

# Groton Daily Independent

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## 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 18, 2020

<b>Positive*</b>	11
<b>Negative</b>	551
<b>Pending</b>	350

### 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.

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## Covid-19 Update by Marie Miller

Folks, I don't know any better way to parse it: Things look grim. I'm hoping we're reaching some kind of peak created by increased testing and that this will abate soon, but I am not hopeful based on the fact that some states ran out of testing supplies on Monday and still have not been replenished. This means we likely still have some important number of undetected cases waiting for sufficient testing. Thinking it will continue to get significantly worse each day for a while yet.

We're at 8317 cases reported in 50 states, DC, and 3 territories, PR, GU, and VI. I had read something about first cases in the Southern Marianas and in American Samoa, but have not been able to confirm these yet. I'll keep watching for this and report as I gather information. Just last night, I told you we've been at daily increases of 27% for some time now; today we blew that out of the water with a 49% increase. This is worrisome. It is also what exponential growth, something I mentioned yesterday--and doesn't that feel like a thousand years ago?--looks like.

NY alone added over 1000 cases just today and now is at 2382; WA hit 1026. We see CA at 875 and NJ at 427. Then, in addition to those, we have 9 more states over 100 cases, 13 states with 50-99 cases, 21 states and DC with 10-49, and only 3, plus the three territories, PR, GU, and VI, left in single digits.

147 people have died in 23 states. WA still is hardest hit with 68 deaths, 35 of them associated with a single nursing home (although there are nursing home-associated deaths in KS, SC, and other nursing homes in WA as well). NY has 21 deaths, CA has 17. LA, which until 10 or so days ago had 6 cases, now has 280 cases and 7 deaths, and FL has 6. Other states with deaths (1-3 each) include NJ, IL, CO, GA, TX, PA, CT, MD, NV, MI, VA, OR, SC, IN, KY, MO, KS, and SD. Of those, PA, CT, MD, MI, and MO are reporting their first deaths today.

More news that doesn't quite skew in the direction we might prefer: It looks like the risk to younger age groups is somewhat higher, at least in the US, than we had thought. The CDC published its preliminary findings on cases in the US earlier today. Much of what we see here is what we'd expect: If you're older, your risk, especially your risk of dying, is higher. But, if you're younger than 65, your risk of being seriously ill is a bit more than perhaps had been thought.

The study included cases between February 12 and March 16 for which ages were known, about 2500 cases. These were confirmed cases, excluding those repatriated from Wuhan and Japan, including from cruise ships, so they were cases diagnosed (and largely acquired) on US soil. Of those 2500, 508 were hospitalized; this is right on the 20% we've seen in other parts of the world. 35% of them were 65 and over; 65% were 20-64. That's a lot in that younger age group, more than I believe most of us have been thinking about.

ICU admissions were 53% 65 and over and 48% 20-64. And deaths were 80% 65 and older and 20% 20-64.

For the record, the numbers in the under 20 age set are negligible: 5% of cases, less than 1% of hospital admissions, and no ICU admissions or deaths.

The takeaway here is that, if you're an adult under 65, you're probably not as bulletproof as you had thought. Take some care, if not in the interest of slowing this thing down on behalf of others, then in the interest of self-preservation. Those who've ended up in ICU and lived to tell the tale do not recount an experience anything like as fun as a party. And the farther you are past 20, the less exciting a diagnosis might be.

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Now for the better news portion of our program, there are a couple of brighter spots on the horizon.

First, two researchers at Johns Hopkins have proposed the use of what's generally called convalescent serum in treatment and prevention of these infections. Convalescent serum is just what it sounds like, serum from blood of people who've recovered. Since recovery means you have produced antibodies capable of fighting off this virus (they're why you recovered) and serum is where antibodies hang out, it makes sense that the serum of recovered patients might be useful for this purpose. This is not some new, high-tech thing; such methods have been employed since the early 20th century in diphtheria epidemics and such.

Especially since hospitals have been running short of personal protective equipment (PPE) for health care workers and some of them become ill due to continuing high-dose exposures, something that will offer them protection from infection would be an enormous help, both in keeping them safe and in keeping them on the front lines caring for patients who need them. If sufficient supplies are available, it would also be of use to high-risk patients if administered early in their infection. This treatment modality requires (1) serum from a sufficient number of recovered individuals, (2) their consent to collect their serum, (3) excellent coordination between blood banks who would collect and process the serum and clinicians who would administer it, and (4) a blood type match between donor and recipient because the serum contains antibodies to red blood cells as well, and this could cause trouble if the types don't match.

Understand that the protection offered is temporary, so it is not a panacea, but it would buy precious time while we work out a vaccine and other treatments. Thing is, the antibodies from someone else don't last a long time in the recipient. The protection, while it lasts, is efficient; but it has limited duration (3 weeks to 3-4 months). So there's something we can do as soon as we have a fair number of recovered patients willing to donate.

The other good news is around the work of a research team in the Netherlands. They have managed to produce in what are called humanized transgenic mice (mice to whom human genes have been transplanted so that they produce human instead of mouse proteins, for example, antibodies) human monoclonal antibodies to SARS-CoV viruses, both the one that causes SARS and the one that causes Covid-19, our current nemesis. The antibody is to a trimeric spike (S) glycoprotein on the viral surface common to this class of virus that mediates entry into host cells, and it is a fully human IgG that can be injected into patients. The report uses language like "potently inhibit infection" and "authentic infection [of cells] was neutralized." It says the antibodies "can alter the course of infection in the infected host supporting virus clearance or protect an uninfected host that is exposed to virus." And because the antibody responds to a surface protein common to all viruses in the subgenus, Sarbecovirus, it should also be useful against other future emerging diseases caused by members of this subgenus, so it could be a valuable tool against the next nasty thing to come along.

I don't know how long it will take to produce these monoclonal antibodies in bulk or to test them, but this is exciting news, a breakthrough. Those among you who've been pooh-poohing scientists when their findings don't comport to the world as you'd prefer to see it, if this kind of research saves your ass, I don't want to hear another word. Not one. This is astonishingly good work, and it is clear evidence that, while you were at the bar, drinking green beer and exposing everyone in sight to all kinds of danger last Saturday night, someone else was burning the midnight oil in a lab for the sole purpose of saving you from your stupid self. Bow down, and be grateful.

[And forgive me if I sound cranky, but I have recently become aware of a coronavirus party, complete with DJ and karaoke, along with a free roll of toilet paper with every purchase of a bucket of beer, for all comers in Rapid City. While I will cop to the purchase of the occasional bucket of beer in my misspent

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youth, it was never at the price of a few lives of people I just didn't care about; and that makes me cranky. So sue me.]

Things are bad, very bad, but we're not dead yet. Do you think it would be possible to deny yourself your creature comforts a while longer to buy us all time while these brilliant and dedicated people devote their time to rescuing us? If so, stay home. Quit running around. Don't be careless. Use precautions. Despite our missteps, we could yet be OK, at least most of us.

I'll update you when I have more news. Some of it will be terrible. With luck, some of it will be good too.

Stay well.

## GBB All-Conference NEC Team

### First Team:

Mariah Winegar, SR, Aberdeen Roncalli.  
Kailee Clausen, SR, Redfield.  
Britney Lovre, SR, Deuel.  
Kylee Wadsworth, JR, Hamlin.  
Kami Wadsworth, FR, Hamlin.

### Second Team:

Addison Rozell, JR, Redfield.  
Logan Keszler, SR, Hamlin.  
Lexus RedThunder, SR, Sisseton.  
Morgan Fiedler, SO, Aberdeen Roncalli.  
Madelyn Bragg, SO, Aberdeen Roncalli.

### Third Team:

Kellie Karst, SR, Sisseton.  
Olivia Sass, SR, Clark/Willow Lake.  
Cara Shoemaker, JR, Webster.  
Jacey Engebretson, SR, Milbank.  
Gracie Traphagen, FR, Groton.

**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 *Open 24/7*  
**GDI Living Fitness**

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

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

## Employers: Use SIDES for Online Unemployment Filing

PIERRE, S.D. – The Department of Labor and Regulation (DLR) is asking employers filing unemployment insurance information to sign up for the State Information Data Exchange System (SIDES) e-Response.

SIDES e-Response is a fast, secure and standardized way to automate responses to notices of unemployment claims. Once an employer signs on to SIDES e-Response, DLR will deliver all notices to their email address rather than by mail.

"Due to the large volume of claims we anticipate due to COVID-19 business layoffs or closures, this online process will save time," said state Labor and Regulation Secretary Marcia Hultman. "SIDES is especially helpful to those who typically deal with a large volume of unemployment insurance information."

SIDES e-Response gives employers an easy and efficient way to respond to information requests from DLR, saving time and money by:

Eliminating mail delivery, allowing more time to gather information and respond timely.

Ensuring complete information is provided the first time, reducing the need for phone calls.

Reducing paper handling, staff time and postage costs.

"Wait times in our unemployment call center are longer than normal due to the high volume of claims," said Secretary Hultman. "In order to reserve the phone lines for individual claimants, I strongly encourage businesses to submit questions specific to COVID-19 layoffs and closures to DLRRADivision@state.sd.us to receive a direct and timely response."



## **Rounds Report: COVID-19 Update** **March 18, 2020**

Today, I voted in favor of legislation to provide additional relief to South Dakota families and businesses, both ag and non-ag, impacted by the effects of COVID-19, commonly referred to as coronavirus. The Families First Coronavirus Response Act was negotiated by House Democrats and the Trump administration, and passed by the Senate earlier today.

While it is far from perfect, it does include necessary provisions that will help our country during the COVID-19 outbreak. Included in this legislation are provisions which provide tax credits for paid sick, family and medical leave as well as provisions that address insurance for individuals unemployed as a result of the COVID-19 outbreak. Most importantly, it will deliver immediate relief to South Dakota families and workers while providing free COVID-19 testing that will help track and stop the spread of the disease.

While the COVID-19 crisis is unlike any other we've seen in modern times, American resilience remains strong. We settled the West, put a man on the moon and won two World Wars. There's no challenge we can't overcome when we put our minds to it.

We continue to work on additional measures to address the effects of COVID-19, including legislation to provide economic relief. Every family and business, both ag and non-ag, has been impacted by the spread of COVID-19. We will continue to work together, in a bipartisan manner, to find timely, targeted solutions that keep South Dakotans healthy and help struggling businesses across the state.

For the latest updates on COVID-19 cases in South Dakota, I encourage you to visit [www.covid.sd.gov](http://www.covid.sd.gov). We are also regularly updating our website, [www.rounds.senate.gov/covid19](http://www.rounds.senate.gov/covid19), with the latest information from the state of South Dakota and the Centers for Disease Control.

## **Johnson Praises Expanded Trucking Hours of Service Amid Pandemic**

Washington, D.C. – U.S. Representative Dusty Johnson (R-S.D.) praised the U.S. Department of Transportation's Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration's (FMCSA) decision to expand commercial drivers' hours-of-service during the national COVID-19 pandemic.

"During uncertain times, our nation's supply chain must remain strong," said Johnson. "Our truck drivers play a crucial role – they make sure our grocery stores are stocked and our medical supplies are delivered. I'm grateful for FMCSA's swift action to relieve trucking hours-of-service to ensure Americans have the supplies they need during this outbreak."

On Wednesday, Johnson urged FMCSA Acting Administrator Jim Mullen to provide trucking hours-of-service relief in order to expedite emergency relief shipments during the COVID-19 outbreak. The expanded hours apply to vehicles carrying emergency supplies like medical equipment, sanitation products, and food and agriculture commodities that keep Americans fed.

To read FMCSA's full national emergency declaration visit: <https://www.fmcsa.dot.gov/emergency/expanded-emergency-declaration-under-49-cfr-ss-39023-no-2020-002>

## Thune Statement on Senate Passage of Additional Coronavirus Relief

WASHINGTON — U.S. Sen. John Thune (R-S.D.) today released the following statement after the Senate overwhelmingly approved additional coronavirus relief funding that will continue to provide support to the American people, including by ensuring there are no financial barriers to testing. The bill, which strengthens protections for employees who have been adversely affected by the coronavirus outbreak, now heads to the president to be signed into law. On March 5, Thune supported the first phase of coronavirus funding and has discussed additional steps that will be required to address this outbreak.

“Today we passed important bipartisan legislation that will provide critical relief to American workers, families, and small businesses,” said Thune. “While this is welcome news, there’s a lot more work ahead of us to address the coronavirus’ economic impact, and Senate Republicans are prepared to stay in Washington as long as it takes to get additional legislation to the president’s desk. I’ve been working with Leader McConnell and my Republican colleagues to identify legislative proposals that could be included in a third legislative package, and I’m optimistic about where those conversations are headed. This is a challenging time for our country, but it’s often in challenging times that we see the very best of America. I am confident that if we pull together as a nation, we will emerge from this challenge stronger.”

The Families First Coronavirus Response Act will:

- Provide support to the American people through the duration of the coronavirus outbreak;
- Ensure there are no cost barriers for Americans who need to be tested for the coronavirus, regardless of their personal financial or health insurance situation;
- Provide tax credits to employers so they can help support American workers who are adversely affected by the coronavirus outbreak (those who are sick, required to self-quarantine, or provide care to others); and
- Increase the use and availability of telemedicine, a tool Sen. Thune has long supported, particularly for the benefits it provides to rural America.

## Rounds Supports COVID-19 Legislation that Provides Immediate Relief for South Dakota Families

WASHINGTON—U.S. Sen. Mike Rounds (R-S.D.) today issued the following statement after voting in favor of the Families First Coronavirus Response Act. Included in this legislation are provisions which provide tax credits for paid sick, family and medical leave as well as provisions that address insurance for individuals unemployed as a result of the COVID-19 outbreak.

“This bill, which was negotiated between House Democrats and the Trump administration, is far from perfect. However, as we seek to address our country’s urgent needs in the wake of COVID-19’s spread, I believe it does more good than bad. Most importantly, it will deliver immediate relief to South Dakota families and workers and provide free COVID-19 testing kits that will help us track and stop its spread.

“While the COVID-19 crisis is unlike any other we’ve seen in modern times, American resilience remains strong. We settled the West, put a man on the moon and won two World Wars. There’s no challenge we can’t overcome when we put our minds to it.

“We continue to work on additional measures to address the effects of COVID-19, including legislation to provide economic relief. Every family and business, both ag and non-ag, has been impacted by the spread of COVID-19. We must continue to work together, in a bipartisan manner, to find timely, targeted solutions that keep South Dakotans healthy and help struggling businesses across the state.”

Judicial Watch uses the Freedom of Information Act and other open records laws to promote transparency and uphold the rule of law. Now, the FBI has halted its online Freedom of Information Act operations. Our Corruption Chronicles blog details the latest on this accountability crisis:

## **FBI Shuts Online Public Records Operation Over Coronavirus, Encourages Standard Mail**

As mandatory social distancing forces Americans and federal government employees to telework, the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) is using coronavirus as an excuse to shut down its electronic public records operations. Instead, the agency that dropped the ball on 9/11 and more than 20 terrorist attacks in the U.S. since then, is encouraging the public to send requests via standard mail. Even for a famously inefficient government with a talent for keeping the public in the dark, this is a bit much. Furthermore, it is a scary display of attitude and conduct by the same bloated entity that is supposed to save us all from the new pandemic.

The bizarre move comes amid a nationwide mandate to avoid the outside world and a maximum telework order for federal government employees. Shutting its online Freedom of Information/Privacy Act (FOIPA) operation and accepting only standard mail makes no sense unless the law enforcement agency is simply trying to stop the flow of public records requests. That would be unethical, to say the least. FOIPA is a valuable tool used by Judicial Watch to expose government corruption and it is essential that there be no disruption in the system. Who will receive the mail with the new requests? When will the FOIPA requests get processed if employees are under a mandatory telework order? Judicial Watch reached out to the FBI, but never received a response. Apparently, everyone is home teleworking which means the requests could easily be accessed if the FBI didn't shut down its electronic system.

Here is the absurd message that greets those wishing to obtain records from the FBI during the viral crisis: "Due to the emerging COVID-19 situation, the FBI is not accepting electronic Freedom of Information/Privacy Act requests or sending out electronic responses through the eFOIPA portal at this time. You may still submit a FOIPA request via standard mail. We apologize for this inconvenience and appreciate your understanding." The print is in red, indicating a sense of urgency, and appears above the original eFOIPA submission portal, which was designed to facilitate the process by allowing requesters to submit and receive responses electronically. "The eFOIPA portal's normal operating hours are 24 hours a day seven days a week," according to the FBI website, which offers simple directions on how to proceed with public records requests. "The FBI would like to thank you in advance for your cooperation and looks forward to receiving and responding to your request," the agency writes. "If you have any additional questions or experience any issues while using the eFOIPA system, please e-mail [FOIPAQuestions@fbi.gov](mailto:FOIPAQuestions@fbi.gov) for assistance. To report a matter concerning national security or another federal crime, submit a tip at [tips.fbi.gov](https://tips.fbi.gov)."

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## South Dakota Department of Transportation

The in person Open House/Public Meeting that was Scheduled for Monday, March 23, 2020 at the Britton Event Center for the proposed SDDOT project to Shoulder Widen SD Hwy 10 from Houghton to Britton has been **CANCELLED**.

In lieu of the in person Open House/Public Meeting, a video presentation is available at the web address listed below. Interested individuals are encouraged to view the presentation and submit questions or comments to Mark Malone via email at [mark.malone@state.sd.us](mailto:mark.malone@state.sd.us) or by mail to:

Mark Malone, PE

SD Department of Transportation

700 East Broadway Avenue

Pierre, South Dakota 57501

Please submit questions/comments prior to Monday, April 6, 2020.

Video Presentation Information @

<https://dot.sd.gov/projects-studies/projects/public-meetings>

(Aberdeen Region)

## COMMUNITY UPDATE

JOE SCHWAN

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 18, 2020

On Tuesday, March 17 the Groton Area Administrative Team met in discussion on providing flexible learning opportunities for our students moving forward. In particular, how can we provide educational services during the week of March 23-27 given the known closure through that time. This afternoon a draft plan was sent to our teachers seeking their input and clarifying questions. Further revisions will be made on Thursday with the anticipation that we can provide a plan to our students and parents on Thursday afternoon or Friday. Be on the lookout for information coming pertaining to learning opportunities for our students.

The sack lunch opportunities currently being provided will continue through the week of March 27. Please take advantage of this service if it would be helpful to you.

We've received notification that the April 4, 2020 ACT testing date has been postponed to June 13, 2020. Those students who had registered for that test should have received notification from ACT regarding the postponement.

As a community, please continue to follow the guidelines and recommendations of health officials including frequent hand washing with soap and water, practicing "social-distancing," and not meeting in groups of larger than ten people. We are all being called upon to do our part in reducing the impact of this situation.

Thank you for your patience as we navigate this new reality.

## From Groton Area Elementary

The AR reading window is now open 24/7!!! If you have books at home be sure to see if they are AR books by going to [www.arbookfind.com](http://www.arbookfind.com). Thank you! Mr. Brett Schwan



## 2-1-1 text alerts available to Brown County residents

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the 211 Helpline Center provides up-to-date information, assistance in finding food or other basic essential needs, and connects volunteers to those who need them. The 211 Helpline also provides a centralized location for organizations and businesses to list available assistance, closures and cancellations, and program restrictions.

Brown County residents are encouraged to sign up for 211 text alerts:  
Text 85511 and type "AlertBrown"

The Brown County 211 Helpline Center provides up-to-date information, assistance in finding food or other basic essential needs, and mental health resources. It also provides a centralized location for organizations and businesses to list available assistance, closures and cancellations, and program restrictions.

211 provides a 24/7 hotline which is connected to a trained team that is able to provide up-to-date information. Here are four ways to connect with 211:

call 211  
email [help@helplinecenter.org](mailto:help@helplinecenter.org)  
text your zip code to 898211  
visit [helplinecenter.org](http://helplinecenter.org)

The Helpline Center also offers translation services for phone calls and online resources.

When individuals contact 211, they can expect a professionally trained staff that will:

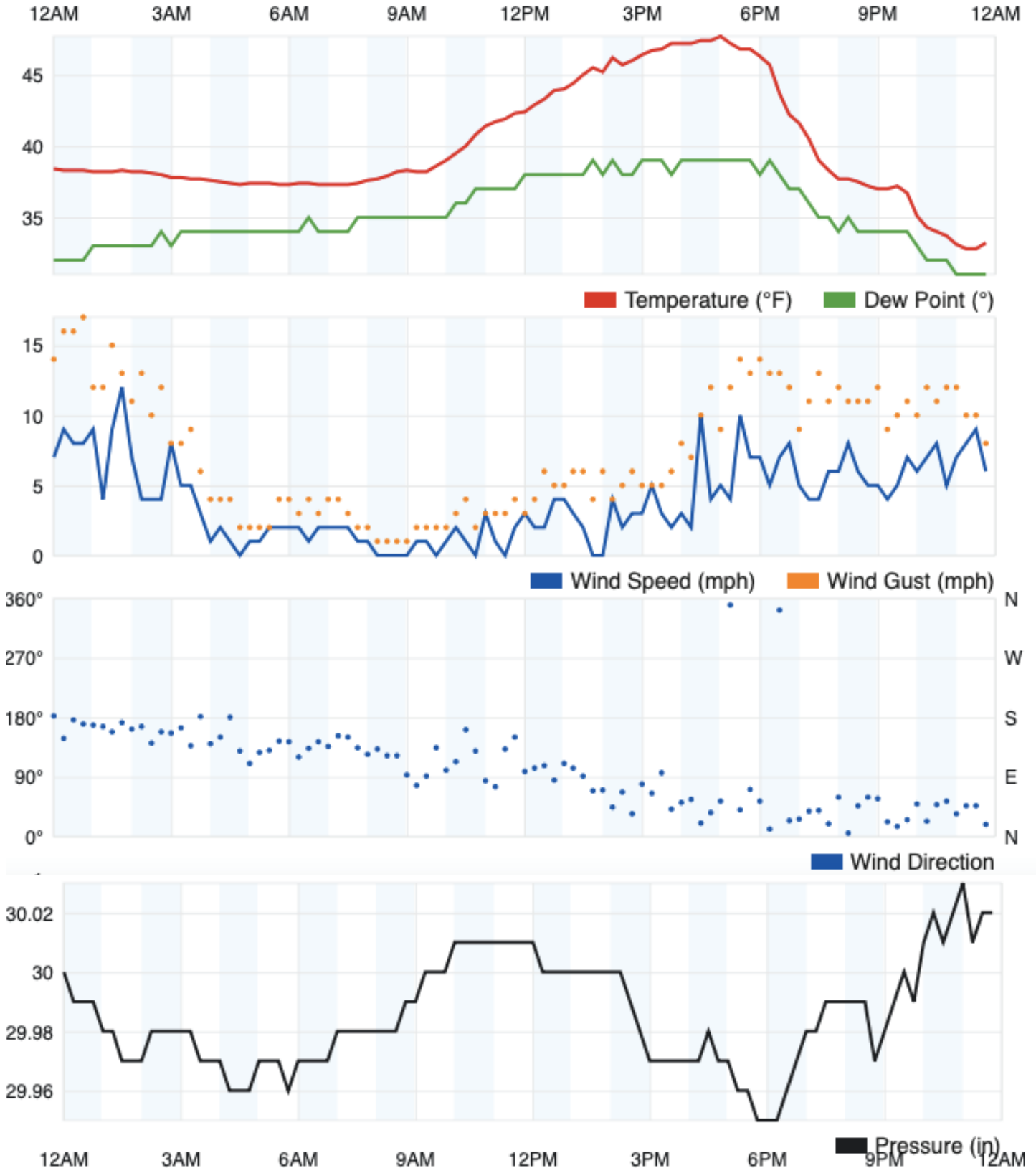
help connect people to food resources and other basic needs  
listen and support all people during their time of need

Brown County organizations can also submit resources and events to 211 by completing this [online form](#).

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## Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs



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Wind Advisory		Friday	Friday Night	Saturday
Thursday	Thursday Night	Friday	Friday Night	Saturday
30%				
Areas Wintry Mix and Patchy Fog then Cloudy and Windy	Gradual Clearing and Windy	Sunny	Partly Cloudy	Mostly Cloudy
High: 29 °F	Low: 9 °F	High: 23 °F	Low: 11 °F	High: 32 °F

## Wintry Mix-Snow, Windy Conditions Today

- Drizzle/Freezing Drizzle to Light Wintry Mix to Light Snow.
- North winds gusting to 35 to 50 mph this afternoon.
- Steady to falling temps through the day.

