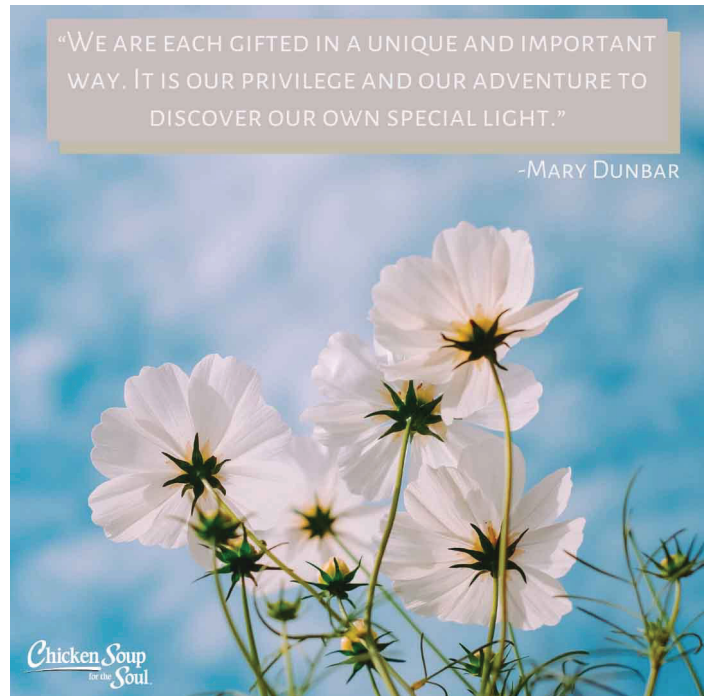


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COVID-19 CASES

	Mar. 20	Mar. 21	Mar. 22	Mar. 23
Minnesota	115	137	169	235
Nebraska	27	42	50	52
Montana	15	27	34	45
Colorado	277	475	591	720
Wyoming	18	24	26	28
North Dakota	26	28	30	32
South Dakota	14	14	21	28
United States		15,219	33,276	43,963
US Deaths		201	417	560

The Groton Fireman Fun Night scheduled for April 25th is canceled. If you have already purchased a ticket you will be refunded. Contact the person that sold you the ticket or call Patti Woods. Thank you for your support and stay safe and stay home and enjoy your families!

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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The lockers have been emptied and students and/or parents will be collecting them on Wednesday. The Groton Area High School Gym is the venue for the middle/high school pickup and the elementary commons for the elementary school. Parents have been contacted and appointment times confirmed. (Photo by Paul Kosel)

Motor vehicle title and registration renewals extended

PIERRE, S.D. – The South Dakota Department of Revenue’s Motor Vehicle Division is asking law enforcement to not enforce certain expirations until May 1, 2020.

The Motor Vehicle Division requests that law enforcement not ticket March 2020 registration renewals for noncommercial and commercial vehicles expiring on March 31, 2020. These individuals will be given an additional month to renew their registrations.

In addition to the March 2020 registration renewals, the Motor Vehicle Division requests temporary seller’s permits that expire March 16, 2020 through April 30, 2020, be granted an additional 30 days from the expiration date to get the title transfer documents and payment to the county treasurer and register the vehicle before any law enforcement action is taken. The Motor Vehicle Division will waive any interest and penalties that accrue due to this extension.

“The Motor Vehicle Division understands not everyone has access to our online renewal system or a DMV Now Kiosk to renew registrations. Additionally, we have taken into consideration that county treasurers are operating in a limited manner. By not enforcing the expiration of these registrations until May 1, 2020 and granting an additional 30 days to transfer titles, the Division hopes that we can assist South Dakotans, during this stressful time,” said Motor Vehicle Division Director, Rosa Yaeger.

Noem Postpones the 2020 South Dakota Week of Work

PIERRE, S.D. – Governor Kristi Noem today announced that the 2020 South Dakota Week of Work will be postponed until the fall.

“As our state, businesses, and schools address COVID-19, it is in our best interest to pause plans for the South Dakota Week of Work until a time when students and businesses can fully participate,” said Noem. “I want to thank the hundreds of businesses across the state who have made thousands of opportunities to learn about the world of work available to our young people.”

The South Dakota Week of Work will introduce students to career opportunities in their communities through job shadows, industry tours, and other business-classroom connections. The week will provide employers opportunities to engage with youth and develop connections with the state’s future workforce.

The inaugural South Dakota Week of Work was set for April 20-24, 2020. Dates have not yet been determined for the postponed event.

The South Dakota Week of Work is a partnership of the Department of Education, the Department of Labor and Regulation, the Governor’s Office of Economic Development, the South Dakota Chamber of Commerce and Industry, and the South Dakota Retailers Association.

Visit <http://sdweekofwork.com> to learn more.

Talking to your kids about COVID-19: Mental health professionals weigh in

SPEARFISH, S.D. – As American families approach another week of closed schools and social distancing recommendations, Black Hills State University psychology professor Emilia Flint, Ph.D., LP, and her colleague at Black Hills Psychology, Tara Ginter, LPC-MH, provide age-specific guidance for talking with your kids about COVID-19.

Preschool Children: Recognize that preschool children may be a bit more fussy right now. They are responding to you and their immediate environment. If you are anxious, they will perceive it. Take time to sing songs/dance/let them know you love them. Play with them - there is no better time than now to transform your living room into a jungle gym. It is okay to help them understand you might be feeling "sad" right now, but everything is going to be okay.

Early Elementary Children: Explain the virus to them in terms of feeling sick and being well (for example, we want everyone who may be sick to feel better, so we are staying at home right now to be sure we stay healthy and to let the doctors and nurses help those who are sick). If they are worried, validate their concerns (you look sad/worried...it is okay to feel that way), but reassure them that they will be okay. Early elementary children may be sad because they miss their friends/teacher. Help them with the adjustment process ("things are going to look different now..."). If allowed, reach out to their teacher/friend for some 'face' time. Get them adjusted to school at home but also be prepared to transition them back should that be the case later on. Additionally, role-playing is fun for this age. Have them dress up as a superhero avenging the world of all diseases...or a doctor who is helping those who are ill.

Late Elementary Children: Problem solving is great! "What can we do as a family to stay healthy?" "What about this is making you nervous," "What do you see on TV? How do you feel? Describe that feeling to me." Also, describe to them how you feel sad/angry/happy/cautious/gleeful (modelling is good). Help them to identify their feelings ("I'm sad because I don't get to see the teacher I love every day") and to be okay with the emotion they feel. If they are a chronic worrier, get them involved in educational play activities (there are several videos out there for free right now - for example, there is one on how to finger knit, another on how to build a geodesic dome out of cardboard, decorate it with lights, and use it as a reading 'cave').

Middle School Students: Educate them on the facts of COVID-19, rather than hearsay from their peers, and stay informed. Death can be scary. If a child focuses on death, help them to 'flip' the statistics on COVID-19 such as looking into how many people have the virus but are well. Search 'boredom busters' online and find creative ideas. Play chess to build critical thinking skills, complete a puzzle, or complete a crossword puzzle without using online resources.

High School Students: Encourage that critical thinker! Help them to research the aspects of the virus that "appeal" to them. Guide their research and discuss the implications of real versus fake news. A few ideas for the researcher:

-Chemistry enthusiast: What is different about the protein structure of COVID-19 that makes it different from other viruses? How (exactly) do antibiotics or anti-viral vaccinations work?

-Future politician: What impact would a shift to universal health care have on the fight against a pandemic? Should social programs be politicized? How long should someone be allowed to stay on federal assistance? Does your response change during a pandemic? Can politicians change their minds?

-Aspiring economist: Develop an economic stimulus plan to help the local Spearfish economy. Develop a savings plan for our family just in case we have to figure out a way to 'cut back' on expenses.

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As restaurants/bars/entertainment shut down, how much money does a business lose in a day? How might one bounce back from this loss?

Make yourself available to talk about COVID-19, but do not 'push'. It is likely this child is using friends as an outlet to discuss the virus - this is okay (but be sure they know to talk about the correct information).

All Ages: Model break times as appropriate. Recognize and validate feelings. Talking about it does ease the fears one may have, but try not to obsess over it either.

Parents/Caregivers, and all those in social isolation: Using technology to combat isolation is a good line of defense against depression. Use videotelephony and chat technology more than ever before. It is common when feeling in low mood because of social isolation to convince yourself you are bothering or burdensome to someone by calling them. Chances are, they want to hear from you. It is also okay to keep the call going even if nothing is being said. For example, call Grandma and let her 'watch' you make cookies with the grandchildren. Physical activity is another good line of defense against depression/low mood due to social isolation.

