

# Groton Daily Independent

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**No School through March 27th**



"AT THE POINT  
WHERE HOPE  
WOULD OTHERWISE  
BECOME  
HOPELESSNESS, IT  
BECOMES FAITH."

-ROBERT BRAULT

*Chicken Soup*  
for the Soul

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

PIERRE, S.D. – The Department of Labor and Regulation (DLR) is accepting reemployment assistance (unemployment insurance) claims from school employees who are not able to work due to COVID-19 closures. If the worker is not being paid by the employer while at home, the worker may be eligible for unemployment benefits. Eligibility will be determined on a case-by-case basis.

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

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

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

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



I know everyone is sitting on pins and needles about this COVID-19 Virus that has engulfed our planet. The numbers are not stagnant - they are changing on a daily basis.

Here in South Dakota, we had 112 negative cases yesterday, but three positive ones, all of them in Beadle County - the Huron area. Governor Kristi Noem talked about it last night and at this point, they are still investigating if they are community spread or not. At this point, they are NOT until we are told otherwise.

The news of our neighbors to the north is not so good. The positive cases in North Dakota has more than doubled in one day with 12 new positive cases, bringing their total to 19 positive cases. Two of them are community spread which has prompted their governor to issue declarations of all restaurants, bars, and the link to discontinue onsite services. They can still do deliveries, call-ins and curbside orders. And that was the tip of the ice berg. He also said that people need to quit smoking and vaping as it will cause respiratory issues with COVID-19. One North Dakotan is hospitalized. No one in South Dakota is currently hospitalized. One death in South Dakota, none in North Dakota.

Comparing the Dakotas:

	North Dakota	South Dakota
Positive Cases	19	14
Negative Cases	654	663
Community Spread	4	0

Here in Groton, the United Methodist Church, Emmanuel Lutheran Church and St. John’s Lutheran Church have suspended services for this Sunday. The South Dakota Diocese has cancelled all mass in South Dakota. The Groton Christian Missionary & Alliance Church and the Presbyterian Church are still planning to have services this Sunday. The two churches that I serve will not have service for the next two weeks. Most churches are now going to the internet with video streaming. I do a podcast just because it’s so easy and quick to do.

I talked with Superintendent Joe Schwan and the whole gist of the school board meeting Monday night will be about the COVID-19 virus situation. We will be livestreaming the board meeting on [GDILIVE.COM](http://GDILIVE.COM) so everyone in the district will be able to watch it and find out the plans for the Groton Area School District.

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## Covid-19 Update by Marie Miller

I've spend most of today immersed in study proposals and research reports. I'll let you know what I'm finding out tomorrow. For today, we're going to look at the numbers and then talk some basic science so that the stuff from the proposals and reports makes sense tomorrow. So here we go:

The numbers are bad. Again. We knew that was going to happen, but it's still hard to take when you see this thing spiraling.

We passed 10,000 cases late morning and kept increasing throughout the day. We now have 12,326 reported cases in the US in all 50 states and 3 territories, PR, GU and VI. This is another big jump from yesterday, 49% increase--second day like that. Once again, it's difficult to tell how much of this is simply due to better reporting because of increased testing because we're still well behind where we should be on that, a great source of frustration. I am still seeing reports about the Northern Marianas, but cannot find confirmation. More on that when I have it.

We now have three states over 1000 cases each; they are NY - 4152, WA - 1228, and CA - 1040. NJ isn't far behind with 742. 8 states are over 200 cases: FL, IL, LA, MI, MA, GA, CO, and TX. 7 more states have over 100 cases, 11 have 50-99, 18 plus DC have 10-49, and 2 states plus 3 territories remain in single digits.

There have been 194 deaths in 26 states. The bulk of these have been in NY with 29, WA with 75, CA with 19, NJ with 9, FL with 8, LA with 10, and GA with 10. The remaining 19 states reporting deaths have fewer than 5 each. States joining this group are WI, OK, and VT.

Now there are some promising drug trials underway, but it's hard to help you understand what these mean until we all get on the same page about just what drug treatment for an infection like this involves. To that end, I'm giving a short (but probably not short enough) primer in how viruses work and how we defend ourselves against them. If you have an allergy to science, feel free to stop reading now, knowing tomorrow's report will not make much sense either. (But I'll warn you, you will want to understand that because there is hopeful news on the horizon.)

When one of these new nasty viruses pops up, people often wonder why we don't just pull one of our amazing antibiotics out of the bag of tricks, hit the virus over the head with it, and take care of the problem. To understand what's happening here, let's talk about treating infections.

When you have a bacterial infection, we want to give you a drug that will kill the bacterium, right? For example, cyanide kills any oxygen-using bacterium nicely--interferes with energy metabolism, and the bacteria die for lack of energy. Of course, we never actually do that because it so happens cyanide also kills the host--that would be you. (Then your family sues and it gets messy. So we don't do that.) Turns out the way the bacteria use oxygen is exactly the same way you use it, so when we target the invader's oxygen-using operation, we also target the host's oxygen-using operation, and nobody wants that. We need a drug that targets something the bacteria do that you don't do--or that you do very differently.

For example, penicillin keeps the bacteria from making new cell walls, and without cell walls, they don't survive. That's handy because your cells don't even have cell walls. So when we target this cell wall-making thing, there's no spillover to you. And there is a bunch of things like that--bacteria do them and we don't, or bacteria do them differently from the way we do them. And that's how antibiotics work, by interfering with something that doesn't mess with the host.

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Viruses are trickier because it turns out they're not even alive. They don't have cells; they have particles--just some genetic material (DNA or RNA), a couple of enzymes, a protein coat over the whole thing, and in some viruses, a lipid (fat) envelope around the outside. That's it. They don't have any cellular machinery to do cell stuff. They can't do anything, including reproduce, without getting into a living host cell--like yours.

Here's what they do: Cozy up to one of your cells, make a little hole, and inject their genetic material. Once inside, that commandeers your cell to do virus stuff for it instead of doing normal cell stuff for you. So your cell goes to work making more viral parts and assembling them into new viruses. Those new viruses either squeeze out through your cell membranes, borrowing a bit of the membrane for that lipid envelope or just fill the cell until it blows up. Either way, zillions of new viruses, custom-made by you, are free to go invade more of your cells, which they happily do, continuing the cycle.

So targeting viral processes is difficult--because those are YOUR processes. If we target viral RNA production, we're actually shutting down YOUR RNA production, and your cells can't stand that. If we target viral protein production, we're actually shutting down YOUR protein production, and your cells can't stand that either. And so on. This leaves us with a very narrow set of possibilities for antiviral activity.

Most antiviral drugs interfere with viral attachment and binding to your cells. A few mess with those couple of viral enzymes, and they might inhibit virus assembly. But that's about it. An antiviral drug is a taller order than an antibiotic for a bacterial infection.

So why doesn't a cold kill you then? If there isn't a drug to kill off the infection, why doesn't the infection kill you off instead?

Because you have a whole system devoted to taking care of foreign invaders; it's called your immune system. This is a pretty complicated set of cells and chemicals that operate to identify what's yours and attack what's not. It involves cells that produce proteins called antibodies to label the invaders as something to destroy and other cells that do the destroying. The activities of these cells are coordinated by a bunch of chemicals called cytokines; they carry messages back and forth and also cause more of these cells to be made so that, in a big infection, you have enough of a response to take care of things. It all works remarkably well.

But this whole operation takes a while to get cranked up. For cold viruses, for example, that time is about 7-8 days, which explains why colds last about 10 days--until your immune system is able to mount a good response and eliminate the virus. On the other hand, if the invader can hurt you faster than you can respond, then you have a bad outcome. The older you get, the more sluggish your immune system becomes (like so many things as we age). If you have health problems, that might interfere with your ability to respond--or it might make your tissues less able to hang on until you get a good response. Outcomes aren't so hot there either. This is why older people and people with health problems are more likely to become very sick and die from this coronavirus than young, healthy people.

And there is one other circumstance when things don't go well. That's when your immune system gets a little overenthusiastic and doesn't know when to stand down. Sometimes, those cytokines bring on more cells which release more cytokines which bring on even more cells which release even more cytokines in a sort of feedback loop that results in what is called a cytokine storm. At this point, those cytokines are actually damaging tissue, especially in your lungs and your kidneys, and this response can actually kill you. That's not unheard of in some viral infections, and this can be a big part of what damages your lungs in this Covid-19 infection.

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And with all of that boring science, I'll close for the day. Tomorrow we'll talk about why any of this matters to you.

It was another rough day, but we need to hang in there a while longer. We've only been doing this social distancing thing for about a week, hard as it is to believe. It should help to recognize that, as inconvenient as all of this is to you, there are health care providers who are already stretched thin, worried about their own exposure, worn out by how little they can do to help some patients, and tired of watching people die alone without family around them.

We knew there was a lag time in detection so that case numbers will continue to increase, even if our efforts are working--and with a two-week incubation period, it would take at least that long to see results anyhow. So we can't give up or stop exercising precautions. We can't get bored and throw a party. We can't feel sorry for ourselves and toss caution to the wind. Time to double down, take care of one another, and be grown-ups.

I'll be back with updates tomorrow--and with a run-down of what anyone's doing about treatment. Turns out the answer is quite a lot.

Stay well.

The DVD Collection of the 2019-20 Groton Area Boys Basketball Season is ready for ordering. You can order specific games or the entire season.

<http://397news.com/index.php...>



## GROTON AREA SCHOOL DISTRICT #06-6

### School Board Meeting

March 23, 2020 – 7:00 PM – GHS Conference Room

#### AGENDA:

1. Call to Order with members present. Approve agenda as proposed or amended.

#### POTENTIAL CONFLICTS DISCLOSURE PURSUANT SDCL 23-3

#### OLD/CONTINUING BUSINESS:

1. Open Forum for Public Participation in accordance with Board Policy & Guidelines.
2. Administrative Reports: (a) Superintendent's Report; (b) Principal's Reports; (c) Business Manager Report

#### NEW BUSINESS:

1. Discussion and/or action on District plan to address Coronavirus/COVID19 pandemic.

#### ADJOURN

We are respectfully requesting that members of the public help us observe the CDC recommendations and guidelines for group size gatherings of less than ten by viewing the meeting via LiveStream on GDILive.com. If there is input or questions that a member of the public would like brought before the board, please contact Superintendent, Joe Schwan, at 605-397-2351 or via email at Joe.Schwan@k12.sd.us.

## Helping children deal with COVID-19

PIERRE – With school cancelled for two weeks in South Dakota and other social distancing techniques being strongly recommended for the foreseeable future, children might feel anxious, isolated and depressed. The Department of Social Services (DSS) has resources available to help kids and adults alike deal with the stress of the COVID-19 pandemic.

“With so much uncertainty and the rapid pace at which the situation is changing in South Dakota and across the globe, it may be hard for parents and caregivers to know what to tell children,” said DSS Cabinet Secretary Laurie Gill. “The Department of Social Services is committed to ensuring that resources are available to bolster good mental health.”

The Center for Disease Control recommends that parents or caregivers talk to children about what is happening in a way that they can understand. “It is important to keep the message simple and appropriate for each child’s age,” Gill said. “Reassure them that there is a plan to keep them safe.”

Guidance to help reduce anxiety is available by clicking on the DSS COVID-19 Resources link on the DSS website at [covid.sd.gov](https://www.covid.sd.gov).

“Feelings of stress and anxiety aren’t exclusive to children,” Gill said. “Anyone can struggle with feelings of loneliness and depression and taking care of your mental health during these times is just as important as your physical health.”

DSS has resources to help children and adults in South Dakota dealing with substance abuse or mental health issues. For more information about behavioral health services, please contact the Division of Behavioral Health online at [dss.sd.gov/behavioralhealth](https://dss.sd.gov/behavioralhealth), by calling 605.367.5236 or by emailing to [DSSbh@state.sd.us](mailto:DSSbh@state.sd.us).

If you or someone you know may be in crisis or contemplating suicide, call 1-800-273-TALK (8255) or visit [www.bethe1sd.com](https://www.bethe1sd.com).

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## COVID-19 IN SOUTH DAKOTA

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.

### SOUTH DAKOTA CASE COUNTS: AS OF MARCH 19, 2020

Test Results	# of Cases
Positive*	14
Negative	663
Pending	270

*\*Positive test results are no longer required to be sent to the CDC for confirmation*

### AGE GROUP OF SOUTH DAKOTA COVID-19 CASES

Age Range	# of Cases
0 to 19 years	0
20 to 29 years	1
30 to 39 years	3
40 to 49 years	4
50 to 59 years	3
60 to 69 years	3
70 to 79 years	0
80+ years	0

### SOUTH DAKOTA COUNTIES WITH COVID-19 CASES

County	# of Cases
Beadle	4
Bon Homme	1
Charles Mix	1
Davison	1
McCook	1
Minnehaha	5
Pennington	1

*There is no known community transmission at this time.*

### SEX OF SOUTH DAKOTA COVID-19 CASES

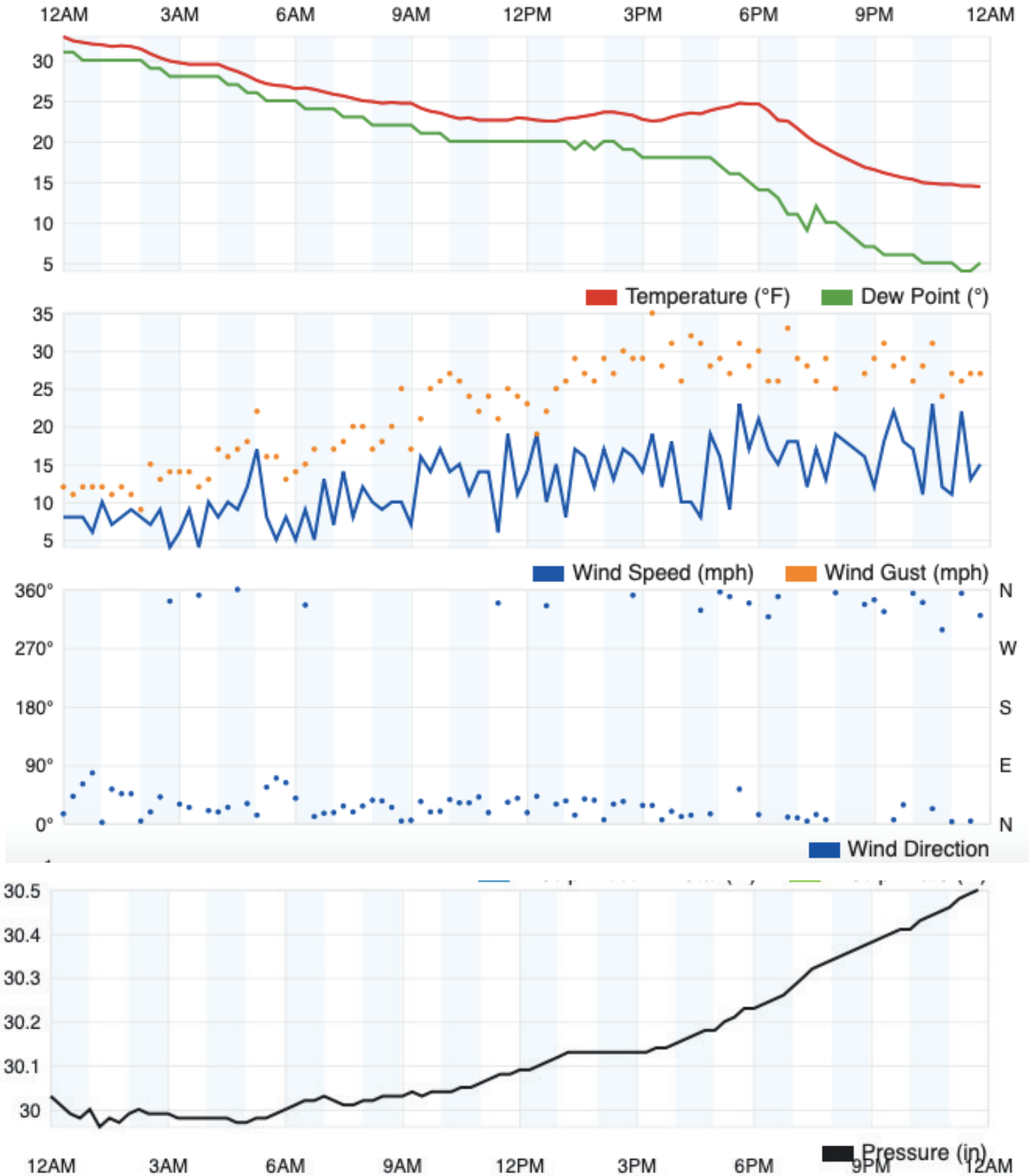
Sex	# of Cases
Male	11
Female	3



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## Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs



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Today



Sunny

High: 20 °F

Tonight



Mostly Clear

Low: 10 °F

Saturday



Partly Sunny  
then Slight  
Chance Snow

High: 33 °F

Saturday  
Night



Mostly Cloudy

Low: 24 °F

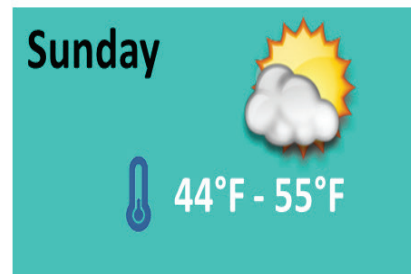
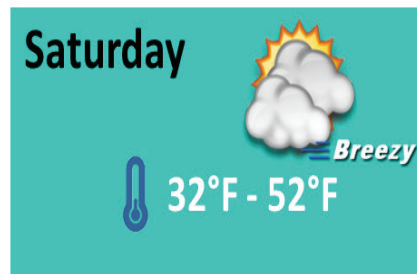
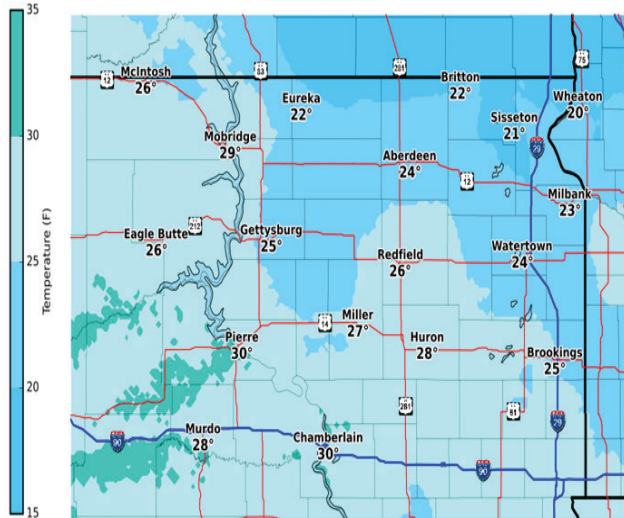
Sunday



Partly Sunny

High: 45 °F

Afternoon Highs  
Valid: March 20, 2020



High pressure will continue to build into the area today that will give most of us plenty of sunshine. However, it may look like Spring, but it won't feel like it. Temperatures during the day will be a good 15 to 20 degrees below normal for this time of year. Occasional breezes through the morning will be possible, but winds should relax by afternoon. Another chilly night is expected tonight before temperatures rebound for the upcoming weekend.

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## Today in Weather History

March 20, 1982: A winter storm dropped 10-20 inches of heavy wet snow across the northern two-thirds of South Dakota. Five persons were killed and eight others injured in indirect accidents. Downed power lines caused isolated power outages. A half dozen newborn calves died of exposure near Lemmon in Perkins County. Also, 5% of the pheasant population in Brown, Edmunds, and Faulk Counties were killed. The weight of the snow collapsed a canopy of a grocery store in McLaughlin, Corson County, tearing out part of the brick front and breaking windows in the store.

March 20, 2008: An upper-level disturbance coupled with an area of low pressure moving across the Central Plains brought widespread heavy snow from the late afternoon through the early morning hours to north-central and northeast South Dakota. Heavy snow of 6 to as much as 18 inches fell in this area resulting in school delays and cancelations along with treacherous travel conditions. Some snowfall amounts included: 6 inches at Bowdle, South Shore, and Bradley; 7 inches at Eureka, Chelsea, Bristol, and Pollock; 8 inches near Hosmer, Osaka, and Roscoe; 9 inches at Victor; 10 inches at Westport and Ipswich. Locations with a foot or more of snowfall included: 12 inches at Columbia, Milbank, and Waubay; 13 inches at Sisseton and Webster; 14 inches at Big Stone City; 15 inches at Summit; 16 inches at Roy Lake; 18 inches at Wilmot and Pickerel Lake State Park.

1948: The city of Juneau received 31 inches of snow in 24 hours, a record for the Alaska Capitol. (20th - 21st)

Also, on this day, an F3 tornado tracked through Tinker Air Force Base in Oklahoma City, OK just before 10 pm destroying 54 aircraft, including 17 transport planes valued at \$500,000 apiece. The total damage amounted to more than \$10 million, a record for the state that stood until the massive tornado outbreak of 5/3/1999. Major Ernest W. Fawbush and Captain Robert C. Miller were ordered to see if operationally forecasting tornadoes were possible. The tornado prompted the first attempt at tornado forecasting. Forecasters at Tinker believed conditions were again favorable for tornadoes and issued the first recorded tornado forecast. Five days later, on 3/25 at 6 pm, a forecasted tornado occurred, crossing the prepared base, and the damage was minimized. The successful, albeit somewhat lucky forecast, paved the way for tornado forecasts to be issued by the U.S. Weather Bureau after a lengthy ban.

1998: A deadly tornado outbreak occurred over portions of the southeastern United States on this day. Particularly hard hit were rural areas outside of Gainesville, Georgia, where at least 12 people were killed during the early morning hours. The entire outbreak killed 14 people and produced 12 tornadoes across three states. The town of Stoneville, North Carolina, hard hit by the storms.

1924 - A late winter storm in Oklahoma produced nearly a foot of snow at Oklahoma City and at Tulsa. (David Ludlum)

1984 - A severe three day winter storm came to an end over the Central Plains. The storm produced up to twenty inches of snow in Colorado, Nebraska and Kansas, and left a thick coat of ice from eastern Kansas across northwestern Missouri into Iowa. (Storm Data)

1986: Great Britain recorded its highest wind gust ever as the summit of Scotland's Cairngorm Mountains, at 4,085 feet, had a gust of 172 mph.

1987 - A storm produced blizzard conditions in Wyoming and eastern Nebraska, and severe thunderstorms in central Nebraska. Snowfall totals ranged up to 12 inches at Glenrock WY and Chadron NE. Thunderstorms in central Nebraska produced wind gusts to 69 mph at Valentine, and wind gusts to 76 mph at Bartley. (Storm Data) (The National Weather Summary)

1988 - Squalls in the Great Lakes Region left up to eight inches of new snow on the ground in time for the official start of spring. Unseasonably warm weather prevailed in the western U.S. Seven cities reported new record high temperatures for the date, including Tucson AZ with a reading of 89 degrees. (Storm Data) (The National Weather Summary)

1989 - Snow and high winds created blizzard conditions in western Kansas to usher in the official start of the spring season. Thunderstorms produced severe weather from east Texas to Alabama and northwest Florida, with nearly fifty reports of large hail and damaging winds during the afternoon and evening hours. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

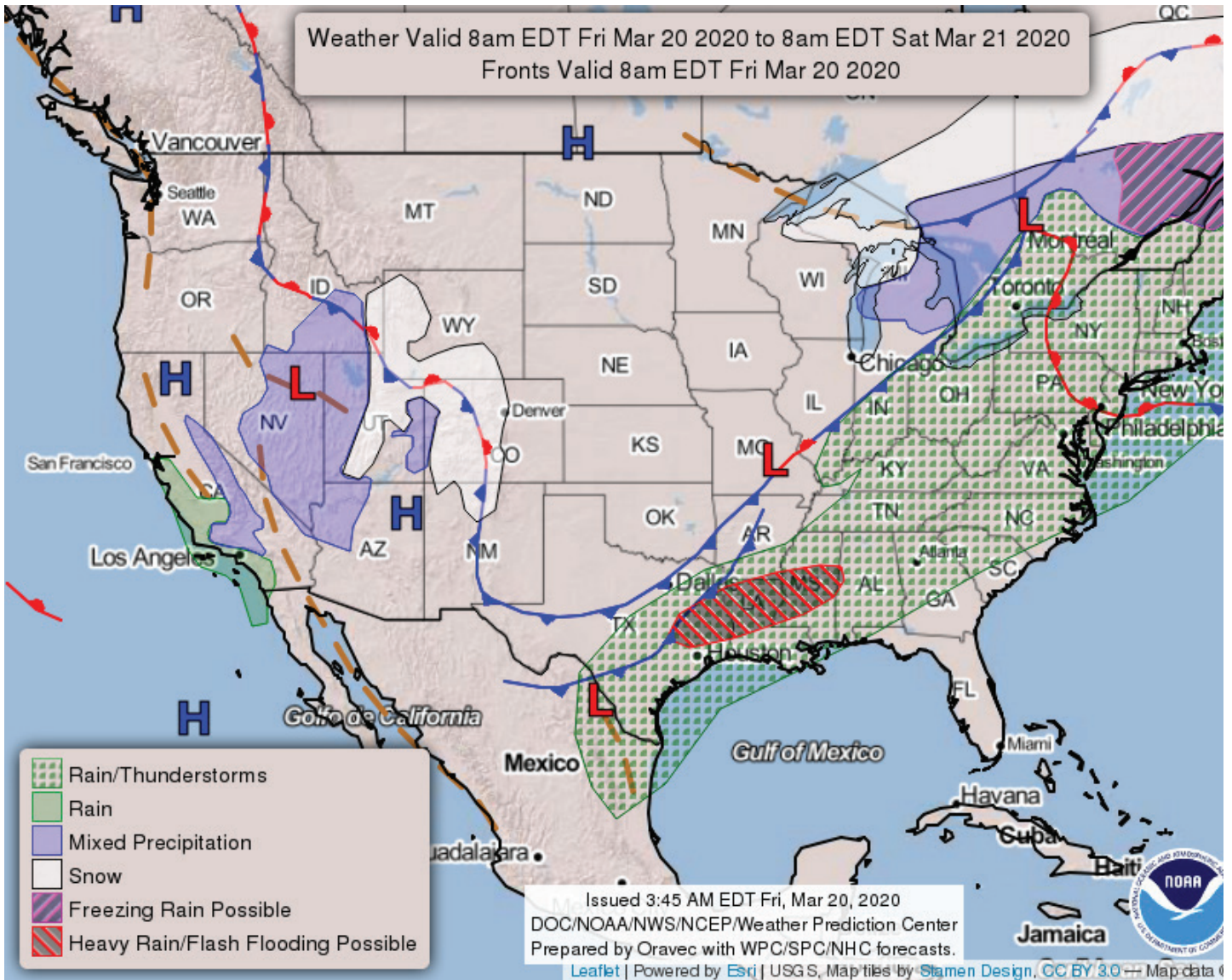
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## Yesterday's Groton Weather Today's Info

**High Temp: 33 °F at 12:00 AM**  
**Low Temp: 14 °F at 11:58 PM**  
**Wind: 35 mph at 3:14 PM**  
**Snow**

**Record High: 75° in 1910**  
**Record Low: -6° in 1965, 1893**  
**Average High: 42°F**  
**Average Low: 22°F**  
**Average Precip in March.: 0.63**  
**Precip to date in March.: 0.00**  
**Average Precip to date: 1.65**  
**Precip Year to Date: 0.35**  
**Sunset Tonight: 7:47 p.m.**  
**Sunrise Tomorrow: 7:33 a.m.**



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## PRETZELS AND PRAYER

Years ago, there was a group of monks in the northern part of Italy who gathered a group of children together to teach them to pray. Each time the children learned a new prayer, they were given a gift as a reward.