**WINDY**

### TOTAL SNOWFALL TODAY-TONIGHT

Location	Snowfall
McIntosh	<1"
Eureka	0"
Mobridge	0"
Aberdeen	0"
Wheaton	0-1"
Sisseton	0-1"
Milbank	0-1"
Redfield	0-1"
Watertown	0-1"
Miller	0-1"
Pierre	0-1"
Huron	0-1"
Brookings	1-4"
Murdo	0-2"
Chamberlain	0-3"

### HIGHEST WIND GUSTS TODAY

Location	Wind Gusts
McIntosh	35-40
Eureka	40-45
Mobridge	40-45
Aberdeen	45-50
Wheaton	40-45
Sisseton	45-50
Milbank	45-50
Redfield	45-50
Watertown	45-50
Miller	45-50
Pierre	45-50
Huron	40-45
Brookings	40-45
Murdo	40-45
Chamberlain	40-45

Visit [www.weather.gov/abr](http://www.weather.gov/abr) for a detailed local forecast

Updated: 3/19/2020 4:33 AM CT

NATIONAL WEATHER SERVICE  
OCEANIC AND ATMOSPHERIC ADMINISTRATION

A storm system moving through the region will produce a chance for a mixed bag of weather conditions today. The morning will feature drizzle or freezing drizzle in some areas that will become a mixture of light rain and light snow and then eventually turn to all snow this afternoon. Most of the steadier precipitation will fall across central and southern areas of South Dakota into southwestern Minnesota. North winds will be on the increase through the day and turn rather gusty through the late afternoon and early evening hours. Temps will remain steady through the morning and fall toward midday and into the afternoon. Cold conditions will be the setup tonight as the precipitation ends and skies gradually clear.

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## Today in Weather History

March 19, 1968: During a severe weather event, hail up to 1.75 inches in diameter fell 2 miles south of Brookings. Also, hail 1.00 inch in diameter fell 3 miles northeast of Sioux Falls.

March 19, 2006: Heavy snow of 7 to as much as 20 inches fell on the afternoon of the 18th until around noon on the 20th. The South Dakota Department of Public Safety issued a travel advisory for any travel but especially for the State Basketball Tournament travelers. Interstate-90 was closed on Sunday into Monday morning, with many people stranded. Many cars and trucks were stuck on the roads. Many schools and meetings were postponed or canceled. Snowfall amounts included 8 inches at Blunt, Onida, and Lake Sharpe, 9 inches at Mission Ridge, 10 inches at Pierre, 11 inches at Fort Pierre and near Stephan, 12 inches at Eagle Butte, 14 inches northwest of Presho, 16 inches at Murdo, and 20 inches near Iona.

1907: The highest March temperature in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, was set when the temperature soared to 97 degrees. Dodge City, Kansas, also set a March record with 98 degrees. Denver, Colorado, set a daily record high of 81 degrees.

1948: An estimated F4 tornado moved through Fosterburg, Bunker Hill, and Gillespie, Illinois, killing 33 people and injuring 449 others. 2,000 buildings in Bunker Hill were damaged or destroyed. The total damage was \$3.6 million.

2003: One of the worst blizzards since records began in 1872, struck the Denver metro area and Colorado's Front Range started with a vengeance. Denver International Airport was closed, stranding about 4,000 travelers. The weight of the snow caused a 40-foot gash in a portion of the roof, forcing the evacuation of that section of the main terminal building. Winds gusting to 40 mph produced drifts six feet high in places around the city. Snowfall in foothills was even more impressive. The heavy wet snow caused numerous roofs of homes and businesses to collapse. The estimated cost of property damage alone, not including large commercial buildings, was \$93 million, making it the most costly snowstorm on record for the area. In Denver alone, at least 258 structures were damaged. Up to 135,000 people lost power during the storm, and it took several days for power to be restored. Mayor Wellington Webb of Denver said, "This is the storm of the century, a backbreaker, a record-breaker, a roof breaker." Avalanches in the mountains and foothills closed many roads, including Interstate 70, stranding hundreds of skiers and travelers. The Eldora Ski area 270 skiers were stranded when an avalanche closed the main access road. After the storm, a military helicopter had to deliver food to the resort until the road could be cleared. Two people died in Aurora from heart attacks after shoveling the heavy wet snow. The National Guard sent 40 soldiers and 20 heavy-duty vehicles to rescue stranded travelers along a section of I-70. The storm made March 2003 the snowiest March on record, the fourth snowiest month on record, and the fifth wettest March on record. The total of 22.9 inches is the most significant 24-hour total in March. The storm also broke 19 consecutive months of below-average precipitation for Denver. The 31.8 inches of snow was recorded at the former Stapleton Airport in Denver for its second-greatest snowstorm on record (the greatest was 37.5 inches on 12/4-12/5/1913) with up to three feet in other areas in and around the city and more than seven feet in the foothills. Higher amounts included: Fritz Peak: 87.5 inches, Rollinsville: 87.5 inches, Canin Creek: 83 inches, Near Bergen Park: 74 inches, Northwest of Evergreen: 73 inches, Cola Creek Canyon: 72 inches, Georgetown: 70 inches, Jamestown: 63 inches, Near Blackhawk: 60 inches, Eldora Ski Area: 55 inches, Ken Caryl Ranch: 46.6 inches, Aurora: 40 inches, Centennial: 38 inches, Buckley AFB: 37 inches, Southwest Denver: 35 inches, Louisville: 34 inches, Arvada: 32 inches, Broomfield: 31 inches, Westminster: 31 inches and Boulder: 22.5 inches. This storm was the result of a very moist intense slow-moving Pacific system that tracked across the four corners and into southeastern Colorado, which allowed a deep easterly upslope to form among the front-range.



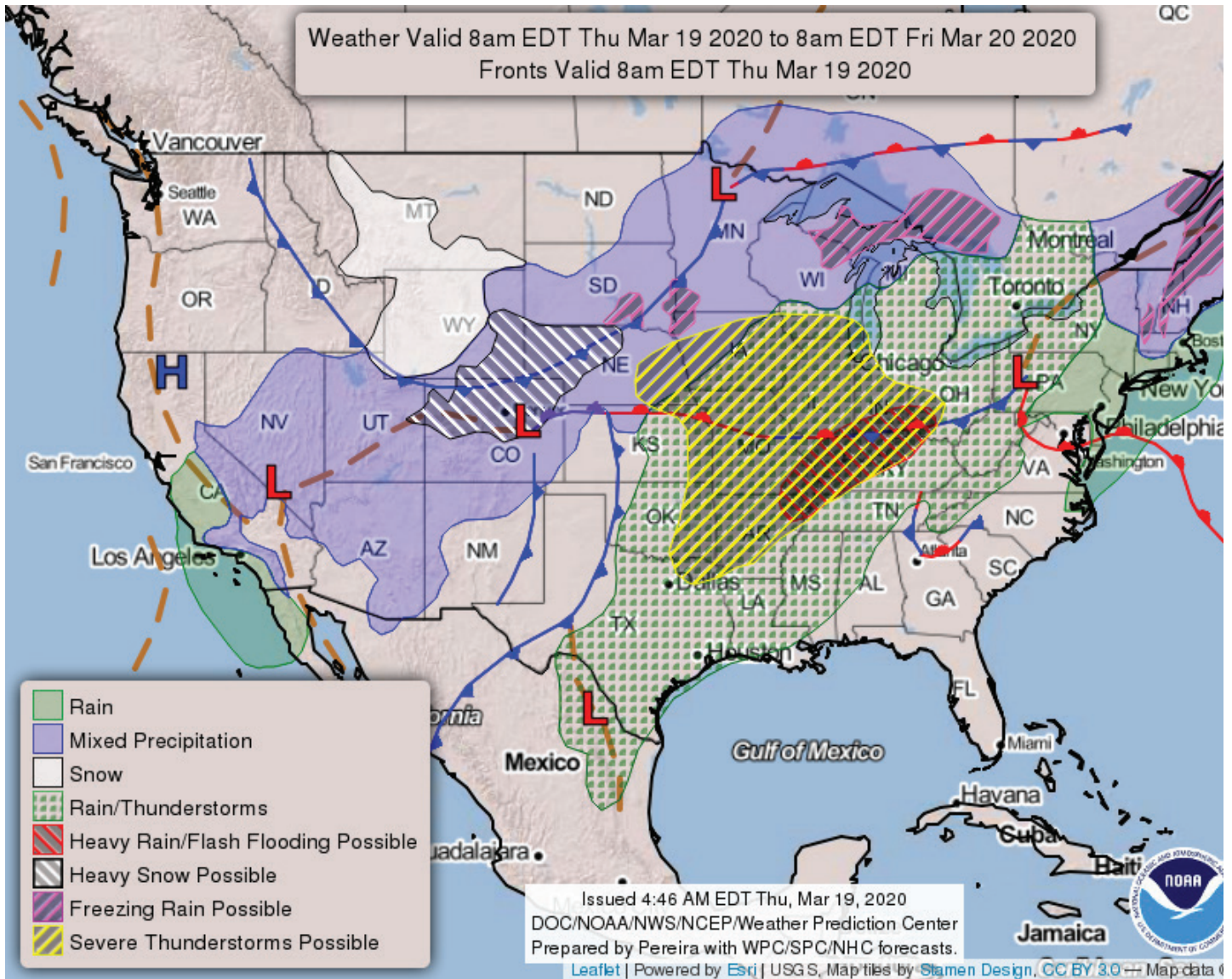
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## Yesterday's Groton Weather Today's Info

**High Temp: 48 °F at 4:55 PM**  
**Low Temp: 33 °F at 11:12 PM**  
**Wind: 18 mph at 12:05 AM**  
**Snow**

**Record High: 73° in 2012**  
**Record Low: -11° in 1965**  
**Average High: 41°F**  
**Average Low: 21°F**  
**Average Precip in March.: 0.59**  
**Precip to date in March.: 0.00**  
**Average Precip to date: 1.61**  
**Precip Year to Date: 0.35**  
**Sunset Tonight: 7:46 p.m.**  
**Sunrise Tomorrow: 7:36 a.m.**



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## PRACTICING THE PRESENCE OF GOD

Lord Moynihan was a brilliant, skillful and world-famous British surgeon. On one occasion after completing an operation before a gallery of doctors, a reporter asked, "How can you work so calmly with such a famous crowd of surgeons present?"

Thoughtfully he replied, "There are just three people in the operating room when I operate: the patient, myself, and God."

As he concluded his farewell speech, Moses told Joshua that the Lord would be with him: "Do not be afraid or discouraged? I will go ahead of you and be with you and never abandon you." We often forget that wherever we are, God is: He is the one Who created us, has a plan for us, and will purposefully work through us.

The opposite of being "discouraged" is to be "encouraged." "En" means "to give." When placed before the word courage, it becomes "to give courage to!" And, this is what God will do for us - constantly and continually. He will always give us the courage to face every challenge in life because He has promised that He will never forget us, forsake us, or fail us.

The question is not "Can we count on God to be faithful and give us courage?" The question is "Can God count on us to be faithful to Him in all He asks of us so He can give us courage?"

Prayer: Heavenly Father, may we sense Your presence and power wherever we are and whatever You call us to do. Give us Your courage to be faithful to You at all times. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: Deuteronomy 31:1-3 But the Lord your God himself will cross over ahead of you. He will destroy the nations living there, and you will take possession of their land.

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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 Wednesday:

Dakota Cash

01-14-15-25-28

(one, fourteen, fifteen, twenty-five, twenty-eight)

Estimated jackpot: \$21,000

Lotto America

06-16-24-34-45, Star Ball: 2, ASB: 5

(six, sixteen, twenty-four, thirty-four, forty-five; Star Ball: two; ASB: five)

Estimated jackpot: \$8.7 million

Mega Millions

Estimated jackpot: \$96 million

Powerball

15-27-44-59-63, Powerball: 8, Power Play: 4

(fifteen, twenty-seven, forty-four, fifty-nine, sixty-three; Powerball: eight; Power Play: four)

Estimated jackpot: \$130 million

### South Dakota governor signs series of criminal justice bills

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — Gov. Kristi Noem on Wednesday signed 17 bills from the South Dakota Legislature that deal with a variety of criminal justice issues.

The bills include proposals to establish a missing person clearinghouse, provide incentives for pregnant women facing drug charges to seek addiction treatment, and allow people who are mentally unfit to stand trial to receive treatment in jails or their homes. The laws will take effect July 1.

The attorney general proposed a missing person clearinghouse after he found the state lacked an updated list of missing people.

Rep. Spencer Gosch, a Glenham Republican, introduced the proposal to push pregnant women facing drug ingestion or possession charges to seek help. The law would allow them to avoid the felony charges if they complete an addiction program and get prenatal treatment.

One of the bills Noem signed designates \$418,000 for the state's justice system to consider arming law enforcement officers with tablet computers to connect people in mental crises with counselors. That budget allotment will be immediately available.

The Legislature is scheduled to meet for one day at the end of the month to consider any vetoes from Noem. The Republican governor has so far vetoed two bills.

### South Dakota halts COVID-19 testing due to lack of supplies

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — South Dakota's public health lab has halted testing for the coronavirus due to a shortage of supplies, Gov. Kristi Noem said Wednesday.

Noem said the lab had been expecting a shipment of supplies earlier this week, but that it was canceled due to a nationwide shortage of enzymes and reagents, which are used for chemical analysis.

The governor said she hoped the lab would be supplied later on Wednesday, though the state's Department of Health said earlier that there was "no time frame" for when tests would be available. It last ran tests for medium- and high-risk patients on Monday. There are 350 tests pending at the lab.

The lab plans to work "around the clock" once the supplies arrive, Noem said.

Two of the largest healthcare providers in South Dakota said Tuesday they were working to develop



testing capabilities.

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.

The vast majority of people recover from the virus. According to the World Health Organization, people with mild cases recover in about two weeks, while those with more severe ones can take three to six weeks to get better.

South Dakota has had 11 confirmed cases of COVID-19, the disease caused by the coronavirus, including one person who died. More than 500 people have been tested, and health officials have said there is no evidence yet of community spread in South Dakota, which is when officials can't trace how or where a person caught the disease.

The Department of Health recommends that people exhibiting symptoms of the coronavirus isolate themselves. It is still telling physicians to send samples to the state lab in Pierre for testing.

Mike Elliott, the chief medical officer at Avera McKennan hospital in Sioux Falls, said the lack of testing could affect how the hospital operates, including what protective equipment staff use when caring for someone exhibiting COVID-19 symptoms and where they place patients in the hospital.

But since there is no treatment specifically targeted at COVID-19, he said it wouldn't change how patients are treated. Hospitals will still test for influenza and care for people who get seriously ill.

"If you're sick right now, stay home, isolate yourself, period," Elliot said.

The governor also warned that the state could see a significant economic impact from the coronavirus. The state is already seeing layoffs.

Noem said the state hasn't reached the threshold of cases at which the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommends that restaurants and bars be closed.

Secretary of State Steve Barnett said local and primary elections are still set to take place as scheduled because state law does not allow elections to be rescheduled or delayed. Sturgis has a local election scheduled for March 23, and Sioux Falls has a city council and school district election scheduled for April 14. The statewide primary election is supposed to be held June 2.

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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.

## Family sad, but relieved to have answers to missing cousins

RAPID CITY, S.D. (AP) — Family members of two cousins found dead on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation say they're saddened, yet relieved to how what happened to the men more than two months after they went missing near Manderson.

Robert "RJ" Kills Enemy Jr., 23, and Vincent "Stevie" Little Dog, 25, were last seen Dec. 27. Their bodies were found last weekend and on Monday.

Kills Enemy's mother and Little Dog's aunt, Willene Kills Enemy, says it's a sad time for the family, but there is relief in knowing they have been found.

"Although it wasn't the way we wanted, they still came home" which is a "major relief for me," she said.

The Rapid City Journal reports the Oglala Lakota County Sheriff's Office, tribal agencies, and many volunteers searched for the cousins by foot, horseback, ATVS, and with the help of dogs, drones and aircraft.

Oglala Sioux Tribe's Department of Public Safety Chief Robert Ecoffey said he's confident the bodies belong to the cousins due to the clothes they were wearing, but DNA testing will confirm their identities.

## Judge allows DNA from trash in 1981 murder case

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — A judge has ruled prosecutors can use DNA evidence investigators pulled from the trash of a Sioux Falls woman charged with killing her newborn nearly 40 years ago.

Second Circuit Court Judge Susan Sabers this week denied a request from the defense attorney for Theresa Bentaas to suppress the evidence because investigators didn't have a search warrant.

The Argus Leader reports Sabers noted that Bentaas voluntarily discarded the items tested in her trash. "Because defendant had no reasonable expectation of privacy in the items searched, the Fourth Amendment does not apply to the DNA testing performed on those items," Sabers wrote. "Once law enforcement lawfully possessed those items, it was not an unreasonable search under the Fourth Amendment to test those items for identification purposes."

Bentaas, 58, is charged with murder and manslaughter in the 1981 death of the infant found abandoned in a cornfield ditch in Sioux Falls. The baby died of exposure.

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

## Stock markets subdued after more central bank support

By ELAINE KURTENBACH AP Business Writer

BANGKOK (AP) — Stock markets were largely subdued Thursday after days of massive volatility, as investors digested new financial support measures, including the European Central Bank's promise to funnel 750 billion euros (\$817 billion) into financial markets.

Market sentiment appeared fragile as investors rushed to convert holdings to cash, bracing for a prolonged coronavirus-induced recession.

After opening higher, European stocks were trading lower, with Germany's DAX shedding 0.7% to 8,386.11. The CAC 40 in Paris fell 0.4% to 3,738.37. Britain's FTSE 100 fell 1.5% to 5,006.56.

The futures for the Dow were down 1.5% and those for the S&P 500 were 1.4% lower.

Signs that the outbreak's impact will be far reaching and prolonged have undermined efforts to staunch the bloodletting on the markets.

Even prices for investments seen as very safe, like longer-term U.S. Treasuries, have been slumping as investors rush to raise cash.

Australia's S&P ASX/200 declined 3.4% to 4,782.90 after the central bank announced it was cutting its policy rate by 0.25 percentage point to a record low 0.25%, among other measures.

"It's amazing how desensitized we've become to central banks' dropping huge numbers and massive amounts of cash in the markets' laps," Stephen Innes of AxiCorp said in a commentary.

Japan's Nikkei 225 index gave up 1.0% to 16,552.83, while in South Korea, the Kospi sank 7.5% to 1,471.61. Hong Kong's Hang Seng index slipped 2.6% to 21,709.40, and the Shanghai Composite index shed 0.9% to 2,704.89.

India's Sensex sank 2.7% and Taiwan's benchmark fell 5.8%. Shares in Southeast Asia also fell.

The losses followed a more than 1,300 point, or 6.3%, decline Wednesday in the Dow Jones Industrial Average, which has now given up nearly all of its gains since President Trump was elected in 2016.

The New York Stock Exchange said late Wednesday it will temporarily close its iconic trading floor in lower Manhattan and move to all-electronic trading beginning Monday as a precautionary step amid the coronavirus outbreak.

The price of oil fell 24% on Wednesday, dropping below \$21 per barrel for the first time since 2002. On Thursday, U.S. benchmark crude climbed 11.3%, or \$2.30, at \$22.67 per barrel in electronic trading on the New York Mercantile Exchange.

Brent crude, the international standard, picked up \$1.19 to \$26.07 per barrel.

As big swaths of the economy retrench while much of society comes to a halt in an attempt to slow the spread of the virus, investors have been clamoring for help from central banks and other authorities around the world to support the economy until it can begin to reopen.

They got a big shot of that Tuesday, when the Trump administration briefed lawmakers on a program

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that could surpass \$1 trillion and the Fed announced its latest moves to support markets.

On Wednesday, President Donald Trump signed an aid package, approved earlier Wednesday by the Senate, to guarantee sick leave to workers who fall ill. Trump's authority under the 70-year-old Defense Production Act gives the government more power to steer production by private companies and try to overcome shortages in masks, ventilators and other supplies.

Late on Wednesday, the Federal Reserve said it will establish an emergency lending facility to help unclog a short-term credit market that has been disrupted by the viral outbreak. Around the same time, the European Central Bank launched a new, expanded program to buy financial assets in a bid to calm markets. The 750 billion euros in purchases are aimed at keeping borrowing costs down and making sure the bank's low rates get through to the economy.

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.

Investors are struggling with uncertainty about how badly the economy is getting hit, how much profit companies will make and how many companies may go into bankruptcy due to a cash crunch.

Even prices for longer-term U.S. Treasuries, which are seen as some of the safest possible investments, fell as investors sold what they could to raise cash. That pushed the yield on the 10-year Treasury higher, to 1.13%. It had recently dropped below 1% for the first time ever.

The mayhem is creating a "cash crunch," that is putting pressure on financial institutions, said Jackson Wong of Amber Hill Capital in Hong Kong.

"That's why the financial markets are performing so badly," Wong said.

The turmoil is also rocking foreign exchange markets.

"Simply put, it's a liquidity mismatch as there are far more U.S. dollars in demand than currently on offer," Innes said.

The dollar was at 109.71 Japanese yen, up from 108.07 yen late Wednesday. The euro fell to \$1.0752 from \$1.0913.

## Israel's Netanyahu accused of exploiting virus crisis

By ARON HELLER Associated Press

JERUSALEM (AP) — With the Israeli government enacting a series of emergency measures to stem the spread of the new coronavirus, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu is facing growing accusations that he is exploiting the crisis to entrench himself in power and undermining the country's democratic foundations.

Amid a wave of sweeping restrictions that have put Israel in near shutdown mode, Netanyahu has managed to postpone his own pending criminal trial, authorize unprecedented electronic surveillance of Israeli citizens and block parliament from pressing ahead with legislation aimed at pushing him from office.

The moves, on the heels of the country's third inconclusive election in less than a year and under the shadow of Netanyahu's corruption indictment, sparked leading opposition figure Yair Lapid to tell Israeli citizens that they "no longer live in a democracy."

"There is no judicial branch in Israel. There is no legislative branch in Israel. There is only an unelected government that is headed by a person who lost the election. You can call that by a lot of names, it isn't a democracy," he said in a recorded video.

Amid growing anger toward Netanyahu, police on Thursday blocked two convoys of cars from reaching the Knesset, or parliament, where activists planned to protest against the government moves.

Police stopped dozens of cars on a major highway as they made their way to Jerusalem, calling it an "illegal protest." They also stopped dozens of cars inside Jerusalem from approaching the Knesset. Many of the cars hoisted black flags alongside Israeli flags and honked in protest. "With dictatorship we die," read one poster.

The new coronavirus has spread to more than 100 countries, infected more than 217,000 people worldwide and killed more than 8,700. For most people, it causes only mild or moderate symptoms, such as

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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.

Israeli health officials have diagnosed over 400 coronavirus cases, roughly a quarter of them detected in the last 24 hours.

With the numbers quickly rising, authorities have issued a series of tough guidelines that have brought the country to a standstill. People have been instructed to stay home, tens of thousands are in home quarantine and foreigners have been banned from entering the country.

Most controversially, the Israeli government 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.

Israel uses phone surveillance in the occupied Palestinian territories, saying it's an important tool to prevent attacks on Israelis, but critics say it's also aimed at maintaining tight control.

The surveillance in Israel has sparked widespread criticism from lawmakers and civil rights groups. Opponents planned to file a Supreme Court challenge on Thursday.

Many of the measures are not unique to Israel. In neighboring Jordan, King Abdullah II has shut the country's court system and parliament, as part of an effort to stem the outbreak. Abdullah, who is not elected, appears to have won wide public support for his handling of the crisis.

The British government plans to introduce a bill in Parliament on Thursday that will give authorities stronger powers to respond to the pandemic. Many of these are relatively uncontroversial — like allowing retired doctors to return to work without taking a hit on their pensions. But critics have raised questions about some proposals, including a move to give police and immigration officers "powers to detain people and put them in appropriate isolation facilities if necessary to protect public health."

The emergency legislation is due to have a two-year time limit, but opposition lawmakers want a shorter cut-off date.

In Israel, Netanyahu has thrived in the crisis, delivering stern televised addresses to the nation each evening.

Presenting himself as the responsible adult steering the country through an unprecedented crisis, he has defended the tough steps, including the electronic surveillance, as measures that he has reluctantly been forced to impose to save lives while his opponents are focused on petty politics.

In a televised interview Wednesday, Netanyahu said that during his 11 years as prime minister, he had previously always refused to use surveillance on Israeli citizens. He said there would be "maximum oversight" to protect privacy concerns.

"The last thing I will do is harm democracy," he said.

The liberal Haaretz daily responded Wednesday with a lead editorial titled "An Epidemic of Surveillance."