Parents/Caregivers, and all those continuing to work inside and outside the home: For healthcare workers, educators, those stocking shelves at the grocery store, etc., practice self-care and boundaries. If you tend to lean towards caring for others naturally (that is what drew you to your discipline in the first place), you may be 'hard wired' to want to help others, even after getting off a work shift. However, a burnt out helper is of no use. Recharge your 'batteries' by getting appropriate rest before venturing out to serve at a local food pantry, for example. Practice assertive communication to achieve better boundaries. Know that it's okay to say 'no' to some service so you can devote your time/effort/energy to your role while being your best possible self.

About the Psychology Program at Black Hills State University

The Psychology major at Black Hills State University has a strong tradition of preparing students who excel in graduate programs and in their careers. Students study human behavior and the psychological, social, and biological processes that relate to that behavior. With a degree in Psychology from BHSU, students are pursuing careers as psychologists, social workers, career counselors, personnel and labor relations specialists, market researchers, and data analysts. At BHSU, students will work with who are experienced as instructors in a variety of theoretical perspectives. Students are involved in cutting-edge research with faculty and participate in internships allowing them to work in the field with practicing psychologists. Read about recent BHSU psychology alum's first jobs in their field.

U.S. Department of Education approves South Dakota's statewide assessment waiver

PIERRE, S.D. – The U.S. Department of Education has informally approved the South Dakota Department of Education's waiver of statewide assessment requirements, accountability, and school identification requirements for the 2019-20 school year.

Through this waiver, South Dakota will not need to administer its statewide assessments to students, to make annual accountability determinations, to identify new schools for support and improvement, or to provide certain data on state and local report cards for the 2019-20 school year.

"With the extended school closures in South Dakota related to COVID-19 concerns, our schools are suddenly facing an unprecedented challenge to meet their students' needs in new, innovative ways," said Secretary of Education Dr. Ben Jones. "They are meeting this challenge with unwavering fortitude, and I'm glad we can at least take statewide assessment off their plates to help ease the burden."

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Atypical Gas Price Trends Drive 29 State Averages to Less than \$2/ Gallon

March 23, 2020 - With the national average at \$2.12, pump prices are, on average, 50-cents less than this time last year. Crude oil is the biggest driver of the less expensive gas prices. In the last week, crude oil prices dropped to \$22/bbl – a low not seen since 2002. Crude oil accounts for nearly 60% of the retail pump price. When crude is cheap, gas prices follow suit.

South Dakota Gas Prices

Today \$2.05 Yesterday \$2.28 Last week \$2.20 Last month \$2.38 Last year \$2.54

"Typically gas prices start to trend more expensive at the beginning of spring, especially as motorists get out to enjoy the warmer weather and travel for spring break. That is not the case this year," said Marilyn Buskohl, AAA spokesperson. "With Americans urged to stay at home and practice social distancing to slow the spread of coronavirus, we are seeing less traffic on the roadways which will ultimately drive down demand, increase gasoline supply and push pump prices less expensive for the foreseeable future."

Motorists do not need to rush to the pumps to fill-up. Currently, there is ample U.S. gasoline supply and no disruption to distribution at gas stations.

Across the country, state averages are less than \$3/gallon except in Hawaii (\$3.47) and California (\$3.21). Twenty-nine states have gas price averages at \$2.10 or less with Oklahoma (\$1.71) carrying the cheapest

Today's national average (\$2.12) is cheaper on the week (-13 cents), month (-35 cents) and year (-50 cents).

Quick Stats

The nation's top 10 largest weekly decreases are: Wisconsin (-24 cents), Oklahoma (-21 cents), North Dakota (-20 cents), Ohio (-19 cents), Michigan (-18 cents), Kentucky (-17 cents), Minnesota (-15 cents), Maine (-15 cents), South Dakota (-15 cents) and California (-14 cents).

The nation's top 10 least expensive markets are: Oklahoma (\$1.71), Ohio (\$1.78), Wisconsin (\$1.81), Kentucky (\$1.82), Indiana (\$1.83), Mississippi (\$1.84), Michigan (\$1.84), Texas (\$1.85), South Carolina (\$1.86) and Missouri (\$1.86).

Great Lakes and Central States

Every state in the Great Lakes and Central States saw gas prices decrease by double-digits on the week. Wisconsin (-24 cents) saw the largest decrease in the region and country. With the latest declines, gas prices range from as cheap as \$1.78 in Ohio to as expensive as \$2.16 in Illinois. In fact the region is home to some of the cheapest averages in the country. These Great Lakes and Central states land on the top 10 list of cheapest state averages in the country: Ohio (\$1.78), Wisconsin (\$1.81), Kentucky (\$1.82), Indiana (\$1.83), Michigan (\$1.84) and Missouri (\$1.86).

The Energy Information Administration (EIA) reports gasoline stocks drew by 1.2 million bbl, dropping the region's total stock level down to 57 million bbl. Regional refinery utilization slowed, decreasing by 2% to 85%, but ranks as the third highest regional utilization rate in the country for the week ending March 13. Despite two weeks of declining stocks, gas prices are expected to push cheaper in the week ahead due to anticipated dip in demand and falling crude oil prices.

Oil Market Dynamics

At the close of Friday's formal trading session on the NYMEX, WTI decreased by \$2.79 to settle at \$22.43. COVID-19 and the crude price war between Russia and Saudi Arabia continue to push crude prices down. Moving into this week, crude prices will continue decreasing as the world grapples with how to contain the ongoing global public health crisis and associated economic challenges that could lead to a global recession. Until Saudi Arabia and Russia end their price standoff and the spread of COVID-19 ceases, domestic crude prices are likely to remain low.

Motorists can find current gas prices along their route with the free AAA Mobile app for iPhone, iPad and Android. The app can also be used to map a route, find discounts, book a hotel and access AAA roadside assistance. Learn more at AAA.com/mobile.

Avera Laboratory Validated for COVID-19 Testing



Avera's laboratory in Sioux Falls has been verified by the South Dakota Department of Health to perform COVID-19 testing.

The Avera Institute for Human Genetics has worked closely with the governor's office as well as the state health department to establish guidelines on how pending tests are processed. This additional testing site will allow processing of up to 200 tests per day. Avera will have the ability to enter these results directly into the patient's AveraChart electronic medical record.

The most critical and highly suspicious tests will receive priority. Result time will depend on volume, however, most test results will be able to be returned in a few days and inpatient tests that are considered urgent based on the patient's condition can be returned more quickly.

To date, this testing has been conducted by the state health department's laboratory and Avera's contract laboratory.

"We are incredibly proud of the teamwork that was involved in making this happen so quickly. This will benefit our patients, health care workers and the general public. The health and safety of our patients and communities are the utmost important to Avera. We hope the addition of more testing sites will expedite results and calm worries," said Bruce Prouse, MD, Clinical Vice President of the Avera Laboratory Service Line.



"Testing of COVID-19 samples is a complex process. Thanks to Avera's background with genetic testing, we have the expertise and equipment to accomplish this," Prouse said. "Getting this validation completed so quickly took amazing teamwork by our laboratory staff as well as state health officials. All are working together in the best interest of patients and the greater population."



All test results will be sent to the state for reporting purposes. Patients with positive test results will be contacted with instructions on how to care for themselves at home, symptom management, and when to contact health care provider if symptoms worsen.

Learn more at Avera.org/COVID-19

Education must move forward

Groton Area School will resume on Wednesday, but it will not be traditional instruction. It will be a flexible learning plan. As of now, traditional instruction is determined on a week-by-week basis.

A game changer could be coming today as Governor Kristi Noem will issue her executive order for K-12 Education. That announcement is expected to come today during her news conference at 11:30 a.m.

Meanwhile, the Groton Area staff has been busy emptying locker and organizing assignments for Wednesday's pickup and delivery.

The meals that have been provided up until today have been made possible through donations. The USDA has lifted regulations on school meals so starting tomorrow, all Groton Area students can qualify for free meals with the state reimbursing the district. Meals will be delivered to rural students and ready for pickup by town students on Mondays and Wednesdays. Assignments will be issued and picked up on Mondays. Superintendent Schwan said he has no problem sending out the paper assignments from the district as the school has been vacant. He said he is not sure about bringing all of the assignments back into the school building. "Things can change significantly on Wednesday, even before we implement the Monday drop-off and pickups," said Superintendent Joe Schwan.

The in-town students/parents can pick up the personal belongings and books on Wednesday morning and then the buses will be loaded at 9:45 a.m. The auxiliary staff will be loading the buses and will also ride along the route to drop off the materials to the patrons. Schwan said, "The auxiliary staff has been fantastic." There were questions about what to do with non-certified staff. The board agreed with Schwan that the budget is in place and will not change, so there is no need to lay anyone off. "They provide a lot of support for our teaching staff," Schwan said.

The district also has meals available for patrons of the district that may need them. Those meals, where children are not yet of school age and living in the district, will be paid for through donations. The BAGS program is doing quite well and should be able to meet the demands of the district at this time.

