Our social safety net is just not equipped at this moment to deal with a crisis like this, and it will disproportionately affect the most vulnerable low wage workers."

For most people, the new coronavirus causes only mild or moderate symptoms, such as fever and cough. For some, especially older adults and people with existing health problems, it can cause more severe illness, including pneumonia.

The vast majority of people recover. According to the World Health Organization, people with mild illness recover in about two weeks, while those with more severe illness may take three to six weeks to recover. In mainland China, where the outbreak emerged in December, almost three-fourths of more than 80,000 patients have recovered.

While tech companies like Facebook, Amazon and Microsoft have implemented work-from-home policies, only 29% of U.S. workers have that option, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics. That means retail workers like Mendy Hughes must fend for themselves. The Walmart cashier in Malvern, Arkansas, serves hundreds of people a day and her big worry is what will happen to her income if she catches the virus or comes in contact with someone who's had it and must self-quarantine for 14 days.

"If I can't go to work, I could try to take a leave but it will be unpaid," said Hughes, who earns \$11.60 an hour. "I don't know what I would be doing about taking care of my family."

Hughes, a diabetic and mother of four, gets 48 hours of sick leave a year but she fears it wouldn't be nearly enough time to recover.

On Tuesday, Walmart announced a new policy that might offer her some relief: employees who work in a region that is required to quarantine by the government or by the retailer, as well as those who have a confirmed case of the new virus, will receive two weeks of pay. If they are not able to return to work after that time, additional pay may be provided for up to 26 weeks for both full-time and part-time hourly workers.

In the United States, about 27% of private sector workers don't have access to paid sick leave, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics. Some countries, like Britain, are looking into helping out non-permanent workers. There is no federal sick leave policy in the U.S., but 12 of the 50 states and Washington D.C. require employers to offer paid sick leave.

Some House and Senate Democrats have been pushing legislation that would require employers to allow workers to accrue seven days of paid sick leave and to provide an additional 14 days in the event of any public health emergency, including the current coronavirus crisis. President Donald Trump said he was seeking help for hourly-wage workers to ensure they're "not going to miss a paycheck," and he would outline the proposals Tuesday.

In Britain, parcel delivery driver Ed Cross worries about catching the virus from the machine he hands people who sign for their packages.

"People have coughed on their hand and then got hold of my machine and you sort of make a joke of it trying to point it out," Cross, 53, said. "But yeah, it's what we face daily."

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"We only have to go to the wrong house and we could catch it, as simple as that," said Cross, who on a recent day handed packages to 110 people on his route in Whitby, northern England.

The British government last week made it easier to collect statutory sick pay and is working on changes to help millions of non-permanent workers like Cross who aren't eligible for it. In a sign the industry is waking up to the problem, his parcel company, Hermes, announced a 1 million pound (\$1.3 million) fund to help couriers who need to self-isolate.

Uber, meanwhile, said it would compensate drivers and couriers for up to 14 days if they get sick or have to be quarantined.

The viral outbreak has revealed gaping holes in health care coverage at a time when people may need it most. Most European countries and Canada have universal healthcare systems, but the U.S. relies on a patchwork of public and private insurance. About 69% of private industry workers in the U.S. have access to healthcare benefits, but that drops to 43% of service workers. U.S. employers with 50 or more employees are required to offer health insurance. But the same protection isn't provided to part-time workers or independent contractors.

Waiter Joey Ingham, who works at a barbecue restaurant in Kansas City, Missouri, popular with business travelers, says he doesn't have insurance. His protection? Washing his hands more often.

"If I wasn't able to come into work, it would be hard to make ends meet," said Ingham, who waits on 80 to 120 people a shift. If he felt sick, he'd "probably talk to a manager" about what to do, but noted management hasn't yet outlined any policies.

Liss-Reardon said most gig workers — independent or temporary contractors — she represents don't have health insurance.