"Under the cover of the battle against the spread of the coronavirus, Interim Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu is concentrating more and more power in his hands, with neither balances nor supervision," it wrote. "At this time of emergency, and in order to keep from sliding down the slippery slope, it is critical to maintain proportionality and oversight."

Following the March 2 election, Netanyahu has the support of only 58 lawmakers, leaving him three short of a majority in the 120-seat Knesset. Sixty-one lawmakers have come out in support of his opponent, Blue and White party leader Benny Gantz, while one refuses to endorse either side.

Backed by a narrow majority, Gantz, a former military chief, was tasked by Israel's president this week to try to form a new government.

In the meantime, Netanyahu has used a series of executive orders and other tactics to push forward his agenda while preventing parliament from convening.

The phone-surveillance plan was approved by the Cabinet in the middle of the night, without the traditional parliamentary oversight that is customary for such decisions.

Blue and White politician Gabi Ashkenazi, another former military chief who was supposed to oversee the committee, called Netanyahu's move a "heist in the dead of night."



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Blue and White has also taken aim at Netanyahu and his Likud party for preventing the newly elected parliament from convening under the guise of virus-related restrictions on public gatherings.

On Wednesday, Parliament Speaker Yuli Edelstein, a member of Likud, abruptly adjourned the Knesset, freezing Blue and White's plans to appoint new committees and advance legislation that could limit Netanyahu's time in office.

President Reuven Rivlin warned the country's democratic system was being threatened.

Netanyahu and Gantz held an emergency meeting this week to discuss the possibility of establishing a unity government to end the prolonged political paralysis. But progress appeared unlikely as they continued to bicker.

Earlier this week, Netanyahu's hand-picked justice minister, in the middle of the night, declared a state of emergency in the court system a day before Netanyahu's trial was to begin. The decree, citing the coronavirus crisis, postponed Netanyahu's trial until May.

In his TV interview, Netanyahu lashed back at his critics.

"While I manage the war against the coronavirus and the fight for saving the lives of citizens of Israel," he said, "they are only planning how to depose a prime minister."

Netanyahu critics have suggested that the crisis landed on the prime minister's lap at just the right time.

"The coronavirus will pass at some point or another," commentator Ben Caspit wrote in Maariv. "After we bury our dead, we are also going to have to administer last rites to our democracy."

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Associated Press writers Jill Lawless in London and Omar Akour in Amman contributed to this report.

## Wuhan offers hope on virus front; Italy nears stark toll

By **DAVID RISING, NICK PERRY and KEN MORITSUGU** Associated Press

BEIJING (AP) — Thursday was a day of contrasts on the front lines of the battle against the new coronavirus. In a sign of hope, the Chinese city of Wuhan reported no new homegrown infections, but in a stark warning for the world, Italy appeared set to surpass China's death toll from the virus.

The two milestones were a dramatic illustration of how much the global outbreak has pivoted toward Europe and the United States. They also showed how the arc of contagion can vary in different nations, as Italy with 60 million people braces to see more carnage than China, a nation of 1.4 billion.

Italy registered 2,978 deaths on Wednesday after another 475 people died. Given that Italy has been averaging more than 350 deaths a day since March 15, it's likely to overtake China's 3,249 dead when Thursday's figures are released at day's end.

U.N. and Italian health authorities have cited a variety of reasons for Italy's high toll, key among them its large elderly population, who are particularly susceptible to developing serious complications from the virus. Italy has the world's second oldest population after Japan's and the vast majority of Italy's dead — 87% — were over age 70.

In the United States, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention says 80% of the nation's 138 deaths have taken place in people over 65. Overall, 8,900 patients have died around the world, and 84,000 have recovered. Aside from the elderly and the sick, most people only have mild or moderate symptoms, like a fever or cough.

In the meantime, the news from China's central city of Wuhan, where the virus first emerged late last year, offered a rare glimmer of hope and perhaps a lesson in the strict measures needed to halt its spread. It came as President Donald Trump likened the fight to "a war" and invoked emergency powers that allow him to compel manufacturers to deal with the pandemic.

Wuhan once was the place where thousands lay sick or dying in hurriedly constructed hospitals, the first place in the world where medical facilities appeared overwhelmed. But Chinese authorities said Thursday that all 34 new cases recorded over the previous day had been imported from abroad.

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"Today, we have seen the dawn after so many days of hard effort," said Jiao Yahui, a senior inspector at the National Health Commission.

While China did not report any new cases in Wuhan or Hubei province, it did record eight additional deaths. Wuhan has been under a strict lockdown since January. Officials are moving to loosen travel restrictions, but only inside the surrounding province of Hubei. Wuhan remains cut-off, with only those with special permission allowed to travel in or out.

Still, the virus, which has infected 219,000 people around the world, took its toll elsewhere, both in human and economic terms.

European stock markets were up only slightly after losses in Asia despite a massive 750 billion-euro stimulus package announced overnight by the European Central Bank. Oil dropped below \$21 a barrel Wednesday for the first time since 2002, and rose slightly Thursday to \$23.

The United Nations warned that the crisis could lead to the loss of nearly 25 million jobs around the world.

Elsewhere around the world, more borders shut, leaving some to wonder how they would get back home. In the Pacific, Australia and New Zealand shut out tourists, allowing only citizens and residents to return, while Fiji reported its first case, a worrying development in a region with poor healthcare.

Iran's top leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei planned to pardon 10,000 more prisoners — among them an unknown number of inmates whose cases are political — in an apparent effort to combat the coronavirus, Iranian state TV reported. The country, where more than 1,100 people have already died from the virus, has already released 85,000 prisoners on temporary leave.

In London, home to almost 9 million, people were being urged to stay off public transport as authorities consider imposing tougher curbs on social distancing. London is the epicenter of Britain's coronavirus outbreak, with about one-third of its 2,644 cases.

Bavarian governor Markus Soeder said it may be necessary to implement a curfew in the southern German state if people don't start better following advice on restricting social contacts. In neighboring Austria, the western province of Tyrol put 279 municipalities under quarantine in light of a large number of COVID-19 infections there, banning anyone from leaving their towns or villages except to go to work in the Alpine region.

The U.S. and Canada both closed their borders to all but essential travel and Trump said he plans to assert extraordinary powers to immediately turn back to Mexico anyone who crosses over the southern border illegally.

Russia and Mexico each reported their first death from the virus. Mexico closed its popular spring equinox visits to the Pyramids of the Sun and the Moon at Teotihuacan.

In the U.S., the Dow Jones Industrial Average shed more than 1,300 points on Wednesday, or over 6%, and has now lost nearly all of the gains it had posted since Trump's inauguration. The White House pressed Congress to swiftly pass a potentially \$1 trillion rescue package to prop up the economy and speed relief checks to Americans in a matter of weeks.

Calling himself a "wartime president," Trump invoked the Defense Production Act of 1950 to steer industrial output and overcome shortages of face masks, ventilators and other supplies as hospitals brace for an expected onslaught of cases.

California's governor warned that martial law could be imposed. The mayor of New York said the city's 8.6 million residents should be prepared for a lockdown.

Ford, General Motors and Fiat Chrysler, along with Honda and Toyota, said they will shut all of their factories in the U.S., Canada and Mexico. The closing of Detroit's Big Three alone will idle about 150,000 workers, who are likely to receive supplemental pay in addition to unemployment benefits.

The U.S. has reported more than 9,400 coronavirus cases and at least 138 deaths, about half of them in Washington state, where dozens of residents from a suburban Seattle nursing home have died.

Scientists believe the true number of people infected in the United States is higher than reported because of the possibility that many mild cases have gone unrecognized and because of delays in ramping up testing.

Rising reported from Berlin. Perry reported from Wellington, New Zealand. Associated Press reporters around the world 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.

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## Flame arrival faces calls for Tokyo Olympics be delayed

By STEPHEN WADE AP Sports Writer

TOKYO (AP) — The Olympic flame is set to arrive in Japan from Greece even as the opening of the Tokyo Games in four months is in doubt with more voices calling for the event to be postponed or canceled because of the coronavirus pandemic.

The flame will touch down Friday aboard a white aircraft painted with the inscription "Tokyo 2020 Olympic Torch Relay" along its side, and "Hope Lights Our Way" stenciled near the tail section.

Everything about the arrival ceremony at the Matsushima air base in northern Japan will be subdued. The flame is to be greeted by a few dignitaries, saluted by a flyover from an aerial acrobatic team — if weather permits — and then used to ignite a cauldron.

The burning vessel will be displayed in three northern prefectures before the official relay begins on March 26 from Fukushima prefecture, which was devastated nine years ago by an earthquake, tsunami and the meltdown of three nuclear reactors.

Thousands of people from the region are still in temporary housing and life has not returned to normal for many. Prime Minister Shinzo Abe hopes to use the Olympics to crown his run as Japan's longest serving premier, and many suggest he may not be around if the games are put off and the economy slumps.

Taro Aso, the Japanese finance minister and former prime minister, characterized the Tokyo Games as the "cursed Olympics" when speaking on Wednesday in a parliamentary committee. Aso was born in 1940, the year Tokyo was to hold its first Olympics, which were called off because of World War II.

"This isn't a phrase that the press could like to hear, but it's true," said Aso, who was a member of Japan's shooting team at the 1976 Montreal Olympics.

Aso pointed out that even as the situation in Japan and Asia improves, it's worse globally.

"We certainly hope to have a situation where everyone can at least come to Japan feeling safe and happy," Aso said. "But the question is how we do that. It is something that Japan alone cannot achieve, and I don't have an answer to this."

Getting the flame to Japan represents a small victory for the International Olympic Committee and local organizers, who maintain the Olympics will open as scheduled on July 24 and be followed by the Paralympics on Aug. 25.

Even if they don't, the burning flame could be used as a symbol — particularly if the games are eventually delayed — and a rallying point for the Japanese public.

In a conference call on Wednesday, IOC president Thomas Bach got support for holding course, but is also getting push back from athletes who can't train, are confused about the qualification process, and worry about their health. Critics are also complaining about the unfairness of qualifying, which might give some athletes advantages over others.

An IOC member, four-time Olympic hockey gold medalist Hayley Wickenheiser, has broken publicly with Bach.

"I think the IOC insisting this will move ahead, with such conviction, is insensitive and irresponsible given the state of humanity," said Wickenheiser, who is training to be a physician.

"Keep them safe. Call it off," Matthew Pinsent, a four-time Olympic champion rower and former IOC member, wrote on Twitter.

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The four-month torch relay could be fraught with problems, particularly for sponsors Coca-Cola and Toyota, which have invested millions for the publicity. The torch relay tradition dates from Adolph Hitler's 1936 Berlin Olympics.

The torch relay in Greece, following the symbolic lighting on March 12, was stopped during the second day and did not resume because of large crowds.

The flame was handed over, by proxy, to Tokyo organizers in Athens on Thursday in a bare-bones version of the usual elaborate ceremony in the stadium where the first modern games were staged in 1896.

The 80,000-seat marble stadium was empty apart from a handful of officials and participants. The Japanese delegation was absent because of travel restrictions and Tokyo organizing committee president Yoshiro Mori delivered a speech by video from Japan. But his message was upbeat.

"Tokyo 2020 commits to be in readiness for the games as planned," Mori said. "I hereby pledge that on 24 July this flame will be lit at the Olympic Stadium in Tokyo."

Tokyo organizers have stripped most of the festivities from the relay, and have asked roadside crowds to be "restrained" and keep their distance from others. If that does not happen, organizers say they could stop the relay, or delay it.

More AP sports: <https://apnews.com/apf-sports> and [https://twitter.com/AP\\_Sports](https://twitter.com/AP_Sports)

## Trump calls himself 'wartime president' as he battles virus

By JONATHAN LEMIRE and JILL COLVIN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Describing himself as a "wartime president" fighting an invisible enemy, President Donald Trump invoked rarely used emergency powers to marshal critical medical supplies against the coronavirus pandemic. Trump also signed an aid package — which the Senate approved earlier Wednesday — that will guarantee sick leave to workers who fall ill.

Trump tapped his authority under the 70-year-old Defense Production Act to give the government more power to steer production by private companies and try to overcome shortages in masks, ventilators and other supplies.

Yet he seemed to minimize the urgency of the decision, later tweeting that he "only signed the Defense Production Act to combat the Chinese Virus should we need to invoke it in a worst case scenario in the future."

"Hopefully there will be no need," he added, "but we are all in this TOGETHER!"

The mixed messaging came as Trump took a series of other extraordinary steps to steady the nation, its day-to-day life suddenly and fundamentally altered.

The Canada-U.S. border, the world's longest, was effectively closed, save for commerce and essential travel, while the administration pushed its plan to send relief checks to millions of Americans.

Trump said he will expand the nation's diagnostic testing capacity and deploy a Navy hospital ship to New York City, which is rapidly becoming an epicenter of the pandemic, and another such ship to the West Coast. And the Housing and Urban Development Department will suspend foreclosures and evictions through April to help the growing number of Americans who face losing jobs and missing rent and mortgage payments.

But as Trump laid out efforts to help the economy, markets plummeted. Gone were nearly all the gains that the Dow Jones Industrial Average had made since Trump took office.

The administration announcements came on a fast-moving day of developments across the capital, its empty streets standing in contrast to the whirlwind of activity inside the grand spaces of the White House and the Capitol.

The Senate overwhelmingly passed a second coronavirus response bill, which Trump signed Wednesday night. The vote was a lopsided 90-8 despite worries by many Republicans about a temporary new employer mandate to provide sick leave to workers who get COVID-19. The measure is also aimed at making tests



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for the virus free.

Meanwhile the administration pushed forward its broad economic rescue plan, which proposes \$500 billion in checks to millions of Americans, with the first checks to come April 6 if Congress approves.

The White House urged hospitals to cancel all elective surgeries to reduce the risk of being overwhelmed by cases. The president was pressed on why a number of celebrities, like professional basketball players, seemed to have easier access to diagnostic tests than ordinary citizens.

"Perhaps that's the story of life," Trump said. "I've heard that happens on occasion."

Trump dismissed a suggestion from his own treasury secretary, Steven Mnuchin, that the nation could face 20% unemployment at least in the short term.

That's an "absolute total worst case scenario," Trump said. "We're no way near it."

The government has told Americans to avoid groups of more than 10 people and the elderly to stay home while a pointed reminder was given to millennials to follow the guidelines and avoid social gatherings. Trump likened the effort to the measures taken during World War II and said it would require national "sacrifice."

"It's a war," he said. "I view it as a, in a sense, a wartime president. It's a very tough situation."

No longer able to run for reelection on a healthy economy, he was taking on the mantle of a wartime leader after played down the severity of the crisis for weeks.

The president also employed more nativist, us-vs-them rhetoric at the briefing, continuing his recent habit of referring to the coronavirus as the "Chinese virus," which has been sharply criticized as racist. "It's not racist at all," Trump said. "It comes from China, that's all."

He was asked about a report that a White House aide had referred to the virus as the "Kung flu" when talking to an Asian-American reporter and Trump did not signal disapproval of the offensive term.

Trump later met nursing leaders and expressed "gratitude for those on the front lines in our war against the global pandemic" as he held out hope that the pandemic would be over soon.

"It's been something, but we're winning and we will win," he said. "It's a question of when and I think it's going to go quickly. We hope it's going to go quickly."

A limited number of people gathered around a large table, their chairs spread apart in a display of social distancing.

The Defense Production Act gives the president broad authority to shape the domestic industrial base so that it is capable of providing essential materials and goods needed in a national security crisis. The law allows the president to require businesses and corporations to give priority to and accept contracts for required materials and services.

The executive order issued by Trump gives Health and Human Services Secretary Alex Azar the authority to determine "the proper nationwide priorities and allocation of all health and medical resources, including controlling the distribution of such materials ... in the civilian market, for responding to the spread of COVID-19 within the United States." It also applies to certain health services.

Azar released a statement Wednesday night, saying, "we are coordinating closely with private suppliers, healthcare purchasers, and our federal partners like the Commerce Department to ensure that resources are going where they're needed."

Trump also said he would soon invoke a rarely used federal statute that would enable the U.S. to tighten controls along the southwest border because of the new coronavirus, based on a recommendation of the U.S. surgeon general.

The president said the law, intended to halt the spread of communicable diseases, would give authorities "great latitude" to help control the outbreak. Earlier, U.S. officials told The Associated Press that the administration would invoke the law to immediately turn back all people who cross the border illegally from Mexico and to refuse people the right to claim asylum there.

More than eight weeks after the first U.S. case of the virus was detected, the federal government is still struggling to conduct widescale testing for the virus. Compounding the problem, laboratories are reporting shortages of supplies needed to run the tests, which officials urged to be given to those most likely to have COVID-19.

Deborah Birx, who is coordinating the White House response, cautioned that there has been a backlog

of swabs waiting in labs to be tested, and as that backlog clears “we will see the number of people diagnosed dramatically increased” in the next few days.

Asked about the administration’s mixed messages when it comes to the threat posed by the virus, Birx said new studies about how long the virus can be transmissible on hard surfaces helped prompt the administration’s tightening of recommendations on social distancing. “None of us really understood” that, she said. “We’re still working out how much is by human transmission and how much is it by surface.” She added, “Don’t exposure yourself to surfaces outside the home.”

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.

As it tries to get its message to the public, the White House said a series of ads, digital and on television, will feature the president and first lady Melania Trump urging Americans to follow the guidelines. Birx also renewed her call for younger people to follow federal guidelines and stop meeting in groups.

She said there have been “concerning reports” from France and Italy about young people becoming seriously ill. The task force last week urged young generations to avoid going out to bars and restaurants and to avoid groups of more than 10 people.

“We cannot have these large gatherings that continue throughout the country for people who are off work,” Birx said. She added that the federal pandemic task force so far has not seen any “significant mortality” in children.

The White House has had several coronavirus-related health scares, with the president himself exposed to at least three people who later tested positive. Republican National Committee chairwoman Ronna McDaniel said Wednesday that she had tested negative for the virus. McDaniel, who met last week with the president and Senate Republicans, had previously been exposed to someone who tested positive.

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Associated Press writers Ricardo Alonso-Zaldivar, Matthew Perrone, Darlene Superville, Robert Burns, Deb Riechmann and Lauran Neergaard contributed to this report.

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## 10 Things to Know for Today

By The Associated Press

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

1. WUHAN REPORTS NO NEW VIRUS CASES Chinese authorities say that the city that was the epicenter of the coronavirus outbreak and its surrounding province had no new cases to report, offering hope to the world.

2. ‘TESTS SHOULD BE FOR THE SICK’ Celebrities, politicians and pro athletes face a backlash after several revealed they had been tested for the coronavirus, fueling a perception of favoritism.

3. VIRUS POSES A TEST FOR DIVIDED CONGRESS Not since the Great Recession of 2008, and before that the 9/11 attacks, has the federal government attempted to mount such an ambitious response to an emergency.

4. ‘THIS SITUATION IS UNPRECEDENTED’ Scientists say there isn’t a simple answer to how long the COVID-19 outbreak will last, but millions of Americans have seen their lives upended by virus containment

measures.

5. EUROPEAN SHARES OPEN HIGHER AFTER ASIA SLIDES Shares are mostly higher in Europe after the European Central Bank promised \$817 billion in asset purchases to support markets.

6. VIRUS IMPACTS CHINA'S SMARTPHONE INDUSTRY Factories in China face a new threat from U.S. anti-disease controls that might disrupt the flow of microchips and other components they need.

7. NATIONAL PARKS ARE OPEN — WITH SOME CHANGES People may find it more difficult than normal to enjoy them as parks close visitor centers, shuttles, lodges and restaurants to fight the spread of the coronavirus.

8. AVENATTI SEEKS TEMPORARY RELEASE FROM JAIL The former lawyer for Stormy Daniels cites a recent bout with pneumonia, a sick cellmate and filthy conditions as reasons he is at high risk of getting the coronavirus.

9. WHY FOX NEWS HOST MET WITH TRUMP Tucker Carlson says he felt a "moral obligation" to meet with the president at Mar-a-Lago to warn him about the seriousness of the coronavirus.

10. BUCS FANS EUPHORIC OVER POSSIBLE BRADY SIGNING Tampa Bay, which ranked 30th out of 32 teams in home attendance last season, has already seen an increased demand for season tickets.

## Virus poses a test: Can fractured Washington still 'go big'?

By LISA MASCARO and ANDREW TAYLOR Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The fast-moving coronavirus upending every facet of American life is testing whether Washington, a capital city fractured by years of bitter partisanship and inaction, can still do big things.

Not since the Great Recession of 2008, and before that the Sept. 11 attacks of 2001, has the federal government attempted to mount such an ambitious response to an emergency, and so quickly. The country's once-revered, now often maligned institutions — from the White House to Congress to the Federal Reserve — are being summoned into action to shoulder the lift.

It starts with a massive \$1 trillion rescue package that includes sending \$1,000 checks to Americans, with a goal of pushing it through Congress and onto President Donald Trump's desk in a matter of days.

What Washington's leaders do, or fail to do, will shape the road ahead for millions of anxious Americans who are suddenly facing a deeply uncertain future.

"The consequences of inaction are tremendous," said Sara Binder, a professor at George Washington University and scholar at the Brookings Institution. "For both parties."

Washington, particularly Congress, hasn't done big things for a long time, ground down by partisan infighting, polarizing extremes and an increasingly skeptical public. The erosion of trust in government and civic institutions has sapped the energy to, as Trump asked, "go big."

When Washington has tackled major policy endeavors in recent years, it's often been along party lines.

President Barack Obama's landmark health care legislation passed Congress in 2010 with only Democratic votes. In 2017, Republicans muscled through a sweeping tax cut for the wealthiest Americans and big businesses with only GOP support. Late last year, the Democratic House voted to impeach Trump, while the Republican Senate voted to acquit.

The result: Trump and House Speaker Nancy Pelosi don't talk much anymore, and Pelosi and McConnell talk only as needed.

Trump has deepened the toxicity, bashing Pelosi and other congressional leaders with cruel nicknames and publicly humiliating members of his own party who stray. Republicans, who were once skeptical and uncomfortable with Trump as their party leader, now rally around him with near unanimity, resigned to his stranglehold on the same voters they need to back their own political campaigns.

But in this moment, Trump needs more than just Republicans. He's relying on the leaders of both major political parties — and them on each other — to confront one of the most difficult tasks any of them has faced in public office.

Lawmakers in both parties declared this week that Washington is indeed up to the challenge. Crises

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tend to bring out the muscle memory.

"History shows Congress has the capacity to step up and do big things," said Sen. Chris Murphy, D-Conn. He said there were glimmers of activity as senators — from both parties — are now talking to each other more.

"There's a deep sense of our responsibility here," Murphy continued. "There's a sense we have an increased obligation because the executive branch is not going to be able to handle this by themselves. We've got to be the adults in the federal government."

Sen. Lindsey Graham, R-S.C., a close Trump ally, said the nation has faced tougher challenges.

"We won two world wars, we can do this," said Graham. "It's not hard to do. It's just expensive."

There is indeed a palpable sense of urgency at both ends of Pennsylvania Avenue. Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell vowed "warp speed" on the White House's \$1 trillion request and Pelosi tapped her chairmen to get to work on their priorities.

"The Congress has an enormous role to play in responding to this challenge," McConnell said as he opened the chamber Wednesday. Even as the rest of Washington emptied out, and businesses around the country closed down, McConnell declared the Senate would stay in town as long as it takes: "We aren't leaving until we deliver."

It was a dramatic shift for McConnell, who relishes his "Grim Reaper" moniker for having turned the Senate into a legislative graveyard, burying bills from Pelosi's House.

Even as late as Friday, he'd cut senators loose for the weekend. McConnell and Supreme Court Justice Brett Kavanaugh, whom McConnell helped confirm to the high court after hearings that focused on sexual misconduct allegations, flew to the senator's home state of Kentucky for a reception for another rising, if controversial judicial star. All the while, an initial aid package passed by the House idled.

The Senate did overwhelmingly pass the measure on Wednesday, sending the \$100 billion package of sick pay and food aid to the president's desk. Meantime, negotiations deepened over the next, larger round of rescue money.

The dynamics between the White House, McConnell's Senate and Pelosi's House are delicate at best. Not only are the two chambers often at odds, but Republican senators can find themselves out of step with Trump, whose personal ideology is fluid and frequently lands on the outskirts of what was once Republican orthodoxy.

That's sometimes left Pelosi to negotiate with the Trump administration, as she did last week. At McConnell's behest, it was the Democratic leader who produced an initial deal with Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin.

One person Pelosi didn't speak with during the negotiations? The president.

Mnuchin and Pelosi were talking again, on the phone late Wednesday.

In the cases of 9/11 and the Great Recession, divided government in Washington moved with great speed, passing emergency appropriations and tax rebates. Lawmakers and the administration were fueled by a sense of national urgency, and the knowledge that failure could cost them politically.