Schwan said that the longer school is out of session, the more that patrons will use the free services of the school. "We have the resources right now to assist children who are not school age but may need meals because of families who need it," Schwan said.

The Branson music trip has been canceled and the district is trying to get as much money back as possible. Schwan said that if they waited too long to cancel, then there would be no refund available. Postponing to a later date could result in various other issues.

The prom is put on hold for now. Schwan encouraged those who had tux rentals for April 25th to get them cancelled. No change in the graduation ceremony is planned for right now. Everything is in a wait and see situation.

The school board election will continue as scheduled. Schwan reported that under the direction of the Secretary of State, there is no provision in the state law to postpone the election.

For full details on everything that was talked about, the video of the board meeting is archived at 397news.com under Archived Videos - School Board.

Noem Issues Executive Order Regarding COVID-19 Guidelines

PIERRE, S.D. - On March 23, Governor Kristi Noem signed an executive order outlining guidelines for all South Dakotans, for-profit and not-for-profit employers, enclosed retail businesses that promote public gatherings, local and municipal governments, and healthcare organizations as it relates to COVID-19 in the state of South Dakota.

The Executive Order reads:

Whereas, An outbreak of the severe respiratory disease, COVID-19, which is caused by and is transmitted by the person-to-person spread of the novel coronavirus, started in late 2019 and has currently been detected in more than 100 countries, including the United States; and,

Whereas, The World Health Organization has designated COVID-19 a pandemic, and the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has declared a public health emergency; and,

Whereas, The CDC has issued guidance to state and local governments and all citizens recommending steps to prevent community spread and guard against the COVID-19 outbreak; and,

Whereas, Executive Order 2020-04 declared South Dakota to be in a State of Emergency due to the COVID-19 pandemic; and,

Whereas, As members of a community, South Dakotans join together in times of crisis to confront difficult times and help their neighbors:

NOW, THEREFORE, I, KRISTI NOEM, Governor of the State of South Dakota, by the authority vested in me by the Constitution and the Laws of this State, including but not limited to SDCL 34-48A, do hereby Order and Direct the following:

Every South Dakotan should:

1. Review and practice the recommended CDC hygiene practices designed to stop the spread of the disease COVID-19 and encourage others to do so as well.
2. Know the signs and symptoms of COVID-19, call a health care provider if suffering symptoms in advance of a visit to a provider, and stay at home if sick.
3. Understand that those who are particularly vulnerable to COVID-19, including those over age 60 and those suffering from respiratory or cardiac conditions, should take extra precautions and remain home if possible.
4. Implement social distancing measures and support businesses who are adjusting their business model to reduce the spread of COVID-19.
5. Assist those who work in essential jobs such as emergency personnel, medical professionals, and law enforcement.

All employers, both for profit and not-for-profit, within the State of South Dakota should:

6. Implement the recommended CDC hygiene practices and other business strategies designed to reduce the likelihood of spreading the disease.

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7. Understand that the COVID-19 is not a short-term challenge, and operations will need to endure a difficult and limited social environment for potentially eight weeks or more.

8. Innovate and continue to demonstrate entrepreneurial excellence in their operations during this difficult and uncertain environment.

9. Encourage staff to telework if possible, implement social distancing measures, limit unnecessary work gatherings, limit non-essential travel, and consider regular health checks including CDC guidance for COVID-19 screening if possible.

10. Offer, to the extent possible, special shopping times or access periods for populations particularly vulnerable to COVID-19.

Any "enclosed retail business that promotes public gatherings" within the State of South Dakota should:

11. Suspend or modify business practices as recommended by CDC guidance that involve ten or more people to be in an enclosed space where physical separation of at least six feet is not possible.

12. Continue offering or consider offering business models that do not involve public gatherings, including takeout, delivery, drive-through, curbside service, off-site services, social distancing models, or other innovative business practices that do not involve public gatherings in an enclosed space.

13. Consider business arrangements and innovative ideas intended to support the critical infrastructure sectors, as defined by the Department of Homeland Security.

For the purpose of sections 11 through 13, an "enclosed retail business that promotes public gatherings" means any enclosed facility operating as a bar, restaurant, brewery, cafe, casino, coffee shop, recreational or athletic facility, health club, or entertainment venue.

All healthcare organizations within the State of South Dakota should:

14. Implement or Continue to follow CDC guidance and maintain their exceptional efforts to prepare for the expected surge of patients needing health care services as a result of the COVID-19 disease.

15. Postpone all non-essential elective surgeries to conserve (and thereby maximize) supplies of personal protective equipment (PPE).

All local and municipal governments within the State of South Dakota should:

16. Implement the recommended CDC hygiene practices and public employee arrangements designed to reduce the likelihood of spreading the disease, and take action based on facts, data, and science.

17. Restrict public gatherings of ten people or more, unless it is necessary.

18. Review the business practices of each "enclosed retail business that promotes public gatherings" in their community for compliance with this Executive Order and protect the ability of those businesses to innovate.

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19. Encourage entrepreneurial innovation in the private sector to provide employment opportunities to protect the continued operation of the free market consistent with recommended CDC hygiene practices and understand that COVID-19 will impact their communities for potentially eight weeks or more.

20. Protect the critical infrastructure sectors, as defined by the Department of Homeland Security, such as healthcare services, pharmaceutical industry, and food supply entities, as these sectors have a special responsibility to maintain their normal work schedule.

Limitations:

This Order should be read in conjunction with the list that is attached to the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA) memorandum dated March 19, 2020.

This Order is not intended to, and does not, create any right or benefit, substantive or procedural, enforceable at law or in equity by any party against the State of South Dakota, its departments, agencies, or entities, its officers, employees, or agents, or any other person.

Sovereign nations within the borders of South Dakota should review the matters set forth herein and make their own decisions in accordance with tribal law.

This Order is based on developing data, facts, and science and may be rescinded or amended, and shall expire on the earlier of when revoked, superseded, or automatically on May 2, 2020.

Nest Predator Bounty Program Begins April 1

PIERRE, S.D.-The 2020 Nest Predator Bounty Program will begin on April 1. However, due to concerns of COVID-19, the South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks (GFP) will not be accepting tails for the program until a later date. Participants are asked to freeze all tails until dates and locations are determined for submission.

Beginning April 1, striped skunk, opossum, red fox, badger and raccoon tails will be worth \$5 for South Dakota residents who submit them to the program. The Nest Predator Bounty Program will have a cap of \$250,000.

"This program is a great way for families to spend time together outside," said GFP department secretary Kelly Hepler. "Now, more than ever, it is important that families connect with our outdoor resources by trapping, hunting, fishing and really just being outside together."

Tails eligible for submission can be harvested via trapping or hunting. Participants need a hunting, fur-bearer or fishing license to be eligible to participate in the bounty program. Landowners harvesting nest predators for the program on their own land and youth under 18 are exempt from this license requirement.

GFP will communicate dates and locations for tail turn-in as information becomes available on gfp.sd.gov and through their social media platforms.

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Covid-19 Update by Marie Miller

The number of cases continues to grow. Even though I expect this each day, it is difficult to watch. If we're going to see results from social distancing and even more stringent efforts at shelter-in-place here and there throughout the US, I know it's going to take more time; but watching the numbers climb is painful because I know this climb represents lives broken and lost. That said, here's what we're looking at:

There have been 43,024 cases reported in the US. Nearly half of these, 20,875, were reported in NY. Another quarter come from the 7 states with more than 1000 cases, NJ, CA, WA, MI, IL, LA, and FL. So 8 states account for 77% of the cases. There are 6 states with 500-999 cases, 4 with 200-499, 7 + DC with 100-199, 10 with 50-99, and 6 + 3 territories with 10-49. There is no state in single digits.

If you're still in a low-occurrence state, don't take this as a free pass to go wherever the hell you want. It is not. If you live in one of these states, then exercise all of the precautions to make sure things stay this way. Your opportunity to do so is dwindling.

These numbers represent a 31% increase over yesterday's count with NY leading the way again at 38%. NJ has shown a great increase with 49%. The US, with just over 4% of the world's population, is showing 12% of the Covid-19 cases. We had just over 10% yesterday; this is not a trend we'd like to continue.

We have lost 536 Americans to this disease, close to a third of them in NY which has lost 157 people. WA has 110 deaths, CA has 39, LA has 34, and GA has 25. the rest of states are all below 20 deaths. Half of these deaths were in NY and WA. States and territories reporting no deaths so far include NC, AL, AR, ME, IA, NH, NM, NE, DE, RI, HI, ID, ND, WY, MT, AK, WV, and VI. The number of deaths tracks fairly closely with the number of cases; The same 8 states that account for 77% of cases account for 77% of deaths, which goes to show you can't game this system.