"We won't have a fully insured population until we get universal healthcare," he said. "There are going to be these huge gaps. The burden is falling on the poorest and most vulnerable in our society. This is just another example."

The American Academy of Family Physicians recommends workers without insurance contact a local health department or community health center for help. The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommends emergency room visits only for patients who are very sick.

In France, where people have the right not to work and get full pay when they consider their workplaces to be dangerous, some service staff briefly stayed home because of contagion concerns. Workers at the Louvre, the world's most-visited museum, refused to work for two days and were only coaxed back after management introduced a raft of new anti-virus measures.

"We are asking for gloves. We are asking for disinfectant gels, and masks for the drivers," said Bastien Berthier, of the Paris metro's UNSA union.

In China, where the outbreak has been raging for two months, many service industry workers have it far worse, with business evaporating as people are forced to hunker down at home.

A barber in Beijing who would give only his surname, Long, said he is supporting his wife and child by charging food and other expenses to a credit card while he waits for his employer to reopen.

"I can ask for sick leave or compassionate leave, but I get nothing without working," said Long, 33.

Jiang Yanlin, a tour guide in eastern China's Huangshan region, said she hasn't earned anything since mid-January and doesn't have any social welfare benefits to fall back on. Usually she can earn up 300 yuan (\$42) a day during the normally busy Lunar New Year holiday.

"If I don't work, I don't get paid. Everyone here in the Huangshan tourist zone is like this," said Jiang, 33. "No one is coming to travel. Everyone is so scared."

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.

Anderson reported from New York. Associated Press writers John Leicester in Paris, Jill Lawless in London, AP researcher Yu Bing in Beijing contributed.

Follow AP's virus coverage at: <https://apnews.com/VirusOutbreak>

Most of U.S. starts answering census questions in next days

By MIKE SCHNEIDER and FRANCOIS DUCKETT Associated Press

ORLANDO, Fla. (AP) — The 2020 census kicked off in rural villages of Alaska in January. Now the rest of the nation gets to start participating in the once-a-decade head count. Here are answers to some frequently asked questions.

WHEN WILL I HEAR FROM THE CENSUS BUREAU?

The Census Bureau will begin sending out notices this week to 95% of the nation's households, informing people that they can start participating in the 2020 census. The mailings will be staggered, going out from March 12 to 20 to avoid overwhelming the self-response website and a telephone helpline. About 80% of households receiving the initial mailings will be encouraged to answer the questions online, and around 20% of households will get a paper questionnaire that can be mailed back because they live in neighborhoods with low internet access or large numbers of seniors.

For less than 5% of households, in areas that have been hit by natural disaster or places that use only PO boxes, a census taker will drop off the initial notices in person. Census takers will eventually go home to home, interviewing residents of households that have not responded.

WILL SOMEONE BE KNOCKING AT MY DOOR?

Only if you fail to reply online, by mail or by telephone. This is the first census in which the Census Bureau is encouraging most people to answer the questions via the internet. The Census Bureau's initial mailing in mid-March will be followed by a reminder letter a week later and a postcard reminder a week after that. If you still haven't responded by April, you will get another reminder with a paper questionnaire in the mail, followed by a final reminder postcard. By May, the Census Bureau will be sending out workers to knock on the doors of households they haven't heard back from.

WHAT ARE THE QUESTIONS?

The form asks how many people live in the household as of April 1, whether the home is owned or rented, and the form-filler's age and sex. They ask people to identify themselves by race, declare whether they're Hispanic or not, and provide details about their country of origin. All other residents in the household must answer, or have the first form-filler answer for them, the same questions on age, sex, race and Hispanic origin. They must specify their relationship to the form-filler and if they live elsewhere, like away at college. For the first time, same-sex couples will be able to identify as such, either as spouses or unmarried partners.

IS THERE A CITIZENSHIP QUESTION?

No. The Trump administration tried to add the question, but the U.S. Supreme Court blocked it.

WHAT IF I DON'T SPEAK ENGLISH?