President George W. Bush sent \$300 checks to Americans after the 2001 attacks and created an entirely new government entity, the Department of Homeland Security.

As the country plunged into recession, Congress hesitated for a crucial few days as the stock market nosedived before approving the \$700 billion bank bailout in 2008.

A few months later, after Obama's inauguration, Congress muscled through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, carrying an initial price tag of \$787 billion, on a nearly party-line vote. That's several hundred billion dollars smaller than what the White House is seeking now — and both parties acknowledge there will almost certainly be more spending to come.

The steps Washington took left toxic hangover for both parties, a lingering unease that someone other than ordinary Americans were benefiting. A new generation of Republicans, declaring themselves the "tea party" swept into office vowing to control government spending, while liberal Democrats deepened their disdain for the excesses of Wall Street, an industry that had flourished after its taxpayer bailouts.



Even as Congress appears to be barreling toward more massive spending, there were those this week trying to raise some alarms.

"Right now, the plan around here is basically to just start shoveling money out of a helicopter," scoffed Sen. Ben Sasse, R-Neb., in a speech on the Senate floor. He urged a better way.

Yet most lawmakers appeared ready to press forward, well aware that the details of the package are only part of what the public is watching for. They have to show Washington can work.

"Both sides know that the public expects us to do something," said veteran Rep. Mike Simpson, R-Idaho. "Or there's going to be hell to pay."

## Indonesia halts Islamic assembly, quarantining 9,000 people

By NINIEK KARMINI and EILEEN NG Associated Press

MAKASSAR, Indonesia (AP) — Indonesia halted a mass congregation of nearly 9,000 Muslim pilgrims and began quarantining them and checking their health Thursday to prevent the further spread of the coronavirus amid a spike in cases.

The four-day gathering at a boarding school in a rural area in south Sulawesi province wasn't approved by authorities and drew fears it could spread the virus widely in the world's fourth most populous nation.

It was organized by a Muslim missionary movement, Jamaat Tabligh, which held a similar event in Malaysia three weeks ago that has been linked to nearly two-thirds of that country's 900 infections as well as dozens of cases in other nations.

South Sulawesi Gov. Nurdin Abdullah said medical teams screening more than 8,600 participants found a local man with fever who was taken to a hospital.

"We've worked hard in dealing with this issue, involving religious leaders and security forces. We have told the pilgrims that we are in an emergency state of coronavirus and only common discipline can break the COVID-19's wide spread," Abdullah said.

The move came as Indonesia reported six more deaths for a total of 25, the most in Southeast Asia, and its biggest daily jump of 82 cases to 309.

Pictures and videos posted by some participants on social media showed long rows of blue makeshift tents on a field at the school. Devotees in long white robes and skullcaps sat close to each other or slept on mats on the ground.

Sentot Abu Thoriq, a member of the organizing committee, said he regretted the government's decision to reject the event that had been planned more than a year ago. He said those who are ill have been told to stay away, and noted that those arriving would have passed stringent health checks at the country's airports and sea ports.

"The decision and the treatment is clearly against our faith and hurt us," Thoriq said. "Health, illness or death is God's destiny, we believe that God will bless and protect those who are devout."

The committee chief later said it accepted the government's decision for the safety of all.

The cancellation surprised some participants who arrived early Thursday.

"I didn't know about that," Indonesian Muhammad Sayid told Kompas TV upon arrival at a bus station in the area. "This is a very important agenda for us and has been long awaited."

Abdullah said 411 foreigners from nine countries including Malaysia, Singapore and Saudi Arabia will be quarantined at a hotel. They will be allowed to leave later based on their ticket dates. Indonesians will be escorted to their home villages or must stay in a government dormitory, but quarantine is compulsory for 14 days once they reach home, Abdullah said.

Indonesia's swift move could help prevent an outbreak like in Malaysia, which on Wednesday sealed its borders and shut schools, businesses and government offices in a two-week lockdown. A Malaysian man who attended the mass Islamic event was among two people in the country who died.

With participants in the Malaysian event huddled together for prayers, sermons and sleeping in a confined space as well as communal eating with hands from shared trays, the virus spread unnoticed during the four-day gathering involving 16,000 people, including from the former pandemic hot spots of China

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and South Korea. The outbreak from the Malaysian gathering came to light nearly two weeks later when Brunei reported its first cases involving citizens who had returned from the event. People from Cambodia, Singapore, Thailand, Indonesia and Vietnam also were infected.

Indonesia's government has been criticized as slow to deal with the virus's spread, which could overwhelm health care system in the country of more than 267 million people.

President Joko Widodo has called for all mass gatherings to be canceled, but such orders could be hard to enforce in the sprawling archipelago.

In another large religious gathering, Catholics attended the ordination of a new bishop on Thursday in a remote town on Flores island. Organizers said about 4,000 people from across the country attended, although government officials said there were 1,000.

Images of the ceremony posted on social media showed people inside the Ruteng cathedral seated next to each other, ignoring social distancing measures. Ruteng resident Sebastian Rida said health officers asked guests to use masks and hand sanitizers but not everyone complied. Rida said he wasn't worried about the virus threat.

"I did not think about it. I just wanted to see the new bishop," he said.

Provincial official Marius Ardu Jelamu said the event was long planned and couldn't be postponed, but that they tried to restrict people from attending. Cabinet ministers and other top officials also didn't participate.

Mass religious gatherings have been curbed in many places to contain the coronavirus.

Many Muslims believe in divine protection against the pandemic. Authorities in predominantly Muslim Bangladesh are investigating an unauthorized prayer rally where about 25,000 people reportedly sought Allah's protection.

The surprise rally Wednesday in an open field in Laxmipur district shocked many in Bangladesh, which has reported one death and 14 cases. The government shut schools and urged people to avoid public gatherings, but religious institutions, including 300,000 mosques, remain open.

Ng reported from Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. Associated Press writers Julhas Alam in Dhaka, Bangladesh, and Edna Tarigan in Jakarta, Indonesia, contributed to this report.

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## How long will Americans be fighting the coronavirus?

By **CHRISTINA LARSON** and **MICHELLE R. SMITH** undefined

WASHINGTON (AP) — In a matter of days, millions of Americans have seen their lives upended by measures to curb the spread of the new coronavirus.

Normally bustling streets are deserted as families hunker down in their homes. Many of those who do venture out try to stay a safe distance from anyone they encounter, even as they line up to buy now-precious commodities like hand sanitizer. Parents juggle childcare as schools close, perhaps for the rest of the school year. And restaurants and bars sit empty as more and more convert to delivery-only options.

How long will this last? Scientists say there isn't a simple answer.

"In many ways, this situation is unprecedented — we're trying to take some actions to curb the spread and timing of this pandemic," said Stephen Morse, a disease researcher at Columbia University in New York.

Yes, there have been past disease outbreaks that scientists can draw some lessons from but, in those cases, the disease was largely allowed to run its course. "So those models don't precisely apply," Morse said.

On Monday, President Donald Trump said the U.S. may be managing the outbreak through July or August. And New York Governor Andrew Cuomo said the state's number of coronavirus cases may peak — not

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end – in 45 days.

The overall message is that the country will be fighting the virus outbreak for a matter of months, at least, not days or weeks.

Each model of how the disease could spread relies on data and assumptions about population dynamics, demographics, health care capacity and other factors, said Rebecca Katz, a public health expert at Georgetown University.

The challenge for designing models of what will happen next in the U.S. is that limited testing for COVID-19 means researchers don't know what the starting point is — how many people are already infected.

In simplest terms, scientists say that the epidemic will slow when people with infections don't pass the virus on to others.

"Basically, if I infect one other person or more ... then the epidemic can take off. If I infect less than one person and everybody infects less than one person, then the epidemic will decline," said Elizabeth Halloran, a disease researcher at the University of Washington.

Based on data from China and from cruise ships, scientists estimate that unless measures are taken to limit the spread, each infected person will infect about 2 or 3 others, leading to an exponential growth of the virus.

If the virus makes a jump to new person every two to five days, as scientists calculate, then a single infected person could lead to 4,142 total infections within a month — assuming nothing is done to break chains of transmission.

Unless such measures are put in place, scientists estimate that between 40 and 80% of the global population could become infected. Based on an analysis of data from China, scientists found that the majority of new infections are transmitted by people with mild symptoms who may not even know they're ill, said Jeffrey Shaman, a public health expert at Columbia University.

Even if most people recover and only a fraction of total infections are severe enough to require hospitalization — about 14%, scientists estimate — the sheer scale of the epidemic will put enormous strain on hospitals, healthcare workers and other patients who may see unrelated procedures delayed.

Scientists now agree that measures to break or slow the chains of transmission are crucial to ensure that emergency rooms aren't quickly overwhelmed by surges in critically ill patients.

If measures like closing schools are successful in slowing disease spread, "we are going to see a hump instead of a peak" in new cases, U.S. government disease expert Dr. Anthony Fauci said in a White House briefing.

In other words, the number of infections will rise more gradually and manageably. But that also means the duration of the outbreak will be prolonged.

"The point of the restrictions we have is actually to stretch this out even longer. We don't want a big peak to come very quickly," said Mark Jit, a disease researcher at the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine. "It's not like a Hollywood movie with a clear ending where everyone is saved, or everyone dies, quickly."

So how does this end?

Most scientists believe the fight against COVID-19 won't be over until there's an effective vaccine. But Fauci and other experts say it will be more than a year before a vaccine can be ready for widespread use.

"The best-case scenario is that we have vaccine in 12 or 18 months and then our lives go back to normal," Jit said. "The worst-case scenario it takes a long time for a vaccine to be developed, and the world is really changed and our lives aren't the same again."

While we wait, are we all shut-ins for more than a year? Almost no one thinks that's realistic.

"I don't think we can maintain social distancing as it is right now for the duration of the epidemic," said Michael Levy, a University of Pennsylvania disease researcher.

What may be more feasible is a plan for intermittent restrictions and enhanced monitoring to control the disease, an idea explored in a new study from researchers at Imperial College London. Once the number of new cases falls below a certain threshold, schools, offices and restaurants could reopen. But if the

number of infections spikes again, restrictions would be reinstated.

"The analogy of pumping car brakes on an icy road is what we should be thinking about," Levy said. "You push on the brakes to slow things down, then ease up – but if you skid, you have to pump the brakes again."

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Follow Christina Larson on Twitter: @larsonchristina  
Smith reported from Providence, R.I.

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## Celebrities get virus tests, raising concerns of inequality

By **MICHAEL BIESECKER, MICHELLE R. SMITH and TIM REYNOLDS** Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Celebrities, politicians and professional athletes faced a backlash this week as many revealed that they had been tested for the coronavirus, even when they didn't have a fever or other tell-tale symptoms.

That's fueling a perception that the wealthy and famous have been able to jump to the head of the line to get tested while others have been turned away or met with long delays.

The concerns over preferential treatment underscores a fundamental truth about inequalities baked into the American health care system — those with the financial means can often receive a different level of service.

Asked about the issue Wednesday, President Donald Trump said the well-to-do and well-connected shouldn't get priority for coronavirus tests. But the wealthy former reality star conceded that the rich and famous sometimes get perks.

"Perhaps that's been the story of life," Trump said during a briefing at the White House. "That does happen on occasion. And I've noticed where some people have been tested fairly quickly."

On Wednesday, the Brooklyn Nets professional basketball team announced the entire team was tested last week upon returning from San Francisco after a game against the Golden State Warriors. The team found a private lab to do the work, and on Tuesday announced that four of its players were positive for the virus, including perennial All-Star Kevin Durant.

Even though public health resources were not used, it raised the ire of many including New York Mayor Bill de Blasio, who turned to Twitter to voice his objections.

"We wish them a speedy recovery," the mayor wrote. "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. Tests should not be for the wealthy, but for the sick."

Like Robin Fraser.

The 30-year-old has fibromyalgia and an autoimmune disorder that put her at high risk for complications if she contracts the virus. She's been running a fever and coughing since last week. Her doctor recommended she get tested at the emergency room, but there she was told there weren't enough tests, so she can't get one.

"That's just not fair," said Fraser, who lives in Victor, New York, near Rochester.

Fraser has seen celebrities and politicians getting tests, and that upsets her.

"Why are they getting in front of the line? People like me, average Joes, we get pushed to the back of the line. Why can Congress get it and we can't?" she asked.

Public frustrations over the difficulties getting tested for the new virus have been building since the first U.S. case was confirmed Jan. 20. Early missteps with test kits developed by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, coupled with strict government criteria about who qualified for screening, have led to widespread reports of people struggling to get tested. Even those who manage to get successfully swabbed often report long delays in getting the results back amid lengthy backlogs at government-run labs.

Seeking to break the logjam, the federal Food and Drug Administration announced earlier this month it



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would allow major private diagnostic lab companies to begin rolling out new COVID-19 tests and relaxed regulations typically required before new tests can be brought to market.

Over the last two weeks, that has led to a surge in testing available from private doctors and labs not bound by CDC's criteria for which patients should be prioritized for testing, such as those with fever and difficulty breathing who have recently traveled to affected countries overseas, or those who have had close contact with someone confirmed to have had the virus.

Quest Diagnostics, a major lab testing company, began providing COVID-19 test on March 9. LabCorp, another major national provider, followed suit on March 13.

In a statement, LabCorp said its COVID-19 test is available on the order of any physician or other authorized healthcare provider anywhere in the United States. The company said it expects to be performing more than 10,000 tests per day by the end of this week, ramping up to 20,000 tests per day by the end of this month.

By comparison, the CDC and other public health labs conducted about 30,000 tests in the eight weeks since the pandemic arrived in the U.S., according to data compiled by researchers at Johns Hopkins University.

The NBA suspended its season on March 11 after a Utah Jazz player tested positive for the coronavirus just before a game — eventually canceled — with the Oklahoma City Thunder. Oklahoma's state epidemiologist confirmed last week that the Jazz, their traveling party and a number of Utah beat writers — 58 people in all — were tested after the cancellation of the game in Oklahoma City once it became known that All-Star center Rudy Gobert tested positive for the virus.

League officials have said that since its players have direct contact with each other and often interact very closely with fans, both physicians who work for teams and public health officials were concerned that they could accelerate the spread of the virus. NBA spokesman Mike Bass said that players getting tested — and in some cases, revealing their positive status — may have ultimately "drawn attention to the critical need for young people to follow CDC recommendations."

Hollywood actor Idris Elba said he didn't have any symptoms when he announced his positive test on Monday, prompting questions and criticism on social media about why he got a test when he was not symptomatic.

On Tuesday, Elba explained further in a follow-up video. He said it was because he learned on Friday that a person he was in contact with had tested positive. He said he was on location, about to start a film. It was not clear what country he was in or where he was tested.

"I was around a lot of people. And quite honestly, my job made me test immediately," said Elba, an Englishman best known for his roles on the HBO series "The Wire" and as a detective on the BBC One series "Luther."

"I had to test anyway, because it meant putting a lot of people at risk if I had been exposed, then the people I would be working with would also be exposed. So, we got a test immediately. We were really lucky to take the test very quickly, because of the shortages of tests."

But Elba's work situation isn't unusual. Businesses across the country are shutting down to prevent employees from exposing themselves to the virus at work. Several cities, including New York, San Francisco and Washington, have ordered bars, restaurants, gyms, movie theaters and other businesses to close to slow the virus' spread.

Ali Fedotowsky-Manno, former star of ABC's "The Bachelorette," found herself on the defensive after announcing in a post on Instagram Sunday that she had been tested at a clinic in Los Angeles after she said she had shortness of breath and an X-ray that showed white spots on her lungs, and what she said were "all the symptoms of the virus, except for a fever."

She said she went to a clinic called Mend, which she said was "one of the only places that will do the test if you don't have a fever."

Fedotowsky-Manno said Wednesday in an interview with The Associated Press that she had seen commentary accusing her of special treatment. She denied the accusation, saying she chose the clinic closest to her house, She checked in under her married name and only heard the clinic would give tests to people without a fever from someone else in the waiting room, after she was already there.

"Nobody knew who I was at that urgent care. I went to urgent care like anybody could," she said.

The CEO of Mend did not return emails seeking comment, but the clinic's website says it charges \$195 for a home visit to collect swabs for COVID-19 tests, with Quest then billing a patient's insurance to process the samples.

"We would expect physicians to follow CDC clinical criteria," said Wendy Bost, a spokeswoman for Quest. "Our materials about the test are clear on this point."

The company declined to provide a figure for what it charges for its COVID-19 test.

Fedotowsky-Manno on Wednesday was still waiting for her results, five days after getting tested. She said she understands why people are upset over testing.

"I think it's crazy that everybody can't get tested," she said. "It's absolutely absurd."

Smith reported from Providence, Rhode Island, and Reynolds from Miami.

Follow AP investigative reporter Michael Biesecker at <http://twitter.com/mbieseck>

## Contagion of fear, uncertainty infect financial markets

By MICHAEL LIEDTKE AP Business Writer

The rapidly deteriorating health of the financial markets is being driven by a contagion of fear and uncertainty about a global pandemic that's infecting the economy in ways that seemed unfathomable just a month ago.

It almost seems like a distant memory now, but shortly after the President Day's holiday weekend the benchmark S&P 500 index closed at a record high, buoyed by another round of impressive quarterly corporate profits that had convinced investors the damage caused by a fast-spreading coronavirus in China would cause relatively little damage. Anyone who glanced at their 401(k) statements then probably at least smiled and may have even flirted with the idea of retiring a little early.

Now, those thoughts seem like pipe dreams as people mostly wonder if and when life will be normal again during a week that has seen most commerce shut down in Silicon Valley — a vital cog in the economy — against the backdrop of canceled St. Patrick's Day traditions throughout the world.

Most experts now believes a U.S. recession is inevitable, with its severity the only question left to be determined. "It's a fait accompli," said Michael Yoshikami, CEO of Destination Wealth Management in Walnut Creek, Calif.

No wonder the S&P 500 now stands roughly 30% below its peak after a mind-boggling four weeks like no other in the financial markets. The pummeling would have been even worse if not for several robust, although short-lived, rallies that were fueled by hopes that the government might come up with a financial antidote that would prevent the fallout from the coronavirus outbreak from becoming as bad as it is now.

The market's wild swings have been exacerbated by the computerized trading programs that hedge funds create to wager on the financial market's up and downs. Those algorithms, coupled with the lightning speed of today's computer programs, can vastly accelerate the momentum of selling frenzies, as well as seemingly irrational buying binges.

Human behavior, though, is more predictable. Just as people are hoarding non-perishable groceries, hand sanitizers and other goods they need while being forced to stay at home to stem the spread of the COVID-19 disease, investors have been fleeing the stock market as they build stockpiles of cash in conservative investments viewed as safe havens in times of financial turmoil.

"There are some parallels between having plenty of cash and plenty of toilet paper right now," said Richard Weiss, chief investment officer at American Century Investments.

On Wednesday, that relationship fell apart too, as investors even sold safe haven assets to raise cash.

The good news is that the stock market remains in far better shape than it was at the depths of the Great Recession — a scary crisis that was triggered by reckless home lending practices. Despite the market's startling fall, the S&P 500 is still nearly worth four times higher than it was at its low point 11 years ago

during the Great Recession.

The bad news is the same government toolbox that helped resuscitate the economy back then may not prove to be a cure for the economic ills caused by the biggest pandemic in a century. In the Great Recession, central bank's quickly dropped short-term interest rates to record lows and drove down the cost of money in other ways, such as buying bonds in record amounts.

That helped create a virtuous cycle as consumers spent more and employers steadily expanded their payrolls as their profits rose as more people got jobs.

But that strategy might not prove as effective at a time that protecting people's health is requiring wide swaths of the economy to go into hibernation for what could be just a few weeks or could turn into many months until an effective vaccine against COVID-19 is found. After all, consumers can't spend when they are being ordered to stay home as much as possible, and most stores, theaters, amusement parks, and other popular places that cost money are closed down anyway.

Its uncharted territory that has left even the most sophisticated investors in a state of confusion that can't be easily deciphered with any of the usual historical data that they typically use to forecast future corporate profits or the likely direction of bond prices.

"Those numbers that in the past would say, 'OK, you're definitely at a bottom,' don't mean that right now because there hasn't been evidence that's taken place," said Willie Delwiche, an investment strategist at Baird. "It's extreme markets becoming more extreme, so then your boundaries of what's extreme need to change with it."

More experts fear things could become so dire that President Donald Trump's administration may have to follow in the footsteps of Franklin Roosevelt with a government package that mirrors elements of the New Deal that helped the U.S. recover from the Great Depression during the 1930s.

In a paper released earlier this week, University of California, Berkeley, economics professors Emmanuel Saez and Gabriel Zucman predicted the gross domestic product in the U.S. could contract by more than 7% this year if more parts of the country impose near-lockdowns similar to what happened in the San Francisco Bay area, where about 7 million people are being required to "shelter in place" until at least April 7.

Saez and Zucman believe the U.S. government must step up to become a "payer of last resort" for businesses and consumers who may not be able to pay their bills during the restrictions being imposed to fight COVID-19.

"The government can prevent a very sharp but short recession from becoming a long-lasting depression," the professors asserted.

Reporters Stan Choe in New York and Alex Veiga in Los Angeles contributed.

## 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 Oscar 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 activ-

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ity 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."

As of Wednesday, two federal Bureau of Prisons staff members have tested positive for coronavirus, a person familiar with the matter told the AP. One of the staffers works in a correctional facility in Berlin, New Hampshire, and the other works in an office in Grand Prairie, Texas, but there were still no confirmed cases among any of the 175,000 inmates in the BOP system, the person said. The person, who wasn't authorized to discuss the matter publicly and spoke to the AP on condition of anonymity, would not say how many inmates, if any, have been tested for coronavirus.

Michael Avenatti, the once high-flying lawyer who was recently convicted of trying to extort Nike, asked a judge Wednesday to release him to home confinement. A court motion said Avenatti was particularly vulnerable to the coronavirus in part because his cellmate in Manhattan's Metropolitan Correctional Center was removed from his cell due to flu-like symptoms.

"He is part of the general population incarcerated under unsanitary and disease-prone conditions," attorney H. Dean Steward wrote in the court filing. "He also had pneumonia six months ago."

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.

Mayor Bill de Blasio said Wednesday that over the next 48 hours the city will identify any inmates held in minor charges it thinks should be released because of their health. He said it's a balance of "public safety with the very real concern about health in the jails."

"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 Barzee, 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



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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 last week 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."

Goodman reported from Miami. Michael Balsamo in Washington, Stefanie Dazio in Los Angeles and Michael R. Sisak in New York contributed to this report.

## Brady deal could make Bucs relevant; ticket demand spikes

By FRED GOODALL AP Sports Writer

TAMPA, Fla. (AP) — The Tampa Bay Buccaneers enter free agency with expectations of signing Tom Brady and bolstering a defense that will be one of the keys to helping the six-time Super Bowl champion quarterback be successful with his new team.

There's been no official announcement on Brady joining the Bucs after 20 seasons with the New England Patriots. However, there's already an increased demand for tickets.

Tampa Bay ranked 30th among 32 teams in home attendance, averaging 51,898 per game last season.

Within hours of reports of the team closing in on a deal with Brady, the website selling season passes for 2020 showed more than 2,400 people in a queue waiting for an opportunity to make purchases.

Brady ended his historic run in New England, announcing on social media Tuesday that he would become a free agent for the first time in his career.

Armed with plenty of salary cap space, a roster featuring a pair of 1,000-yard receivers and a coach with a proven track record of working with high-profile quarterbacks, the Bucs took a shot at making themselves relevant for the first time in more than a decade.

The Bucs went 7-9 last season and missed the playoffs for the 12th straight year, the second-longest drought in the league behind the Cleveland Browns. They haven't won a postseason game since their 2002 Super Bowl championship run.

Landing Brady not only figures to fill empty seats at Raymond James Stadium and make the Bucs a playoff contender right away, but also raises the prospect of Tampa Bay becoming the first team to win a Super Bowl in the host city's stadium.

Next season's NFL title game is in Tampa.

Brady won 17 division titles and appeared in nine Super Bowls — winning six — with the Patriots. He's a

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four-time Super Bowl MVP, 14-time Pro Bowl selection and three-time regular season MVP who has made 41 postseason starts.

The Bucs have played 15 playoff games in their 44-season history, none since 2007.

In signing Brady, Tampa Bay also officially moved on from Jameis Winston, who became a free agent Wednesday after five seasons as the team's quarterback.

The No. 1 overall pick from the 2015 draft departs as the club's career passing leader, but compiled a 28-42 record as a starter and never shook off a penchant for game-changing mistakes that undermined his chances to be successful.