NY health care is very near a breaking point; additional resources must come online soon to avoid catastrophe. Drive-through testing, something South Korea implemented on February 26, just about a month ago, is finally becoming available here. South Korea's first case was diagnosed on January 20, only 2 days before our first was on January 22. I cannot begin to imagine what the hold-up has been here; but it's going to cost us lives. While things are slowing down a bit, we're still climbing toward a peak. The National Guard has been deployed in NY to enforce their shelter-in-place policy. I wish them well with it; this is the only tool left in our toolbox to slow this thing down.

What can you do? STAY HOME. Really, Just stay home. If you must go out, exercise all of the precautions I've outlined throughout this series--if you don't want to die and you don't want to kill someone, that is. Keep healthy.

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COVID-19 IN SOUTH DAKOTA

There are seven new cases across South Dakota with Hughes County, Lyman County and Beadle County considered community spread.

SOUTH DAKOTA CASE COUNTS

Test Results	# of Cases
Positive*	28
Negative**	762
Pending***	265
<p><i>*Positive test results are no longer required to be sent to the CDC for confirmation.</i></p> <p><i>**The negative test results above represent testing conducted by the South Dakota Public Health Laboratory. It does not include results from private laboratories. Those results will be included as they become available.</i></p> <p><i>***Tests currently pending at the South Dakota Public Health Lab.</i></p>	

COVID-19 IN SOUTH DAKOTA

Number of Cases	28
Deaths	1
Recovered	6

SEX OF SOUTH DAKOTA COVID-19 CASES

Sex	# of Cases
Male	17
Female	11

SD COUNTY OF RESIDENCE OF COVID-19 CASES

County	# of Cases
Beadle	12
Bon Homme	1
Brown	1
Charles Mix	1
Codington	1
Davison	2
Hughes	1
Lyman	1
McCook	2
Minnehaha	5
Pennington	1

AGE GROUP OF SOUTH DAKOTA COVID-19 CASES

Age Range	# of Cases
0 to 19 years	2
20 to 29 years	3
30 to 39 years	4
40 to 49 years	4
50 to 59 years	8
60 to 69 years	6
70 to 79 years	1
80+ years	0

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We're here for you.

Groton Subway is still open for takeout.

It's our priority to serve you the delicious meals you love in the easiest and safest ways possible.



Groton Subway is open daily 9 a.m. to 7 p.m.

605/397-SUBS (7827)
1202 N 1st St - Suite D
Groton



FREE Footlong when you buy ANY Footlong

Add 2 Footlongs to your cart & discount automatically applies for participating shops.

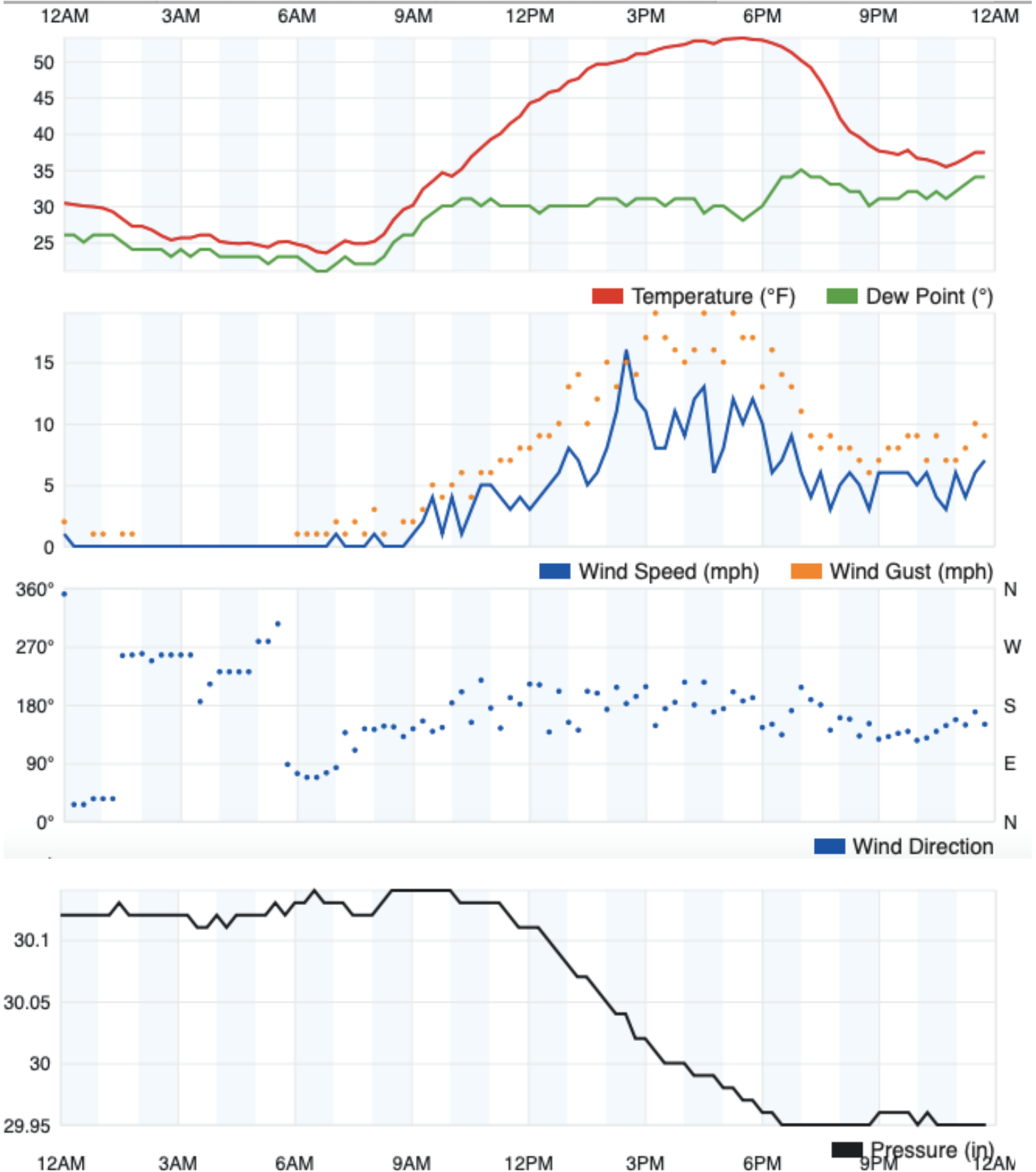


Free sub of equal/lesser price. No Extras. At participating restaurants. No add'l discounts.

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Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs



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Today



Patchy Fog
then Mostly
Sunny

High: 58 °F

Tonight



Mostly Clear
then Chance
Rain/Snow

Low: 31 °F

Wednesday



Snow Likely
then
Rain/Snow
Likely

High: 36 °F

Wednesday
Night



Mostly Cloudy

Low: 22 °F

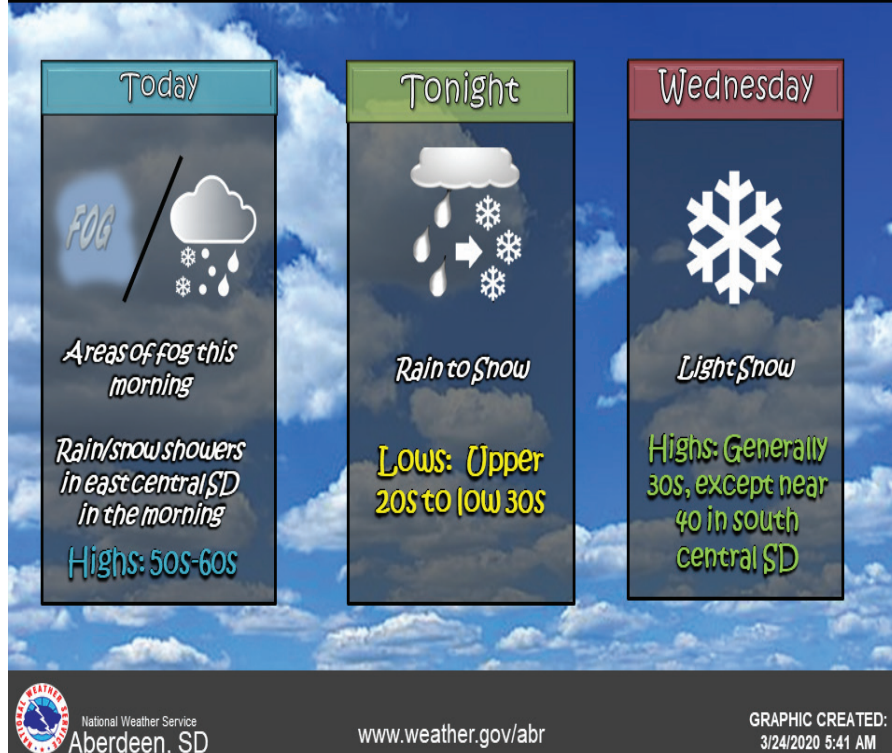
Thursday



Chance Snow
then Chance
Rain/Snow

High: 40 °F

Accumulating Snow Expected Wednesday



This morning will see areas of fog through much of eastern and north central South Dakota, as well as west central Minnesota. A few rain/snow showers are also moving across east central South Dakota this morning. Temperatures will be well above average today before a system moves through tonight through Wednesday. Accumulating snow is expected for much of the area Wednesday with accumulations generally less than two inches, although a few locations in east central South Dakota may see accumulations of up to three inches.