Besides English, respondents will be able to answer the census questionnaire in Spanish, Simplified Chinese, Traditional Chinese, Vietnamese, Korean, Russian, Arabic, Tagalog, Polish, French, Haitian Creole, Portuguese and Japanese. Guides in both video and print are being issued in 59 languages, including American Sign Language.

WHO GETS COUNTED?

Everyone residing in the United States and the five U.S. territories, including non-citizens and immigrants living in the country illegally. Prisoners are counted in the facilities where they live, and military personnel temporarily deployed overseas are counted at their home addresses in the U.S.

WILL MY INFORMATION BE SHARED?

No. Under federal law, all responses are kept completely confidential, and they can be used only to produce statistics.

WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?

Because the 2020 census is used to determine who your representative in Congress is, where new businesses can build, how crowded your local schools will get over the next decade, and whether highways in your community get money for repairs. The results of the 2020 census help determine the distribution of \$1.5 trillion in federal spending, as well as how many congressional seats each state gets.

HOW DOES THE CENSUS BUREAU KNOW WHERE TO FIND ME?

They don't start from scratch. The Census Bureau continually updates a complete inventory of housing units using an address list that shows them where to count. They get information from the U.S. Postal Service, tribal, state and local governments. Addresses that couldn't be verified using satellite images or mapping tools were checked door-to-door by canvassers last fall.

Follow Mike Schneider on Twitter at <https://twitter.com/MikeSchneiderAP>

Nashville artists help out on stage and off after tornadoes

By KRISTIN M. HALL Associated Press

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (AP) — Members of the Grammy-winning string band Old Crow Medicine Show put down their fiddles and banjos and picked up chainsaws last week after deadly tornadoes hit middle Tennessee.

"When I am doing this relief work in north Nashville and east Nashville and Donelson, the guys in Old Crow got their chainsaws out," said lead singer Ketch Secor on Monday night, nearly a week after the severe storms. "We love our concerts and our audience, but when this happens in our town, we're out there leading the charge."

Nashville musicians banded together both in their community, but also on stage during a benefit concert Monday night called "To Nashville, With Love" featuring a dozen artists playing to raise money for relief efforts. Some of the musicians who performed don't live in Tennessee full-time, but record there and have close connections.

British singer-songwriter Yola got to work immediately, helping organize the concert in less than a week. Performers included Old Crow Medicine Show, Sheryl Crow, Dan Auerbach, Jason Isbell, Soccer Mommy, Brothers Osborne and Ashley McBryde. The proceeds from Monday's concert were going to the Community Foundation of Middle Tennessee. At least six tornadoes hit the state and killed 24 people.

"That tornado whipped out a lot of precious things, a lot of mementos, a lot of things that signify a family life or a loved one," said Yola backstage. "You need to put that love back in."

Many in the town's musical community were impacted. Country star Dierks Bentley and his crew showed up in gloves and boots to help his drummer, Steve Misamore, whose home was severely damaged. Dual-tone Records' Nashville office was directly hit, as well as a popular club called The Basement East.

Mike Grimes and Dave Brown, co-owners of The Basement East, said staff members were finishing their shifts early Tuesday morning after a Bernie Sanders fundraising concert when one person stepped outside and saw a funnel cloud approaching. The staff grabbed three pedestrians off the street and huddled in the basement as the tornado tore down the venue's cinderblock walls and ripped off the roof. No one was hurt at The Basement East, but two people were killed as they were leaving a neighboring bar.

But left standing among the rubble was one piece of wall that featured a mural that declared "I Believe in Nashville." It was a slogan that became popular in Nashville after the devastating 2010 flooding that hit the city. Even amidst the debris, people have still been walking past roadblocks to take a picture of the

mural that survived the winds.

"It's an amazing thing that it is still standing and very symbolic of the town's resolve and resiliency," said Brown.