The 26-year-old led the NFL in passing yards in 2019, while also playing his way out of plans for the future by becoming the first player in league history to throw at least 30 touchdown passes and 30 interceptions in the same season.

Brady arguably had his worst non-injury season last year, throwing for 4,057 yards with 24 TDs and eight interceptions.

Still, the Patriots won 12 games and extended their string of consecutive playoff appearances to 11.

Coach Bruce Arians spearheaded Tampa Bay's bid to sell Brady on signing with the Bucs. He's also worked with Peyton Manning, Ben Roethlisberger, Andrew Luck and Carson Palmer.

While insisting he still believed the Bucs could win with Winston at quarterback, Arians reiterated last month that he wanted to know what might be available behind what he referred to as "Door No. 2" in free agency.

Turns out, it was Brady.

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

## Chinese factories face new threat: US anti-virus controls

By **JOE McDONALD AP Business Writer**

BEIJING (AP) — Factories in China, struggling to reopen after the coronavirus shut down the economy, face a new threat from U.S. anti-disease controls that might disrupt the flow of microchips and other components they need.

The shock threatens to set back the ruling Communist Party's efforts to revive the world's second-largest economy after it declared victory over the outbreak. It would add to pressures on global business activity as Western countries close workplaces, limit travel and tell consumers to stay home.

Chinese manufacturers assemble more than 80% of smartphones for Apple, Samsung and other brands, half of the world's personal computers and a big share of home appliances and other goods. But they need U.S. processor chips and other high-value components.

It isn't clear how U.S. anti-coronavirus curbs might affect trade. Controls so far apply to travelers, not goods. American factories are operating, but the National Federation of Independent Business says 39% of 300 companies it surveyed already were suffering supply disruptions.

"A sustained disruption of activity in the U.S. will likely lead to disruptions to manufacturing activity in China," said Darren Tay, a country risk analyst for Fitch Solutions, in an email.

Beijing is easing controls that left city streets empty and silent and sent shock waves through the global economy. Manufacturers are rebuilding supply chains — networks of thousands of providers of auto parts, microchips and other components.

Officials say steel makers and other state-owned industries are almost back to normal. But conditions are more precarious for small, private companies that are China's economic engine and make clothes, toys and other consumer goods. Many are running at a fraction of normal levels or are closed due to a lack of materials and employees.

One in six companies that responded to a March 9-14 survey has run out of components and others are running low, the American Chamber of Commerce in South China said in a report Wednesday.

The United States, Europe and other Asian countries accounted for 18% of shortages, the chamber said.

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It said supply chains from the United States are suffering the second-biggest disruption after those in China. Just over half the 237 companies surveyed were American and three-quarters were manufacturers. All reported "some impact" due to supply disruptions due to the outbreak.

"Many of the companies reported a great deal of their needed items regularly being shipped from Japan, South Korea, Italy and the U.S. — countries which are now under pressure from the outbreak," said the chamber report.

Economists who have slashed forecasts of this year's global economic growth cite disruption to Chinese and U.S. manufacturing as one reason.

The predicament highlights the risks of manufacturing strategies that cut costs by using far-flung networks of suppliers and factories across multiple countries.

Smartphone brands likely will be hard-hit due to their reliance on Chinese assembly and fragmented groups of components suppliers, according to IDC.

Germany, Japan and South Korea also supply microprocessors and other smartphone components, but the most advanced chip producers are American.

"The pessimistic scenario sees supply disruptions lingering throughout the year," IDC researchers said in a report. If that happens, "the industry is permanently reshaped" once it starts to recover next year or in 2022.

Huawei Technologies Ltd., a Chinese maker of smartphones and network equipment, has said it expects no change in its supply chain in the next three to six months. The company scrambled to remove American components from its products last year after President Donald Trump imposed curbs on access to U.S. technology.

Automakers also are "highly exposed," because they need components from U.S. and other global suppliers, Moody's Investors Service said in a report. It said disruption in China would affect the worldwide industry.

Global automakers use lean systems that keep few components on hand. They have reopened factories in China but say the pace of recovery depends on how fast suppliers start delivering again.

Ford Motor Co. said in a statement is "carefully assessing the situation" but anticipates no disruption to its China operations due to anti-virus controls imposed by other governments. It said its factories are able to meet market demand but need time to return to normal.

Dell Technologies Ltd., one of the biggest PC manufacturers, said it uses a global network of suppliers and tells customers about changes in production time.

"We continuously explore alternative sourcing, production and logistics strategies" and will "adjust as needed," the company said in a statement.

General Electric Co., which employs 18,000 people in China, expressed confidence its global supply chain gives the company "flexibility to manage and adapt to risks."

The politics of supply chains are increasingly fraught as U.S.-Chinese trade tensions rise.

Manufacturers already were looking for ways to rely less on China after a tariff war with Washington blew up in 2018. But few countries can match its vast workforce, efficient suppliers and brand new ports and other infrastructure.

Peter Navarro, a Trump adviser on trade, has called for Washington to rely less on Chinese-supplied components for medical equipment and raw materials for pharmaceuticals.

Companies started looking for non-Chinese suppliers and manufacturing sites last year but there are few appealing options, said Gerry Mattios, a Bain & Co. supply chain expert.

In addition to its workforce and rising skills, China is a leader along with the United States in embracing digital technology to make its supply chains even more competitive, Mattios said.

"Right now, most people would think companies are quickly leaving China," he said. "The reality is, that is very difficult."

Companies including South Korea's Samsung Electronics have shifted some production to Vietnam to cut labor costs. But Vietnam's population of 90 million people is smaller than that of the single Chinese province of Guangdong, the country's manufacturing heartland, which has 100 million.

Vietnam's ports, airports and other infrastructure are straining to keep up with growing trade. "I think China, even after this Covid, will still have a major competitive advantage," said Mattios. China's government wants to shut down talk about companies leaving. "It is neither realistic nor wise to try to artificially cut off the global industrial chain and supply chain," a foreign ministry spokesman, Geng Shuang, said Tuesday. "Given the current epidemic situation, it is simply the wrong medicine."

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, like pneumonia.

## Trump invokes emergency authority, no new cases in Wuhan

By **TIM SULLIVAN and ANITA SNOW** Associated Press

MINNEAPOLIS (AP) — President Donald Trump invoked emergency authority to marshal industry to fight the coronavirus, as the economic fallout from the pandemic mounted Wednesday with major U.S. auto manufacturers saying they are shutting down their North American factories.

The announcements came hours before China said the former virus epicenter of Wuhan and its surrounding province had reported no new cases, a dramatic development in the city overwhelmed by thousands of new patients each day when the outbreak was peaking there last month.

On a day of head-spinning developments:

— Stocks tumbled again on Wall Street on fears of a prolonged recession, falling so fast they triggered another automatic trading halt. The Dow Jones Industrial Average shed more than 1,300 points, or over 6%, and has now lost nearly all of the big gains it had posted since Trump's inauguration. Oil dropped below \$21 per barrel for the first time since 2002.

— More borders slammed shut across Europe and North America, with the U.S. and Canada closing their boundaries to all but essential travel and Trump saying he plans to assert extraordinary powers to immediately turn back to Mexico anyone who crosses over the southern border illegally.

— The White House pressed Congress to swiftly pass a potentially \$1 trillion rescue package to prop up the economy and speed relief checks to Americans in a matter of weeks.

Calling himself a "wartime president," Trump invoked the Defense Production Act of 1950 to steer industrial output and overcome shortages of face masks, ventilators and other supplies as hospitals brace for an expected onslaught of cases.

The Korean War-era law gives the president extraordinary authority to compel industries to expand production and turn out vital materials. It was most recently used after the 2017 Puerto Rico hurricane to speed up contracts for food and other necessities.

"It's a war," Trump said, likening the coronavirus fight to measures taken during World War II and warning of national sacrifices ahead.

China's health ministry said Thursday that all 34 of its new cases were in people arriving from abroad. Eight new deaths were reported, all in Wuhan, where the first cases of COVID-19 were reported in December and which remains under the quarantine control measures imposed weeks ago to stop its spread.

The virus has since infected more than 217,000 people worldwide and killed over 8,700, mostly in China, Italy and Iran. The United Nations warned that the crisis could lead to the loss of nearly 25 million jobs around the world.

Though China still has the largest number of cases, most of its patients have recovered. China even sent medical supplies to hard-hit France, returning a favor done by the French weeks ago.

But in a grim illustration of the pandemic's shift, deaths in Italy were nearing China's toll. Italy had more than 2,900 dead after a record one-day total of 475; China's overall toll was around 3,200. Iran has also been hit hard, with more than 1,100 deaths.



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More than 83,000 people overall have recovered from the virus, which causes only mild or moderate symptoms such as fever and cough in most cases. Severe illness is more likely in the elderly and those with existing health problems.

Around the globe, governments took increasingly drastic measures to fight the epidemic and the threat of a recession, in some cases using emergency powers.

California's governor warned that martial law could be imposed. The mayor of New York said the city's 8.6 million residents should be prepared for a lockdown. The U.S. Census Bureau suspended field operations for two weeks, soon after it began its once-a-decade count of American people.

Czech authorities used emergency powers to raid a warehouse and seize hundreds of thousands of face masks. And Hong Kong widened the use of electronic wristbands that monitor people under self-quarantine.

Theodore Peck, who owns a Brooklyn coffee shop and bakery, was in quarantine at home as a precaution when New York City this week ordered all bars and restaurants to close except for takeout. He had to shut down his business and lay off all his workers.

"My life's work is being ... you know, destroyed, like picked over," he said.

Peck lamented that he didn't even get the chance to say goodbye to 22 of his employees.

With a growing number of Americans thrown out of work by the near-shutdown of much of the U.S. economy, Trump also said the Housing and Urban Development Department will suspend foreclosures and evictions from public housing.

The Trump administration's plan for issuing relief checks to Americans calls for the payment of \$500 billion in two installments over the next two months. The amounts have yet to be decided but would be based on income and family size.

Seattle-area tattoo artist Travis Tolin lost his only source of income when the shop he works for shut down. He took to Facebook to ask friends for moral support.

"We're all going to be struggling for a bit so all I ask is that you support small businesses if you're fortunate enough to still be working, buy prints, music, jewelry, anything they have available," Tolin said. "We will all get through this!!"

Ford, General Motors and Fiat Chrysler, along with Honda and Toyota, said they will shut all of their factories in the U.S., Canada and Mexico. The closing of Detroit's Big Three alone will idle about 150,000 workers, who are likely to receive supplemental pay in addition to unemployment benefits.

At GM's pickup truck assembly plant in Flint, Michigan, workers have been fearful since the virus surfaced in the U.S., said Tommy Wolikow, who has two young daughters.

"That's the thing that I was scared the most about, being the one to bring it home to them," he said.

The U.S. reported more than 7,700 coronavirus cases and at least 138 deaths, about half of them in Washington state, where dozens of residents from a suburban Seattle nursing home have died.

Rep. Mario Diaz-Balart of Florida is the first known member of Congress to test positive for the virus. Other members of Congress have self-quarantined, but none have reported positive test results.

Miami Mayor Francis Suarez, who last week announced he tested positive, is sharing his experience in a daily YouTube diary and on Twitter as he runs the city from home isolation. His wife and children are staying with relatives.

"The longer I live with COVID-19, the more I understand just how crucial social distancing is," Suarez wrote.

Scientists have no doubt the true number of people infected is higher than reported because of the possibility that many mild cases have gone unrecognized or unrecorded, and because of the lag in large-scale testing in the U.S.

In the first breakdown of its kind in the U.S., the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention said that the nation's coronavirus deaths so far mirror what has been reported in other countries, with about 4 out of 5 fatalities occurring in people 65 and older, and no deaths in children.

Scientists in China reported disappointing results from the first study completed on a potential COVID-19 treatment. A combination of two antiviral drugs used now to treat HIV did not resolve symptoms quicker

than usual care in a study of 199 hospitalized, severely ill patients. The findings were reported Wednesday in the New England Journal of Medicine.

Associated Press reporters around the world 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>

The headline has been corrected to say 200,000 virus cases, not deaths.

## Coronavirus layoffs spark surge in state jobless claims

By DAVID A. LIEB Associated Press

JEFFERSON CITY, Mo. (AP) — In Ohio, more than 48,000 people applied for jobless benefits during the first two days of this week. The tally during the same period the prior week: just 1,825.

In neighboring Pennsylvania, about 70,000 people sought unemployment aid in a single day — six times the total for the entire previous week.

Jobless claims are surging across the U.S. after government officials ordered millions of workers, students and shoppers to stay at home as a precaution against spreading the virus that causes the COVID-19 disease.

"We've been getting flooded with calls," said John Dodds, director of the nonprofit Philadelphia Unemployment Project. "It's going to be a big mess, a double mess: illness and unemployment."

The growing number of people filing for unemployment checks raises fresh questions about whether states have stockpiled enough money since the last recession to tide over idled workers until the crisis ends. Some fear the demand for help could outpace the states' ability to pay claims.

"Our unemployment insurance fund is getting hit pretty hard right now," said Gov. Gina Raimondo of Rhode Island, where coronavirus-related jobless claims accelerated from zero to nearly 18,000 in barely one week.

Raimondo, a Democrat, said the state needs to start replenishing its fund and appealed for help from the federal government.

President Donald Trump's administration is proposing an economic stimulus package that could approach \$1 trillion and include sending checks to Americans within a matter of weeks to help them pay for groceries, bills, mortgages and rent. The Senate gave final approval Wednesday to a separate bill that would inject \$1 billion into state unemployment insurance programs.

The federal aid could rival or exceed that of the Great Recession in 2008, when a financial industry crisis led to widespread layoffs. Economic analysts warn the country is likely entering — or already in — its first recession since then.

Valerie Costa, a 41-year-old mother of two, quickly applied for unemployment benefits after the Rhode Island casino where she worked as a bartender and cocktail server closed because of virus precautions. For now, her husband is still working.

"We're limiting our spending. But we also really don't know what to expect," she said. "Most of us live through our tips, and if no tips are coming in, that makes things tough."

The last recession led to the insolvency of unemployment trust funds in 35 states that collectively racked up more than \$40 billion of debt to keep paying unemployed workers. In many states, those debts were repaid through higher taxes on employers.

To shore up their trust funds, some states also cut the amount and duration of benefits for those who became unemployed in the future.

"States aren't really recession-ready, because it's so hard for people to get benefits, stay in the program,

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and the benefits are insufficient," said Michele Evermore, a senior policy analyst at the National Employment Law Project, a New York-based group that advocates for low-wage workers and the unemployed.

Jobless claims and unemployment also are rising around the globe. The U.N.'s International Labor Organization estimates that fallout from the coronavirus outbreak could lead to nearly 25 million job losses worldwide and drain up to \$3.4 trillion worth of income by the end of this year.

In the U.S., state unemployment trust funds generally are in better financial shape than they were before the last recession. Yet 21 states began the year with less than the amount recommended to remain solvent in an average recession, according to a U.S. Department of Labor report. At the bottom of the solvency list are many of the most populous states — California, Texas, New York, Illinois, Ohio and Massachusetts.

Ohio Gov. Mike DeWine, a Republican, was among the first to shut down schools, sporting events and certain businesses because of the coronavirus. Unemployment claims have since skyrocketed.

DeWine's administration acknowledged that state lawmakers likely will have to intervene to shore up the state's shaky unemployment trust fund.

"The workers out there should not be worried. It will be funded for their needs," said Ohio Lt. Gov. Jon Husted, also a Republican.

Pennsylvania in January finally made the last payment on billions of dollars of bonds issued in 2012 to cover the unemployment fund debt from the last recession. But its fund remains in danger of insolvency, according to the U.S. Labor Department report.

In Tennessee, new unemployment claims tripled over the past week. Michigan's unemployment agency said Wednesday that it has received over five times as many unemployment applications as normal. And Minnesota said it has been getting more than 2,000 unemployment applications per hour, compared with the usual 40 or 50.

The Department of Employment and Economic Development has been taking more than 2,000 applications per hour, compared with the usual 40 or 50, Commissioner Steve Grove said

Warnings to stay away from public gathering spots also have made it more complicated to apply for benefits, with some state unemployment offices closed to the public. Instead, states have shifted more applicants from offices to websites and phone calls, but even those systems are being taxed.

New Jersey Gov. Phil Murphy said the number of unemployment insurance requests was so high at the start of this week that it crashed the state labor department's website.

New York's labor department said it's experiencing "an unprecedented increase" in calls and online visits for unemployment benefits. During the first half of Tuesday, it had 110,000 website visits and 21,000 phone calls. That's 2 1/2 times the web traffic and 10 times the phone calls of the entire previous Tuesday. At times, the surge was too much for the agency to handle.

Governors and lawmakers in many states took action this week to make unemployment benefits easier and quicker to get. Some also waived rules that disregard the first week of unemployment or extended the total number of weeks people can be eligible.

In North Carolina, which offers less in jobless benefits than most states, displaced workers won't have to be actively looking for a new job, as is required for traditional benefits, and employers who must lay off workers won't be financially responsible for the benefits their workers receive.

Kansas lawmakers worked quickly Tuesday to pass legislation that eliminates a one-week wait to begin receiving benefits and expands their duration from 16 to 26 weeks. But House Commerce Committee Chairman Rep. Sean Tarwater, a Republican, expressed concern that the economic problems caused by the virus pandemic could deplete the state's unemployment fund in less than a year, even though it's ranked in the top quarter nationally.

"What we are seeing is something totally unique here, where the switch has flipped from historically low claims numbers to a dramatic escalation that's going to affect multiple segments of the economy," said Kansas Deputy Labor Department Secretary Brett Flachsbarth.

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, like pneumonia.

The Associated Press has distributed state-, MSA- and county-level data to help members localize employment trends and gauge coronavirus impact in their area. If your news organization has a license for AP's data distributions, you can find the data at <https://data.world/associatedpress/coronavirus-labor-impact>. To enroll in the AP data distribution program, email [APDigitalSales@ap.org](mailto:APDigitalSales@ap.org)

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## What's Happening: Trump taps powers, auto factories closing

These are some of the latest developments Wednesday in the world's coronavirus pandemic:

### — PRESIDENT TRUMP INVOKES EMERGENCY AUTHORITY

President Donald Trump invoked emergency authority to marshal industry to fight the coronavirus as the economic fallout from the crisis mounted. The entire U.S. auto industry announced it was shutting down its North American factories. Stocks tumbled again on fears of a prolonged recession, falling so fast they triggered another automatic trading halt. The Dow Jones Industrial Average shed more than 1,300 points, or over 6 percent, and has now lost nearly all of the big gains it had posted since Trump's inauguration.

### — NUMBER OF WORLDWIDE CASES TOPS 200,000

The number of people infected worldwide surpassed the 200,000 mark. Deaths topped 8,700, but the number of people considered recovered reached over 83,000, according to a tally kept by Johns Hopkins University. The countries with the most confirmed cases were China, Italy, Iran, Spain and Germany. The countries with the most confirmed deaths were China, Italy, Iran, Spain and France. The United Nations warned that the pandemic could lead to the loss of nearly 25 million jobs around the world.

### — BORDERS SLAM SHUT

More borders slammed shut across Europe and North America, with the U.S. and Canada closing their boundaries to all but essential travel. Trump says he plans to assert extraordinary powers to immediately turn back to Mexico anyone who crosses over the southern border illegally. European Union leaders agreed to shut down the bloc's external borders and ban entry of most foreigners for 30 days.

### — CANCER, HEART SURGERIES DELAYED

Doctors in virtually every field are scrambling to alter care as the virus spreads. Some cancer surgeries are being delayed, many stent procedures for clogged arteries have been pushed back and infertility specialists are postponing efforts to help patients get pregnant. Medical groups issued advice this week on how hospitals and doctors should adapt as beds and supplies are pinched and worries rise about exposing patients to possible infection.

### — US STRUGGLES TO PROVIDE PROTECTIVE GEAR

The U.S. government is rushing protective equipment to states, packing dozens of flights and hundreds of trucks with supplies like masks and gloves for medical workers on the front lines of the coronavirus fight. But the pandemic has exposed some of the Strategic National Stockpile's shortcomings: The cache isn't designed to be a long-term solution. State officials are complaining that the deliveries are falling far short of what's needed or include expired items. The stockpile created in 1999 maintains caches of pharmaceuticals, medical supplies and vaccines in secret locations around the nation.

### — BEST STRATEGIES AGAINST VIRUS: TRACK, ISOLATE, COMMUNICATE

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. But 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. The experience in Singapore has shown that some strategies are proving more effective than others in containing the pandemic: proactive efforts to track down and isolate the infected, access to basic, affordable public health care, and clear, reassuring messaging from leaders.

## TWO 20-SOMETHINGS EXTEND "INVISIBLE HANDS"

Two 20-something friends amassed 1,300 volunteers in 72 hours to deliver groceries and medicine to older New Yorkers and other vulnerable people amid the coronavirus outbreak. Liam Elkind, a junior at Yale, and his friend Simone Policano call the project Invisible Hands. Grocery and pharmacy orders are placed on the Invisible Hands website and volunteers must practice social distancing and other safety measures in their own lives and wear gloves while shopping. Bags of goods are left at doors, and cash can be exchanged the same way or directly to a store or through a digital transaction.

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## Weinstein moved to state prison day before 68th birthday

By MICHAEL R. SISK and TOM HAYS Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Harvey Weinstein was transferred to a state prison in New York on Wednesday as he begins to serve a 23-year sentence for rape and sexual assault in his landmark #MeToo case.

The disgraced film mogul, who will turn 68 on Thursday, is locked up at the maximum security Wende Correctional Facility near Buffalo, according to state prison officials. He is known behind bars as inmate No. 20B0584.

The prison, six hours by car from Manhattan, is likely just a temporary stop for Weinstein. While he's there, he'll be evaluated to determine which state prison facility meets his security, medical, mental health and other needs.

Weinstein's spokesman called the move "harsh."

Weinstein, convicted Feb. 24 and sentenced last week, had been splitting time between New York City's notorious Rikers Island jail complex and a Manhattan hospital.

Weinstein left court in an ambulance after the guilty verdict and detoured to Bellevue Hospital, complaining of chest pains and high blood pressure. He later had a stent inserted to unblock an artery. After his sentencing, he returned with more chest pains.

Weinstein, the Oscar-winning producer of "Shakespeare in Love," was convicted of raping an aspiring actress in 2013 and forcibly performing oral sex on a TV and film production assistant in 2006. His lawyers have said they'll appeal.

Within hours of Weinstein's sentencing, prosecutors in Los Angeles announced they were beginning the extradition process to send him there for an arraignment on charges he raped a woman and sexually assaulted another in 2013. That's now on hold because of the coronavirus crisis that has shuttered courthouses and limited travel.

For Weinstein, being sent to the Buffalo-area prison is an inauspicious homecoming. He attended college nearby and got his start in the entertainment business in the area as a concert promoter bringing the likes of Frank Sinatra and the Rolling Stones to town.

This story has been corrected to show Harvey Weinstein's birthday is Thursday, not Wednesday.

## Trump taps emergency powers as virus relief plan proceeds

By JONATHAN LEMIRE and JILL COLVIN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Describing himself as a “wartime president” fighting an invisible enemy, President Donald Trump on Wednesday invoked rarely used emergency powers to marshal critical medical supplies against the coronavirus pandemic. Trump also signed an aid package — which the Senate approved earlier Wednesday — that will guarantee sick leave to workers who fall ill.

Trump tapped his authority under the 70-year-old Defense Production Act to give the government more power to steer production by private companies and try to overcome shortages in masks, ventilators and other supplies.

Yet he seemed to minimize the urgency of the decision, later tweeting that he “only signed the Defense Production Act to combat the Chinese Virus should we need to invoke it in a worst case scenario in the future.”

“Hopefully there will be no need,” he added, “but we are all in this TOGETHER!”

The mixed messaging came as Trump took a series of other extraordinary steps to steady the nation, its day-to-day life suddenly and fundamentally altered.

The Canada-U.S. border, the world’s longest, was effectively closed, save for commerce and essential travel, while the administration pushed its plan to send relief checks to millions of Americans.

Trump said he will expand the nation’s diagnostic testing capacity and deploy a Navy hospital ship to New York City, which is rapidly becoming an epicenter of the pandemic, and another such ship to the West Coast. And the Housing and Urban Development Department will suspend foreclosures and evictions through April to help the growing number of Americans who face losing jobs and missing rent and mortgage payments.

But as Trump laid out efforts to help the economy, markets plummeted. Gone were nearly all the gains that the Dow Jones Industrial Average had made since Trump took office.

The administration announcements came on a fast-moving day of developments across the capital, its empty streets standing in contrast to the whirlwind of activity inside the grand spaces of the White House and the Capitol.