One monk began to pray about the gifts he was giving the children. He wanted them to understand the importance of prayer as well as to remind the children to pray. So, he decided to give the children a tasty item baked in his oven from unleavened bread. Rolling out a piece of dough, he carefully designed a pastry with three holes and a twist in the middle that represented two arms folded in prayer. He called it a "pretola" which means "little gift." It was eventually called a "pretzel" and has been enjoyed all over the world for 1300 years.

All of us have many opportunities to remind people of the importance of prayer. One thing we can do is to share God's answers to our prayers with others. Another thing we can do is to invite people to pray with us. We can also remind others of what God's Word teaches about prayer, something as simple as, "Call on Me, and I will answer you!"

Perhaps one day when eating a pretzel with a friend, we can share the story of the pretzel and remind them to pray whenever they see a pretzel.

Prayer: Help us, Lord, to understand the importance of prayer in our lives, and to pray more often! May we realize that You are waiting, willing and wanting to hear from us, and meet our need. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: Luke 18:1 One day Jesus told his disciples a story to show that they should always pray and never give up.

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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

### South Dakota reports 3 new COVID-19 cases in one county

By **STEPHEN GROVES** Associated Press

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — South Dakota officials on Thursday reported three more positive cases of COVID-19 from a batch of 94 high-priority tests at the state health lab.

The lab halted testing this week after running out of supplies to conduct tests, but the lab obtained more supplies earlier in the day. Health officials are working with limited testing supplies, prioritizing tests from those who pose the greatest threat of spreading the coronavirus to vulnerable people.

All three people tested positive live in Beadle County. They include two men and one woman who are in their 30s, 40s, or 60s. Health officials will be interviewing them to see if there is evidence of community spread there.

Gov. Kristi Noem remained upbeat on the situation in South Dakota, saying that the relatively small number of people who have tested positive for COVID-19 meant “the actions that we’ve taken are working.”

After testing 663 people for COVID-19, the state has 14 positive results, including one person who died. But there are 270 more tests waiting at the lab.

When Noem was asked by reporters why she has reiterated that there is no community spread while hundreds of tests await results, she said, “I have to use the data and the facts that I have to back up what I say.”

Secretary of Health Kim Malsam-Rysdon said the state has supplies to run about 100 tests. They will be saving those for people like healthcare providers and nursing home workers who could easily spread the coronavirus.

Noem said she expected more supplies in the next few days.

“We certainly in this country don’t have enough supplies to test everyone,” the governor said.

In the meantime, the state lab is sending some of its tests to commercial labs out of the state. Those will take four or five days to process.

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.

The governor highlighted the positive stories emerging as the state shuts many of its usual activities and businesses bear the economic slowdown. The state call center for unemployment claims has seen an influx of calls in the last week, even adding phone lines and assigning more staff to keep up with the calls.

“We need to spend some time talking about how communities have come together,” Noem said.

Earlier in the day, she told staff at the state’s Emergency Operations Center in Pierre they could be working for up to five more weeks, but added “we don’t necessarily know.”

Minnehaha County, which contains the state’s largest city Sioux Falls, has seen the most cases at five. Officials there continued to attempt to limit social interactions, with the mayor closing all non-essential city buildings in the hope it would push bars and restaurants to limit gatherings to 10 or fewer people. The city’s largest mall is also closed.

Federal courts in the state postponed all trials scheduled for the rest of the month. The South Dakota Supreme Court Chief Justice has also issued an order allowing judges to delay trials and limit visitors to court buildings throughout the state.

One of the state’s largest healthcare providers, Avera, said on Thursday it would postpone some elective surgeries. Kevin Post, the Chief Medical Officer for Avera, said they were preparing for a possible surge in patients from the coronavirus.

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

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

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

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

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

The state will deposit the money into the 911 Coordination Fund and distribute \$200,000 to emergency call centers throughout the state.

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

This story was first published on March 17. It was updated on March 19 to correct that only \$200,000 of the \$3.4 million settlement will go to emergency call centers, not the entire amount. The Associated Press previously corrected the company's name, which is Comtech Telecommunications Corp., not Comtech Communications Corp.

## Survey suggests virus outbreak to slow the economy

OMAHA, Neb. (AP) — Bankers in rural parts of 10 Plains and Western states expect the economy to slow down over the next few months as the nation deals with the coronavirus outbreak, according to a new survey released Thursday.

The overall index for the region fell to 35.5 in March from February's healthy 51.6 reading. Any score below 50 suggests a shrinking economy, while a score above 50 suggests a growing economy, organizers say.

Creighton University economist Ernie Goss said 61 percent of the bankers surveyed expect the measures being taken to fight the coronavirus to lead to a recession. State officials are limiting the size of public gatherings to slow the spread of the disease, prompting some businesses to close, and many restaurants have been forced to close their dining rooms and only handle take-out or delivery orders.

The survey's confidence index, which measures how bankers feel about the economy over the next six months, fell to 28.3 in March from February's 58.1.

The borrowing index rose to 66.1 in March from February's 50 as more farmers took out loans.

The employment index slipped to 48.3 in March from 57.8 in February.

Bankers from Colorado, Illinois, Iowa, Kansas, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, South Dakota and Wyoming were surveyed.

## Scientists expect spring floods to be milder than last year

**CHRISTINA LARSON AP Science Writer**

WASHINGTON (AP) — Too often disasters come in threes. But the year of global pandemic and record wildfires in Australia will not also be a year of historic floods in the U.S., forecasters predict.

Last year saw record floods in several regions of the country. But this year this annual spring flooding season will not be as severe or prolonged as in 2019, scientists at the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration said Thursday.

Major to moderate flooding is projected in 23 states, impacting 128 million people.



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The regions most likely to experience major flooding include parts of North Dakota, South Dakota and Minnesota.

The potential for major flooding is elevated along the Red River, the James River and parts of the Upper Mississippi River, said Edward Clark, director of NOAA's National Water Center.

That's in part due to heavier than normal rainfall over the last 90 days in those watershed areas.

In the southeastern U.S., the potential for heavy floods may be slightly dampened by the early arrival of spring — meaning that the sprouting plants and trees are absorbing moisture from the soil and air. Floods are more likely when rain falls on already water-saturated soils.

The National Phenology Network, which tracks the advent of green shoots and blooming flowers, found that spring has arrived around three weeks early in much of the eastern U.S.

Warmer temperatures are linked to climate change.

Last December to February saw "above normal temperatures for nearly the entire continental U.S.," said Jon Gottschalck, a scientist at NOAA's Climate Prediction Center.

Follow Christina Larson on Twitter: @larsonchristina

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## The Latest: Coronavirus greatly affects 2 convents near Rome

By The Associated Press

The Latest on the coronavirus pandemic, which has infected more than 244,500 people and killed more than 10,000. The COVID-19 illness causes mild or moderate symptoms in most people, but severe symptoms are more likely in the elderly or those with existing health problems. More than 86,000 people have recovered so far, mostly in China.

TOP OF THE HOUR:

- Worldwide death toll from COVID-19 passes 10,000.
- Britain is asking 65,000 retired nurses and doctors to return to work to help fight the coronavirus.
- South Korea's voters will be required to wear masks and use disposable gloves during next month's parliamentary elections.

ROME — Outbreaks of the coronavirus have stricken two convents in the Rome area.

Rome daily *Il Messaggero* quoted the Lazio region's health commissioner on Friday as saying 59 nuns at the Institute of Daughters of St. Camillo, in the hill town of Grottaferrata, have tested positive for COVID-19. One of the nuns has been hospitalized.

The newspaper also said 19 of 21 nuns at the convent of the Congregation of Angelic Sisters, on the outskirts of Rome, have the coronavirus infection.

Churches in Italy are no longer holding public Masses, but some of them are still open for faithful to come in to pray.

Because of nearby Vatican City, Rome is home to dozens of convents or mother houses of congregations of many nuns.

JOHANNESBURG — Anxiety is rising in Africa's richest nation as South Africa says coronavirus cases have jumped to 202, the most in the sub-Saharan region.

The country's largest airport says foreigners will not be allowed to disembark. And state-owned South African Airways is suspending all international flights until June. The Johannesburg airport is the busiest in Africa.

South Africa's government announced travel restrictions days ago while declaring a national disaster.

Thirty-seven countries in Africa have confirmed virus cases totaling over 800. So far most cases have

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been linked to overseas travel, but Niger's first patient had traveled in four West African capitals.

**BELGRADE**, Serbia — Serbia's police have detained 154 people for breaching the curfew imposed as part of harsh measures designed to contain the spread of the new coronavirus in the Balkan country.

Interior Minister Nebojsa Stefanovic said Friday that police made the detentions overnight while patrolling the streets to make sure that people stay indoors between 8 p.m. and 5 a.m. (1900 GMT and 0400 GMT), as ordered by the authorities.

Stefanovic also said that 66 people were placed in a quarantine at a military compound near the border with Croatia. The facility has been set up for the Serbian citizens who have returned to the country from abroad and breach the order to remain in self-isolation. Serbia has reported 118 cases of the coronavirus.

In neighboring Bosnia, the prosecutor's office said it will prioritize cases of individuals suspected of endangering public health with reckless and illegal behavior. Bosnia has 69 confirmed cases of the new coronavirus infections.

**MADRID** — Spanish health authorities say that 1,002 people have died in the country since the coronavirus outbreak, while infections have reached 19,980.

Fernando Simón, director of Spain's center for health alerts and emergencies, said Friday that infections rose by 16% in 24 hours. On Thursday, the death toll in Spain stood at 767, with 17,147 infections.

Spain is in its first week of a lockdown, with the government struggling to reduce the rising contagion rate and give relief to its strained health care system. Over 10,000 people have been hospitalized, including more than 1,000 in intensive care units.

Spain is the second-hardest hit country by the COVID-19 virus in Europe, behind Italy.

**BRUSSELS** — Belgium's health authorities remain confident the country has enough hospital beds to weather the coronavirus crisis despite the recent surge of confirmed cases.

According to the latest figures released Friday, 2,257 people have been diagnosed with the deadly virus, including 37 patients who have died. The health ministry said 837 persons have been hospitalized — 214 of them over the past day — and 164 patients were in intensive care. The average age of patients admitted to intensive care is 60.

"We have no capacity problems but we are expecting demand to increase in coming days," said Belgium's crisis center spokesman Benoit Ramacker.

Belgium has introduced a series of stringent social-distancing measures, including the closure of all "non-essential" shops, to tackle the epidemic, but the ministry says it's still too early to assess their impact.

**TOKYO** — Japan's education minister says that the government does not plan to extend school closures and that the new school year is expected to begin in April, as planned.

Education Minister Koichi Hagiuda said that the school closures "will not be extended."

Prime Minister Shinzo Abe in late February announced plans to close all schools from the beginning of March until later in the month when spring holidays begin, effectively creating a month-long interval until the new academic year starting April. It was a way of social distancing, part of government measures to prevent the further spread of the coronavirus.

During Friday's taskforce meeting, Abe cited experts' views that the domestic situation has not progressed into an explosive infection spread, and Japan still "coping," while infections in urban areas are on the rise.

He said, however, that nationwide efforts to change patterns of daily activity — such as refraining from large-scale events, school closures and working remotely — has been effective, though it is not known which element was effective.

**ROME** — Italy has banned all foreign cruise ships from docking there.

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The country is also requiring Italian cruise liners to disembark passengers at their ports of final destination, and not embark any more passengers.

A decree signed Thursday by the Italian health and transport ministers says that Italian citizens who disembark must self-quarantine. Any foreign citizens who disembark from Italian cruise ships in Italy "must be immediately transferred to their destinations abroad at the expense of the ship owner."

Should there be any COVID-19 cases aboard, any passengers who were in contact with them must go into quarantine in areas designated by health authorities. In the case of foreigners, they will be immediately transferred abroad, in specially protected ways, at the expense of the cruise companies.

The new rules also apply to crews. The decree, posted Friday on ministry websites, will remain in effect until April 3.

**TORONTO** — A union official says Air Canada is laying off more than 5,000 flight attendants as the country's largest airline cuts routes and parks planes amid the pandemic.

Wesley Lesosky, who heads the Air Canada component of the Canadian Union of Public Employees, says the carrier is laying off about 3,600 mainline employees as well as all 1,549 flight attendants at Rouge, Air Canada's discount brand.

He says the layoffs will take effect by April and affect roughly 60 percent of flight attendants at the two segments.

Air Canada says the layoffs are temporary and employees will be returned to active duty status when the airline is able to ramp up its network schedule.

The Montreal-based company said Wednesday it will suspend the majority of its international and U.S. flights by March 31.

**NICOSIA, Cyprus** — The religious leaders of ethnically divided Cyprus' Christians and Muslims have issued a joint call for all believers to "pray fervently, act compassionately and remain in solidarity" with each other during the coronavirus crisis.

The leaders of the island nation's Orthodox, Armenian, Maronite and Catholic churches on Friday called for special prayers for the ill and those who passed away due to COVID-19.

They also called for prayers to "uplift" all doctors, nurses and caregivers who are on the front lines of dealing with the virus' consequences, and urged all to strictly follow the guidelines issued by the World Health Organization and state authorities to prevent the spread of the virus.

**PARIS** — French President Emmanuel Macron urged worried employees to keep working in supermarkets, production sites and other key businesses amid tight restrictions on movement imposed to fight the rapid spread of the coronavirus in the country.

"We need to keep the country running," Macron said..

As many workers express fears of the virus, the French government is trying to strike a tricky balance between restrictions and keeping the economy afloat.

Finance Minister Bruno Le Maire insisted Friday that not only the food industry, but the whole flow of goods to consumers must be guaranteed.

This week, France shut all restaurants, cafes, cinemas and retail shops that are not essential. Working from home has become widespread for employees able to do so.

Businesses allowed to remain open are required to apply strict rules about social distancing, washing hands and disinfection.

French health authorities have reported almost 11,000 cases of people infected with the virus, including 372 who have died.

**TOKYO** — The foreign ministers of Japan and Iran agreed Friday to cooperate in fighting the coronavirus. Japanese Foreign Minister Toshimitsu Motegi told Iran's Mohammad Javad Zarif that Japan is providing

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2.5 billion yen (\$22.8 million) to help Iran battle the virus, which has infected more than 17,000 people and killed more than 1,100 there.

Motegi also urged Iran to play a constructive role in promoting peace and stability in the Mideast amid rising tensions between Tehran and Washington.

Japan has dispatched a naval ship to help secure Japanese oil tankers passing through nearby seas.

**LONDON** — Britain is asking 65,000 retired nurses and doctors to return to work to help fight the coronavirus.

The government is sending letters to 50,000 former nurses and 15,000 retired doctors, and Health Secretary Matt Hancock said he hoped “many, many thousands will respond” to the appeal. He said volunteers would be given training over the next few weeks before being allocated to hospitals.

Final-year nursing and medical students could also be drafted to bolster health care staff.

Britain’s coronavirus outbreak is not expected to peak for several weeks. Already, some hospitals have complained about overworked staff and shortages of ventilators and protective equipment such as face masks.

The U.K. has 3,269 confirmed cases of COVID-19, and 144 people have died.

**ROME** — Mayors of many towns in Italy are asking for more stringent controls on citizens’ movements to help contain surging coronavirus infections.

Despite a national lockdown that strictly limits conditions under which people are allowed to leave their homes, there have been many violations. Authorities say as of Friday morning more than 53,000 summons have been issued for violations.

Some people are leaving home several times a day to shop for food. While solitary strolling or jogging near one’s home is allowed, some people have been exercising together outdoors.

State radio said Friday that Premier Giuseppe Conte might announce tighter measures nationwide. On Thursday, Italy’s deaths from the virus — 3,405 -- surpassed those in China, where the outbreak began.

**BERLIN** — An Estonian ferry operator has started a new freight service to haul critical goods from Western Europe to the Baltic nation, bypassing Poland where new border controls designed to prevent the spread of the coronavirus have led to massive traffic jams and delays.

Ferry operator Tallink started daily runs from the northern German port of Sassnitz to the Estonian capital, Tallinn, the port operator told Germany’s dpa news agency Friday.

Each ferry can carry around 100 trucks and the trip takes about 20 hours — about the same time it would take to drive the route through Poland, Lithuania and Latvia to Estonia non-stop.

Meantime, Polish authorities say measures they’ve taken to alleviate traffic issues at the border are steadily reducing the backups.

Countries around Europe have instituted measures meant to stop non-essential cross-border travel, but allow trucks carrying food, medicine and other critical supplies through. So far, however, truckers have been reporting long delays.

**BRUSSELS** — Belgium has received an order of 5 million protective masks from China amid fears of shortages in hospitals.

The shipment was delivered early Friday at the Liege airport and placed under military surveillance.

A total of 1,795 confirmed cases of COVID-19 have been recorded by Belgian authorities, including 21 deaths.

“The need for masks is enormous. It will ease the tension we are starting to feel in hospitals,” Luc Partoune, the CEO of Liege airport, told local media.

A previous order of 5 million masks placed by Belgium was expected last week but was canceled because of a fraud investigation targeting the Turkish provider.

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JAKARTA, Indonesia — The largest mosque in Southeast Asia canceled mass prayers for the next two weeks to avoid spreading the coronavirus.

The Istiqlal grand mosque in Indonesia's capital, Jakarta, is usually packed with thousands of Muslims during Friday prayers.

Imam Nasaruddin Umar says the decision was made after the Indonesian Ulema Council, the country's highest religious authority, issued a fatwa or ruling on Monday, allowing Muslims to skip mass prayers in regions where the virus has spread "uncontrollably" until the situation returns to normal.

"Prayers in congregations will be suspended in Istiqlal for the next two weeks, including Friday prayers," Umar said in a video statement televised nationally in the world's most populous Muslim country.

"We appeal people not to hold mass prayers in other region where the coronavirus had spread until the danger for the contagion disappears," he said.

His appeal following orders from President Joko Widodo to the people in the world's most populous Muslim nation to curb mass religious gatherings to contain the coronavirus.

Indonesia has had 25 deaths from COVID-19, the most in Southeast Asia, and has 309 cases.

On Friday, there were still a few people in Istiqlal. Instead of Friday prayer, they held the noon prayer congregation by practicing social distancing of one meter (yard) apart between worshippers.

Most mosques in cities and districts remained out of red zones of coronavirus outbreak, are holding Friday prayers which commonly believed to be obligatory for Muslim men. They are holding prayers with a shorter sermon and the congregation to bring their own prayer mats.

SEOUL, South Korea -- South Korea's election commission says all voters will be required to wear masks and use disposable gloves at ballot booths during next month's national parliamentary elections as preventive measures against the coronavirus.

An official from the National Election Commission also said Friday that election workers will conduct temperature checks and provide separate polling places for voters with fever or respiratory symptoms.

Voters will be required to stand at least a meter apart when waiting in lines and sanitize their hands and wear plastic gloves provided by election workers before entering booths.

The commission will establish voting stations at hospitals and other treatment centers for COVID-19 patients who are medically isolated.

Some politicians had called for the country to postpone the April 15 election, which will be a crucial moment for President Moon Jae-in's government amid concerns about the epidemic's impact on public health, livelihoods and industries.

Foreign ministers from Japan, China and South Korea held a video conference Friday and agreed to continue cooperating in their effort to fight against the coronavirus outbreak.

Japanese foreign minister Toshimitsu Motegi and his counterparts, China's Wang Yi and South Korea's Kang Keung-wha, ensured cooperation among the three countries in their effort and agreed to hold a three-way meeting of health authorities at an early date.

Motegi also proposed sharing of information on drugs and vaccine development, as well as cooperation to ensure shipment of medical supplies and emergency relief goods among the three countries.

Motegi told the other ministers that Japan hopes to fully achieve the Tokyo Olympics and Paralympics "as a proof of human victory against the new coronavirus," the Japanese foreign ministry said in a statement.

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## Senators sold stock before steep market losses from virus

By MARY CLARE JALONICK Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Senate Intelligence Committee Chairman Richard Burr, R-N.C., sold as much as \$1.7

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million in stocks just before the market dropped in February amid fears about the coronavirus epidemic. Senate records show that Burr and his wife sold between roughly \$600,000 and \$1.7 million in more than 30 separate transactions in late January and mid-February, just before the market began to fall and as government health officials began to issue stark warnings about the effects of the virus. Several of the stocks were in companies that own hotels.

The stock sales were first reported by ProPublica and The Center for Responsive Politics. Most of them came on Feb. 13, just before Burr made a speech in Washington, D.C., in which he predicted severe consequences from the virus, including closed schools and cutbacks in company travel, according to audio obtained by National Public Radio and released Thursday.

Burr told the small North Carolina State Society audience that the virus was "much more aggressive in its transmission than anything that we have seen in recent history" and "probably more akin to the 1918 pandemic."

Burr's remarks were much more dire than remarks he had made publicly, and came as President Donald Trump was still downplaying the severity of the virus.

There is no indication that Burr had any inside information as he sold the stocks and issued the private warnings. The intelligence panel did not have any briefings on the pandemic the week when most of the stocks were sold, according to a person familiar with the matter. The person declined to be identified to discuss confidential committee activity.

Burr said on Twitter Thursday that Americans were already being warned about the effects of the virus when he made the speech to the North Carolina State Society.

"The message I shared with my constituents is the one public health officials urged all of us to heed as coronavirus spread increased," Burr wrote. "Be prepared."

Burr sent out the tweets before reports of his stock sales. A spokesperson for the senator said in a statement that Burr "has been deeply concerned by the steep and sudden toll this pandemic is taking on our economy" and supports congressional efforts to help the economy. The spokesperson declined to be identified in order to share the senator's thinking.

The North Carolina senator was not the only lawmaker to sell off stocks just before the steep decline due to the global pandemic. Georgia Sen. Kelly Loeffler, a new senator who is up for re-election this year, sold off hundreds of thousands of dollars worth of stock in late January, as senators began to get briefings on the virus, also according to Senate records.

In the weeks that followed, Loeffler urged her constituents to have faith in the Trump administration's efforts to prepare the nation.

"@realDonaldTrump & his administration are doing a great job working to keep Americans healthy & safe," Loeffler tweeted Feb. 27.

The Daily Beast first reported that Loeffler dropped the stock in late January. The senator is married to Jeffrey Sprecher, the chairman and CEO of Intercontinental Exchange, which owns the New York Stock Exchange.