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Today in Weather History

March 24, 1996: North winds of 30 to 40 mph, gusting to 55 mph, combined with the falling snow and the previous day's snowfall to create blizzard conditions. Travel became extremely difficult. Several cars went into ditches, and flights out of Aberdeen were canceled. Schools and activities were either delayed or canceled. Some of the more significant two-day snowfall amounts include 6 inches at Sisseton and Aberdeen, 7 inches at Sand Lake NWR, 8 inches near Veblen, 9 inches at Britton, and 10 inches near Victor.

March 24, 2009: An area of low pressure moved out of the Rockies and into the Northern Plains producing snow and widespread blizzard conditions across central and north central South Dakota. Winds gusting to over 60 mph along with several inches of snow caused hazardous travel conditions. Interstate 90 was closed for a time across much of Jones and part of Lyman County. Power was also out in parts of Pierre and Mobridge for a short period. Some snowfall amounts included; 2 inches at Pierre; 5 inches in Hayes and Timber Lake; 6 inches in Murdo, McLaughlin, and 6 miles southeast of McIntosh; 7 inches 14 miles northeast of Isabel; 8 inches in Eagle Butte; and 12 inches 8 miles southwest of Keldron.

1912: Residents of Kansas City began to dig out from a storm that produced 25 inches of snow in 24 hours. The snowfall total was nearly twice that of any other storm of modern record in Kansas City before or since that time. A record 40 inches of snow fell during March that year, and the total for the winter season of 67 inches was also a record. By late February of that year, Kansas City had received just six inches of snow. Olathe, Kansas received 37 inches of snow in the snowstorm, establishing a single storm record for the state of Kansas. (23rd-24th)

1929: St. Louis, Missouri soared to 92 degrees; their all-time record high for March.

1975: "The Governor's Tornado" hop-scotched a 13-mile path across the western part of Atlanta, GA during the early morning hours, causing considerable damage to the Governor's mansion. Hundreds of expensive homes, businesses and apartment complexes were damaged. Total losses were estimated at \$56 million. Three people lost their lives, and the F3 tornado injured another 152.

1987 - A winter-like storm in the central U.S. produced blizzard conditions from South Dakota to western Kansas. Snowfall totals ranged up to 24 inches at Neligh NE, with 19 inches at Winner SD. Winds gusting to 60 mph created twelve foot snow drifts in Nebraska stranding thousands on the highways. (Storm Data) (The National Weather Summary)

1988 - Thunderstorms developing along a cold front produced severe weather from Minnesota to northeastern Texas. The thunderstorms spawned ten tornadoes, including one which injured five persons near Raymondville MO. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1989 - Low pressure off the coast of Virginia brought heavy rain to the Middle Atlantic Coast States, and heavy snow to the Northern Appalachians. Cape Hatteras NC was soaked with 5.20 inches of rain in 24 hours, and snowfall totals in Vermont ranged up to 12 inches. Winds gusted to 52 mph at New York City. (Storm Data) (The National Weather Summary)

1990 - The storm system which produced heavy snow in the Lower Missouri Valley the previous day, spread heavy snow across parts of the Upper Ohio Valley and the Middle Atlantic Coast Region. Snowfall totals of 2.2 inches at Philadelphia PA and 2.4 inches at Atlantic City NJ were records for the date. Up to six inches of snow blanketed southern Ohio. In the Middle Atlantic Coast Region, snow coated the blossoms of cherry trees which had bloomed in 80 degree weather the previous week. (Storm Data)

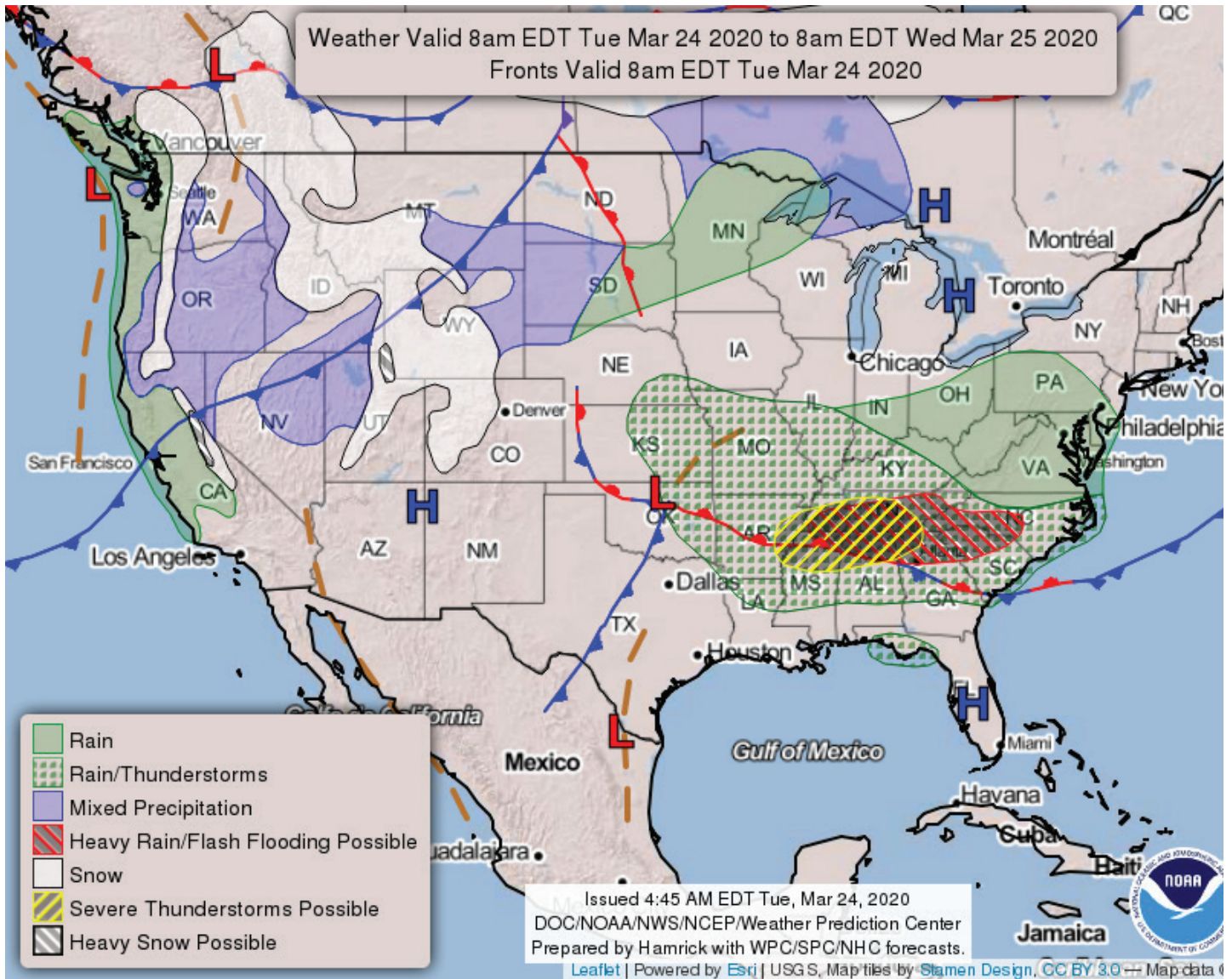
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Yesterday's Groton Weather Today's Info

High Temp: 53 °F at 5:03 PM
Low Temp: 23 °F at 6:40 AM
Wind: 19 mph at 3:14 PM
Snow

Record High: 80° in 1939
Record Low: -10° in 1893
Average High: 44°F
Average Low: 23°F
Average Precip in March.: 0.79
Precip to date in March.: 0.00
Average Precip to date: 1.81
Precip Year to Date: 0.35
Sunset Tonight: 7:52 p.m.
Sunrise Tomorrow: 7:26 a.m.



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“ TO THE GLORY OF GOD”

Johann Sebastian Bach is recognized as one of the world’s most famous musicians. He was orphaned when he was ten years old and went to live with his oldest brother, a church organist. Recognizing his joy for music, his brother began teaching him how to play various instruments. At age fourteen he was awarded a scholarship to study music at a famous university. After graduation, he auditioned for a job he deeply wanted but was not hired.

