

# Groton Daily Independent

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*Chicken Soup  
for the Soul*

“FORGET WHAT  
HURT YOU,  
BUT NEVER  
FORGET WHAT  
IT TAUGHT  
YOU.”

-SHANNON L. ALDER

## State COVID-19 Update

On March 4, 2020, CDC updated the clinical criteria for testing a symptomatic individual after evaluation by their healthcare provider. As a result, the South Dakota Department of Health (SD-DOH) expects the number of persons under investigation (PUI) being tested for COVID-19 to increase.

The number of PUI being tested does not reflect the level of risk to the public in the state. For more information about the outbreak, potential risks, and protective recommendations, visit the SD-DOH website or CDC website.

This table shows the total number of positive COVID-19 cases in South Dakota residents, the total number of persons that tested negative, and the total number of PUIs that are pending results.

### As of March 17, 2020

<b>Positive*</b>	11
<b>Negative</b>	551
<b>Pending</b>	35

### South Dakota Counties with COVID-19 Cases

<b>Beadle</b>	1
<b>Bon Homme</b>	1
<b>Charles Mix</b>	1
<b>Davison</b>	1
<b>McCook</b>	1
<b>Minnehaha</b>	5
<b>Pennington</b>	1

Note: All cases had travel history outside South Dakota prior to illness onset. There is no community transmission at this time.

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

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

## Labor Department Accepting Unemployment Claims from School Employees Affected by COVID-19 Closures

PIERRE, S.D. – The Department of Labor and Regulation (DLR) is accepting reemployment assistance (unemployment insurance) claims from school employees who are not able to work due to COVID-19 closures.

South Dakota schools will stay closed through March 27 as a precaution to slow the spread of COVID-19. If the worker is not being paid by the employer while at home, the worker may be eligible for unemployment benefits. Eligibility will be determined on a case-by-case basis.

“School workers approved for benefits will not be required to actively seek work each week while receiving benefits,” said state Labor and Regulation Secretary Marcia Hultman.

Workers can file for benefits online at [raclaims.sd.gov](http://raclaims.sd.gov) or by calling 605-626-2452. Online filing is encouraged. The non-paid waiting week, typically the first week of compensable benefits, is still in effect.

People who are being paid to work from home or those receiving paid sick or vacation leave are NOT eligible for unemployment compensation benefits, regardless if they fit the situation above.

Please see [Proposed Scenario Interpretations](#) for more details.

## Effective March 17, 2020, Social Security Offices Will Only Offer Phone Service; Online Services Remain Available

All local Social Security offices will be closed to the public for in-person service starting Tuesday, March 17, 2020. This decision protects the population we serve—older Americans and people with underlying medical conditions—and our employees during the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. However, we are still able to provide critical services.

Our secure and convenient online services remain available at [www.socialsecurity.gov](http://www.socialsecurity.gov). Local offices will also continue to provide critical services over the phone. We are working closely with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), state and local governments, and other experts to monitor COVID-19 and will let you know as soon as we can resume in-person service.

### **If you need help from Social Security:**

First, please use our secure and convenient online services available at [www.socialsecurity.gov/online-services](http://www.socialsecurity.gov/online-services). You can apply for retirement, disability, and Medicare benefits online, check the status of an application or appeal, request a replacement Social Security card (in most areas), print a benefit verification letter, and much more – from anywhere and from any of your devices. We also have a wealth of information to answer most of your Social Security questions online, without having to speak with a Social Security representative in person or by phone. Please visit our online Frequently Asked Questions at [www.socialsecurity.gov/ask](http://www.socialsecurity.gov/ask).

If you cannot conduct your Social Security business online, please check our online field office locator for specific information about how to directly contact your local office. Your local office still will be able to provide critical services to help you apply for benefits, answer your questions, and provide other services over the phone.

If you already have an in-office appointment scheduled, we will call you to handle your appointment over the phone instead. If you have a hearing scheduled, we will call you to discuss alternatives for continuing with your hearing, including offering a telephonic hearing. Our call may come from a PRIVATE number and not from a U.S. Government phone. Please remember that our employees will not threaten you or ask for any form of payment.

If you cannot complete your Social Security business online, please call our National 800 Number at 1-800-772-1213 (TTY 1-800-325-0778). Our National 800 Number has many automated service options you can use without waiting to speak with a telephone representative. A list of automated telephone services is available online at [www.socialsecurity.gov/agency/contact/phone.html](http://www.socialsecurity.gov/agency/contact/phone.html).

## **SBA To Provide Small Businesses Impacted by Coronavirus (COVID-19) Up to \$2 Million in Disaster Assistance Loans**

WASHINGTON – SBA Administrator Jovita Carranza issued the following statement in response to the President’s address to the nation:

“The President took bold, decisive action to make our 30 million small businesses more resilient to Coronavirus-related economic disruptions. Small businesses are vital economic engines in every community and state, and they have helped make our economy the strongest in the world. Our Agency will work directly with state Governors to provide targeted, low-interest disaster recovery loans to small businesses that have been severely impacted by the situation. Additionally, the SBA continues to assist small businesses with counseling and navigating their own preparedness plans through our network of 68 District Offices and numerous Resource Partners located around the country. The SBA will continue to provide every small business with the most effective and customer-focused response possible during these times of uncertainty.”

### **Process for Accessing SBA’s Coronavirus (COVID-19) Disaster Relief Lending**

➤ The U.S. Small Business Administration is offering designated states and territories low-interest federal disaster loans for working capital to small businesses suffering substantial economic injury as a result of the Coronavirus (COVID-19). Upon a request received from a state’s or territory’s Governor, SBA will issue under its own authority, as provided by the Coronavirus Preparedness and Response Supplemental Appropriations Act that was recently signed by the President, an Economic Injury Disaster Loan declaration.

➤ Any such Economic Injury Disaster Loan assistance declaration issued by the SBA makes loans available to small businesses and private, non-profit organizations in designated areas of a state or territory to help alleviate economic injury caused by the Coronavirus (COVID-19).

➤ SBA’s Office of Disaster Assistance will coordinate with the state’s or territory’s Governor to submit the request for Economic Injury Disaster Loan assistance.

➤ Once a declaration is made for designated areas within a state, the information on the application process for Economic Injury Disaster Loan assistance will be made available to all affected communities.

➤ SBA’s Economic Injury Disaster Loans offer up to \$2 million in assistance and can provide vital economic support to small businesses to help overcome the temporary loss of revenue they are experiencing.

These loans may be used to pay fixed debts, payroll, accounts payable and other bills that can’t be paid because of the disaster’s impact. The interest rate is 3.75% for small businesses without credit available elsewhere; businesses with credit available elsewhere are not eligible. The interest rate for non-profits is 2.75%.

SBA offers loans with long-term repayments in order to keep payments affordable, up to a maximum of 30 years. Terms are determined on a case-by-case basis, based upon each borrower’s ability to repay.

SBA’s Economic Injury Disaster Loans are just one piece of the expanded focus of the federal government’s coordinated response, and the SBA is strongly committed to providing the most effective and customer-focused response possible.

For additional information, please contact the SBA disaster assistance customer service center. Call 1-800-659-2955 (TTY: 1-800-877-8339) or e-mail [disastercustomerservice@sba.gov](mailto:disastercustomerservice@sba.gov).

## COVID-19 - It is not business as usual

In just one week, the Corona Virus, AKA COVID-19, has changed the lifestyle of virtually every United State Citizen. South Dakota Governor Kristi Noem called off school this week across South Dakota and then extended it into next week. The state basketball tournaments are postponed. Spring activities are being postponed. The Student Council Convention, all Region music contests, and All-State Band scheduled for later this month are cancelled.

President Donald Trump is urging no more than 10 people in a gathering. The CDC (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention) are working around the clock, monitoring the spread of the virus across the United States and throughout the world. The stock market has plunged with trading halted twice because of steep declines. People are panicking and have bought up all the supply of toilet paper, hand sanitizer and most of the wipes, and food items are disappearing rapidly as well.

They are talking about a recession and unemployment rising to 20 percent. The Federal Reserve has lowered the lending rate from 1.25 down to .25. There is talk in Congress about giving every American earning less than \$80,000 a year a \$1,000 check. Businesses are closing their offices to the public.

James Valley Telecommunications has closed its doors to the public. Many banks are closing their lobby and allowing customers to use only the drive-through, mobile App or phone. Even WalMart has curtailed its hours. Dollar General is allowing the first hour of business devoted to the elderly first and will be closing earlier, now at 8 p.m. Assisted Living Centers and nursing homes are barring anyone, except employees, from entering the facilities. The Shrine Circus scheduled for Aberdeen has been cancelled. The State Destination Imagination Tournament is cancelled as is the Globals Finals with the option of creating a virtual tournament. The annual meeting of the Carnival of Silver Skates has been postponed to April 19th at 1 p.m. at the warming house.

According to the South Dakota Department of Health, there are 11 positive cases in South Dakota with 551 negative, 35 pending, and one death. Minnehaha County is leading the state with five cases while Beadle, Bon Homme, Charles Mix, Davison, McCook and Pennington county each having one positive case. All cases in South Dakota had travel history outside South Dakota prior to illness onset. There is no community transmission at this time. And that is what the state is trying to prevent from happening.

COVID-19 has a bigger impact on people age 60 and older and on those who have respiratory issues.

There are those stating do not give into fear. Do not panic and don't hoard food and supplies. This, too, will pass.



**Katie Kesterson, an RN at Avera St. Luke's Hospital, Aberdeen, talked about taking precautions and protecting the people in Groton from the spread of COVID-19.** (Photo lifted from GDILIVE.COM video)



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**Groton Area School Business Manager Mike Weber talked about the possible upcoming changes in finishing the school year.** (Photo lifted from

GDILIVE.COM video)

Doug Hamilton, along with other business owners, came before the Groton City Council Tuesday night to talk about COVID-19. "Let's not get so shook about this whole thing," he said. "We have a population of 1453 people. - We're pretty cautious, pretty careful," he said. "We (Legion) have done away with our three biggest nights." They are Bingo, Friday Night Drawing and Corn Hole. "Let's use common sense."

He also mentioned that the Softball/Baseball Foundation will take a big hit. "We had to cancel our basketball tournament for last weekend and will probably have to cancel the fundraiser for April 4th. That's a \$20,000 to \$25,000 hit for improvements for the ball park."

Owners for the Red Horse and the Jungle were also on hand concerned about what the COVID-19 will have an impact on local businesses. "Live life as normal," Mayor Scott Hanlon said.

But Katie Kesterson, an RN with Avera St. Luke's, said that it is not business as usual.

"The main thing is that COVID-19 isn't so much the deadliest thing that we're going to come across, it's that we, as humans, are transmitting it quickly," Kesterson said. "It would be nice to say 'Carry on as usual,' but that's not what we should be doing. I'm not saying shut down, but we need to make adjustments and be prepared." She used a local pilot as an example. "He flies in and out of other countries or parts of the states. He comes back to Groton. His symptoms don't show up for 10-14 days. In the mean time he's transmitting the virus. When the symptoms arise, it's too late to dial back at who he exposed. Let's say there are 1,200 people in Groton and there are 100 ventilators between Avera and Sanford, then we have to choose who lives and who dies, and that's the struggle in Italy right now. It is coming. It could already be here and we don't know it. That's the struggle behind the health care aspect of it. Yes, we don't want to get up in arms and yes, we don't want to be reactive, but we need to be proactive, or we are going to have a problem that we can't fix. Speaking from an Avera employee, we don't have the resources. We are the largest hospital treating how many counties and if everyone gets it at one time, a choice has to be made who dies. It could be you, it could be a family member, it could be someone close to you. I know this affects businesses. It's scary. If we get ahead of this and we don't have such a huge impact, I think that's a better plan."

Mike Weber talked about the school's aspect on COVID-19. "They are making plans for tele-education in case we don't go back to school, which I would say right now is a 50:50 chance that we're done for the year. They are planning to use the Public Broadcasting System to offer classes that kids can tune into during the day and get a lesson plan. I assume it will be taught by the educators in Pierre and then our local teachers will follow up daily or weekly to see if the kids are tuning in to get the lesson plan. The state is making plans right now to finish the education process for this year at home."

Mike went on to say that whatever the state is passing on, it's important to relay that information locally. "If the state is recommending not to close businesses, that needs to be relayed locally so people will frequent the businesses. Get that out to the public. Whatever guidance they are giving you, get it out to the public right away.

"My son is a physical therapy doctor in Omaha and they had a session last week. He told me that the time frame for the Midwest is going to be between April and June when it gets here. It will probably go into the summer, so be prepared. "

While there was an emphasis of doing more home deliveries. Samantha Bahr from the Jungle said, "I can tell you right now that we're not going to make it with deliveries and take-out orders." Dion Bahr said, "Until the governor says something, I don't see why we have to change. If Aberdeen is not going to stop,

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then why should we?" Kesterson did not mince words. "If you keep doing what you're doing, you're going to kill people." Dion said there is a bowling alley still open in Aberdeen and there are places for kid's to go in Aberdeen that are still open." Kesterson said, "That's because there is a lack of education." Samantha said that she is doing more cleaning than ever. Kesterson replied, "Cleaning doesn't mean anything. You need to limit contact with people."

Hamilton then added there are a number of snowbirds coming back to South Dakota. "The governor is hanging her hat on the virus coming in from the outside. What do you do with the snowbirds? Do you have those people self quarantine for 14 days? That decision needs to be made. Those are the carriers that could feasibly bring this into Groton. So what do you do about that? Locke said, "I think they are using their heads, especially the elderly people."

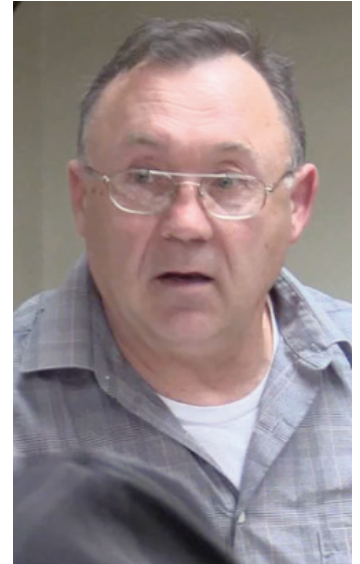
Mayor Scott Hanlon said, "We'll keep everyone informed. We need to try and do the best we can and support each other. Try to limit the human touch as much as possible. Pull together as a community to make this work."

## In other city council business:

A special event retail liquor license was approved for the Groton Firemen's event April 25.

Nicole Marzahn gave a skating rink report. "It was a really good season," she said. The season ran from December through the end of February. She said that people donated hot chocolate and that went over good.

Those hired for this summer are: Matt Locke, baseball and softball coordinator and Legion Coach; Seth Erickson, assistant Legion coach; Dalton Locke, junior Legion coach; Spencer Locke, junior teenager coach; Aaron Severson, public works and junior teenager coach; Sue Fjeldheim, U14 softball coach; Kayla Krause, U12 softball coach; Alyssa Thaler, softball coach (age unspecified); Rebbecca Padfield, concessions; Tashayla Featherman and Bradin Althoff, ticket takers; Wyatt Locke, 12, 10 and 8U day coach; Jordan Bjerke, Steven Paulson, Lee Iverson and Tristan Traphagen, groundskeepers; Brian Gravatt, cemetery maintenance; Kami Lipp, Karla Pasteur and Tricia Keith, pool manager; and lifeguards are Brenda Madsen, Alexis Hanten, Allyssa Locke, Eliza Wanner, Grace Wambach, Jackson Cogley, Jasmine Schinkel, Kaden Kurtz, Kayce Hawkins, Madeline Fliehs, Nicole Marzahn, Tadyn Glover, Tanae Lipp, Tessa Erdmann, Trista Keith, Cody Swanson, Kellie Hanson, Shallyn Foertsch, Aspen Johnson, Andrew Marzahn, Marlee Tollifson, Jacob Lewandowski, Gracie Traphagen and Jacelynne Gleason.



**Groton Mayor Scott Hanlon, said the community needs to work together to get through this COVID-19 crisis.** (Photo lifted from GDILIVE.COM video)

(Photo lifted from GDILIVE.COM video)

Election workers hired were Joyce Grenz, Julie Hinds, Wanda Hamilton and Linda Locken at \$11 an hour. So far, the election is planned for April 14th, but that is subject to change.

- Paul Kosel

**Several members of the public were on hand to talk about their concerns for action relating to the COVID-19 virus.** (Photo lifted from GDILIVE.COM video)

(Photo lifted from GDILIVE.COM video)

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## Technical Colleges Temporarily Move Classes Online Next Week

PIERRE, S.D. – In response to COVID-19, South Dakota's four technical colleges will move temporarily to an online learning model. Beginning on Monday, March 23, 2020, all classes will be temporarily moved online. On-campus, in-person classes are scheduled to resume on Monday, March 30, 2020.

All four campuses will continue to be closed to the general public until Monday, March 30, 2020.

The shift impacts Lake Area Technical Institute (Watertown), Mitchell Technical Institute (Mitchell), Southeast Technical Institute (Sioux Falls), and Western Dakota Technical Institute (Rapid City).

Because this situation is evolving, leaders from each institution will continue to monitor the status of COVID-19 cases in our state, recommendations from the State of South Dakota, and guidance from Centers for Disease Control. We will communicate any updates to our course delivery plan in the coming days.

As a system, we thank the administrators, faculty, and staff, who have continued to guide their institutions through an unprecedented challenge. These difficult decisions are centered on the health and well-being of people.

Individual institutions will be sending additional information to their students, faculty, staff, and community partners. Please refer to their news releases and web sites for more details.

**Attention Students:**

Students ages 15 and up  
Under 15 need parental oversight

**Don't let CORONA-19 stop  
you from your workouts!**



**Keep Healthy!  
Keep Fit!**



13 Main St., Downtown Groton

**GDI Living Fitness**



*Open 24/7*

Call/Text Paul  
605/397-7460  
or Tina at  
605/397-7285

**Membership Fee is only \$10 from now  
until the school gym is reopened!**



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## Groton City Financial Report

February 2020

1st State Bank Checking Acct	\$ 1,201,214.98
General Cash	\$ 300.00
SD FIT Acct	\$ 1,450,131.62
1st State Bank Water CD	\$ 83,654.27
BB Trust CD	\$ 1,500.00
SD FIT CD	\$ 102,514.21
Cemetery Perp Care CD	\$ 32,876.69
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$ 2,872,191.77</b>

Invested In		
Cash	\$ 300.00	0.01%
1st State Bank	\$ 1,319,245.94	45.93%
SD Fit	\$ 1,552,645.83	54.06%
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$ 2,872,191.77</b>	<b>100.00%</b>

	Beginning Cash Balance	Receipts	Expenditures	Transfers	Ending Cash Balance
General	\$ 292,808.53	\$ 79,305.46	\$ 83,442.54		\$ 288,671.45
Bed, Board, Booze Tax	\$ 57,147.05	\$ 1,487.67			\$ 58,634.72
Baseball Uniforms	\$ 1,710.20				\$ 1,710.20
Airport	\$ (3,527.07)		\$ -		\$ (3,527.07)
**Debt Service	\$ 311,248.57	\$ 17,947.70	\$ -		\$ 329,196.27
Cemetery Perpetual Care	\$ 34,706.69				\$ 34,706.69
Water Tower	\$ 180,000.00				\$ 180,000.00
Water	\$ 149,106.51	\$ 32,608.83	\$ 30,351.02		\$ 151,364.32
Electric	\$ 1,337,023.40	\$ 168,855.36	\$ 119,416.91		\$ 1,386,461.85
Wastewater	\$ 242,336.28	\$ 15,994.79	\$ 6,568.52		\$ 251,762.55
Solid Waste	\$ 17,192.95	\$ 8,030.78	\$ 8,067.45		\$ 17,156.28
Family Crisis	\$ 6,904.58	\$ -	\$ -		\$ 6,904.58
Sales Tax	\$ 18,848.32	\$ 10,381.99	\$ 10,409.26		\$ 18,821.05
Employment	\$ 8,991.67	\$ -	\$ 3,851.05		\$ 5,140.62
Utility Prepayments	\$ 69,929.00	\$ (2,553.80)	\$ 191.13		\$ 67,184.07
Utility Deposits	\$ 77,974.58	\$ 375.00	\$ 700.00		\$ 77,649.58
Other	\$ 354.61	\$ -	\$ -		\$ 354.61
<b>Totals</b>	<b>\$ 2,802,755.87</b>	<b>\$ 332,433.78</b>	<b>\$ 262,997.88</b>	<b>\$ -</b>	<b>\$ 2,872,191.77</b>

**Debt to be Paid	
**2015 Refinance	\$ 2,533,062.50 by 12/1/2035
**West Sewer	\$ 89,026.75 by 10/15/2022
**RR Sewer Crossing	\$ 51,244.31 by 7/15/22
<b>Total Debt</b>	<b>\$ 2,673,333.56</b>



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## Covid-19 Update by Marie Miller

Well, today's numbers are in, and they are about as expected. For many days, we've been seeing a daily increase of about 27%, and we're right about there again today. Here are the damages:

We are now at 5587 cases in the US. The last domino has finally fallen: WV now has its first reported case. So the tally stands at 50 states, DC, and 3 territories, PR, GU, and VI. A state, NY, has broken the 1000-case mark, and they're well past it at 1374. Another 11 states are over 100: WA and CA in the big numbers with 865 and 636, respectively, NJ and MA over 200, and with FL, LA, CO, IL, GA, TX, and PA between 100 and 200 cases. We have 10 states between 50-99, 20 between 11-49, and 8 still in single digits.

There have been 101 deaths in 18 states. Illinois and Texas reported their first deaths today.

Closings and cancellations are increasingly widespread and extending in duration. More and more entities are recognizing this isn't going to blow through in a week or two so we can all return to business as usual. That looks to be a ways off.

So I'm getting a lot of questions about how this thing ends. And they're good questions. The short answer is we don't really know. Here's what we do know.

There is a large number of variables which will determine how this thing ends, and we're not even sure what some of those are yet, for example, precisely how this virus operates. We're learning more every day, but we're not there yet. We also don't know the true number of infected people at present. We're sure it is many, many more than we've detected, but we don't know how many that is. And that number determines how effective these social distancing measures will be in places which are undertaking them. We tend to focus on the US because we live here, but it's important to remember this virus is a world traveler, and every country has its own situation and is taking its own steps. We also don't know how many of such steps will be undertaken and where or how rigidly they'll be enforced. We know a lot of bars did a very good business in the US last weekend, so not everyone here is complying with requests to avoid crowds. For us here though, this recent development of having the federal voices all singing from the same hymnal is going to help.

One possibility is that this thing just burns through the population until it gets hard for it to find susceptible hosts. Some experts see between 20% and 60% of the world's population becoming infected before we're done. The current estimate is that, if 50% or so of the population has been infected, either with symptoms or not, enough people will have had it to develop effective herd immunity. This happens because the people who would be a source of infection are less likely to run into a susceptible host to whom they can transmit it. It would probably take a long time to reach that point—a couple of years maybe. And if the fatality rate is anything like we think it is, there would be a horrifying number of deaths. And this number would be higher if it burns through fast because (and I've said this a couple of hundred times now), if health care systems are overwhelmed and unable to treat everyone who needs treatment, then we're going to lose people who could have survived with proper care. But either way, there would be a lot of deaths.

[Hypothetically, the virus could become less lethal as time goes on. If we consider that some strains or versions of the virus may be better at killing people than others, the ones that kill people are, evolutionarily speaking, "foolish" because killing your host means you don't have anywhere to reproduce anymore; and viruses need a living host—they're nothing without one. So if the most deadly versions sort of self-destruct by killing their hosts, the ones that are left to move on to new hosts would be the less deadly versions. And that would be good. Hypothetically, that is. Because we don't know whether this will actually happen. But it could.]

What we really need is a vaccine and/or some useful antivirals for treatment. We know those take time: We're looking at a year, minimum, to have an effective vaccine in production at scale. Please note I said minimum: It could take longer. We need to know, before we start vaccinating healthy people, that whatever we're using is both safe and effective. The steps to assure this take time, and you can't really speed them up much. It appears we've taken about as many shortcuts as we can already in blowing by the animal trials.

Antivirals could come sooner, especially if one or more of the already-on-the-market drugs turns out to be effective. Trials will proceed apace; we'll wait here for results. Although the already-developed drugs are presumably already demonstrated to be safe, we don't know if they work. And finding this out for

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sure takes some time too, after which it would take a while to crank up production at scale so the drug was widely available. That can't happen overnight either. Some drugs are harder to make than others; I haven't the least idea how difficult the ones currently in trials are, so we'll have to wait and see, once we know what we have.

One good reason to slow this epidemic down though is to give the researchers some time to come up with these vaccines and antivirals. The longer we can hold off the bulk of cases, the better the chance we'll have something we can do about those cases when they come. And that would be amazing.

I'll mention one more thing that comes up in conversation from time to time, the question whether this is "just" a seasonal thing. While anything's possible, the experts don't think so. What makes a virus seasonal is a combination of two things: (1) transmission that is affected quite a bit by temperature and humidity and (2) transmission that works better when people are all indoors crowded together the way they are in the winter in some climates. We already know the answer to the second part: Respiratory spread is, indeed, more efficient indoors in the cold of winter. The first part remains to be seen, but evidence is against it. The experience in other parts of the world has been that, when weather warmed up, this virus continued on its merry way. Places with warm, humid climates are seeing infection rates similar to those with cold climates. Additionally, this virus's cousin, MERS-CoV, had no trouble spreading in 110-degree heat in the Middle East. And this virus doesn't seem to be particularly affected by humidity. So we don't think it's going to be seasonal. And that's not entirely bad news; if it were, it would just be back next winter, and many experts think next winter would be worse.

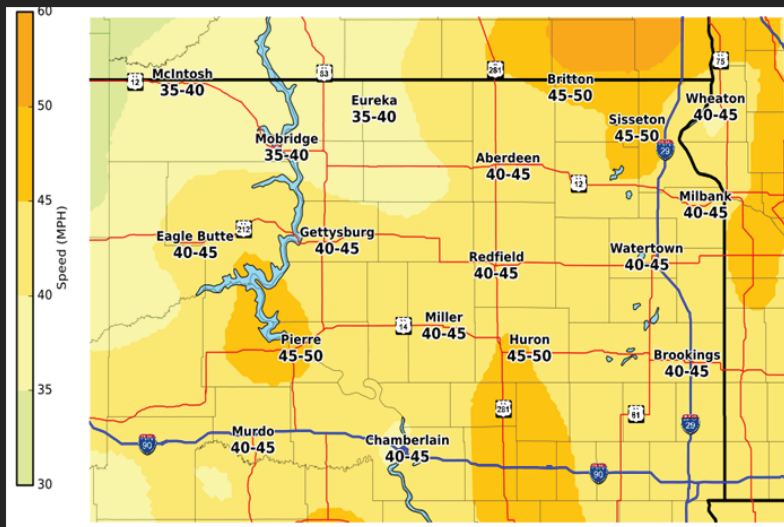
The pace of change is fast. I'll update when I have more news. Meanwhile, stay home, stay safe, and stay healthy.

## Windy Thursday

Created at 3:32 AM - Wednesday, March 18, 2020

### \*Peak Wind Gusts\*

Thursday Afternoon through Thursday Evening



### What



Wind gusts of around 35 to 45 mph, leading to blowing snow Thursday Afternoon through Thursday Night.

### For How Long



Winds will diminish west to east Thursday night.

### Impacts



Use caution! Winds will combine with the falling snow to produce Blowing Snow, with reductions to visibility likely, especially over the southern half of South Dakota.

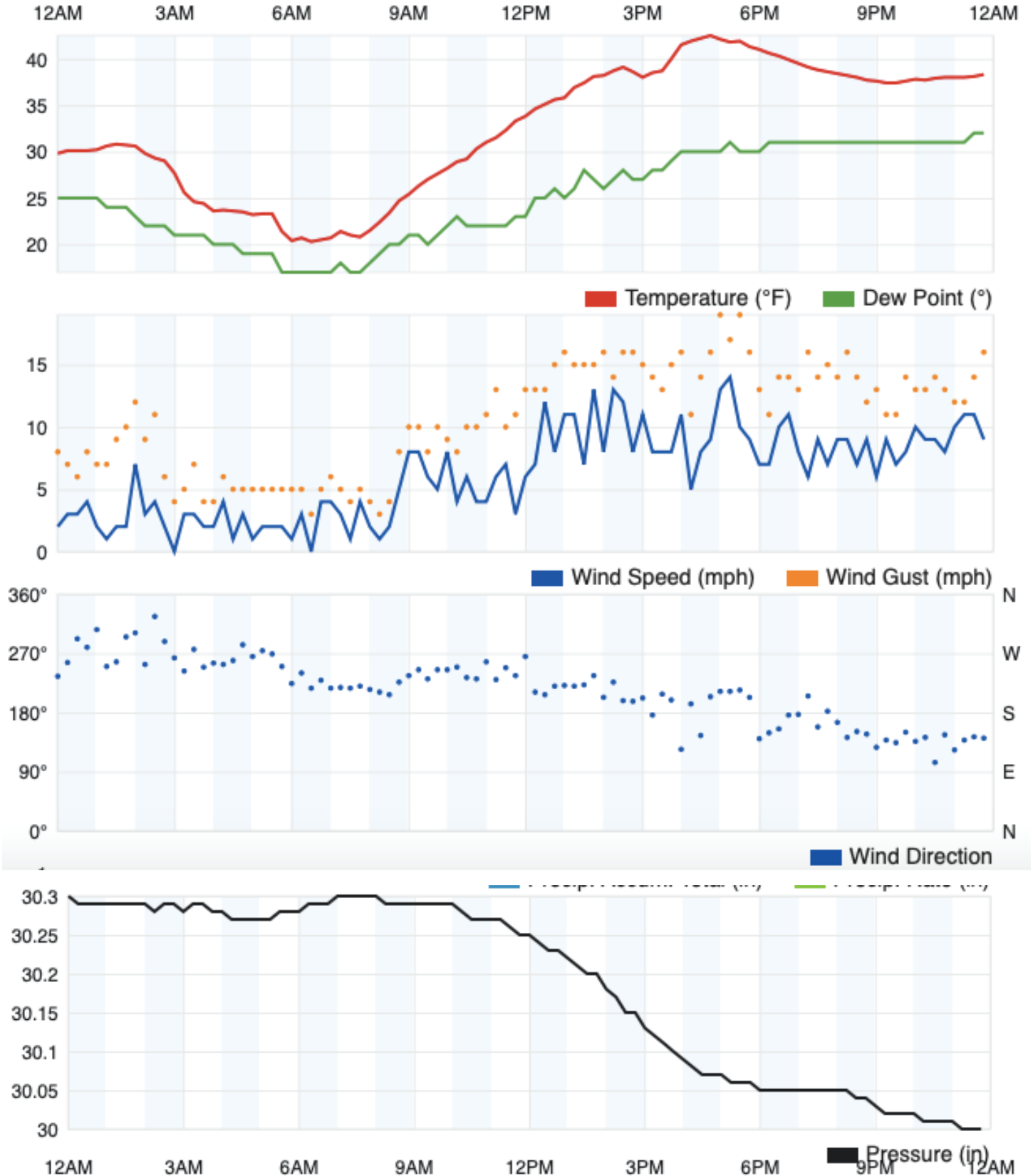


Wind gusts of around 35 to 45 mph are possible Thursday afternoon, before diminishing west to east Thursday night. Winds will combine with the falling snow to produce blowing snow with reductions to visibility likely, especially over the southern half of South Dakota.