Just as the town's artists donated their time and money to help others after the flood in 2010, already many donations are pouring in. Taylor Swift announced a \$1 million donation for tornado relief efforts and country duo Dan + Shay donated \$100,000.

Grammy-winning singer Brandi Carlile lives in Washington state, but has been spending a lot of time in Nashville in recent years because of her work with the country supergroup The Highwomen as well as producing Tanya Tucker's latest Grammy-winning album. Carlile said backstage at the concert that the volunteer response in Tennessee has been overwhelming.

"I've got friends that are going into people's houses that are just completely destroyed without a roof and putting a tarp over people's clothes and folding their things so that when they come home, some of their memories are intact," said Carlile.

Follow Kristin M. Hall at <http://twitter.com/kmhall>

US starts troop pullout, seeks end to Afghan leaders' feud

By KATHY GANNON and RAHIM FAIEZ Associated Press

KABUL, Afghanistan (AP) — The United States began withdrawing troops from Afghanistan, the U.S. military said Tuesday, taking a step forward on its peace deal with the Taliban while also praising Afghan President Ashraf Ghani's promise to start releasing Taliban prisoners after he had delayed for over a week.

The U.S.-Taliban deal signed Feb. 29 was touted as Washington's effort to end 18 years of war in Afghanistan. The next crucial step was to be intra-Afghan talks in which all factions including the Taliban would negotiate a road map for their country's future.

But Ghani and his main political rival, Abdullah Abdullah, were each sworn in as president in separate ceremonies Monday. Abdallah and the elections complaints commission had charged fraud in last year's vote. The dueling inaugurations have thrown plans for talks with the Taliban into chaos, although Ghani said Tuesday that he'd start putting together a negotiating team.

The disarray on the Afghan government side is indicative of the uphill task facing Washington's peace envoy Zalmay Khalilzad as he tries to get Afghanistan's bickering leadership to come together. In an early Tuesday tweet, Khalilzad said he hoped the two leaders can "come to an agreement on an inclusive and broadly accepted government. We will continue to assist."

U.S. military spokesman in Afghanistan Sonny Leggett said in a statement Tuesday the military had begun its "conditions-based reduction of forces to 8,600 over 135 days."

Currently the U.S. has about 13,000 soldiers in Afghanistan — 8,000 of whom are involved in training and advising Afghanistan's National Security Forces, while about 5,000 are involved in anti-terror operations and militarily supporting the Afghan army when they are requested.

Ghani had been dragging his feet on releasing some 5,000 Taliban prisoners, something agreed to in the U.S.-Taliban deal. Ghani promised Monday to announce a decree to free the prisoners after the U.S. and a number of foreign dignitaries appeared to back his claim to the presidency by sending their representatives to his inauguration.

U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo released a statement Monday saying, "We also welcome President Ghani's announcement that he will issue a decree March 10 on Taliban prisoner release."

Taliban officials said late Monday that a flurry of biometric identifications were being conducted on Taliban prisoners, hinting at a mass release, according to prisoners currently in lockup. The Taliban officials spoke on condition of anonymity because they weren't authorized to talk to the media.

Sohail Shaheen the Taliban's spokesman in Doha where the insurgent group maintains an office, tweeted Tuesday the names of the 5,000 prisoners are with an "American delegation and the list cannot be manipulated," without elaborating.

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In his tweet, Shaheen said any prisoners handed over will be verified before being accepted. The Associated Press contacted a Taliban prisoner in Afghanistan's Pul-e-Charkhi Jail on the outskirts of Kabul who said four Taliban had been released Monday and another three Tuesday. The seven had completed their sentence, said Maulvi Niaz Mohammad in a telephone interview.

They were not part of the 5,000 on the Taliban prisoner list, he said. Mohammad, who had also been interviewed by The AP in the prison in December, is in telephone contact with the Taliban's Prisoners Commission, which is headed by Maulvi Nooruddin Turani, a former Taliban justice minister and a violent enforcer of the Taliban's strict code of conduct.