## **Virus pandemic tightens grip; 10,000 dead worldwide**

**By LORI HINNANT and NICK PERRY Associated Press**

PARIS (AP) — The U.S. warned Americans to avoid all international travel and told citizens abroad to return now or face an "indefinite" absence, and California's governor asked all 40 million residents to stay home, to try to slow a pandemic toll that on Friday surpassed 10,000 people worldwide.

Wuhan, China, where the outbreak began, offered a ray of hope with no new infections reported for a second day in a row and only 39 cases reported nationwide — all of them brought from the outside, the government said.

But the effects of a global economy grinding to a halt were beginning to show, from millions of unsold flowers rotting in piles in Kenya to the slow emptying of the world's skies. The U.N. chief warned of a looming global recession "perhaps of record dimensions."

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In a measure of how the fortunes of East and West have shifted, a Chinese Red Cross official heading an aid delegation to Milan castigated Italians for failing to take their national lockdown seriously. Sun Shuopeng said he was shocked to see so many people walking around, using public transportation and eating out in hotels.

"Right now we need to stop all economic activity, and we need to stop the mobility of people," he said. "All people should be staying at home in quarantine."

China also sent medical equipment to the Czech capital, Prague, on Friday.

Globally, governments are trying to balance the need to lock down residents with the need to keep food, medicine and other essentials flowing. In Britain, the category of vital workers includes doctors, nurses and paramedics — and also vicars, truckers, garbage collectors and journalists.

French President Emmanuel Macron urged employees to keep working in supermarkets, production sites and other necessary businesses amid stringent restrictions of movement.

"We need to keep the country running," Macron said.

Worldwide, the death toll from COVID-19 passed 10,000 and infections exceeded 244,000, according to a Johns Hopkins University tally. Italy, with 60 million citizens, has recorded 3,405 deaths, exceeding the 3,248 in China, a country with a population over 20 times larger.

Though the illness is mild in most people, the elderly are particularly susceptible to serious symptoms. Italy has the world's second-oldest population, and the vast majority of its dead — 87% — were over 70.

Jonas Schmidt-Chanasit, a virologist at Germany's Bernhard Nocht Institute for Tropical Medicine, offered another reason for Italy's high death rate: "That's what happens when the health system collapses."

More than 86,000 people have recovered, mostly in China, but the pace is much slower than the spread of the virus. Recovery takes two weeks or so for mild cases but can be up to six weeks for those that turn serious, according to the World Health Organization.

Italy surpassed China in deaths from the outbreak, and Iran's official toll was rising quickly as well amid fears it is underreporting the scale of the pandemic. Iran accused the United States of helping spread the virus by retaining sanctions that prevent it importing desperately needed medicine and medical equipment.

"While the U.S. is trying to curb the virus internally, it is helping the spread of the virus externally," Iran's U.N. mission said in a statement.

Nations are imposing ever-stricter border controls and lockdowns to keep people at home and keep away outsiders, hoping to slow the spread of the virus while preparing for an onslaught of sick patients.

Italy was the first to act in Europe, and — despite the criticism from the Chinese official — other leaders held up Italians as an example to encourage their own citizens to endure far-reaching restrictions on public life. Austria and Germany warned that they would continue at least through Easter.

"We must not ease off. We must continue the measures we have taken," said Austrian Chancellor Sebastian Kurz. "This is a marathon ... everyone who goes along with the measures is a life-saver."

The Trump administration upgraded its already dire warning to Americans against all international travel, and the State Department announced new restrictions on the issuance of passports to U.S. citizens. In Morocco, several hundred Americans are scattered in cities around the country, sleeping on floors in the Marrakech airport, holed up in one of the last hotels open in Rabat and banding together on a Facebook group — U.S. Citizens Trapped in Morocco.

"The airport in Marrakech is crowded. People are touching shoulder to shoulder and many are sleeping on the floor," said student Corrine Schmaedeke, who managed to get a ticket Thursday to fly home after eight cancellations.

"The U.S. Embassy did nothing to help us," she said, adding that information was coming instead from the British Embassy.

At home, the U.S. Army prepared mobile military hospitals for deployment in major cities, and motorists waited in long lines for nurses to swab their nostrils at new U.S. drive-thru testing sites. Deaths have reached at least 205 and New York City is rapidly becoming a U.S. epicenter, with more than 4,000 cases.

New York Gov. Andrew Cuomo said the state needs to acquire thousands of ventilators, which would

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help the critically ill breathe, before the outbreak overwhelms hospitals. At a video conference with Trump, governors complained they were having difficulty obtaining such things as swabs and protective gear for doctors and nurses.

"We literally have people in China shopping for ventilators which is one of the largest manufacturers," Cuomo said.

In California, Gov. Gavin Newsom said that if strong action wasn't taken, 56% of the state's 40 million residents could contract the virus over the next eight weeks. He expanded restrictions on nonessential movement outside of homes, saying it was necessary to control the spread of the virus, which was threatening to overwhelm California's medical system.

Damage to the world's largest economy kept increasing, with the number of Americans filing for unemployment benefits surging by 70,000 last week.

Congress is weighing a proposed \$1 trillion emergency package that would dispense relief checks to households in as many as two rounds, the first of which would consist of payments of \$1,000 per adult and \$500 for each child.

And New York Mayor Bill de Blasio lashed out at the president as "the Herbert Hoover of your generation," referring to the man who was president when the stock market crashed in 1929 and the Depression set in.

A Houston hospital that opened its doors to drive-thru testing quickly saw a line of hundreds of vehicles stretching more than a mile. At a white tent, workers in masks and head-to-toe protective gear swabbed motorists. Petra Sanchez waited to find out whether she had the virus.

"I have an 80-year-old dad, and I haven't been around him for the same reason," she said. "I don't know what I have."

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.

## 2020 campaigns go digital amid fears of coronavirus spread

By BRIAN SLODYSKO, ALEXANDRA JAFFE and ZEKE MILLER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — No more rallies. No more door-knocking. And no more in-person fundraisers, raking in dollars from dozens of millionaires at once.

The coronavirus has disrupted American life, and the 2020 presidential campaign is no exception. Amid calls for social distancing to stop the pandemic's spread, President Donald Trump and Democrats Joe Biden and Bernie Sanders have had little choice but to call off large-scale public events in favor of politicking online and over the airwaves.

Gone are the rope lines, selfies with supporters and entourages of traveling press. They're being replaced — for now — with tools of the digital world: tele-town halls, virtual fundraisers and livestreamed speeches from candidates' homes, sometimes with awkward results.

The abrupt shift has infused the contest with an added degree of uncertainty.

With control of the White House at stake, candidates have been forced to ditch well-honed strategies in favor of untested tactics. There are doubts about whether they will be able to continue raising crucial cash as unemployment soars and the economy sputters. There are also concerns that a virtual campaign could foster the spread of misinformation and maybe even force the cancellation of the major party conventions this summer.

"Nobody's had to put together a general election strategy in the circumstances we face today," Anita Dunn, Biden's senior adviser, told The Associated Press. "I like to say every election is different. This election is really, really, really different."

Digital advertising and online outreach were always going to play a major role in the election. But no



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one could anticipate that tactile politics would be completely put on hold.

Since events halted earlier this month, Sanders has held a virtual rally featuring rocker Neil Young and appeared via livestream for a "fireside chat." But any momentum he's sought to build has been sapped, as Biden, the former vice president, has won a string of contests that put the nomination within his grasp.

Sanders' campaign did not respond to a request for comment.

The pause has provided Biden the opportunity to retool his campaign, which was running on fumes before his massive win in South Carolina last month reset the race. But he lacks the robust digital operation that Sanders and Trump have. And his early experiments in online campaigning have had mixed results.

Biden aimed to appear presidential during a livestream Tuesday night, when he won primaries in Florida, Illinois and Arizona. Standing before a podium with an austere backdrop from his home state of Delaware, he called on the nation to put politics aside to fight the coronavirus because it "doesn't care if you're a Democrat or a Republican."

Yet an earlier event was marred by technical glitches. At one point, Biden wandered off-camera. The campaign later apologized for the difficulties, and Rob Flaherty, Biden's digital director, acknowledged livestream technology is "one of the things that we're struggling with."

"He's the best retail politician in the entire world, right? So how do we build systems where he can go out and meet people, still talk to people, get those one-on-one engagements, and also make people feel like they're a part of something?" Flaherty said.

The campaign is also looking into adopting the use of Slack, a popular group communication platform, now that staffers are working from home.

Trump, too, is not immune from the effects. Though the Republican has the megaphone of the presidency, his dismissive early response to the virus and denials that a pandemic was spreading have been largely panned.

At the same time, he's being denied the ability to hold the freewheeling rallies that are a staple of his presidency and that allow him to blow off steam, attack rivals and often shift the media narrative.

As campaign offices have emptied out and workers telecommute from home, trainings for his reelection effort are now being done virtually, as are all voter contacts.

Tim Murtaugh, the communications director for Trump's reelection campaign, said the campaign is "best equipped" for the pivot to virtual campaigning. But no amount of technology can replicate the arena rallies that have served as mass organizing and communication events for his reelection.

Murtaugh said the campaign hopes to roll out "live and interactive" events with surrogates online in the coming days. Still, don't expect to see Trump participating in them.

Murtaugh said that as Trump and Vice President Mike Pence hold televised briefings daily, the campaign's role is to amplify their message.

"Americans want to see that their president and their government is on the case," he said.

While Biden has called for the country to come together for a moment of bipartisanship to address the crisis, other Democrats are itching to use Trump's handling of it as an election-year attack.

"Using Trump's own words and actions to remind people of his failures while he tries to rewrite history is essential," tweeted David Plouffe, Barack Obama's former campaign manager.

So far, at least, a political committee affiliated with Trump's reelection has opted against taking the same course. America First Action, a super PAC sanctioned by Trump, has postponed plans to spend millions attacking Biden in TV ads while the crisis is ongoing.

Another area of uncertainty is whether any of the contenders will still be able to rake in gobs of money, the lifeblood of any campaign.

With big-dollar events on hold, the candidates and the parties could struggle to bring in large checks. The financial uncertainty could also depress grassroots donations from those who give small amounts online.

"We have to be thoughtful about how we ask people for money," Flaherty said. "We're moving into a space where the economy is going to be tougher."

Not everyone is concerned, though.

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"Any Democratic Party official who's agonizing over what type of fundraising we do or what type of convention we're going to have should get out of group therapy, go to JoeBiden.com and make a donation," said Robert Zimmerman, a prominent New York donor and Democratic National Committee member who said he would be fine casting his ballot for Biden during a virtual convention. "The pandemic that we're facing and the threat it represents puts everything in the proper perspective."

But it's not just the presidential candidates who will have to grapple with this new reality. Down-ballot candidates could find the shift to an all-digital campaign particularly challenging because many of them are running on much thinner budgets and have less money to spend on ads and staff to make up for the loss of in-person interaction.

"If you have no money, and you're dependent on meeting people out in organic environments, the challenges you now face are huge," said Kelly Dietrich, CEO of the National Democratic Training Committee, a group that trains Democrats who want to run for office or work on a campaign.

Even well-funded players in the presidential race are feeling the pinch. And the holding pattern gripping the contest is delaying on-the-ground organizing efforts that will be key to winning battleground states like Michigan, Pennsylvania, Wisconsin and Florida.

"Everyone is hitting pause and thinking about how we engage in field activities and organizing. Hopefully we'll get to a place where that can happen," said Guy Cecil, chairman of Priorities USA, the largest outside Democratic group. "But the reality is that until we see changes, we're just going to have to put those things on hold."

Associated Press writer Bill Barrow contributed to this report from Atlanta.

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

## 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. **DEATH TOLL HITS 10,000 IN CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC** California's governor orders people in the most populous state to stay home as the viral outbreak toll worsens so much world leaders warned of "record" economic pain.

2. **ITALY'S VIRUS EPICENTER GRAPPLES WITH GRIM TOLL** Families in the northern Italian city of Bergamo are deprived of a farewell with virus-stricken loved ones, or even a traditional funeral.

3. **IN OUTBREAK, A NEW LEXICON EMERGES** With words like lockdown, quarantine, social distancing and flattening the curve our vocabulary has changed — just like everything else.

4. **FINANCIAL MARKETS CHEER AID HOPES** Global share prices and U.S. futures rose on hopes government and central bank action can shield the world economy from a looming recession caused by the coronavirus.

5. **SENATORS SOLD STOCK BEFORE STEEP MARKET LOSSES** Sens. Richard Burr and Kelly Loeffler sold large amounts of stock before the market drop amid fears about the coronavirus epidemic.

6. **2020 CAMPAIGNS GO DIGITAL** Amid calls for social distancing, Donald Trump, Joe Biden and Bernie Sanders have had to call off large-scale public events in favor of politicking online and over the airwaves.

7. **'I CAN'T STAY HERE ALL DAY'** Parents and authorities around the globe are struggling to keep young people from gathering to help stop the spread of the coronavirus.

8. **MANY RENTERS WILL FACE EVICTIONS** Most Americans who rent their home, many of whom have lost their jobs in the sudden economic slowdown caused by the viral outbreak, will not be eligible for eviction protections.

9. **'THIS WILL NOT BE PRETTY'** With iPhones and Skype, Conan O'Brien is going back on the air, encouraging viewers to "feel free to laugh at our attempt."

10. **MORE NBA PLAYERS TEST POSITIVE FOR VIRUS** Marcus Smart of the Boston Celtics reveals that

he tested positive for the coronavirus and the Los Angeles Lakers say two of their players did as well, bringing the total to 10 NBA players.

## Trump's team, senators to negotiate \$1T economic rescue deal

By **ANDREW TAYLOR** and **LISA MASCARO** Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Members of President Donald Trump's economic team convene Friday on Capitol Hill to launch negotiations with Senate Republicans and Democrats racing to draft a \$1 trillion-plus economic rescue package amid the coronavirus outbreak.

It's the biggest effort yet to shore up households and the U.S. economy as the pandemic and its nationwide shutdown hurtles the country toward a likely recession.

Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell unveiled the Republican opening offer to pump \$1,200 direct checks to taxpayers, \$300 billion for small businesses to keep idled workers on payroll and \$208 billion in loans to airlines and other industries.

The GOP leader's effort builds on Trump's request for Congress to "go big."

"We need to take bold and swift action as soon as possible," McConnell said Thursday, announcing his plan on the Senate floor.

The 247-page McConnell CARES Act puts the leader's imprint on opening talks with Democrats in Congress as lawmakers prepare to work through the weekend to fast-track perhaps the most urgent legislative undertaking since the 2008 financial crisis.

The negotiations are certain to encounter difficulties ahead, despite the pressure on Washington to act. Trump's Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin and economic adviser Larry Kudlow will meet behind closed doors with Senate leaders. Democrats say the Republican plan does not go far enough and some Senate Republicans object to certain provisions.

"We are beginning to review Senator McConnell's proposal and on first reading, it is not at all pro-worker and instead puts corporations way ahead of workers," said a joint statement from House Speaker Nancy Pelosi and Senate Democratic Leader Chuck Schumer.

The GOP leader's plan aims to shore up households, businesses and the healthcare industry, which is bracing for an expected onslaught of patients falling ill from the virus that causes COVID-19.

The one-time \$1,200 stipends would be sent to individuals — \$2,400 for couples — phased out at income thresholds of \$75,000 for individuals and \$150,000 per couple. Additionally, there would be \$500 payments for each child.

Additionally, the McConnell bill would provide \$300 billion to small businesses, with loans that would eventually be forgiven for employers who use them to meet payroll expenses.

To shore up industry, McConnell's plan would provide \$208 billion in loans and loan guarantees to distressed sectors, including \$50 billion for commercial airlines, \$8 billion for air cargo carriers and \$150 billion for other eligible businesses, but those loans would have to be paid back.

Businesses would also be allowed to defer payment of the 6.2% employer payroll tax.

The proposal also includes a specific provision to allow the Treasury secretary to "participate in the gains," through stock options or other financial instruments, of companies that receive federal aid.

At the same time, caring for the expected surge of sick Americans is a priority for Congress.

The McConnell proposal contains a raft of health care provisions — including permanent liability protection for the manufacturers of respirators and other desperately needed medical gear to handle the pandemic.

At the consumer level, McConnell's bill would put into federal law the commitment from insurers that coronavirus tests will be cost-free to policy holders. Additionally, the bill requires coverage of coronavirus vaccines, at no cost to patients.

For the health care industry, the bill would establish a new Medicare payment for treating COVID-19 patients. It would suspend through the end of this year a 2% Medicare payment cut to providers under previously set budget restraints.

Pelosi and Schumer said in statement they looked forward to working with Republicans "in a bipartisan

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way to deliver for the American people as soon as humanly possible.”

The Democratic leaders said, however, their priority is to “make sure all workers are protected from the loss of a paycheck or that no family falls into financial ruin because of this pandemic.”

The Democratic leaders called on Trump to ramp up production of medical supplies and rapidly erect temporary field hospitals under new authorities he has invoked in the Defense Production Act.

Keeping paychecks flowing for idled workers as jobless claims skyrocket is a top priority for both Republican and Democratic plans emerging from Congress.

But how best to send direct payments to Americans — as one-time stipends, ongoing payroll support or unemployment checks — is a crucial debate.

Democrats have other ideas for ushering aid to Americans by pushing more money into the existing unemployment insurance system. Schumer called it “employment insurance” — which he characterized as “unemployment insurance on steroids.”

Some GOP senators panned the idea of direct one-time checks, preferring instead to use the federal dollars to keep workers who are asked to stay home on business payrolls.

“What I want is income, not one check,” said Sen. Lindsey Graham, R-S.C.

Meanwhile, industries of all kinds are lining up for help. The total price tag is sure to grow beyond \$1 trillion, lawmakers said.

Trump has already signed into law a \$100 billion-plus bill to boost testing for the coronavirus and guarantee paid sick leave for millions of workers hit by it. Earlier, Trump signed an initial \$8.3 billion package from Congress.

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.

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Associated Press writers Darlene Superville, Matthew Daly, Mary Clare Jalonick, Ricardo Alonso-Zaldivar and Padmananda Rama in Washington contributed to this report.

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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.

## Africa, Latin America fragile targets for coronavirus spread

By CARLEY PETESCH Associated Press

DAKAR, Senegal (AP) — The West African nation of Mali has roughly one ventilator per 1 million people — 20 in all to help the critically ill with respiratory failure. In Peru, with more than 32 million people, about 350 beds in intensive care units exist.

The coronavirus is now moving into parts of the world that may be the least prepared. Some countries in Africa and Latin America lack the equipment or even trained health workers to respond.

Many of their nations are slamming shut borders and banning large gatherings in the hope of avoiding the scenes in wealthier countries such as Italy and the U.S., but local transmission of the virus has begun.

Containing that spread is the new challenge. Africa has less than 800 confirmed cases and Latin America under 2,000, but an early response is crucial as fragile health systems could be quickly overwhelmed.

With such limited resources, experts say identifying cases, tracing and testing are key.

“We have seen how the virus actually accelerates that after a certain ... tipping point. So the best advice for Africa is to prepare for the worst and prepare today,” WHO Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said Wednesday.

“We have different and significant barriers to health care in Africa, which could be a real challenge,”

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said Dr. Ngozi Erondu, a senior research fellow at the Chatham House Center for Global Health Security. Many countries in sub-Saharan Africa do not have the isolation wards or large number of health care workers to respond to a surge of COVID-19 patients, she said.

Liberia and Burkina Faso only have a few ventilators for their millions of people.

Dr. Bernard Olayo, founder of the Kenya-based Center for Public Health and Development, said most countries in Africa can't afford ventilators. Even if ventilators were provided by other countries, it's not sufficient because of the lack of qualified people to use them.

"It's complex, it's very very complex because the patients that end up on ventilators require round the clock care by larger teams," he said.

Many patients could do well with just oxygen, he said, but close to half of health facilities in African countries don't have reliable oxygen supplies. Oxygen concentrators can be used, but given the frequent electricity cuts in many countries, oxygen generators and pressure cylinders are needed because they can function while power is out.

The WHO regional Africa director, Dr. Matshidiso Moeti, said the lack of ICU facilities and ventilators is one of the biggest challenges facing the continent.

"We have been able to identify importing a field hospital-type of facility that can be set up and equipped with some of the key items needed, such as ventilators," she said. Training has begun in Republic of Congo and Senegal so health care workers will be ready to operate it, and World Bank funding is being made available, she said.

It's not all grim. Elsie Kanza, head of Africa at the World Economic Forum, said many countries are deploying lessons learned from the Ebola outbreak in West Africa in 2014-2016 that killed well over 10,000 people.

The Africa Centers for Disease Control and Prevention was created to respond to that Ebola outbreak. As of Thursday, 43 countries can test for the coronavirus, it said. In addition, Chinese billionaire Jack Ma this week pledged to donate 1.1 million testing kits, 6 million masks and 60,000 protective suits and face shields to share among all African countries.

Meanwhile, Senegal is helping to develop a fast COVID-19 test that is expected in June.

But some including Adama Dempster, a human rights advocate in Liberia, warned that support for African nations' efforts might dry up if cases soar.

"It's something that is worrisome because other countries that are so powerful and have the sophistication to deal with things like this are themselves concerned about their own situation," she said.

Africa isn't the only continent worried about what's to come.

Several countries in Latin America are among the least prepared in the world for a pandemic, with healthcare systems already stretched thin.

Peruvian Minister of Defense Walter Martos told local America TV on Monday that the nation has less than 400 respirators available.

"It's not a lot," he said. "Really, we don't have the infrastructure that developed nations do."

Peru and other nations in Latin America are looking to the experience in Europe as a cautionary tale and hoping to curtail the spread of coronavirus cases before they overwhelm hospitals.

Epidemiologist Cristian Díaz Vélez said those measures could potentially create a slower rise in cases that is more manageable for Peru's medical system. He said the country has around 300 to 350 beds in intensive care units, half of which are now in use.

"It will overwhelm our healthcare system," he said, if cases skyrocket.

Other countries in Latin America could fare far worse.

Venezuela ranks 176th of 195 nations worldwide in preparedness for a health crisis, according to the Global Health Security Index, a project of the John Hopkins Center for Health Security and the Nuclear Threat Initiative.

The nation's healthcare system has been crippled by years of economic contraction, political chaos and a humanitarian crisis, with rising infant mortality rates and critical shortages of water and medicine.

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A migration crisis in which over 4.5 million people have fled – one of the largest exoduses in the world today – could exacerbate the spread of the virus throughout the region.

That is of particular concern in Colombia, where nearly 2 million Venezuelans now live. Hospitals along the border have seen their capacity stretched. The coronavirus pandemic could tip them further over the edge.

“The health system obviously has a capacity that could be clearly surpassed, in Colombia and in any country in Latin America,” said Dr. Alfonso Rodríguez-Morales, vice president of the Colombian Association for Infectious Diseases.

AP reporters Clarence Roy-Macaulay in Freetown, Sierra Leone, Jonathan Paye-Layleh in Monrovia, Liberia, Babacar Dione in Dakar, Senegal, Sam Mednick in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso; Christine Armario in Bogota, Colombia, and Maria Cheng in London contributed to this report.

## Global stocks, US futures rise on virus aid hopes

By **JOE McDONALD AP Business Writer**

BEIJING (AP) — Global stock markets and U.S. futures rose Friday on hopes government and central bank action can shield the world economy from a looming recession caused by the coronavirus.

London and Frankfurt opened more than 4% higher and Shanghai, Hong Kong and other Asian markets advanced. Seoul surged 7.4%.

Investors were encouraged after seeing more steps by the Federal Reserve and other central banks and governments to support credit markets and the economy.

On Wall Street, the future for the benchmark S&P 500 index rose 2.8% and that for the Dow Jones Industrial Average gained 3.2%. The S&P 500 gained 0.5% on Thursday in a relatively modest change after wild price swings over the past week.

Hopes are rising that there will be progress in finding virus treatments and that “a boatload of stimulus by both central banks and governments will put the global economy in position for a U-shaped recovery,” said Edward Moya of Oanda in a report.

On Thursday, the European Central Bank launched a program to inject money into credit markets by purchasing up to 750 billion euros (\$820 billion) in bonds. The Bank of England cut its key interest rate to a record low of 0.1%. Australia’s central bank also cut its benchmark lending rate to 0.25%. Central banks in Taiwan, Indonesia and the Philippines also cut their benchmark rates.

They are trying to reduce the impact of a global recession that forecasters say looks increasingly likely as the United States and other governments tighten travel controls, close businesses and tell consumers and travelers to stay home.

Investors also appeared to be encouraged by reports that China is set to ramp up stimulus spending after the province where the virus emerged in December showed no new infections on Wednesday.

In early trading, London’s FTSE 100 rose 4.8% to 5,401.00 and the DAX in Frankfurt advanced 6.2% to 9,086.82. France’s CAC 40 gained 5.7% to 4,078.64.

In Asia, the Shanghai Composite Index rose 1.6% to 2,745.62, while Hong Kong’s Hang Seng gained 5.1% to 22,805.07.

The Kospi in Seoul advanced 7.4% to 1,566.15 and Australia’s S&P-ASX 200 added 0.7% to 4,816.60 after being up more than 4% at one point.

New Zealand and Southeast Asian markets advanced.