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## Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs





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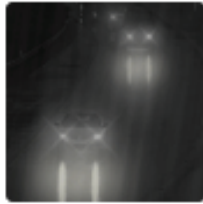
Today



Increasing  
Clouds

High: 42 °F

Tonight



Slight Chance  
Drizzle

Low: 35 °F

Wednesday



Chance  
Drizzle

High: 43 °F

Wednesday  
Night



30% 40%

Chance Rain  
then Chance  
Wintry Mix

Low: 25 °F

Thursday



40% 40%

Blustery.  
Chance Wintry  
Mix then  
Chance Snow

High: 30 °F

## Today

**DRIZZLE**

Highs in 40s

## Tonight

Wintry Mix

Lows 25-35°F  
Highs in 30s

## Thursday

Snow Accum for Thursday  
*\*light ice accum possible tonight\**

A system will move out into the Plains tonight and Thursday. Precipitation initially will favor a mix of rain, freezing rain and sleet. The precipitation should transition over to all snow by mid morning on Thursday. Light amounts of ice and snow accumulation are expected, which could make travel hazardous. mix of precipitation Thursday morning will transition to all snow. Accumulating snow is expected, mainly over the southern half of SD.

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## Today in Weather History

March 18, 1982: Northern Lawrence and Southwest Butte Counties experienced strong winds during the afternoon of March 18, 1982. Winds gusting to 70mph in Spearfish and Belle Fourche areas overturned a trailer house near Belle Fourche. No injuries were reported.

March 18, 2013: An area of low pressure moving across the region brought widespread accumulating snowfall along with powerful northwest winds to northeast South Dakota. Snowfall amounts from 1 to 4 inches along with sustained winds of 25 to 35 mph with gusts up to near 60 mph caused widespread blizzard conditions. Travel was disrupted or halted. Some businesses and schools were also closed. Some snowfall amounts included; 1 inch at Sisseton; 2 inches south of Bristol and at Bowdle; 3 inches near Big Stone City; and 4 inches at Summit. The highest wind gust was 58 mph at Aberdeen and near Summit. The snowfall began between 5 and 7 pm on the 17th and ended between 5 and 9 pm on the 18th.

March 18, 2014: A low-pressure surface area moving off to the east brought some heavy snow into far eastern South Dakota and western Minnesota. A narrow band of heavy snow set up across this area bringing from 6 to 11 inches of snow.

1925: The great "Tri-State Tornado" occurred, the deadliest tornado in U.S. history. The storm claimed 695 lives (including 234 at Murphysboro, IL, and 148 at West Frankfort, IL), and caused seventeen million dollars property damage. It cut a swath of destruction 219 miles long and as much as a mile wide from east-central Missouri to southern Indiana between 1 PM and 4 PM. The tornado leveled a school in West Frankfort, Illinois, and picked up sixteen students setting them down unharmed 150 yards away. Seven other tornadoes claimed an additional 97 lives that day.

1952: 151.73 inches of rain fell at Cilaos, La Reunion Island in the Indian Ocean over five days (13th-18th) to set the world rainfall record. This record was broken on February 24th-28th, 2007, when Commerce La Reunion Island picked up 196.06 inches.

1990: An intense hailstorm struck the Sydney region in Australia, producing strong winds and torrential rains in a swath from Camden to Narrabeen, causing extensive damage. Hailstones were measured up to 3 inches in diameter. The total insured cost was estimated at \$319 million, the third-largest loss event in Australian insurance history.

1971 - High winds accompanied a low pressure system from the Rocky Mountains to the Great Lakes. Winds gusted to 100 mph at Hastings NE, and reached 115 mph at Hays KS. High winds caused two million dollars damage in Kansas. Fire burned 50,000 forest acres in eastern Oklahoma. (17th-19th) (The Weather Channel)

1987 - A storm in the central U.S. produced up to 10 inches of snow in western Nebraska, and up to six inches of rain in eastern sections of the state. The heavy rains pushed the Elkhorn River out of its banks, submerging the streets of Inman under three feet of water. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1988 - Light rain and snow prevailed east of the Mississippi River. Fair weather prevailed west of the Mississippi. (The National Weather Summary)

1989 - A storm in the western U.S. produced heavy rain in California, with heavy snow in the Sierra Nevada Range. Venado CA was drenched with 5.40 inches of rain in 24 hours. A dozen cities in the eastern U.S. reported new record high temperatures for the date, including Baltimore MD with a reading of 82 degrees. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1990 - Heavy rain caused extensive flooding of rivers and streams in Georgia, with total damage running well into the millions. Flooding also claimed six lives. Nearly seven inches of rain caused 2.5 million dollars damage around Columbus, and up to nine inches of rain was reported over the northern Kinchafoonee Basin in Georgia. (Storm Data)

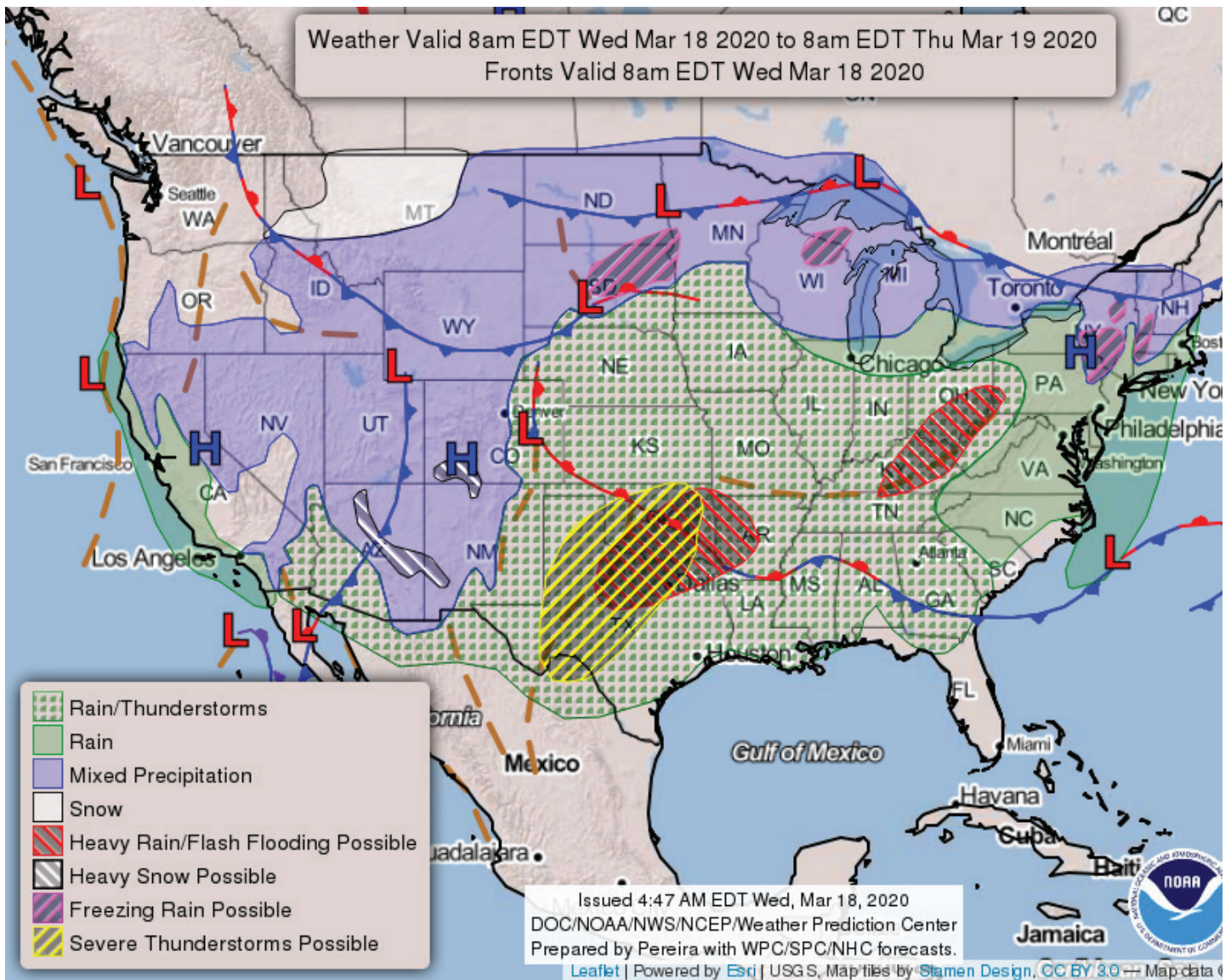
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## Yesterday's Groton Weather Today's Info

**High Temp: 43 °F at 4:49 PM**  
**Low Temp: 20 °F at 6:07 AM**  
**Wind: 19 mph at 12:48 PM**  
**Snow**

**Record High: 85° in 2012**  
**Record Low: -15° in 1923**  
**Average High: 41°F**  
**Average Low: 21°F**  
**Average Precip in March.: 0.55**  
**Precip to date in March.: 0.00**  
**Average Precip to date: 1.57**  
**Precip Year to Date: 0.35**  
**Sunset Tonight: 7:44 p.m.**  
**Sunrise Tomorrow: 7:38 a.m.**





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## OVERCOMING ADVERSITY

Enterprise, Alabama is known for having a monument to an agricultural pest - the boll weevil. In 1915, the "pest" invaded the area and destroyed their only crop - cotton. This disaster left the farmers destitute and nearly hopeless. However, in 1917 the county produced and harvested more peanuts than any other county in the nation.

The monument, erected in 1919, stands in the center of the downtown district as a symbol of their willingness and ability to adjust to and overcome adversity. The residents are quick and proud to remind visitors of the lessons they learned from the boll weevil.

One resident said, "There was a time when we had one crop - cotton; the boll weevil destroyed it. Then we were forced to diversify. Now we are doing better than ever. The boll weevil was a blessing in disguise."

Paul said, "We can rejoice when we run into problems and trials, for we know that they help us to develop endurance." Difficulties are not to be dreaded. They are to be accepted as unique opportunities that God brings into our lives as challenges to help us "diversify" - to develop all of the skills and talents God has given us.

Prayer: Lord, help us to trust in Your goodness and grace, believing that all of the obstacles in our lives are gifts from You. Help us to accept them willingly and grow through them. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: Romans 5:3 We can rejoice, too, when we run into problems and trials, for we know that they help us develop endurance.

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

## News from the Associated Press

### SD Lottery

By The Associated Press

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

Mega Millions

20-27-28-58-59, Mega Ball: 25, Megaplier: 3

(twenty, twenty-seven, twenty-eight, fifty-eight, fifty-nine; Mega Ball: twenty-five; Megaplier: three)

Estimated jackpot: \$90 million

Powerball

Estimated jackpot: \$130 million

### Pair charged in '09 cold case that left Minnesota mom dead

MINNEAPOLIS (AP) — A former MMA fighter accused in two Texas slayings is one of two people charged in the death of a woman who was abducted from a Minnesota domestic violence shelter 11 years ago, authorities said Monday.

Cedric Marks, 45, of Killeen, Texas, has been charged in Hennepin County with second-degree murder in the 2009 slaying of April Pease, who was the mother of one of his children. Kellee Sorensen, 34, of Lynden, Washington, faces a similar charge.

Marks and Pease were allegedly involved in a custody dispute.

Marks is also suspected in the strangling deaths of his ex-girlfriend and another man in Texas last January, authorities said.

Marks and Sorensen originally found Pease at a shelter in Washington State, after which time Pease was transferred to a Bloomington, Minnesota shelter, court documents show. The two suspects tracked down Pease in Minnesota and took her against her will.

Marks told Sorensen he killed Pease and removed her hands and teeth so she couldn't be identified, according to court documents. It's unclear from the complaint whether her body was ever discovered, but one of Marks' wives told police it was buried somewhere in one of the Dakotas.

It's unclear if Marks and Pease have lawyers in the Pease case.

Marks compiled a record of 31-28-0 during his professional MMA career, which began in 1999, according to mixedmartialarts.com. His last fight was in 2018.

### South Dakota gets \$3.4 million in 911 call system lawsuit

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — South Dakota officials announced on Tuesday the state will receive \$3.4 million in a settlement with the company that used to provide its 911 call system.

After a series of alleged 911 call failures, the state decided to switch its emergency call system last year and sued Comtech Telecommunications Corp. which had the old contract.

The money from the settlement will be distributed to emergency call centers throughout the state.

Last year, the state's 911 Coordination Board awarded a five-year contract to CenturyLink to provide 911 services to the state. The board completed its transition to that provider in February.

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This story has been corrected to correct name of company to Comtech Telecommunications Corp.

### \$1 million cash bond set in fatal Sioux Falls stabbing

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — Bond has been set at \$1 million cash for a Yankton man accused of fatally stabbing a woman in Sioux Falls.



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Josephdeng Aganj Mamot, 50, appeared in court Monday afternoon on multiple charges, including murder and manslaughter. Mamot turned down a court-appointed attorney.

Authorities identified the victim as 39-year-old Akoat Mater. Police say the two were in a domestic relationship, according to the Argus Leader.

Police say Mamot used a knife and stabbed Mater numerous times during an argument. Mater was pronounced dead at the scene.

Mamot, who was arrested at the scene, was injured during the altercation and was taken to a hospital for medical treatment, then taken to the police department for questioning.

## South Dakota gov: no school next week, more tests coming

SIoux FALLS, S.D. (AP) — Gov. Kristi Noem on Tuesday ordered South Dakota schools to stay closed again next week while the state waits for healthcare providers to make more testing available.

Officials announced earlier in the day that one more person has tested positive for COVID-19 in South Dakota, bringing the state's total to 11. Authorities confirmed on Monday that one death last week was caused by COVID-19.

The new case is in Minnehaha County, which contains Sioux Falls, the state's largest city. Five of the people who tested positive for the coronavirus live in the county. The latest case is a woman in her 50s.

All the positive cases have come from people who traveled outside the state and there is currently no evidence of it spreading in communities, officials said.

Noem on Monday met with leaders from two of the state's largest healthcare providers, Sanford and Avera. The companies announced they would be coordinating to make more tests available and expanding testing to commercial labs. The state health lab has tested over 500 people for COVID-19 but experienced a slow down Monday when it ran low on the supplies needed to conduct the tests.

"We hope by the end of the week to have hundreds and hundreds of tests every day available," said the CEO of Sanford Kelby Krabbenhoft.

The governor said that one more week of school closures would give the state time to ramp up testing.

When asked if hospitals needed to brace for similar numbers of infections to the influenza epidemics that infected hundreds of thousands in 1918 and 1958, the governor said, "I believe because of the actions we've already taken, we won't reach that level."

Noem also raised the possibility of the Legislature funding a response to the outbreak and its economic effects when lawmakers convene for one day at the end of the month.

"The virus is having a ripple effect across the state," Noem said.

Earlier in the day, Sioux Falls Mayor Paul TenHaken said bar and restaurant owners are particularly concerned with the drop off in customers. The city is not mandating any bar or restaurant shutdowns, but encouraging businesses to follow guidelines from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention to limit gatherings to 10 or fewer people. He said the city is trying to help encourage people to order takeout.

For most people, the 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.

Sioux Falls also is setting up a fund to help people financially impacted by the outbreak. So far, businesses and nonprofits have donated \$700,000. TenHaken asked landlords to be lenient on renters hit by the economic slow down.

"The last thing we want to see is evictions right now," he said.

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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.

## South Dakota Board of Regents CEO to step down

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — The executive director and CEO of the governing board for South Dakota's six public universities will be stepping down.

Paul Beran, who held the job with the Board of Regents since 2018, will leave when his current contract expires at the end of June. He said in a statement that the board decided to "go a different direction in leadership."

Regents President Kevin V. Schieffer said the Board of Regents will announce next steps for finding a new executive director after its April 1-2 regular meeting.

During his time on the job, Beran helped hire a new president at Black Hills State University and a new superintendent for the School for the Blind and Visually Impaired. He also helped lobby the state Legislature for funding for several new programs and buildings.

The Legislature has proposed examining operations at the Board of Regents this year. Lawmakers cleared a bill to require the Board of Regents to assemble a task force with at least eleven members, including four legislators. It is now awaiting approval from Gov. Kristi Noem.

## 2 bodies on reservation likely those of missing cousins

RAPID CITY, S.D. (AP) — Two bodies found on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation are believed to be those of cousins who have been missing for more than two months, sheriff's officials said.

Oglala Lakota County Sheriff Joe Herman said autopsies will confirm the identity of the two, but that "it is very likely the missing young men," the Rapid City Journal reported.

"The tribe is doing the investigation and autopsies," Herman said. "That is when we will know for sure."

Robert "RJ" Kills Enemy Jr., 23, and Vincent "Stevie" Little Dog, 25, were last seen around 11 p.m. on Dec. 27 north of Manderson after a police officer pulled up to them and a third person.

The group took off running and the officer chased after them but eventually had to return for other calls for service.

While the third person was found, Kills Enemy and Little Dog remained missing despite widespread searches.

Authorities did not say how the men may have died.

## Excerpts from recent South Dakota editorials

By The Associated Press undefined

### Yankton Daily Press & Dakotan, March 16

#### Proactive steps to combat COVID-19

Extraordinary times demand extraordinary measures.

And that's certainly what we are seeing and enduring as America and the world ramp up their response to the COVID-19 coronavirus that's racing across the planet.

The situation has been months in the making, and some countries have prepared relatively better than others. America is now working overtime in a feverish hope to catch up and minimize the damage as much as possible.

We are seeing drastic steps that are literally touching every aspect of life across the country, across South Dakota and Nebraska, and in Yankton and every community in the region.

South Dakota Gov. Kristi Noem has called off school for the coming week (at least), and the Board of Regents did the same for state universities.

Nebraska Gov. Pete Ricketts on Friday mentioned the possibility of closing schools in that state for 6-8 weeks, if necessary.

Indeed, events are being postponed or canceled in wholesale terms, from small local meetings to entire professional sports leagues and the NCAA "March Madness" college basketball tournaments. The NAIA basketball tournaments in Sioux Falls (for the men) and Sioux City (women) were canceled outright after

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the first day of action. The South Dakota Class B girls' basketball tournament in Spearfish was postponed after the first round, and this coming weekend's tournaments have also been postponed. Church service schedules are being altered. Even funerals are being delayed until the situation looks better.

These are dramatic steps.

But they are also important steps. They are strongly proactive in an attempt to slow the spread of the contagion, to protect as many people as possible and to avoid a crushing onslaught of patients on medical facilities, which would impact all medical care, even for non-COVID-19 patients. It's part of what's called "flattening the curve."

Much of it falls under the label of "social distancing," which is actually not a new concept at all — just one expanded to societal terms. This purpose is to create isolation and separation to slow the spread of the virus. In spirit, it's quite sensible.

But in implementation, it is radical and will have a serious impact in other areas for some time to come. This is going to take a serious financial toll on a number of fronts, and states, cities and businesses must face those formidable battles. For instance, the cancellation of sporting events, which may seem minor to some people, will have major consequences on the cities and states that host these events, the vendors and other workers who make their livings from those events and so on.

In effect, our nation is being asked to step back from its normal routines, and this will be tough for many people. It's forcing us to re-think some things we do, in terms big and small. The consequences, either way you look at it, will be difficult.

The debate over how we got here will be an important one, but the decisions we make in regard to what we do now are the most pressing. The government needs to do what it needs to do. And each of us needs to do what we must for the general good and health for both ourselves and those we know and love.

It's a battle we WILL ultimately win — and as was pointed out during a press conference of Yankton's COVID-19 task force last week, if we fight this fight well enough, it will seem like we overreacted. So be it. Let's make the fight worth it.

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## Madison Daily Leader, March 10

### Government works better when open to citizens

This week (March 15-21) marks the 15th Sunshine Week, a time to stress the importance of open government policies at all levels. The terms "Sunshine" suggests opening up government to the light of day.

Sunshine Week started after the Sept. 11, 2001 attacks on America, when there was a rush to close off government information to the public. Tim Franklin, associate dean of the journalism school at Northwestern University, said the shutting down of access to public records and public meetings was based on the "misguided, and sometimes cynical, notion that Americans are safer the less they know about what the government is doing in their name and with their money."

That sounds a bit harsh, but we're surprised how often we hear a phrase like "we don't want the public to know this," or "the public won't understand this if we tell them." At worst, we've heard "let's not tell the public because it might cause a panic." That's what happened just recently in some countries with the coronavirus outbreak.

Not surprisingly, we believe instead in the public's right to know. A government "of the people" is not a private business owned by someone. Local governments are owned by citizens/taxpayers. We elect officials to conduct our business, but they still report to us as citizens. We deserve to have input into their decisions, open discussion about their decisions, and a permanent record of how they spend our money. We deserve to know what is going on in public schools. We want to be in the room when a zoning change is proposed in our neighborhood.

We all need to be vigilant in asking for, and insisting on, open records, meetings and discussions.

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## Aberdeen American News, March 14

### No more denying the uncertainty of COVID-19

If you're not acknowledging the problem by now, you are part of the problem.

The problem is, of course, COVID-19. And it's real.

There are many questions with unknown answers. And that's what makes this such a slippery slope. That's what's sparking uncertainty and, in some cases, fear. That's what makes this different from other viruses in the past.

We hope, a few weeks or months from now, everything happening — closed schools, canceled events, travel restrictions, the shutdown of sports leagues — will look like wild overreactions. That's the best-case scenario. But whether we reach that point, it's too early to tell.

In the meantime, here are some and inarguable facts to chew on:

— After initially downplaying the COVID-19 outbreak, President Donald Trump declared a national emergency Friday.

— That was hours after Gov. Kristi Noem did the same for the state. She wasn't nearly as stubborn as the president. That said, the decision to kick media members out of a COVID-19 meeting earlier this week did nothing to instill trust.

— The NCAA didn't pull the plug on March Madness and give up hundreds of millions of dollars to make the president look bad. Or to inconvenience you. Nor did the other sports leagues that have paused their seasons act with those motives.

Get over that kind of thinking. It's petty, dangerous and foolish.

No, all of these steps — the unprecedented actions — were made for our protection.

Protection.

Protection.

Protection.

And that is all. So stop looking for other reasons.

That's why South Dakota schools will be closed next week. That's why college campuses will be empty next week. That's why the state basketball tournaments have been postponed. That's why there's virtually nothing that's not vital happening next week.

Now it's for all of us to help. And that's the easy part. Because it involves some simple steps we've been hearing about for weeks:

— Wash your hands with soap for at least 20 seconds. (You should have been doing this all along.)

— Cover your mouth with your arm or a tissue when you cough or sneeze.

— If you don't feel good, stay home. Work remotely if you can or have to.

— And avoid crowds if you are pregnant, older or have a weakened immune system.

— Keep high-traffic and high-germ areas clean.

— Oh, and don't hoard toilet paper and sanitizer. Take what you need and leave some for the next shopper.

This is not a fun time. It's stressful and sometimes scary. Nobody is enjoying it. Not the government. Not the media. Not people making difficult decisions.

Maybe, months from now, when with a little luck we are all looking back on this moment, we'll see overreaction. Maybe the pandemic has peaked and it will start to backslide in the days to come.

There's no way to know.

And that's the reason for such drastic action. If we don't encounter more problems, though, remember this time. Because the tough decisions being made now might be a big reason why.

## Iran reports another spike in coronavirus with 147 deaths

By NASSER KARIMI and AYA BATRAWY Associated Press

TEHRAN (AP) — Iran reported its single biggest jump in deaths from the new coronavirus, saying Wednesday another 147 had died in a nearly 15% spike that raises the death toll to 1,135 people nationwide.

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The rise in deaths comes as the number of infections continues to grow each day, with some 17,361 people infected, according to Iran's deputy health minister, Alireza Raisi.

Meanwhile, Friday will mark the Persian New Year, Nowruz, raising fears of people traveling and further spreading the virus.

That is the biggest 24-hour rise in deaths yet recorded by Iran's Health Ministry since the virus first appeared in Iran in mid-February. Iran's deputy health minister, Alireza Raisi, announced the new tolls at a televised press conference on Wednesday.

The outbreak has cast a shadow over the Persian New Year, Nowruz, a normally joyous holiday that begins on Friday. Health officials have urged the public to avoid travel and crowded places. But many seem to be ignoring the warnings, raising the risk of further outbreaks.

Some food markets in the capital, Tehran, were still packed on Wednesday, and highways were crowded with traffic as families traveled between cities. Iran also announced it would close mosques for communal Friday prayers for a third consecutive week. Other Muslim countries, including Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and the United Arab Emirates have also cancelled Friday prayers in mosques.

Iran's President Hassan Rouhani on Wednesday defended his government's response to the coronavirus outbreak in the face of widespread criticism that officials acted too slowly and may have even covered up initial cases before infections rapidly spread across the country.

In a speech to his Cabinet, Rouhani said the government was "straightforward" with the nation, saying it announced the outbreak as soon as it learned about it on Feb. 19.

"We spoke to people in a honest way. We had no delay," he added.

The government has come under heavy criticism for what has been seen as a slow and inadequate response. For weeks, government officials implored clerics to shut down crowded holy shrines to stymie the spread of the virus. The government finally closed the shrines this week.

"It was difficult of course to shut down mosques and holy sites, but we did it. It was a religious duty to do it," Rouhani said.

The new coronavirus has spread to more than 100 countries, infected more than 195,000 people worldwide and killed more than 7,800. For most people, it 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.

In Israel, meanwhile, the Health Ministry said 90 more people had tested positive, bringing the country's overall number to 427, a day after authorities issued a new series of guidelines that put Israelis in near-shutdown mode. Israel has ordered tens of thousands into home quarantine, turned hotels into hospitals and was setting up drive-thru testing centers.

In a nationwide address Tuesday night, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu warned of catastrophic consequences if people don't follow safety instructions. "This is a huge crisis. We are only at the start of the campaign."

Most controversially, the Israeli government has instructed the shadowy Shin Bet internal security service to start deploying the agency's phone surveillance technology to help curb the spread of the new coronavirus in Israel by tracking the moves of the infected. The step has sparked widespread criticism from lawmakers and civil rights groups.

In Iraq, a week-long curfew went into effect in Baghdad where streets were largely empty of both people and cars, and most shops were closed. Only pedestrians were allowed on the streets to buy necessary foodstuffs and medicine. Armed Iraqi police were seen patrolling the city and setting up roadblocks.

Still, some pilgrims in Iraq defied the curfew order to observe the annual Shiite Muslim commemoration of the death of Imam Mousa al-Kazim. Thousands typically make the journey on foot to the revered imam's shrine in the Khadimiya area outside of Baghdad. Several men, women and children walked solemnly down Baghdad's Saadoun Street on Wednesday, determined to complete the journey to the shrine. Police stationed nearby did not intervene to stop them.

Demonstrators in Tahrir Square, the hub of Iraq's anti-government protest movement, issued a collective statement that they were suspending protest activities to help stop the spread of the virus. Iraq has had

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11 deaths among 154 confirmed cases of the virus, which causes the COVID-19 illness.

In Egypt, authorities started to close shops to encourage people to stay at home. Coffee shops and restaurants were shuttered on Wednesday in Cairo, a city of over 20 million, while plain-clothed security forces urged people to go home.

"I am financially ruined, how can I earn my living now," said Mohammed Gamal, a worker in a coffee shop that was shut down.

Egypt, which has reported nearly 200 cases and six deaths from the virus, has suspended flights, closed schools, is quarantining more than 300 families in a Nile Delta village, and imposed a lockdown in the Red Sea resort town of Hurghada.

As global stock markets remain volatile, the United Arab Emirates' Securities and Commodities Authority announced early Wednesday that local exchanges would only be able to fluctuate 5% before being shut down.

Meanwhile, the leaders of the world's 20 biggest economies may hold an extraordinary virtual meeting next week about advancing a coordinated response to the pandemic. Saudi Arabia, which currently leads the G20 presidency, said it is communicating with countries to convene the virtual meeting of leaders.

In Pakistan, Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi, who this week visited China along with the country's president Arif Alvi, said he is protectively quarantining himself on his physician's advice.

— Batrawy reported from Dubai, United Arab Emirates. Associated Press writers Aron Heller in Jerusalem, Samya Kullab in Baghdad, Munir Ahmed in Islamabad, Pakistan and Samy Magdy in Cairo 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.

## Balkans fights virus amid lack of doctors, medical supplies

By **DUSAN STOJANOVIC** Associated Press

BELGRADE, Serbia (AP) — The main Serbian hospital treating patients infected with coronavirus looks like an abandoned building, but it isn't.

With its rundown facade, peeling walls and rooms crammed with metal beds, the downtown Belgrade clinic for infectious diseases has for decades been a symbol of Serbia's depleted health system that now has to cope with a major virus outbreak.

"If coronavirus doesn't kill you, that hospital surely will," said Bane Spasic, a middle-aged man who recently visited the place for a minor infection.

Although the COVID-19 pandemic hasn't hit Eastern and Central Europe with such a force compared to Italy, Spain and France, health officials throughout the region are sounding alarm about the lack of medical staff, facilities, equipment and enough hospital beds to handle several virus outbreaks simultaneously.

The COVID-19 illness causes mild or moderate symptoms in most of those infected, but severe symptoms are more likely in the elderly or people with existing health problems. The vast majority of those infected recover.

The countries in the region have taken a range of restrictive steps, from cutting off travel links to closing down schools and universities. But there are fears that the relatively low number of tests being carried out doesn't reflect the true scale of the outbreak.

The massive exodus of doctors and nurses to the West, mainly Germany, appears to be a major hurdle in the fight against the outbreak. Now, the medical staff are being called to come out of retirement, graduate medical students are asked to volunteer and officials are promising special bonuses to the overloaded staff.

The government in Slovenia has suspended specialist studies for new doctors and interns so they can join the effort to combat the epidemics. Graduated doctors who still don't have their licenses will be appointed wherever their help may be needed.

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The small country of Slovenia was hit hard by the spreading of the virus from neighboring Italy with 273 confirmed cases and one death, according to the latest figures from Tuesday.

The medical systems in Serbia, Bulgaria, Albania, Bosnia, Northern Macedonia and Romania have all been hit hard by the massive exodus of doctors and nurses over the past several years. The medics have moved to richer countries for better pay, but they are also driven away by the ailing health systems which offer them hours of overwork, modest salaries and chronic shortages of basic medical supplies to treat people.

In Bulgaria, the government has announced financial support for all medics involved in the treatment of coronavirus patients. An additional 500 euros will be paid to every medical worker with their monthly salaries. In Albania, Prime Minister Edi Rama said that starting from March all medical staff will be paid 1,000 euros more a month. Albania's average monthly salary is 450 euros.

Serbia's president, Aleksandar Vucic, announced last week that all medical workers were getting a 10% increase in salaries as they face a looming struggle against the coronavirus.

Faced with low wages and tough working conditions, about 6,000 Serbian doctors and nurses are believed to have left the country in recent years. This has prompted the government to cancel an agreement with Germany on the hiring of nurses from Serbia.

A state of emergency was declared throughout Serbia, including a nationwide dusk to dawn curfew for all citizens and a ban for all those older than 65 from leaving their households.

Epidemiologist Predrag Kon, who is part of Serbia's anti-virus team, has explained that the idea of the imposed state of emergency has been to stretch the epidemic as long as possible to avoid choking the clinics and putting too much burden on the health system at once.

Zlatko Kravic, the head of the general hospital in Sarajevo, said he was concerned about Bosnia's ability to respond to the major crisis because of the shortage of medical staff.

"We will need more doctors, our current staffing levels will need to increase by at least a third," he said, calling on doctors to come out of retirement and "contribute to our fight against this 21st-century menace."

In Croatia, which also faces a major shortage of medical workers, the struggle against the epidemics is compared to the country's war for independence from Yugoslavia in the 1990s.

"I believe we are used to all kinds of situations," said Alemka Markotic, the head of Zagreb's hospital for infectious diseases.

AP writers Jovana Gec in Belgrade, Veselin Toshkov in Sofia, Bulgaria, L Lazar Selimi in Tirana, Albania, Sabina Niksic in Sarajevo, Bosnia, and Konstantin Testordes in Skopje, Northern Macedonia, 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.