Meanwhile, Pompeo said he "strongly opposed" the establishment of a parallel government in Kabul, despite early signs of one emerging. Abdullah had quickly sent his vice presidents to occupy the official offices Monday, ahead of Ghani's plan to send his vice presidents to their offices Tuesday.

Pompeo warned against "any use of force to resolve political differences." Both candidates — but particularly Abdullah — are backed by warlords with heavily armed militias, underscoring fears they could use force to back their candidate.

The U.S. has said its partial troop withdrawal over an 18-month period provided for in the deal will be linked to the Taliban keeping their promises to help fight terror in Afghanistan, but not to the success of talks between the Taliban and the Afghan government.

Over the weekend, Taliban spokesman Zabihullah Mujahed said the insurgent group was committed to its agreement with the U.S. and called on Washington to do its part to make sure its prisoners were freed.

The Islamic State claimed responsibility for a rocket attack that took place during Ghani's inauguration ceremony. IS also claimed a brutal attack last week on a gathering of minority Shiites that killed 32 and injured scores more. The U.S. in reaching its deal with the Taliban said it expected the Taliban, which has been battling Afghanistan's IS affiliate, to further aid in the effort to defeat IS.

Gannon reported from Islamabad. Associated Press writers Matthew Lee in Washington and Tameem Akhgar in Kabul, Afghanistan contributed to this report

Today in History By The Associated Press undefined

Today in History

Today is Wednesday, March 11, the 71st day of 2020. There are 295 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On March 11, 2011, a magnitude-9.0 earthquake and resulting tsunami struck Japan's northeastern coast, killing nearly 20,000 people and severely damaging the Fukushima Dai-ichi (foo-koo-SHEE'-mah dy-EE'-chee) nuclear power station.

On this date:

In 1862, during the Civil War, President Abraham Lincoln removed Gen. George B. McClellan as general-in-chief of the Union armies, leaving him in command of the Army of the Potomac, a post McClellan also ended up losing.

In 1888, the Blizzard of '88, also known as the "Great White Hurricane," began inundating the north-eastern United States, resulting in some 400 deaths.

In 1918, what are believed to be the first confirmed U.S. cases of a deadly global flu pandemic were reported among U.S. Army soldiers stationed at Fort Riley, Kansas; 46 would die. (The worldwide outbreak of influenza claimed an estimated 20 to 40 million lives.)

In 1941, President Franklin D. Roosevelt signed the Lend-Lease Bill, providing war supplies to countries fighting the Axis.

In 1942, as Japanese forces continued to advance in the Pacific during World War II, U.S. Army Gen. Douglas MacArthur left the Philippines for Australia, where he vowed on March 20, "I shall return" — a promise he kept more than 2½ years later.

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In 1954, the U.S. Army charged that Sen. Joseph R. McCarthy, R-Wis., and his subcommittee's chief counsel, Roy Cohn, had exerted pressure to obtain favored treatment for Pvt. G. David Schine, a former consultant to the subcommittee. (The confrontation culminated in the famous Senate Army-McCarthy hearings.)

In 1959, the Lorraine Hansberry drama "A Raisin in the Sun" opened at New York's Ethel Barrymore Theater.

In 1977, more than 130 hostages held in Washington, D.C., by Hanafi Muslims were freed after ambassadors from three Islamic nations joined the negotiations.

In 1985, Mikhail S. Gorbachev was chosen to succeed the late Konstantin U. Chernenko as general secretary of the Soviet Communist Party.

In 2003, a U.S. Army helicopter crashed near Fort Drum in upstate New York, killing 11 soldiers. Recep Tayyip Erdogan (REH'-jehp TY'-ihp UR'-doh-wahn), the leader of Turkey's governing party, was named prime minister. After a four-day walkout that cost New York City \$10 million, Broadway musicians settled the first strike on the Great White Way in nearly 30 years.