He refused to be discouraged and dedicated himself to becoming a gifted musician and composer. On the top part of each composition, he wrote the words, “To the glory of God.”

How would our lives be different if we preceded each word or deed or thought with the words: “Will what I am about to do or say or think bring glory to God?” Would our lips be sealed, our hands idle, or our minds blank if what we said, or thought or did could not bring glory to God? Would we become as still as a statue?

The Bible makes no apologies when it declares, “Whatever you do, do it all to the glory of God!” All that we do or think or say is to be done to bring glory to God. Keeping this Scripture in mind will help us realize the impact our behavior has on others - positively or negatively – and the glory it brings to God.

Prayer: Father, may every word or deed, thought or action, bring unending glory to Your name each day of our lives. Let our thoughts, words, and deeds glorify Your Name. In Jesus’ Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: 1 Corinthians 10:31 So whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God.

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2020 Groton SD Community Events

- 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
 - **CANCELLED** 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
 - Jun 2020 Transit Fundraiser (Thursday Mid-June)

News from the Associated Press

Noem asks restaurants, businesses to restrict operations

By **STEPHEN GROVES** Associated Press

SIoux FALLS, S.D. (AP) — Gov. Kristi Noem on Monday issued an executive order asking businesses to restrict gatherings and hospitals to postpone elective procedures because COVID-19 is spreading in South Dakota, a move that had some elected officials asking why the Republican was asking for such action rather than demanding it.

Noem's order leaves enforcement up to counties and cities. It gives what she called "guidelines" for businesses, municipalities and hospitals to limit the spread of the coronavirus. It called on restaurants and retail businesses to offer takeout or limit groups of people to 10 or fewer, and asked hospitals to postpone elective procedures. The governor had tried to address the global COVID-19 pandemic by pinpointing cases but her messaging took a turn on Monday as she said infections will continue to increase.

The pandemic and the response necessary to halt widespread infection is testing South Dakota law on what government authorities can and cannot do.

While governors around the country have issued orders for sweeping shutdowns, Noem said she was doing what she could given the limitations on her powers.

The South Dakota constitution does not grant the governor wide-ranging emergency powers, according to Patrick Garry, a state constitution expert at the University of South Dakota law school.

But one South Dakota law covering the authority of the governor in times of disaster allows her to suspend rules for state agencies and restrict the movement of people. That law also says the disaster response has to be "beyond local government capability."

Pressed at a news conference on what consequences businesses would face for not following her order's guidance, she said: "If a business wants to operate in this state, they will follow the direction of this executive order." But she gave no details on how that could be enforced.

Some mayors said recommendations aren't enough.

"It loses a lot of the teeth without a more universal approach," Sioux Falls Mayor Paul TenHaken said.

Without a statewide edict, a patchwork of city and county actions has emerged. Huron closed bars and eat-in restaurants just hours after Noem on Sunday announced six more cases in the area. The Rapid City Council took the first step to shuttering non-essential businesses. And TenHaken was pushing the Sioux Falls Health Board to close businesses.

Ordering businesses to close is a move no politician wants to make, said Bob Everson, the mayor of Mitchell. He'd rather see the governor take the heat for pulling the trigger on closing businesses.

"It's a lot of pressure to put on a mayor," he said. "Realistically you're going to see a major economic impact."

South Dakota has 28 confirmed cases of COVID-19, including one death and three people who are hospitalized. Monday's update included news that a woman in the South Dakota Women's Prison had tested positive.

Noem warned that up to 30% of people in South Dakota, about 240,000 people, could become infected with the coronavirus and the number of infections could increase until May or June.

Some municipal officials have complained that they are getting little information from the state on cases in their area.

In Huron, part of a county where Noem believes there is "community spread" after 12 people tested positive, local officials said they have not received details on who is infected or where they live. Community spread means it's not clear how an infected person contracted the virus and its origin can't be traced.

"All we're pretty much getting is the press releases from the governor's office," said Huron Police Capt. Mark Johnson.

Secretary of Health Kim Malsam-Rysdon said the state cannot give details on people who are infected

because it is protected by privacy laws.

The state's two largest hospital systems also announced on Monday they can now run a combined 600 COVID-19 tests a day.

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 state is distributing the \$4.5 million it received from the federal government to hospitals so they can gear up for an influx of patients, Secretary of Health Kim Malsam-Rysdon said. State authorities have also been working with the National Guard to prepare in case hospitals are inundated.

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

Native Americans put digital spin on traditions amid virus

Native Americans across the U.S. are organizing online and social-distancing powwows and posting videos of dances as a way to offer hope and spiritual support during the coronavirus pandemic.

Over the weekend, jingle dress dancers and singers on the Bad River Reservation in Wisconsin gathered in a casino parking lot and observed social distancing while performing for community members who watched from their cars, Indian Country Today reported.

"Jingle dresses are medicine dresses," said Jody Bigboy, a Bad River tribal judge who helped organize the event.

Other jingle dress dancers shared videos on social media sites from Montana, Arizona, the Dakotas, Canada and elsewhere. And groups like Social Distance Powwow kept dancers, singers, vendors and others connected on Facebook.

Community song and dance have always been a part of health and prayer for Native people, Indian Country Today reported. And the jingle dress — or zibaaska'iganagoody, the dress of exploding sound in the Ojibwe language — in particular has a long history of healing.

While embraced by many tribes, its origins are based in Ojibwe country, which includes Michigan, Wisconsin, Minnesota, and Ontario, Canada, the site reported.

According to teachings passed down through oral history, a dream came to an Ojibwe father whose daughter was very ill. A woman in the dream danced in spring-like steps, always keeping one foot on the ground. She wore a dress covered in bits of metal that created explosive sounds.

The father built the dress, and his daughter wore it and danced like the woman in the dream. She began to feel better and eventually recovered.

The dance gained a reputation for healing and spread to communities throughout Ojibwe country and beyond.

"When the jingles start singing, we believe they help take our prayers and songs up to the Creator," Bigboy said. "The dance can offer hope and healing for those who need it."

For Saturday's powwow, Bigboy said she put out a call on Facebook asking if people wanted to participate, and more than 30 dancers signed up.

The tribe loaned the group orange safety cones to mark out a dance circle.

"Organizing the dance was super organic," said Lynn Maday Bigboy, Bad River youth service coordinator. "It offered a good way to offer healing to our community and the world."

Information from: Indian Country Today, <https://indiancountrytoday.com/>

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Excerpts from recent South Dakota editorials

By The Associated Press undefined

Argus Leader, Sioux Falls, March 20

We're wasting time waiting on flawed test numbers. Protect South Dakota citizens now.

The most critical role of a governor in perilous times is to protect state citizens from harm.

That can mean economic or social hardship in many cases, but in our current reality with the COVID-19 outbreak, it means keeping people from dying. It means taking strong and mandatory measures that reflect the severity of the threat.

This article is being provided free to all readers as a public service during the coronavirus pandemic. Help us to continue providing important coverage like this by subscribing today.

A week ago, there were 2,247 known cases of the novel coronavirus in the United States, with 49 deaths. Now there are more than 14,500 known cases and 218 fatalities, and states are scrambling to slow the spread to give health systems a chance to prepare for an exponential crisis.

Gov. Kristi Noem declared a state of emergency on March 13 and closed schools statewide, but one thing we've learned from other countries and states is that half-measures aren't effective. And basing government actions on flawed and incomplete testing is dangerous.

Noem announced Thursday that three new positive cases of COVID-19 were found in Beadle County, bringing South Dakota's total to 14, with 270 tests pending. She added that she cannot say that there is community spread in our state because it hasn't been proven in the data.

Here's the thing: Nothing can be proven from that data, because the data is flawed. The state lacks testing supplies and is delayed in getting results. Waiting for "more information" before moving to protect citizens is a reckless and irresponsible leadership strategy.

Look around you. Learn from other countries and states. The chances of community spread occurring in South Dakota is probably 100 percent, and it's likely that the state has hundreds or thousands of cases right now that we don't know about. Can Noem possibly base emergency measures on numbers that she admits are incomplete, or is she trying to avoid some sort of statewide panic?

We're past that, in case you didn't know. Half-measures and delays help fuel the virus, so it's time to shut everything down. Not just restaurants and bars, but everything non-essential. In California on Thursday, Gov. Gavin Newsom ordered all citizens to stay home, telling them to venture outside only for essential jobs, errands and exercise. New York's Andrew Cuomo followed suit on Friday.

California has 40 million people. New York has 20 million. If they can do it, so can South Dakota.

Reports out of Italy show that not taking stricter shutdown measures early in the crisis enabled the virus to spread. There were too many loopholes and inconsistent edicts. The country had about 4,500 cases of coronavirus two weeks ago – now it has 41,000, more than the population of every city in South Dakota other than Sioux Falls and Rapid City. About 3,400 people have died.