The Senate overwhelmingly passed a second coronavirus response bill, which Trump signed Wednesday night. The vote was a lopsided 90-8 despite worries by many Republicans about a temporary new employer mandate to provide sick leave to workers who get COVID-19. The measure is also aimed at making tests for the virus free.

Meanwhile the administration pushed forward its broad economic rescue plan, which proposes \$500 billion in checks to millions of Americans, with the first checks to come April 6 if Congress approves.

The White House urged hospitals to cancel all elective surgeries to reduce the risk of being overwhelmed by cases. The president was pressed on why a number of celebrities, like professional basketball players, seemed to have easier access to diagnostic tests than ordinary citizens.

“Perhaps that’s the story of life,” Trump said. “I’ve heard that happens on occasion.”

Trump dismissed a suggestion from his own treasury secretary, Steven Mnuchin, that the nation could face 20% unemployment at least in the short term.

That’s an “absolute total worst case scenario,” Trump said. “We’re no way near it.”

The government has told Americans to avoid groups of more than 10 people and the elderly to stay home while a pointed reminder was given to millennials to follow the guidelines and avoid social gatherings. Trump likened the effort to the measures taken during World War II and said it would require national “sacrifice.”

“It’s a war,” he said. “I view it as a, in a sense, a wartime president. It’s a very tough situation.”

No longer able to run for reelection on a healthy economy, he was taking on the mantle of a wartime leader after played down the severity of the crisis for weeks.

The president also employed more nativist, us-vs-them rhetoric at the briefing, continuing his recent habit of referring to the coronavirus as the “Chinese virus,” which has been sharply criticized as racist. “It’s not racist at all,” Trump said. “It comes from China, that’s all.”

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He was asked about a report that a White House aide had referred to the virus as the "Kung flu" when talking to an Asian-American reporter and Trump did not signal disapproval of the offensive term.

Trump later met nursing leaders and expressed "gratitude for those on the front lines in our war against the global pandemic" as he held out hope that the pandemic would be over soon.

"It's been something, but we're winning and we will win," he said. "It's a question of when and I think it's going to go quickly. We hope it's going to go quickly."

A limited number of people gathered around a large table, their chairs spread apart in a display of social distancing.

The Defense Production Act gives the president broad authority to shape the domestic industrial base so that it is capable of providing essential materials and goods needed in a national security crisis. The law allows the president to require businesses and corporations to give priority to and accept contracts for required materials and services.

The executive order issued by Trump gives Health and Human Services Secretary Alex Azar the authority to determine "the proper nationwide priorities and allocation of all health and medical resources, including controlling the distribution of such materials ... in the civilian market, for responding to the spread of COVID-19 within the United States." It also applies to certain health services.

Trump also said he would soon invoke a rarely used federal statute that would enable the U.S. to tighten controls along the southwest border because of the new coronavirus, based on a recommendation of the U.S. surgeon general.

The president said the law, intended to halt the spread of communicable diseases, would give authorities "great latitude" to help control the outbreak. Earlier, U.S. officials told The Associated Press that the administration would invoke the law to immediately turn back all people who cross the border illegally from Mexico and to refuse people the right to claim asylum there.

More than eight weeks after the first U.S. case of the virus was detected, the federal government is still struggling to conduct widescale testing for the virus. Compounding the problem, laboratories are reporting shortages of supplies needed to run the tests, which officials urged to be given to those most likely to have COVID-19.

Deborah Birx, who is coordinating the White House response, cautioned that there has been a backlog of swabs waiting in labs to be tested, and as that backlog clears "we will see the number of people diagnosed dramatically increased" in the next few days.

Asked about the administration's mixed messages when it comes to the threat posed by the virus, Birx said new studies about how long the virus can be transmissible on hard surfaces helped prompt the administration's tightening of recommendations on social distancing. "None of us really understood" that, she said. "We're still working out how much is by human transmission and how much is it by surface." She added, "Don't exposure yourself to surfaces outside the home."

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.

As it tries to get its message to the public, the White House said a series of ads, digital and on television, will feature the president and first lady Melania Trump urging Americans to follow the guidelines. Birx also renewed her call for younger people to follow federal guidelines and stop meeting in groups.

She said there have been "concerning reports" from France and Italy about young people becoming seriously ill. The task force last week urged young generations to avoid going out to bars and restaurants and to avoid groups of more than 10 people.

"We cannot have these large gatherings that continue throughout the country for people who are off work," Birx said. She added that the federal pandemic task force so far has not seen any "significant

mortality" in children.

The White House has had several coronavirus-related health scares, with the president himself exposed to at least three people who later tested positive. Republican National Committee chairwoman Ronna McDaniel said Wednesday that she had tested negative for the virus. McDaniel, who met last week with the president and Senate Republicans, had previously been exposed to someone who tested positive.

Associated Press writers Ricardo Alonso-Zaldivar, Matthew Perrone, Darlene Superville, Robert Burns, Deb Riechmann and Lauran Neergaard contributed to this report.

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## Carlson says he felt obligation to meet with Trump on virus

By DAVID BAUDER AP Media Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Fox News Channel's Tucker Carlson says he felt a "moral obligation" to meet with President Donald Trump and warn him personally about the seriousness of the coronavirus pandemic.

Carlson told Vanity Fair that "I didn't feel it was my role" but was convinced by his wife to meet with Trump at Mar-a-Lago on March 7. Two nights later on his Fox show, he issued a pointed warning to viewers to prepare for the coming storm.

It speaks to both Fox News' influence with the president and his supporters that a cable news host was able to contact the White House and successfully request the two-hour meeting. Carlson drove to the president's resort from his Florida home, ironically on the day some guests at Mar-a-Lago were exposed to the virus.

He declined a request to speak to The Associated Press about it on Wednesday, and the White House had no comment on a private meeting.

Carlson had sounded the alarm about the coronavirus on his show earlier than this month. On Jan. 28, he criticized the media for spending more time on the impeachment trial than the virus and, on Feb. 3, told viewers that "you should be concerned."

Yet his blunt March 9 commentary was eye-opening, particularly in how it contrasted with attitudes expressed by some Fox colleagues. At the same time as he was talking, Trish Regan on the sister Fox Business Network was denouncing the "coronavirus impeachment scam," suggesting the stories were an attempt to attack the president. Four days later, Fox shelved her show.

"People you know will get sick," Carlson said that night. "Some may die. This is real. That's the point of this script — to tell you that."

Carlson said the nation's leaders haven't helped citizens take it seriously, criticizing liberals for saying it was racist to refer to "The Chinese Coronavirus" — words displayed on the screen behind him.

"If we're being honest, the other side has not been especially helpful, either," Carlson said. "People you trust — people you probably voted for — have spent weeks minimizing what is clearly a very serious problem. It's just partisan politics, they say, calm down. In the end this is just like the flu and people die of that every year."

It's not, he said, noting that the death rate for the coronavirus was much higher.

He named no names. His fellow Fox News host, Sean Hannity, has repeatedly brought up seasonal flu in connection with the coronavirus, to the point where Dr. Anthony Fauci implored him last week not to ignore the new disease's lethality.

Most people who get the coronavirus have only mild or moderate symptoms. 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.

Fox confirmed that Carlson has not been tested for the disease and hasn't experienced any symptoms.

Carlson told Vanity Fair that he told Trump "exactly what I've said on TV, that this could be really bad." He hasn't talked about his meeting on television and wanted to keep it a secret, although it was revealed in a story by The New York Times.

After weeks of trying to downplay the risk of the coronavirus, Trump has taken a more urgent tone in recent days and led daily briefings with federal leaders about developments.

"I think a lot of people around him, and I mean broadly around him — particularly Republican members on Capitol Hill, in leadership, too — were determined to pretend this wasn't happening," he told the magazine. "I felt I had to do it, even though I suspected on some level it would probably hurt me if I did it."

Carlson said it's hard to tell a straightforward story at a time people see most everything through a partisan or ideological lens. Polls have shown Democrats to be more concerned about the coronavirus than Republicans.

"It's hard to get people's attention if you know you're saying something that they suspect is political propaganda," he said. "It's something people have worried about for a long time — what if there's a crisis, and no one will believe the coverage? Well, okay, that's where we are."

He said a lot of people are to blame for that, "including probably me."

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## Trump dubs COVID-19 'Chinese virus' despite hate crime risks

By **DEB RIECHMANN** and **TERRY TANG** Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump said Wednesday that he doesn't think calling COVID-19 the "Chinese virus" — or the "kung-flu," as one administration official reportedly called it — puts Asian Americans at risk of retaliation despite growing reports they are facing virus-related discrimination.

Since coronavirus infections started appearing in the United States in January, Asian Americans have shared stories of minor aggression to blatant attacks from people blaming them for the pandemic, which has killed more than 130 people in the United States.

Among the hate crimes reported in major cities with Chinese communities: An Asian man in a Brooklyn subway car who was yelled at and sprayed with Febreze air freshener. In Los Angeles, a 16-year-old boy of Asian descent said other students had bullied him and accused him of carrying the virus. Even before cities began shutting down all restaurants to stop the spread of the virus, Chinese restaurant owners were already experiencing steep declines in business because of racial stigma.

Asked why he keeps calling the coronavirus the "Chinese virus" when scientists say the disease doesn't respect borders and is not caused by ethnicity, Trump told reporters at the White House that he doesn't consider it a racist remark.

"It's not racist at all," Trump said, adding that he calls it the "Chinese virus" because he wants to be accurate. He indicated his terminology was a warranted pushback to Chinese officials who have been suggesting the U.S. military might have introduced the virus to Wuhan, the Chinese city where it was first reported in late 2019.

"China had tried to say at one point — maybe they stopped now — that it was caused by American soldiers," Trump said. "That can't happen. It's not going to happen, not as long as I'm president. It comes from China."

Beijing has complained, but Trump administration officials continue to link the virus to China.

At a State Department news conference on Tuesday, Secretary of State Mike Pompeo referred six times to the virus as the "Wuhan virus" and suggested the Chinese were trying to distract the world from the shortcomings of its initial response. Pompeo also suggested that an "after-action" report would corroborate his claim, suggesting that U.S.-China tensions are unlikely to end when the pandemic is over.

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Reports of anti-Asian violence are on the rise along with white nationalist rhetoric about the coronavirus on social media and far-right websites, according to Eric Ward, director of the Western States Center, a group based in Portland, Oregon, that works to strengthen inclusion.

"We have an irresponsible president who continues to refer to COVID-19 as a Chinese virus. That is intentional," Ward said. "And at a time of great panic and fear, that will only lead to physical violence."

"It is going to be critically important for community leaders, elected officials and others to step up their resistance to hate groups and their goal of dividing a united America."

John C. Yang, president and executive director of Asian Americans Advancing Justice, said Trump's comments were reminiscent of the late 1800s, when Chinese Americans were deemed the "yellow peril," despite living in the United States for years.

"For us, words matter," Yang said. "In reality, Chinese are not more genetically prone to transmit the virus. What we all need to do is focus on our public health."

He noted that the World Health Organization has cautioned against using geographic descriptors because it leads to ethnic discrimination. Yang said terms like "kung-flu" are not jokes.

"That's racial stereotyping, and it's just not funny," Yang said. "This is not comedy when it leads to verbal and physical assaults against a community."

During a White House briefing on the coronavirus, Trump was told that an unidentified administration official had used the term "kung-flu." The president was asked whether using a term like "Chinese virus" puts Asian Americans at risk.

"No, not at all. Not at all," Trump replied. "I think they probably would agree with it 100%. It comes from China."

On Tuesday, CBS reporter Weijia Jiang had tweeted that a White House official had called the coronavirus the "Kung-Flu" in front of her. She did not identify the official, but Jiang mentioned the remark Wednesday morning to Kellyanne Conway, counselor to the president.

"Of course it's wrong," said Conway, who wanted to know the identity of the official. She called the reference "highly offensive" and noted that she was married to an Asian American and that her children were 25% Filipino. "Why don't we go to the source and tell them that's very hurtful and unhelpful."

After the news conference, the White House defended the president's language, saying that previous epidemics, such as the Spanish flu and West Nile Virus, were named for geographic locations. They labeled the controversy a "fake media outrage."

"Those trying to divide us must stop rooting for America to fail and give Americans real info they need to get through the crisis," the White House tweeted.

But the "Spanish" flu is a misnomer. The strain is theorized to have actually developed in Kansas. Because newspapers on both sides of World War I censored most early news of the outbreak for the sake of public morale, Spain, which remained neutral, freely reported on influenza, giving the impression it had originated there.

Elsewhere, a group of Asian Americans in entertainment and fashion launched a social media campaign called #WashTheHate on Wednesday in an attempt to combat xenophobia related to the coronavirus. Supporters posted videos of themselves washing their hands for 20 seconds while talking about how they've been affected by virus-fueled racism.

Among them was actor Tzi Ma, who portrays the title heroine's father in Disney's now-postponed "Mulan" movie. The Asian American community has to speak up, he said, especially when Trump and other officials use these kinds of labels for the virus.

"We can never get off the soapbox. These things rehash themselves all the time," Ma said. "I don't see an end to it particularly, when our leadership is overtly racist. They're not even censoring themselves."

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.

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.

Tang reported from Phoenix. Associated Press writers Michael Kunzelman in Silver Spring, Md., and Jill Colvin in Washington 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.

## **Apollo 15 astronaut Al Worden, who circled moon, dies at 88**

**By MARCIA DUNN AP Aerospace Writer**

CAPE CANAVERAL, Fla. (AP) — Apollo 15 astronaut Al Worden, who circled the moon alone in 1971 while his two crewmates test-drove the first lunar rover, died Wednesday at age 88.

Worden died in his sleep at a rehab center in Houston following treatment for an infection, said friend and colleague Tom Kallman.

"Al was an American hero whose achievements in space and on Earth will never be forgotten," said NASA Administrator Jim Bridenstine in a statement. He also praised Worden for his appearances on "Mister Rogers' Neighborhood" to explain his moon mission to children.

Worden flew to the moon in 1971 along with David Scott and Jim Irwin. As command module pilot, Worden remained in lunar orbit aboard the Endeavour while Scott and Irwin descended to the surface and tried out NASA's first moon buggy.

Scott is one of four moonwalkers still alive. Irwin died in 1991.

"Line of Grey, Be Thou at Peace! Godspeed Al," tweeted Apollo 11 moonwalker Buzz Aldrin, borrowing from their West Point alma mater.

Once his moonwalking crewmates were back on board and headed home, Worden performed the first deep-space spacewalk — nearly 200,000 miles (322,000 kilometers) from Earth. He inspected the service module's science instrument bay and retrieved film. His foray outside lasted just 38 minutes.

Worden said of the mission: "Now I know why I'm here. Not for a closer look at the Moon, but to look back at our home, the Earth."

Apollo 15 was Worden's only spaceflight. He was in NASA's fifth astronaut class, chosen in 1966. He retired from NASA in 1975 and went to work for a few aerospace companies.

Of the 24 men who flew to the moon from 1968 through 1972, only 11 are still alive.

Born and raised on a farm in Jackson, Michigan, Worden graduated from the U.S. Military Academy at West Point, New York, in 1955 and was commissioned in the Air Force. He attended test pilot school.

"As I was growing up, aviation was not really something that was foremost in my mind," Worden said in a 2000 oral history for NASA. "From the age of 12 on, I basically ran the farm, did all the field work, milked the cows, did all that until I left for college."

While in the Air Force, "I began to realize that flying was kind of my game. It was a thing that I was very attuned to."

Going to the moon was "like flying an airplane," Worden said in the NASA oral history. "It's a skill that you learn. It takes some knowledge. It takes some analytical ability if something goes wrong, but outside of that it's like driving a car."

Working as a senior aerospace scientist at NASA's Ames Research Center in Mountain View, California, after the flight was more intellectually stimulating, he noted.

In his 2011 book "Falling to Earth: An Apollo 15 Astronaut's Journey to the Moon," Worden wrote that NASA was leery about young children watching a rocket launch and so he called Fred Rogers in Pittsburgh. Worden, the father of three daughters, ended up doing a special show.

"It was so outside of what most astronauts did, many thought I was crazy. Astronauts liked to think they were super jocks who hunted, fished, drank, and chased girls. We didn't do kiddies' shows."

A list of children's questions eventually led to Worden's 1974 book for children "I Want to Know about a Flight to the Moon."

After returning from the moon, all three Apollo 15 astronauts became embroiled in a controversy over a few hundred stamped postal covers that flew with them to the moon. The astronauts planned to sell them to help pay for their children's education, Worden said in the NASA oral history.

Worden said he assumed the stamped covers were on the official flight manifest, but wasn't sure now that they ever were. All this resulted in "quite a flap."

None of the three ever flew in space again. He blamed NASA management.

"Some senator or some congressman asked the question, and they caved under right away and tried to get rid of us," he said in the oral history. "Nobody stood up for us. Nobody."

Worden sued the U.S. government in 1983 and got his covers back.

"We probably didn't do the smartest thing in the world, but we didn't do anything that was illegal," he said. "We didn't do anything that anybody else hadn't done, but the consequences were rather severe to us."

Worden most recently worked with Kallman, a New Jersey businessman, on promoting science, engineering and math education, as well as providing scholarships for international young people to attend Space Camp in Huntsville, Alabama.

"That foundation lives on and he lives on through it as well," Kallman said.

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

## Endangered gray wolf population on the rise in southwest US

By **SUSAN MONTOYA BRYAN** Associated Press

THE EDGE OF THE GILA WILDERNESS, N.M. (AP) — A voice interrupted the crackle of the radio at basecamp: "Starting pursuit."

The rest of the team on the ground was anxious to hear those words after the low-flying helicopter crew had been working all morning to get close to one of the Mexican gray wolves that had been targeted as part of an annual survey of the endangered predators.

For months, crews combed the rugged mountains of the southwestern United States, tracking collared wolves and looking for evidence of new packs to build the most accurate picture possible of just how many wolves are roaming the wild in New Mexico and Arizona.

The results of the painstaking effort were finally released Wednesday, revealing there are more wolves in the wild than at any time since federal wildlife managers initiated efforts to conserve the animals decades ago.

Since the first wolves were released in 1998, the program aimed at re-establishing the species across its historic range has had its share of fits and starts due to illegal shootings, courtroom battles and politics. The challenges are mounting as ranchers and rural residents say the situation for them has become untenable as 2019 marked a record year for livestock kills.

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### ENCOURAGING NUMBERS

At least 163 wolves were counted during the recent survey. That marks a nearly 25% jump in the population from the previous year and puts wildlife managers about half way to meeting the goal that has been set for declaring the species recovered.

Officials say the population has increased an average of 15% annually over the last decade, marking what they consider to be a healthy pace.

"This is the second year we have seen a significant increase in the wild population of Mexican wolves, a success that is directly tied to the science-based, on-the-ground management efforts of the Interagency Field Team," said Amy Lueders, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Southwest regional director.

The recent count found there were 42 packs in the wild and half of them had pups last spring. In all,



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about 90 pups were born last year and nearly 60% of them survived, beating the average survival rate for Mexican wolf pups.

The recovery team also placed 12 captive-born pups into five wild dens to boost the genetic variability of the wild population. The cross-fostering technique has been used for a few years now and appears to be paying off as four fostered wolves have survived to breeding age, resulting in multiple litters of pups born in the wild. Three more fostered wolves will reach breeding age this spring.

"You've got wild wolves raising those pups, teaching them to be wild rather than taking a captive adult that's used to people and not used to killing and feeding itself. When you put those adults out in the wild, they're the ones that tend to cause problems," said Brady McGee, the Mexican gray wolf recovery coordinator. "The last few years, we've shied away from doing the adult releases for that reason and working more with the pups."

## 'BEYOND FRUSTRATING'

No matter the number of wolves on the landscape, ranchers say the threat to their livelihood is becoming more dire. They point to the recent spike in the number of cattle kills.

In fact, 2019 marked a record with more livestock being killed than in any year since the first captive-bred wolves were released in 1998. Federal wildlife officials have been poring over the data to determine the reason for the increase and to develop potential strategies to reverse the upward trend.

Megan Richardson runs a cattle ranch with her husband near Beaverhead, in the heart of the wolf recovery zone. She said the predators have harassed her horses and that packs like to nibble on the back ends of her cattle, leaving them with open wounds.

Richardson and others believe there are more wolves in the wild than what the annual count turns up. She says she and her neighbors are the boots on the ground and see them regularly.

"Almost daily we pass volunteers who have the trackers who go out and track the wolves," she said. "They won't even stop and speak with us. It's come to the point where it's like they hate us, we hate them, they don't want us there. We're trying to survive and make a living and support our families so it's beyond frustrating."

Audrey McQueen, a single mother of four young children, said her ranch southwest of Reserve, New Mexico, has been hit hard over the last year as there are three packs that roam the mountainous area that includes her spread. She said her losses due to cattle and calf kills average about \$50,000 annually but it could be more than a year before ranchers see any money from the claims they file with a co-existence council set up to address some of the financial effects of the reintroduction.

"We can't even have a normal life," McQueen said. "We work all day and at night we're driving up and down, shining the light just trying to haze off wolves. Everyone is worn out. Normal stuff is building fence and riding and we're not even able to do that because all we are is wolf patrol."

Richardson and McQueen say they've tried to work with federal officials to haze the wolves but nothing has worked.

## SEARCHING FOR SOLUTIONS

Unlike wolf reintroductions in Yellowstone and the northern United States, wildlife managers in the Southwest are faced with a climate that has encouraged a year-round calving season, meaning conflicts between livestock and wolves are constant rather than just a few months out of the year.

"The ranching culture is passed on from one generation to the next and they've always done it this way. With the wolves here, they do need to do things a little different," McGee said. "We've been talking with a few of the ranchers and throwing a few ideas out."

Those include calving in the late spring or early summer when there are also elk calves in the wild to lessen the pressure on livestock herds. McGee also has suggested moving herds further from wolf den sites during calving season.

Ranchers say that's not always possible since the cattle need to be where feed is available and there

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are certain pastures that need to be avoided at certain times of the year due noxious weeds, making the chess game nearly impossible.

Last year, 184 livestock kills were confirmed across New Mexico and Arizona and ranchers say some cases went unreported. Wildlife managers acknowledge the problems and are trying to determine what might be behind the spike.

"Every partner that's engaged, that's our top priority going into 2020 — figuring out some really good solutions for the depredation because it's not a sustainable level for anybody," said Fish and Wildlife Service spokeswoman Aislinn Maestas.

There already are a lot of tools in the chest — from range riders on horseback who scare the wolves away with cracker shots to flagging along fence lines and sometimes feeding caches to draw the wolves away from the cattle.

In December alone, the wolf team conducted more than two dozen days and nights of hazing in problem areas and maintained one diversionary food cache. The work has continued this year and there are regular calls and meetings with ranchers.

Still, McGee said it's been hard overcoming the lore attached to the predators. "There's still a huge misconception about wolves out there," he said. "People think wolves are big bad dangerous animals."

Once common throughout the Southwest U.S. and northern Mexico, the Mexican gray wolf is now the rarest subspecies of gray wolf in North America. It was all but eliminated by the 1970s, prompting the federal government to develop a captive breeding program.

Environmentalists have pushed for years for releasing more captive wolves into the wild, saying the current population is not sustainable without constant human intervention and cannot withstand current mortality rates. There were 14 wolves found dead in the wild in 2019, far less than the 21 documented the year before.

"Ensuring that wolves and people can coexist is an essential part of long-term success," said Bryan Bird with Defenders of Wildlife. "The Mexican gray wolf is an integral part of southwestern ecosystems and we must do everything we can to ensure the species is given the protections they need to survive."

## ORGANIZED CHAOS

Back at basecamp on the edge of the Gila National Forest, it looks like a NASCAR pit stop. All hands are on deck as the team scrambles to process the wolf that had just been darted and captured. They have to work quickly.

The young male is weighed and measured. Teeth are checked. Blood is drawn. Vaccines are given. Its temperature is taken repeatedly to ensure it's not in distress. A new collar is affixed as it's stretched out on the bed of a pickup truck.

Activity swirls all about, but the wolf is nearly motionless, except for the occasional lick of its tongue.

"We have a really good crew," biologist Maggie Dwire says. "A lot of these people have been doing it for a really long time so it's a pretty well-oiled machine when an animal comes in. It may look like chaos, but it's organized chaos."

With a collective breath, the team then loads the wolf back onto the helicopter, the blades spin up and away it goes.

## Earthquake shakes Utah, rattling frayed coronavirus nerves

By BRADY McCOMBS and LINDSAY WHITEHURST Associated Press

SALT LAKE CITY (AP) — A moderate earthquake Wednesday near Salt Lake City temporarily shut down a major air traffic hub, damaged a spire atop a temple and frightened millions of people already on edge from the coronavirus pandemic. There were no reports of injuries.