In 2004, ten bombs exploded in quick succession across the commuter rail network in Madrid, Spain, killing 191 people in an attack linked to al-Qaida-inspired militants.

In 2005, a judge, court reporter and sheriff's deputy were shot to death at an Atlanta courthouse; Brian Nichols, who killed them as well as a federal agent, surrendered a day later at the apartment of Ashley Smith, a woman he'd taken hostage. (Nichols was later convicted of murder and sentenced to life in prison.)

Ten years ago: A federal appeals court in San Francisco upheld the use of the words "under God" in the Pledge of Allegiance and "In God We Trust" on U.S. currency. In an address at Tel Aviv University, Vice President Joe Biden said "good faith negotiations" could recognize Israeli security needs and the Palestinian goal for a viable state. Sebastian Pinera was sworn in as Chile's new president on a day when the country was peppered with a dozen significant aftershocks from a February earthquake. Pro Football Hall of Famer and former television actor Merlin Olsen died in suburban Los Angeles at age 69.

Five years ago: The police chief of the St. Louis suburb of Ferguson resigned in the wake of a scathing Justice Department report prompted by the fatal shooting of an unarmed black 18-year-old by a white police officer. Jimmy Greenspoon, 67, the keyboardist for rock band Three Dog Night, died in North Potomac, Maryland.

One year ago: Airlines in Ethiopia, China, Indonesia and elsewhere grounded the Boeing 737 Max 8 jetliner after the second devastating crash of one of the planes in five months; Boeing said it had no reason to pull the popular aircraft from the skies. Party leaders announced that Milwaukee would be the host of the 2020 Democratic National Convention. President Donald Trump proposed a record \$4.7 trillion budget, pushing the federal deficit past \$1 trillion but counting on optimistic growth, accounting shuffles and steep domestic cuts to bring spending into balance in 15 years. Hal Blaine, a session drummer who played on the songs of Frank Sinatra, Elvis Presley and the Beach Boys, died at his California home at the age of 90; according to the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame, Blaine had played on 40 No. 1 hits and 150 top 10 songs.

Today's Birthdays: Media mogul Rupert Murdoch is 89. Former ABC News correspondent Sam Donaldson is 86. Musician Flaco Jimenez (FLAH'-koh hee-MEH'-nez) is 81. Actress Tricia O'Neil is 75. Actor Mark Metcalf is 74. Rock singer-musician Mark Stein (Vanilla Fudge) is 73. Singer Bobby McFerrin is 70. Movie director Jerry Zucker is 70. Singer Cheryl Lynn is 69. Actress Susan Richardson is 68. Recording executive Jimmy Iovine (eye-VEEN') is 67. Singer Nina Hagen is 65. Country singer Jimmy Fortune (The Statler Brothers) is 65. Actor Elias Koteas (ee-LY'-uhs koh-TAY'-uhs) is 59. Actor-director Peter Berg is 58. Singer Mary Gauthier (GOH'-shay) is 58. Actor Jeffrey Nordling is 58. Actress Alex Kingston is 57. Country musician David Talbot is 57. Actor Wallace Langham is 55. Former U.S. Rep. Jesse Jackson Jr., D-Ill., is 55. Actor John Barrowman is 53. Singer Lisa Loeb is 52. Neo-soul musician Al Gamble (St. Paul & the Broken Bones) is 51. Singer Pete Drobe is 51. Actor Terrence Howard is 51. Rock musician Rami Jaffee is 51. Actor Johnny Knoxville is 49. Rock singer-musicians Benji and Joel Madden (Good Charlotte; The Madden Brothers) are 41. Actor David Anders is 39. Singer LeToya is 39. Actress Thora Birch is 38. TV personality Melissa Rycroft is 37. Actor

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Rob Brown is 36. Actress Jodie Comer is 27.

Thought for Today: "It's all right to hesitate if you then go ahead." — Bertholt Brecht, German poet and dramatist (1898-1956).

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