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

## A cruel paradox: Beating virus means causing US recession

By PAUL WISEMAN AP Economics Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — No one knows how long it will last or how much it will hurt. But the U.S. economy is either sliding into a recession for the first time since 2009 or is already in one — a sudden victim of the coronavirus outbreak.

The vast changes deemed necessary to defeat the virus — people and companies no longer engaging with each other — are bringing everyday business to a halt and likely delivering a death blow to the longest economic expansion on record.

The interplay between the outbreak and the steps meant to vanquish it reveals a cruel paradox: The faster and more painfully that ordinary economic life shuts down, the faster the health crisis can be solved



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and the faster people and businesses may gain the confidence to return to normal life. Conversely, a prolonged period of fighting the virus would delay an economic rebound and imperil many small businesses.

Much, too, will depend on how swiftly and aggressively the Federal Reserve, Congress and the Trump administration deliver financial aid to tens of millions of economic victims — from hourly workers with no more income to suddenly furloughed employees to businesses with loans to pay but no customers. Solving the health crisis by shutting down the economy, though, will have to come first.

"The more rapidly you want to contain the virus, then the more severe the lockdown has to be and the more severe the disruption to economic activity is," said Gregory Daco, chief U.S. economist at Oxford Economics. "The hope is, the more severe the lockdown, the sharper the rebound will be."

The "Lockdown Paradox," he calls it.

In the near term, at least, Daco foresees excruciating economic pain: He expects the American economy to shrink at a staggering 12% annual rate in the April-June quarter. That would be the most dismal quarter on record dating back to 1947. After a second-half rebound, Daco thinks the economy will post zero growth for 2020 as a whole.

Experts say the economy has sunk with stunning speed. And the United States is hardly alone: By all estimations, Europe is enduring its own recession, accelerated by the coronavirus' epicenter in Italy.

In the United States, waves of layoffs seem inevitable, especially in industries most vulnerable to an economic standstill: Travel, entertainment, hotels, restaurants, retail stores — the heart of the service sector, which makes up most of the U.S. economy. Unemployment is sure to rise, perhaps sharply, in the months ahead.

"We are already in recession," said Robin Brooks, chief economist at the Institute of International Finance, an association of financial companies.

Brooks reckons that the U.S. gross domestic product — the broadest gauge of economic output — will fall at a 0.2% annual rate in the January-March quarter and then by 3.6% in the April-June period.

Even President Donald Trump, ever celebratory of the economy's performance on his watch, conceded this week that the U.S. "may be" heading toward a downturn.

Statistics that will capture the economic damage from the virus and the efforts to contain it are just beginning to surface. For now, Brooks fears "all the things we don't see: The social distancing, the quarantining and the uncertainty aren't in the hard data yet."

The early evidence is sobering: The Federal Reserve Bank of New York reported Monday that manufacturing activity in New York state plunged this month to the lowest level since the Great Recession year of 2009.

On Tuesday, hotel executives, whose bookings have swiftly dried up, took their worries to the White House.

"I personally lived through many crises, starting with the S&L, the 9/11 crisis, the Great Recession," said Hilton's CEO, Christopher Nassetta. "I've been doing this for 35 years. Never seen anything like it."

Chip Rogers, president and CEO of the American Hotel & Lodging Association, noted that hotels last year were, on average, roughly 67% full.

Now?

"We're probably under 20% nationwide and headed south," he said. "If, by the end of the year, we get up to 35% and nothing else happens, that will be about 4 million jobs lost."

The speed with which the virus broke out of China and traversed the globe caught forecasters off guard. Federal Reserve Chair Jerome Powell said Sunday that the Fed won't even bother to issue its usual quarterly economic forecasts this week.

Its economic view, after all, depends on how the virus outbreak evolves, "and that's just not something that's knowable," Powell acknowledged to reporters. "So actually writing down a forecast in that circumstance didn't seem to be useful."

Initially, economists had expected more or less a repeat of what had happened when SARS hit China and Southeast Asia in 2003: Short-lived damage, largely isolated to China and Hong Kong, that left the United States relatively unscathed.

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China does pack four times more weight in the global economy than it did 17 years ago. And it's far more tightly integrated into the world economy. Still, the main problem for the U.S. economy this time, it was thought, would be disrupted supply chains involving some Chinese imports: Made-in-China iPhones, Easter eggs and beachwear, for example, among others, would be delayed.

Yet the rapid spread of the virus and the disease it causes, COVID-19, heightened the economic threat to the United States. Suddenly, the outbreak was everywhere.

In response, the economy started shutting down as Americans sought to isolate themselves to avoid contagion. Airlines cancelled flights. The NBA and NHL called off their seasons. There would be no March Madness. Fast-food restaurants closed their dining rooms and confined their service to drive-through windows. Workers stayed away from offices and hunkered down at home instead of spending money at bars, restaurants, stores, movie theaters.

Compounding the threat, oil prices started to tumble in the face of weakening global growth. That was especially so after Russia and Saudi Arabia staggered into an oil war, refusing to cooperate on production cuts to stabilize the oil market. Plummeting prices, though welcome to motorists, threatened to discourage investment by U.S. energy companies that contributes to economic growth.

Trouble in the oil patch, in turn, put pressure on deeply indebted oil and gas exploration and drilling companies. This trend intensified fears over the health of the corporate bond market where companies go to borrow.

As the economic outlook darkened, financial markets began to crumble — brought down, too, by the U.S. government's fumbling initial response to the crisis. Despite a strong rebound Tuesday, the Dow Jones Industrial Average remains down more than 8,300 points, or 28%, since Feb. 12.

Tumbling markets are more than a symptom of economic distress. They can cause it, too. Mark Zandi, chief economist at Moody's Analytics, calculates that every \$1 of wealth lost to falling stock prices reduces by nearly a nickel spending by consumers, who drive about 70% of U.S. economic activity.

After a slow start, U.S. policymakers are moving aggressively to limit the damage. The Fed on Sunday slashed its benchmark rate to nearly zero and said it would buy \$700 billion in bonds to try to ease credit market disruptions and keep long-term rates low. On Tuesday, the Fed said it would take steps to ease the flow of the short-term credit that businesses use for payrolls and other everyday costs.

In a recognition of the gravity of the threat, the Trump administration is backing a roughly \$850 billion emergency stimulus package, which would include sending checks directly to American households to help tide them over during the disruption.

Will it all work?

Zandi at Moody's Analytics said the economy's return to health depends not just on what happens to the virus and how policymakers respond. Also crucial is the mindset of ordinary consumers and business owners whose lives have been upended by the health crisis.

"How long it takes for businesses to feel confident enough to allow their employees to get back to work and travel and for tourists to get back on planes and cruise ships... whether the collective psyche holds together," he says.

AP staffer Kevin Freking contributed to this report.

Follow Paul Wiseman on Twitter at @PaulWisemanAP

## 3 more Biden victories increase pressure on Sanders to quit

By WILL WEISSERT and BRIAN SLODYSKO Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Joe Biden swept to victory in Florida, Illinois and Arizona, increasingly pulling away with a Democratic presidential primary upended by the coronavirus and building pressure on Bernie Sanders to abandon his campaign.

The former vice president's third big night in as many weeks came Tuesday amid tremendous uncertainty

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as the Democratic contest collides with efforts to slow the spread of the virus that has shut down large swaths of American life. Polls were shuttered in Ohio, and although balloting went ahead as scheduled in the three other states, election workers and voters reported problems.

Still, Biden's quest for his party's nomination now seems well within reach. His trio of wins doubled his delegate haul over Sanders, giving the former vice president a nearly insurmountable lead. Top Democratic leaders and donors have also increasingly lined up behind Biden as the best option to square off against President Donald Trump in November.

Using a livestream to address supporters from his home state of Delaware, Biden seemed ready to move past the primary. He paid tribute to the Vermont senator for advancing key issues like affordable health care and combating climate change.

"Sen. Sanders and his supporters have brought a remarkable passion and tenacity to all of these issues. Together they have shifted the fundamental conversation in this country," Biden said. "So let me say, especially to the young voters who have been inspired by Sen. Sanders, I hear you. I know what's at stake. I know what we have to do."

With the exception of North Dakota and the Northern Mariana Islands, Sanders hasn't scored a victory since Super Tuesday on March 3. He made no immediate move on Tuesday to contact Biden, according to people familiar with the situation who spoke on the condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to speak for the candidates. During remarks early in the night, Sanders said little about the future of the race and instead focused on the coronavirus outbreak.

Trump, meanwhile, formally clinched the Republican presidential nomination after facing minimal opposition.

But much of the action was on the Democratic side, where higher vote totals in some key states suggested enthusiasm that even the coronavirus couldn't contain. Turnout in Florida's Democratic primary surpassed the 1.7 million who cast ballots four years ago.

Sanders' path to the nomination is quickly narrowing, and some Democrats are now calling on him to drop out in the name of party unity. Top advisers have said he's considering whether the political landscape could look different as the virus continues to reshape life across the country.

Still, the race increasingly favors Biden. He maintained strength on Tuesday with African Americans and older voters who have been the hallmark of his campaign. He also appeared to chip away at Sanders' previous advantage with Hispanics that helped him win Nevada and California early in the race.

In Florida, Latinos made up roughly 20% of Democratic primary voters, and they largely sided with Biden. The former vice president received the support of 62% of Puerto Rican voters and 57% of Cubans, according to AP VoteCast, a broad survey of primary voters.

The public health and economic havoc wreaked by the coronavirus will nonetheless influence how the presidential contest unfolds. Rallies and other big events have been canceled. Democratic National Committee Chairman Tom Perez urged states with upcoming primaries to expand vote-by-mail and absentee balloting, as well as polling station hours — trying to ensure the primary isn't further hampered going forward.

"The right to vote is the foundation of our democracy, and we must do everything we can to protect and expand that right instead of bringing our democratic process to a halt," Perez said in a statement.

But the damage may have already happened.

Four states — Louisiana, Georgia, Kentucky and Maryland — have joined Ohio in moving to push back their upcoming primaries, and others may yet do so. That has left the Democratic primary calendar empty until March 29, when Puerto Rico is scheduled to go to the polls. But island leaders are working to re-schedule balloting there, too.

That means there is nowhere for Sanders to gain ground on Biden anytime soon, even if he could find a way to mount a sudden surge.

At least one of Sanders' top advisers chided party officials for going forward with voting on Tuesday.

"The Democratic Party rightly berates the GOP for ignoring scientists' warnings about climate change,"

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David Sirota tweeted. "The same Dem Party just ignored scientists' warnings & pushed to continue in-person elections during a lethal pandemic, rather than delaying until there is vote by mail."

There were problems across the country on Tuesday. In Illinois, for instance, there was a push to relocate about 50 Chicago-area polling places after locations canceled at the last minute.

Jim Allen, a spokesman for the Chicago Board of Election Commissioners, said the board asked Democratic Gov. J.B. Pritzker last week to cancel in-person voting, but the governor refused. Pritzker countered that state law doesn't give him the authority to make the sweeping changes that elections officials wanted.

"Let me tell you this: It is exactly in times like these when the constitutional boundaries of our democracy should be respected above all else. And if people want to criticize me for that, well, go ahead," the governor said.

There weren't problems, everywhere, though. Mel Dockens, a 49-year-old small-business owner, voted in the Phoenix suburb of Glendale and said it was a tough choice. But he went for Biden because he thought Sanders' progressive views might turn off some Democratic voters.

"It's all about electability," Dockens said. "It's not that I don't trust Bernie Sanders, but I trust (Biden) a little more."

Associated Press writers Bill Barrow in Atlanta, Katie Foody in Chicago, and Seth Borenstein and Alexandra Jaffe in Washington contributed to this report.

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

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## 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. 'WE ARE AT WAR' World leaders grapple with how to implement border closures, travel restrictions and lockdowns that have unleashed transportation chaos and imperiled economies to slow the spread of the coronavirus.

2. HOW COUNTRIES CAN STEM VIRUS' SPREAD Be pro-active in tracking down and isolate cases, provide access to basic, affordable public health care and issue clear, reassuring messaging from leaders.

3. 'IN AMERICA, WE DON'T DO SUBTLE AND SUBDUED' The arrival of the coronavirus, and the muted methods being recommended to the public to arrest its spread, are not surprisingly a hard sell for some Americans.

4. NOVEL CORONAVIRUS, NOVEL PRICE TAG Trump's possible \$1 trillion stimulus package would deliver emergency checks to the public within two weeks and may enlist the military for MASH-style hospitals to care for the sick.

5. BIDEN SWEEPS LATEST PRIMARIES The Democratic presidential front-runner caps another big week with victories in Florida, Illinois and Arizona, building pressure on Bernie Sanders to abandon his campaign.

6. GLOBAL STOCKS SINK AFTER TRUMP PROMISES VIRUS AID World share prices decline in a third day of wild price swings after the U.S. president promises aid to get the American economy through the coronavirus outbreak.

7. ISRAEL'S WEST BANK SETTLEMENTS SURGE An Israeli watchdog says settlement building and activity increased in 2019, maintaining a rapid pace that has drawn strength from the friendly policies of the Trump administration.

8. WHERE A CARTEL IS RISING Mexico's Jalisco New Generation gang has a reputation for ruthlessness and violence unlike any since the fall of the old Zetas cartel.

9. KATY PERRY WINS COPYRIGHT CASE A federal judge overturns a nearly \$3 million jury's verdict that



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found the pop superstar copied her 2013 hit "Dark Horse" from a 2009 Christian rap song.

10. 'MY FOOTBALL JOURNEY WILL TAKE PLACE ELSEWHERE' Tom Brady, the centerpiece of the New England Patriots' dynasty, is in serious talks to join the Tampa Bay Buccaneers.

## Global stocks sink after Trump promises virus aid

By JOE McDONALD AP Business Writer

BEIJING (AP) — Global stock markets sank Wednesday in a third day of wild price swings after President Donald Trump promised aid to get the U.S. economy through the coronavirus outbreak.

London and Frankfurt opened more than 3% lower and Shanghai, Tokyo and Hong Kong all declined. Australia's main index fell 6.4%.

The White House proposal could approach \$1 trillion in spending to ward off the pressure of business closures to contain the virus. The Federal Reserve has announced more measures to keep financial markets operating.

Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin said Trump wants to send checks to Americans in the next two weeks to help support them while more parts of the economy come closer to shutting down.

On Wall Street, the future for the benchmark S&P 500 index was down 3.7%. The future for the Dow Jones Industrial Average was off 3.9%.

On Tuesday, the S&P rose by an unusually wide daily margin of 6%, regaining just under half the previous day's history-making loss. The Dow advanced 5.2%.

Investors expect more volatility until the virus is brought under control.

Trump's proposal would include \$250 billion for small businesses and \$50 billion for airlines.

That is a good start but investors need to see the number of infections slow before markets can find a bottom, analysts said. The number of new cases reported in China, where the virus emerged in December, is declining but infections in the United States, Europe and elsewhere are increasing.

There are "green shoots of risk appetite emerging, and some further concerning aspects," said Chris Weston of Pepperstone Group in a report. "I am not going to call a bottom in the risk story by any means."

The FTSE 100 in London dropped 4.3% to 5,066.96 and Frankfurt's DAX skidded 3.7% to 8,606.79. France's CAC 40 shed 3.4% to 3,873.71.

On Tuesday, European markets swung from gains to losses and back to gains.

In Asia, the Shanghai Composite Index fell 1.8% to 2,728.76 while the Nikkei 225 in Tokyo shed 1.7% to 16,726.55. Hong Kong's Hang Seng skidded 4.2% to 22,291.82.

The Kospi in Seoul slumped 4.9% to 1,693.95. Australia's S&P-ASX 200 plunged to 5,320.20.

New Zealand and Singapore rose 1% while Manila fell 7.9%. Bangkok surged 2.8%.

For most people, the coronavirus causes only mild or moderate symptoms, such as fever and cough, and those with mild illness recover in about two weeks. Severe illness including pneumonia can occur, especially in the elderly and people with existing health problems, and recovery could take six weeks in such cases.

On Monday, the Dow lost nearly 3,000 points after Trump said a recession may be on the way. The S&P is off 25.3% from last month's record.

The virus has spread so quickly that its effects haven't shown up in much U.S. economic data yet.

On Tuesday, a report showed retail sales weakened in February, when economists expected a gain. A separate report a day earlier showed manufacturing in the state of New York contracting.

"The global recession is here and now," S&P Global economists wrote in a report Tuesday.

In energy markets, U.S. benchmark crude lost 87 cents to \$26.08 per barrel in electronic trading on the New York Mercantile Exchange. It lost \$1.75 to \$26.95 on Tuesday.

Brent crude, the international standard, fell 43 cents to \$28.25 per barrel in London.

The dollar declined to 107.42 yen from 107.67 late Tuesday. The euro retreated to \$1.0983 from \$1.0996.

## Best strategies against virus: Track, isolate, communicate

By EE MING TOH and ELAINE KURTENBACH Associated Press

SINGAPORE (AP) — Singapore, a tiny city-state of less than 6 million people, had one of the earliest and biggest clusters of cases of the coronavirus in early February, before it began its rapid, inexorable expansion around the globe.

Within weeks, the country's tally of infections with the highly contagious virus that causes COVID-19 was overtaken by skyrocketing caseloads in South Korea, several European countries and the U.S.

Some strategies are proving more effective than others in containing the pandemic: pro-active efforts to track down and isolate the infected, access to basic, affordable public health care, and clear, reassuring messaging from leaders. East Asia's experience with the 2003 outbreak of Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome, which also originated in China, has likewise helped.

Since testing rates vary widely, it's hard to know for sure. But with the global number of infections approaching 200,000, Singapore appears to be among the handful of places that tick all those boxes, though recent spikes in new cases show that any lapses can have dire consequences.

Singapore's first case, confirmed on Jan. 23, was a 66-year-old man from Wuhan, the Chinese city where the disease was first detected in December.

By mid-February, the number of recovered patients in the Southeast Asian city-state was outpacing new ones. That changed in early March after 47 cases were tracked to a Feb. 15 dinner gathering. As of Wednesday, Singapore had 266 confirmed cases and no deaths from the virus.

As new infections increased, the government tightened quarantine controls.

Taiwan, a self-governed island off the coast of mainland China, has confirmed just 100 cases and one death. Most recent cases were residents returning from overseas travel.

Hong Kong has reported 167 cases and four deaths. Its leader, Carrie Lam, on Tuesday warned against all outbound travel and said any people arriving from outside greater China will face 14-day home quarantines or medical surveillance.

Of the 13 cases found in the tiny gambling enclave of Macao, 10 have recovered. Casinos have been closed for weeks to battle the outbreak.

Cambodia, which has confirmed three dozen cases, last weekend moved to stop foreigners traveling from France, the U.S., Spain, Germany, Italy and Iran after several new cases were found among travelers.

Thailand, likewise, appears to have kept cases under control with aggressive public health campaigns intended to minimize infections, though new cases jumped recently as stepped-up testing found clusters linked to a boxing tournament and an evening gathering at a bar. So far, 177 cases have been confirmed among 70 million Thais, even though it's a top destination for travelers, especially from China.

The virus that causes COVID-19 gives most people only mild symptoms but can also cause severe illness, including pneumonia. The vast majority of people who get it survive.

Assuming the numbers reported to the World Health Organization are accurate, many of the countries with lower caseloads are relatively isolated geographically: Singapore, New Zealand, Nepal, Bhutan, Sri Lanka, Mongolia. Some others may be latecomers in testing and reporting: Russia, Indonesia, Vietnam.

For Singapore, Taiwan and Hong Kong, the experience of battling the 2003 SARS outbreak, which infected some 8,000 people and killed nearly 800, helped ensure residents took the risks seriously, experts say.

"Almost everyone played ball and followed accordingly," said Leong Hoe Nam, an infectious diseases specialist at Singapore's Mount Elizabeth Novena Hospital. "SARS was our baptism by fire and we were forced to learn everything by swimming in the deep end of the pool."

After the SARS outbreak, when 238 people were infected and 33 died in Singapore, the city revamped its already excellent health care system, writing up new protocols for containing outbreaks. It set up "fever centers" to isolate suspected cases, invested in equipment and improved training in handling infectious diseases, Leong said. So when the first case of COVID-19 was discovered, Singapore was ready to act, he said.

From Feb. 1, Singapore blocked entry and transit for new visitors who had traveled to mainland China within 14 days. These restrictions have since expanded to include visitors with recent travel to Iran, north-

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ern Italy or South Korea.

When the number of local cases without links to previous cases or travel in China surged, the government raised its alert to "orange," the second-highest level, on Feb. 7. The Singapore Air Show, a huge event that draws thousands, scaled back the number of participants and barred most exhibitors and visitors from China from attending. Good hygiene and avoiding handshakes were recommended.

The National Public Health Laboratory, set up after SARS, was prepared to fast-track testing, using advanced diagnostics and newly developed COVID-19 test kits.

Rapid testing and isolation of suspected cases, and painstaking tracing of contacts, helped by police, surveillance videos and ATM records, have helped prevent a worse local outbreak, said Tikki Pangestu, a visiting professor at the Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy and former director of WHO's research policy and cooperation department.

Once a COVID-19 case is confirmed, Singapore embarks on "diligent contact tracing," said Pangestu. It ordered workers arriving from countries with endemic virus infections to stay home. Worship services were suspended in favor of livestreaming after a cluster was found at a church. Schools suspended mass assemblies and staggered recess.

So far, 5,700 people have been quarantined.

In Thailand, too, public health workers have gone door-to-door to track down contacts, said Thanarak Plipat, deputy director-general of the Disease Control Department of the Health Ministry. "We must go see them ourselves. This is an old public health way. We do our best," he said.

It has mostly worked. But newly confirmed clusters show one dinner, one boxing match or one religious gathering can undo weeks of work.

Initially, Germany was thought to have done relatively well at slowing the spread, but infections there have jumped to 9,360.

In South Korea, where more than 270,000 people have been tested, newly discovered cases are dropping sharply, but clusters are still popping up, at a call center, at a church where worshipers shared a spray bottle of salt water to "disinfect" each other.

This week, Malaysia has reported a surge in cases linked to a religious gathering in its capital at the end of February. Cambodia, Thailand and Indonesia also have confirmed new cases linked to that gathering.

It's unclear if strategies used in an authoritarian society like Singapore can prevail in bigger places where people expect greater personal freedoms. But as virus controls expand to unprecedented levels in many other countries, the policies are looking prescient.

Singapore is a small island with strong public trust in the government, "a strong healthcare system, excellent information systems and plenty of money," said Pangestu. "Many other countries, especially developing ones, do not have these capacities or characteristics."

Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong, lauded for adopting a calming, clear approach early on, said in a televised talk last week that the situation was under control but the government was planning ahead, trying to free up hospital beds to be prepared for any surge in cases.

Singaporeans "feel we are all in this together," Lee said, "and we don't leave anyone behind."

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Asia Business Editor Elaine Kurtenbach reported from Bangkok.

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

## Clean water access for India's poor spawns virus concerns

By SHEIKH SAALIQ Associated Press

NEW DELHI (AP) — Dharam Singh Rajput can't afford to buy hand sanitizer, which could help ward off transmission of the coronavirus in his community.

The Rajput family could opt for something more basic — soap and water — to achieve hand hygiene. But sometimes there is no clean running water in their neighborhood, which sits next to open sewage canals and mounds of garbage in the heart of New Delhi, India's capital. "The kind of water we have access to has the potential to cause more diseases instead of warding off the virus if we use it to wash our hands," Rajput said.

Experts say keeping hands clean is one of the easiest and best ways to prevent transmission of the new coronavirus, in addition to social distancing. But for India's homeless and urban poor who live in thousands of slums across major cities and towns, maintaining good hygiene can be nearly impossible.

About 160 million — more than the population of Russia — of India's 1.3 billion people don't have access to clean water.

That could leave impoverished Indians like Rajput and his family at risk during the virus outbreak.

"It could prove disastrous for people who don't have access to clean water," said Samrat Basak, the director of the World Resource Institute's Urban Water Program in India. With India being the world's second-most populous country, and having weak health care facilities and growing concerns that there may be an undetected communal spread of the virus, the risks associated with the lack of clean water aren't being overstated. UNICEF said last week that almost 20% of urban Indians do not have facilities with water and soap at home. What could make things worse, experts say, is that social distancing is nearly impossible in many Indian cities that are among the world's most densely populated areas. So far, the government has apparently been able to keep a lid on community transmission of the virus. Authorities have confirmed 147 cases and three deaths, all linked to foreign travel or direct contact with someone who caught the disease abroad.

While the coronavirus can be deadly, particularly for the elderly and people with other health problems, for most people it causes only mild or moderate symptoms, such as fever and cough. Some feel no symptoms at all and the vast majority of people recover.

India's government has made fervent appeals to the public to practice social distancing and good hand hygiene. India also was one of the first countries to essentially shut its borders and deny entry to all but a select few foreigners. But in a country as big as India, community transmission is all but inevitable, experts say.

"Clean water is the first line of defense," said V.K. Madhavan, India chief executive at WaterAid, a global advocacy group for water and sanitation. "If there is no access to clean water, the situation could worsen."

India's clean water problem isn't new.

Hundreds of thousands of people wait in line every day to fill buckets from government water trucks. Hospitals and schools struggle with clean water supplies. People are forced to wash utensils and clothes in dirty water.

About 600 million Indians face acute water shortages, according to government think tank NITI Aayog.

The water crisis hits the poor particularly hard since wealthy people can pay for water from private sources that those living in slums can't afford.

The mortality rate due to inadequate or unsafe water is also high. About 200,000 people die each year in India from diseases related to unclean water. Insufficient water also leads to food insecurity.

"When clean drinking water runs out, people will have no choice but to rely on unsafe water," said Dr. Anant Bhan, a global health researcher. "It could expose India's huge population to extreme vulnerability."

Government promises to provide clean water to many Indians have so far failed despite efforts by Prime Minister Narendra Modi that have been internationally lauded.

"Access to clean water is a basic human right," said Madhavan. "No one should fear losing their life because they couldn't practice the first line of defense, which is hand washing." \_\_\_ Associated Press



videojournalist Shonal Ganguly 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.

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

## **Governments grapple with virus border closures, lockdowns**

**By DAVID RISING and CHRIS BLAKE Associated Press**

BERLIN (AP) — Governments grappled Wednesday with how to implement border closures, travel restrictions and lockdowns that have caused transportation chaos and imperiled economies, but which authorities say are needed to slow the coronavirus pandemic.

European Union leaders agreed to shut down the bloc's external borders for 30 days, while the U.S. and Canada were working on a mutual ban on nonessential travel between the two countries.

In Southeast Asia, the causeway between Malaysia and the financial hub of Singapore was eerily quiet after Malaysia shut its borders, while the Philippines backed down on an order giving foreigners 72 hours to leave from a large part of its main island.

The administration of President Donald Trump was considering a plan to immediately return to Mexico all people who cross America's southern border illegally, according to two administration officials who spoke to The Associated Press on the condition of anonymity because the plan hasn't been finalized.

The coronavirus is now present in every U.S. state after West Virginia was the last to report an infection. Hawaii's governor encouraged travelers to postpone their island vacations for at least the next 30 days, while the governor of Nevada — home to Las Vegas — ordered a monthlong closure of the state's casinos.

Increasingly worried about the economic fallout of the global shutdown, the U.S., Britain and the Netherlands announced rescue packages totaling hundreds of billions of dollars, while longtime International Monetary Fund critic Venezuela asked the institution for a \$5 billion loan.

Major Asian stock markets fell back after early gains on Wednesday after Wall Street jumped on Trump's promise of aid.

In Brussels, Ursula von der Leyen, the European Commission president, said there had been "a unanimous and united approach" to the decision to prohibit most foreigners from entering the EU for 30 days.

German Chancellor Angela Merkel said European leaders agreed in a conference call to the commission's proposal for an entry ban to the bloc — along with Norway, Switzerland, Iceland and Britain — with "very, very limited exceptions." Germany will implement the decision immediately.

On Monday, the EU issued guidelines to ease the flow of critical goods like food and medicine, while helping individual nations restrict nonessential travel.

But on Tuesday, there was chaos at borders, with traffic backed up for dozens of kilometers (miles).

"We are all desperate, cold and sleepless here for a third day," said Janina Stukiene, who was stuck in Lithuania on the border with Poland with her husband and son. "We just want to go home."

The line of cars and trucks in Lithuania was about 60 kilometers (37 miles) long after Poland closed its border. Similar traffic jams were visible on the borders with Germany and the Czech Republic.

Droves of Malaysians endured hourslong traffic jams as they sought to get into Singapore before the border closure. More than 300,000 people commute daily to Singapore to work and many have chosen to stay there during the lockdown.

Malaysia's restricted movement order came after a sharp spike in coronavirus cases to 673, making it the worst-affected country in Southeast Asia. About two-thirds of the cases are linked to a mass religious gathering at a mosque in a Kuala Lumpur suburb that has also sickened participants from Brunei, Singapore and Indonesia.

The self-governing island of Taiwan said Wednesday that it too would ban foreigners from entry and

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Taiwanese would have to self-quarantine at home for 14 days.

In Thailand, Bangkok's notorious red light districts were due to go dark Wednesday after a government order closing bars, schools, movie theaters and many other venues.

French President Emmanuel Macron tightened internal guidelines, allowing people to leave home only to buy food, go to work or do essential tasks. He said people had not complied with earlier guidelines and "we are at war."

Even tourists on Ecuador's iconic Galapagos islands — 1,000 kilometers (620 miles) off the South American mainland — have been affected.

Canadian Jessy Lamontaine and her family were stuck on the island when flights were suspended and they missed the last trip out.

"I was in tears this morning," Lamontaine said. "I couldn't get any answers from the airline. I had no money and didn't know whether I was going to keep my job."

Galapagos Gov. Norman Wray said the 2,000 foreigners who remain on the archipelago in the next week will have the possibility of leaving on charter flights or those approved by the government. They won't be able to go home immediately, however, as a ban international flights will remain until the emergency measures are lifted.

The global number of cases worldwide of the virus now exceeds 198,000, though more than 81,000 of them have recovered, mostly in China.

The virus causes only mild or moderate symptoms, such as fever and cough, for most people, but severe illness is more likely in the elderly and people with existing health problems. COVID-19, the disease caused by the virus, has killed more than 7,900 people.

In Italy, infections jumped to 27,980 on Tuesday. With 2,503 deaths, Italy accounts for a third of the global death toll.

Spain, the fourth-most infected country, saw its cases rise by more than 2,000 in one day to 11,178. Deaths from COVID-19 jumped to 491, a toll that included 17 elderly residents of a Madrid nursing home who died over five days.

Among them was the 86-year-old diabetic grandmother of Ainhoa Ruiz.

"We feel totally helpless and devastated because my grandma spent her last week only with her husband and caretakers but no other relatives," Ruiz said.

Some bright spots emerged. Wuhan, the central Chinese city where the virus was first detected late last year and which has been under lockdown for weeks, reported just one new case for a second straight day Wednesday.

In the U.S., the death toll surpassed 100, and officials urged older Americans and those with health problems to stay home. They also recommended all group gatherings be capped at 10 people.

New York City Mayor Bill de Blasio warned that residents should be prepared for the possibility of a shelter-in-place order within days. A shelter-in-place order in the San Francisco Bay Area, requiring most residents to leave their homes only for food, medicine or exercise for three weeks, is the most sweeping lockdown in the U.S.

Miguel Aguirre, his wife and two children were the only people on a normally bustling street near City Hall. Aguirre said he and his wife, janitors at a Boys and Girls Club, heard about the order on TV but showed up to work anyway because they need the money. His supervisor texted him to leave.

"If we don't work, we don't eat," said Aguirre, who brought his two daughters along because schools were closed. He had already lost his second job, at a hotel, when tourism conferences began canceling a month ago.