The U.S. Federal Reserve unveiled measures Thursday to support money-market funds and the borrowing of dollars as investors in markets worldwide hurry to build up dollars and cash as insurance against falling asset prices.

That rush to gather dollars is straining markets, with sellers of even high-quality bonds struggling to find buyers at reasonable prices.

Investors are jumpy due to uncertainty about the size and duration of the impact of the coronavirus

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and the spreading wave of business shutdowns meant to help contain it.

More than 10,000 people have died. There are more than 244,000 cases worldwide, including nearly 85,000 people who have recovered.

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.

Wall Street has bounced up and down by record-setting margins of up to 12% over the past week.

Unease has grown as forecasters say a global recession looks increasingly likely and have cut growth outlooks for the United States, China and other major economies.

In energy markets, benchmark U.S. crude gained \$1.70 to \$27.61 per barrel in electronic trading on the New York Mercantile Exchange. The contract surged \$5.08 on Thursday to settle at \$25.91.

Brent crude, used to price international oils, added \$1.59 to \$30.06 per barrel in London. It rose 14.4%, or \$3.59, to settle at \$28.47 the previous session.

The dollar declined to 109.92 Japanese yen from Thursday's 110.71 yen. The euro rose to \$1.0783 from \$1.0692.

## Italy's virus epicenter grapples with huge toll, some hidden

By COLLEEN BARRY and LUCA BRUNO Associated Press

BERGAMO, Italy (AP) — The priest gave a final benediction. There were no flowers, no embraces. Francesca Steffanoni and her mother hurried away from Bergamo's main cemetery, their furtive farewell lasting no more than 5 minutes.

Bergamo is the epicenter of the hardest-hit province of Italy's hardest-hit region, Lombardy, the site of hundreds of coronavirus deaths. Families here are deprived of a bedside farewell with virus-stricken loved ones, or even a traditional funeral, and the cemetery is so overwhelmed by the number of dead that military trucks transported 65 bodies to a neighboring region for cremation this week.

Steffanoni had taken her mother to watch as the coffin containing an 82-year-old relative — a widower with a heart condition, struck down with the virus — was driven inside the imposing gates. They wore masks and gloves; they kept their distance.

"In theory, we should not have gone. But it was one of her last relatives who remains," Steffanoni said.

According to unofficial figures, more than 600 people infected with the virus have died in the province, which is tucked up against the Italian Alps and accounts for more than a quarter of all deaths in Lombardy, even though it represents only a tenth of the region's population of 10 million.

"We are confronting the biggest COVID emergency after Wuhan," said Dr. Luca Lorini, head of intensive care at Bergamo's main hospital, named for native son Pope John XXIII, where nearly 500 beds are dedicated to people suffering severe symptoms of the virus, 80 of those in intensive care. "The numbers tell us this."

But the numbers thus far don't tell the whole story.

Provincial mayors are sounding an alarm that the virus-related toll fails to reflect a spike in deaths in the general population among those who have not been tested. Last week alone, 400 people died in Bergamo and 12 neighboring towns — four times the number who died the same week the previous year, according to the Bergamo mayor's office. Only 91 of those had tested positive for the virus.

People on the front lines of the virus fight, including hospital officials, funeral operators, city administrators and union leaders, told The Associated Press that Bergamo's crisis might have been prevented had their individual requests to create a red zone around the area as early as Feb. 23 been heeded.

Instead, strict containment measures were extended to Bergamo only on March 8, two weeks later, without ever isolating two valley towns where the outbreak was first recorded.

"When the virus arrived here, there was no containment and it spread through the valleys very quickly. ... Some said it was the normal flu. We doctors knew it was not," Lorini said.

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Funeral parlors already were registering an alarming increase in deaths starting in January and February, an anomaly they signaled to officials, said Antonio Ricciardi, head of a local funeral parlor association. His business handled 611 funerals from March 1-18, when the usual pace is just over 100 in a full month.

After the first death in nearby Alzano Lombardo was recorded and other cases confirmed on Feb. 23, doctors at the Pope John XXIII Hospital set up an emergency ICU to handle virus patients. That was two days after the lockdown of 10 towns in southern Lombardy, which has been largely declared a success and served as a model for the nationwide shutdown instituted March 9.

No official explanation has been given for the decision not to extend red-zone status to Bergamo. Regional welfare official Giulio Gallera acknowledged the question but said he didn't want to place blame, adding "we are in a situation in which the entire region has substantially adopted particularly rigid measures."

Eliana Como of the influential FIOM metalworkers union said she believes the area's economic significance played a role in the decision not to place a red zone around towns at the mouth of the Seriana Valley, home to steel production and artisanal workshops.

"I think the business interests weighed heavily on the decision," said Como, who lives in Bergamo.

In the epidemic's fourth week, Lorini estimates that the true number of infected in the area is 5 to 10 times the official figure of 4,645. The current regimen allows testing only of people who show up at a screening area at the hospital with severe symptoms, missing people who are sick at home.

"We believe the true numbers (of COVID-19-related deaths) are hidden," said Francesco Alleva, spokesman for Bergamo's mayor. "Because many people are dying at home or in structures for the elderly, and they have never been tested for the virus."

That uncertain toll is at the heart of officials' constant appeals for people to stay home. Police cars circulate Bergamo with loudspeakers instructing people not to go out except for true necessities, such as work or grocery shopping. To further discourage people from leaving their homes, Mayor Giorgio Gori this week turned off the public wi-fi and closed down gambling machines in tobacco shops, which remain open and where people can also pay some bills.

Though the increase in positive diagnoses has narrowed from some 500 a day this past weekend to over 300 on Thursday, Lorini said it would take until at least next week to determine if the containment measures were having an impact.

The inability to comfort virus-stricken family members in the hospital or even attend a funeral has been among the most wrenching aspects of the still-unfolding emergency. Hospital wards try to help by phoning updates to loved ones and allowing phone calls when patients start to recover. But when death is near, Lorini said, a visit would be "a useless explosion of contagion."

"It is terrible to lose a loved one and not be able to hug them. But that is what has happened in epidemics for a thousand years, and what will also happen for the next thousand years," Lorini said.

Once a loved one with the virus dies, family members are not permitted to choose a favorite outfit for burial. By government decree, the dead are buried in the clothes they died in, wrapped in sterile blankets and placed inside coffins as quickly as possible.

"There is a huge psychological issue for family members who cannot see the body," Ricciardi said. "Without a body, it is hard to realize a death occurred."

The sobering toll hits in full force with just a glance at the local newspaper, L'Eco di Bergamo, which has seen the number of pages dedicated to death notices multiply from one to nine, 10, even 11 pages.

In a notice in Wednesday's edition, the family members of Bruno Maffei, who died at age 66, expressed a "heartfelt thank you to the doctors and personnel of Pope John Hospital in Bergamo, and in particular to Dr. Carlo Fino for his generous availability."

"As specified by the government, the funeral will be celebrated at a future date to be decided," the notice said.

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Barry reported from Soave, Italy.

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Institute's Department of Science Education. The AP is solely responsible for all content.

## 40 million Californians ordered to stay home to halt virus

By KATHLEEN RONAYNE and DON THOMPSON Associated Press

SACRAMENTO, Calif. (AP) — California's 40 million residents should stay home indefinitely and venture outside only for essential jobs, errands and some exercise, Gov. Gavin Newsom said Thursday, warning that the coronavirus threatens to overwhelm the state's medical system.

The move, the most sweeping by any state so far, was an exclamation point at the end of a week of increasingly aggressive moves meant to keep the virus in check by forcing people to stay away from each other as often as possible.

"I can assure you home isolation is not my preferred choice, I know it's not yours, but it's a necessary one," Newsom said at an evening news conference streamed on social media.

He assured residents that they "can still take your kids outside, practicing common sense and social distancing. You can still walk your dog." Restaurant meals can still be delivered to homes.

The announcement came after the release of a letter to President Donald Trump where Newsom warned the virus was spreading quickly and eventually could infect more than half the state's population. A spokesman later clarified that the figure did not take into account the aggressive mitigation efforts that have been made.

The governor said he doesn't expect police will be needed to enforce his stay-at-home order, saying "social pressure" already has led to social distancing throughout the state.

"I don't believe the people of California need to be told through law enforcement that it's appropriate just to home isolate," he said.

The Democrat who is barely a year into his first term also called up 500 National Guard troops to help distribute food. The move comes after panic buying led to massive lines at some grocery stores.

Newsom also outlined a series of steps aimed at providing more space for hospital patients.

He said the state has taken over a 357-bed bankrupt hospital in the San Francisco Bay Area, soon will announce the purchase of a similarly sized hospital in Southern California and may use dormitories at the state's public colleges and universities. He also asked Trump to dock the Navy's 1,000-patient Mercy hospital ship in the Port of Los Angeles.

The coronavirus is spread through sneezes and coughs. There are at least 1,030 confirmed cases in California and 18 people have died, according to a tally by Johns Hopkins University.

Newsom's statewide order came after counties and communities covering about half the state's population already had issued similar edicts. He said the restriction is "open-ended" because it could raise false hopes if he included an end date.

However, he did offer a glimmer by saying he didn't expect it would last "many, many months."

Just before Newsom's statewide declaration, Los Angeles announced what officials there called a "Safer at Home" order that carried the same restrictions.

"We're about to enter into a new way of living here in Los Angeles," Mayor Eric Garcetti said. "What we do and how we do it and if we get this right will determine how long this crisis lasts."

In the letter to Trump seeking the hospital ship, Newsom said California's infection rates are doubling every four days in some areas and that 56% of the state's population could contract the virus in the next eight weeks, which would be more than 22 million people. He later said the "overwhelming majority won't have symptoms" and will be fine but that up to 20% could be hospitalized.

"If we meet this moment we can truly bend the curve" of escalating cases, Newsom said.

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

Most people recover — those with mild illness in about two weeks, while those with more severe illness may take three to six weeks, according to the World Health Organization.

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Also Thursday, Newsom asked U.S. House and Senate leaders for \$1 billion to support state and local health systems. He said that money would be needed to do things like set up state-run and mobile hospitals, housing options to help people socially distance and testing and treatment for people without health insurance.

He also asked for assistance so the state can extend unemployment benefits beyond the usual 26-week limit, expand food assistance programs, resources for the homeless and tribal communities and boost childcare programs. He further asked for assistance for schools, aid to local and state budgets and transportation relief.

"While California has prudently built a sizable Rainy Day Fund over the past ten years, the economic effects of this emergency are certain to mean that the state and its 58 counties will struggle to maintain essential programs and services," he wrote.

Newsom earlier announced \$150 million of a \$1 billion emergency state appropriation would go toward getting homeless people off the streets. He has estimated up to 60,000 of the state's homeless could get infected.

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This story has been corrected to show that Newsom said up to 20% of people infected by coronavirus, not 20,000 people, could be hospitalized.

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Associated Press writer Adam Beam contributed to this story.

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

## **In pandemic, word definitions shift and new lexicon emerges**

**By MATT SEDENSKY AP National Writer**

PHILADELPHIA (AP) — Newscasts bring word of "hot zones" and "lockdowns." Conversations are littered with talk of "quarantines" and "isolation." Leaders urge "social distancing" and "sheltering in place" and "flattening the curve."

In an instant, our vocabulary has changed — just like everything else.

It seems like just days since people were looking up "caucus" for clarity on the American political process or "acquit" to decode the Senate's verdict in President Donald Trump's impeachment. Now, those turning to online dictionaries are parsing the difference between epidemics and pandemics, ventilators and respirators, seeking some black-and-white answers in the face of total uncertainty.

"Words matter," says John Kelly, a senior research editor at Dictionary.com. "They provide comfort and order amid chaos. They provide solidarity in an age of social distancing."

A look at the fast-evolving lexicon of the coronavirus pandemic:

### **WARTIME METAPHORS**

Trump, who spent weeks brushing off the severity of the crisis, is now touting himself as "a wartime president" leading the fight against the virus. New York Gov. Andrew Cuomo is equating ventilators to "missiles" in the battle. French President Emmanuel Macron has bluntly declared: "We are at war."

Around the world, words typically used in relation to nuclear fallout, active shooters, deadly storms and war are now being deployed to discuss disease.

John Baugh, a linguist at Washington University in St. Louis, says doctors are desperate to shake the public to attention, using metaphors they think can convey the seriousness of the problem. Politicians may be doing the same — or may be trying to capitalize on catastrophe.

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"They're intended to grab attention, whether it's politically motivated or for some other reason," Baugh said.

## SHIFTING DEFINITIONS

After the virus gripped China, onlookers saw a "lockdown" at the outbreak's epicenter of Wuhan, with public transit coming to a halt, monitors enforcing orders keeping people inside and officials going door-to-door searching for infected people to be forced into quarantines.

As COVID-19 moved west, though, the meaning of such terms has morphed, and leaders' definitions of disaster jargon has been as varied as the public's interpretations.

Cuomo, whose state has the largest number of virus cases in the U.S., created a "containment zone" in New Rochelle last week. Paired with an order dispatching the National Guard — though only for cleaning and food distribution — the phrase conjured images of mass quarantine even as businesses remained open and people were free to come and go.

Cuomo and New York City Mayor Bill de Blasio have subsequently aired different messages on the possibility of more severe restrictions in the biggest American city, with the mayor urging residents to prepare to "shelter in place" and the governor criticizing the idea and the language. Cuomo has dismissed "shelter in place" as a relic of the Atomic Age, when people were trained to get to an interior windowless room until they got an "all clear" message.

"Now, that's not what people really mean, but that's what it sounds like," he said. "Communicate what you mean without using terms that nobody understands and only incites panic."

With people clamoring to know what's next, it's important that a San Francisco "shelter in place" not be confused with a Wuhan "lockdown," but it's hard to get the same message projected everywhere.

"People are using different terms somewhat interchangeably," said Dr. Irwin Redlener, an expert on disaster preparedness and public health at Columbia University. The tug-of-war over terminology echoes the patchwork of measures that state and local governments have taken, he said.

## VIRUS VOCABULARY

Kathleen Hall Jamieson cringes when scientists toss out statements of "morbidity" and "mortality" in the same breath, when public officials warn of "asymptomatic" people posing a threat, and when news conferences are peppered with words like "vector" and "transmission."

"They are incomprehensible to many in the public," said the University of Pennsylvania communications expert, who co-edited "The Oxford Handbook of the Science of Science Communication."

"Public health officials," she said, "need to translate their technical language into intelligible language."

That means saying something like "not showing any symptoms" instead of "asymptomatic," using simple verbs like "spread" versus "transmit," and opting for the clarity of "hand-washing" over "hygiene."

But Hall Jamieson marvels at how Dr. Anthony Fauci and others have managed to get the public to grasp a complicated medical concept with the phrase "flattening the curve," often accompanied by visual hand cues.

And many see "social distancing" to be the greatest pandemic-era addition the vernacular yet — easily understood phrasing that's helped communicate to millions that they need to keep a safe berth to avoid spreading the virus.

"That's really taken off," says Eric Acton, a linguist at Eastern Michigan University, "and (it's) a term that probably will have a life that outlives this outbreak."

## REBRANDING, OR SEEKING LEVITY

"We now have a name for the disease," the head of the World Health Organization, Dr. Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, announced on Feb. 11, declaring it COVID-19.

It doesn't exactly roll off the tongue, and no obvious acronym like AIDS or SARS or MERS has arisen as a replacement.

Seeking to rebrand, Trump and his allies have taken to calling it the "Chinese virus," which many consider racist. Alaska Rep. Don Young played on the coronavirus' linguistic similarity to a libation often consumed with a lime wedge, dismissing it as a "beer virus" overblown by media hysteria. And others bored with the limitations of COVID-19 and the even clunkier name of the virus that causes it — severe acute respiratory

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syndrome coronavirus 2 — have come up with their own shorthand.

“One of my students just referred to the virus as “The Ronies,” Acton said Thursday after a research group meeting conducted virtually. Online, where people are chronicling their “quarantini” mixology (typically Emergen-C and a favored spirit), “Rona” is being popularized to refer to the pandemic.

There are doubts it will gain widespread use.

“The genie’s out of the bottle,” says Dr. Scott Ratzan, editor-in-chief of the Journal of Health Communications. “It’s either COVID-19 or just the coronavirus.”

Contributing to this report were Associated Press journalists Jennifer Peltz in New York; Marina Villeneuve in Albany, New York; Mark Thiessen in Anchorage, Alaska; Elaine Ganley in Paris; and Kirsten Grieshaber in Berlin. Matt Sedensky can be reached at [msedensky@ap.org](mailto:msedensky@ap.org) or, on Twitter, at @sedensky.

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

## India hangs 4 men convicted for fatal New Delhi gang rape

By SHEIKH SAALIQ and RISHABH JAIN Associated Press

NEW DELHI (AP) — Four men sentenced to death for the gruesome gang rape and murder of a woman on a New Delhi bus in 2012 were hanged Friday, concluding a case that exposed the scope of sexual violence in India and prompted horrified Indians to demand swift justice.

The four stood trial relatively quickly in India’s slow-moving justice system, their convictions and sentences handed down less than a year after the crime. India’s top court upheld the verdicts in 2017, finding the men’s crimes had created a “tsunami of shock” among Indians.

“The four convicts were hanged together at 5.30 a.m.,” said Sandeep Goel, head of the Tihar Jail in New Delhi.

The victim, a 23-year-old physiotherapy student, was heading home with a male friend from a movie theater when six men tricked into getting on a private bus. With no one else in sight, they beat her friend and repeatedly raped the woman. They penetrated her with a metal rod, causing fatal internal injuries. They dumped both victims on the roadside, and the woman died two weeks later.

Asha Devi, the mother of the victim, thanked the judiciary and government after the convicts were hanged.

“Today, we got justice and this day is dedicated to the daughters of the country,” she told reporters. “I could not protect her but I was able to fight for her.”

Devi said she hoped that courts in India will end delays in rape cases and punish convicts within a year’s time.

The case drew international attention at the time and prompted Indian lawmakers to stiffen penalties for rape, part of a wave of changes as India confronted its appalling treatment of women.

Facing public protests and political pressure after the attack, the government reformed some of India’s antiquated laws on sexual violence and created fast-track courts for handling rape trials that formerly could last more than a decade.

The new laws prescribed harsher punishments for rapists and addressed new crimes, including acid throwing and stalking.

India’s Prime Minister Narendra Modi said Friday that justice had prevailed and it was of utmost importance to ensure the dignity and safety of women.

“Together, we have to build a nation where the focus is on women empowerment, where there is emphasis on equality and opportunity,” he said on his Twitter account.

Hundreds of police were deployed outside the jail to control a crowd that waited to celebrate the executions. Dozens of people held placards hailing the hangings. The crowd chanted slogans like "Justice for women" and cheered by clapping and blowing whistles.

Another suspect had hanged himself in prison before his trial began, though his family insists he was killed. The sixth assailant was a minor at the time of the attack and served three years in juvenile detention.

Amnesty International India condemned Friday's executions, saying they "mark a disheartening development." It called again for India to abolish the death penalty.

"There is no evidence that the punishment acted as a particular deterrent to the crime and will eradicate violence against women," the group said in a statement.

The executions were carried out as two recent attacks renew attention to the problem of sexual violence in India.

Activists say new sentencing requirements haven't deterred rape, with Indian government data showing police registered almost 34,000 cases in 2018.

The real figure is believed to be far higher since stigma surrounding sexual violence keeps victims from reporting their attacks to police.

## One-two punch of new virus, falling oil prices threaten Iraq

By QASSIM ABDUL-ZAHRA and SAMYA KULLAB Associated Press

BAGHDAD (AP) — The economic fallout from the coronavirus coupled with a sudden drop in oil prices is threatening to catapult Iraq into an unprecedented crisis.

The crude-exporting country is struggling to finance measures to contain the pandemic amid a leadership void in the federal government, and the unexpected oil price war between Russia and Saudi Arabia is further exacerbating budget shortfalls as losses accrue daily in trade, commerce, tourism and transportation.

"This epidemic is striking our economy more than it is striking our health," said Thamir Gharib, a hotel owner in Karbala. The Shiite holy city in southern Iraq that hummed with religious pilgrims all year long is now ghostly quiet.

Gone are the dozens of buses primarily from neighboring Iran, the Gulf and Europe carrying visitors to the Imam Hussein shrine and filling up Karbala's hotels and restaurants.

Revenues from tourists who traveled to holy sites in Iraq accounted for nearly 8% of the country's GDP, according to figures from the World Travel and Tourism Council. But as the global pandemic takes hold of the country, religious tourism has ground to a halt and Gharib's hotel doors — like others in Karbala and the nearby city of Najaf — are shuttered.

A potentially weeks-long curfew went into effect in the capital Baghdad on Tuesday night, further compounding economic losses.

"If we calculate the damages with the fall of oil prices, it's no less than \$120-130 million per day," said Mudher Saleh, financial adviser to the prime minister.

"It is necessary to legislate an emergency budget in the short term that provides financial sustainability at this stage to meet the necessary needs," he added.

But Iraqi officials appear to be slow to heed these calls amid a deepening political crisis as rival blocs sparred for weeks over the naming of the next prime minister, precipitating a void in the country's top leadership. On Tuesday, former governor of Najaf, Adnan al-Zurfi, was named premier-designate but it remained to be seen whether political blocs will approve his Cabinet line-up.

Prime Minister Adel Abdul-Mahdi's government has been functioning in caretaker status since his December resignation under pressure from mass protests. Previous premier-designate Mohammed Allawi withdrew his candidacy amid delays and political dysfunction.

"The prime minister has absolved himself of political leadership and is acting as an administrator. Politically we don't have any leadership or consensus," said Sajad Jiyad, a Baghdad-based analyst.

Other officials expressed optimism that oil prices would bounce back in a matter of months and that Iraq could rely on central bank reserves in the meantime. Based on assessments from the bank and the

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Finance Ministry these reserves stand between \$45-60 billion.

Decision-making is further hampered by the fact that government orders to contain the virus will impact the ability of parliament to pass legislation.

"Sessions are impossible as all internal flights are cancelled and no public gatherings are allowed," said Kurdish lawmaker Sarkawt Shamseddine.

Oil prices were already suffering shock from the virus outbreak and plunged further when Saudi Arabia began heavily discounting its crude and announced plans to increase output. The move came after Russia refused to sign on to a plan proposed by the Saudis to cut output and manage global oil supplies at an OPEC meeting earlier this month.

Oil currently trades at around \$26 per barrel, the lowest in 18 years and about half of what Iraq has projected to fund the state budget for this year. If prolonged, Baghdad will be unable to pay public sector employees and deliver basic services. Iraq's deficit, which is estimated at \$40 billion, would also double, Iraqi officials said.

Iraq relies on oil exports to fund over 90% of state revenue. The proposed 2020 budget projected revenues at \$56 per barrel but political deadlock has delayed its passing, casting more uncertainty over Iraq's economic future.

Already, the economic challenges are having an impact. Last week, Health Minister Jaafar Allawi said in televised comments that \$150 million per month was still needed to purchase equipment and materials to fight the virus. To meet these needs the Finance Ministry said it was accepting donations from banks, government and private institutions. Kuwait has pledged \$10 billion.

Meanwhile, virus cases continue to rise, with 13 dead among 192 confirmed infected, according to the Health Ministry. The vast majority of people recover from the new virus, although it can kill the elderly or those with other underlying illnesses.

Transport, trade, tourism and commerce are among the sectors hardest hit by the pandemic, according to senior Iraqi officials, experts and businessmen.

The movement of goods has decreased by at least 30%, said Iraq's Transport Minister Abdullah Laibi. Crucial imports of goods from neighboring countries Turkey and Iran are down by two-thirds.

Prices in the local market are already seeing an effect. Ahmed Rahim, 25, a grocer in Baghdad said the price of Iran-imported onions for example has nearly doubled.

The construction sector in northern Iraq, which relies heavily on Iranian labor has also halted big commercial projects in the wake of border closures.

International companies have been unable to rotate staff in and out of the company due to flight suspensions.

In response, many Chinese oil companies across Iraq have declared their inability to fulfill contracts because of the unexpected pandemic, according to an industry official. The official spoke on condition of anonymity in line with regulations.

China, where the virus first originated, is deeply entrenched in Iraq's energy sector and is a major importer of Iraqi crude. Iraqi officials fear Beijing's falling demand for crude in light of the coronavirus might also impact state revenues.

But as many ongoing Chinese projects in the country are funded on the back of future oil sales, officials said they expected Beijing to cut back on imports from other Middle East countries before reaching Iraq.

Private businessmen in Baghdad's commercial centers said they have had to let go staff because of plunging revenues.

Muhammed Najm estimated sales from his perfume shop in the capital's main Shorja Market dropped by 60% in the wake of the coronavirus.

"We do not have anything, and the state has no solutions," he said.

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Associated Press writer Salar Salim in Irbil, Iraq, contributed.

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## Olympic flame lands in Japan as doubts grow over Tokyo Games

By HARUKA NUGA and KOJI UEDA Associated Press

MATSUSHIMA AIR BASE, Japan (AP) — The Olympic flame on Friday completed its difficult journey from Greece to Japan.

That signified a small, symbolic victory for the IOC and local organizers, who maintain the Tokyo Olympics will open on July 24 amid a chorus of doubters who believe they should be postponed or canceled because of the coronavirus pandemic.