This is a highly contagious coronavirus that can no longer be contained. We are in crisis mode, which includes preparing hospitals to handle the influx of patients, procuring enough respirators to keep the most critical patients alive and making sure the rest of the citizenry has access to basic services.

That is an enormous undertaking that should involve a task force of federal, state, private health and public safety officials. Get business leaders on board. Demand that our congressional delegation assumes a more active role in South Dakota preparedness.

Some of this is already happening, so let's start with real talk rather than shaky numbers and token measures. Reliable information is needed in a crisis, and so is responsible leadership.

If either one continues to fall short, people will look elsewhere to find it.

The Huron Daily Plainsman, March 19

For little ears

This past Sunday was the one-year anniversary of the adoption date of three of our four children. Our

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other daughter had been adopted three months prior, on her birthday, so we celebrate March 15 for all four of them as she gets a celebration on her adoption day every year specially for her besides her adoption anniversary.

The recent events of the world have made me consider what it is that we're not just leaving for our children, but also what it is that we're showing them right now every day.

My children come from a different background than most. They were foster children before we adopted them, and, without going into detail on their individual histories, they had seen and experienced far more than any child should in 18 years, let alone two, as little Zaylee was when she moved into our home in 2017.

My children have been through more court hearings than many experienced criminals and spent the first few years of their lives not exactly sure where they would lay their head the next evening.

Because of that, my wife and I have never felt the need to hide the truth of the world around them. We take the time to talk with them and let them ask the questions that they need to ask, in order to understand happenings around them.

A month before they were adopted, those three siblings found out their birth mother had passed away unexpectedly.

Explaining addiction and overdose to a 4-year-old is something that many would skirt. There would be a sideways reason given to the children that they'd learn years later was not the actual truth.

That's not how I wanted to ever have my children experience the world.

They processed these things over the days, weeks, and months to follow, and to some degree, we still process them today.

Zaylee is my youngest, and she has the personality of the baby of the family for certain. While I'd like to crack down on her behaviors sometimes, I'll admit that she's got me wrapped around her very little finger. You see, Zaylee is the first who ever called me "daddy" after she had moved in with us three years ago, before it was ever certain that we would be adopting her and her two siblings.

Let's just say my heart won't forget that one.

So when Zaylee was sent home from school last week due to a cough and a temp that barely registered above 99 (I had checked it that morning and checked it multiple times during the day and she was not over 98 the rest of the day, but alas), she wanted to know what she did wrong to be sent home from school. That set the opportunity for a talk in our family.

My wife and I talked with all four children (ages five to eight) about COVID-19 and the very real concerns and issues that surround the virus.

We discussed how they could end up having dance or gymnastics or even church events canceled due to concerns about spreading the virus. We also talked about keeping safe space for their health and the health of others.

When the governor shut down schools Friday and another conversation came because ideas for our celebration on Sunday for that one year anniversary were likely going to change, they handled it in stride because they weren't panicking or afraid.

They knew the facts and how to keep themselves and others safe. They made good second choices for options for the special day Sunday, and rather than a buffet and bowling, we went to a sit-down restaurant with my parents and then a movie together as a family before returning home.

Little ears not only hear the words we are saying, but they understand how we're saying those words and how we're reacting as well. Educating ourselves to understand both the gravity of the situation at hand and a simple plan to keep one another safe shows through in a lack of stress from Mommy and Daddy.

As we live through week one of potentially more of children at home, avoiding spreading panic to the little ones is a responsibility of all of us "big people," as Zaylee has termed adults in the past. We should not take that responsibility lightly.

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Yankton Daily Press & Dakotan, March 19

The Pandemic: Our temporary normal

This has happened to me most every morning lately. I wake up and blankly glance at the world outside my window, seeing gray signs of the oncoming spring. But, after a few seconds, I then remember: the coronavirus. Oh, yeah ... that. And that's when the world changes and my thoughts sink into an anxious fog.

These are the extraordinary times in which we live. We fear everything; we wash our hands obsessively; we keep our distance; we seek out oases of hope amid a desert of bad news and overreaction. We're bombarded with updates and rumors. And we wait.

The coronavirus has momentarily transformed our planet. Its fingerprints are everywhere you look — the plain evidence of a thing you can't see.

These days, Yankton may not be a ghost town by any means, but it sometimes looks skeletal, haunted. The schools are empty. Store shelves are cleaned out. The street traffic is often eerily thin. Business is generally down and jobs may be in jeopardy. Even the churches are closed, with many offering online worship instead.

We're learning to deal with this new, surreal, temporary reality as best we can. One of the most important directives is called "social distancing," in which you maintain a physical buffer, a zone of safety, between yourself and others. This one is curious, for it asks me to embrace a pattern of behavior that I've been working most of my life to overcome. That feels as odd as it does familiar.

Someday, life will go back to the way it was even just a month ago, but how long that will be is anyone's guess.

The COVID-19 pandemic brings with it a lot of familiarities for me, although they don't align perfectly with my past experiences.

In a way, this feels a little like 9/11 with that same sense of ubiquitous dread and paranoia. And yet, this situation is not THAT at all.

It also sometimes feels like a massive, paralyzing snowstorm in the way that it has smothered most everything to a halt. But here, it's like it's snowing all over the world and the forecast is uncertain.

Mostly, it brings to mind, for obvious reasons, the reading I've done on the Spanish flu pandemic of 1918, and it's compelled me to reconnect with an old, dear friend.

I went up to our archive last week and dug out the disintegrating book of bound-volume Press & Dakotan newspapers from July-December 1918. This book is in tatters after a century of use, and I've inflicted my share of damage to it over the years merely by reading its yellowed, fragile pages again and again. It's a fascinating treasure trove of insight from another age that addresses, among other things, the great mysteries of war and pandemics.

Back in 1918, in the final months of World War I, the Yankton area was clobbered by the ferocious global pandemic, causing quarantines and the wholesale cancelling of public events, as well as its grim share of deaths. I still recall how I felt the first time I read about funerals back then being forbidden because crowds were discouraged; they were practicing "social distancing" even then. This was chilling stuff. And now, as we receive obituaries announcing private or delayed services due to the coronavirus threat, that nervous chill has returned.

It's estimated that the Spanish flu pandemic ultimately infected more than a quarter of the global population and killed up to 50 million people.

The toll that the current pandemic will exact is unknown, of course, but the financial impact could be devastating. To borrow and paraphrase a weather term, what we're enduring now feels like a "flash depression," something that appears suddenly and usually lasts briefly. However, the collateral damage may linger for a very long time to come unless bold moves — perhaps bolder than those currently being proposed — are made. (Also, maybe this is a turnabout strategy: Since the 1920s — the "Roaring Twenties" — screeched to a halt with a disastrous financial crash in 1929, perhaps this time we're getting it out of the way right now.) However, our basic economic structure remains sound, so there's hope in that.

In fact, I have other hopes squirming in my head these days.

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I hope the coronavirus will have a little less impact on rural areas than on urban areas that are encased in people. I'm NOT wishing ill on the cities at all; instead, I just wonder if, since distancing is such a staple of life here anyway, that space may work to our advantage.

I hope we get sweeping, nationwide testing soon — real soon — in order to get a better handle on what we're dealing with. Right now, we're practically flying blind.

I hope the testing leads to better understanding of what we're fighting, as well as a better perspective and the realization that most of us will be all right, even as we anxiously await either a vaccine or a way to take the edge off the effects. (We may well need this because the virus probably won't simply vanish soon; the 1918 flu pandemic attacked in waves, and the second wave was the most destructive.)

Until the future becomes clear, we wait. We worry. We isolate. We distance ourselves. We scrub everything. We stock up. We wonder what will come next. And we anxiously look for any sprouts of normalcy poking through the pandemic snow cover.

But for now, at the very least, I find myself cherishing those few drowsy seconds each morning when I'm free of this reality — before it finds me yet again.

Global stocks rebound on hopes for US stimulus package

By PAN PYLAS Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — Global stocks surged Tuesday while U.S. futures raced ahead so much that trading had to be halted, after U.S. political leaders said they were nearing a deal on a massive government stimulus package to offset the damage inflicted by the coronavirus pandemic.

Stock markets around the world, from Japan's Nikkei to Germany's DAX, have spiked by more than 5%. Wall Street was also headed for similar gains at the bell, which according to regulations means that trading is suspended temporarily. Despite the gains, most indexes are down around a third from where they started the year.

In the U.S., sentiment appears to have been boosted after top congressional and White House officials emerged from grueling negotiations over a nearly \$2 trillion coronavirus rescue package saying they expected to reach a deal Tuesday. That aid would come on top of the Fed's announcement Monday that it would buy as many Treasuries and other assets as needed, including corporate bonds for the first time, to keep financial markets functioning.