Blake reported from Bangkok. Contributing to this report were Associated Press writers Tim Sullivan in Minneapolis; Elliot Spagat in San Diego; Colleen Long in Washington; Alan Clendenning in Phoenix; Eileen Ng in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia; Jim Gomez in Manila, Philippines; Tong-hyung Kim in Seoul, South Korea; Lorne Cook in Brussels; Frank Jordans, Kirsten Grieshaber and Geir Moulson in Berlin; Jocelyn Gecker in San Francisco; Ed White in Detroit; Sylvie Corbet in Paris; Aritz Parra in Madrid; Adam Geller in New York;

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Mike Corder in Amsterdam; Jill Lawless and Maria Cheng in London; Liudas Dapkus in Vilnius, Lithuania; Colleen Barry in Milan; and Karel Janicek in Prague.

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## Watchdog says Israel's West Bank settlements surged in 2019

By JOSEF FEDERMAN Associated Press

JERUSALEM (AP) — Israeli settlement activity in the West Bank surged ahead in 2019, a watchdog group said in a report Tuesday, maintaining a rapid pace that has drawn strength from the friendly policies of the Trump administration.

Peace Now, a monitoring group that opposes the settlements, said that Israel's average annual construction rate has risen 25% since President Donald Trump took office in 2017.

Perhaps more significantly, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's government last year approved plans to build thousands of new homes, laying the groundwork for a sharp spike in construction in the coming years. That included an explosion in plans for new settlement projects approved early this year.

"In my opinion, they're trying to take advantage of the window of opportunity that they have under the Trump administration, knowing that it might change in a few months," said Hagit Ofran, a researcher for the group. "There was no such supportive administration for the settlements previously, ever."

Most of the world considers the West Bank, captured by Israel in the 1967 Mideast war, to be occupied territory and Israeli settlements illegal obstacles to peace.

In a break from his Republican and Democratic predecessors, Trump has taken a much softer line toward the settlements. Surrounded by a group of advisers with close ties to the settlement movement, Trump's administration declared last year that it did not consider the settlements to be illegal under international law. Then, in January, he unveiled a Mideast plan that envisions placing large parts of the West Bank, including all of the settlements, under permanent Israeli control.

The Palestinians, with wide international backing, seek all of the West Bank and east Jerusalem, also captured in 1967, as parts of a future independent state.

With nearly 500,000 settlers now living in the West Bank, and over 220,000 more in east Jerusalem, the Palestinians say the chances of establishing a state in those territories are quickly dwindling. They have rejected the Trump Mideast plan, saying it would extinguish any remaining hopes of independence.

According to the Peace Now figures, Israel began construction on 1,917 new homes in the West Bank last year. That marked a slight dip from 2,100 construction starts in 2018. But overall, Israel has begun construction on an average of 2,267 homes per year since Trump took office, compared to an annual average of 1,807 units during the Obama administration. The construction was scattered throughout the West Bank, including small settlements deep inside the territory.

That new annual construction could house roughly an addition 9,000 people per year in settlements, based on Peace Now's estimate of four people per a household.

Under Israeli law, settlements must go through several stages of bureaucratic planning before construction begins.

According to Peace Now, Israel last year advanced plans to build nearly 8,457 new homes, putting them on track to potentially be built in the coming years — up from 5,618 units last year and 6,742 in 2017.

By comparison, Israel advanced plans for a total 4,611 new homes during the final two years of the Obama administration, when ties with the U.S. were strained.

Peace Now gathers its data from official Israeli sources and by conducting aerial photography of settlements. Israeli settlement groups, using different sets of measures, have also reported rapid growth in

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the settler population during the Trump era.

Oded Revivi, mayor of the settlement of Efrat and the chief foreign envoy of the Yesha settler council, said it was “no secret” that the Trump administration has been more tolerant of construction.

Whether the thousands of units in the pipeline are built, he said, will depend on who leads Israel’s next government and who wins the U.S. presidential election in November.

“If we still have the same players, Netanyahu and Trump, I predict the figures you will see in 2020, or more accurately 2021, will actually be higher than 2019,” he said.

Netanyahu, fighting for his political life, took a number of pro-settlement steps while campaigning for re-election early this year.

Immediately after Trump unveiled his Mideast plan, Netanyahu vowed to begin annexing the settlements. When the White House balked, he pushed forward a flurry of new settlement plans as he tried to cater to his hard-line base.

During the first two months of this year, Israel pushed ahead plans for an additional 7,500 homes — nearly half of them in the sensitive “E1” area, according to Peace Now.

Developing that area, jutting deep into the West Bank east of Jerusalem, would hinder Palestinian hopes of creating a contiguous state. Israel has previously refrained from building in E1 due to opposition by prior U.S. administrations. Israel also moved ahead with plans to build over 1,500 units in a contentious area of east Jerusalem.

Despite these steps, Netanyahu came up short as the March 2 election ended in deadlock. Netanyahu’s rival, Benny Gantz, is now trying to form the country’s next government but also appears to face long odds of success. If neither man can cobble together a governing coalition, the country could plunge into a fourth consecutive election, placing Netanyahu’s future into question as he prepares to go on trial for corruption charges.

Trump’s future, meanwhile, also is suddenly in question following widespread criticism of the slow U.S. response to the coronavirus crisis.

The virus could also play a role in the growth of the settlements in the coming months. An economic slowdown, for instance, could potentially slow demand in the Israeli housing market, including in settlements.

In the West Bank, there are also risks from Israelis and Palestinians — who are covered by two different health systems and governments — coming together. Revivi’s settlement, for example, is next to the Palestinian city of Bethlehem, and residents often come into contact with one other. Thousands of Palestinians, including construction workers, work in the settlements.

“With all the potential of catching the virus, all these things become a much more relevant issue that needs to be discussed, determined, decided upon and definitely acted upon,” Revivi said.

## **Ravaged by war, Middle Eastern countries face a new scourge**

**By ISABEL DEBRE Associated Press**

CAIRO (AP) — When Dr. Ismail al-Mansouri goes to work in Yemen’s capital, he puts on one of the hospital’s few pairs of medical gloves. Then he enters a cramped clinic teeming with listless patients, many malnourished, some vomiting, others with diarrhea.

Al-Mansouri, a pediatrician, has been struggling for years to battle the rapid spread of otherwise preventable and treatable infections, such as cholera, that have surged in war-ravaged Yemen.

Now as the coronavirus outbreak intensifies in the region, he is faced with a new threat, one he can only hope to ward off with a handful of masks.

“I cannot even speak about our preparedness for the coronavirus,” he said, “because we have none.”

Long-running wars and conflicts across the Middle East have wrecked potential defenses against coronavirus outbreaks, leaving millions vulnerable in Yemen, Libya, Syria, Afghanistan, the Gaza Strip and elsewhere. Health care systems have been gutted; war has blasted key infrastructure. Several of the



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countries are carved up among rival claimant governments, factions or armed groups, snarling any attempt at nationwide protection programs. Hundreds of thousands of people driven from their homes by fighting are crowded in close quarters in tent camps or improper housing.

"We are becoming very worried," said John Nkengasong, director of Africa Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, as the virus reached conflict-ridden Iraq, Libya, Somalia and the Democratic Republic of Congo. "The impact will be magnified."

Most patients who contract the new coronavirus develop only mild symptoms and recover after about two weeks. But the virus is highly contagious and can be spread by those with no visible symptoms. For older adults and people with underlying health problems, it can cause more severe illness, including pneumonia.

So far Yemen, Libya, Syria and Gaza have not confirmed any infections. But doctors in many cases believe the virus has arrived and fear that a lack of disease surveillance systems — shortages of tests, basic supplies and properly trained professionals — is allowing an invisible pandemic to spawn.

"We don't have the testing capabilities, so we can only rely on symptoms and signs. But when I do see symptoms and try to report them, no one does anything. People go home, they go out, walk around, eat in restaurants," said Dr. Wejdan Sabri, an orthopedic doctor outside Libya's capital, Tripoli. "I can say with certainty that those likely carrying the virus have continued their lives as normal, passing it to family members and others on the street."

Sabri is one of two volunteer doctors tasked with infectious disease control for the 2.3 million people in Tripoli, which has been a battleground for warring militias. She said she has seen at least seven patients in the last few days with the signature symptoms of coronavirus. She could only advise them to stay home or visit the central lab in Tripoli, where Libya's few dozen tests can be found. Many of her patients shun testing, fearing quarantine. "They think they'll go to an isolation unit and die."

Protective gear across Libya is sparse. A trauma doctor at Tripoli central hospital said 15 surgeons on his night shift share one mask. The main respiratory diseases facility in the east, near the city of Benghazi, has only eight intensive care beds, 10 ventilators and a quarantine room for two.

"We are doing our best but of course it is not enough," said its director, Dr. Anas Albarghathy. Last weekend, doctors there found they didn't have the equipment to assemble tests for three patients who had just arrived from Iran, Egypt and Great Britain with fevers and dry cough.

In Yemen, doctors fear that raging war and a humanitarian crisis will only exacerbate the difficulties of determining chains of infection and containing the virus. The country, divided between a rebel-held north and government-run south, has already struggled to stop repeated cholera outbreaks that have infected more than 2 million people and killed nearly 4,000 since 2016.

In Taiz, one of the country's largest cities, Dr. Abdul Rahman al-Azraqi estimated that 80% of the city's hospitals and clinics had been shattered by the war and ongoing siege.

He described the situation in his hospital bluntly: "There is no training. There is no quarantine. We do not have tests for patients we suspect."

The World Health Organization has identified two facilities in the country of 29 million people for quarantine and diagnosis, which local director Atlaff Musani acknowledged would soon become "grossly insufficient." One, in the rebel-held capital of Sanaa, has the capability to carry out only 200 tests; the other, in the southern city of Aden, can test roughly 300 specimens.

"People are scared because they know the government is not prepared," said Dr. Mohamed Rabid, deputy director of the Aden's health office, lamenting that hospitals across the country are desperate for gloves, goggles, ventilators, medicines and other supplies.

Concerns have compounded as the virus sweeps across poorly patrolled borders. Iran, which has emerged as the regional epicenter of the outbreak, frequently sends military advisers and Shiite religious pilgrims to Syria. All 21 confirmed cases in Afghanistan traveled from neighboring Iran. Oil workers circulate between Libya and Italy, a major center of contagion. Thousands of migrants cross Libya's southern frontier, which Elizabeth Hoff, the country's World Health Organization representative, called "a serious vulnerability that we can't really do anything about."

In the Gaza Strip, medical infrastructure has been strangled by a 13-year blockade imposed by Israel with

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Egypt's help, preventing the passage of even critical goods like surgical supplies. While Israel has closed its border crossing, it continues to allow serious medical cases through. Gaza's testing capacity remains severely limited, with enough to process 150 samples. Israel has delivered an additional 200 tests.

In Syria, where nine years of devastating war have left infrastructure and health facilities in shambles, President Bashar Assad's government has conducted 103 coronavirus tests thus far in the country's sole laboratory, which came back negative. Social distancing proves a monumental task in unsanitary refugee camps jam-packed with hundreds of thousands of displaced Syrians.

In Afghanistan, which shares a large border with Iran, Health Minister Ferozuddin Feroz described a growing capacity to test suspected cases at the country's only functioning laboratory, with 30,000 more kits arriving soon. "We are not in a normal situation," Faroz told reporters Monday. "We are faced with a national threat."

In Gaza and Benghazi, authorities scrambled to set up new hospitals to handle a possible influx of patients. In Tripoli, Prime Minister Fayez Sarraj announced the allocation of some \$360 million to prevent the spread of the virus. Dr. Sabri, the Libyan orthopedic, says she won't get a full night's sleep for a while as she stages awareness campaigns and frantically trains inexperienced nurses in basic sanitation.

Officials in Yemen and Libya offered reassurances this week that things were under control. But not everyone sees it that way.

"People are terrified," said al-Mansouri, the Yemeni pediatrician. "May God protect us."

Associated Press writers Fares Akram in Gaza City, Gaza Strip; Zeina Karam in Beirut; and Rahim Faiez in Kabul, Afghanistan contributed to this report.

## AP VoteCast: Biden cuts deep into the Sanders coalition

By JOSH BOAK and HANNAH FINGERHUT Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Joe Biden cut deep into Sen. Bernie Sanders' coalition of young, liberal and Latino voters on Tuesday, securing solid victories in Florida, Illinois and Arizona in unsettled times.

The former vice president expanded his support among groups that have been propping up the Vermont senator's struggling campaign. Biden, who has run as a moderate, won liberals in Florida, and ate into Sanders' advantage with young people. In Arizona and Illinois, the two men roughly split Latino voters, a group that Sanders heavily courted.

The results from AP VoteCast surveys of thousands of Democratic voters across the three states show Biden consolidating Democrats at a time of rising anxieties about the spread of the new coronavirus and a national mobilization to contain it.

Not surprisingly, voters in all three states ranked health care as a top issue — and in Florida more said they trusted Biden over Sanders to handle the issue.

In just a few weeks, the coronavirus has upended the presidential campaign — not to mention the global economy and Americans' daily routines.

Ohio chose to halt in-person voting on Tuesday and delay its primary to avoid the risk of spreading the virus. Illinois, Florida and Arizona went ahead, instituting some new safety measures for voters and poll workers.

AP VoteCast surveys are designed to capture voters' views regardless of when or how they voted, accounting for the many voters in Florida and Arizona who voted early. Here's a snapshot of voters' priorities and concerns as they cast their ballots:

### BIDEN'S BIG TENT

Biden, 77, preserved his strength among older voters, women and moderates and conservatives — all groups that make up majorities of Democratic primary voters. He continued to be African Americans' overwhelming favorite.

But he went much further. In Florida and Illinois, Biden appeared to beat Sanders in suburbs, small towns and cities, while he ran about even with Sanders in Arizona's urban areas. He bested Sanders with

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Protestants, Catholics and Jews in Florida and Illinois, and among voters there with a college degree and those without. In Florida, he even won liberals, getting 51% to Sanders' 37%.

Young voters stand out as still somewhat wary of Biden, even as he gained some ground. Sanders, 78, maintained a modest edge among young voters in Florida, where about half of those under 30 supported him. Sanders got at least two-thirds of those voters in Illinois and Arizona.

## SANDERS' LATINO SUPPORT ERODES

Sanders has enjoyed a foundation of support from voters under 30 and Latinos, but that foundation showed some cracks.

Latinos were roughly 20% of Florida's Democratic voters. And of that group, 21% of identified as Cuban, 33% as Puerto Rican and the rest had family ties to other countries. Not only did Biden win Latinos in Florida overall, he got 62% of Puerto Ricans and 57% of Cubans. Sanders may have alienated many voters of Cuban descent for praising the literacy program of Fidel Castro's regime despite human rights abuses in that country.

In Illinois, Latinos were closely divided between the two leading contenders.

Biden also pulled about even with Sanders in Arizona, where Latinos made up 28% of the state's Democratic primary voters. Both candidates were competitive in Arizona's cities, while Biden had a modest edge in other communities.

## HANDLING HEALTH CARE

About 4 in 10 voters in Florida and roughly a third in Arizona and Illinois said they are "very" concerned that they or a family member may get infected with COVID-19. About 40% of voters in each state felt somewhat concerned.

Distress about the coronavirus was spread evenly across gender, education and income levels. But voters under 45 were somewhat less likely than their older counterparts to worry about getting infected.

The outbreak feeds into pre-existing concerns about the health care system. Democratic voters have for weeks named health care as a top issue of concern and that remained true in Arizona, Florida and Illinois.

Democratic primary voters in Florida, a state with both a large population of retirees and many younger tourism and service sector workers, believe that Biden would be better than Sanders at handling health care issues, 55% to 34%. Arizona and Illinois voters are closely divided between the two candidates on the issue.

## ECONOMIC CONCERNS

The full brunt of the economic damage from the coronavirus hasn't hit, but the surveys reveal most Democratic voters already felt on shaky ground. Less than 20% in Arizona, Florida and Illinois said they were getting ahead financially in what has been the longest expansion in U.S. history.

Roughly two-thirds in each state think they are "holding steady," while about a quarter describe themselves as falling behind.

Overwhelming majorities in all three states — 80% in Arizona and about 70% in Florida and Illinois — describe the country's economic system as unfair.

## POISED FOR NOVEMBER

Biden is widely seen as the strongest contender against Trump.

About 80% of voters in Arizona, Florida and Illinois think the former vice president could definitely or probably win the general election. Smaller majorities in each state — roughly 60% — have the same confidence in a Sanders victory.

Opposition to Trump is a defining trait of Democratic primary voters. In Florida and Illinois, around three-quarters said they would vote for whomever the party nominates to take on Trump. That figure is somewhat more, 81%, in Arizona.

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

## With 3 more victories, Biden pulls further away from Sanders

By WILL WEISSERT and BRIAN SLODYSKO Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Joe Biden swept to victory in Florida, Illinois and Arizona on Tuesday, increasingly pulling away with a Democratic presidential primary upended by the coronavirus and building pressure on Bernie Sanders to abandon his campaign.

The former vice president's third big night in as many weeks came amid tremendous uncertainty as the Democratic contest collides with efforts to slow the spread of the virus that has shut down large swaths of American life. Polls were shuttered in Ohio, and although balloting went ahead as scheduled in the three other states, election workers and voters reported problems.

Still, Biden's quest for his party's nomination now seems well within reach. His trio of wins doubled his delegate haul over Sanders, giving the former vice president a nearly insurmountable lead. Top Democratic leaders and donors have also increasingly lined up behind Biden as the best option to square off against President Donald Trump in November.

Using a livestream to address supporters from his home state of Delaware, Biden seemed ready to move past the primary. He paid tribute to the Vermont senator for advancing key issues like affordable health care and combating climate change.

"Sen. Sanders and his supporters have brought a remarkable passion and tenacity to all of these issues. Together they have shifted the fundamental conversation in this country," Biden said. "So let me say, especially to the young voters who have been inspired by Sen. Sanders, I hear you. I know what's at stake. I know what we have to do."

With the exception of North Dakota and the Northern Mariana Islands, Sanders hasn't scored a victory since Super Tuesday on March 3. He made no immediate move on Tuesday to contact Biden, according to people familiar with the situation who spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to speak for the candidates. During remarks early in the night, Sanders said little about the future of the race and instead focused on the coronavirus outbreak.

Trump, meanwhile, formally clinched the Republican presidential nomination after facing minimal opposition.

But much of the action was on the Democratic side, where higher vote totals in some key states suggested enthusiasm that even the coronavirus couldn't contain. Turnout in Florida's Democratic primary surpassed the 1.7 million who cast ballots four years ago.

Sanders' path to the nomination is quickly narrowing, and some Democrats are now calling on him to drop out in the name of party unity. Top advisers have said he's considering whether the political landscape could look different as the virus continues to reshape life across the country.

Still, the race increasingly favors Biden. He maintained strength on Tuesday with African Americans and older voters who have been the hallmark of his campaign. He also appeared to chip away at Sanders' previous advantage with Hispanics that helped him win Nevada and California early in the race.

In Florida, Latinos made up roughly 20% of Democratic primary voters, and they largely sided with Biden. The former vice president received the support of 62% of Puerto Rican voters and 57% of Cubans, according to AP VoteCast, a broad survey of primary voters.

The public health and economic havoc wreaked by the coronavirus will nonetheless influence how the presidential contest unfolds. Rallies and other big events have been canceled. Democratic National Committee Chairman Tom Perez urged states with upcoming primaries to expand vote-by-mail and absentee balloting, as well as polling station hours — trying to ensure the primary isn't further hampered going forward.

"The right to vote is the foundation of our democracy, and we must do everything we can to protect and expand that right instead of bringing our democratic process to a halt," Perez said in a statement.

But the damage may have already happened.

Four states — Louisiana, Georgia, Kentucky and Maryland — have joined Ohio in moving to push back their upcoming primaries, and others may yet do so. That has left the Democratic primary calendar empty until March 29, when Puerto Rico is scheduled to go to the polls. But island leaders are working to re-



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schedule balloting there, too.

That means there is nowhere for Sanders to gain ground on Biden anytime soon, even if he could find a way to mount a sudden surge.

At least one of Sanders' top advisers chided party officials for going forward with voting on Tuesday. "The Democratic Party rightly berates the GOP for ignoring scientists' warnings about climate change," David Sirota tweeted. "The same Dem Party just ignored scientists' warnings & pushed to continue in-person elections during a lethal pandemic, rather than delaying until there is vote by mail."

There were problems across the country on Tuesday. In Illinois, for instance, there was a push to relocate about 50 Chicago-area polling places after locations canceled at the last minute.

Jim Allen, a spokesman for the Chicago Board of Election Commissioners, said the board asked Democratic Gov. J.B. Pritzker last week to cancel in-person voting, but the governor refused. Pritzker countered that state law doesn't give him the authority to make the sweeping changes that elections officials wanted.

"Let me tell you this: It is exactly in times like these when the constitutional boundaries of our democracy should be respected above all else. And if people want to criticize me for that, well, go ahead," the governor said.

There weren't problems, everywhere, though. Mel Dockens, a 49-year-old small-business owner, voted in the Phoenix suburb of Glendale and said it was a tough choice. But he went for Biden because he thought Sanders' progressive views might turn off some Democratic voters.

"It's all about electability," Dockens said. "It's not that I don't trust Bernie Sanders, but I trust (Biden) a little more."

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Associated Press writers Bill Barrow in Atlanta, Katie Foody in Chicago, and Seth Borenstein and Alexandra Jaffe in Washington contributed to this report.

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

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## 5 primary takeaways: Joe Biden is Democrats' antidote

By **BILL BARROW** and **NICHOLAS RICCARDI** Associated Press

Joe Biden's surge toward the Democratic presidential nomination rolled on Tuesday with a dominating victory in Florida, the largest delegate prize of the day, and win in Illinois and Arizona.

Takeaways from Biden's latest victories:

**BIDEN'S SURGE BECOMES A WAVE**

Biden continues one of the most remarkable presidential campaign turnarounds in U.S. history.

His campaign always said he didn't have to win Iowa or New Hampshire, because his base was in more racially diverse states that followed, a theory that often seemed more like an excuse than a strategy. But even that plan didn't foresee the kind of catapult he has managed since blowing out the field in South Carolina on Feb. 29.

The former vice president has put together broad coalitions of Democratic primary voters: African Americans, white college-educated suburbanites, city dwellers of all demographics, rural and small-town voters who haven't yet defected to Republicans (or who might be returning from the GOP).

Certainly, it may be as much about President Donald Trump as anything else — Biden's "electability" case coming to fruition. But Biden's read on the electorate shouldn't be discounted. During a primary campaign whose narrative was dominated by Bernie Sanders and other candidates' ideological push for a progressive national makeover, Biden held to his core belief that 2020 was most fundamentally about re-establishing a sense of normalcy, then moving forward, "results," not "revolution."

Biden noted in a brief address, livestreamed late Tuesday, that Sanders and his supporters "have shifted

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the fundamental conversation in this country” with the Vermont senator’s two presidential campaigns. But the primary results offered the latest evidence that Biden is who and what more Democrats actually want in the Oval Office.

## SANDERS’ SINKING FEELING

Sanders spoke for 20 minutes via livestream Tuesday night and did not once mention the election. Instead, he tried to project calm as he outlined his coronavirus response plan.

It was an odd role for a candidate whose entire brand has been his defiant call for a political revolution.

Biden’s latest drubbing of Sanders comes as the half of the states yet to vote scramble to find a safe way to cast ballots during the coronavirus outbreak.

It’s unclear how robust future primary elections may be. With the entire country under virtual house arrest it’s impossible for Sanders to recreate the massive rallies that have powered his presidential bid. Every time he criticizes Biden, Sanders angers the majority of the party’s voters who have backed the former vice president, and risks sowing dissent before the general election.

Even on the issue of health care, the cornerstone of his campaign, Sanders is losing. Florida Democrats thought Biden would be better than Sanders on health care by a significant margin, according to AP VoteCast surveys of the electorate. Voters in Arizona and Illinois were about evenly divided between the two candidates on health care.

In 2016, Sanders fought on after it was impossible for him to defeat Hillary Clinton, helping build enough political muscle to pull the party leftward. But Biden’s in a stronger position than Clinton was and the socially distanced world of 2020 is a political lifetime away from the time before Trump’s presidency in 2016. It’s not clear what Sanders is doing right now.

## BIDEN’S ONLY OBVIOUS GAP: THE YOUNGEST VOTERS

Biden’s coalition on Tuesday again was wide. AP VoteCast data showed he continued his clear advantages among black voters in Florida and Illinois. Additionally, he appeared to win women, voters over 45, and moderates and conservatives. He showed strength in suburbs and small towns and across religious identities. In Florida, Biden won 51% of liberals.

If there’s a gap for Biden, it remains with voters under 30. Sanders maintained the edge in Florida and won about two-thirds of that group in Illinois. That youngest slice of the electorate has never been a force in primaries. But battleground states are won on the margins in November, and the 77-year-old establishment favorite tacitly acknowledged Tuesday that he still has work to do. Biden praised Sanders’ backers for their “remarkable passion and tenacity.” Then he turned to Americans young enough to be his grandchildren. “Let me say especially to the young voters who have been inspired by Sen. Sanders: I hear you. I know what’s at stake. I know what we have to do,” Biden said. “Our goal as a campaign and my goal as a candidate for president is to unify this party, and then to unify the nation.”

## BIDEN IMPROVING WITH LATINOS

Tuesday was a test of whether Biden could bounce back among another crucial Democratic group where he has lagged Sanders in the primary — Latinos. And he certainly did.

Biden handily won Latinos in Florida, where they comprised about one-fifth of the Democratic primary vote. According to AP VoteCast, Biden won just over half of Cubans, a group where Sanders was believed especially weak due to his previous warm statements about Fidel Castro. But Biden did even better among Puerto Ricans, winning about 60% of a group which the Sanders campaign hoped would be their strongest segment of the Latino population in the state.

Sanders has racked up his biggest margins among Latinos in California and Texas, states with predominantly Mexican-American populations. But in Illinois, home to many Mexican-Americans, Latino voters were about split evenly between the two candidates. The outcome was similar in border state Arizona, according to AP VoteCast.

Resentment has lingered among some Democratic Latinos over the Obama administration’s high rate of deportations, and it was unclear whether Biden could rally the demographic in November. Tuesday’s results show he still has a solid chance of doing so.

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## CORONAVIRUS DOESN'T THREATEN LEGITIMACY OF RESULTS

The Biden campaign had been confident heading into Tuesday, but still quietly concerned that Sanders or his supporters could cast doubt on the legitimacy of the outcome if the quasi-national shutdown over the coronavirus depressed turnout to abysmal levels.

He won convincingly enough in the three states to rebut any widespread doubt. To be sure, in-person voting on Tuesday almost certainly was lower than it would have been otherwise in Arizona, Florida and Illinois.

But early in-person and mail balloting ensures that the final turnout on Tuesday was at least in the neighborhood of a usual competitive presidential primary, even if the states didn't shatter records like several states did on Super Tuesday.

As an example, going into Tuesday, Florida had processed about 140,000 more mail-in ballots than in 2016, while the early in-person count outpaced 2016 by more than 70,000 voters. Those numbers didn't include more than 450,000 mail ballots that were distributed to voters but not yet returned and counted. Illinois, a state that doesn't typically rely as heavily on early and mail voting as Florida, likely suffered much more because of the in-person dip.

Turnout in Florida's Democratic primary is higher than it was four years ago, when 1.7 million voters cast ballots. This year, turnout is on pace to approach 2 million.

## Brady leaving Patriots, says 'football journey' is elsewhere

By KYLE HIGHTOWER AP Sports Writer

For two decades, Tom Brady was the face of the Patriots, and even of the NFL. When he turns 43 in August, his home address no longer will be in New England.

The six-time Super Bowl champion plans to keep playing. But the centerpiece of the Patriots' dynasty, the most successful quarterback in league history, says he is leaving the only pro team he has ever known.

Brady's representatives were in serious talks with the Tampa Bay Buccaneers.

Brady posted Tuesday on social media "my football journey will take place elsewhere."

The comments were the first to indicate the Patriots icon would leave New England. Statements later by team owner Robert Kraft and coach Bill Belichick made it clear that Brady's remarkable stint there is over.

In a two-part message, Brady thanked the Patriots and the fans and said "FOREVER A PATRIOT."

"I don't know what my football future holds, but it is time for me to open a new stage for my life and my career," he wrote. "Although my football journey will take place elsewhere, I appreciate everything that we have achieved and am grateful for our incredible TEAM experiences."

The one-year contract Brady signed before last season expires Wednesday afternoon, and his agent could negotiate a deal with another team on Tuesday, though it can't be official yet. He will count \$13.5 million toward New England's salary cap due to the signing bonus money he received in 2019.

Kraft said of Brady: "I had hoped this day would never come, but rather that Tom would end his remarkable career in a Patriots uniform after yet another Super Bowl championship. Unfortunately, the two sides were unable to reach an agreement to allow that dream to become a reality. While sad today, the overwhelming feeling I have is appreciation for his countless contributions to our team and community."

A four-time Super Bowl Most Valuable Player and three-time league MVP, Brady has been the enduring face of the Patriots during a run that added another layer to Boston's already rich sports history. Only Bill Russell, who won 11 NBA championship rings in the 1950s and '60s with the Celtics, has won more titles as a member of one of New England's four major professional sports teams.

Brady would be the oldest starting quarterback in the league at 43 at the beginning of next season. The Colts, Buccaneers, Chargers and Dolphins are among the teams expected to be in a Brady derby.

"TB12," as he has been dubbed, a nod to his 2017 book detailing his diet and exercise approach, arguably is coming off his worst non-injury season. He threw for 4,057 yards and 24 touchdowns in 2019, with eight interceptions. But he completed fewer than 56% of his passes six times in the final eight games of the year, including a season-ending loss to Miami that cost the Patriots a first-round playoff bye.

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They lost at home to the Titans in the wild-card round, Brady's earliest postseason exit in a decade — and likely his last game in a Patriots uniform.

Brady had a one-year contract for 2019 that paid him \$23 million, placing him 10th among starting quarterbacks. It was the latest renegotiation by Brady to help give the Patriots salary cap flexibility to fill out the roster.

The chief decision-maker in player personnel decisions, Belichick hasn't been shy about moving on from players he felt were past their prime or seeking contracts that exceeded value in relation to their age. Belichick has severed ties with players much younger than Brady during his time in New England.

"Nothing about the end of Tom's Patriots career changes how unfathomably spectacular it was," said Belichick, whose current quarterback is untested second-year player Jarrett Stidham. "With his relentless competitiveness and longevity, he earned everyone's adoration and will be celebrated forever. It has been a privilege to coach Tom Brady for 20 years."

After franchising offensive lineman Joe Thuney and coming to terms on new deals with Matt Slater and Devin McCourty, the Patriots have only about \$18 million in salary cap space.

AP Sports Writer Jimmy Golen contributed to this report.

More AP NFL: <https://apnews.com/tag/NFL> and [https://twitter.com/AP\\_NFL](https://twitter.com/AP_NFL)

## Trump's economic rescue package could approach \$1 trillion

By LISA MASCARO and ZEKE MILLER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — In a massive federal effort, President Donald Trump asked Congress to speed emergency checks to Americans, enlisted the military for MASH-like hospitals and implored ordinary people — particularly socially active millennials — to do their part by staying home to stop the spread of the coronavirus.

His proposed economic package alone could approach \$1 trillion, a rescue initiative not seen since the Great Recession. Trump wants checks sent to the public within two weeks and is urging Congress to pass the eye-popping stimulus package in a matter of days.

As analysts warn the country is surely entering a recession, the government is grappling with an enormous political undertaking with echoes of the 2008 financial crisis.

At the Capitol on Tuesday, Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell vowed the Senate would not adjourn until the work was done.

"Obviously, we need to act," McConnell said. "We're not leaving town until we have constructed and passed another bill."