"For the first time in 56 years, the Olympic torch is heading to Tokyo and I hope that the Olympic torch will illuminate the path of hope for many people," organizing committee President Yoshiro Mori said at a scaled-down arrival ceremony at an air base in northern Japan.

Mori of course was referring to Tokyo's famous 1964 Olympics. Tokyo was also to have been the venue for the 1940 Olympics, which were cancelled by World War II.

"We will work closely with the International Olympic Committee, the Japanese government, and the Tokyo Metropolitan Government," he said, and based on the World Health Organization's advice, "we will ensure a safe and secure games."

The flame, carried in a tiny canister from Greece, reached Japan aboard a white aircraft painted with the inscription "Tokyo 2020 Olympic Torch Relay" along its side. The tail section was adorned with the refrain "Hope Lights our Way."

The aircraft was welcomed on the tarmac by a small contingent of organizing committee officials. Two of Japan's most famous Olympians — three-time wrestling gold medalist Saori Yoshida and three-time judo gold medalist Tadahiro Nomura — received the flame for the lighting ceremony.

The two climbed portable stairs and entered the aircraft before emerging holding the cradle-like canister with a flame burning inside. They handed it over at the base of the stairs to Mori, who delivered a brief acceptance speech in a gusting wind.

Yoshida and Nomura then took the torch and ignited a large cauldron on the tarmac of the air base.

Mori referred to the "difficult situation" with the virus, and then thanked the IOC and Greek officials that the "hand-over ceremony was able to be held" with the Olympics set to open in just over four months.

The flame arrived in the northeastern part of Japan, roughly 250 kilometers (150 miles) from Tokyo, that was devastated by the 2011 earthquake, tsunami and meltdown of three nuclear reactors that has left many still living in temporary quarters.

The flame will stay in northern Japan for almost a week until the torch relay begins officially on March 26 from Fukushima prefecture. It will be put on public display in the three prefectures most affected by the disaster — Miyagi, Iwate and Fukushima,

Even if the Olympics and Paralympics don't start as scheduled, the burning flame could be used as a symbol 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.

Worldwide the death toll surpassed 10,000 and infections topped 240,000, including 86,000 people who have recovered. Japan has reported about 900 confirmed cases.

The Japanese news agency Kyodo released a survey on Monday showing 69.9% of those questioned did not believe the Olympics will open as scheduled because of the virus.

The four-month torch relay could be fraught with problems, particularly for sponsors which have invested millions for the publicity.

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. Japanese organizers have asked crowds to be "re-

strained" and could stop or delay the relay if they are not.

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

## Parents, police struggle to herd the young in virus outbreak

By LEANNE ITALIE Associated Press

Teen: "I can't stay here all day. What about my friends!?"

Parent: "Are you kidding? This is serious!"

The adolescent brain is definitely in play as authorities around the globe struggle to keep young people from gathering, while parents fret at home about what they're up to as the coronavirus spreads.

"It's like herding chickens," said Southampton, New York, mom Anastasia Gavalas, with five of her own who range from 13 to 21.

She spoke Tuesday, just two days into school closings that could last for weeks.

"They feel well and the weather has been nice so they think they can go and do anything. If they can climb over locked gates and play ball in the park, they will. If there's one store that's remained open, they'll find it and go in. No matter how much I ask, they're getting out and doing something," Gavalas said.

Impulsiveness, unsound judgment, egocentricity. Toddlers or teens?

Rachel Busman, a child and adolescent psychologist with the Child Mind Institute in New York, said the still-developing adolescent brain can exhibit those traits and more, only now teens with thoughts of invincibility can potentially do real harm to themselves and others.

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.

Some teens are skipping over the reality that they're potential carriers.

"They're very much primed toward reward and primed toward immediate gratification," Busman said.

What's a parent to do? Especially those of highly mobile older teens used to far greater freedoms than virus restrictions allow, including college kids whose schools have gone to remote learning or remain on spring break.

"If you start the conversation with, 'You can't do that,' you're probably going to be met with, 'Oh yes I can, I'm an adult' kind of thing,'" Busman said. "The first step is validate. Let your teen know you get it, even if you don't fully understand."

In Europe and elsewhere, authorities have stepped in.

Belgian media reported roughly 300 people attended a rave in the Luxembourg Province town of Tenville last Saturday. Police and federal agents swooped in and broke it up.

In France, teens who defy a lockdown on nonessential trips out could cost their parents fines of \$40 to \$150. All residents must fill out a form documenting why they've left their homes during the 15-day period. Hanging out with friends is not considered a valid reason.

Just as spring weather arrived in Germany, with schools, clubs and concert halls closed, "corona" parties have surfaced despite restrictions. In addition, police dispersed young people from several parks across Berlin on Tuesday, according to local media.

"It is not reasonable to invite a big party at home or other celebrations with many people," said Lars Schaade, the deputy head of Germany's public health agency.

Groups of teens have been congregating in cafes elsewhere in Europe.

Asked about the problem of roving young people, U.S. President Donald Trump joined the chorus Wednesday of those noting "they're feeling invincible," and sternly urged them to "heed the advice" to take care.

His coronavirus coordinator, Deborah Birx, warned of "concerning reports" out of France and Italy that young people have become seriously ill from COVID-19.

Some parents are doing what they can.



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In Williston, Vermont, Ann Schmidt said her 17-year-old son isn't one to sit around the house. He's a soccer player and skier, but his soccer center has shut down along with the slopes.

"He's been tooling around in his car, visiting friends. It's very hard," she said. "Taking away his physical activity is having a dramatic impact. I'm trying to be as empathetic as possible while keeping him safe."

Schmidt sent him to a store with a credit card to buy an Xbox so at least he can play FIFA online.

In Manhattan, mom Alina Adams is holding her own with her three, ages 13, 16 and a 20-year-old home since his college closed.

"I'm being completely hands off because I know that the minute I suggest they do anything, they'll be instantly against it," she said. "My 13-year-old daughter has been making plenty of TikToks."

Associated Press writers Samuel Petrequin in Brussels and Kirsten Grieshaber in Berlin contributed to this report.

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

## Joe Biden, nominee-in-waiting, with a long wait

By **BILL BARROW, ALEXANDRA JAFFE and WILL WEISSERT Associated Press**

WASHINGTON (AP) — In the three weeks since his blowout win in the South Carolina primary, Joe Biden has emerged as the Democratic presidential nominee-in-waiting. But, amid the uncertainty of the coronavirus pandemic, put the emphasis on waiting.

Biden holds an essentially insurmountable delegate lead over his last remaining rival, Bernie Sanders, yet the Vermont senator remains in the race. And with several states delaying their primaries to avoid the spread of the COVID-19 virus, Biden can't reach the required majority of pledged convention delegates until May or June.

The former vice president, who proudly calls himself a "tactile politician," can't chase those votes in public because he's essentially confined to his Delaware home like any other American in a quasi-national quarantine. His new campaign manager and her staff are working from home, too.

For now, Biden's campaign has little choice but to embrace an unprecedented political purgatory.

"Three weeks ago, we were on the verge of collapse as a campaign, so this is a very recent phenomenon," said Biden senior adviser Anita Dunn, insisting that the 77-year-old candidate remains focused on playing a productive role in the coronavirus response and sewing up a nominating fight that he doesn't see as finished.

"We will figure out how to put together a general election campaign for this difficult time," Dunn said.

Biden is confident enough in his position, campaign co-chairman Cedric Richmond said, that he's started to consider possibilities for a running mate. But Richmond said no vetting process has begun in earnest.

His former Democratic presidential rivals have coalesced around him, too. On Wednesday alone, Hawaii Rep. Tulsi Gabbard dropped out of the race and threw her full support behind Biden, and New York Sen. Kirsten Gillibrand said on Twitter that Biden had the "right experience, empathy, and character to lead."

Biden announced Jen O'Malley Dillon, a veteran Democratic operative, as his new campaign manager on March 12, two days after another round of primary victories widened his lead over Sanders. But in the same gathering where O'Malley Dillon was introduced, she and Dunn told the staff they were shuttering the Philadelphia headquarters and all other Biden offices. With social distancing already taking hold nationally, Biden and his wife, Jill, addressed the group by telephone from their Wilmington home.

The campaign has promised the expected build-out from a relative shoestring staff — growth having been hampered by Biden's inconsistent fundraising until his recent primary victories — into a national

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footprint befitting a nominee. But as O'Malley Dillon plots general election strategy, there's little evidence that mass hiring is imminent.

Andrew Bates, who runs Biden's "rapid response" communications unit, said the campaign is recruiting "talented people from other presidential campaigns and from elsewhere." Yet some staffers from defunct campaigns told The Associated Press they've had only initial conversations, with no follow-up, and others said they were told the campaign isn't hiring for their roles in the immediate future.

The people spoke on the condition of anonymity to protect their job prospects.

Digital fundraising efforts continue, with the campaign pushing the usual texts and emails asking for small-dollar contributions.

But high-dollar fundraising events are on hold, including any possibility of a joint fundraising agreement with the Democratic National Committee. That deal, typically forged between nominees and the party, would allow individual megadonors to contribute hundreds of thousands of dollars each to the party and certain Biden operations, exponentially multiplying the usual \$2,800 limits on individual contributions to the Biden campaign. But the hooks of that fundraising approach are swanky in-person events that allow donors close contact with a would-be president. No one knows when those can happen again.

Meanwhile, Biden and his aides must also react to President Donald Trump and developments in the coronavirus outbreak and response. While challengers to incumbent presidents always play a reactionary role, that's especially true for Biden, who has built his entire campaign as a juxtaposition with Trump.

But now Trump and his team have an even more dominant media megaphone with an endless loop of White House briefings and congressional machinations in response to the crisis.

As an example, Biden has used two formal addresses to pan Trump's response as slow and inadequate. Yet since then, the president has signed an initial aid package and endorsed a massive program for direct aid to every adult American — a turn that underscores the difficulty Biden may face countering Trump with a "front-porch campaign" from Delaware.

"I think you've seen in the last week, certainly, that the vice president is going to put policy considerations ahead of political considerations," Dunn said.

The immediate wild cards for Biden, though, are Sanders and the shifting primary calendar.

Though a lengthy primary could afford Biden media spotlights and fundraising hooks he might not otherwise get, Sanders' lingering presence also delays any effort to unify a party that was damaged in 2016 by a long primary fight between Sanders and Hillary Clinton.

Mathematically, there aren't enough delegates up in April for Biden to claim the nomination. But more likely, he'd need to win 75% of the delegates from scheduled contests to win the nomination outright on May 19 with Sanders still in the race. If he doesn't, June 2 would become his more likely clinching date.

At the least, Biden and Sanders have indicated they won't descend into a bitter fight.

Sanders was at home in Vermont on Thursday, beginning to speak to top supporters about his campaign going forward. His team understands he has virtually no chance at the nomination, but they also said Sanders wants to leave on his own terms.

Aides who spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss the campaign's thinking said Sanders has given them no indication of his timeline.

In a Thursday email to supporters, Sanders didn't ask for campaign contributions for the second straight day — an indication he won't be in the race much longer — but instead sought input on how best to combat the public health and economic effects of the coronavirus.

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Barrow reported from Atlanta. Associated Press writer Seth Borenstein in Washington contributed to this report.

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

## Mexico's president in no hurry to confront virus outbreak

By PETER ORSI Associated Press

MEXICO CITY (AP) — Many countries in Latin America have taken aggressive measures to deal with the coronavirus such as closing their borders, dock and airports to foreigners, declaring states of emergencies and ordering business shutdowns.

Mexico, by contrast, has so far taken a "business as usual" attitude. People still crowd street markets picking through piles of fruit and vegetables. Cars and trucks continue to fill the streets and commuters throng subway trains, though the volume of traffic is noticeably lower.

President Andrés Manuel López Obrador and his government have said a shutdown of the country would disproportionately hurt poor people and also be a psychological weight on all Mexicans. They say there is no reason to impose major restrictions before health officials deem them necessary — a moment they are expecting in late March, based on the virus' pattern elsewhere and the Feb. 27 date of Mexico's first confirmed case.

The approach is worrying many experts.

But it is the president's personal attitude that has Mexicans puzzled. He continues to attend mass public rallies, shaking hands and kissing babies. Asked how he was protecting Mexico, López Obrador removed two religious amulets from his wallet and proudly showed them off.

"The protective shield is the 'Get thee behind me, Satan,'" López Obrador said, reading off the inscription on the amulet, "Stop, enemy, for the Heart of Jesus is with me."

López Obrador, often described as a leftist, is in fact a nationalist with deep religious feelings.

"I think President López Obrador is trying to project confidence and minimize the risk," said Jesus Silva-Herzog, a political commentator and professor at the Tecnológico de Monterrey University.

But, Silva-Herzog added, "I think that what he has wound up doing is minimizing the risks associated with the emergency, and sending messages that contradict what is being said almost everywhere else."

Mexico reported its first death from the virus Wednesday — a 41-year-old man said to have been obese and suffering from diabetes. As of late Thursday, the country has 164 confirmed cases of coronavirus, up from just over 40 a week ago.

Still, Hugo López-Gatell, deputy secretary in the Health Ministry and the administration's public face of López Obrador's coronavirus response team, said the country remains in what it calls phase 1 of the epidemic, with all cases related to importation from other countries and no community transmission.

Federal officials have suspended classes for about a month beginning after Friday's school sessions and are encouraging things like social distancing, working from home and following hygienic measures recommended by international and domestic health experts.

Some large events have been called off, yet others such as a multi-day music festival attended by tens of thousands in Mexico City were allowed to proceed. Federal officials recommend that "non-essential" gatherings should not be larger than 5,000 people, while local authorities in the capital have said events topping 1,000 people should be canceled.

Mexico has only 5,000 emergency beds, and about 1,500 intensive care or sealed rooms, for a population of over 125 million, but officials still exude a sense of calm at their daily briefings on the virus. And some observers say they are chilled by remarks like López Obrador's.

"I think this has shown a lack of respect by the president," said Carlos Padilla, a Mexico City business administrator. "I think he should be doing a better job of protecting the public, in every sense."

Once community transmission begins — and Mexican officials make no secret that they know it is coming, sooner rather than later — the country is likely to see more aggressive measures.

"We are prepared. We have enough budget. All the resources we need," López Obrador said Thursday.

Some, however, are beginning to be nervous about the lack of response now, including among the president's political opposition. The conservative National Action Party sent a letter to the Pan American Health Organization on Thursday expressing its "deep concern about the government's actions in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic."

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Former diplomat Enrique Berruga Filloy said in a column for the newspaper El Universal on Thursday that Mexico's geographic advantages gave it more leeway to plan for the virus and take timely actions, but that the administration has squandered the chance.

"The tsunami is coming and we, instead of seeking safety, are playing on the beach," Berruga Filloy wrote.

Like in other countries, Mexico's stock market has been hit hard by coronavirus concerns. The peso has slid precipitously, trading over 24 to the dollar at times this week for the first time in history.

Alfredo Coutiño of Moody's Analytics said Mexico's markets "are now realizing that the country is facing a higher risk of contamination by the coronavirus" with the Mexican economy already weak.

Despite assurances from officials, Mexico and its health system are showing "real vulnerability," Coutiño said.

He said investors particularly don't like the lack of government measures to protect the economy and the people. "Fiscal and monetary policies are running far behind the curve," he said.

National Action senators proposed a package of measures this week that would include measures such as lowering interest rates, stimulating home construction and infrastructure, reactivating private investment in the energy sector and transferring money to the Health Department. But López Obrador is known for a visceral dislike of spending and deficits.

López-Gatell displayed the administration's attitude Thursday when he said everything is going according to plan.

"All of the scenarios that we foresaw for what was going to happen, are happening," he said. "This will allow us to keep to a well-planned, well-calculated technical plan of action."

López Obrador, who enjoys approval ratings that would be the envy of many a world leader, said Thursday that military medical workers and installations would be part of the pandemic response. But he ruled out any curfew or troop deployments, saying he wanted nothing to do with tough measures that could be seen as authoritarian.

## China exonerates doctor reprimanded for warning of virus

BEIJING (AP) — China has exonerated a doctor who was officially reprimanded for warning about the coronavirus outbreak and later died of the disease, a startling admission of error by the ruling Communist Party that generally bodes no challenges to its authority.

The party's top disciplinary body said the police force in Wuhan had revoked its admonishment of Dr. Li Wenliang that had included a threat of arrest.

It also said a "solemn apology" had been issued to Li's family and that two police officers, identified only by their surnames, had been issued "disciplinary punishments" for the original handling of the matter.

In death, Li became the face of simmering anger at the ruling Communist Party's controls over information and complaints that officials lie about or hide disease outbreaks, industrial accidents, natural disasters and financial frauds, while punishing whistleblowers and independent journalists.

After seeing thousands of new cases daily at the peak of the city's outbreak a month ago, Wuhan on Friday had its second consecutive day with no new confirmed or suspected cases.

The National Health Commission said all of the 39 new cases recorded Friday in China were brought from overseas, showing that rigid travel restrictions and social distancing requirements appear to have had their desired effect.

China has loosened some travel restrictions in Hubei, the province surrounding Wuhan, although its provincial border remains closed and Wuhan itself remains under lockdown. Officials say they will only lift the quarantine after Wuhan goes 14 consecutive days with no new cases.

Police in December had reprimanded eight doctors including Li for warning friends on social media about the emerging threat. China's supreme court later criticized the police, but the ruling party continued to tighten its grip on information about the outbreak.

The party has faced similar accusations of bungling or thuggish behavior following previous disasters. They include the 2003 outbreak of Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome, a 2005 chemical spill that disrupted

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water supplies to millions of people in China's northeast, sales of tainted milk that sickened thousands of children and the failure of private finance companies after the global economic crisis.

In each case, officials were accused of trying to conceal or delay information people said they needed to protect themselves.

The party often responds by allowing the public to vent temporarily, then uses its control of media and the internet to stifle criticism. Critics who persist can be jailed on vague charges of spreading rumors or making trouble.

The treatment of Li's case may reflect concerns among the leadership about public anger over the failure to properly honor the sacrifices of front-line health workers while praising the party and its head, Xi Jinping, who has tightened controls on society since taking power in 2012.

The most powerful Chinese leader since at least the 1980s, Xi gave himself the option of remaining president for life by changing the Chinese constitution in 2018 to remove a two-term limit.

In Wuhan, local leaders were accused of telling doctors in December not to publicize the spreading virus in order to avoid casting a shadow over the annual meeting of a local legislative body.

As the virus spread, doctors were ordered to delete posts on social media that appealed for donations of medical supplies. That prompted complaints authorities were more worried about image than public safety.

Li was detained by police after warning about the virus on a social media group for his former classmates.

## Coronavirus extends across West, Californians must stay home

By NICOLE WINFIELD and TIM SULLIVAN Associated Press

ROME (AP) — Italy's deaths from the coronavirus pandemic eclipsed China's on Thursday as the scourge extended its march across the West, where the United States and other countries increasingly enlisted the military to prepare for an onslaught of patients and California's governor ordered people in the most-populous U.S. state to stay home.

The U.S. Army prepared mobile military hospitals for deployment in major cities. In Madrid, Spain, a four-star hotel was turned into a hospital. Long lines of motorists waited for nurses to swab their nostrils at new U.S. drive-thru testing sites.

The virus has infected at least one European head of state: Monaco's 62-year-old Prince Albert II, who continued to work from his office. And it appeared to be opening an alarming new front in Africa, where health care in many countries is already in sorry shape.

At the United Nations, Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said the world is "at war with a virus" and warned that "a global recession, perhaps of record dimensions, is a near certainty."

"If we let the virus spread like wildfire — especially in the most vulnerable regions of the world -- it would kill millions of people," he said.

Italy, with 60 million citizens, has recorded 3,405 deaths, or roughly 150 more than in China, a country with a population over 20 times larger. As Italy reached its bleak milestone, China is seeing signs of hope. Wuhan, the city where the new virus emerged three months ago, had no new infections for a second day Friday, a sign its draconian lockdowns had worked.

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

Jonas Schmidt-Chanasit, a virologist at Germany's Bernhard Nocht Institute for Tropical Medicine, offered another reason for Italy's high death rate: "That's what happens when the health system collapses."

In a measure of how the fortunes of East and West have shifted, New York officials were sent to China to buy more ventilators. And in Italy, the leader of a delegation from the Chinese Red Cross openly castigated Italians for failing to take the national lockdown seriously.

On a visit to the hard-hit city of Milan, Sun Shuopeng said he was shocked to see so many people walking around, using public transportation and eating out in hotels.

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"Right now we need to stop all economic activity, and we need to stop the mobility of people," he said. "All people should be staying at home in quarantine."

Worldwide the death toll surpassed 10,000 and infections topped 240,000, including 86,000 people who have recovered.

In the U.S., where deaths reached at least 205, and infections climbed past 14,000, Army officials announced plans to deploy two hospitals, probably to Seattle and New York City. Washington state had the highest death toll, 74. President Donald Trump said earlier this week that he would send a Navy hospital ship to the West Coast as well as one to New York City, which is rapidly becoming a U.S. epicenter, with more than 4,000 cases.

Damage to the world's largest economy kept increasing, with the number of Americans filing for unemployment benefits surging by 70,000 last week. On Wall Street, though, stocks rose modestly amid optimism over efforts by the Federal Reserve and other central banks to shore up the economy. The Dow Jones Industrial Average gained almost 200 points, or 1%.

Congress is weighing a proposed \$1 trillion emergency package that would dispense relief checks to households in as many as two rounds, the first of which would consist of payments of \$1,000 per adult and \$500 for each child.

Around the country, governors and mayors sounded increasingly alarmed and took ever more drastic measures to fend off the crisis.

In California, Gov. Gavin Newsom late Thursday expanded to nearly 40 million people the restrictions he said already applied to about half the state. He said the statewide restriction on non-essential movement outside people's homes is necessary to control the spread of the virus that threatens to overwhelm California's medical system.

Newsom earlier in the day issued the dire prediction that 56% of California's population could contract the virus over the next eight weeks.

Pennsylvania Gov. Tom Wolf ordered the closing of all "non-life-sustaining" businesses in the state, with exceptions for gas stations, grocery stores, pharmacies and takeout restaurant service, and warned that violators could be subject to fines or imprisonment.

At a video conference with Trump, governors complained they were having difficulty obtaining such things as swabs and protective gear for doctors and nurses.

And New York Mayor Bill de Blasio lashed out at the president as "the Herbert Hoover of your generation," referring to the man who was president when the stock market crashed in 1929 and the Depression set in.

New York Gov. Andrew Cuomo said the state does not have enough ventilators for the expected surge of patients in need of help breathing, and needs to acquire thousands before the outbreak overwhelms hospitals.

"Every state is shopping for ventilators. We're shopping for ventilators. We literally have people in China shopping for ventilators which is one of the largest manufacturers. So this is a major problem," he said.

A Houston hospital that opened its doors to drive-thru testing quickly saw a line of hundreds of vehicles stretching more than a mile. At a white tent, workers in masks and head-to-toe protective gear swabbed motorists. Petra Sanchez waited to find out whether she had the virus.

"I have an 80-year-old dad, and I haven't been around him for the same reason," she said. "I don't know what I have."

The U.S. State Department, meanwhile, warned Americans in the strongest terms yet not to travel abroad under any circumstances.

The British government, criticized as slow to react to the virus, shifted gears and drew up legislation giving itself new powers to detain people and restrict gatherings. The bill is expected to be approved by Parliament next week.

Supermarket chain Sainsbury's reserved the first hour of shopping for vulnerable customers. Among them was Jim Gibson, 72, of London, who was concerned that the country wasn't ramping up testing fast enough.

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"You can't go on ignoring World Health Organization guidelines — if they're wrong, who the hell is right?" he said. "Let's have no shilly-shallying."

French Prime Minister Edouard Philippe pleaded with people to social distance, even as the crisis pushed them to seek comfort. "When you love someone, you should avoid taking them in your arms," he said in Parliament.

China for the second day said Friday the locked-down city of Wuhan, where thousands once lay sick or dying in hurriedly constructed hospitals, had no new cases of infections. All 39 new cases recorded nationally were from abroad.

"Today, we have seen the dawn after so many days of hard effort," said Jiao Yahui, a senior inspector at the National Health Commission, said Thursday. Officials say they will only lift the quarantine of Wuhan after the city goes 14 consecutive days with no new cases.

China is slowly coming back to life, with the government saying about 80% of economic activity has been restored, although millions of workers remain stranded by travel bans. Beijing's tourism industry is still on hold, just as it should be ramping up for the summer season.

The World Health Organization warned, though, that the virus is spreading quickly in Africa, from about five countries a week and a half ago to 35 of the continent's 54 nations — an "extremely rapid evolution," said WHO's Africa chief, Dr. Matshidiso Moeti.

Sullivan reported from Minneapolis. 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.

This story has been corrected to show Wuhan had no cases of infection and China had only imported cases, not that Wuhan had imported cases.

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## Governors raise alarm as coronavirus taxes health systems

By MELINDA DESLATTÉ and BRIAN WITTE Associated Press

BATON ROUGE, La. (AP) — In a day of dizzying developments, governors across the U.S. sounded a perilous alarm about the rapid spread of the new coronavirus and warned of dire consequences for their health care systems.