The 5.7-magnitude quake just after 7 a.m. damaged the spire and statue atop the iconic Salt Lake Temple. Elsewhere, bricks were showered onto sidewalks and a chemical plume was released outside the city.

The epicenter was just southwest of Salt Lake City, between the airport and Great Salt Lake. It was felt

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by about 2.8 million people who were already hunkered down inside their homes to prevent the spread of the coronavirus. Many ran outside in panic amid the shaking that lasted as long as 15 seconds.

"This is extremely bad timing, because we already have the coronavirus issue going on right now causing a lot of anxiety," Gov. Gary Herbert said.

Planes were diverted from Salt Lake City International Airport and the control tower and concourses were evacuated. Far fewer people than normal were in the airport, due to the coronavirus precautions. On a typical travel day, the airport would have had about 24,000 people inside and more making connections. But there were just 9,000 on Wednesday, making an evacuation easier. Airport executive director Bill Wyatt said.

Marsha Guertzgen of Evanston, Wyoming, was about to board a flight when the quake struck. "Pandemonium and chaos" immediately erupted in the terminal — only to be heightened by each aftershock, she said.

"Everybody was running around, they were scared, I don't think they knew what was going on," she said. "People were screaming, kids were screaming, people were climbing under things."

No runway damage was found and most of the damage in the terminal appeared to be caused by a broken water line, Wyatt said. Cargo and non-commercial flights resumed hours later, but commercial flights were delayed into the afternoon.

Elsewhere, there were reports of fallen lights and bookcases.

People reported feeling the quake in the neighboring states of Colorado, Idaho, Wyoming and Nevada.

The quake shut down light-rail service for Salt Lake City and its suburbs. The chemical plume was released at Kennecott copper mine west of Salt Lake City and moved toward the Great Salt Lake, said Clint Mecham, Salt Lake County's emergency manager. Officials have not identified the chemicals involved, but Mecham said it was not expected to affect people since it's moving away from populated areas.

Residents reported shaking across a 100-mile (160-kilometer) area, with the heaviest impact in Salt Lake County, officials said.

Paramedics and fire crews responding to emergency calls asked people to first disclose if they have symptoms of coronavirus. If they did, the crews donned masks, gowns and gloves before attending to them.

Some virus testing was delayed by the earthquake and the state's coronavirus hotline was temporarily shut down while damage assessments were conducted.

Michelle Daneri, 30, said the coronavirus outbreak had kept her mostly inside her Salt Lake City home since Friday, but she emerged after the quake to search for her frightened cat and chatted with her neighbors outside.

"We're trying to check on each other but we're also trying to keep our distance," Daneri said. "I think we at least stood about 5 feet away from each other."

The experience made her wonder how to take precautions against the virus if she could not stay in her home. "It makes me feel a little bit on edge in my house, when that felt like a safe space," Daneri said.

Damage was reported to roads and bridges, and natural gas leaks were reported at state government buildings, said Utah Commissioner of Public Safety Jess Anderson.

Near the epicenter of the quake in the small town of Magna, 14 buildings were damaged and 100 people were evacuated, Unified Fire spokesman Matthew McFarland said.

Homer Conder was among the residents who came to look at the damage. After feeling the quake as he was drinking his coffee.

"I stood up to move and it took me right off my feet," said Conder, a retired mechanical designer. "I narrowly missed getting hit in the head with a piece of pottery."

At the Salt Lake Temple near the headquarters of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, the trumpet held by the Angel Moroni fell from the statue at the top of the temple and stones were displaced from the spire. The temple is undergoing renovations and a seismic upgrade. Construction crews were sent home while the damage was assessed, church spokesman Daniel Woodruff said in a statement.

About 73,000 homes and businesses lost electricity in the Salt Lake City area, but power was quickly being restored in some areas, said utility Rocky Mountain Power.

It was the largest earthquake to hit Utah since a 5.9 magnitude quake shook southern Utah in 1992, according to Utah Emergency Management.

## Two 20-somethings extend 'invisible hands' in virus outbreak

By **LEANNE ITALIE** and **JESSIE WARDARSKI** Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Liam Elkind's big heart and his break from college was a highlight of 83-year-old Carol Sterling's week.

The retired arts administrator has been sheltering at home during the coronavirus outbreak, unable to shop for herself. Yearning for some fresh food, she found the 20-year-old through their synagogue, and soon he showed up at her door with a bag full of salad fixings and oranges.

Elkind, a junior at Yale, and a friend, Simone Policano, amassed 1,300 volunteers in 72 hours to deliver groceries and medicine to older New Yorkers and other vulnerable people. They call themselves Invisible Hands, and they do something else in the process — provide human contact and comfort, at a safe distance, of course.

On delivery day Tuesday, Elkind and Sterling met for the first time over her paper bag of groceries outside her 15th-floor apartment on the Upper West Side. It was a moment of "tikkun olam" between the two congregants of the progressive and service-minded Stephen Wise Free Synagogue.

The Hebrew for "world repair" is a phrase synonymous with the notion of social action.

"It's neighbor to neighbor," Sterling said. "A crisis like this often brings out the very best."

Elkind, the son of a doctor, has watched his father and other caregivers working tirelessly in crisis.

"I figured, OK, I can go buy some groceries. That I can do."

Life has changed radically for Sterling, a widow who lives alone. She's a people person, a puppeteer who clearly misses human interaction as she busies herself at home with online classes through "something called Zoom, which I had never heard of."

She was supposed to be in Vietnam and Bali attending a conference and teaching children and educators about puppetry. The outbreak dashed her plans. With her two children and other family far away, the usually busy Sterling has a new friend in Elkind.

"People are scared, and people are lonely," he said. "We're all so separated, and one of the things we need is that social cohesiveness. This is one opportunity to get them that social connection they're looking for."

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

Elkind and his fellow volunteers take the name of their project from their vigilance in maintaining social distance from the people they serve, and their meticulous care while shopping and delivering.

Grocery and pharmacy orders are placed on the Invisible Hands website. Shoppers must not have traveled out of the country for the virus' 14-day incubation period, have any symptoms of COVID-19 or have come in contact with anybody who has tested positive.

They must pledge that they have practiced social distancing and other safety measures in their own lives before signing on. They wear gloves while shopping, wipe down bags they're delivering and use self-checkout when possible.

Bags of goods are left at doors, and cash can be exchanged the same way, or directly to a store or through a digital transaction. Volunteers make a point to pause and chat as they deliver.

The effort started on Facebook. Policano, also a New Yorker, put out a call for volunteers. Word spread quickly as they built a website and distributed flyers in seven languages.

"It's gone from extremely casual to extremely operational very quickly," Elkind said. "This is one of those times when I remember that New York is such a small town, and people are willing to look out for one another and have each other's back."

Now, Elkind said, volunteers have offered to extend Invisible Hands to Boston, Los Angeles, San Francisco, Washington and London.



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"It's been really exciting just to see that amount of interest and how many people there are in this world who want to do good and are looking for ways to do that," he said. "This is a 24-7 operation right now. It's overwhelming in the best way possible."

Elkind is on spring break at the moment. After that, his school goes to remote learning. Unless told by officials to stop, Invisible Hands will press on. It was unclear what would happen to the efforts if New York is put under a shelter-in-place order, as Mayor Bill de Blasio has proposed. Such a measure could force residents to stay home except for strictly limited activities like buying food or medicine or getting exercise.

Sterling was more than a little grateful, for the food and for Elkind and his colleagues of all ages.

"When we look back ... a lot of good things are going to come out of this," she said of the crisis. "This will bring everybody together."

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 a continuing AP series reflecting these acts of kindness.

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## **Q&A: What does 90-day tax payment delay mean for filers?**

**By SARAH SKIDMORE SELL and MARTIN CRUTSINGER AP Business Writers**

The Trump administration has announced that most individuals and businesses will be allowed to delay paying their federal tax bills for 90 days as part of an emergency relief plan amid the coronavirus pandemic. Some questions and answers about the delay and its potential impact on the U.S. economy.

### **DO I STILL NEED TO FILE?**

Yes.

The details on the program are still scant. But as of now, taxpayers need to file their federal tax returns by the traditional April 15 deadline. The 90-day extension is solely for the money that is due. Those delayed payments are now due July 15.

However, taxpayers who are facing difficulty filing on time always still have the option to request a six-month extension. Visit the IRS website for more details.

### **WHO GETS TO WAIT TO PAY?**

Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin said individuals who owe less than \$1 million will be able to delay paying. Corporations will be able to defer payment on taxes due up to \$10 million. Mnuchin said only the "super rich" would be excluded.

However, because details are still pending, it's unclear if the delay applies to trusts or whether people who make quarterly payments on their taxes will still need to make that first payment by April 15, said Lance Christensen, a partner at the accounting firm of Margolin Winer & Evens.

### **WILL I BE PENALIZED FOR WAITING TO MAKE PAYMENTS?**

No. During this unprecedented delay, individuals and corporations will not be subject to interest or penalty payments.

### **WHAT IF I AM EXPECTING A REFUND?**

If you are expecting a refund, continue to file as usual. As of now, the IRS is still processing returns and

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sending out refunds.

## DOES THIS APPLY TO MY STATE TAXES TOO?

No. Check with your state tax authority to see about any changes to due dates. Some are not extending their deadline, others are following the federal model and others still are setting their own deadlines. California, for example, has bumped its date for filing and payment of state taxes to June 15.

## HOW WILL THIS HELP THE ECONOMY?

It's unclear.

Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin estimates that taxpayers will be able to keep \$300 billion in the economy for now. And some tax and economic experts say any extra cash in the hands of Americans is helpful because many will be struggling to get by.

However, some say the tax delay will not provide widespread financial relief.

Howard Gleckman, a senior fellow at the nonpartisan Tax Policy Center, says he thinks it will have a limited impact. That is in part because about three-quarters of Americans get refunds in any year and won't benefit from a delayed tax bill.

The IRS expected about 150 million individual tax returns, as of the most recent count, about 68 million taxpayers have already filed.

Those who file early tend to be low- and middle-income individuals who are getting a refund. Higher-income individuals, or those with complex taxes who owe money to the government, tend to file later, Gleckman said. This move will provide some relief for them, but Gleckman warns that higher income individuals have extra cash, and they tend to save it not spend it. That leaves lower income individuals, who need it most and are more likely to go out and spend it, without relief from this move.

## The show will go on. Just from their living rooms.

By MESFIN FEKADU AP Music Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — The spreading coronavirus canceled several touring performances from A-list musical artists, but those acts have found a new venue to sing: their living rooms.

John Legend, Bono, Coldplay's Chris Martin, Pink, John Mayer, Keith Urban and more have held virtual concerts from their homes as the world continues to practice social distancing to slow the spread of the virus.

"I mean, we don't normally do concerts live from our house in a robe," Legend told The Associated Press late Tuesday, hours after performing a nearly hour-long concert which streamed on Facebook and Instagram Live. "This is a cool way to connect with people and make them feel some kind of love and intimacy and connection, even though they have to be stuck at home."

"So many people are dealing with a lot of stress right now, trauma, anxiety, all those things. And they don't know what to do. And a lot of musicians and artists and entertainers are unable to go out and do the thing that we do best, which is perform live at venues with lots of people," he added. "So we're trying to find ways to stay in touch with people and give them some love."

The piano-playing superstar took requests from fans as he crooned from his living room like he does at one of his typical live concerts. Legend's performance was in support of the World Health Organization's newly-launched online concert series "Together at Home," created in efforts to fight the coronavirus, which causes only mild or moderate symptoms such as fever and cough for most people but can be severe in some cases, especially older adults and people with existing health problems. People with mild illness recover in about two weeks, while those with more severe illness may need six weeks to recover.

Others have found creative ways to communicate with their fans, some homebound because of school closings and others working from home.

Miley Cyrus launched a daily Instagram live talk show called "Bright Minded: Live with Miley" (2:30 p.m. Eastern) to offer viewers some positivity and comfort. Tuesday's show featured singer-actress Demi Lovato

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and Wednesday's program will include Amy Schumer and her husband, Chris Fischer, as well as Lauren Speed and Cameron Hamilton from the popular Netflix reality series, "Love Is Blind."

Rolling Stone magazine, which closed its offices like many companies to prevent the virus from spreading, will launch the new IGTV performance series "In My Room" on Wednesday at 3 p.m. Eastern. It will feature Brian Wilson of the Beach Boys performing "In My Room" as well as other classic songs; episodes will be released every Monday, Wednesday and Friday.

Brandon Flowers of The Killers tweeted a video of him washing his hands while singing the band's signature hit, "Mr. Brightside," while Lin-Manuel Miranda tweeted a live video of him performing an unreleased "Hamilton" song. And a tweet from Netflix editorial manager Jasmyn Lawson on Monday led to a virtual watch party for Beyoncé's epic "HOMECOMING" documentary, to take place Wednesday.

"We've never been in this type of space before, and it's really incredible to see artists coming together to figure out ways that they can bring joy and comfort and happiness to their fans given this crazy time that we're living in at the moment," said Kevin O'Donnell, Twitter's head of music partnerships. "I think the creativity is just going to even ramp up even more."

Former One Direction singer Niall Horan, Death Cab for Cutie's Ben Gibbard, Rob Thomas, JoJo, Christine and the Queens, Yungblud, David Foster and Katharine McPhee have also joined the music community by livestreaming directly to fans. Neil Young is even planning to jump on board.

Former "Glee" actor and singer Chord Overstreet launched a live performance series on YouTube appropriately called "Quarantine Sessions" this week, while OneRepublic isn't only performing, they're offering cooking lessons on social media. And some acts are even performing from venues: Grammy-nominated rock band Code Orange livestreamed their performance to an empty Roxian Theatre in Pittsburgh via Twitch this weekend.

Other acts stuck indoors are finding ways to promote new albums or make up for canceled and postponed shows.

The canceled Luck Reunion festival, annually held in Willie Nelson's backyard, will now go Thursday (7 p.m. Eastern) as a free broadcast featuring call-in sets filmed live by artists themselves from their own homes. Performers include Lukas Nelson, Jewel, Nathaniel Rateliff, Margo Price and more.

Latin superstars Juanes and Alejandro Sanz, whose concerts were postponed because of the virus, joined forces for a special streaming jam session in Miami this weekend, while Broadway stars are putting on twice-a-day concerts called "Stars in the House." And alternative rock-pop band Grouplove and singer-songwriter Caitlyn Smith, who both released albums Friday and had tour plans in support of the albums scrapped, are livestreaming performances.

The rock trio X Ambassadors have been bouncing around the world as several of their concert dates were canceled due to the virus. First was China. Then Milan. And while setting up in Poland for a performance, they were told to shut down. They made it home to Los Angeles on Thursday as President Donald Trump announced a travel ban.

Sam Nelson Harris of the band said the experience was traumatic, stressful and chaotic. And as he settles in, he's hoping to give his fans a cool experience from home.

"I'm pretty conservative when it comes to my use of Instagram and I haven't posted a single TikTok video, but I got all this time now to really figure out how to interact with it in a way that's genuine for me. And because I really do want to reach out to our fans and to people who have not been able to come see us because of cancellations that we had to make during the pandemic," said Harris, who has posted live performances from home on Instagram this week.

X Ambassadors have hit the Top 20 of the pop charts with "Unsteady," "Renegades" and "Sucker for Pain" and the group — which includes drummer Adam Levin and Harris' brother, keyboardist Casey Harris — have produced multiple songs on Lizzo's Grammy-winning album "Cuz I Love You."

"I have enough here at my house that I could do something on my own from scratch," Harris said of making music from his home. "And what I'm actively doing right now is reaching out to other producers and songwriters and trying to get people to be sending stuff back and forth. I know a lot of musicians who are out of work right now, and who will be out of work for a while, so I want to try and get people

involved with making music together, even though we can't actually be there together in person."

Legend, who has been working on new music, may still release the songs this spring while folks are homebound.

"I have a bunch of new music that's already almost done. We just have to mix it, which won't require a lot of group contact. So, I think we can get a lot of that out to people sooner rather than later," he said.

"We have to decide as a music community if we're going to let the fact that we can't go out and physically promote it stop us from putting it out. And I tend to think we should put stuff out."

Legend is also in the middle of figuring out if his U.S. tour, which is expected to launch in August, will still go on.

The Emmy, Grammy, Oscar and Tony winner compared current times to a film when aliens attack and "the whole earth comes together."

"This is one of those things that all of us are facing as a global community. And it doesn't discriminate based on what nation we live in or what race we are. And we have to come together as a community and do what we need to do to help each other get through it," he said.

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## **Cancer, heart surgeries delayed as coronavirus alters care**

**By MARILYNN MARCHIONE AP Chief Medical Writer**

Some cancer surgeries are being delayed, many stent procedures for clogged arteries have been pushed back and infertility specialists were asked to postpone helping patients get pregnant. Doctors in virtually every field are scrambling to alter care as the new coronavirus spreads.

Medical groups issued advice this week on how hospitals and doctors should adapt as beds and supplies are pinched and worries rise about exposing patients to possible infection. That includes canceling elective surgeries, including many for slow-growing or early-stage cancers, which many people would consider not elective at all.

Luciano Orsini's operation, set for April 1 at Fox Chase Cancer Center in Philadelphia, was pushed to April 29. He lost one kidney to cancer last year and was eager for this surgery to remove tumors on the sole kidney he has left.

"I don't want it to get any larger," Orsini said of his cancer, which his doctor says it's growing so slowly that he should be safe waiting. He understands but said: "The anxiety of just have this inside of you and not knowing and wanting to get it out" is hard.

Choices like this are happening across the United States, said Dr. Len Lichtenfeld of the American Cancer Society.

"We are going to face ethical dilemmas, not just in cancer care but in medical care in general," he said. "We recognize that any delay is not good but we may not have a choice."

The cancer society on Tuesday urged people to forgo mammograms, colonoscopies and other routine cancer screenings until the outbreak eases.

On Wednesday, Vice President Mike Pence called on hospitals to delay all elective procedures across the country to help ensure medical capacity is focused on stemming the spread of the coronavirus. Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services administrator Seema Verma said her agency will soon issue guidance on elective procedures, including dental care.

Dr. Deborah Birx, the White House coronavirus response coordinator, also addressed the issue, telling hospitals and dentists: "Things that don't need to be done over the next two weeks, don't get it done."

Medical care is being rescheduled for unplanned reasons, too: On Tuesday, Joslin Diabetes Center in



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Boston canceled all patient appointments after a staff member tested positive for the virus.

In Seattle, the U.S. city with the most virus cases, surgeon Dr. David Byrd of the University of Washington said many women with early-stage breast cancer that's fueled by estrogen — the most common form of the disease — could try hormone-blocking drugs and delay surgery for a month or two. One of his patients this week chose that because she was worried about the risks of virus infection if she went to a hospital for surgery now.

"This tumor probably took months to years to form. The likelihood of it spreading in the next few weeks is highly unlikely," Byrd said.

Many prostate and thyroid cancer operations also can wait, cancer doctors say. Other cases pose tougher decisions, Byrd and other doctors wrote in a paper published Wednesday by the Journal of the National Comprehensive Cancer Network.

Cancer doctors "will face the heavy reality of rationing care," they wrote. "As the pandemic progresses, there will come a point when channeling a large amount of resources for an individual patient will be in direct conflict with the greater social good."

At Fox Chase, it was a tough call to advise Orsini to delay his kidney cancer operation, said surgery chief Dr. Robert Uzzo. Hundreds of surgeries each week at his hospital are under scrutiny to see which can be put off.

"We want to balance the harm of delaying immediate cancer care against the harm of potential COVID infection or possible transmission to other people," Uzzo said. "What people hear about a lot are about ventilators, respirators, personal protective equipment" being in short supply, but there also are shortages of blood and other things needed for surgery, he added.

IV chemotherapy treatments also are being scrutinized to see if a delay seems safe. Some patients can be switched to an oral medicine, and sometimes home health care can administer IV drugs, but only certain cancer drugs are approved for that.

"It's not necessarily a simple solution," said Dr. Richard Schilsky, chief medical officer of the American Society of Clinical Oncology, which has posted patient advice.

Family planning also has been disrupted. The American Society for Reproductive Medicine on Tuesday called for suspension of most infertility treatments, including in vitro or lab dish fertilization, retrieving eggs or sperm, and transferring embryos to a womb. Doctors should continue to treat patients in the midst of these procedures, but start no new ones until the virus outbreak eases, the group said.

Wei Escala has been preparing to freeze eggs for a possible future pregnancy but decided to postpone next steps.

"Egg freezing can wait for a few weeks or a few months, it's no problem," said Escala, who runs a software company in Austin, Texas. Delaying it to avoid spreading the virus is the responsible thing to do "for myself and for everybody."

Heart groups have advised postponing elective stent procedures for people with stable chest pain caused by clogged arteries. That's virtually all outpatient cases at New York-Presbyterian/Columbia University Medical Center, said the chief of these services, Dr. Ajay Kirtane. Emergency stent procedures for heart attacks are still happening.

Several heart groups warned patients this week against discontinuing certain medicines. Some ACE inhibitors, like captopril, enalapril and lisinopril, and ARB medications, like losartan and valsartan, that are widely used to treat high blood pressure, heart failure and diabetes have been linked in some reports to COVID-19, the disease the new virus causes.

"There is the suggestion that the receptors that interact with these drugs also are the receptors that the virus are attaching to," but that's not known for sure, said Dr. Mariell Jessup, the American Heart Association's chief scientific officer. Some reports suggest the drugs help and others suggest they don't, she said.

"The harm that could come with withdrawing these drugs ... is much greater than continuing the drugs and individualizing the care for each patient if they develop symptoms" of COVID-19, Jessup said.

In a podcast Wednesday with a medical journal editor, the National Institutes of Health's Dr. Anthony Fauci said there's no data showing harm but some scientific basis to think there could be a relationship

between the drugs and the coronavirus.

"It is a possibility that we need to address" with more information, he said.

AP medical writer Carla K. Johnson contributed from Seattle.

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

## Many pastors follow coronavirus rules but some defy them

By ELANA SCHOR Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — On the first Sunday after the coronavirus began upending American life, some religious institutions — including two churches whose pastors are close to President Donald Trump — held in-person services amid public health worries over the pandemic. That picture already looks different this week.

Pastor Robert Jeffress, a stalwart evangelical ally of Trump, held services at his First Baptist megachurch this past Sunday in accordance with Dallas-area limits on gatherings of more than 500 people but said in an interview that this week, he would hold online-only worship. The Florida church where Paula White, Trump's personal pastor and a White House adviser on faith issues, invited congregants to in-person services this past Sunday will also shift to online-only status this week, according to a spokeswoman.

Jeffress, who had called for "a fearless church," said on Tuesday that Christians should take "common-sense approaches" to protect their health.

"Every pastor needs to use wisdom, and it is very obvious that the government's motivation in this is to protect the well-being of individuals," he said.

Churches and other religious institutions that have chafed at public health experts' calls to fight the virus by avoiding gatherings are under heightened scrutiny as those experts' pleas become edicts from government officials, including Trump. In a nation where faith can be as politically polarized as any other part of life — and where freedom to worship has become a rallying cry on the right — some conservative religious institutions are acknowledging that the government's word comes first during a pandemic.

Liberty University, where president Jerry Falwell Jr. had initially planned to resume classes next week, said Monday that the evangelical Christian campus would largely shift to online learning after Virginia's governor restricted gatherings of more than 100 people.

"All we're trying to do is obey the law. We might not agree with the governor on the best way to keep this from spreading, but he is the governor and the ban has been issued," Falwell said in an interview.

Falwell, who speculated on Fox News last week that coronavirus may have been the work of North Korea, added that he remains unworried about the virus but would not impose his view on others: "I just think it's silly to be wringing your hands and worrying about something like this, but that's just my personality."

Not every house of worship is bowing to government guidelines designed to help snuff out the virus. Rodney Howard-Browne, a Florida-based charismatic Christian pastor who prayed over Trump in the Oval Office in 2017, vowed not to stop services and encouraged worshippers to shake hands despite experts identifying that behavior as an easy way to spread the virus.

In Louisiana, pastor Tony Spell was warned by police Tuesday after holding a service that attracted hundreds and flouted a state ban on mass gatherings. Spell, who has claimed that his services also heal cancer and HIV, said that he would not permit "any dictator law" to stop worship.

For many other pastors, prioritizing faith and science simultaneously is a high priority during the pandemic. But the minority view of faith leaders who chafe at suspending in-person services while coronavirus infections climb across the country is raising concerns.