But first, McConnell said, the Senate will vote on a House-passed package of sick pay, emergency food and free testing, putting it back on track for Trump's signature — despite Republican objections. "Gag, and vote for it anyway," he advised colleagues.

It was a signal of what the GOP leader called the "herculean" task ahead.

Senators gathered at an otherwise shut-down Capitol as Americans across the country were implored to heed advice and avoid crowds. Young adults, in particular, are being urged to quit going out because even seemingly healthy people can be spreading the virus that causes the COVID-19 illness.

Even so, presidential primary elections unfolded in Florida, Illinois and Arizona. Ohio's was called off hours before the polls were set to open.

After a savage drop at the start of the week, the stock market rose as Trump and aides sketched out elements of the economic rescue package at a briefing. Economists doubted that would be enough to stop millions of jobs losses, even if in the short term.

Bigger than the \$700 billion 2008 bank bailout or the nearly \$800 billion 2009 recovery act, the White House proposal aims to provide a massive tax cut for wage-earners, \$50 billion for the airline industry and \$250 billion for small businesses. Two people familiar with the package described it to The Associated



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Press on the condition of anonymity because they weren't authorized to speak publicly.

The amount that would be sent out in checks Americans is not yet disclosed. The White House said it liked GOP Sen. Mitt Romney's idea for \$1,000 checks, though not necessarily at that sum and not for wealthier people.

"This is a very unique situation," said Treasury Secretary Steve Mnuchin, exiting a private briefing of Senate Republicans. "We've put a proposal on that table that would attract a trillion dollars into the economy."

One GOP leader, Sen. John Thune of South Dakota, told reporters afterward it "could be" up to \$1 trillion.

Senate Democrats produced their own \$750 billion proposal, which includes \$400 billion to shore up hospitals and other emergency operations in response to the global pandemic and \$350 billion to bolster the safety net with unemployment checks and other aid to Americans.

"The aid has to be workers first," said Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer, not what happened in 2008, when the big banks took precedence. Schumer also said it's time to call out the National Guard to provide security as communities reel from the crisis.

The slow-moving Congress is being asked to approve the far-reaching economic rescue as it tries to rise to the occasion of these fast times.

A roster of America's big and small industries — airlines, hotels, retailers and even casinos — lined up for hoped-for aid.

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.

Still, health officials are urging Americans to stay home to prevent an onslaught of cases that could overwhelm hospitals as happened in Italy, among the countries hardest hit.

As Congress considered aid, the Pentagon on Tuesday said it would provide 5 million respirator masks and 2,000 specialized ventilators to federal health authorities. And Medicare was immediately expanding coverage for telemedicine nationwide to help seniors with health problems stay home to avoid infection.

More than two dozen Senate Democrats urged Trump to invoke the Korean War-era Defense Production Act to increase production of masks, ventilators and respirators, as well as expand hospital capacity to combat the coronavirus. Federal officials said the administration is working with the Army Corps of Engineers to see about erecting temporary hospitals, as is done in the military, to handle an expected surge of cases.

Schumer compared the government response needed to a wartime mobilization.

House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, who marshaled the earlier package through a bipartisan vote last week, fielded a call from Mnuchin on Tuesday morning and another from Federal Reserve Chairman Jerome Powell in the afternoon, encouraged by the Fed chairman's perspective that Congress could think big with interest rates at nearly zero.

In the call with Mnuchin, she and Rep. Peter DeFazio, D-Ore., chairman of the House Transportation committee, "emphasized that protecting workers' paychecks and benefits was their top priority, and that immediate action was needed," said Pelosi spokesman Drew Hammill on Twitter.

The debate is sure to revive the sharp divisions over the costly bank bailout and economic recovery of the Obama and Bush eras.

Much about the proposed checks is not known, such as whether the amount would vary by the income of the recipient or whether everyone would get the same sum. Mnuchin said "it's clear we don't need to send people who make \$1 million a year checks, OK?"

Economists from both parties endorsed mailing checks of at least \$1,000 to all American households as the quickest way to offset the sharp slowdown in economic activity.

"We need to pay people to stay at home," said Heidi Shierholz, a senior policy analyst at the Economic

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Policy Institute, a liberal think-tank. The group predicted that without a huge stimulus package, the U.S. economy could lose three million jobs by this summer.

Still, some GOP senators were skeptical about the massive aid on the table. "I'm going to be very leery of doing something like in 2008," said Indiana Republican Sen. Mike Braun.

"Right now, the plan around here is basically to just to start shoveling money out of a helicopter," said Sen. Ben Sasse, R-Neb. "This is a bad idea. ... We don't need a policy where Washington, D.C., handpicks winners and losers."

Despite federal guidelines against so many people gathering, senators had no choice but to convene. Legislating cannot be done from home.

But late Tuesday, another lawmaker, Sen. Cory Gardner, R-Colo., announced he would self-quarantine after contact with a constituent who later tested positive for coronavirus.

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Associated Press writers Andrew Taylor, Matthew Daly, Martin Crutsinger, Colleen Long, Chris Rugaber, Mary Clare Jalonick and Kevin Freking in Washington contributed to this report.

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## Get out of jail? Inmates fearful of virus argue for release

By **JIM MUSTIAN** and **JOSHUA GOODMAN** Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Coronavirus has become a "get out of jail" card for hundreds of low-level inmates across the country, and even hard-timers are seeking their freedom with the argument that it's not a matter of if but when the deadly illness sweeps through tightly packed populations behind bars.

Among those pleading for compassionate release or home detention are the former head of the Cali drug cartel, President Donald Trump's former personal attorney Michael Cohen, Ponzi schemer Bernard Madoff and dozens of inmates at New York City's Rikers Island, part of a jail system that lost an employee to the virus this week.

"He is in poor health. He is 81 years old," David Markus, the attorney for cocaine kingpin Gilberto Rodriguez-Orejuela, wrote in emergency court papers this week seeking his release after serving about half of a 30-year drug-trafficking sentence. "When (not if) COVID-19 hits his prison, he will not have much of a chance."

While widespread outbreaks of coronavirus behind bars have yet to happen, the frenzy of legal activity underscores a crude reality that's only beginning to sink in: America's nearly 7,000 jails, prisons and correction facilities are an ideal breeding ground for the virus, as dangerous as nursing homes and cruise ships but far less sanitary.

Stepped-up cleanings and a temporary halt to visitations at many lockups across the country in the midst of the crisis can't make up for the fact that ventilation behind bars is often poor, inmates sleep in close quarters and share a small number of bathrooms.

"Simply put, it's impossible to do social distancing," said David S. Weinstein, a former federal prosecutor in Miami.

The 81-year-old Madoff, who is serving a 150-year sentence for bilking thousands of investors in a \$17.5 billion Ponzi scheme, had just asked last month to be released early in light of his terminal kidney disease. Now his attorney is calling on all at-risk federal prisoners to be released for their own safety because of the coronavirus.

"The federal prison system has consistently shown an inability to respond to major crises," Madoff attorney Brandon Sample told The Associated Press. "My concerns are even more amplified for prisoners at federal medical centers and those who are aged."

Prosecutors argued against Rodriguez-Orejuela's emergency request and noted that the federal prison in Butner, North Carolina, where both he and Madoff are being held has not had any staff or inmates

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diagnosed with the virus, and staff are being screened upon entry.

It's not just attorneys for the wealthy and powerful seeking release.

In New York, public defenders asked judges to release older and at-risk inmates from the city's beleaguered federal jails, saying pretrial confinement "creates the ideal environment for the transmission of contagious disease." The motions cite a provision of the Bail Reform Act allowing for the temporary release of pretrial inmates under "compelling" circumstances.

"I truly believe the jails are ticking time bombs," said David Patton, executive director of the Federal Defenders of New York. "They're overcrowded and unsanitary in the best of times. They don't provide appropriate medical care in the best of times, and these certainly are not the best of times."

Some authorities around the nation appear to agree. Police departments are incarcerating fewer people, prosecutors are letting non-violent offenders out early and judges are postponing or finding alternatives to jail sentences.

In Los Angeles, the nation's largest jail system has trimmed its population by more than 600 since Feb. 28, allowing many inmates with fewer than 30 days left on their sentences to be released early. In Cleveland, judges held a special session over the weekend to settle cases with guilty pleas and release more than 200 low-level, non-violent inmates. And in Miami, the top state attorney has urged the release of all non-violent felons and those being held on misdemeanors.

"No judge wants to have a dead prisoner on his conscience," said Bill Breeze, a Miami defense attorney.

New York City's Board of Correction this week called for the immediate release of all high-risk inmates after an investigator assigned to the jail system died over the weekend of the coronavirus. The 56-year-old man was said to have a pre-existing health condition and only limited contact with inmates. The city's jail system has about 8,000 inmates, most at notorious Rikers Island.

However, accommodating the surge of requests poses its own challenge. Courts around the country are shutting down, with only a skeletal staff working. The chief federal judge in Brooklyn on Monday postponed indefinitely all criminal and civil jury trials, encouraging judges to conduct court business via telephone or video conferencing when possible, and to delay in-person proceedings.

Prosecutors said in court filings that the Federal Bureau of Prisons has been planning for the outbreak since January, including by establishing a task force with experts at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. The BOP on Friday suspended visitation for all federal inmates, facility transfers, staff travel and training for 30 days. Newly arriving inmates are being screened for COVID-19, and even asymptomatic inmates deemed to be at risk are being quarantined. Immigration and Customs Enforcement announced that they would take similar steps.

Public health officials stress that older people and those with existing health problems are most at risk from coronavirus but that the vast majority of people will only suffer mild or moderate symptoms, such as fever and cough, with recovery in a matter of weeks.

But such assurances are small solace for inmates.

The Twitter account of Michael Cohen, Trump's former attorney who is serving a three-year sentence for crimes including tax evasion and campaign finance violations, shared over the weekend an online petition seeking the transfer of non-violent federal prisoners to home confinement. Addressed specifically to Trump, it argues the move would "give the prison facilities additional (and much needed) medical triage and logistic space for those who will become infected."

"Without your intervention, scores of non-violent offenders are at risk of death," it reads, "and these people were not given a death sentence."

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Goodman reported from Miami. Associated Press writers Stefanie Dazio from Los Angeles and Michael R. Sisak from New York contributed to this report.

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## Disruption frenzy: Nations try to slow virus, aid economies

By **DAVID RISING** and **TIM SULLIVAN** Associated Press

BERLIN (AP) — Mass disruptions shuddered around the globe as governments struggled to slow the spread of the coronavirus while trying to keep afloat their economies. The impact included border traffic jams in Lithuania, the deaths of 17 elderly residents in one Madrid nursing home and a bus service halt in Detroit when drivers didn't show up for work.

European Union leaders agreed to shut down the bloc's external borders for 30 days. The final U.S. state to confirm a case, West Virginia, showed the virus has spread nationwide, and entertainment shutdowns reached the glitzy casinos on the Las Vegas Strip as Nevada's governor ordered all non-essential businesses to close.

The administration of President Donald Trump was considering a plan to immediately return to Mexico all people who cross the southern border illegally, according to two administration officials who spoke to The Associated Press on the condition of anonymity because the plan hasn't been finalized.

Increasingly worried about the economic fallout of the global shutdown, the U.S., Britain and the Netherlands announced rescue packages totaling hundreds of billions of dollars, while longtime International Monetary Fund critic Venezuela asked the institution for a \$5 billion loan.

But it was everyday people who suffered most.

Miguel Aguirre, his wife and two children were the only people on a normally bustling street near San Francisco's City Hall, a day after six area counties issued a "shelter-in-place" order requiring most residents to leave their homes only for food, medicine or exercise for three weeks — the most sweeping lockdown in the U.S. On Tuesday morning, only two coffee shops on the street were open. Both were empty.

Aguirre said he and his wife, janitors at a Boys and Girls Club, heard about the order on TV, but showed up to work anyway because they need the money. His supervisor texted him to leave.

"If we don't work, we don't eat," said Aguirre, who brought his two daughters along because schools were shuttered. He had already lost his second job, at a hotel, when tourism conferences began canceling a month ago.

In Brussels, Ursula von der Leyen, the European Commission president, said there had been "a unanimous and united approach," to the decision to prohibit most foreigners from entering the EU for 30 days.

German Chancellor Angela Merkel said European leaders agreed in a conference call to the commission's proposal for an entry ban to the bloc — along with Norway, Switzerland, Iceland and Britain — with "very, very limited exceptions." Germany will implement the decision immediately.

On Monday, the EU issued guidelines to ease the flow of critical goods like food and medicine, while helping individual nations restrict non-essential travel.

But on Tuesday it was chaos on many borders with traffic backed up for dozens of kilometers (miles).

"We are all desperate, cold and sleepless here for a third day," said Janina Stukiene, who was stuck in Lithuania on the border with Poland with her husband and son. "We just want to go home."

The line of cars and trucks in Lithuania was about 60 kilometers (37 miles) long after Poland closed its border. Similar traffic jams were visible on the borders with Germany and the Czech Republic.

French President Emmanuel Macron tightened internal guidelines, allowing people to leave home only to buy food, go to work or do essential tasks. He said people had not complied with earlier guidelines and "we are at war."

In Italy, infections jumped to 27,980. With 2,503 deaths, Italy accounts for a third of the global death toll.

Spain, the fourth-most infected country, saw its cases rise by more than 2,000 in one day to 11,178. Deaths from COVID-19 jumped to 491, a toll that included 17 elderly residents of a Madrid nursing home who died over five days.

Among them was the 86-year-old diabetic grandmother of Ainhoa Ruiz.

"We feel totally helpless and devastated because my grandma spent her last week only with her husband and caretakers but no other relatives," Ruiz said, adding that her main worry is now the health of her grandfather, who is 87 and remained by his wife during her last days.



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The global number of cases worldwide exceeds 198,000, though 81,000 of them have recovered, mostly in China.

The virus causes only mild or moderate symptoms, such as fever and cough, for most people, but severe illness is more likely in the elderly and people with existing health problems. COVID-19 has killed over 7,900 people.

As the pandemic intensified in Europe and spread deeper into the Americas and Africa, the ebbing of cases where the virus was first detected late last year was dramatic. The central Chinese city of Wuhan reported just one new case Wednesday for the second day, after seeing thousands of new cases per day at its peak.

Major Asian stock markets were higher Wednesday after Wall Street rebounded on Trump's promise of aid to get the U.S. economy through the pandemic. Still, a growing number of traders see a recession likely, if not already here.

The White House proposed a roughly \$850 billion rescue package — a sweeping stimulus not seen since the Great Recession of 2008 — and called for its rapid approval. It would provide relief for small businesses, \$50 billion for the airline industry and a big tax cut for wage-earners, said two people familiar with the request who described it on the condition of anonymity because they weren't authorized to speak publicly.

In Britain, the government unveiled a massive economic support package. Prime Minister Boris Johnson said his government will "act like any wartime government and do whatever it takes to support the economy."

Among the measures, Treasury chief Rishi Sunak said the government would provide 330 billion pounds (\$405 billion) worth of government-backed loans and guarantees for small and large businesses.

In the U.S., the death toll surpassed 100, and officials urged older Americans and those with health problems to stay home. They also recommended all group gatherings be capped at 10 people. California's governor said most of the state's schools would probably be closed until the fall.

The pandemic roiled U.S. primary elections Tuesday in four states. Ohio called off the vote hours before polls were to open but voting went on in Illinois, Arizona and Florida. The big question was whether coronavirus would affect turnout.

Problems arose, including in Florida, which has the most delegates up for grabs. In one county, two dozen poll workers dropped out, leaving staff scrambling to train replacements. "We are at the honest end of the rope," Elections Supervisor Paul Lux said.

New York City's mayor warned that residents should be prepared for the possibility of a shelter-in-place order within days. Mayor Bill de Blasio said he wants city and state officials to decide within 48 hours, given the fast spread of the virus.

In Britain, Johnson told people to eliminate unnecessary contact with others, work from home where possible and avoid bars, restaurants, theaters and other venues. Schools remained open for the time being.

Some scientists, and many worried Britons, have said the government should have acted sooner.

Britain's dramatic escalation of restrictions was sparked by new scientific evidence suggesting 250,000 people in the U.K. and more than 1 million in the U.S. might die if the country did not suppress the disease's spread.

The analysis, published by Imperial College London, drew on the latest data from China and Italy. It found that a strategy of "mitigation" — slowing but not stopping the spread of the virus while protecting vulnerable groups like the elderly — would still lead to a huge number of cases that would overwhelm the health care system.

And in Detroit, bus riders were stranded after most drivers didn't report to work, apparently concerned about the virus and confused as to whether Michigan's new public gathering restrictions included vehicles loaded with commuters.

The city's bus service was canceled at 8 a.m. Surprised riders tried to get rides from family and friends. "Just now?" a maintenance man, Amadou Sanders, asked. "How am I going to get to work?"

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Sullivan reported from Minneapolis. Associated Press writers Elliot Spagat in San Diego, Colleen Long

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in Washington, Alan Clendenning in Phoenix, Lorne Cook in Brussels, Frank Jordans, Kirsten Grieshaber and Geir Moulson in Berlin; Jocelyn Gecker in San Francisco, Ed White in Detroit, Sylvie Corbet in Paris, Aritz Parra in Madrid, Adam Geller in New York, Mike Corder in Amsterdam, Jill Lawless and Maria Cheng in London, Liudas Dapkus in Vilnius, Lithuania, Colleen Barry in Milan, Italy and Karel Janicek in Prague.

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## Analysis: American attitudes make virus response a hard sell

By TED ANTHONY AP National Writer

When Americans are summoned to deal with an attack or defy overwhelming odds, the response typically goes something like this: Fight. Hold the line. Stand together. This won't stop us. Keep on living your life. We will prevail.

Some of the coronavirus language from leaders has mirrored this imagery. "An invisible enemy," President Donald Trump called it. "We're at war with a virus," Joe Biden said at Sunday's debate. Countered Bernie Sanders: "We have to act dramatically, boldly."

Contrast that with a meme that has been popping up everywhere on social media this week: "Your grandparents were called to war. You're being called to sit on your couch. You can do this."

The arrival of the coronavirus, and the muted methods being recommended to the public to arrest its spread, are a hard sell for some Americans, and that's not surprising. Literature, movies and advertising have always shown us otherwise.

The central mythology across much of the country's history, from the Puritans to the frontier to 9/11, has been about getting up and going out to do what needs to be done — not staying home, being quiet and practicing what can look a whole lot like inaction.

"We're beginning to see that the traditional ways that Americans may handle adversity may be coming up a bit short," says Daryl Van Tongeren, who teaches psychology at Hope College in Michigan and has studied how people find meaning in suffering.

Part of that is because the imagery doesn't quite fit:

—We are, in many ways, a nation that prizes concrete ideas; fighting the minute and invisible coronavirus is a very abstract notion.

—We are, in many ways, a nation that has obsessed on outcomes; this is a saga fraught with frustrating processes.

—We've been conditioned for generations to be a certain brand of rugged-individualist tough; now we're being asked to be tough in a way that's completely different.

This time, unlike a World War II or a 9/11, there is no willful human enemy, only nature creeping along silently and incrementally. As a war, it's configured far differently than the ones we're accustomed to watching and waging. And the dramatic, bold action for most among us will be near-hibernation, which is easy to mistake as a couple steps short of cowering.

"In America, we don't do subtle and subdued," says Lorenzo Servitje, an assistant professor of literature and medicine at Lehigh University. His upcoming book, "Medicine Is War," examines how Victorian-era England learned to understand medical progress through martial imagery.

This "war," Servitje says, is unlike most standard Hollywood fare. "It's boring, difficult, challenging. It's not everyone running around with machetes and fighting against people who become cannibals overnight. It's trying to home school your kids, manage finances, reconfigure the way we've been doing things."

Some still respond defiantly — like the crowd in Nashville shown partying on Twitter early Sunday, or young people angry at the cancellation of their sports seasons venting under the hashtag #letthekidsplay.

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"I think we have a bit of a false sense of invulnerability. And situations like this shatter our assumptions," says Van Tongeren. His new book, "The Courage to Suffer," was co-written with his wife, Sara Showalter Van Tongeren.

"We think if we fight hard enough and use sheer willpower and outmuscle it, then we'll conquer it. But that can cause us to ignore wise advice from experts," Van Tongeren says. "If we think of this as an enemy we might have to outsmart instead of outmuscle, then we start to think differently."

Those are important questions for Americans: How to recognize that outsmarting might work when outmuscling can't? And how to rebrand the act of, well, not doing things as an expression of resolute commitment to a cause?

"There is a narrative of action that can co-exist with a narrative of social distancing," says Nancy K. Bristow, a historian at the University of Puget Sound in Washington and author of "American Pandemic: The Lost Worlds of the 1918 Influenza Epidemic."

"To stay at home and not go out to the grocery store and use social distance — that's action," she says. "If people can think about it that way, there are active storylines right in the midst of all of this."

Imagine that: an American action narrative where staying home and persevering through the minutiae is an act of bravery, where mastering everyday life under unusual circumstances — multiplied by millions of households — can vanquish the "enemy" at our doorstep.

You're being called to sit on your couch. Can you do this? Will mastering that be the next American chapter? We'll see.

"Americans often just want to know what to do," says John Baick, a historian at Western New England University in Massachusetts.

"If it's charge that hill, it's charge that hill. If it's take that beach, it's take that beach. If it's shelter in place and wash up and don't take unnecessary risks, that's what it has to be," he says. "It won't make a great movie. It might make a great HBO series — in 45 parts. I hope Tom Hanks is in it."

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Ted Anthony, director of digital innovation for The Associated Press, has written about American culture since 1990. Follow him on Twitter at @anthonyted.

## Trump mulls sending all who cross border illegally to Mexico

By ELLIOT SPAGAT and COLLEEN LONG Associated Press

SAN DIEGO (AP) — The Trump administration is considering a plan to turn back all people who cross the border illegally from Mexico, two administration officials said Tuesday, using powers they say the president has during pandemics like the coronavirus outbreak to mount what would be one of the most aggressive attempts to curtail illegal immigration.

The plan is under consideration and no final decisions have been made, according to the officials, who spoke to The Associated Press on the condition of anonymity because the plan hasn't been announced.

The officials said the president has authority to take such action in a pandemic and that Mexico's efforts to stop the spread of the coronavirus, along with Venezuela's, have been the weakest in North and South America. The officials said its authority relies on a law that gives the president authority to deny entry to people or to reject cargo if the Surgeon General determines there is "serious danger" of bringing a communicable disease to the United States.

The administration had declared in November 2018 that anyone who crossed the border illegally from Mexico would be denied asylum, a measure has been blocked in court. Last month, a 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals panel in San Francisco upheld a lower court decision to keep that asylum ban on hold while a lawsuit proceeds.

The ban now being considered, which was first reported by The New York Times, would turn back to Mexico all people who cross the border illegally, not just those seeking asylum.

Homeland Security Department spokeswoman Heather Swift said the president was focused on protecting Americans from the coronavirus and that "all options are on the table."

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Immigrant advocacy groups condemned the possible move.

"Decisions relating to the pandemic should be guided by public health officials, not by the Trump administration's long-standing agenda to close the border to refugees seeking asylum," said Eleanor Acer, Human Rights First's director of refugee protection. "The administration is using the pandemic as a pretext to advance its long-term goal of curtailing asylum rights for people fleeing persecution."

A third official familiar with the administration's decision making and unauthorized to speak publicly said there was some alarm within the government and health care community about the health of people at the Southern border, and there could be consequences without further restrictions. The official noted that some migrants are coming over the border from countries with confirmed cases of the virus.

But the proposal is also in line with Trump's overall policies on migrants, especially poor people arriving at the border, and his desire to clamp down on immigration. It would be the effort to deter asylum and illegal immigration on the Mexican border. About 60,000 asylum-seekers have been returned to Mexico to wait for hearings in U.S. immigration court since January 2019 under its "Remain in Mexico" policy, which the Supreme Court ruled last week could stay in effect during a legal challenge. The officials didn't detail the mechanics of how this new effort would work.

Many migrants who are forced to wait in Mexico live in squalor in makeshift camps as they wait out their court cases to stay in the U.S., often facing violence and poverty. On Tuesday, some 30 asylum-seekers, many with children, wore masks to court in El Paso, Texas.

One U.S. official told the AP that people who cross the border illegally would still be processed by the Border Patrol, which has limited ability to do so without taking people to a station. Mexico can refuse to take back non-Mexicans, but the Trump administration hopes the measure will increase pressure on Mexican authorities to address the public health threat.

Since November, the administration has denied asylum to hundreds of people from El Salvador and Honduras and flown them to Guatemala with a chance to seek protection there.

There were more than 851,000 arrests for crossing the border during the 2019 fiscal year, which ended Sept. 30. The new policy would not apply to asylum-seekers who present themselves at land ports of entry, the official said.

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 worldwide outbreak has sickened more than 180,000 people and left more than 7,000 people dead. In the United States, there have been more than 4,000 confirmed cases and scores of deaths.

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## Asian stocks higher after Trump promise of virus aid

By **JOE McDONALD AP Business Writer**

BEIJING (AP) — Major Asian stock markets were higher Wednesday after Wall Street rebounded on President Donald Trump's promise of aid to get the U.S. economy through the coronavirus outbreak.

Benchmarks in Shanghai, Tokyo and Hong Kong all advanced. Australia's main index fell 5% and smaller Asian markets were mixed.

The White House proposal could approach \$1 trillion in spending to ward off the pressure of business closures to contain the virus. The Federal Reserve announced more measures to keep financial markets operating.

On Wall Street, the benchmark S&P 500 index rose by an unusually wide daily margin of 6%, regaining just under half of the previous day's history-making loss. Professional investors expect more big daily swings in both directions until the spreading virus is brought under control.

Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin said Trump wants to send checks to Americans in the next two weeks



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to help support them while more parts of the economy come closer to shutting down.

The proposal would include \$250 billion for small businesses and \$50 billion for airlines.

The measures are a good start but investors need to see the number of infections slow before markets can find a bottom, analysts said. The number of new cases reported in China, where the virus emerged in December, is declining but infections in the United States, Europe and elsewhere are increasing.

"The wash-up has been some signs of green shoots of risk appetite emerging, and some further concerning aspects," said Chris Weston of Pepperstone Group in a report. "I am not going to call a bottom in the risk story by any means."

The Shanghai Composite Index rose 1.3% to 2,814.70 and the Nikkei 225 in Tokyo gained 1.9% to 17,342.71. Hong Kong's Hang Seng added 0.5% to 23,384.51.

Those three markets account for the bulk of the region's stock value.

The Kospi in Seoul gained 0.5% to 1,682.12 in early trading. Australia's S&P-ASX 200 fell 5% to 5,029.70.

Market benchmarks in New Zealand and Singapore rose 2% while Manila fell 7.9%, reopening after it was closed on Tuesday. Bangkok surged 2%.

Investors say they need to see the number of infections slow before markets can find a bottom.

For most people, the coronavirus causes only mild or moderate symptoms, such as fever and cough, and those with mild illness recover in about two weeks. Severe illness including pneumonia can occur, especially in the elderly and people with existing health problems, and recovery could take six weeks in such cases.

On Tuesday, European stocks swung from gains to losses and back to gains.

On Wall Street, the S&P 500 rose to 2,529.10. It still is down 25.3% from last month's record.

The Dow Jones Industrial Average advanced 5.2% to 21,237.38. A day earlier, the Dow lost nearly 3,000 after Trump said a recession may be on the way.

The virus has spread so quickly that its effects haven't shown up in much U.S. economic data yet.

A report on Monday about manufacturing in New York State was the first piece of evidence that manufacturing is contracting due to the outbreak. On Tuesday, a report showed retail sales weakened in February, when economists had been expecting a gain.

"The global recession is here and now," S&P Global economists wrote in a report Tuesday.

In other trading, U.S. benchmark crude gained 4 cents to \$26.99 per barrel in electronic trading on the New York Mercantile Exchange. It lost \$1.75 to \$26.95 on Tuesday.

Brent crude, the international standard, gained 28 cents to \$29.01 per barrel.

The dollar was trading at 107.17 Japanese yen, down from 107.67 late Tuesday. The euro was at \$1.1021, up from \$1.10999.

## Facebook bug wrongly deleted authentic coronavirus news

By The Associated Press undefined

Facebook said a bug in its anti-spam system temporarily blocked the publication of links to news stories about the coronavirus. Guy Rosen, Facebook's vice president of integrity, said on Twitter Tuesday that the company was working on a fix for the problem.

Users complained that links to news stories about school closings and other information related to the virus outbreak were blocked by the company's automated system.

Later on Tuesday, Rosen tweeted that Facebook had restored all the incorrectly deleted posts, which also covered topics beyond the coronavirus.

Rosen said the problems were unrelated to any changes in Facebook's content-moderator workforce. The company reportedly sent its human moderators home this week because of the coronavirus outbreak.

A representative for Facebook did not immediately respond to questions on the status of Facebook's content moderators, many of whom do not work directly for the company and are not always able to work from home.

## Trump pushes for massive aid from Congress, checks to public

By LISA MASCARO and ZEKE MILLER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — In a massive federal effort Tuesday, President Donald Trump asked Congress to speed emergency checks to Americans, enlisted the military for MASH-like hospitals and implored ordinary people — particularly socially active millennials — to do their part by staying home to stop the spread of the coronavirus.

His proposed economic package alone could approach \$1 trillion, a rescue initiative not seen since the Great Recession. Trump wants checks sent to the public within two weeks and is urging Congress to pass the eye-popping stimulus package in a matter of days.

As analysts warn the country is surely entering a recession, the government is grappling with an enormous political undertaking with echoes of the 2008 financial crisis.

At the Capitol, Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell vowed the Senate would not adjourn until the work was done.

"Obviously, we need to act," McConnell said. "We're not leaving town until we have constructed and passed another bill."

But first, McConnell said, the Senate will vote on a House-passed package of sick pay, emergency food and free testing, putting it back on track for Trump's signature — despite Republican objections. "Gag, and vote for it anyway," he advised colleagues.

It was a signal of what the GOP leader called the "herculean" task ahead.

Senators gathered at an otherwise shut-down Capitol as Americans across the country were implored to heed advice and avoid crowds. Young adults, in particular, are being urged to quit going out because even seemingly healthy people can be spreading the virus that causes the COVID-19 illness.

Even so, presidential primary elections unfolded in Florida, Illinois and Arizona. Ohio's was called off hours before the polls were set to open.

After a savage drop at the start of the week, the stock market rose as Trump and aides sketched out elements of the economic rescue package at a briefing. Economists doubted that would be enough to stop millions of jobs losses, even if in the short term.

Bigger than the \$700 billion 2008 bank bailout or the nearly \$800 billion 2009 recovery act, the White House proposal aims to provide a massive tax cut for wage-earners, \$50 billion for the airline industry and \$250 billion for small businesses. Two people familiar with the package described it to The Associated Press on the condition of anonymity because they weren't authorized to speak publicly.

The amount that would be sent out in checks Americans is not yet disclosed. The White House said it liked GOP Sen. Mitt Romney's idea for \$1,000 checks, though not necessarily at that sum and not for wealthier people.

"This is a very unique situation," said Treasury Secretary Steve Mnuchin, exiting a private briefing of Senate Republicans. "We've put a proposal on that table that would attract a trillion dollars into the economy."

One GOP leader, Sen. John Thune of South Dakota, told reporters afterward it "could be" up to \$1 trillion.

Senate Democrats produced their own \$750 billion proposal, which includes \$400 billion to shore up hospitals and other emergency operations in response to the global pandemic and \$350 billion to bolster the safety net with unemployment checks and other aid to Americans.

"The aid has to be workers first," said Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer, not what happened in 2008, when the big banks took precedence. Schumer also said it's time to call out the National Guard to provide security as communities reel from the crisis.

The slow-moving Congress is being asked to approve the far-reaching economic rescue as it tries to rise to the occasion of these fast times.

A roster of America's big and small industries — airlines, hotels, retailers and even casinos — lined up for hoped-for aid.