The governor of California issued a statewide stay-at-home order, Pennsylvania's governor ordered more than 150 types of businesses to close, the governor of Texas closed schools for more than 5 million students and the Louisiana governor delivered a grim assessment of his state to President Donald Trump.

U.S. governors told the president Thursday that their states are in immediate need of federal help as they expand measures to contain the new coronavirus. Louisiana Gov. John Bel Edwards said his state's health system could be overwhelmed in a week.

"Our trajectory is basically the same as what they had in Italy. And if there's anything I said today that ought to get people's attention, it is that," the Democratic governor said. "If we are not going to look like Italy in 10 days or two weeks, it will only be because of these mitigation measures."

In a conference call with other governors, Edwards warned Trump of the "worst-case scenario" modeling. But he also told reporters that Louisiana was on track for that "sobering" reality if the state's residents don't actively work to decrease contact with others — staying home more and distancing themselves from people.

Louisiana had nearly 400 positive tests for COVID-19 Thursday, up from 280 a day earlier, Edwards said.

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Ten people have died.

Sobering projections for infections and hospitalizations prompted governors across the country to take their toughest actions to date to try to control the outbreak.

California Gov. Gavin Newsom said infection rates are doubling every four days in some parts of the state and issued the dire prediction that 56% of the state's population — equal to 22.4 million people — could contract the virus over the next eight weeks.

His order late Thursday restricted non-essential movement for all residents.

"This is a moment we need to make tough decisions," Newsom said. "We need to recognize reality."

Earlier in the day, he asked congressional leaders for \$1 billion in initial federal funding to help the nation's most populous state fight the virus. He also asked for the federal government to deploy the USNS Mercy Hospital Ship to the port of Los Angeles to help the state "decompress" its health care system, predicting that California would be thousands of hospital beds short of meeting the demand.

In their teleconference with Trump and Vice President Mike Pence, governors pressed for more supplies — masks and other protective equipment for medical professionals, test kits and life-saving supplies such as ventilators.

New Mexico Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham said she wanted better coordination between the federal government and the states regarding the supply chain for essential medical equipment.

"Where is it, who is making it and where is it getting deployed?" said Grisham's spokesman, Tripp Stelnicki. "There really needs to be more clear communication."

The White House disputed governors' claims that they could not get equipment but offered help to states that were struggling to acquire materials such as test swabs and processing agents.

Governors also asked for additional oversight of their National Guard units, mostly to have more leeway to deploy them for humanitarian purposes. They want Guard units to help run mobile screening facilities, disinfect public spaces and distribute medical supplies such as gloves, gowns and face shields.

"We need all levels of government working together to get through this crisis," said Maryland Gov. Larry Hogan, chairman of the National Governors Association.

Urgent developments accelerated throughout the day, as more governors made sweeping recommendations for residents to avoid public spaces or greatly limit their exposure to others.

In Pennsylvania, Gov. Tom Wolf tightened his directives to businesses to shut down, issuing a dire warning and saying that all "non-life-sustaining" businesses in the state must close their physical locations by 8 p.m. to slow the spread of the coronavirus. Enforcement actions against businesses that do not close their physical locations will begin Saturday, Wolf said in a statement.

South Carolina Gov. Henry McMaster issued an executive order calling on all nonessential state employees to stay home.

Minnesota Gov. Tim Walz ordered health care providers to postpone elective surgeries and other medical procedures so they can focus on responding to the anticipated surge of coronavirus cases.

"The greatest risk we face during the COVID-19 pandemic is overwhelming our health care systems and limiting their ability to respond to emerging cases," Walz said in a statement.

Hogan said governors also are requesting a delay or greater flexibility for completing the 2020 census and the transition to Real ID.

Maryland has waived state requirements so driver's licenses won't expire during the state of emergency to prevent crowds at Motor Vehicle Administration offices, he said. However, federal law requires Real ID compliance by Oct. 1. Hogan said governors don't want people coming to MVAs with the documents they need to present in person to be in compliance.

"Other governors all agreed and said, 'Yes, that's a big problem for all of us.' So, we're just asking to push the pause button on all these things that require interaction with people where they would spread the disease," Hogan said.

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Associated Press writers Jill Colvin in Washington, D.C.; David Eggert in Lansing, Michigan; Susan Haigh in Hartford, Connecticut; Steve Karnowski in Minneapolis, Minnesota; Meg Kinnard in Columbia, South



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Carolina; Marc Levy in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania; Morgan Lee in Santa Fe, New Mexico; and Kathleen Ronayne and Don Thompson in Sacramento, California, contributed to this report.

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## **Business Fallout: Airlines lobby for funds, Domino's hiring**

It was less than 11 weeks ago that the first cases of pneumonia were detected in Wuhan, China. The speed at which what would soon be named COVID-19, the disease caused by the new coronavirus, knocked the global economy askew is unparalleled in our lifetimes.

Following are developments Thursday related to the outbreak, the efforts by governments to stabilize their economies, the companies that must navigate through an altered landscape, and the millions of people whose lives have been upended.

**NATIONAL ECONOMICS:** Mass disruptions have spread across the globe as nations simultaneously try to slow the spread of the coronavirus and limit damage to the economy.

The number of Americans filing new claims for unemployment benefits surged last week by 70,000, indicating that the impact of the coronavirus was starting to be felt in rising layoffs in the job market. The Labor Department reported Thursday that applications for benefits, a good proxy for layoffs, rose by 70,000 to a seasonally adjusted 281,000 last week.

A leading German economic index fell by the most since 1991, indicating Europe's largest economy is plunging into recession due to the disruption from the virus outbreak.

Saudi Arabia will cut spending by 5%, or about \$13.3 billion, to offset the impact of plunging oil prices and the effects of the new coronavirus on its economic outlook and deficit.

Late Wednesday, the European Central Bank launched an expanded program to buy up to 750 billion euros (\$820 billion) in bonds to support the economy. ECB head Christine Lagarde said Thursday that the the bond purchase stimulus is not the last word and could be increased if the coronavirus crisis demands that. Lagarde said in an op-ed article to appear in European newspapers Friday that "we are fully prepared to increase the size of our asset purchase programs and adjust their composition, by as much as necessary and for as long as needed." She said the monetary authority for the 19 countries in the euro currency would "do everything necessary within our mandate to help the euro area through this crisis." Lagarde's words recalled the statement by predecessor Mario Draghi that "within our mandate, the ECB is ready to do whatever it takes" to ensure the euro survived its 2010-2012 debt crisis.

The Bank of England on Thursday slashed its key interest rate to 0.1%, its lowest-ever level, amid global economic turmoil sparked by the coronavirus pandemic.

**AIRLINES:** U.S. airlines are still lobbying for taxpayer cash to keep flying through the virus outbreak, despite failing to win White House support for \$29 billion in grants. Thirty airline-industry groups appealed Thursday to congressional leaders and Treasury Secretary Steve Mnuchin for immediate and long-term help from the federal government. They asked for aid "in the form of grants, unsecured loans and limited tax measures. The survival of our industry depends on it."

President Donald Trump has said repeatedly that his administration will help the airlines. But while his administration is supporting \$50 billion in secured loans, it did not endorse the grants or billions more in tax relief requested by the airlines. Consumer advocates and many Democrats in Congress want to tie any help for the airlines to specific measures including aid for workers, limits on ticket-change fees, and a ban on stock buybacks.

American Airlines says it plans to cancel 55,000 flights next month and it is grounding nearly half the

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fleet while expecting plummeting demand for air travel to get even worse. The airline's president, Robert Isom, detailed the moves in a letter Thursday to employees. The company has cut its international schedule for April by 75% and domestic flying by 30%, with plans to cut even more in May.

Germany's Lufthansa said that airlines may fail without government assistance if the outbreak lasts for an extended time. The airline has already slashed routes and frozen new hires. Lufthansa said members of its executive board also decided to take a 20% cut in basic pay for 2020.

The International Air Transport Association, which represents around 290 airlines worldwide, on Thursday put the price tag on combined lost revenue to date at \$7 billion. It will get a lot worse. The group estimates total costs worldwide could reach \$113 billion. The group called for emergency aid of up to \$200 billion for airlines globally.

The Las Vegas airport is running with reduced operations after an air traffic controller tested positive for the new coronavirus, temporarily closing the control tower. Nearly 500 flights in Las Vegas were canceled by midday.

Seven Middle Eastern countries have suspended all commercial flights, while other airlines halted international flights amid a near total collapse in demand for travel. Vietnam Airlines was the latest with a halt to all international flights until the end of April.

The South American country of Guyana, meanwhile, has temporarily closed its two international airports.

**DRIVE-THRU TESTING:** Drugstore chain CVS said it has opened a first drive-thru coronavirus testing site in Shrewsbury, Massachusetts, but only for first responders and health care workers. Walmart says it will follow in the next two to three days with testing centers for that limited group of people in the Chicago area. Both say they will use the parking-lot testing areas as trial sites for an expanded effort for the general population. The announcements come nearly a week ago after Trump described a government partnership with major businesses to set up drive-thru testing centers.

**BONUSES:** Walmart also said that it will be giving special bonuses to its hourly employees to reward them for their work in serving customers who are stockpiling toilet paper and other basics. Part-time workers will receive \$150 while full-time workers will receive \$300 provided they started March 1. The bonuses will be paid out on April 2. It will also move up quarterly bonuses for workers.

**SHOPPING IN AN OUTBREAK:** The trend toward online shopping has been underway for years and the arrival of the novel coronavirus may be accelerating that shift. Amazon is hiring 100,000 people to fulfill orders. Domino's Pizza said Thursday that it is hiring about 10,000 workers in the U.S. to meet rising demand for delivery and carryout. Domino's put out the call for delivery drivers, pizza makers, managers and truck drivers. Domino's U.S. stores remain open for carryout and it is also offering contact-less delivery.

**DISLODGED:** The hotel industry is being decimated as businesses cease travel and one-time tourists take shelter. Hotels were half emptied out last week, according to the analytics firm STR, with occupancy rates falling 24%. In cities particularly hard hit by the virus, like Seattle and San Francisco, occupancy was below 40%, according to STR.

Marriott's CEO, as well as the son of the hotel company's founders, have forfeited their salary for the rest of the year as the hotel company tries to slash costs. J.W. Marriott Jr., who serves as chairman, earned \$3.2 million in 2018. CEO Arne Sorenson had a base salary of \$1.3 million. The pay of other executives will be halved. Marriott occupancy in the U.S. and Europe is less than 25% — down from a usual rate of nearly 70%. Sorenson said cancellations have reached historic highs.

Greece ordered most hotels to shut down by Sunday and remain closed through all of April.

**FACTORED OUT:** More companies are closing factory gates a day after the top U.S. automakers announced a total production shutdown in North America.

Electric vehicle maker Tesla Inc. is indefinitely suspending production at its assembly plant in Fremont, California, at the end of the day Monday. The company says it followed federal guidelines in staying open even though seven Bay Area counties have ordered residents to shelter in place. Alameda County on Tuesday night declared Tesla a "nonessential business" under the county's shelter-in-place order, but the Fremont factory kept producing. On Thursday, Tesla said it would shut down except for basic operations. The company said its solar factory in New York also will temporarily suspend production, but its battery

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plant in Nevada and other operations will continue.

Subaru is temporarily closing its only U.S. factory out of concerns for worker safety due to the coronavirus, as well as to adjust for falling sales. The Japanese automaker says the plant in Lafayette, Indiana, will shut down on Monday and remain closed for at least a week. All workers will be paid for the week. The plant has about 5,700 workers.

Kia and Volkswagen also said they would suspend production at their U.S. factories. The 2,700-worker Kia plant in West Point, Georgia will be closed Thursday and Friday due to a parts shortage. It will be cleaned and is expected to reopen Monday. Worker pay is being discussed. Volkswagen will halt assembly lines for a week starting Saturday at its Chattanooga, Tennessee, plant that employs 3,800. It's scheduled to reopen the night of March 29. VW says it will use the time to clean the plant and assess future production. Workers will get full pay, VW says.

Toyota also announced Thursday it will extend the closure of its North American plants until April 6. The plants will close Monday and Tuesday and had been scheduled to reopen Wednesday.

They join General Motors, Ford, Fiat Chrysler, Honda, Nissan and Hyundai in suspending production at North American factories. Auto factories run by BMW and Mercedes-Benz are still running.

Hyundai said Thursday that it would close its plant in the Czech Republic for two weeks starting Monday. The plant produced almost 310,000 cars last year and employs some 3,300 people. Auto factories have been closed across much of Europe already.

**MANUFACTURING'S SECOND ACT:** Germany-based Beiersdorf, whose brands include Nivea and Coppertone, says it is launching production of medical disinfectant in Europe to support the fight against the virus. Beiersdorf said Thursday that it initially will provide 500 tons of disinfectant for hospitals, medical staff and emergency responders such as police and firefighters.

**CRUCIAL SUPPLY:** Supermarkets have become one of the few places where social distancing rules are stretched. Brands like Campbell, which have struggled as more people seek out non-processed foods or those they believe are more fresh, have seen their stock spike. Placer.ai, a data analytics firm, said traffic at Kroger and Albertsons stores rose more than 35% the second week in March.

British supermarkets have brought in measures to control the coronavirus-induced panic-buying that's seen many of their shelves emptied and elderly and vulnerable people often unable to get the products they need.

Established companies like Campbell and Hormel are not the only ones seeing demand surge. Blue Apron, which makes fresh meal kits for dinner preparation at home, was threatened with delisting from the New York Stock Exchange not so long ago after its shares fell below the exchange minimum \$1. Company shares are up almost 530% this week. Blue Apron said it has seen a sharp increase in consumer demand over the last week and is increasing its capacity to fill those orders. It said it's hiring workers for temporary and permanent positions in New Jersey and California.

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## Most renters will not receive protections under WH proposal

By KEN SWEET AP Business Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Most Americans who rent their home, many of whom have lost their jobs in the sudden economic slowdown caused by the coronavirus outbreak, will not be eligible for eviction protections, despite what President Donald Trump said this week.

Under the Department of Housing and Urban Development's plan released Wednesday, foreclosures and evictions would stop for 60 days on single-family homes with loans through the Federal Housing

Administration. That would apply to roughly 8 million units, according to HUD. Only FHA homes lived in for at least a year can be rented out.

That's compared with the roughly 43 million households who rented in 2019, according to the U.S. Census. Roughly half of renters rent their home from an individual investor, while the other half rent from a business or multi-unit property owner. The ones renting from a business will not receive any protections according to HUD's proposal.

"That's the problem with (HUD's proposal). It only impacts a very small amount of people. We need big-scale solutions," said Andrea Shapiro of the Metropolitan Council on Housing, a New York-based housing advocacy organization.

Furthermore, HUD has no power to protect renters in public housing authorities located across the country. HUD Secretary Ben Carson said this week on Twitter that the agency is working with Congress to get that authority to protect renters in public housing authorities.

"HUD has been in contact with every Public Housing Agency in the country to ensure the millions of low-income Americans we serve continue to have a roof over their head," Carson said.

The rules are in contrast to comments made by Trump this week, who said renters would get "immediate relief" as part of his administration's plan.

Housing advocates called the White House's proposal a "important first step," but said there are limitations to the policy that need to be addressed.

"America's lowest-income renters were already struggling to pay rent and make ends meet before this latest disaster, and people were experiencing homelessness. Congress must implement a national moratorium on all evictions and foreclosures," said Diane Yentel, president and CEO of the National Low Income Housing Coalition.

Renters tend to be more economically vulnerable than their homeowner counterparts. They have generally lower incomes and cannot tap into the equity in their homes as a line of credit in case of an emergency. A disproportionate number of renters are black, Hispanic and other minorities.

Some cities and states, including San Francisco and Los Angeles, New York state and Kentucky, have imposed their own eviction and foreclosure moratoriums in response to the coronavirus. But the majority of states and localities have yet to step in to stop people from losing their homes.

Shapiro said the best solution at the moment would be a national moratorium on both rental payments and mortgage payments.

"Everyone needs protections right now," she said.

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AP Race and Ethnicity Writer Aaron Morrison contributed to this report from New York.

## **NBA shuttering facilities, as more teams face positive tests**

**By TIM REYNOLDS AP Basketball Writer**

The number of known coronavirus cases within the NBA doubled to 14 on Thursday, when Marcus Smart of the Boston Celtics pleaded with people to take social distancing more seriously and the league ordered all teams to shutter their training facilities indefinitely.

Smart revealed that he tested positive and the Los Angeles Lakers said two of their players tested positive as well, bringing the number of players who have acquired the virus to 10. The Philadelphia 76ers said three members of their organization tested positive and the Denver Nuggets said someone within their franchise was positive as well.

The 76ers and Nuggets did not say if the affected people were players, coaches or other staff.

"I've had no symptoms and I feel great," Smart said on Twitter. "But the younger generation in our country MUST self distance. This is not a joke. Not doing so is selfish. Together we can beat this, but we must beat it together by being apart for a short while."

The league wants its teams to keep distance as well. Earlier Thursday, the NBA sent a memo to teams telling them to close their training and practice facilities to all players and staff — plus recommending that

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players "take aggressive measures to avoid contact with others and remain home as much as possible, leaving only for essential activities."

Smart said he waited five days for his test results.

"I've been self-quarantined since the test, thank goodness," Smart tweeted. "COVID-19 must be taken with the highest level of seriousness. I know it's a #1 priority for our nations health experts, & we must get more testing ASAP."

Smart's comments and the other positive-test revelations came hours after the NBA's memo, a copy of which was obtained by The Associated Press, was sent Thursday afternoon. The league told teams that it was going to more-stringent policies "in light of the rapidly-developing coronavirus situation, and consistent with evolving advice from health experts regarding how to promote individual and public health while minimizing the spread of the virus."

As recently as Monday, the NBA was telling teams that individual workouts could take place at team facilities using what the league called the "one player, one coach, one basket" rule. Now, that's not even permitted. If players are going to work out during the league's shutdown, they'll have to do it at home or some other private facility. Public facilities, like gyms or college courts — many of which are closed anyway — aren't permitted to be used by NBA players under the league's coronavirus policy.

Essential activities, by NBA definition, include buying food, medicine, or other necessary supplies; obtaining critical medical services; providing necessary care for a family member in another household; or attending to some other emergency.

Brooklyn, Utah and Detroit join the Celtics and Lakers as teams known to have players who have tested positive. In all, seven NBA teams — when adding the 76ers and Nuggets — have revealed positive tests.

Across the U.S., the death toll has reached at least 178 and known infections climbed past 11,000 Thursday.

"We will navigate these uncharted waters together," Jazz coach Quin Snyder wrote in an open letter to Utah fans on Thursday, thanking them for their support. "Right now, we are all sacrificing in our own unique ways — for our health and for the greater good — and that is critical."

With the belief that there are going to be no NBA games for several more weeks, at minimum, the league clearly felt Thursday was the right time to take the additional step of urging players to limit exposure.

The NBA said its infectious disease specialists agree with other public health experts and that, "to mitigate the spread of the coronavirus ... until further notice, team practice or training facilities" needed to be closed to players and staff. The league said the ban applies to G League facilities as well.

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

The vast majority of people recover from the new virus. According to the World Health Organization, people with mild illness recover in about two weeks, while those with more severe illness may take three to six weeks to recover.

The NBA had already banned teams, as part of the coronavirus response, from using public health clubs, fitness centers, gyms and college facilities. Teams can, however, set players up with training, conditioning, or other instructional materials for use at their homes.

"I'm incredibly blessed to just have some free weights here. I have a versa climber. I have enough stuff that I won't take a step back," Kevin Love of the Cleveland Cavaliers said Thursday. "I'll make sure that I'm maintaining and hopefully keep my wind up and stay strong and just keep that constant tension on my body because it's tough right now. I haven't really left the house much."

The league also reminded teams Thursday that it recommends players remain in their team markets and avoid all non-essential travel, though players -- in concert with their team -- can choose to go to another city and stay there instead. But players still cannot travel outside of North America; one of the reasons for that is logistical, since it is unclear if players who hypothetically want to return to homes in Europe would be allowed to fly back to the U.S.

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Thursday was the eighth full day of the NBA's shutdown because of the virus. That brings the total of games missed to 57, including the two called off on March 11 — the night that the positive test of Utah Jazz All-Star center Rudy Gobert was revealed and the league announced that it was suspending the season.

Smart and the Celtics played Utah on March 6. The Jazz have two players dealing with the virus; All-Star guard Donovan Mitchell, whose positive result was revealed March 12, is the other.

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

## What you need to know today about the virus outbreak

Italy's death toll from the coronavirus overtook China's, underscoring just how much the outbreak has pivoted toward Europe as well as the United States. The Middle East and Africa also are seeing a worrying number of new cases.

The grim news from Italy followed the announcement from Chinese authorities that there were no new cases to report from the former epicenter of the virus, which had once seen thousands of cases a day, and its surrounding province.

Here are some of AP's top stories Thursday on the world's coronavirus pandemic. Follow APNews.com/VirusOutbreak for updates through the day:

### WHAT'S HAPPENING TODAY:

— Italy, with a population of 60 million, on Thursday recorded at least 3,405 deaths, or roughly 150 more than in China, a country with a population over 20 times larger. Italy reached the bleak milestone the same day that Wuhan, the Chinese city where the coronavirus first emerged three months ago, recorded no new infections, a sign the communist country's draconian lockdowns were a powerful method to stop the virus's spread.

— Not surprisingly, the number of Americans filing new claims for unemployment benefits soared by 70,000, to the highest level in more than two years. Andrew Hunter, senior U.S. economist at Capital Economics, forecasts that jobless benefit applications could easily exceed 1 million within the next few weeks.

— Around the United States, authorities are receiving a surge of reports about stores trying to cash in on the coronavirus crisis with outrageous prices, phony cures and other scams amid long lines, some empty shelves and patience wearing thin. An Associated Press survey of state attorneys general or consumer protection agencies across the country found the number exceeded 5,000, with hundreds more coming in every day.

— Inequality in testing has become a contentious issue, with accusations the rich and famous are jumping the line. Celebrities, politicians and professional athletes faced a backlash this week as several revealed that they had been tested for the coronavirus, even when they didn't have a fever or other symptoms.

— Stocks capped a wobbly day on Wall Street with solid gains, reflecting cautious optimism among investors that emergency action by the U.S. government and central banks will cushion the global economy from a looming recession caused by the coronavirus pandemic. The swings in the market were markedly less volatile than recent days, with the Dow Jones Industrial Average gaining almost 200 points, or 0.9%. Markets have swung wildly as investors weigh the increasing likelihood of a recession against emergency efforts by global authorities to support the economy.

— Americans are increasingly worried they or a loved one will be infected by the coronavirus, with two-thirds now saying they're at least somewhat concerned — up from less than half who said so a month ago. That's according to a new poll from The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research that finds about 3 in 10 Americans say they're not worried at all.

— Emergency policies to curtail the spread of the virus have sent shock waves through the economy. It's been especially difficult for small businesses, which are less resilient because restrictions on movement have reduced foot traffic. An AP photo gallery presents one New York business's struggle.

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## WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW:

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.

Here are the symptoms of the virus compared with the common flu.

One of the best ways to prevent spread of the virus is washing your hands with soap and water. The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommends first washing with warm or cold water and then lathering soap for 20 seconds to get it on the backs of hands, between fingers and under finger nails before rinsing off.

You should wash your phone, too. Here's how.

## ONE NUMBER:

9,000: The number of Muslim pilgrims quarantined in Indonesia on Thursday. They were attending a four-day gathering at a boarding school that 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.

## IN OTHER NEWS:

**SINGING HEALTH WORKERS' PRAISES:** People in many hard-hit European cities are taking at least a minute each night to come together in gratitude — while still in isolation. They stand at open windows or on balconies in Rome, Madrid, Paris, Athens and Amsterdam, singing, cheering and applauding the doctors, nurses and other health care workers putting themselves at risk on the front lines of the pandemic.

**GO AHEAD AND BINGE:** Americans hunkering down at home are occupying their time with Netflix, Amazon, Hulu and other streaming services. Up to a 20 percent increase is likely in the amount of time subscribers spend watching, and millions of new customers will hop aboard, one analyst predicts.

**TRADITIONAL FRENCH SOAP ENJOYS REVIVAL:** Amid the rapid spread of the coronavirus across Europe, the hallmark Marseille tradition of soap-making is enjoying a renaissance, as the French rediscover an essential local product. Savonnerie de la Licorne, a family business going back more than a century, has seen shop sales increase 30% and delivery orders quadruple since Italy declared a state of emergency.

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>

## National parks are free, but some oppose that amid the virus

By **BRADY McCOMBS** and **JAMES ANDERSON** Associated Press

SALT LAKE CITY (AP) — Most national parks are open as a refuge for Americans tired of being stuck at home during a pandemic, but despite now being free to visit, people may find it more difficult to enjoy them as parks close visitor centers, shuttles, lodges and restaurants to fight the spread of the coronavirus.