"Different churches have stayed open for different reasons. All of them need to suspend in-person events if they love their neighbors," said Nathan Empsall, an Episcopal priest and campaigns director for the liberal-leaning grassroots Christian group Faithful America. "The best way to love our neighbors is to do so from a distance right now."

As churches that have sought to keep gathering in person during the pandemic draw outsized attention,

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Empsall's group launched a petition this week calling for a halt to all in-person worship.

The First Amendment safeguards religious freedom, and 21 states have separate religious freedom laws designed to shield expressions of faith. Still, those laws are likely to provide scant protection for any house of worship that defies emergency governmental moves to limit gatherings during the fight against the pandemic.

Religious organizations could make a constitutional claim to being singled out by a law that treats secular activity differently, said Eugene Volokh, a UCLA Law School professor and First Amendment expert. "But if you're just imposing the same burden on everybody, for reasons completely unrelated to religiosity of the behavior, that is likely to be permissible even" under state-level religious freedom laws, he said.

Those religious freedom laws ask whether government restrictions are the least burdensome way to further a "compelling interest." When it comes to coronavirus, Volokh said, courts are likely to find "there's a compelling interest in preventing death through communicable disease."

Luke Goodrich, vice president of the Becket Fund for Religious Liberty and a top religious freedom attorney, agreed that the public health emergency of the pandemic would make the governmental case for restrictions on gatherings, including worship, "far stronger than usual."

To be sure, difficult questions about pausing in-person services as the coronavirus spreads are not limited to churches. While the Orthodox Union issued guidance this week calling for strict limits on worship gatherings, the New York Times reported that fire department officials in New York had to disperse a large Hasidic wedding that ignored the city's gathering ban.

"The city will continue to respond to complaints, educate the public, and enforce the capacity guidelines in place for all events and locations in the interests of public health and safety," said Jim Long, a fire department spokesman.

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

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## Public debut without public for polar bear cubs at Dutch zoo

THE HAGUE, Netherlands (AP) — A pair of twin polar bear cubs have made their public debut at a Dutch zoo -- but without the public because of coronavirus restrictions.

There was no sign of social distancing between the three-and-a-half-month-old cubs and their mother as they cautiously ventured out of the maternity den at the Ouwehands Zoo on Wednesday morning.

The twins stuck close to their mother, called Freedom, as they explored their outdoor enclosure for the first time since they were born on Nov. 27.

In video released by the zoo, Freedom kept a close eye on her cubs and gently licked the head of one as it suckled.

The cubs are the product of a European breeding program intended to help preserve the endangered species.

The gender of the cubs is not yet known. Once that is established, likely after they take their first swim, the zoo has two male names -- Yuku and Atlas -- and two female names -- Yura and Nova -- ready.

The Ouwehands Zoo in the central town of Rhenen has been forced to close its doors by a government ban, in force until at least April 6, on gatherings of more than 100 people.

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 hos-

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pital'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 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.



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"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 mismanagement by the Islamic militant Hamas rulers and a 13-year blockade imposed by Israel with Egypt's help that has complicated the passage of key medical equipment and 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.

On Wednesday, Israeli officials said they have coordinated the delivery of hundreds of additional test kits, along with medical protection equipment, from the World Health Organization. Israeli officials say they are closely monitoring the situation in Gaza and ready to work with the international community if there is a widespread outbreak.

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.

## A snapshot of Mexico's cartel landscape amid rising violence

By PETER ORSI Associated Press

MEXICO CITY (AP) — Another year, another homicide total unseen before in Mexico's modern history as the country struggles to check rising violence.

Cartels and other criminal groups that hold sway over large swaths of territory are blamed for much of it, warring with each other and preying on local populations in places where the state, especially local authority, is weak or even in cahoots with the gangs.

Here's a look at Mexico's criminal underworld today:

### THE PLAYERS

In its latest National Drug Threat Assessment, published early this year, the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration lists six Mexican criminal organizations as having significant trafficking impact on the United States: Sinaloa, Jalisco New Generation, Beltran-Leyva, Juarez, Gulf and the Zetas. But experts say most

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of the cartels have been splintered into competing factions in recent years, and today only Sinaloa and Jalisco meet the traditional conception of cohesive organizations with a large footprint. There are also other smaller, more local outfits.

Sinaloa, long led by notorious kingpin Joaquín "El Chapo" Guzmán, who is serving a life sentence at a Colorado supermax, is based out of the Pacific coast state of the same name but has a presence in much of the country, sometimes via allied local proxies. Sinaloa survived an apparent power dispute after Guzmán's extradition that ended with the capture of cartel figure Dámaso López in 2017 and the surrender of his son. Today Guzmán associate Ismael "El Mayo" Zambada and Guzmán's sons, known as "los Chapitos" or "the little Chapos," are believed to be firmly in control.

Jalisco, based in Guadalajara, Jalisco, is Mexico's fastest rising cartel, aggressively expansionist and not shying away from brazen, brutal tactics such as the October 2019 massacre of 13 police officers in Michoacan or the mass dumping in August of 19 bodies in the same state. CJNG leader Nemesio Oseguera Cervantes, alias "El Mencho," is one of the most wanted men by both Mexico and the United States; the latter has offered a \$10 million reward for his capture. The DEA says Jalisco is present in at least 24 of Mexico's 32 states.

## THE CONFLICTS

There are turf wars in many states, often between local groups or rival factions of erstwhile allies or even proxies for the big cartels. Jalisco's ambition to expand and subsume smaller groups all over the country is seen as driving much of the conflict.

Experts say Jalisco is fighting Sinaloa in places from Tijuana, across from San Diego; to Zacatecas, in central Mexico; to Quintana Roo, home to Cancun and other popular Caribbean resorts. It's fighting Gulf and Zetas splinters in Veracruz, along the Gulf of Mexico. And in states such as Guerrero and Michoacan, against local groups such as Los Viagras. Michoacan has seen some of the most shocking violence so far in 2020, such as the massacre in early February of nine people including four boys at a video arcade.

Sinaloa is also in conflict with Juarez remnants and proxies in the border area of the northern states of Chihuahua and Sonora; it was here that three women and six children from the U.S.-Mexican Mormon community were ambushed and shot dead in November along a rural mountain road. Sinaloa is also said to be supporting some local groups in their fights against Jalisco.

Zetas and Gulf offshoots are disputing control of the eastern part of Mexico's border with Texas, including the Gulf coast state of Tamaulipas, a key smuggling corridor. Scott Stewart, a vice president and security analyst for global intelligence firm Stratfor, said Jalisco has also made a play there including in Reynosa, across from McAllen, Texas. He called the conflict in Reynosa "a free-for-all" with little likelihood of a single figure emerging to control the "plaza" anytime soon.

## THE DRUGS

The DEA says Mexican cartels continue to "export significant quantities of heroin, cocaine, methamphetamine, marijuana and fentanyl" to U.S. markets.

According to a February report by Stratfor, synthetics such as meth and fentanyl offer the largest profit margins. Production appears to be exceeding U.S. demand, it said, and cartels have begun looking to ship synthetics to new markets in places like Australia, New Zealand and Europe.

Precursor drugs are often imported from China.

Stratfor also noted an increase in 2019 in production of concentrated cannabis oil. Often smuggled in buckets, it's more compact and easier to move across the border than the huge marijuana bales of old and can be used to make edibles and other products.

Most cross-border drug smuggling happens through ports of entry in private vehicles or mixed in with legitimate cargo on tractor-trailer trucks, according to the DEA. Cartels, mostly Sinaloa, employ underground tunnels to California and Arizona. They also use cargo trains, passenger buses, boats and individuals carrying loads in backpacks. The DEA says cartels use light aircraft for drug drops, mostly marijuana. Drone

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use is currently limited to small loads, though that could change "if their carrying capacity is increased."

## OTHER INTERESTS

Cartels and gangs aren't just in the business of smuggling drugs and fighting each other.

Rather, they have diversified into a range of illegal activities such as extorting businesses — Coca-Cola Femsa was forced to shutter a bottling plant in Guerrero in 2018, and last year a Ford dealership in Guajajuato closed after it was shot up.

Criminal groups are also involved in kidnapping, people-smuggling and theft of cargo and fuel. President Andrés Manuel López Obrador's government has prioritized cracking down on fuel theft and says it has dramatically reduced incidence rates, but that has come with its own unwelcome side effects — in Guajajuato, the Santa Rosa gang has turned from fuel theft to extortion.

A notable exception, according to security consultant Samuel González, who previously headed up the Mexican Attorney General's Office's now-defunct Special Organized Crime Unit, is the Sinaloa cartel, which he said has basically stuck to the traditional business of moving drugs: "They have not wanted to get involved in other areas."

## TACKLING THE GANGS?

López Obrador espouses what he calls "hugs not bullets," emphasizing addressing root social causes of criminality such as poverty, inequality and joblessness. That's at least a rhetorical departure from his two immediate predecessors, the latter of whom launched Mexico's militarized anti-cartel offensive in 2006.

López has restructured security forces under a new National Guard, with tens of thousands of troops drawn mostly from police and the armed forces. But immediately upon deployment last year, many Guardsmen were diverted to immigration enforcement following pressure from Washington.

Last October saw a security operation in Culiacan, the cradle of the Sinaloa Cartel, that cornered one of "El Chapo's" sons. After gunmen with high-caliber weapons paralyzed the city with gunbattles, blockades and burned vehicles, authorities ordered a retreat and the son was allowed to go free to prevent further loss of life. That decision prompted questions about whether the federal government has a realistic strategy to achieve security.

López Obrador, in office since December 2018, says it will take time for his holistic approach to bear fruit. He has also said that white-collar crime such as corruption has done more damage than the cartels.

Both gangland violence and corruption are problems that will precede his administration.

Since then-President Felipe Calderón launched a militarized anti-cartel offensive in 2006, homicide rates are up more than triple. Mexico recorded 35,588 murders in 2019, the most since comparable records began to be kept in the 1990s, although the rate of increase was 2.7% — significantly below recent years.

The rule of law is broadly wanting in Mexico — over 90% of all crimes go unpunished — and many areas lack firm regional control, either by government or a strong gang.

## AP Exclusive: Barr creating task force on prison misconduct

By MICHAEL BALSAMO Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Justice Department is creating a special task force to address criminal misconduct by federal Bureau of Prison officers at several correctional facilities after a loaded gun was found at the same jail where wealthy financier Jeffrey Epstein killed himself, Attorney General William Barr told The Associated Press.

In an interview with the AP, Barr said he was planning to establish the task force that would "have a very aggressive review of potential misconduct by correction officers in certain institutions around the country."

Those facilities include the Metropolitan Correctional Center in New York City, where Epstein killed himself last summer and where federal investigators found a loaded gun earlier this month. The gun's discovery followed a weeklong lockdown that turned up other contraband — including cellphones, narcotics and homemade weapons — and led to a criminal probe by prosecutors in Manhattan into guard misconduct

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focusing on the flow of contraband into the lockup.

The establishment of the task force comes as the nation's jails and prisons are on high alert in response to the threat of the coronavirus, stepping up inmate screenings, sanitizing cells and canceling visitation at all 122 federal correctional facilities across the country. Correctional officers and other Bureau of Prisons staff members who work in facilities in areas considered hotspots for the coronavirus or at medical referral centers — which provide advanced care for inmates with chronic or acute medical conditions — are also undergoing enhanced health screenings, including having their temperature taken before they report for duty each day.

The ability to smuggle a gun into the Manhattan jail, which had been billed as one of the most secure in America, marked a massive breach of protocol and raised serious questions about the security practices in place at the Bureau of Prisons, which is responsible for more than 175,000 federal inmates.

It was just the latest crisis at the jail, which houses a number of high-profile inmates, including attorney Michael Avenatti, who gained fame by representing porn actress Stormy Daniels in lawsuits involving President Donald Trump. Federal prosecutors allege that the two correctional officers assigned to watch Epstein's unit were snoozing and shopping on the internet when he took his own life in his cell in August, and later forged records to make it look like they checked in on him.

Barr named a new director earlier this month to take charge of the Bureau of Prisons, which has been the subject of intense scrutiny since Epstein took his own life while in custody in August. The agency has been plagued for years by serious misconduct, violence and staffing shortages so severe that guards often work overtime day after day or are forced to work mandatory double shifts.

Just this month, an inmate was killed by another prisoner inside a high-security federal prison in Illinois, four Bureau of Prisons officers were indicted for lying about three inmate deaths at a prison in North Carolina in 2019 and the Justice Department's inspector general found a warden at another facility directed an acting warden not to report misconduct to internal affairs for a week, among other issues.

After Barr swore in Michael Carvajal as the new director of the Bureau of Prisons, the two met privately and Carvajal told him he wanted to "step up, substantially, enforcement efforts against correctional officers or managers who engage in wrongdoing," the attorney general said.

Barr said he didn't believe there were systematic issues in the entire federal prison system, but he said officials need to focus on some facilities where they've uncovered problems.

Barr said with the leadership changes at the Bureau of Prisons, including the appointment of Carvajal and his immediate predecessor Kathleen Hawk-Sawyer, who remains at the agency as a senior adviser, he is "very optimistic we'll be able to turn things around" at the agency.

## 'Wonderchicken' fossil reveals ancestor of today's birds

By MALCOLM RITTER AP Science Writer

New York (AP) — A tiny fossil skull nicknamed "Wonderchicken" is giving scientists a rare glimpse at early ancestors of today's birds. It may be the oldest known fossil from this group.

With a face like those of today's chicken-like birds and a back portion like that of living duck-like birds, Wonderchicken is "down near the bottom of the modern-bird family tree," said Daniel Field of Cambridge University.

He and others announced the find in a report released Wednesday by the journal Nature. They named the creature *Asteriornis maastrichtensis*, but let's stick with Wonderchicken.

Found in Belgium, it is some 66.7 to 66.8 million years old. A previously reported Antarctic fossil find is about as old, but its precise age and place on the evolutionary tree are not clear. Field said the Belgian skull is slightly older.

It appeared as a block of broken rocks with some broken leg bones sticking out. After it was donated to a museum, Field tried CT scanning to get a better look at those bones. To his astonishment, the scanning revealed a well preserved skull inside the rock "staring out of the computer screen right at us."

The leg bones let researchers estimate the creature was the size of a very small duck, weighing only



about 14 ounces (395 grams). Its legs were long and slender, and it was evidently a shore bird and it could probably fly, Field said.

Wonderchicken lived just before the asteroid impact that's blamed for killing off many species, most notably the giant dinosaurs. That suggests the evolution of the family tree for modern-day-birds was in a very early stage when the asteroid struck, Field said.

Close relatives of Wonderchicken survived the cataclysm, and the fossil itself shows some traits that have been proposed as beneficial for making it through, Field said. It was small, and its legs suggest it did not live in trees, an important factor since forests were thought to have been devastated by wildfires.

"It also probably paid to not be picky about what you are eating," since there wasn't much on the menu in the aftermath of the asteroid strike, Field said. Wonderchicken's beak shows no signs of a specialized diet, he said.

Scientists unconnected to the research were enthusiastic.

Kevin Padian, a paleontologist at the University of California, Berkeley, said the fossil provides the best evidence yet of when and how the earliest ancestors of today's birds evolved.

Genetic studies have suggested that those ancestors appeared tens of millions of years earlier than Wonderchicken, he said. But at this point the fossil record shows no support for that, and there's no known fossil that is clearly from this lineage that predates Wonderchicken, he said.

Julia Clarke, a fossil-bird expert at the University of Texas at Austin, said the fossil "has a lot of information that can start to add to our picture of the earliest steps" in the proliferation of living birds species.

Fossils are snapshots, she said, and "right now our photo album has almost nothing in it" from this time period that relates to modern-day birds. "Any new picture is of key importance."

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## Iran's Nowruz New Year, typically joyous, haunted by virus

By **NASSER KARIMI** Associated Press

TEHRAN, Iran (AP) — At this time of year, the meandering arcades and alleys of Tehran's Grand Bazaar and other markets would usually be filled with shoppers rushing to stock up before the Persian New Year, Nowruz — a major holiday in Iran, when the entire country goes on vacation.

Instead, roll-down shutters have closed most shops. Merchants who keep their stores open carefully take cash and debit cards between their index finger and thumb from worried shoppers wearing face masks.

The new coronavirus has ravaged Iran, straining its hospitals amid over 17,000 confirmed cases and more than 1,100 deaths. It has also cut into the ancient Nowruz celebration that marks the start of spring and has further slowed the Islamic Republic's economy.

But though the traditional shopping spree is missing, Iranians appear not to be heeding warnings by health officials to stay home and avoid crowds to curb the risk of a further spread of the virus.

"It is not like previous years, at all," said Mohammad Khademi, a garment trader in downtown Tehran's Baharestan Square. "No customer comes in."

Most people who are infected by the new coronavirus recover, with some never showing symptoms. However, 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 last month 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" and a religious edict on Tuesday banned "unnecessary travel."

Iran's merchants — the so-called Bazaari class — have long been a political bellwether. The older among them say they can only remember one other time when so many shops were shuttered.

"It reminds me when shops went on strike against Shah Mohammad Reza Pahlavi some 40 years ago,"

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said Reza Jahani, a fishmonger. That strike fueled the 1979 Islamic Revolution, which brought in Iran's Shiite theocracy and the civilian government the country has today.

This time the closures appear to be more about fear of the virus — a fear that's proving costly to the wider Iranian economy, already battered by U.S. sanctions imposed after President Donald Trump unilaterally withdrew from Tehran's nuclear deal with world powers in 2018.

Nowruz has a huge impact on Iranian retail sales, particularly in domestic travel. During last year's holiday, some 25 million travelers filled hotels, creating 1.2 million temporary jobs and \$1.2 billion in revenue, according to a report by the moderate daily newspaper Hamshahri.

The slowdown is also evident at the closed teahouses and Tehran's subdued train station, where customers come only for refunds. Tehran's Mehrabad airport, through which most of the capital's domestic routes pass, has about 20 flights per day — a stark contrast to about 400 daily flights during Nowruz in previous years.

Authorities have installed checkpoints outside major cities and urged people not to travel, but there are worries people will ignore them, potentially sparking trouble.

The economic pain of the virus is felt across all industries as customers no longer want to have face-to-face meetings or buy items in person if they can help it. Iran's currency, the rial, which traded at 32,000 to the dollar at the time of the 2015 nuclear deal, is now over 160,000 to \$1.

"If you produce anything other than staples and necessary goods, nobody will buy from you and you'll be left with products with no consumers," said entrepreneur Behnam Tavakkoli. "This leads to unemployment of thousands of people, recession and high prices."

Nowruz, or "New Day" in Farsi, is celebrated by some 300 million people in Iran and beyond, marking the spring equinox. Families gather around tables set with the Islamic holy book, the Quran, as well as green wheat sprouts, apples, gold coins and either goldfish or oranges in a bowl of water.

When the new year is ushered in — this year it's expected at 7:20 a.m. on Friday — families embrace and kiss, hoping for better times.

But the virus has cast a shadow on those hopes.

"After nearly 10 days in self-quarantine, I came out for less than an hour and bought bread and fruits for two weeks," said Samira Khani, a homemaker who wheezed while carrying a big basket full of bread, apples and oranges. "I feared that there may be a shortage because of the corona."

The Iranian government has paid up to \$40 to poor families ahead of Nowruz. Earlier in the week, Iran's paramilitary Revolutionary Guard forces distributed food among the poor in some Tehran neighborhoods.

"We do not offer food for publicity here. That's why we did not invite the press," said a Guard lieutenant, who spoke on condition of anonymity as he wasn't authorized to speak to journalists. "We are here for the sake of God and to protect our people."

At a time of a global pandemic, Iran's poor likely will be the most affected, warned Tehran-based economic and political analyst Saeed Leilaz. "For poor street sellers it is worse, since they have to choose between the coronavirus and famine," he said.

One hawker, Mehdi Ghasemi, sat near the Mohseni Square in northern Tehran, selling candles and trinkets — but people quickly passed by him.

"People do not look at my offers at all," he said.

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Associated Press journalists Saeed Sarmadi and Mehdi Fattahi in Tehran, Iran, contributed to this report.

## Today in History By The Associated Press

Today in History

Today is Thursday, March 19, the 79th day of 2020. There are 287 days left in the year. Spring arrives at 11:50 p.m. EDT, the earliest the vernal equinox has occurred in 124 years.

Today's Highlight in History:

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On March 19, 1966, the Texas Western Miners defeated the heavily favored Kentucky Wildcats, 72-65, to win the NCAA Championship played in College Park, Maryland; making the contest especially noteworthy was that Texas Western became the first basketball team to start five black players in a national title game as it faced an all-white Kentucky squad.

On this date:

In 1687, French explorer Rene-Robert Cavelier, Sieur de La Salle, the first European to navigate the length of the Mississippi River, was murdered by mutineers in present-day Texas.

In 1917, a divided U.S. Supreme Court, in *Wilson v. New*, upheld, 5-4, the eight-hour work day for interstate railroad workers.

In 1931, Nevada Gov. Fred B. Balzar signed a measure legalizing casino gambling.

In 1945, during World War II, 724 people were killed when a Japanese dive bomber attacked the carrier USS Franklin off Japan (the ship was saved). Adolf Hitler ordered the destruction of German facilities that could fall into Allied hands in his so-called "Nero Decree," which was largely disregarded.

In 1953, the Academy Awards ceremony was televised for the first time; "The Greatest Show on Earth" was named best picture of 1952.

In 1977, the series finale of "Mary Tyler Moore" aired on CBS-TV, ending the situation comedy's seven-season run.

In 1979, the U.S. House of Representatives began televising its floor proceedings; the live feed was carried by C-SPAN (Cable-Satellite Public Affairs Network), which was making its debut.

In 1987, televangelist Jim Bakker resigned as chairman of his PTL ministry organization amid a sex and money scandal involving Jessica Hahn, a former church secretary.

In 1993, Supreme Court Justice Byron R. White announced plans to retire. (White's departure paved the way for Ruth Bader Ginsburg to become the court's second female justice.)

In 2003, President George W. Bush ordered the start of war against Iraq. (Because of the time difference, it was early March 20 in Iraq.)

In 2013, Pope Francis officially began his ministry as the 266th pope, receiving the ring symbolizing the papacy and a wool stole exemplifying his role as shepherd of his 1.2-billion strong flock during a Mass at the Vatican.

In 2014, Toyota agreed to pay \$1.2 billion to settle an investigation by the U.S. government, admitting that it had hidden information about defects that caused Toyota and Lexus vehicles to accelerate unexpectedly, resulting in injuries and deaths.

Ten years ago: The White House released an online video of President Barack Obama making a fresh appeal directly to the people of Iran, saying a U.S. offer of diplomatic dialogue still stood, but that the Tehran government had chosen isolation.

Five years ago: President Barack Obama ordered the federal government to cut its greenhouse gas emissions by nearly half over the next decade, driving his climate change agenda forward despite percolating challenges from Republican-led states. Days after winning reelection, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu backtracked from hardline campaign statements against the establishment of a Palestinian state in the face of a diplomatic backlash. Lindsey Vonn won the final super-G of the season and with it her 19th crystal globe trophy at the World Cup finals in Meribel, France. Songwriter Michael Brown, 65, who co-wrote the 1966 hit "Walk Away Renee," died in Englewood, New Jersey.

One year ago: President Donald Trump escalated his attacks on the late Sen. John McCain, who had died in 2018 of brain cancer; Trump told reporters, "I was never a fan of John McCain and I never will be." Aid workers rushed to rescue victims clinging to trees and crammed on rooftops after a cyclone unleashed devastating floods in Mozambique, Zimbabwe and Malawi; more than 350 people were confirmed dead with hundreds missing. In a major advance against the Islamic State group, U.S.-backed Syrian forces seized control of an encampment held by the group in eastern Syria after hundreds of militants surrendered overnight.

Today's Birthdays: Former White House national security adviser Brent Scowcroft is 95. Actress Renee

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Taylor is 87. Actress Ursula Andress is 84. Singer Clarence "Frogman" Henry is 83. Singer Ruth Pointer (The Pointer Sisters) is 74. Actress Glenn Close is 73. Disgraced movie mogul Harvey Weinstein is 68. Actor Bruce Willis is 65. Actress-comedian Mary Scheer is 57. Playwright Neil LaBute is 57. Actor Connor Trinneer is 51. Rock musician Gert Bettens (K's Choice) is 50. Rapper Bun B is 47. Rock musician Zach Lind (Jimmy Eat World) is 44. Actress Virginia Williams is 42. Actress Abby Brammell is 41. MLB pitcher Clayton Kershaw is 32. Actor Craig Lamar Traylor is 31. Actor Philip Bolden is 25.

Thought for Today: "The heaviest baggage for a traveler is an empty purse." — German proverb.