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 ill-

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ness, 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.

Still, health officials are urging Americans to stay home to prevent an onslaught of cases that could overwhelm hospitals as happened in Italy, among the countries hardest hit.

As Congress considered aid, the Pentagon on Tuesday said it would provide 5 million respirator masks and 2,000 specialized ventilators to federal health authorities. And Medicare was immediately expanding coverage for telemedicine nationwide to help seniors with health problems stay home to avoid infection.

More than two dozen Senate Democrats urged Trump to invoke the Korean War-era Defense Production Act to increase production of masks, ventilators and respirators, as well as expand hospital capacity to combat the coronavirus. Federal officials said the administration is working with the Army Corps of Engineers to see about erecting temporary hospitals, as is done in the military, to handle an expected surge of cases.

Schumer compared the government response needed to a wartime mobilization.

House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, who marshaled the earlier package through a bipartisan vote last week, fielded a call from Mnuchin on Tuesday morning and another from Federal Reserve Chairman Jerome Powell in the afternoon, encouraged by the Fed chairman's perspective that Congress could think big with interest rates at nearly zero.

In the call with Mnuchin, she and Rep. Peter DeFazio, D-Ore., chairman of the House Transportation committee, "emphasized that protecting workers' paychecks and benefits was their top priority, and that immediate action was needed," said Pelosi spokesman Drew Hammill on Twitter.

The debate is sure to revive the sharp divisions over the costly bank bailout and economic recovery of the Obama and Bush eras.

Much about the proposed checks is not known, such as whether the amount would vary by the income of the recipient or whether everyone would get the same sum. Mnuchin said "it's clear we don't need to send people who make \$1 million a year checks, OK?"

Economists from both parties endorsed mailing checks of at least \$1,000 to all American households as the quickest way to offset the sharp slowdown in economic activity.

"We need to pay people to stay at home," said Heidi Shierholz, a senior policy analyst at the Economic Policy Institute, a liberal think-tank. The group predicted that without a huge stimulus package, the U.S. economy could lose three million jobs by this summer.

Still, some GOP senators were skeptical about the massive aid on the table. "I'm going to be very leery of doing something like in 2008," said Indiana Republican Sen. Mike Braun.

"Right now, the plan around here is basically to just to start shoveling money out of a helicopter," said Sen. Ben Sasse, R-Neb. "This is a bad idea. ... We don't need a policy where Washington, D.C., handpicks winners and losers."

Despite federal guidelines against so many people gathering, senators had no choice but to convene. Legislating cannot be done from home.

But late Tuesday, another lawmaker, Sen. Cory Gardner, R-Colo., announced he would self-quarantine after contact with a constituent who later tested positive for coronavirus.

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Associated Press writers Andrew Taylor, Matthew Daly, Martin Crutsinger, Colleen Long, Chris Rugaber, Mary Clare Jalonick and Kevin Freking in Washington contributed to this report.

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## Durant among 4 Nets to test positive for new coronavirus

By BRIAN MAHONEY AP Basketball Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Four Brooklyn Nets players, including Kevin Durant, have tested positive for the new coronavirus, bringing the total to seven known players in the NBA.

The Nets did not name the players Tuesday, but Durant told The Athletic he was one of them, saying: "Everyone be careful, take care of yourself and quarantine. We're going to get through this."

The Nets announced that one player is exhibiting symptoms, while the other three are asymptomatic. All four players have been isolated and are under the care of team physicians.

"The health of our players and staff is of the highest priority to the organization and the team is doing everything within its power to ensure that those affected receive the best care possible," the Nets said in a statement.

Brooklyn's most recent game was March 10 in Los Angeles against the Lakers. After the Nets announced their test results, the Lakers — who have the NBA's second-best record this season and two of the game's biggest stars in LeBron James and Anthony Davis — indicated that their team will now be tested.

"Given the exposure risks from our game against the Nets on March 10th, we are following the next steps of our COVID-19 procedures and protocol that are established in consultation with various health officials, the NBA and our UCLA Health doctors," the Lakers said. "The health and well-being of our players, staff, fans, and society in general, is of paramount importance to us, and will continue to be our focus."

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.

The Nets said that all players and members of their travel party are being asked to remain isolated and closely monitor their health, but the team's ability to get testing that has been unavailable to so many others drew criticism from New York Mayor Bill de Blasio.

"We wish them a speedy recovery. But, with all due respect, an entire NBA team should NOT get tested for COVID-19 while there are critically ill patients waiting to be tested," de Blasio wrote on Twitter. "Tests should not be for the wealthy, but for the sick."

NBA spokesman Mike Bass later said that public health officials and team physicians had concerns that players — because of their direct contact with each other and interactions with the general public — "could accelerate the spread of the virus."

The NBA's hope is that the platform its players have will raise awareness among the game's fan base on the topic of taking precautions seriously. Several NBA players have taped messages in recent days on the topic; Portland's Pau Gasol, for example, released one Tuesday thanking first responders for their work on the front lines of the crisis.

"Hopefully, by these players choosing to make their test results public, they have drawn attention to the critical need for young people to follow CDC recommendations in order to protect others, particularly those with underlying health conditions and the elderly," Bass said.

It is unknown how many teams have been tested.

Brooklyn beat the Lakers in that March 10 matchup. The Nets were then to face the Golden State Warriors two nights later in San Francisco — a game that was to be played without fans because of a decision made by local officials there — before the NBA season was suspended after Utah's Rudy Gobert tested positive for the COVID-19 virus. Durant was in Los Angeles for the Nets' game against the Lakers, but was not in San Francisco for the game against the Warriors, his former club.

"I saw that news," Warriors coach Steve Kerr said of the Nets' positive tests while speaking on a conference call. "I'm hoping none of our players went and hung out with guys the night before our game. I don't know if that's the case or not."

Kerr added that he didn't need to be convinced that suspending the season was the correct decision.

"I think everything that's happened since the league shut down was enough proof that we did the right thing, that the NBA did the right thing and that we need to follow the advice of the experts out there and



everybody's got to do their part," Kerr said.

Meanwhile, the NBA's board of governors met again Tuesday for what a person familiar with the details of the call categorized as an "update" on the pandemic and the league's response. Among the speakers addressing team owners was former Surgeon General Dr. Vivek Murthy, who served during President Barack Obama's second term and discussed the U.S. response to the virus, according to the person who spoke to The Associated Press on condition of anonymity because the call's details were not released publicly.

Besides the four Nets and Gobert, Utah's Donovan Mitchell and Detroit's Christian Wood are the other NBA players who have tested positive.

The Nets said they are currently notifying anyone who has had known contact with the players, including recent opponents, and working closely with state and local health authorities on reporting.

"If everybody in the world would just stay home for 2 weeks regardless if they have symptoms or not, this thing would blow over a lot faster," Washington's Davis Bertans tweeted.

AP Basketball Writer Tim Reynolds in Miami and AP Sports Writer Janie McCauley in San Francisco contributed to this report.

More AP NBA: <https://apnews.com/NBA> and [https://twitter.com/AP\\_Sports](https://twitter.com/AP_Sports)

## Ex-California Rep. Duncan Hunter gets 11 months in prison

By JULIE WATSON Associated Press

SAN DIEGO (AP) — Former California Republican Rep. Duncan Hunter was sentenced Tuesday to 11 months in prison after pleading guilty to stealing campaign funds and spending the money on everything from outings with friends to his daughter's birthday party.

The ex-Marine's attorneys had asked for most or part of his sentence be spent in home confinement, citing his military service fighting the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, and his nearly six terms in Congress. Hunter, 43, resigned from Congress in January after representing one of Southern California's last solidly Republican districts.

But U.S. District Court Judge Thomas J. Whelan said given the amount of money Hunter misspent and the number of years he carried out the pilfering, home confinement was not an option.

Prosecutors ahead of Tuesday's sentencing submitted 87 pages to the judge that showed a corrupt congressman who intentionally and repeatedly stole from his campaign funds for a decade.

"Today's sentence reinforces the notion that the truth still matters, that facts still matter," Assistant U.S. Attorney Phil Halpern said after the hearing.

Hunter's attorney, Devin Burstein, said the fact that Hunter was sentenced to less than a year instead of the 14 months prosecutors sought was because of his "years of service and dedication to our country."

"Congressman Hunter is ready to put this behind him and to continue helping veterans in every way possible," Burstein wrote in an email to The Associated Press.

Hunter and his wife Margaret, who was his campaign manager, were accused in a 60-count indictment of stealing more than \$250,000 in campaign funds and trying to hide it on financial disclosure records, listing some personal expenses as contributions to wounded warriors.

The money bankrolled private school tuition for his children, his wife's shopping sprees, weekend trips with his mistress and parties in Washington, according to the indictment.

Each pleaded guilty to a single count in separate plea agreements last year, and each had faced up to five years in prison.

Hunter, who in his plea deal admitted to conspiring with his wife to misspending \$150,000, asked the judge Tuesday to spare the mother of his three children jail time. She was not present Tuesday. He said he takes full responsibility. He showed little emotion as his father, former Rep. Duncan L. Hunter, sat behind him.

The hearing was held despite many state and federal courts across California and the country all but shutting down or holding hearings by teleconference to curb the spread of the new coronavirus.

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The judge said the full courtroom did not exceed 50 people, complying with federal recommendations. Whelan noted Hunter wanted the hearing to proceed. Hours after the sentencing, the court's chief judge announced criminal proceedings, including sentencing hearings, would be suspended until April 16.

Prosecutors had asked for a 14-month prison sentence to punish a lawmaker who lied to his constituents and left the 50th congressional district without a representative. A Democrat and Republican are headed to a November runoff for his seat.

A broke and debt-saddled Hunter cavalierly spent campaign money on small things, such as a tin of chewing tobacco, and a copy of the book, "Why We Suck: A Feel Good Guide to Staying Fat, Loud, Lazy and Stupid," according to prosecutors.

And after he was caught, he ran for reelection and tried to convince voters in the district east of San Diego that as a staunch supporter of President Donald Trump, he was the victim of a political witch hunt by left-leaning prosecutors trying to drive him out of office in Democratic California.

Defense attorneys said he deserved home confinement because of his military and public service. His parents wrote a letter pointing out his bravery in signing up for the Marine Corps the day after the Sept. 11 attacks.

Hunter's conviction ended his family's political dynasty in the 50th congressional district. He took over the seat from his father, who represented the area of suburbs and farm towns for 28 years before retiring.

Hunter was ordered to report May 29 to a prison in an undisclosed location in the western United States. The judge also ordered Hunter to participate in a drug and alcohol program. He will be under supervised release for three years.

He is the second congressman to be sentenced to federal prison this year. Former New York Republican Rep. Chris Collins, was sentenced in January to 26 months in prison after pleading guilty to insider trading charges. Both were re-elected while indicted.

## Hospitals fear shortage of ventilators for virus patients

By LINDSEY TANNER and LINDA A. JOHNSON AP Medical Writers

U.S. hospitals bracing for a possible onslaught of coronavirus patients with pneumonia and other breathing difficulties could face a critical shortage of mechanical ventilators and health care workers to operate them.

The Society of Critical Care Medicine has projected that 960,000 coronavirus patients in the U.S. may need to be put on ventilators at one point or another during the outbreak.

But the nation has only about 200,000 of the machines, by the organization's estimate, and around half are older models that may not be ideal for the most critically ill patients. Also, many ventilators are already being used by other patients with severe, non-coronavirus ailments.

Hospitals are rushing to rent more ventilators from medical-equipment suppliers. And manufacturers are ramping up production. But whether they can turn out enough of the machines at a time when countries around the world are clamoring for them, too, is unclear.

"The real issue is how to rapidly increase ventilator production when your need exceeds the supply," Dr. Lewis Kaplan, president of the critical care society, said Tuesday. "For that I don't have a very good answer."

In the most severe cases, the coronavirus damages healthy tissue in the lungs, making it hard for them to deliver oxygen to the blood. Pneumonia can develop, along with a more severe and potentially deadly condition called acute respiratory distress syndrome, which can damage other organs.

Ventilators feed oxygen into the lungs of patients with severe respiratory problems through a tube inserted down the throat. The machines are also used routinely to help other hospital patients breathe, namely those undergoing surgery while under general anesthesia.

"If everyone in the country wants to order some, that will get rapidly depleted in a heartbeat," Kaplan said.

The other problem is that there are only enough respiratory therapists, specialist nurses and doctors with the ideal type of critical care training in the U.S. for about 135,000 patients to be put on ventilators at any one time, the critical care organization said.

Postponing non-emergency surgeries in the event of a big surge in coronavirus cases could help free up

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some ventilators as well as anesthesiologists and nurse anesthetists to deal with the crisis, Kaplan said. On Tuesday, U.S. Defense Secretary Mark Esper said the Pentagon will provide 2,000 specialized ventilators to federal health authorities to help handle the outbreak. He said the machines are designed for use by troops, and the military will need to train civilians how to use them.

President Donald Trump said Monday that the government is seeking to acquire more ventilators. But he angered some when he said governors should feel free to take matters into their own hands if they can obtain the equipment more quickly elsewhere.

"To hear the leader of the federal government tell us to work around the federal government because it's too slow is kind of mind-boggling," Michigan Gov. Gretchen Whitmer, a Democrat, said on MSNBC.

The critical care group's estimate of the number of ventilators nationwide includes those in the U.S. government's Strategic National Stockpile, which keeps medical supplies on hand for states to use in emergencies. The stockpile has nearly 13,000 ventilators, Dr. Anthony Fauci, the Trump administration's infectious-disease expert, told ABC on Monday.

Whether that is enough depends on how well the nation can contain the virus, he said.

For most people, the coronavirus causes only mild or moderate symptoms, such as fever and cough. Most patients recover in a matter of weeks, as seen in mainland China.

Evidence from China suggests that some coronavirus patients who develop severe breathing problems need to be on ventilators for weeks, if not longer, said Dr. Jacqueline Kruser, an intensive care physician and professor at Northwestern University's medical school.

"The most important thing right now is to plan ahead and start mobilizing all the resources at hospitals in the city and at the state and national level ... to get ventilators to places that need them the most," Kruser said. "Waiting until a shortage occurs or appears imminent is going to be far too late."

Philips Healthcare of the Netherlands; GE, which manufactures ventilators in Wisconsin and sells them globally; and Vyaire Medical Inc. of Mettawa, Illinois, all said they are stepping up production.

Vyaire is adding a second shift at its Palm Springs, California, factory and hiring more workers, spokesman Cheston Turbyfill said. As a global supplier, it has previously shipped ventilators to China and now is getting requests from Italy.

"We're prioritizing by where the hot spots are," he said.

One major rental company, US Med-Equip, reported that U.S. hospitals have rented 60 percent more ventilators, monitors and other equipment over the past few weeks than at any time last year. It said it has 6,500 ventilators on rent and expects 1,200 more to arrive within the next few weeks at its Houston headquarters.

"Our team is working around the clock to provide patient-ready equipment so medical staff can focus on their lifesaving work," CEO Gurmit Singh Bhatia said in a statement.

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Follow AP medical writers Lindsey Tanner at @LindseyTanner and Linda A. Johnson at @LindaJ\_onPharma.

## When Irish eyes are absent: Virus subdues St. Patrick's Day

By ALANNA DURKIN RICHER Associated Press

BOSTON (AP) — St. Patrick's Day revelers across the world tried to salvage the holiday with makeshift celebrations after parades and parties were scrapped and residents were urged to hunker down at home to slow the spread of the new coronavirus.

It was the first St. Patrick's Day in more than 250 years without a large parade in New York City, but a small group of organizers marched the rain-soaked streets early Tuesday anyway — observing "social distancing," they said — to keep the tradition alive.

Led by police cars with flashing lights, people in uniforms and sashes marched up Fifth Avenue before

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dawn with a banner and flags as bagpipe music played. The brief march wasn't advertised, and the sidewalks were largely empty.

In Savannah, Georgia, which canceled its hugely popular parade for the first time in 99 years, there were no bagpipers, no cheering crowds — just two men in green blazers carrying a large Irish flag as they trudged along largely abandoned sidewalks.

"It's really strange," said Bill Bradley, carrying the flag on its long wooden pole. "It's almost like a dream, like living in some kind of nightmare." Bradley and his friend John Lowenthal, members of one of Savannah's Irish social societies, opted to walk the parade route on their own.

There were virtually no signs of revelry in a Chicago, which scrapped the nearly 60-year-old tradition of dyeing the Chicago River green in order to keep crowds away.

One or more diehards tried to turn at least part of the river green anyway. A portion of the river was turned green by someone, but it's not clear what substance was used, WTTW-TV reported.

After having to postpone shows in Boston, American Celtic punk band The Dropkick Murphys hoped to spread Irish cheer to those holed up in their homes with a concert that will be livestreamed Tuesday night on YouTube, Instagram and Facebook.

"We're gonna play it like there are people in front of us, at level 10," singer and bassist Ken Casey of the band, known for its popular song "I'm Shipping Up To Boston," told WBUR.

In Minnesota, Gov. Tim Walz had ordered bars to close at 5 p.m. Tuesday and asked people to resist going out for one last blowout.

Dooley's Pub, near the Mayo Clinic in Rochester, urged residents on social media to "stop on in for some corned beef and cabbage!" and pledged to keep pouring green beer until 5 p.m. The bar said it wanted to "allow our employees a chance to earn as much as they can before the shutdown pushes them into an untenable economic situation."

Neighbors in some communities organized "Shamrock Scavenger Hunts" on social media to give kids whose schools are shuttered something fun to do. Residents were told to hang a shamrock in their window so kids could go around the neighborhood and spot the shamrocks while keeping a safe distance from one another.

For most people, the 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, or death. The vast majority of people recover from the new virus.

Parades were canceled across the globe. Bars and restaurants that would typically be filled with parties on St. Patrick's Day were closed to all but takeout and delivery in places like New York and Massachusetts.

Irish authorities called off Dublin's parade, which usually draws half a million revelers, and pleaded with people not to congregate at house parties.

The country's national broadcaster, RTE, urged people to post footage of their improvised, isolated celebrations on social media. The hashtag #RTEVirtualParade soon became a riot of flag-waving family processions, pets in green, white and orange tricolors and children performing Irish dancing.

In the U.K., London's festival in Trafalgar Square was called off, and the government urged Britons not to visit bars and restaurants but did not formally shut them down.

Still, landmarks around the world, including Sydney Opera House, the London Eye and The Colosseum in Rome, were lit up in green as part of Tourism Ireland's "Global Greening" project.

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Associated Press writers Jill Lawless in London, Peter Morrison in Dublin, Karen Matthews in New York City, Philip Marcelo in Boston, Russ Bynum in Savannah, Georgia, Amy Forliti in Minneapolis, Minnesota, and Michael Tarm in Chicago 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>. 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.



## Lyle Waggoner, foil on 'The Carol Burnett Show,' dies at 84

By LYNN ELBER AP Television Writer

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Lyle Waggoner, who used his good looks to comic effect on "The Carol Burnett Show," partnered with a superhero on "Wonder Woman" and was the first centerfold for Playgirl magazine, died Tuesday. He was 84.

Waggoner, who was battling cancer, died peacefully Tuesday at his Los Angeles-area home with his wife of 60 years, Sharon, at his side, according to a family statement.

A household name in the 1970s, Waggoner went on to become a successful entrepreneur. He built a behind-the-scenes business that provides custom trailers that keep stars comfortable during production breaks. Playing on his surname, he called it Star Waggoners.

In the mid-1960s, the Kansas-born Waggoner was appearing in run-of-the-mill movies such as "Swamp Country" and "The Catalina Caper" and was a finalist to play "Batman" in the campy TV series that eventually starred Adam West. Then he was called to audition for Burnett's variety show.

The actress-comedian recalled that she wanted an announcer for the show who could do more than introduce the commercials. He had to also be good-looking, so she could do her ugly-duckling, romance-besotted character with him, and funny, so he could contribute laughs.

"I walked Lyle Waggoner," she recalled in her 2010 book, "This Time Together." "Gorgeous? Yes. But so much more. He was incredibly funny. He had a sly, tongue-in-cheek delivery that told you he was putting himself on and not taking himself seriously."

As the series evolved, she said, he showed such great comic instincts that he got roles in sketches and became a full member of the cast. He stayed with the show from its beginning in 1967 to 1974 (it ran on CBS another four years.)

Along the way, he made history of sorts in 1973 when the fledgling Playgirl magazine chose him as his first centerfold, calling him "the stuff of which sexual fantasies are made, a 6-foot-4 hunk of gorgeous beefcake." The Chicago Tribune studied his unclothed but discreet pose behind a desk, and reported he looked "slightly embarrassed at having it widely known that he sits at his desk in the nude."

In 1976 Waggoner was picked to star in "Wonder Woman," based on the venerable comic book heroine. Lynda Carter was Wonder Woman, who came from a lost island where she was one of a band of Amazon women with superpowers. Maj. Steve Trevor (Waggoner), crashed onto the island during World War II. Wonder Woman joined him on his return to the United States, where she mostly fought Nazi agents with her secret powers while posing as Steve's secretary.

In 1977 "Wonder Woman" moved from ABC to CBS as "The New Adventures of Wonder Woman" and from the '40s to contemporary times, with Carter still the superhero and Waggoner as Steve Trevor Jr., his previous character's son. The series ended in 1979 and Waggoner focused on his rental company, with acting jobs on the side.

"I was always looking for a backup because I knew the (television) series; they don't last forever," he told a CNBC interviewer in 2002. "They can yank the rug out from under you at any time."

He got the idea while working on "Wonder Woman," when he was assigned a motor home rented from an individual. When Waggoner asked the studio if they would rent a motor home from him, he bought one and started charging for it. That gave rise to Star Waggoners, which were up to 40 feet long, cost as much as \$100,000 and included carpeting, leather easy chairs and satellite television.

He eventually had hundreds of them, customized to meet special requests. Star Waggoners covered mirrors at Steven Spielberg's request, changed a dinette to a makeup area for Teri Hatcher and even switched a trailer that Jaclyn Smith got "bad vibes" in. Martin Sheen, who played the president in "The West Wing," and a real president, Bill Clinton, both used them; Clinton during a 1996 trip to California.

"I used to go on location and sit outside in a canvas chair with a fold-down counter as a makeup station," Waggoner told The Associated Press in 1998. "Now we have these 40-foot, eight-station electronic slide-out rooms with surround sound and CD players." "Our job is to spoil the actors."

Waggoner continued to perform occasionally, appearing in TV specials starring old pal Burnett and guest starring on shows such as "Murder, She Wrote," "Ellen" and "Love Boat."

Waggoner, who was born in April 1935, is survived by his wife, their two sons, Jason and Beau, and four grandchildren. Services were pending for Los Angeles and Wyoming, the family said.

This story includes research from the late Bob Thomas, who was a longtime Hollywood reporter for The Associated Press.

## US life with COVID-19: A state-by-state patchwork of rules

By CLAIRE GALOFARO AP National Writer

As the nation struggles to reconcile itself to a new and spreading peril, it also struggles with a patchwork of rules that vary dizzyingly from place to place: For now, your life and lockdown in the shadow of COVID-19 depends on where you live.

In some places, many ordinary Americans are making public health choices, searching their own conscience and deciding for themselves what risk they're willing to endure. In others, government has made at least some of those decisions.

Ohio canceled its presidential primary to avoid crowds, but the polls opened Tuesday morning in Florida, Illinois and Arizona. Bars in some states prepared for hordes of St. Patrick's Day revelers, while elsewhere others are stacking the stools up on tables and locking the doors.

Casinos in some states have shut down, yet others remain open, where hundreds or even thousands of people touch the same slot machines and gambling chips. Spring breakers are partying by the hundreds on some beaches, while police are sweeping others, ordering people away through loud speakers.

The federal government on Monday urged Americans not to gather in groups of 10 or more and asked older people to stay home, as the number of infections in the U.S. climbed to more than 4,500, with at least 88 deaths. But hard rules have been left up to the states, creating what New York Gov. Andrew Cuomo derided as a "hodgepodge."

Jennifer Dykstra, the owner of a restaurant called Kitchen House in rural Michigan, cried all weekend, paralyzed to choose which prospect seemed more terrifying.

She could close her restaurant, potentially putting herself out of business and rendering her 25 employees unemployed. Or she could stay open, risking their health and that of their customers, many of them old friends and regulars, who'd suddenly stopped shaking hands on their way in and started instead making nervous jokes about preferring tables in the virus-free section.

"It's been lurking in the room, weighing heavily on us: what is the right answer, what is the right thing to do?" she said. Then Michigan announced Monday afternoon that all bars and restaurants must close to dine-in customers: "I'm relieved that the decision was made for us," Dykstra said.

Even as some states made stunning announcements — 7 million people in the San Francisco area were put on a near-total lock-down — life carried on in others.

Jade Noble looked out from behind her Phoenix bar, Linger Longer Lounge, packed with people. They were mostly young, but she imagined them all going home to older, more vulnerable relatives and neighbors. She watched one person walk up to the water cooler and put the mouth of their bottle right up to the spigot.

"We need less people in here," she thought this weekend. She considered the guidance from the Centers for Disease Control, begging people to stay away from each other to flatten the curve — the exponential spread of the virus. "We need to take ourselves out of that equation," she decided. So the Linger Longer Lounge closed its doors, despite no mandate from the state or city.

In Oklahoma, Scott Wagoner, the co-owner of a furniture store in Oklahoma City, also decided to shut down his store, despite not being ordered by the state to do so. Most of his employees, he said, are parents and grandparents, and he felt they could do their part to stop the spread.

"It's a very tough decision, people's lives and livelihoods are at stake," said Gareth O'Sullivan, who owns a pub called Mac McGee in Decatur, Georgia, also among the states that has not yet instituted a statewide rule.

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Mac McGee has been awaiting word from authorities. In the meantime, tables and bar stools have been spread 6 feet apart. Employees are wearing gloves and obsessively sanitizing every surface. But as the death toll ticked up and warnings became more dire, O'Sullivan began to feel like some parts of this were totally out of his control. The crowd is starting to thin, he said, as reality sank in.

If the government doesn't weigh in soon, he'll probably close on his own. The stress, he said, is becoming too much to bear.

While Ohio postponed its election, other states were opening the polls, with an assortment of methods to try keeping voters safe.

Officials in Cook County, Illinois, encourage poll workers to use blue painter's tape to mark the floor every six feet so voters can keep their distance while waiting in line. In Florida, Orange County Election Supervisor Bill Cowles said voters are being allowed to bring wipes to clean their voting booths, face masks and their own pens to mark their ballots. Poll workers have been given supplies to wipe down counters.

Nick Campbell, went with his wife and their 11-year-old daughter to vote in the Tampa suburb of River-view, armed with masks and gloves. But when they saw there were no other voters, they opted to don only the gloves. They were in and out within minutes.

"I didn't touch anything. It was a very sterile operation," he said.

But others chose to stay away.

Jonathan Castoire, a Broward County telecommunications engineer, said he couldn't vote Tuesday because he has multiple sclerosis and his voting station is in a senior center. He felt that would be too dangerous. He said he feels like he has been given "an ultimatum" to choose between his health and his right to vote. "That's not right," he said.

Uncertainty and frustration extends even to beaches. In Florida, beaches on the Gulf coast near Tampa intend to stay open until state emergency officials mandate closures. Local news reports showed Clearwater Beach flooded with spring breakers on Monday. But in Puerto Rico, sirens blared across the busiest beaches Monday as police cleared hundreds of tourists. Using loudspeakers, officers in patrol cars ordered people away: "Please stay at home. Governor's executive orders. The beach is closed."

"Why would I get sick at the beach? I'm not going to be touching anything," said 46-year-old David Zimmer of Richmond, Minnesota, as he joined a group of family and friends flip-flopping their way to a beach that police had driven through just an hour before to empty it out. Other tourists heeded the warnings and shuffled back to their hotels, many carrying take-out meals before locking themselves in.

As state after state on Monday announced they'd be shutting movie theaters, bars, restaurants museums and all non-essential business, others were still preparing for a party.

In Savannah, Georgia, bar owner Jessica Walden said she was trying to just break even with far fewer customers that she's used to during St. Patrick's Day celebrations. City officials this year canceled the city's massive parade, but allowed bars and restaurants to remain open.

Walden, who co-owns Bay Street Blues with her mother, said few weekend guests seemed concerned about the pandemic. The bar's Saturday crowd reached a capacity of 144 patrons several times. They had hand sanitizer posted in two spots on the bar and at the front door, and other than people pumping copious amounts into their palms, the party seemed to go on uninterrupted. Closing down during the most lucrative week of the year would crippled her business, she said, and she's not that worried.

"I just at this time don't have any concerns," she said. "Maybe I'm naive. Everybody keeps saying it's like the flu."

But in places where the government has mandated closures, residents seemed resigned to waiting it out inside. In Louisville, Kentucky, people bought wine by the case.

Hours after the governor announced all bars and restaurants would close at 5 p.m. Monday, Danny Flanigan and Jennie Mulhall scrapped their plans to eat fast food in the car. They opted instead for lunch at their favorite restaurant, the Bristol.

"We want to support you one more time while we still can," he told the hostess as they walked inside. Flanigan and Mulhall said that over the last week, they have been trying to live some abridged version of their normal lives. He's a musician and played a small show over the weekend, and it felt different, like

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people were aware it would be the last hurrah for awhile.

"In times like this, everything else takes a backseat to being alive," Flanigan said. Maybe six months from now, we'll all laugh and say 'oh, remember all that stuff we couldn't do when we were stuck inside.' But we won't be laughing if we don't take these precautions and people die."

Galofaro reported from Louisville, Kentucky. Journalists Jamie Stengle in Dallas, Russ Bynum in Savannah, Georgia, Tamara Lush in Tampa, Florida, Terry Spencer in Fort Lauderdale, Florida, Wayne Parry in Atlantic City, New Jersey, Terry Tang in Phoenix, and John Rice in San Juan, Puerto Rico, contributed reporting.

## Spreading birthday card love in the time of coronavirus

By LUIS ANDRES HENAO Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Mona Helgeland was sad for her children. Their birthdays were coming up but they were self-quarantined because of the coronavirus and going to miss celebrating with friends and family.

So, the Norwegian single mother of two went on Facebook groups and asked people to send greeting cards. She said she has been "blown away by the kindness." In just a few days since that first post, she has received dozens of cards from across the world - from Alaska to South Africa.

"It's beautiful. I started crying," Helgeland, 37, said about the cards that some have posted with drawings of her son's favorite Japanese cartoon characters, or cows, zebras and hearts, as well as photos from the studio where they make the Harry Potter films that her children love.

To Helgeland, who has a painful spinal joint disorder called ankylosing spondylitis, the message during these uncertain times is clear: "It's important to stay positive and take care of each other and spread love, not just the virus."

Tens of millions of people were hunkered down Tuesday. Countries across the globe shut their borders, and cities locked down, closing schools and businesses to try to curb the spread of the virus, which has infected more than 190,000 people and killed more than 7,500.

The virus causes only mild or moderate symptoms, such as fever and cough, for most people, but severe illness is more likely in the elderly and people with existing health problems. More than 80,000 people have recovered from the illness.

Amid the grim news Helgeland has seen goodness, one card at a time.

"They're making the effort, going out of their way for someone they don't even know," Helgeland said in an interview via videoconferencing. "I'm blown away by their kindness."

Helgeland lives with her family in Ålgård, about 300 miles (480 kilometers) southwest of the Norwegian capital of Oslo. The town is best known for an amusement park, its wood and textile industries, and for being the birthplace of Havard "Kickalicious" Rugland. The placekicker's YouTube video in 2012 went viral and led to several tryouts with NFL teams.

Norway recently announced measures to try to halt the spread of the virus, which has infected more than 1,400 people and killed 3 in the Scandinavian country. King Harald V, several members of the royal family and some government members have protectively been put in quarantine because they had traveled abroad in recent weeks.