Parks are trying to keep up with ever-changing rules and recommendations from government officials who are urging people to avoid gathering in large groups but allowing them to get outside for fresh air and exercise as long as they keep away from others.

The National Park Service says it's adhering to the latest guidelines from the White House and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, vowing to keep outdoor spaces open while giving park superintendents the power to close or modify operations.

Interior Secretary David Bernhardt this week temporarily waived entrance fees at national parks, monu-

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ments and wildlife refuges to make it easier for people to get outdoors and “implement some social distancing.”

“Getting out into the wilderness is perfect for what we call the ‘shack nasties’ — being cooped up inside your home,” said Trish Jacob, an employee of a backcountry guiding company near Rocky Mountain National Park.

But not everyone is on board with the idea of people descending on parks and their gateway towns to escape the virus.

Making parks free will lead to overcrowding and put staffers and visitors at greater risk of being exposed to the virus, according to a group representing park service employees.

“It is irresponsible to urge people to visit national park sites when gathering at other public spaces is no longer considered safe,” said Phil Francis, chairman of the Coalition to Protect America’s National Parks.

A hospital in Moab, Utah, also has implored state officials to slow the flow of people coming to see the red rocks and unique formations at Arches and Canyonlands national parks over fears the facility couldn’t handle an outbreak. In response, officials this week limited hotel stays to people in town for work and banned dining in restaurants.

Nationally, parks are devising ways to stay open while keeping people safely apart and trying to ensure employees stay healthy. Many closed visitor centers, museums and entrance booths while rangers are stationed outside to field visitors’ questions.

Though rangers are working, some parks warned people to be extra cautious, especially in places with wintry weather, because resources are strained amid the pandemic and rescues may be more difficult.

Zion National Park in southern Utah halted shuttles used by most people visiting its red rock vistas nestled in a narrow canyon. Tourists now must wait for limited parking to free up. Grand Canyon National Park also stopped its shuttles and closed its restaurants.

In Northern California, visitor centers at several destinations managed by the park service, such as Muir Woods National Monument, Alcatraz Island and the Golden Gate Bridge, are closed. Yosemite National Park closed its campgrounds.

Chris Brunell, who spent most of the past three weeks camping in Yosemite, said he was told he had to pack up and leave Thursday, two days earlier than he expected.

Brunell, who was laid off from a Silicon Valley technology job before the outbreak, said the park emptied noticeably after lodging and restaurants closed Tuesday.

“Compared to the usual numbers, it’s just a trickle,” he said.

Yellowstone National Park, Mount Rainier National Park in Washington state and Rocky Mountain National Park in Colorado also closed facilities. Most amenities and roads in Yellowstone — which spans parts of Wyoming, Montana and Idaho — and Rainier normally are closed this time of year because of deep snow. The Statue of Liberty National Monument and Ellis Island in New York are closed entirely.

Workers at Grand Canyon have shifted away from duties that put them close to tourists.

“We’re just coming up with different ways for them to do their jobs that’s mindful of the CDC guidelines,” park spokeswoman Lily Daniels said.

For most people, the coronavirus causes only mild or moderate symptoms. But for the elderly and people with existing conditions, it can cause more severe illness. The vast majority of those who are infected recover.

In Utah, the hospital’s concerns are over the social interactions at hotels, bars, restaurants and often crowded trailheads or entrance gates. Expecting thousands of tourists in the city this weekend, Moab Regional Hospital executives urged the governor to ban visitors. But tourists have only been prohibited from staying at hotels.

“We’re just encouraging people stay home and stay in their residences and to wait out this two weeks and hopefully things will return to some kind of normal,” said Elaine Gizler, executive director of the Moab Area Travel Council.

In Rocky Mountain National Park, Katarina Takahashi of Longmont, Colorado, trudged through fresh snow during a three-hour hike to Emerald Lake, passing other alpine lakes surrounded by towering peaks.



She called the 3-mile (5-kilometer) trek last week a much-needed escape.

"It's a very refreshing time to be outdoors, to get the health benefits of exercising, be in the sunshine, and get away as well from the anxiety I've felt, that we're all feeling, about the virus," said Takahashi, a 32-year-old freelance Japanese language translator who blogs about the outdoors.

Businesses in Estes Park, a gateway town that relies heavily on Rocky Mountain National Park, are watching virus developments warily.

"We are open for business until the city tells us otherwise," said Jacob, who works for Kirk Mountain Adventures, which offers snowshoeing, fly fishing, hiking, backpacking and other excursions into the park.

Kirk employees were leading snowshoeing and fly fishing trips this week — each limited to three people, not because of the virus but because many visitors want a more intimate experience in nature. But spring break business is slightly down, Jacob said.

Like its Moab counterpart, the Estes Park Chamber of Commerce is focusing more on helping its members deal with the virus than promoting tourism. The town's already been hit by a statewide ban on dining at restaurants and bars.

If there's any silver lining, it may be better that the first shock waves from the coronavirus are hitting now, rather than during the peak summer season, chamber executive director Keith Pearson said.

"By Memorial Day, if the worst can be in the rear-view mirror, that would be fantastic," Pearson said.

Anderson reported from Denver. Associated Press writers Lindsay Whitehurst in Salt Lake City, Felicia Fonseca in Flagstaff, Arizona, and Brian Melley in Los Angeles contributed to this story.

## Pressure grows on Trump as hospitals sound virus alarms

By JILL COLVIN and DEB RIECHMANN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Insisting the federal government is not a "shipping clerk," President Donald Trump on Thursday called on states to do more to secure their own critically needed masks, ventilators and testing supplies as the pressure mounted on hospitals struggling to cope with a rising number of coronavirus patients.

During another fast-moving day in the capital, Trump and his administration took additional, once-unthinkable steps to try to contain the pandemic. The State Department issued a new alert urging Americans not to travel abroad under any circumstances. And Trump said the government should take partial ownership of companies bailed out during the pandemic, a step that would mark an extraordinary federal reach into the private sector.

Hoping to inject some good news into the dreary outlook, Trump held a White House briefing trying to highlight new efforts underway to find treatments for COVID-19 as infections in the country climbed past 11,000, with at least 168 deaths.

He offered an upbeat promotion of therapeutic drugs in early testing that he said could be "a game-changer" in treating those suffering. But critics quickly accused him of spreading misleading information and overly optimistic projections after the head of the Food and Drug Administration made clear that the drugs Trump discussed were still being tested for their effectiveness and safety. That process takes months and may or may not yield any results.

The FDA later reminded the public in a statement that there are "no FDA-approved therapeutics or drugs to treat, cure or prevent COVID-19."

On Capitol Hill, lawmakers worked urgently toward a \$1 trillion aid package to prop up households and the U.S. economy that would put money directly into American's pockets. Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell has proposed making direct payments of \$1,200 per person, \$2,400 for couples and \$500 for each child, according to a copy of the legislation obtained by The Associated Press.

Congress has also been discussing loans that would have to be paid back to shore up airlines and other industries and was working to increase production of medical supplies and build temporary field hospitals under new authorities unlocked when Trump invoked the Defense Production Act Wednesday.

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At the White House, where temperature checks continued and officials and journalists sat separated from one another as they practiced social distancing, Trump also stepped up his criticism of China, chastising the country he had previously praised for not warning the world earlier about a disease that started in Wuhan, but has since spread across the globe.

Indeed, the death toll in Italy from the coronavirus overtook China's on Thursday, with at least 3,405 deaths in a country with a population of 60 million."

"If people would have known about it, it could have... been stopped in place, it could have been stopped right where it came from," Trump said.

"But now the whole world almost is inflicted with this horrible virus and it's too bad," he added, lamenting how the U.S economy was healthy "just a few weeks ago."

Trump grew agitated when one reporter noted the economy had essentially ground to a halt. "We know that," Trump snapped. "Everybody in the room knows that."

More than eight weeks after the first U.S. case of the virus was detected, the federal government is still struggling to respond. Testing in the U.S. lags dramatically behind other developed nations, and states still say they cannot conduct wide-scale testing because they don't have the swabs or other materials necessary to process them.

And as the number of confirmed cases mounts, doctors and nurses are sounding warnings about the shortage of crucial supplies, including masks and other gear needed to protect health care workers, along with ventilators to treat respiratory symptoms of the virus.

Indeed, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention this week issued guidance telling health care workers that if no masks are available, they could turn to "homemade" options "(e.g., bandana, scarf) for care of patients with COVID-19 as a last resort."

But Trump insisted against the evidence Thursday that there are more than enough supplies available to meet needs. And he said that it was up to states to obtain them.

While willing to "help out wherever we can," he said "governors are supposed to be doing a lot of this work."

"The federal government's not supposed to be out there buying vast amounts of items and then shipping," Trump said. "You know, we're not a shipping clerk."

After the briefing, Trump traveled to the Federal Emergency Management Agency, which has now been tasked with leading the national coronavirus response, for a teleconference with governors — some of whom have complained about a lack of guidance from Washington.

Again and again during the call, governors said they were having difficulty securing supplies, including the materials needed to process tests, with some sounding panicked. Some said they were competing with the federal government for purchases. Officials in the room, however, insisted there was plenty available on the market to purchase.

Among those expressing concern was Louisiana Gov. John Bel Edwards, who told Trump he feared the state would begin to exceed its capacity to deliver health care in as soon as a week.

"I'm asking for help in terms of surging our medical capacity here in Louisiana," he told the president. He said the state was "going to do everything we can to mitigate and slow the spread, but in the time that we have, we've got to increase our surge capacity. That is my biggest concern."

For most people, COVID-19 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.

As the virus threat has become more acute, Trump has begun to describe himself as a "wartime president." As he and members of Congress craft bailout packages, Trump said he believed the government should take partial ownership of some companies hard hit by the pandemic and aided by taxpayers. Some Republicans in Congress have pushed back on the idea, saying it amounts to the government picking winners and losers, as they criticized President Barack Obama of doing after the 2008 financial crisis.

On the medical front, Trump and Dr. Stephen Hahn, the Food and Drug Administration commissioner, described several existing drugs and treatments currently under testing to see if they can help those with

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COVID-19. Among them: chloroquine, a drug long used to treat malaria; remdesivir, an experimental antiviral that's being tried in at least five separate studies; and antibodies culled from the blood of COVID-19 patients when they recover.

Chloroquine is widely available already and could be used off-label, but Hahn said officials want a formal study to get good information on whether it helps people with COVID-19 and is safe. No new and imminent treatments were announced at the briefing.

"We're looking at drugs that are already approved for other indications" as a potential bridge or stopgap until studies are completed on drugs under investigation, Hahn said.

Social distancing has proved to be a challenge in the tight quarters of the White House briefing room. When task force members walked out for the briefing, they spread out widely. "We practice what we preach," Surgeon General Jerome Adams said.

But moments later, the vice president's press secretary popped out into the briefing room and directed them to move closer together, presumably to make room for her boss.

Trump, who is at increased risk of serious illness because of his age, stood so close to some of the officials answering questions at the podium that they could not stand fully in front of it.

Trump took note of the cramped quarters, too, and claimed that social distancing was making the media "nicer." Yet he later laced into reporters, suggesting he would like to limit briefings to two or three of his favorite supporters. And he assailed some of his coverage, slamming as "fake news" outlets whose reporters have worked to hold his administration accountable for its delayed response.

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Associated Press writer Matthew Perrone contributed to this report.

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## Europeans sing health workers' praises nightly from windows

By LORI HINNANT Associated Press

PARIS (AP) — At a time of isolation, people in many European cities hit hard by the new coronavirus are taking at least a minute each night to come together in gratitude.

They stand at open windows or on balconies in Rome, Madrid, Paris, Athens and Amsterdam, singing, cheering and applauding even though they know their intended audience is too busy to listen.

The adulation is for the doctors, nurses and other health care workers putting themselves at risk on the front lines of the pandemic that is forcing most residents to stay home. A 52-year-old nurse on Thursday became the first medical professional in Spain to die of COVID-19.

In Italy, where the number of virus-related deaths surpassed those in China, 2,900 health care providers have been infected, or 10% of the country's total. Italian broadcasters regularly feature exhausted doctors and nurses begging people to stay home and expressing a sense of abandonment over inadequate protective gear.

The Dutch health minister collapsed from exhaustion in the midst of a parliamentary session on Wednesday.

"We're clapping tonight out of respect and to say thank you to all the health care workers in the Netherlands who are protecting us against this horrible coronavirus," King Willem-Alexander said while observing the ritual Tuesday night with his family at Palace Huis ten Bosch in The Hague.

The word spread mostly through the WhatsApp messaging service. In France, where the head of the national doctors' federation picked up the virus from a diabetic patient, the call went out seemingly spontaneously by text messages hours after a nationwide lockdown went into effect Tuesday. Windows

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opened promptly at 8 p.m. then and again on Wednesday.

"In this period of crisis, we are going to see the most beautiful things humanity has to offer, but also perhaps the darkest," French Prime Minister Edouard Philippe said.

In Brussels and other cities, the intended audience for the nightly chorus of thanks was expanded to everyone working to keep essential services running in Belgium, such as firefighters, supermarket workers and trash collectors.

In Spain, people are singing Mónica Naranjo's popular cover of the disco-era tune "I Will Survive" with the lyrics tweaked to say, "I will survive/I'll look for a home/Among the rubble of my loneliness/Strange paradise/Where you are missed."

Workers at one hospital responded with a video recorded in the facility's corridors. Standing in a small group and wearing masks, they held up one sign after another with messages that included, "We are all in this together." Then, they gave a minute of applause for their home-bound admirers.

While nonstop global news about the effects of the coronavirus have become commonplace, so, too, are the stories about the kindness of strangers and individuals who have sacrificed for others. "One Good Thing" is an AP continuing series reflecting these acts of kindness.

Associated Press writers Nicole Winfield in Rome, Aritz Parra in Madrid and Bram Janssen in Johannesburg 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.

## **\$10 toilet paper? Coronavirus gouging complaints surge in US**

**By REESE DUNKLIN and JUSTIN PRITCHARD Associated Press**

One store advertised hand sanitizer at \$60 a bottle. Another was accused of hawking it at \$1 a squirt. Chain stores offered \$26 thermometers and face masks at the "everyday low price" of \$39.95 a pair, while a convenience store touted toilet paper at \$10 a roll next to a sign reading: "This is not a joke."

Across a country where lines are long, some shelves are empty and patience is thin, authorities are receiving a surge of reports about merchants trying to cash in on the coronavirus crisis with outrageous prices, phony cures and other scams. An Associated Press survey of attorneys general or consumer protection agencies nationwide found reports already exceeded 5,000, with hundreds more arriving daily.

"Greed is a powerful motivator for some people," said Josh Stein, the attorney general of North Carolina, where the number of reports jumped from 72 to 131 one day earlier this week. "It is inexcusable to prey on people in a vulnerable time to make a quick buck."

AP's 50-state survey is the most comprehensive look so far at the emerging problem. In all, 41 states responded with numbers that included both tips and formally filed complaints against mom-and-pop stores and big-box retailers alike.

AP's count is certainly low also because it only includes cases in which someone went online or called to register a grievance. Many others went to the court of social media to vent their outrage.

"STOP SHOPPING HERE!!" one woman blared on Facebook next to cellphone photos of a Southern California grocery charging \$6.98 for a gallon of milk and \$14.99 for cheddar cheese. "There are families out there who really need groceries and they're overcharging."

Beyond AP's state count, individual cities are carrying out efforts to prevent exploitation. New York City alone has received more than 1,000 complaints, issued 550 violations and imposed \$275,000 in fines for price gouging — including one case in which a store was accused of selling bottles of Purell at \$79 each. Among the items the city is preventing stores from jacking up the prices on: aloe vera and rubbing alcohol, the ingredients that can be combined to make hand sanitizer.

Three states, including California, refused to share how many reports they've received, and several rural

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states said they had none. Those that did are still checking out many of the claims. While some have gone to court against sellers, others have determined cases didn't meet their legal standard for price gouging, which generally involves an increase of more than 10%.

Many states said they try to resolve reports not by pursuing fines or criminal charges but by confronting the retailer, which typically apologizes and lowers the price.

In Maine, investigators had photographic evidence from a shopper showing the \$10 rolls of toilet paper. In Tennessee, where state lawyers forced two brothers to stop selling the more than 17,000 bottles of hand sanitizer they had hoarded, investigators checked out a tip that a store was charging \$1 for each squirt.

There were reports of overpriced rice in Wisconsin and potatoes in Idaho. In Connecticut, a seller reportedly inflated the cost of medical masks 10 times over the normal value. One couple in Ohio reported that a thermometer they bought for \$8 at a national chain store cost \$26 two days later.

"This is so wrong at a time of crisis," the wife wrote in her report about the thermometer. "Contact them and tell them they can't do this."

Pennsylvania, which with more than 1,200 reports earlier this week had the most in the nation, created an email address dedicated to complaints. Oregon launched a price-gouging hotline this week. Oklahoma's attorney general is shifting agents to its consumer protection unit.

A small slice of reports involved not high prices but false claims that products or services can detect or even cure the virus, which in most people causes only mild or moderate symptoms but can be deadly for some. The U.S. Food and Drug Administration has approved no treatments or vaccines, and the National Institutes of Health says no scientific evidence exists to suggest alternative remedies help.

That hasn't stopped the likes of televangelist Jim Bakker pushing treatments with tiny silver particles and conspiracy theorist and Infowars host Alex Jones advertising toothpastes, creams and other products on his radio show. Both were targets last week of cease-and-desist letters from New York's attorney general, and the federal government has sent seven warning letters over false claims.

In Michigan, Attorney General Dana Nessel's office issued cease-and-desist letters instructing businesses and online sellers to correct their pricing or risk further action.

One went to an Ann Arbor cleaning store that used its Twitter account to advertise Purell at prices that soared from \$7.50 for one large bottle to \$60 in mere days. After customer backlash, A.M. Cleaning and Supplies called the tweeted advertisement a "false post," lowered the prices and changed sales signs in the store.

The owner, Anthony Marshall, said the higher prices were intended to be for eight bottles — not one bottle, as his advertisement's text indicated. "We never sold them at that price," he said.

Another warning letter went to the home improvement chain Menards. Some of its stores were accused of doubling the price of a gallon of Clorox bleach to \$8.99 and offering two types of 3M respirator masks for an "everyday low price" of \$39.95 a pair — more than four times what Home Depot advertised.

"I'm very disappointed with Menards' choice of actions during this uneasy time," one man who believed he was overcharged for bleach wrote in an affidavit.

Menards spokesman Jeff Abbott said in a statement that the Wisconsin-based chain considered the Clorox price reasonable because, while like other bleach it was sold in a gallon jug, it was more concentrated and would last customers twice as long. The statement didn't address the respirator masks.

"We are disappointed and are taking this very seriously," Abbott said.

Authorities in states including Florida were forwarding to the nation's online retail giants — including Amazon, Walmart and eBay — reports that third-party sellers on their sites were overcharging.

In a statement, Walmart spokesman Kevin Gardner said the company is "taking a firm stance" against possible price gouging on its Marketplace site. Walmart's policy calls for removing listings that are unfairly priced.

A bipartisan group of House lawmakers this week urged the Justice Department to police price gouging so that people "have access to the items they need to protect themselves, their families, and their communities."

In an AP interview this week, Attorney General William Barr pledged that the Justice Department would

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"come down hard" on profiteers so they are not "taking advantage to further hurt the American people."

On Thursday, the Justice Department announced it is activating a central fraud hotline (1-866-720-5721 or [disaster@leo.gov](mailto:disaster@leo.gov)) and has ordered U.S. attorneys across the nation to appoint special coronavirus fraud coordinators.

Consumers who want to report cases directly to their state's authorities can go to <https://www.consumerresources.org/>, a website run by the National Association of Attorneys General.

Dunklin reported from Dallas and Pritchard from Los Angeles. Michael Balsamo contributed reporting from Washington.

Contact AP's global investigative team at [Investigative@ap.org](mailto:Investigative@ap.org), and the reporters on Twitter at <https://twitter.com/lalanewsman> or <https://twitter.com/ReeseDunklin>.

## Trump focuses attention on possible coronavirus treatments

By **MARILYNN MARCHIONE AP Chief Medical Writer**

President Donald Trump focused attention on possible treatments for the new coronavirus on Thursday, citing potential use of a drug long used to treat malaria and some other approaches still in testing.

At a White House news conference, Trump and Food and Drug Administration Commissioner Dr. Stephen Hahn cited the malaria drug chloroquine, along with remdesivir, an experimental antiviral from Gilead Sciences, and possibly using plasma from survivors of COVID-19, the disease the new virus causes.

Those treatments are among several being tested that might ease symptoms but do not stop the virus from spreading.

Also on Thursday, Swiss drugmaker Roche said it was working with the U.S. government to start a study of Actemra, a drug used now for rheumatoid arthritis and some other conditions, against the coronavirus.

"We're looking at drugs that are already approved for other indications" as a potential bridge or stopgap, Hahn said, while also doing rigorous studies to see if the drugs truly make a difference versus usual care, and if they are safe when used for a new purpose.

"We want to make sure this is done well and right," he said.

No drug is specifically approved now for treating COVID-19.

Chloroquine and a similar drug — hydroxychloroquine, sold as Plaquenil by French drugmaker Sanofi and in generic form — are available now and can be used off-label in the United States. They may interfere with the coronavirus being able to enter cells, and some scientists have reported possible encouraging signs in test-tube and other small studies.

German drugmaker Bayer has said it would donate 3 million tablets of its chloroquine drug, Resochin, for use against coronavirus. That drug was never approved in the U.S., so Bayer is working with federal agencies to get an emergency-use authorization.

Chloroquine and remdesivir are among the drugs the World Health Organization said would be tried in a five-part international study announced Wednesday.

Already approved drugs are tempting for doctors to use off label, but formal studies are needed to see if they truly work for a new purpose or disease, said Dr. Ross McKinney Jr., chief scientific officer for the Association of American Medical Colleges, which represents about 400 major teaching hospitals across the country.

Chloroquine may look promising in a test tube, but "I'm skeptical it will be effective" in patients, he said Thursday in a call with reporters.

Remdesivir interferes with virus reproduction and has shown some promise in lab and animal studies against other coronaviruses that cause similar diseases, MERS and SARS.

It's being tested in at least five separate experiments, and Gilead also has given it to several hundred severely ill patients in the U.S, Europe and Japan under "compassionate use" provisions. That includes three of the first dozen COVID-19 patients in the United States. They recovered, but it's impossible to

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know whether they would have anyway without the drug.

On a podcast Wednesday with a medical journal editor, the National Institutes of Health's Dr. Anthony Fauci said China had enrolled several hundred people in its two remdesivir studies but is having trouble recruiting more because many patients just want the drug and are unwilling to take a chance on being randomly assigned to a comparison group that just gets usual care.

It would be great if an independent monitoring board could look at results so far and see if there are signs of safety or effectiveness, Fauci said.

"We desperately need the data" on this and other drugs being tested in rigorous scientific studies, Fauci said. "We've got to be able to determine if they work and if they're safe."

Apart from the studies in China, Fauci's agency is running a study of remdesivir that aims to recruit 400 patients in the U.S. and elsewhere. That study is "adaptive," meaning it will allow scientists to add other drugs under the same testing umbrella as time goes on. Gilead also has said it will do two studies testing remdesivir treatment for five or 10 days in about 1,000 hospitalized patients primarily in Asia.

Remdesivir "does look like it could be promising," said Dr. Daniel Kuritzkes, chief of infectious diseases at Brigham and Women's Hospital in Boston. In animal tests, it was "quite effective at preventing infection" and reducing severity of illness and damage to the lungs when given early enough in the course of illness, he said.

"It interferes with the enzyme that reproduces the genetic material of the virus" and acts at an earlier step than protease inhibitors such as lopinavir and ritonavir, which are used now to treat HIV and also are being tested against the new coronavirus, Kuritzkes explained.

The HIV drugs gave disappointing results, failing to shorten illness in a study of 199 severely ill hospitalized patients in China, scientists from that country reported Wednesday in the *New England Journal of Medicine*.

Some other studies testing the HIV drug combo are still underway.

The Roche drug, Actemra, is used now for rheumatoid arthritis and some other conditions. It targets interleukin-6, which plays a role in inflammation. Roche's U.S. subsidiary, Genentech, said Thursday that it was working with the FDA to start a 330-patient study on hospitalized COVID-19 patients in April.

Regeneron Pharmaceuticals says it will launch a study of Kevzara, its rheumatoid arthritis drug that also targets interleukin-6, against the coronavirus.

A Japanese company, Fujifilm Toyama Chemical, says tests suggest its drug favipiravir, used to treat the flu in Japan, shows promise against the coronavirus, though no large studies of that have been published yet.

Other companies are developing monoclonal antibodies, proteins that specifically fight the coronavirus. Antibodies or combinations of them were tried against Ebola, and doctors think a similar approach may help against the new virus.

Finally, some doctors have urged collecting plasma from people who have survived COVID-19, because they should have made natural antibodies to the virus that could be given to people to help their immune systems fight it off.

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Associated Press writers Maria Cheng in London, Linda A. Johnson in Trenton, New Jersey, and Mike Stobbe in New York contributed to this report.

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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.

## 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

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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 underscore 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.