Helgeland had been planning the birthdays of her children: Kristine, who will turn 17 on March 26, and Vetle, who will be 14 on April 6. Instead, the three of them are isolated at home.

"They're so scared," she said about how news of the virus has affected them. "I wanted to do something to cheer them up."

Over the weekend, she wrote notes and posted them on Facebook groups, including "Little love notes from around the world!" and one called "Random Acts of Kindness." She told people about the chronic illness that she has had for 10 years, the isolation during the virus outbreak and about her family: how her daughter loves cows and dogs and the "Outlander" TV show; how "My Hero Academia" is her son's favorite cartoon.

"Hi everyone! Hope you all are safe and well with everything happening around the world. I want to ask



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you a favour," she said in her note where she asked for a card ("it doesn't have to be anything fancy") for her kids. "I want to make their birthdays something to remember with joy," she said. "And hope to make them both a "love/happy birthday from around the world-note."

The photos of the cards started coming in, one after the other from all corners of the world. Her favorite? "Oh my God, I love them all," she said. "They're all special."

There's one with the photo of a tiny, florescent green iguana from Jacksonville, North Carolina and another with the giant brown moose from Sterling, Alaska. And one is a cartoon of a man in a kilt next to his dog from Scotland. Several include landmarks and landscapes, a sunset from Idaho, the "Plaza de Armas" square of Veracruz, Mexico and a dog on a beach in Melbourne, Australia. One with a cartoon cow that reads: "Dear Kristine, your mother's love is so big that this 'moooooosage' came from Alberta, Canada."

Savannah Foster, 33, from Collinsville, Illinois sent Kristine a hand-drawn card with a birthday cake and for Vetle, some stars. She first read Helgeland's message in the Facebook group "Little love notes around the world," and the women have kept in touch and said they have become friends.

"Just knowing how far a mother would go for her kids. It's just the small things, but there's love. That moved me," said Foster, who recently put a message on Facebook offering toilet paper rolls for the elders in her town. "It says that no matter where you are, we are people and as long as we stick together, the world can be ok," she said. "It is hope. There's definitely hope."

While nonstop global news about the effects of the coronavirus have become commonplace, so, too, are the stories about the kindness of strangers and individuals who have sacrificed for others. "One Good Thing" is an AP continuing series reflecting these acts of kindness.

Henao reported from New York. Jan M. Olsen in Copenhagen, Denmark, contributed to this report.

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

## **Iraqi officials say rockets strike Baghdad's Green Zone**

**By SAMYA KULLAB and QASSIM ABDUL-ZAHRA Associated Press**

BAGHDAD (AP) — At least three rockets struck Baghdad's fortified Green Zone near the American Embassy late Tuesday, a day after an attack on a training base south of Baghdad where U.S.-led coalition troops and NATO trainers were present, Iraqi security officials said. It was the fourth such attack in the span of a week.

At least three rockets struck the Green Zone, the seat of Iraq's government and home to several foreign embassies, two Iraqi security officials said. Myles Caggins, spokesman for the coalition, said the rockets fell at least 2 kilometers (1.2 miles) from the embassy.

There were no immediate reports of casualties.

The previous evening, rockets hit the Basmaya base near the Iraqi capital, an Iraqi army statement said. The projectiles landed in an area that includes agricultural land and a factory, according to the statement. No more details were provided.

A Spanish contingent of the coalition and NATO trainers are present at the Basmaya site. There was no immediate confirmation of the attack from the coalition and no militant group claimed responsibility for the assault.

Last Wednesday, a barrage of over two dozen rockets struck Camp Taji, north of Baghdad, killing three coalition servicemen, including two Americans. A British serviceman was also killed. It was the deadliest to target U.S. troops in Iraq since a late December rocket attack on an Iraqi base, which killed a U.S. contractor and set in motion a series of attacks that brought Iraq to the brink of war.

Wednesday's barrage was followed by another attack, on Saturday at the same site, which wounded

five soldiers — three coalition members and two Iraqi soldiers.

The first attack prompted American airstrikes Friday against what U.S. officials said were mainly weapons facilities belonging to Kataib Hezbollah, the Iran-backed militia group believed to be responsible for the attack.

However, Iraq's military said those airstrikes killed five security force members and a civilian, while wounding five fighters from the Popular Mobilization Forces, an umbrella organization including an array of militias, including some Iran-backed groups.

Iran-backed Shiite militia groups vowed to exact revenge, signalling another cycle of tit-for-tat violence between Washington and Tehran that could play out in Iraq.

## How will NCAA recoup millions from lost tournament?

By RALPH D. RUSSO AP College Sports Writer

The NCAA made more than \$1 billion last year, almost \$867 million from the men's Division I basketball tournament, and most of that from a massive television rights deal with CBS and Turner that runs through the 2032 tournament.

The coronavirus not only wiped out the games, but it will create some unexpected red ink on the NCAA's balance sheet this year. Exactly how much is to be determined.

"Well, I can't give you any specific numbers because we don't know yet," NCAA President Mark Emmert said. "We know that the financial implications are all negative and we're going to have to deal with those."

The NCAA canceled the tournament last Thursday because of concerns over spreading the virus. At first, the NCAA announced the games would go on, but the general public would be kept out of the buildings. A day later, the whole thing was scrapped.

The NCAA's contract with CBS and Turner pays about \$800 million per year.

It is standard for media rights contracts to have language that relieves rights holders from financial obligations if games are canceled due to events outside the control of the property, said Chris Bevilacqua, co-founder of Bevilacqua Helfant Ventures.

"Typically, those right fees are paid in installments. Let's presume a couple of those installments were probably already paid and the bigger installments haven't been paid because the tournament hasn't happened," said Bevilacqua, who has advised leagues and college conferences in TV contract negotiations but was not involved in the NCAA's deals.

"I'm sure they have a way to deal with a total and complete cancellation," he said.

Emmert has said the NCAA has business disruption insurance to cover some of its losses.

Bevilacqua said the long-running partnership between the NCAA and CBS, which has aired the tournament every year since 1982, and Turner could help the two sides find a resolution to any outstanding money matters.

"Maybe that allows for CBS and Turner to extend the deal by a year at some favorable rate whenever it ends," Bevilacqua said.

Sponsorship deals that companies have with CBS and Turner to run advertisements during games are typically structured similarly to the rights fees. If the spots don't run, the sponsors don't have to pay.

Typically, the money flows from sponsors to the networks to the NCAA to the schools.

"Every one of those steps has to be worked through to determine what is going to happen here. And that has to happen in conjunction with the insurance conversation," said Greg Shaheen, a former NCAA executive who oversaw the men's basketball tournament. "And the insurance company is going to, I'm certain, want to say to the association: 'You know, we want to make sure that you get every penny you potentially are entitled for out of your contracts before we just roll over and pay some amount.'"

The NCAA distributes 60% of its annual revenue to schools in various ways, including shares called units distributed to conferences and determined by how many teams from a league reached the tournament and how many games those teams won.

Last year the Division I Basketball Performance Fund doled out \$168.8 million.

The NCAA and the richest and most powerful conferences, such as the Big Ten and Southeastern Conference, should be able to take any possible financial hit that comes from the men's basketball tournament not being played. All the Power Five conferences have billion dollar TV deals, with football as the centerpiece. Not completing their conference basketball tournaments will cost them both in lost box office and lost inventory provided to their rights holders.

"For the top six or eight conferences ... they all have a decent amount of flow through in terms of their regular revenues," Shaheen said.

Those mid-major conferences, the ones that usually get only one team in the tournament, and rely heavily on the few tournament units they accrue, could really feel the pinch of the lost revenue.

"We have had that question arise, how revenue will be affected?" Atlantic Sun Commissioner Ted Gumbart said. "And the simple answer is, it's going to be affected and we have to realize that it's an unprecedented situation and we may have to make some changes."

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Follow Ralph D, Russo on Twitter at <https://twitter.com/ralphDrussoAP>

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More AP college basketball: <https://apnews.com/Collegebasketball> and [https://twitter.com/AP\\_Top25](https://twitter.com/AP_Top25)

## US revises passenger safety rules for autonomous vehicles

By TOM KRISHER AP Auto Writer

DETROIT (AP) — The U.S. government is coming out with new regulations aimed at changing automotive passenger safety standards that could be barriers to autonomous vehicles.

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration says it's seeking comment on proposed updated standards to account for vehicles that don't have manual controls such as steering wheels or brake pedals. Autonomous vehicles also may not have drivers sitting in the traditional driver's seat.

The proposal would revise requirements and test procedures, the agency said in a statement Tuesday. It also would clarify that passenger protection standard standards don't apply to vehicles made specifically to carry goods and not people.

"We do not want regulations enacted long before the development of automated technologies to present an unintended and unnecessary barrier against innovation and improved highway safety," NHTSA Acting Administrator James Owens said in the statement.

The proposed regulation would apply front passenger seat protection standards to the traditional driver's seat of an autonomous vehicle, rather than safety requirements that are specific to the driver's seat, the agency said. "The rationale discussed in this notice is that an occupant should not need protection from a steering control system if none exists in the vehicle," the regulation said.

The regulations would account for vehicles that operate autonomously but also can be controlled by a human in the driver's seat, NHTSA said.

NHTSA says in the regulation that much of the safety potential of automated driving systems is "unsubstantiated and the impacts unknown," but it still believes the best path forward is to remove barriers.

Jason Levine, executive director of the nonprofit Center for Auto Safety, an advocacy group, said NHTSA shouldn't remove regulatory safeguards for a technology that is not proven "and in fact may be unsafe." He said in a statement that the government should focus on existing safety measures "not corporate giveaways desired by lobbyists and questioned by experts."

The public has about 60 days to comment on the proposal. Based on the comments, NHTSA would then put the rule into effect, the agency said.

The regulation is aimed at autonomous vehicles and does not address multiple recommendations from the National Transportation Safety Board made last month about partially automated vehicles with driver assist systems.

After several fatal crashes involving Tesla electric vehicles operating on the company's Autopilot driver-assist system, the NTSB recommended that NHTSA expand testing to make sure partially automated

systems can avoid running into common obstacles such as a freeway barrier. The board also asked that NHTSA evaluate Autopilot to determine where it can safely operate, and to develop and enforce standards for monitoring drivers so they pay attention while using the systems.

NHTSA said at the time it will review the NTSB's report and that all commercially available vehicles require human drivers to stay in control at all times.

## Building a savings cushion in a time of emergency

By SARAH SKIDMORE SELL AP Personal Finance Writer

If you are going to stockpile anything these days, consider liquid savings.

A stash of easily accessible money to tap for emergencies is always important, but it is critical at times like these when people face potential layoffs and deep economic uncertainty.

Experts generally suggest having three to six months of savings on hand, but that can be tough for many people who are living paycheck to paycheck. At least one-quarter of American adults say they wouldn't be able to cover an unexpected expense of \$400, according to a survey by the Federal Reserve.

"There are far too many Americans who are financially unprepared for an economic downturn, and lack of sufficient savings will be most people's Achilles heel," said Bruce McClary, spokesman for the National Foundation for Credit Counseling, a nonprofit organization.

Editor's note— If you have a story to share about how the coronavirus outbreak has impacted you financially, email [apmoney@ap.org](mailto:apmoney@ap.org).

Don't despair though — you can still start saving and even having a small amount in reserve can help. Here are a few things you should know to get things rolling:

### GET STARTED

It's never too late to start setting aside money.

If you are working, automate the savings. Employers will often allow you to have money from your paycheck deposited directly into more than one account. Consider having it sent directly to a savings account of some sort. If that is not an option, have your bank automatically draw it from your checking account on payday to a savings account. No matter how you get paid — the key is to make it part of your routine.

A good rule of thumb is to budget 50% of your income to essentials like housing and utilities, 30% toward non-essentials and 20% toward financial goals like savings and paying down debt.

### MANAGE EXPENSES

At times like this, small automated savings may not be enough, said Mariel Beasley, co-founder of the Common Cents Lab at Duke University, which aims to improve the financial well-being of low to moderate income Americans.

She suggests people take a hard look at their expenses, figure out what they can cut and then divert that money to savings.

Beasley said people should look at any subscriptions that can be canceled or consider downgrading to a cheaper phone, cable or internet plan. Set a restrictive budget on the spending side too. To help you stick to it, consider using a pre-paid card that you reload weekly or make purchases only with cash. If possible, increase your income with overtime, an extra gig or selling unwanted items online.

Granted, your spending may look a bit different right now. You might be buying a few extra items at the grocery store but you likely won't be going out to the movies. You might also want to cancel a gym membership given the virus scare.

She also suggests at times like this to consider shifting some of your long-term savings into short-term savings. That could include lowering the amount of money you might be putting into retirement savings, at least down to what your company matches, or a college savings account and putting that into emergency savings. You can switch back once you are financially stable again.

### EMERGENCY BUDGET



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If you don't have anything set aside, you've been laid off already or anticipate you will suffer financially soon, consider switching to an emergency budget.

The emergency budget focuses only on essentials and leaves out most or all discretionary spending. That means no trips, no gifts, no little extras at the store that aren't absolutely necessary. The goal should be to free up enough funds to boost your savings contribution to 20% or more of your take-home pay. The more the better, McClary said.

Stay on this budget until you have at least three months of net income set aside for emergencies. No matter where you are in the progress toward this goal, more savings is better than none when you need the money right away.

## GET HELP

If you are already feeling the pinch financially, ask for help.

Reach out to your landlord, mortgage lender, utility providers, credit card company or other lender. Many utility companies are making provisions for this pandemic. For example, Seattle Public Utilities Seattle City Light are promising water and electricity customers they won't have their services shut during the area's coronavirus emergency. Evictions have been put on hold in some cities for the time being.

As seen during the federal shutdown, most people struggle to operate with an interruption to their income, even if for a short time. The FDIC, along with other federal and state regulators, have urged financial institutions to help customers affected by the virus and some lenders say they are willing to do so. Lenders may be willing to work with you to postpone or lower payments for a period.

Lawmakers are also considering a number of provisions to free up cash for Americans and protect them in a downturn, including a possible payroll tax cut, increasing paid sick leave provisions and strengthening the unemployment benefits.

## AVOID HIGH COSTS

If things do get rough, avoid high-cost alternatives to get cash.

That means no running up high-interest credit card debt, using payday loans with astronomical interest rates or withdrawing retirement funds. These can often leave you in a worse position than you started thanks to fees, interest and more.

For those tempted to touch their 401(k), think twice: You'll get cash but you'll also get hit with penalties and steep taxes. You'll also lose out again later when it's time to retire and your balance is much lower.

If you are over 59 1/2 there are no restrictions for making withdrawals from your IRA or 401(k), so you can pull out some of that money for emergency savings with less consequence than younger counterparts. But Beasley suggests doing so in small increments as needed, to avoid spending down your nest egg.

## IGNORE THE GOAL

While some experts say to focus on the goal, if you are just getting started that may be daunting. Instead, don't worry as much about the end goal as much as the practice of savings. Even having a small amount of money can help provide some cushion in times of need — such as being able to buy groceries during a quarantine.

"Every dollar you can set aside in savings is one less dollar you will have to borrow in a time of emergency," McClary said.

## Italy struggles to make room for onslaught of virus patients

By ANDREA FOA Associated Press

BRESCIA, Italy (AP) — Three weeks into Italy's coronavirus crisis, Dr. Sergio Cattaneo has seen an unused ward outfitted into an intensive care unit in six days, a hospital laundry room converted into a giant stretcher-filled waiting room and a tented field hospital erected outside to test possible new virus patients.

But Cattaneo, head of anesthesiology and intensive care at the public hospital in Brescia in northern Italy, still can't get his head around the curve — the upward slope of new infections in Italy that tracks almost exactly the trajectory of cases in Wuhan, China, where the global pandemic began three months ago.

"What is really shocking — something we had not been able to forecast and brought us to our knees

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— is the quickness the epidemic spreads,” Cattaneo told The Associated Press during an exclusive tour of Brescia’s newest ICU. “If the spreading of this epidemic is not put under control, it will bring all hospitals to their knees.”

Cattaneo’s new ICU added six more beds to the hospital’s capacity, bringing to 42 the number of ICU beds dedicated to the virus. Across the Lombardy region, local authorities are pushing ahead with plans to build a 400-bed ICU field hospital at the Milan fairgrounds, even though the civil protection agency has warned that it doesn’t have the ventilators or personnel to staff it, and that time is running out.

“The secret has been — and this should be a strong message for foreign countries — to act early on this, in order to avoid — like in our case — having to chase after it day after day,” Cattaneo said.

Brescia, an industrial city of nearly 200,000 east of Milan and the capital of a province of 1.2 million, is second only to nearby Bergamo in positive cases in Lombardy, the epicenter of the pandemic in Europe.

For the past two days, Brescia actually outpaced Bergamo in the number of new infections, on Tuesday adding another 382 positive tests for a total of 3,300 and suggesting that it is becoming Lombardy’s hottest hot spot.

Indeed, seven of Brescia’s deaths this week were among residents of the same nursing home in Barbariga, where another eight elderly people tested positive, local media reported. While many people suffer relatively mild symptoms from the virus, the mortality rate in Italy in people over 80 is 22 percent, according to statistics from the National Institutes of Health.

By Tuesday, Italy recorded 31,506 positive cases and 2,503 deaths, more than anywhere outside China.

It has been a race against time for Lombardy to add more ICU beds than the patients who need them, not an easy task given that 10 percent of all Italy’s infected require ICU admission, primarily for respiratory help.

Nearly all admitted patients have interstitial pneumonia, a disease in which the lace-like tissue of the lungs’ alveoli become inflamed, leading to progressive respiratory failure, according to Giovanna Perone, director of Brescia’s emergency services.

“In the last few days, the number of people arriving here on their own and reporting such symptoms has increased,” Perone said outside the civil protection tents where walk-in patients are tested and then sent to the hospital’s converted laundry room to await the results.

The onslaught of infections has completely overwhelmed the public health system in Italy’s prosperous north, prompting regional officials to beg retired doctors to come back to work and to accelerate graduation dates for nurses and specialists.

“I ask you from my heart, we need your competency, your experience, your efficiency,” said Giulio Gallera, Lombardy’s chief healthcare official. “Give us a hand.”

The 25 billion euro aid package the Italian government approved Monday, aimed at bolstering both the health care system and helping businesses, workers and families weather the economic hit, also contains provisions to hire 10,000 more medical personnel.

Already Lombardy this week has received 2,200 responses to a “help wanted” sign on its Facebook page, and hired over 1,000 people, Gallera said.

Italy’s medical personnel also complain about critical shortages of gear, including protective masks and glasses. Italy’s national federations of doctors and nurses issued a joint alarm Tuesday over the more than 2,300 medical personnel who have been infected, 1,900 of them doctors and nurses. The two groups demanded adequate protective masks, gloves and other equipment as a matter of national security for the 900,000-strong medical workforce in Italy.

“We have to redefine the priorities in the fight,” said Filippo Anelli, head of the doctors’ federation. “It’s unfathomable, unworthy of a civil society and puts public health at risk.”

Italy’s civil protection agency has blasted countries for failing to follow through on orders of protective masks, including 20 million that were under contract but were never delivered. Civil protection chief Angelo Borrelli has named India, Russia, Romania and France as countries that have blocked exports of the specialized masks, which Italy doesn’t produce domestically.

"What we're seeing is a closure of borders to exportation," he lamented this week.

Prisoners are being put to work to make surgical masks, since there's a shortage of them, too. The Justice Ministry estimates that inmates could produce as many as 10,000 a day.

The shortages, as well as the 12-hour shifts that sometimes last for 18, are taking a toll on the health care workers still standing. State-run RAI television runs near-nightly interviews with doctors and nurses on the front line, making urgent, exhausted appeals for Italians to just stay home.

"Family life has changed too of course because we either live in self-isolation at home, out of fears of creating problems, or even sleeping elsewhere in some cases," said Fabio Arrighini, nursing coordinator for Brescia's health care emergency service.

Associated Press Writer Nicole Winfield in Rome contributed to this report.

## **Iraq ex-governor named PM-designate as Baghdad awaits curfew** **By SAMYA KULLAB Associated Press**

BAGHDAD (AP) — Iraq's president Tuesday named a former governor of the city of Najaf as prime minister-designate, following weeks of political infighting, as Baghdad residents rushed to stock up on supplies hours before a days-long curfew was set to take hold amid a global pandemic.

Adnan al-Zurfi was appointed premier-designate by President Barham Saleh after tense meetings between rival political blocs. The meetings went on for weeks without reaching a consensus on a candidate to replace outgoing Premier Adel Abdul-Mahdi. Hours after the announcement, Iraq's powerful Fatah parliamentary bloc rejected al-Zurfi's candidacy signaling a rocky path to government formation for the new premier-designate.

An earlier premier-designate, Mohammed Allawi, withdrew his candidacy after political groups rejected his proposed Cabinet lineup.

Fatah, headed by Hadi al-Ameri, garnered the second highest number of seats in parliament in the May 2018 federal election.

In a statement, the bloc accused Saleh of "disregarding" the constitution and naming al-Zurfi in the absence of political consensus. "The president of the republic shall endure full responsibility for the repercussions of this provocative step."

"We will take all measures to prevent this disregard of the law and constitution," the statement said.

Al-Zurfi, 54, was appointed by Iraq's U.S. administrator Paul Bremer as governor of Najaf in 2004 and later served in the same post between 2009 and 2015. His third term was cut short following his dismissal by the provincial council. In the May 2018 election he won a seat in parliament under former Prime Minister Haidar al-Abadi's list.

According to Iraq's constitution, al-Zurfi has 30 days to propose a lineup of ministers and form a new government. Saleh wished al-Zurfi success "in his new tasks to work for early and fair elections and to achieve the aspirations of the Iraqis," according to a statement from his office.

Early elections have been a key demand of anti-government protesters camped out in the capital's Tahrir Square. Last October, thousands took to the streets to decry government corruption, poor services and unemployment. Abdul-Mahdi resigned under pressure from the demonstrations.

Subsequently, Allawi's efforts to form a government were plagued with delays and dysfunction as legislators failed on two occasions to approve his Cabinet of independents, which alienated Iraqi Kurdish and Sunni lawmakers.

Anti-government protesters said they rejected al-Zurfi's nomination. In Tahrir Square, demonstrators marked his portrait with an "X."

"This political class could never select a candidate we'd endorse," said protester Mustafa Ali, 26.

Al-Zurfi's appointment came hours before a curfew imposed because of the coronavirus pandemic was to take effect in Baghdad as Iraq struggles to contain the spread of the virus.

Residents of the Iraqi capital rushed Tuesday to stock up on last-minute supplies ahead of the start of

the 11 p.m. curfew. Many were concerned it could be extended beyond the week's time announced by the government.

Long lines formed at gas stations and shops. Workers stood guard outside supermarkets to take the temperatures of shoppers coming in. Gloves were handed out.

The effective lockdown coincides with the annual Shiite Muslim commemoration of the death of revered Imam Mousa al-Kazim. Thousands of Iraqis typically make the journey on foot to the shrine of the imam in the Khadimiya area outside Baghdad.

Pilgrims in the past few days have been stopped from carrying out the trek by security forces over fears of the virus, which has infected more than 182,000 people and killed more than 7,100 globally.

The fate of the six-month protest movement has also come into question amid the strict protocols prohibiting large public gatherings. In a collective statement, demonstrators in Tahrir Square, the hub of the movement, said they were suspending protest activities.

"There will be no large gatherings with the suspension of all protest activities, including marches and cultural activities inside and outside the square until the crisis ends," the statement said. It added that "full time mobile teams" would be formed from among demonstrators to sterilize roads and shops in Tahrir.

The number of demonstrators camped out in central Baghdad squares had been dwindling before the outbreak. Some protesters were adamant about keeping a presence in Tahrir, while others said they feared an outbreak.

Iraq has had 11 deaths among 154 confirmed cases of the virus, which causes the COVID-19 illness. Most people experience only mild or moderate symptoms, such as fever and cough, and recover within weeks. But the virus is highly contagious and can be spread by people with no visible symptoms. For some, especially older adults and people with existing health problems, it can cause more severe illness, including pneumonia.

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Associated Press writer Qassim Abdul-Zahra in Baghdad contributed to this report.

## **Iran warns virus could kill 'millions' in Islamic Republic**

**By NASSER KARIMI and JON GAMBRELL Associated Press**

TEHRAN, Iran (AP) — Iran issued its most dire warning yet Tuesday about the new coronavirus ravaging the country, suggesting "millions" could die in the Islamic Republic if people keep traveling and ignore health guidance.

A state TV journalist who also is a medical doctor gave the warning only hours after hard-line Shiite faithful on Monday night pushed their way into the courtyards of two major shrines that were finally closed due to the virus. Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei issued a religious ruling prohibiting "unnecessary" travel.

Roughly 9 out of 10 of the over 18,000 confirmed cases of the virus in the Middle East come from Iran, where authorities denied for days the risk the outbreak posed. Officials have implemented new checks for people trying to leave major cities ahead of Nowruz, the Persian New Year, on Friday, but have hesitated to quarantine the areas.

The death toll in Iran saw another 13% increase Tuesday. Health Ministry spokesman Kianoush Jahanpour said the virus had killed 135 more people to raise the total to 988 amid over 16,000 cases.

Jordan announced a state of emergency, banning gatherings of more than 10 people, and Israel issued its own strict guidelines.

Most infected people experience only mild or moderate symptoms, such as fever and cough, and recover within weeks. But the virus is highly contagious and can be spread by people with no visible symptoms. For some, especially older adults and people with existing health problems, it can cause more severe illness, including pneumonia.

In announcing the new warning, the Iranian state TV journalist, Dr. Afruz Eslami, cited a study by Tehran's prestigious Sharif University of Technology, which offered three scenarios: If people cooperate fully now, Iran will see 120,000 infections and 12,000 deaths before the outbreak is over; if they offer medium



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cooperation, there will be 300,000 cases and 110,000 deaths.

But if people fail to follow any guidance, it could collapse Iran's already-strained medical system, Eslami said. If the "medical facilities are not sufficient, there will be 4 million cases, and 3.5 million people will die," she said.

Eslami did not elaborate on what metrics the study used, but even reporting it on Iran's tightly controlled state media represented a major change for a country whose officials had for days denied the severity of the crisis.

Underlining that urgency was the fatwa issued by Khamenei, which prohibited "unnecessary" travel. It comes as the public ignored repeated warnings and pleas from security forces. Such a decree is rare by Khamenei, who has final say on all state matters.

Some Iranian media later said Khamenei hadn't issued a fatwa, though semiofficial news agencies believed to be close to the paramilitary Revolutionary Guard said the order had been made.

Late Monday night, angry crowds stormed the courtyards of the Imam Reza shrine in Mashhad and the Fatima Masumeh shrine in Qom. Many people visit the shrine in Qom 24 hours a day, seven days a week, touching and kissing the shrine. That has worried health officials, who for weeks wanted Iran's Shiite clergy to close them.

State TV had announced the closures earlier in the day, sparking the demonstrations.

"We are here to say that Tehran is damn wrong to do that!" one Shiite cleric shouted at the shrine in Mashhad, according to online video. Others joined him in chanting: "The health minister is damn wrong to do that, the president is damn wrong to do that!"

Police later dispersed the crowds and made arrests. Religious authorities and a prominent Qom seminary called the demonstration an "insult" to the shrine.

Iran's shrines draw Shiite pilgrims from all over, likely contributing to the virus' regional spread. Saudi Arabia has closed off Islam's holiest sites and on Tuesday said it would halt communal Friday prayers in the kingdom.

President Hassan Rouhani said that despite the closures, "our soul is closer to the saints more than at any time."

State TV reported teams were deployed to screen travelers leaving major cities in 13 provinces, including the capital, Tehran. But Iran has 31 provinces and authorities haven't tried to lock down the country the way its allies Iraq and Lebanon have done.

The teams check travelers and send those with fevers to quarantine centers. Iran has been urging people to stay home, but many ignore the call.

In apparent efforts to try to curb the spread, Iran has released 85,000 prisoners on temporary leave, judiciary spokesman Gholamhossein Esmaili said. That number included half of all "security-related" prisoners, he said without elaborating. Western nations have urged Iran to release dual nationals and others, alleging they are used as bargaining chips in negotiations.

Among those released is Mohammad Hossein Karroubi, the son of opposition leader Mehdi Karroubi, who was in jail for nearly two months.

Also temporarily freed was Nazanin Zaghari-Ratcliffe, an Iranian-British dual national long held on internationally criticized charges. Zaghari-Ratcliffe, who works for the charitable Thomson Reuters Foundation, was arrested in 2016 on charges of trying to topple the government while traveling with her toddler daughter.

In Jordan, King Abdullah II by royal decree declared a national emergency over the virus outbreak, which allows the suspension of laws and grants greater powers to the state to restrict public gatherings and make arrests.

Troops were deployed outside of Jordan's major cities to block travel, newspapers were ordered to stop publishing, gatherings of more than 10 people were banned and a quarantine zone was established at Dead Sea hotels. It also halted all private sector work and public transportation as well.

Egypt, which has 196 confirmed cases of the virus and six deaths, announced the immediate shutdown of all movie theaters across the Arab world's most populous country.

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It also locked down the Red Sea province that includes the resort town of Hurghada. Authorities barred workers in all tourist sites, hotels, bazaars and restaurants from leaving the province and imposed a 14-day quarantine, according to a document from the governor's office obtained by The Associated Press.

In Oman, the sultanate announced anyone coming from abroad would be subject to quarantine.

Israel's Defense Ministry plans to use near-empty hotels, as recovery centers for patients with COVID-19, the illness caused by the virus. Israel also urged citizens to stay home, closing parks, museums, libraries, beaches and other public areas.

In Syria, all sports clubs, movie theaters, concerts, theaters, as well as halls used for weddings or funerals were ordered closed in Damascus, and all restaurants and other shops around the country were ordered shut. Syria says it has no cases of the virus.

Pakistan's number of coronavirus cases rose to 237, although no deaths have been reported. Government critics blame improper border screenings for thousands of pilgrims returning from Iran this month.

Prime Minister Imran Khan warned that the disease will spread but said the public "should not fret as most of the people easily recover."

Gambrell reported from Dubai, United Arab Emirates. Associated Press writers Mehdi Fattahi in Tehran, Iran, Aron Heller in Jerusalem, Omar Akour in Amman, Jordan, Bassem Mroue in Beirut and Samy Magdy in Cairo 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.

## Dear Corona Diary: German patient gives updates on Twitter

**KIRSTEN GRIESHABER Associated Press**

BERLIN (AP) — On the fifth day after she fell ill with COVID-19 respiratory disease, Karoline Preisler could breathe again without wincing through severe pain in her chest.

But the 48-year-old from a small town in northeastern Germany was still sick and very weak. She had slept only three hours the night before in a hospital isolation ward. She worried constantly about her husband and three children.

"I miss my children so badly. They miss me, and we all miss that we can't hug each other anymore," Preisler said in a phone interview on Monday.

Preisler, who practices law and is a local politician in the Baltic Sea town of Barth, started experiencing symptoms a few hours after she tested positive for the new coronavirus last week. Her husband, a federal lawmaker, had tested positive earlier and been told to remain isolated in Berlin, a 299-kilometer drive (186 miles) away,

The couple's 9-year-old twins and 11-year-old tested negative, but health authorities ordered the children quarantined at home with their mother. When Preisler's symptoms worsened and she needed to be hospitalized on Saturday, her husband was permitted to go back to Barth to care for the children.

Lonely, frightened and unwell, Preisler turned to the internet for information from other patients but didn't find many first-hand accounts of living with and fighting the virus. So she decided to share her experience on Twitter, where she had about 5,000 followers.

Using the hashtag #coronatagebuch, German for #coronadiary, Preisler has given frequent updates on her condition. She posted photos of herself with hollow eyes and her lower face masked., images of cleaning staff in protective gear removing contaminated clothes from her hospital room and another selfie showing her receiving oxygen through thin tubes in her nose.