"We wish them a speedy recovery," the mayor wrote on Twitter. "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.

Among the powerful people who have gotten tests in recent weeks were South Carolina Sen. Lindsey Graham and Florida Rep. Matt Gaetz. Both Republican lawmakers were exposed to someone who tested positive, but their tests came back negative.

Rep. Ben McAdams of Utah, a Democrat, announced Wednesday that he tested positive after experiencing symptoms including a 103-degree fever. Utah health officials said neither McAdams nor anyone else has gotten special treatment and they are following public health guidelines.

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 due to lengthy backlogs at government-run labs.

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

LabCorp, a major lab testing company, began providing COVID-19 test on March 5. Quest Diagnostics, another major national provider, followed suit on March 9.



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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.

Elba later explained that he was on location, about to start a film, and got tested after a person he was in contact with had tested positive. He said he would have put a lot of people at risk if he had continued working.

“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.”

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.

Elba told The Associated Press in an email sent through his representative Thursday that he took the test in the United States and was tested by a private doctor through his employer, whom he did not name.

“Everyone should be able to be tested. Period,” he wrote to the AP.

Elba said people not knowing if they are infected is a problem because they spread the virus further. He encouraged people to stay home until more tests become available.

Ali Fedotowsky-Manno, former star of ABC's “The Bachelorette,” found herself on the defensive after announcing in a post on Instagram on 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."

This story has been corrected to say that LabCorp first provided tests on March 5.

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

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

## Coronavirus gathering bans raise religious freedom questions

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.

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

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## **Vital but vulnerable, cleaners hold the line against a virus**

**By MAE ANDERSON, ALEXANDRA OLSON and KELVIN CHAN AP Business Writers**

NEW YORK (AP) — When hospitals need to prep a room for the next coronavirus test, when jetliners discharge their passengers at the gate, when suburbanites start to take sanitary precautions more seriously, the call goes out:

Send in the cleaners.

These largely unsung workers are often the first line of defense against the global COVID-19 pandemic, cleaning and disinfecting homes, offices, medical facilities and public spaces where the novel coronavirus could spread. But the people doing all this cleaning earn low wages, frequently lack sick leave and paid days off, and can be fired with no warning.

Amid all that is the constant fear that they could encounter the virus themselves, despite what many say are diligent precautions.

Shasmin Lewis, who spends her mornings doing office work for MaidPro in Philadelphia and her afternoons cleaning homes, says her hours have jumped almost 80% to 40 hours a week. She brings her own

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mask to work even though MaidPro provides both masks and gloves, washes her hands frequently and wears gloves even when dusting.

"I'm very worried, but I plan on staying around until we can't," she said. Not only do her elderly customers need her help, she says, but like countless workers, she has enough savings to support her and two kids for about a month — even though she's moving into management.

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 who contract the virus recover.

Overall demand for cleaning has been heavy. Airlines, including Delta and Southwest, added disinfecting measures on flights. Amtrak increased the frequency of cleaning services at trains and stations, in some cases on an hourly basis, and is using more disinfectant to wipe down handrails, door knobs and handles.

During the first two weeks of March, ads for cleaners were up 75% in the U.S. and 20% in the U.K. compared to a year ago, according to Ziprecruiter, an online job posting site.

But that's starting to change as cities across the U.S. and Europe enter lockdown and schools, hotels, restaurants and other businesses shut down.

Last week, Zoraida Rodriguez was working overtime to keep the Bernard B. Jacobs theater clean for well-heeled Broadway enthusiasts. She and other custodial workers were called in early and stayed late to help with deep cleaning, disinfecting door knobs, stair rails and anything else theatergoers might touch.

This week, Rodriguez is out of a job. Broadway theaters abruptly closed until at least April 12 and possibly beyond. At least 204 theaters and stadium service workers lost their jobs, according to the Service Employees International Union that represents them. There is no clear answer about whether they would get severance pay or any type of relief. Rodriguez was told to pick up her last paycheck this week.

Rodriguez, 53, has worked cleaning Broadway theaters for nearly 16 years, making \$20 an hour. She had health insurance, paid sick leave and vacation. Those benefits are gone, although SEIU is negotiating for some relief. For the moment, she says she'll rely on unemployment benefits and her daughter's salary from a New Jersey beauty salon -- although salon hours are also falling as customer traffic plummets.

"We really live paycheck to paycheck, and it is difficult for us to last a month without working," Rodriguez says.

According to a study by the National Domestic Workers Alliance, 82 % of domestic workers don't get paid sick days. Many are afraid if they do stay out sick they'll get fired: about 25% of domestic workers fired from their jobs say it was due to their request to take time off, 22% were fired for actually taking time off, and 20% were discharged for missing work to take care of themselves or a family members.

The mean annual wage for maids and housekeepers was \$25,570 in 2018, according to the most recent data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics. For janitors and building cleaners it is \$26,100 per year. That's close to the poverty line for a family of four.

Technology is also encroaching on their jobs. Hong Kong's subway operator is deploying 20 robots developed with a local biotech startup that spray vapourized hydrogen peroxide to "penetrate in the small gaps that are difficult to reach during normal cleaning work" on train cars or station facilities. The Westin Houston Medical Center is rolling out two ultraviolet "germ-zapping robots" to disinfect rooms, saying it's the first and only U.S. hotel to do so.

Ingrid Vaca, who works cleaning homes in the Washington, D.C. area, has lost four of her eight clients over the past two weeks as the coronavirus crisis deepened. One by one, they have called to tell her not to come, trying to keep their homes closed off to the outside world. Only one offered to pay her for the month of March.

This crisis has magnified the dangers of Vaca's precarious work life, which has long been at the mercy of employers who can fire her at any moment, for any reason, with no obligation to give her notice or severance pay.

One client, an elderly man whose house she has cleaned for 15 years, abruptly laid her off on Friday after his family decided he could no longer afford her services. No one asked how she was faring in the

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midst of the pandemic that had cost her three other jobs the same week.

"They throw us out like a dirty towel when they don't need us anymore," said Vaca, 57, sobbing as she recalled her years of service to the client, whose son lives in another state. "We are people too with families with needs."

Demand still remains strong in one area of the economy: healthcare.

Alex Lawrence, co-owner of a British cleaning company, said requests have soared since the outbreak began. His company, Lawrence Cleaning, has contracts with 21 clinics in central England, which under new U.K. regulations will need daily cleaning of certain "red zones."

Lawrence, who works alongside his staff on medical cleaning jobs, said they clean anything that gets touched -- doors, desks, handrails, armrests. They wear full "personal protection equipment" -- respirators, suits, gloves and foot covers.

"It can look quite daunting if people are in full suits and masks and (patients) think they could be in danger," said Lawrence. "But it does look less daunting if we're around when people aren't in."

This story has been corrected to use the correct spelling of Ingrid Vaca's name.

Chan reported from London.

## Finding joy indoors in troubled times, one leaf at a time

By MOLLY SPRAYREGEN Associated Press

CHICAGO (AP) — I have spent my first full week of isolation carefully observing one of my houseplants. Dylan, as my fiancée and I so fondly call her, has been growing new leaves at an uncharacteristically rapid rate.

It might be the longer hours of daylight. But I imagine Dylan's new zest for life also comes from the increased attention we've paid to her and the rest of our houseplants now that we're with them in our apartment 24/7. At a time when so little feels under control, one thing we know is up to us is the survival of these living things we have committed to taking care of.

We check on them more. We give them more water. Sometimes, we just stare at them, taking in the beauty and comfort they provide.

When we first decided to take the leap into plant ownership, before the outbreak of the coronavirus, I simply wanted to brighten our apartment. I'd been sprucing up the place with flowers, but had grown tired of spending money on something that would die within days or weeks.

I had no idea how much joy the plants would bring me, or how much fun I would have learning to care for them.

Now, every morning at a time when I might usually be kissing my fiancée goodbye as she heads off to school, I amble over to where Dylan sits on the windowsill and smile at her buds, which seem to have doubled in size each day. These new ones are a bright, bold green.

My plants help satisfy a dog-size hole in my heart. Of course, they don't return love the way a dog would, and I promise I am fully aware they are not sentient beings. But they do make the apartment feel brighter, warmer and cozier. They need me, and that feels good.

The first thing we did when we brought the plants home was name them. We did it to be silly, yes, but it also felt instinctual. We had spent an entire weekend carefully selecting them from two different stores, and we hoped to keep them in our lives for many years.

Naming something, of course, breeds connection. I began to greet them when I came home, and I started speaking to them like they were more pet than plant. I have purchased spray bottles and plant food and a watering can and newer, prettier pots because my plants, of course, deserve the best.

Plant parenting, it turns out, is no easy task. Though they are indeed difficult to kill, it takes effort to keep them looking bright, shiny and healthy. I am still learning to care for them, but especially now, I love the work of doing so. It brings comfort, consistency.

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Early in our plant parenthood, we left town for the weekend. When we got home, we encountered disaster. Dylan was a mess. Almost all her shiny red-green leaves were browned, crumpled and scattered across the floor. A few still hung limply from her now-muted green stem. The rest of our houseplants were fine, but I was convinced she was a goner. Still, I grabbed the watering can and sprang into action. I gave her as much water as I could without drowning her. I placed my phone beside her and blasted music just in case that could help. I prayed she liked Taylor Swift.

The next morning, Dylan looked better. Her stem stood straighter and her remaining leaves had unfolded. Within days, little buds grew where the leaves had been lost. I couldn't believe it. She was going to make it.

Dylan has never looked quite the same since that weekend. Her frame has always looked a little barer. But now, it seems, just when we need her the most, she is ready to grow again.

What I wouldn't give at a time like this to have a dog, to wake up to a furry, goofy, joyous face, to someone who doesn't understand at all what's happening and whose world has only grown fuller because humans are spending more time in it. But for now, caring for our plants will simply have to do.

We are clinging to the little things that bring us joy. Sometimes, it's the jokes on "Grace and Frankie." Other times, it's a video happy hour with friends. Right now, it's the sprouting of new leaves.

## Gabbard ends long-shot 2020 bid, throws support to Biden

By MEG KINNARD Associated Press

COLUMBIA, S.C. (AP) — Hawaii Rep. Tulsi Gabbard suspended her presidential campaign on Thursday, ending a long-shot effort that saw her feuding with Hillary Clinton and raising fears among Democrats that she would mount a third-party 2020 bid.

In an email and a video posted to Twitter, Gabbard offered her full support to former Vice President Joe Biden, saying "it's clear that Democratic primary voters have chosen" him to take on President Donald Trump in November.

Noting their political differences, Gabbard said she respected Biden and had confidence in the motivations of his campaign effort.

"Although I may not agree with the vice president on every issue, I know that he has a good heart, and he's motivated by his love for our country and the American people," Gabbard said. "I'm confident that he will lead our country, guided by the spirit of aloha respect and compassion, and thus help heal the divisiveness that has been tearing our country apart."

As the coronavirus outbreak continues, Gabbard, a military veteran and a major in the Army National Guard, said she would focus on her continued service, including military experience, should it be needed.

"I feel that the best way I can be of service at this time is to continue to work for the health and well-being of the people of Hawaii and our country in Congress, and to stand ready to serve in uniform should the Hawaii National Guard be activated," said Gabbard, who served two tours of duty in the Middle East.

During her candidacy, Gabbard appeared often on Fox News Channel and angered fellow Democrats by voting "present" on the articles of impeachment against Trump.

Gabbard attracted a sizable following in New Hampshire, where she frequently campaigned ahead of the state's February primary. Some past supporters of Vermont Sen. Bernie Sanders in the state warmed to her campaign over time, and she espoused a similar outsider approach to Sanders' 2016 run, which she supported.

She was also part of what once was a historically diverse Democratic field and the last of a half-dozen female candidates to depart the race. The 38-year-old American Samoan's campaign website described her as "the first Hindu to run for president and first practicing Hindu in Congress." And as one of the youngest candidates in the field, Gabbard outlasted senators and governors who came into the large Democratic primary race with higher profiles.

Although she failed to qualify for any stage past the fifth debate, in November, Gabbard was awarded two delegates once voting began, according to The Associated Press' count, both in the March 2 contest

in her native American Samoa.

Yet Gabbard's 2020 campaign was also quick to attract questions from voters. The Hawaii congresswoman has faced backlash for her 2017 meeting in Syria with Syrian President Bashar Assad, whose government has been accused of chemical weapons attacks against its own citizens.

And with a primary challenge looming, she announced in October she would not run for reelection to her Hawaii congressional seat. Gabbard's decision became public shortly after a public feud with Clinton, the 2016 Democratic presidential nominee. In a podcast interview, Clinton appeared to call her "the favorite of the Russians" and said she believed Republicans have "got their eye on somebody who's currently in the Democratic primary and are grooming her to be the third-party candidate."

Gabbard responded by calling Clinton the "personification of the rot that has sickened the Democratic Party for so long." In January, she filed a defamation lawsuit against Clinton, saying Clinton's comments were based on either her own imagination or "extremely dubious conspiracy theories" that any reasonable person would know to be "inherently and objectively unreliable."

Asked to comment on the lawsuit, Clinton spokesman Nick Merrill said, "That's ridiculous."

As most of her Democratic House colleagues voted to impeach Trump in December, Gabbard chose to vote present on the two articles of impeachment. Former Hawaii Gov. Neil Abercrombie called for Gabbard to resign over the vote and said she wasn't doing her job representing Hawaii.

"Look, I did not take the easy vote," Gabbard said after returning to the campaign trail. "I took the vote that I felt was in the best interest of our country and standing in the center to be able to bring the country together, to be able to begin this reconciliation that I think is so necessary in this terribly divided moment in our country."

Questions over whether Gabbard would mount a third-party run in November's general election continued following her feud with Clinton. Even as she was questioned for her present vote on the impeachment articles, Gabbard maintained that a third-party campaign was not something she was considering.

"Absolutely not," Gabbard said in December 2019. "It's not going to change. My decision won't change, no matter how many times people say it, no matter how many times I get asked the question, it's not changing. I'm running to be the Democratic nominee."

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Meg Kinnard can be reached at <https://twitter.com/MegKinnardAP>.

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

## 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.

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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, 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



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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.

Associated Press writers Mike Catalini in Trenton, New Jersey; David Eggert in Lansing, Michigan; John Hanna in Topeka, Kansas; Meghan Hoyer in Washington, D.C.; Steve Karnowski in St. Paul, Minnesota; Kimberlee Kruesi in Nashville, Tennessee; Marc Levy in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania; Philip Marcelo in Boston; Gary D. Robertson in Raleigh, North Carolina; and Andrew Welsh-Huggins in Columbus, Ohio, contributed to this report.

## Monaco's head of state Prince Albert II contracts new virus

PARIS (AP) — The palace of Monaco says its ruler, Prince Albert II, has tested positive for the new coronavirus but his health is not worrying.

Albert, 62, appeared to be the first head of state who has publicly said he contracted the virus.

In a statement Thursday, the palace said he is being treated by doctors from the Princess Grace Hospital, named after his U.S. actress mother. It says Albert is continuing to work from his home office in the palace and is in constant contact with members of his government.

In the statement, Albert urged residents of his tiny Mediterranean principality to respect confinement measures.

Albert is the second child of Princess Grace — formerly Grace Kelly — and Prince Rainier of Monaco. Albert became a five-time Olympic bobsledder and in recent years has been a global environmental campaigner.

Fluent in English and French, Albert graduated from Amherst College in Massachusetts with a degree in political science in 1981, and is a member of the International Olympic Committee.

He and his wife, the former Charlene Wittstock, have twin children.

## AP-NORC poll: Fear of virus infection spikes among Americans

By SARA BURNETT and EMILY SWANSON Associated Press

CHICAGO (AP) — Concern among Americans that they or a loved one will be infected by the coronavirus rose dramatically in the past month, with two-thirds of the country now saying they're at least somewhat concerned about contracting the COVID-19 illness.

That's up from less than half who said so in February. Still, a new poll from The Associated Press-NORC

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Center for Public Affairs Research finds that about 3 in 10 Americans say they're not worried at all about the coronavirus.

And while the survey found that most say they're taking at least some actions to prevent the disease from spreading, experts say it also shows the country is not doing all of what's needed to reduce infections, such as canceling travel.

"Some set of people is still going about their daily lives, and that needs to change pretty rapidly," said Caroline Pearson, a senior vice president at NORC at the University of Chicago and a health policy expert. "Now they need to do the hard things, not just the easy things that don't disrupt their life."

The poll found that younger adults have greater concerns about the coronavirus than older Americans, with 43% of adults under 30 being very worried, compared with 21% of those age 60 and over. Pearson said that may be because younger people are more likely to feel uncertain about jobs or health insurance or to worry about older family members like parents or grandparents.

That disparity by age does not match the threat posed by the virus. Deaths to date in the U.S. mirror the experience in other countries, with about 4 out of 5 fatalities occurring in people 65 and older, and no deaths in children, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

While the poll found that about 3 in 10 Americans say they're highly worried about the illness, about the same number are unconcerned — with 7% saying they were not taking any of the prevention measures asked about in the poll, including more frequent hand washing or staying away from large groups.

That's a red flag for Libby Richards, a Purdue University nursing professor who teaches courses on population health.

"We do need that 33% to change if we're going to keep this under control as much as possible," Richards said, adding that "maybe that 7% of people are already excellent hand washers, but I doubt it."

The survey found that about 9 in 10 Americans say they're washing their hands more frequently, roughly 7 in 10 are avoiding large groups and about 6 in 10 are avoiding touching their faces. Older Americans are especially likely to say they're avoiding large groups, with 77% saying they've done that in response to the coronavirus.

Public health officials have urged people to do their part to slow the spread of the virus before hospitals and other health facilities are overwhelmed. Schools and sporting events have been canceled, and restaurants and Las Vegas casinos closed. President Donald Trump's administration said Monday that people should avoid social gatherings with groups of more than 10 people.

But of those who had travel plans in the next few months, a minority — 22% of those who had domestic travel plans and 41% of those with international travel plans — say they've canceled them. About another 3 in 10 of each group say they've considered canceling, while the rest are still planning to travel.

On Saturday, Trump expanded European travel restrictions due to the global pandemic, telling Americans, "If you don't have to travel, I wouldn't do it." The CDC has advised that travelers are more likely to get infected if they go to a destination where the virus is spreading and in crowded settings such as airports.

The poll was conducted March 12-16, when information about the virus was changing rapidly, as was the Trump administration's reaction to it. Trump declared the pandemic a national emergency on March 13, making up to \$50 billion available for local and state governments to respond to the crisis, and announced a range of executive actions aimed at expanding testing for the virus. The administration also started work on a \$1 trillion aid and stimulus plan.

Richards said she's hopeful the numbers of Americans worried about the coronavirus would be higher in a poll conducted entirely after Trump declared the national emergency. Still, she said she's been troubled by people who don't seem to be taking the warnings seriously, including those she's seen in images of crowded Florida beaches.

For most people, COVID-19 causes only mild or moderate symptoms, such as fever and cough. It can cause more severe illness, including pneumonia, for some people, especially older adults and those with existing health problems. Most people recover — those with mild illness in about two weeks, while those with more severe illness may take three to six weeks, according to the World Health Organization.

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Swanson reported from Washington.

The AP-NORC poll of 1,003 adults was conducted March 12-16 using a sample drawn from NORC's probability-based AmeriSpeak Panel, which is designed to be representative of the U.S. population. The margin of sampling error for all respondents is plus or minus 4.3 percentage points.

Online:

AP-NORC Center: <http://www.apnorc.org/>.

## Today in History By The Associated Press

Today in History

Today is Friday, March 20, the 80th day of 2020. There are 286 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On March 20, 1854, the Republican Party of the United States was founded by slavery opponents at a schoolhouse in Ripon (RIH'-puhn), Wisconsin.

On this date:

In 1413, England's King Henry IV died; he was succeeded by Henry V.

In 1760, a 10-hour fire erupted in Boston, destroying 349 buildings and burning 10 ships, but claiming no lives.

In 1815, Napoleon Bonaparte returned to Paris after escaping his exile on Elba, beginning his "Hundred Days" rule.

In 1899, Martha M. Place of Brooklyn, New York, became the first woman to be executed in the electric chair as she was put to death at Sing Sing for the murder of her stepdaughter.

In 1933, the state of Florida electrocuted Giuseppe Zangara for shooting to death Chicago Mayor Anton J. Cermak at a Miami event attended by President-elect Franklin D. Roosevelt, the presumed target, the previous February.

In 1942, U.S. Army Gen. Douglas MacArthur, having evacuated the Philippines at the order of President Franklin D. Roosevelt, told reporters in Terowie, Australia: "I came out of Bataan, and I shall return."

In 1952, the U.S. Senate ratified, 66-10, a Security Treaty with Japan.

In 1976, kidnapped newspaper heiress Patricia Hearst was convicted of armed robbery for her part in a San Francisco bank holdup carried out by the Symbionese Liberation Army. (Hearst was sentenced to seven years in prison; she was released after serving 22 months, and was pardoned in 2001 by President Bill Clinton.)

In 1977, voters in Paris chose former French Prime Minister Jacques Chirac to be the French capital's first mayor in more than a century.

In 1995, in Tokyo, 12 people were killed, more than 5,500 others sickened when packages containing the deadly chemical sarin were leaked on five separate subway trains by Aum Shinrikyo (ohm shin-ree-kyoh) cult members.

In 1996, a jury in Los Angeles convicted Erik and Lyle Menendez of first-degree murder in the shotgun slayings of their wealthy parents. (They were sentenced to life in prison without the possibility of parole.)

In 2004, hundreds of thousands of people worldwide rallied against the U.S.-led war in Iraq on the first anniversary of the start of the conflict. The U.S. military charged six soldiers with abusing inmates at the Abu Ghraib prison.

Ten years ago: Pope Benedict XVI sent an unprecedented letter to Ireland apologizing for chronic child abuse within the Roman Catholic Church, but failed to calm anger of many victims. Thousands of protesters — many directing their anger squarely at President Barack Obama — marched through the nation's capital to urge immediate withdrawal of troops from Iraq and Afghanistan. Former Secretary of the In-

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terior Stewart Udall died in Santa Fe, New Mexico, at 90. Lady Bird Johnson's former press secretary, Liz Carpenter, died in Austin, Texas, at 89.

Five years ago: A jury in Gadsden, Alabama, convicted 49-year-old Joyce Hardin Garrard of capital murder for running to death her 9-year-old granddaughter, Savannah Hardin. (Garrard was sentenced to life in prison without parole; she died in February 2016.) Suicide bombers attacked a pair of mosques in the capital of Yemen, unleashing blasts that killed 137 people. Former Australian Prime Minister Malcolm Fraser, 84, died in Canberra. Actor Gregory Walcott ("Plan 9 from Outer Space") died in Los Angeles at age 87.

One year ago: Mike Trout and the Los Angeles Angels announced agreement on a \$426.5 million, 12-year contract, a record deal that would tie baseball's top player to the Angels for what would likely be the rest of his career. As Republican lawmakers denounced his comments, President Donald Trump aimed new invective at the late Sen. John McCain, claiming credit for McCain's moving Washington funeral and complaining that he was never properly thanked. A U.N. court upheld the genocide and war crimes convictions of ex-Bosnian Serb President Radovan Karadzic and sentenced him to life behind bars.

Today's Birthdays: Singer Dame Vera Lynn is 103. Producer-director-comedian Carl Reiner is 98. Actor Hal Linden is 89. Former Canadian prime minister Brian Mulroney (muhl-ROO'-nee) is 81. Country singer Don Edwards is 81. Basketball Hall of Fame coach Pat Riley is 75. Country singer-musician Ranger Doug (Riders in the Sky) is 74. Hockey Hall of Famer Bobby Orr is 72. Blues singer-musician Marcia Ball is 71. Actor William Hurt is 70. Rock musician Carl Palmer (Emerson, Lake and Palmer) is 70. Rock musician Jimmie Vaughan is 69. Country musician Jim Seales (formerly w/Shenandoah) is 66. Actress Amy Aquino (ah-KEE'-noh) is 63. Movie director Spike Lee is 63. Actress Theresa Russell is 63. Actress Vanessa Bell Calloway is 63. Actress Holly Hunter is 62. Rock musician Slim Jim Phantom (The Stray Cats) is 59. Actress-model-designer Kathy Ireland is 57. Actor David Thewlis is 57. Rock musician Adrian Oxaal (James) is 55. Actress Jessica Lundy is 54. Actress Liza Snyder is 52. Actor Michael Rapaport is 50. Actor Alexander Chaplin is 49. Actor Cedric Yarbrough is 47. Actress Paula Garces is 46. Actor Michael Genadry is 42. Actress Bianca Lawson is 41. Comedian-actor Mikey Day is 40. Actor Nick Blood (TV: "Marvel's Agents of S.H.I.E.L.D.") is 38. Rock musician Nick Wheeler (The All-American Rejects) is 38. Actor Michael Cassidy is 37. Actress-singer Christy Carlson Romano is 36. Actress Ruby Rose is 34. Actress Barrett Doss is 31.

Thought for Today: "Common sense is genius dressed in its working clothes." — Ralph Waldo Emerson, American writer and poet (1803-1882).