She also wrote intimate tweets about how she was doing emotionally - sometimes well, sometimes not so well - at a time when people around the world worry about the virus but know so little about how COVID-19 can play out on a personal level for someone who has it.

"Dear #coronadiary, today is my second day ... I am ill, the lung is like a big lump. I am whimpering like

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a whelp. The father will take over family life long-distance via Videochat. Corona is mean, bye," Preisler said in one tweet.

Preisler is one of some 7,300 people who have tested positive in Germany, a country with a population of 83 million, She has not contracted pneumonia, an illness seen in people with severe forms of COVID-19. But due to a preexisting health condition, the virus made her more sick than is typical for someone her age.

For most people, the coronavirus causes only mild or moderate symptoms, such as fever and cough. For some, especially older adults and people with underlying 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.

On the day after she tested positive, Preisler suffered from shortness of breath. She and her children marked off areas of their home with tape to create a makeshift isolation ward for mom while leaving the rest of the house to the healthy kids.

Preisler was too sick to cook so the children took over the kitchen, making waffles topped with lots of powdered sugar and browsing cookbooks for recipes.

Friends went grocery shopping and dropped the bags off in front of the family's home since none of them were supposed to go inside.

"They brought us lots of potatoes," Preisler said. "So right now, the kids are into making potato chips."

On Twitter, she sometimes relayed the latest developments with a grim sense of humor.

"Dear corona diary, here's a positive approach ... somebody who cannot breathe well saves food. It's too exhausting (to eat). My fitness tracker is proud of my weight loss. Welcome hip bones, that I could live to see you again," she wrote on Day 2 of her illness.

While trying to cheer up her followers with cheeky tweets, Preisler felt progressively worse. She didn't go to the hospital because she couldn't leave her quarantined children alone.

Her husband, who exhibited mild symptoms, got permission Friday night to drive home from the German capital - wearing full protective gear and without stopping even once for gas. The next morning, Preisler was admitted to the Krankenhaus am Sund hospital in the city of Stralsund. She started getting oxygen and inhaled medications that alleviated her shortness of breath. It's not clear when doctors will release her.

With new infections dwindling in Asia, Europe has become the main front line of the pandemic that has infected over 190,000 people worldwide and killed more than 7,500 as of Tuesday. More than 80,000 people with the virus have already recovered.

Preisler said she received positive and encouraging responses to her social media posts from all over Germany and Europe and from as far away as Winnipeg, Canada. There have also been hateful and negative reactions from people who called her stupid and worse for coming out in public as a COVID-19 patient.

"Some people have really gone after us. It's horrible," Preisler said. "People are so afraid and insecure, especially those who don't inform themselves about the virus."

Thomas Sattelberger, a 70-year-old German lawmaker who tested positive for the virus on Saturday, said he had not received any negative responses after he posted videos on Twitter about his situation.

Sattelberger, Preisler and her husband all belong to the Free Democrats party. They are not sure where they picked up the virus, if they were infected by the same source or whether they passed the virus among each other.

Sattelberger said in an interview a main concern has been making sure health authorities inform people he might have had contact with that they could be infected.

"It's been 30 hours and I still haven't been able to make a contact with the health authorities," he said. "I'm worried because I have been in touch with so many people."

Virus hotlines were busy or went unanswered when he tried calling over the weekend, he said. So instead of relying on overwhelmed officials, Sattelberger reached out to contacts himself to warn them.

Sattelberger, who is self-isolated at his home in Starnberg, has not suffered from symptoms. He said he feels dazed and weak, has headaches and experienced chills on Friday.

"My first response after the doctor called me with the results was shock," Sattelberger said. "And from

time to time, I still have to think about the fragility of humanity, as this virus is basically conquering the world.”

Like Preisler, he has taken to Twitter to inform and encourage his 12,300 followers, hoping that a sense of humor may allay some of their fears.

In one of his videos, he held up a candy bar and flashed a big smile, saying his partner bought him chocolates and not “rice and peas,” which might have been a healthier choice but did not have the curative powers he craved under his current circumstances.

“The overwhelming majority of people will go through this crisis well,” Sattelberger reminded viewers. “It will be difficult. It will stress us, but the majority will overcome all of this in a good way.”

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

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.

## ‘Virus at Iran’s gates’: How Tehran failed to stop outbreak

By JON GAMBRELL Associated Press

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates (AP) — Appearing before the cameras coughing and sweating profusely, the man leading Iran’s response to the new coronavirus outbreak promised it was of no danger to his country.

“Quarantines belong to the Stone Age,” Iraj Harirchi insisted.

A day later, he himself would be in quarantine from the virus.

Harirchi’s story is a microcosm of what has happened in Iran amid the coronavirus pandemic. Roughly nine out of 10 cases in the Middle East come from the Islamic Republic, which has reported over 16,000 people infected and at least 988 deaths amid fears that cases may still be underreported. While most people who are infected recover, the virus spreads rapidly and can kill the elderly and those with breathing problems or other underlying illnesses.

Days of denials gave the virus time to spread in Iran as the country marked the 41st anniversary of its 1979 Islamic Revolution with mass demonstrations and then held a parliamentary election in which authorities desperately sought to boost turnout. Now, state television warns the virus could kill “millions” as its supreme leader issued a religious order Tuesday banning “unnecessary travel.”

Although Iran has one of the Mideast’s best medical services, its hospitals appear to be overwhelmed and authorities have asked for 172 million masks from abroad. It also has asked the International Monetary Fund for \$5 billion, the first such loan for Iran since 1962.

The Islamic Republic has an opportunity to limit the virus with the approach of the Persian New Year, Nowruz. The rare religious decree by Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei curtailing travel in the country could help, but it came days after Iraq and Lebanon, both allies of Iran, restricted movement while facing a fraction of the reported infections.

What happens next will not only affect Iran’s civilian government and Shiite theocracy, whose officials already have fallen ill, but also the wider world.

“Judging by the fact that Iran has now asked for a \$5 billion loan from the IMF, this speaks to how dire the situation is getting and them realizing that it’s spun out of control,” said Dr. Amir A. Afkhami, an associate professor at George Washington University who studies Iran.

### ‘PATIENT ZERO’ AND AN ELECTION

In a country like Iran, where the state controls all broadcasters and journalists face restrictions, many things about the outbreak remain unknown. Chief among them is who was “patient zero” — the person who was first infected with the coronavirus in the nation, and where.

Public comments point to the city of Qom, 125 kilometers (80 miles) southwest of Tehran, on the coun-



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try's windswept central desert plateau. How the virus arrived there remains in question.

Authorities suggested that perhaps an Iranian businessman returned from China with the virus. Qom is home to major Shiite seminaries that draw Chinese students. It also is along a \$2.7 billion high-speed train route that a Chinese company is building, a sign of China's outreach to Tehran amid crushing U.S. sanctions. China is also constructing a solar power plant there.

From late January, worries could be seen on the front page of the pro-reform newspaper Aftab-e Yazd. "Mysterious virus at Iran's gates," its banner headline warned as China began a lockdown to control the outbreak.

Yet travel between China and Iran continued.

The first two coronavirus cases were reported Feb. 19, with the announcement that both died in Qom. Since it can take up to two weeks to show symptoms, they could have gotten it in early February.

Iranian authorities haven't offered any details. Iran analysts suggest it might be because the country marked the 41st anniversary of the Islamic Revolution during that period.

Iran also held parliamentary elections Feb. 21. The government desperately wanted a large turnout to boost its legitimacy after shooting down a Ukrainian passenger jet, killing all 176 people on board. Days earlier, a U.S. drone strike in Baghdad killed top Revolutionary Guard Gen. Qassem Soleimani, further shaking its credibility.

Iranian authorities already had disqualified thousands of candidates from running, ultimately tilting the election to conservatives. Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei even later accused foreign enemies of trying to influence turnout with the outbreak.

"The pretext of an illness and virus was used, and their media did not miss the slightest opportunity to discourage people from voting," he said.

The election saw Iran's lowest turnout since the revolution, with some voters wearing the masks that everyone soon would want. But people already were dying and fear was spreading.

## SHRINES AND HAZMAT SUITS

Qom long has been the stronghold of Iran's Shiite clergy. A focal point of devotion is the golden-domed shrine of Fatima Masumeh, a Shiite saint. Crowds pray there 24 hours a day, seven days a week, touching and kissing the shrine.

That raises the risks for visitors. In Saudi Arabia, authorities have closed off access to the holiest sites in Islam over concerns about the virus. Churches, mosques, temples and shrines around the world have been closed or subject to stringent disinfecting campaigns.

But in Qom and elsewhere in Iran, the shrines stayed open despite civilian health authorities demanding they close. Mohammad Saidi, who oversees the Fatima Masumeh shrine, insinuated that closing shrines was part of a plot against Shiites by President Donald Trump.

"Defeating Qom is the dream of treacherous Trump and his domestic mercenaries, but this dream will not be realized even in their grave," Saidi said on Feb. 22.

That decision likely gave the virus time to spread. Police later arrested those who posted online video of themselves licking and kissing shrines.

"The city's religious epithet — 'the nest of the Prophet and his family' — was intended to reassure believers worldwide that it was insulated against epidemics and other disasters," wrote Mehdi Khalaji, a Qom-trained Shiite theologian who is an analyst at the Washington Institute for Near-East Policy. "If early reports about the spread of the coronavirus prove correct, Qom's status as the ideological capital of the Islamic Revolution helped make it the pathogen's transmitting center to the rest of Iran and at least seven other countries."

Since then, hazmat-suited workers have fogged disinfectant and cleaned the shrines. Some mosques even hand out alcohol as a disinfectant to the poor despite Islam forbidding its consumption.

The Fatima Masumeh shrine and another one in Mashhad had closed by Monday night, only to see online videos purporting to show hard-line faithful storming the shrines' courtyard, demanding they open.

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By that point, the virus had spread, reaching the highest levels of Iran's theocracy.

THE SITUATION IS TERRIBLE HERE AND I HOPE GOD HELPS US'

Like blood from a beating heart, the infections in Qom coursed out across Iran in maps later shared by the Health Ministry. In Tehran, the virus began moving through the government and the Shiite theocracy.

Among those first infected was Harirchi, the deputy health minister who tested positive only a day after he downplayed the virus in a televised news conference.

It didn't stop there.

The virus killed Expediency Council member Mohammad Mirmohammadi, described as a close confidant of Khamenei. Hadi Khosroshahi, Iran's former ambassador to the Vatican, and Ahmad Tuyserkani, an adviser to Iran's judiciary chief, also died along with several lawmakers and a member of the country's Assembly of Experts.

The sick included Vice President Masoumeh Ebtekar, better known as "Sister Mary," the English-speaking spokeswoman for the students who seized the U.S. Embassy in Tehran in 1979 in the 444-day hostage crisis. The virus also infected senior Vice President Eshaq Jahangiri and two other Cabinet members, along with Revolutionary Guard members and doctors.

Soon, even 80-year-old Khamenei was seen wearing disposable gloves at a tree-planting ceremony. President Hassan Rouhani, 71, was pictured at a teleconference with the nearest official a few meters (several feet) away.

The numbers soared. Iran's death rate from the virus now is higher than in other hard-hit nations.

That could be from the initial lack of testing kits and facilities. It also could be from what outside experts, Tehran lawmakers and other local leaders have alleged from the start: Iran was hiding the true number of infections and deaths.

Authorities initially denied that, especially after the BBC's Persian service said deaths far exceeded those reported at the beginning of the crisis. But that denial appeared to weaken over time.

"We found out a little late that the coronavirus had entered Iran because we mistook it for the flu," Reza Malekzadeh, a deputy health minister, later said.

A man in Qom filmed rows of bodies in black bags and caskets awaiting burial for days in a trench lined with lime. He alleged all had tested positive for the coronavirus, although officials later said the bodies had been held pending test results.

"The situation is terrible here and I hope God helps us," he said while walking through the mortuary.

Authorities later arrested him.

PAST EXPERIENCES, NEW WORRIES

Diseases have influenced Iranian history. Cholera outbreaks plagued its Qajar dynasty, long indebted to British and Russian powers. The chaos and debt set the stage for Iran's 1906 Constitutional Revolution and the creation of parliament.

That cholera outbreak saw Shiite religious leaders lash out at the West. Now, Iranian leaders, such as the head of its Revolutionary Guard and Khamenei himself, traffic in the baseless conspiracy theory that the coronavirus is a biological weapon created by the U.S., something echoed by Chinese officials as well.

"The psychology of the leadership in Iran has sort of an almost self-destructive need to double down on a lie just to sort of portray itself as competent," Afkhami said.

That's contrasted with the response to the El Tor strain of cholera that caused a pandemic through the 1960s. Iran produced millions of vaccine doses and inoculated its people, controlling its spread. It even gave broad-range antibiotics from the U.S. to pilgrims visiting Shiite shrines, Afkhami said.

"This rapid mobilization and this rapid response allowed the country to control the epidemic," he said.

That was under Iran's shah, toppled in the 1979 revolution. But even after, Iran fought off other outbreaks, and its hospitals, doctors and nurses are known as some of the best in the wider Middle East, with a network of clinics from villages to big cities.

However, the system appears to be stretching at the seams, with online videos purporting to show field hospitals going up. Meanwhile, Iran's 80 million people, whose sense of high risk has been dulled by years of international isolation, crowd into grocery stores and butcher shops, suspicious of anything in the state media.

Nowruz, the Persian New Year, looms on Friday, a holiday when millions travel. The government repeatedly had stopped short of ordering any major travel restrictions. It didn't explain why, but there could be worry about further angering its people or slowing down its anemic, sanctions-hurt economy.

Online videos showed Iranians ignoring government demands to stay home and moving instead toward the coast of the Caspian Sea and the Persian Gulf. Residents of hard-hit Rasht, on Iran's coast, have threatened to attack out-of-towners.

"We expect that, God willing, we can contain the rising trend of the disease, not the disease itself, by March 26," said Harirchi, the health official who is recovering from COVID-19. "But I say this very frankly: if the great people don't cooperate, the disease will continue to be there until late May or even in June, and turn into a huge crisis."

And the man who once called quarantines a thing of the past added: "I beg the people to minimize their trips and contacts, and isolate the infected people from others completely."

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Follow Jon Gambrell on Twitter at [www.twitter.com/jongambrellAP](https://www.twitter.com/jongambrellAP).

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

## State and local officials take a harder line on the virus

By **TIM SULLIVAN** and **CHRIS RUGABER** Associated Press

Nearly 7 million people in the San Francisco area were all but confined to their homes Tuesday, while Florida put a damper on spring break and St. Patrick's Day by ordering the closing of all bars, as state and local officials took an increasingly hard line against the coronavirus.

Ohio canceled its presidential primary hours before the polls were to open, but three other states pressed ahead with their elections, recommending such precautions as putting tape on the floor to keep voters a safe distance apart.

On Wall Street, stocks bounced around in early trading, one day after the worst market loss since the Black Monday crash of 1987.

With the economy grinding to a halt, the White House proposed a roughly \$850 billion rescue package — a sweeping stimulus not seen since the Great Recession of 2008 — and called for its rapid approval.

It would provide relief for small businesses, \$50 billion for the airline industry and a big tax cut for wage-earners, said two people familiar with the request who described it on the condition of anonymity because they weren't authorized to speak publicly.

"If we do this right, our country and the world, frankly, but our country can be rolling again pretty quickly," President Donald Trump said.

Officials in six San Francisco Bay Area counties issued a "shelter-in-place" order that went into effect Tuesday, requiring most residents to stay inside and venture out only for food, medicine or exercise for three weeks — the most sweeping lockdown in the U.S. against the outbreak.

"It's really a scary situation for us because if we don't work, we don't eat," lamented Miguel Aguirre, a janitor at San Francisco's Boys and Girls Club.

Coronavirus infections across the country reached approximately 5,200, and the death toll climbed to at least 97, with more than half of the dead from Washington state. Worldwide, more than 7,300 have died.

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Over the past day, new and more urgent warnings have come from the White House, which has called on Americans not to gather in groups of more than 10 and advised older people to stay home.

Still, the response across states varied.

While beaches on Florida's Gulf Coast were still open, and at least one was full of spring breakers, Gov. Ron Desantis ordered all the state's bars and nightclubs closed for 30 days and asked Florida's university system to send students home for online instruction for the rest of the spring semester.

Desantis has said he would leave beach restrictions up to local authorities.

In Texas, Gov. Greg Abbott has left many decisions up to local governments. Unlike other governors of heavily populated states, Abbott has not made explicit calls for limiting mass gatherings.

"This is not a time to panic," he said. "It's not as if we have never been through this before. We've been through this many, many times."

Election officials in Florida, Arizona and Illinois, all of them holding primaries, said they were taking precautions to make sure voters could safely cast their ballots. The immediate problem: Hundreds of poll workers dropped out, forcing state officials to scramble.

"Please, please heed our call and volunteer," said Marisel Hernandez, head of the election commission in Chicago. "Help us."

Election officials in Illinois' Cook County, home to Chicago, urged poll workers to use blue painter's tape to mark the floor every 6 feet so voters could keep their distance while waiting in line.

Meanwhile, millions of Americans were holed up at home, many thrown out of work until further notice as offices, stores and other businesses shut down. School was canceled for tens of millions of students, forcing parents to scramble for child care or find ways to entertain their children.

The rapid work stoppage had Americans fretting about their jobs and their savings, threatened to overwhelm unemployment benefit programs, and heightened fears the country could plunge into a recession.

Most people who come down with the disease have relatively mild symptoms, but it can be deadly for some, especially the elderly and those with underlying health problems. Most people infected with the virus recover in a matter of weeks.

Health officials say that "social distancing" — encouraging people to avoid close contact with others — is a key to slow the spread of the virus and keep U.S. hospitals from being overwhelmed with a sudden deluge of patients.

In Detroit, bus riders were stranded Tuesday after most drivers didn't report to work, apparently concerned about the spread of the virus and confused as to whether Michigan's new restrictions on gatherings included vehicles loaded with commuters.

The city canceled bus service shortly after 8 a.m. because of the shortage of drivers. Surprised riders waiting at stops across the city pulled out phones to try to get a lift from friends or family.

"Just now?" a maintenance man, Amadou Sanders, asked. "How am I going to get to work?"

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Associated Press writers Ed White in Detroit, Angela Charlton in Paris; Geir Moulson in Berlin; Kelli Kennedy and Terry Spencer in Fort Lauderdale, Florida; Mike Schneider in Orlando, Florida; Sophia Tareen and Tammy Webber in Chicago; John O'Connor in Springfield, Illinois; Christina A. Cassidy in Atlanta; Julie Watson in San Diego and Olga R. Rodriguez in San Francisco contributed to this report.

## AP source: Saints, Brees agree on 2-year, \$50 million deal

By BRETT MARTEL AP Sports Writer

NEW ORLEANS (AP) — The Saints and record-setting quarterback Drew Brees have agreed on a two-year, \$50 million contract, a person familiar with the situation said.

The person spoke to The Associated Press on condition of anonymity on Tuesday because the deal has not been announced.

Brees has said repeatedly that he is taking career decision one year at a time. His new contract gives the 41-year-old, 19-year veteran the leverage to decide after this season whether he wants to continue playing.



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Brees missed five games with a throwing hand injury that required surgery but was still productive last season while leading New Orleans to a third straight playoff appearance. Brees' 74.3% completion rate ranked second in NFL history behind only his 2018 record of 74.4%.

He also passed for 27 touchdowns while throwing just four interceptions and was selected to a fourth straight Pro Bowl, the 13th of his career.

Brees was due to become a free agent this offseason, but he announced in mid-February that he wanted to keep playing and retire as a Saint. So the only real questions were when the deal would get done and how much it would be worth.

In this case, Brees accepted deal that did not place him in the top 10 QBs in the NFL in terms of annual salary, essentially taking a home-town discount in hopes giving the club a better chance to build a Super Bowl contender around him.

The Saints have made the playoffs the past three seasons, including a trip to the NFC title game two seasons ago. Each of their past three playoff losses have come down the final play, with two ending in overtime.

Brees is the NFL's all-time leader in completions with 6,867, yards passing with 77,416, and touchdowns with 547. His career touchdowns mark is most vulnerable, just six ahead of 20-year veteran Tom Brady.

Brees began his career with the San Diego Chargers, who drafted him out of Purdue in 2001. He joined the Saints as a free agent in 2006 on the heels of a career-threatening throwing shoulder injury.

More AP NFL: <https://apnews.com/NFL> and [https://twitter.com/AP\\_NFL](https://twitter.com/AP_NFL)

## Trump changes his tone, gets real on the coronavirus threat

By JILL COLVIN, ZEKE MILLER and JONATHAN LEMIRE Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — He called on the country to come together. He warned of pain to come. And he deferred to the nation's public health experts while at least momentarily putting aside petty squabbling.

After weeks of trying to play down the risk posed by the coronavirus pandemic, President Donald Trump struck a more urgent tone Monday as he delivered a sobering message to Americans grappling with a new reality that will dramatically alter their lives for months to come.

The change in tone lasted a day. But it signaled an urgent new White House response to a crisis that's upending American society.

Trump's more somber tone came as he addressed the public at a White House briefing and made a direct appeal to all Americans to do their part to halt the pandemic's spread.

Gone were Trump's "do as I say, not as I do" handshakes that had continued even after health experts admonished people to avoid contact and practice social distancing. Also gone was the rosy talk aimed, in part, at propping up reeling financial markets.

The shift was informed in part by a growing realization within the West Wing that the coronavirus crisis is an existential threat to Trump's presidency, endangering his reelection and his legacy. Trump has told advisers that he now believes the virus will be a significant general election issue and he took note of the clear-eyed, somber tone used by his likely general election foe, Joe Biden, in Sunday's Democratic debate.

But by Tuesday, the Republican president had returned to lashing out on Twitter at his Democratic critics.

He went after New York Gov. Andrew Cuomo, with whom he has feuded for days, incongruously chiding him to "keep politics out of" the nation's response to the virus. He then went after Michigan Gov. Gretchen Whitmer after she criticized him for saying governors should work through their own supply chains to get ventilators and other needed medical equipment instead of relying on the federal government to get it for them.

"Failing Michigan Governor must work harder and be much more proactive," Trump tweeted Tuesday. "We are pushing her to get the job done. I stand with Michigan!"

But despite the attacks, mere minutes later Trump followed up with: "Federal Government is working very well with the Governors and State officials. Good things will happen! #KILLTHEVIRUS."

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Twitter outbursts aside, the president has been shaken by the worsening crisis. With reports from Italy growing grimmer, U.S. cases surging and America's economy in shock, Trump has also received a series of alarming briefings in recent days that have included dire projections about how many Americans could be infected if drastic action isn't taken.

He also has watched the dramatic escalation of precautions within the White House complex, where officials are now screening everyone who enters the building after Trump unknowingly interacted with at least three people who have since tested positive for the virus. Already, both his press secretary, Stephanie Grisham, and his outgoing acting chief of staff, Mick Mulvaney, are isolating themselves at home after coming into direct or indirect contact with those who have COVID-19.

And so it was that on Monday, Trump matter-of-factly outlined the government's newest recommendations, including urging all older Americans and those with chronic health conditions to stay home. All Americans were advised to avoid gatherings of more than 10 people.

Trump repeatedly acknowledged the disquieting reality that the economy may well be careening toward recession and that Americans' lives will likely be impacted for far longer than most people have even begun to process.

"If we do a really good job, people are talking about July, August, something like that," he told reporters who filled every other seat in the briefing room in an attempt to practice social distancing.

National crises are times of testing for presidents, and after days of shrinking from the urgency, Trump approached the moment with newfound gravity.

As recently as Saturday, Trump had said, despite all evidence to the contrary, that the country had "tremendous control" of the virus, even as cases soared, local governments were shutting down schools, and doctors were warning of an impending health catastrophe. He reframed that comment Monday, saying he'd been referring to his government's handling of the crisis and not the virus itself.

"It's not under control for any place in the world," he acknowledged.

Trump for weeks had taken his upbeat cues from a network of outside advisers who told him the media and Democrats were hyping the threat. But he has also heard from allies who have urged him to bolster his response and change his tone, including some Republicans on Capitol Hill who feared they had been personally exposed to the virus.

Jared Kushner, the president's influential son-in-law and senior adviser, who has recently taken a more active role in the administration's response, has privately compared the virus to a "war" that could imperil the nation's economy and population, according to two White House officials and Republicans close to the West Wing who spoke on the condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to discuss private conversations. The pandemic's impact could rival that of World War II, he has said, requiring a national effort.

Trump, who has always viewed himself as his best spokesman, has also expressed frustration in recent weeks that Vice President Mike Pence, whom he appointed to lead the White House task force, has been too robotic when he speaks at White House briefings.

After watching the markets rise Friday during his Rose Garden address, Trump had hoped it would happen again Monday after the Federal Reserve's announcement the previous day that it would slash interest rates, and he was rattled when they collapsed instead. Hoping to turn the tide, he told aides he wanted to speak at Monday's 3:30 p.m. press briefing — the same late afternoon time slot as Friday's event.

But this time, instead of a spike in the market, the Dow Jones continued to plummet as he spoke, dipping even further after he admitted, for the first time, that the nation may be heading for a recession.

While Trump's changes in tones are often fleeting, White House officials and allies saw Monday's more measured approach as evidence the president was coming to grips with the magnitude of the challenges ahead for the nation and his presidency. Still, few expected Trump's more measured approach to last or to erase past missteps.

Said Princeton presidential historian Julian Zelizer: "I'm not sure a change in tone makes up for a kind of complete lack of leadership that the country has seen in the first few weeks of this crisis."

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Bev Banks contributed to this report.

**EDITOR'S NOTE** — 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.

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.

## US job openings jumped in January, before virus outbreak

By **CHRISTOPHER RUGABER AP Economics Writer**

WASHINGTON (AP) — U.S. employers sharply increased the number of jobs they advertised in January, a sign the job market and economy were in mostly solid shape before the virus outbreak hit.

Businesses, nonprofits and government agencies posted nearly 7 million open jobs in January, up 6.3% from the previous month. Hiring slowed, while the number of people quitting their jobs was largely unchanged.

Quits can be a sign of economic strength since most people quit a job when they have another lined up. Overall, the figures show that in January there were more jobs available than the number of unemployed, but that will likely change sharply as companies lay off workers and freeze hiring amid widespread closures and self-isolation intended to prevent the spread of the coronavirus.

## Today in History By The Associated Press

Today in History

Today is Wednesday, March 18, the 78th day of 2020. There are 288 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On March 18, 1940, Adolf Hitler and Benito Mussolini met at the Brenner Pass, where the Italian dictator agreed to join Germany's war against France and Britain.

On this date:

In 1766, Britain repealed the Stamp Act of 1765.

In 1922, Mohandas K. Gandhi was sentenced in India to six years' imprisonment for civil disobedience. (He was released after serving two years.)

In 1925, the Tri-State Tornado struck southeastern Missouri, southern Illinois and southwestern Indiana, resulting in some 700 deaths.

In 1937, in America's worst school disaster, nearly 300 people, most of them children, were killed in a natural gas explosion at the New London Consolidated School in Rusk County, Texas.

In 1942, President Franklin D. Roosevelt signed an executive order authorizing the War Relocation Authority, which was put in charge of interning Japanese-Americans, with Milton S. Eisenhower (the younger brother of Dwight D. Eisenhower) as its director.

In 1963, the U.S. Supreme Court, in *Gideon v. Wainwright*, ruled unanimously that state courts were required to provide legal counsel to criminal defendants who could not afford to hire an attorney on their own.

In 1965, the first spacewalk took place as Soviet cosmonaut Alexei Leonov went outside his Voskhod 2 capsule, secured by a tether.

In 1980, Frank Gotti, the 12-year-old youngest son of mobster John Gotti, was struck and killed by a

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car driven by John Favara, a neighbor in Queens, New York. (The following July, Favara vanished, the apparent victim of a gang hit.)

In 1996, rejecting an insanity defense, a jury in Dedham, Massachusetts, convicted John C. Salvi III of murdering two women in attacks at two Boston-area abortion clinics in December 1994. (Salvi later committed suicide in his prison cell.)

In 2002, Brittanie Cecil died two days short of her 14th birthday after being hit in the head by a puck at a game between the host Columbus Blue Jackets and Calgary Flames; it was apparently the first such fan fatality in NHL history.

In 2005, doctors in Florida, acting on orders of a state judge, removed Terri Schiavo's feeding tube. (Despite the efforts of congressional Republicans to intervene and repeated court appeals by Schiavo's parents, the brain-damaged woman died on March 31, 2005, at age 41.)

In 2018, Vladimir Putin rolled to a crushing reelection victory for six more years as Russia's president.

Ten years ago: President Barack Obama signed into law a \$38 billion jobs bill containing a modest mix of tax breaks and spending designed to encourage the private sector to start hiring again. Actor Fess Parker, 85, died in Santa Ynez, California. Jerome York, an Apple Inc. board member and a financial wizard credited with turning around Chrysler and IBM, died in Pontiac, Michigan, at age 71.

Five years ago: Militants opened fire at a museum in Tunisia's capital, killing 22 people, most of them foreign tourists. Serbia arrested eight men accused of taking part in the massacre of some 1,300 people at a warehouse on the outskirts of Srebrenica (sreh-breh-NEET'-sah) in 1995. Lindsey Vonn won the World Cup downhill title for the seventh time, winning the last race in the discipline at the World Cup finals in Meribel, France.

One year ago: Warner Bros. chief Kevin Tsujihara stepped down from the studio following claims that he had promised roles to an actress with whom he was having an affair; he was one of the highest-ranking Hollywood executives to be felled by sexual misconduct allegations. Brooks & Dunn, Ray Stevens and record label head Jerry Bradley were announced as inductees into the Country Music Hall of Fame.

Today's Birthdays: Composer John Kander is 93. Country singer Charley Pride is 86. Nobel peace laureate and former South African president F.W. de Klerk is 84. Country singer Margie Bowes is 79. Actor Kevin Dobson is 77. Actor Brad Dourif is 70. Jazz musician Bill Frisell is 69. Singer Irene Cara is 61. Alt-country musician Karen Grotberg (The Jayhawks) is 61. Movie writer-director Luc Besson is 61. Actor Geoffrey Owens is 59. Actor Thomas Ian Griffith is 58. Singer-songwriter James McMurtry is 58. TV personality Mike Rowe is 58. Singer-actress Vanessa L. Williams is 57. Olympic gold medal speedskater Bonnie Blair is 56. Country musician Scott Saunders (Sons of the Desert) is 56. Actor David Cubitt is 55. Rock musician Jerry Cantrell (Alice in Chains) is 54. Rock singer-musician Miki Berenyi (ber-EN'-ee) is 53. Actor Michael Bergin is 51. Rapper-actress-talk show host Queen Latifah is 50. Former White House Chief of Staff Reince Priebus (ryns PREE'-bus) is 48. Actor-comedian Dane Cook is 48. Country singer Philip Sweet (Little Big Town) is 46. Rock musician Stuart Zender is 46. Singers Evan and Jaron Lowenstein are 46. Actress-singer-dancer Sutton Foster is 45. Rock singer Adam Levine (Maroon 5) is 41. Rock musician Daren Taylor (Airborne Toxic Event) is 40. Olympic gold medal figure skater Alexei Yagudin is 40. Actor Adam Pally is 38. Actor Cornelius Smith Jr. is 38. Actor Duane Henry (TV: "NCIS") is 35. Actress Lily Collins is 31. Actress-dancer Julia Goldani Telles is 25. Actress Ciara Bravo is 23. Actor Blake Garrett Rosenthal is 16.

Thought for Today: "No man has a right in America to treat any other man tolerantly, for tolerance is the assumption of superiority." — Wendell Willkie, American politician (1892-1944).