Governments and central banks in other countries around the world are also unveiling unprecedented levels of support for their economies in an attempt to limit the scale of the upcoming virus-related slump. Germany, a bastion of budgetary discipline, is also mulling a big fiscal boost.

A raft of economic surveys released Tuesday, including from Japan and Europe, provided clear evidence of the scale of the recession the world is in as many countries around the world impose draconian lockdown restrictions on economic activity, the latest being Britain.

"Everyone was prepared for a set of shockers, and that is precisely what we got, but they are not a surprise," said Chris Beauchamp, chief market analyst at IG. "It is at times like this that the market's propensity to look forward is demonstrated most effectively."

A further boost to sentiment has come from the news that China is preparing to lift the lockdown in Wuhan, the epicenter of the outbreak, and from Italy reporting a reduction in the number of new cases and coronavirus-related deaths.

"It's still early days, of course — perhaps investors can start to envisage life beyond the coronavirus," said Craig Erlam, senior market analyst at OANDA Europe. "That could make stocks look a little more attractive, although anyone jumping back in now will need to have nerves of steel."

In Europe, Germany's DAX was up 6.6% at 9,321 while the FTSE 100 index of leading British shares spiked 4.2% at 5,202. France's CAC-40 soared 5.7% to 4,139.

Before the trading suspension in the U.S., Dow futures and the broader S&P futures were up by the maximum 5%.

Earlier in Asia, Tokyo's Nikkei 225 rose 7.1% to 18,092.35 and the Kospi in Seoul surged 8.6% to 1,609.97.

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The Shanghai Composite Index was 2.3% higher at 2,722.44 and Hong Kong's Hang Seng gained 4.5% to 22,663.49. Australia's S&P-ASX 200 gained 4.2% to 4,735.70 and India's Sensex added 3.1% to 26,776.71. New Zealand rose 7.2% and Singapore added 5.3%.

Whether the gains can be built on in coming days will likely hinge on how the effectiveness of the measures taken by governments to get on top of the outbreak. The number of known infections worldwide jumped past 380,000. After just a few weeks, the United States has more than 46,000 cases and more than 600 deaths.

For most people, the coronavirus causes only mild or moderate symptoms, such as fever and cough. 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. Recovery could take six weeks in such cases.

In energy markets, benchmark U.S. crude rose \$1.40 to \$24.76 per barrel in electronic trading on the New York Mercantile Exchange, while Brent crude, used to price international oils, added \$1.17 to \$28.20 per barrel in London.

In the currency markets, the euro was up 1.5% at \$1.0876 while the dollar fell 0.7% at 110.45 yen.

UN: 85% of new infections, deaths coming from Europe and US

By DAVID RISING and CHRIS BLAKE Associated Press

BERLIN (AP) —

The World Health Organization says infections and deaths globally from the new coronavirus are expected to increase "considerably" when global figures are published later Tuesday.

Dr. Margaret Harris, a WHO spokeswoman, said overnight reporting showed 85% of the new cases are being reported in Europe and the United States.

On Monday, WHO counted more than 334,000 total cases globally. Harris said "but in fact the outbreak is accelerating very rapidly and the case numbers we received overnight will put that up considerably."

THIS IS A BREAKING NEWS UPDATE. AP's earlier story follows below.

As virus deaths mounted and Americans hoped for some economic relief Tuesday from their divided government, health officials and leaders warned that the world was entering a critical period that would determine just how deeply the pandemic slices through their nations.

While Chinese authorities said they would finally end a two-month lockdown in hard-hit Hubei province where the coronavirus outbreak first began, nations in Europe, North America and elsewhere pressed harder to enforce the stay-at-home restrictions placed on 1.5 billion people worldwide.

Those measures could significantly impact the trajectory that the virus will take as it spreads across the world. World Health Organization warned that the outbreak is accelerating but said nations and individuals can all have an important impact.

"We are not helpless bystanders," said WHO chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, noting that it took 67 days to reach 100,000 cases worldwide but just four days to go from 200,000 to 300,000. "We can change the trajectory of this pandemic."

One viral social media video showed Italian mayors, sometimes profanely, berating their fellow citizens for not staying inside.

On Capitol Hill, a nearly \$2 trillion plan that would prop up businesses and send checks to American households has stalled in Washington for days, but officials said they expect to reach a deal later Tuesday. Democrats have argued that it was tilted too much toward corporations rather than helping American workers and health care providers.

It appears that it will be soon that the U.S., which has more than 46,000 infections and 530 deaths, overtakes hard-hit Italy in the number of infections. Authorities say the U.S. is on track to eventually overtake China's nearly 82,000 infections and how soon that happens depends on how seriously Americans take the state-at-home restrictions.

In New York, now one of the world's biggest virus hot spots, authorities rushed to set up the thousands of hospital beds they will need in just weeks to protect the city's 8.4 million people. More than 12,000

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people have tested positive in the city and 125 have died. A state-wide lockdown took effect Monday.

The mayor warned that the city's hospitals are just 10 days away from shortages in basic supplies, while the state's governor announced plans to convert a New York City convention center into a hospital.

"This is going to get much worse before it gets better," New York Gov. Andrew Cuomo said.

British Prime Minister Boris Johnson tightened all travel restrictions, demanding that people do not visit family members or friends and stick with only the people they live with.

Nearly 384,000 people worldwide have been infected and more than 16,500 have died from the virus, according to by Johns Hopkins University.

In Italy, Spain and France, the pandemic is pushing national health systems to their breaking points.

The outbreak has killed more than 6,000 Italians, the highest death toll of any country. Officials said Monday the virus had claimed just over 600 more lives, down from 793 two days earlier, offering some glimmer of hope.

The risks remain for doctors, nurses and others on the front lines: Italy has seen at least 18 doctors with the coronavirus die. Spain says 12% of its cases — more than 3,900 health care workers — have become infected.

A Madrid ice rink is now being used as a makeshift morgue as the number of bodies of virus victims in the Spanish capital mounts. Overwhelmed by a virus hotspot in its eastern city of Mulhouse France was getting help from hospitals in neighboring Germany and Switzerland.

Confusion rippled through Britain on the first morning after Johnson ordered a three-week halt to all nonessential activity. The government has told most stores to close, banned gatherings of three or more people and said everyone apart from essential workers should leave home only to buy food and medicines or to exercise. But photos showed crowded trains Tuesday on some London subway lines.

"I cannot say this more strongly: we must stop all non-essential use of public transport now," London Mayor Sadiq Khan tweeted. "Ignoring these rules means more lives lost."

Asian stock markets reacted positively Tuesday, markets in Japan and South Korea posting significant gains after the Federal Reserve said it will lend to small and large businesses and local governments to help them through the crisis.

The move toward lockdowns has been influenced by the success of such measures in China, where the virus was first found late last year in the central city of Wuhan. China barred people from leaving or entering the city on Jan. 23, and soon expanded that to cover most of Hubei province, home to 70 million people.

On Tuesday, after more than a week in which China said the vast majority of new virus cases were imported from abroad, authorities said the restrictions in Hubei would end. People cleared by health authorities would be able to leave the province after midnight. Wuhan itself will remain locked down until April 8.

For most people, the coronavirus causes only mild or moderate symptoms, such as fever or coughing. But for some older adults and people with existing health problems, it can cause more severe illness, including pneumonia. Some 102,000 people have recovered, mostly in China.

In contrast to other European nations, German health authorities offered some hope that the country has flattened the exponential spread of the virus, which has already infected nearly 30,000. Chancellor Angela Merkel's government approved a massive new aid package to cushion the economic fallout of the outbreak, offering more than 1 trillion euros (\$1.1 trillion) to tide small companies and entrepreneurs through closures and to pump capital into bigger companies.

But around the world, industries big and small kept shutting down. Boeing announced it was suspending production in the Seattle area, where it has two mammoth aircraft plants employing about 42,000 people.

On the sports front, Japan's prime minister and the head of the International Olympic Committee were to hold talks Tuesday as they consider postponing this summer's games in Tokyo.

Blake reported from Bangkok, Thailand. Associated Press reporters around the world contributed to this report.

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

UnderstandingtheOutbreak

The Latest: WHO expects rise in reported cases, deaths

By The Associated Press undefined

The Latest on the coronavirus pandemic, which has infected more than 387,000 people and killed over 16,500. 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 101,000 people have recovered so far, mostly in China.

TOP OF THE HOUR:

- World Health Organization says expect coronavirus cases to increase “considerably”.
- Some prisoners in Australia will be eligible for early parole under emergency legislation.
- The Vatican is under pressure to let more employees work from home.

GENEVA — A spokeswoman for the World Health Organization says case counts and deaths globally from the new coronavirus are expected to increase “considerably” when global figures are published later Tuesday.

Dr. Margaret Harris, a WHO spokeswoman, said overnight reporting showed 85% of the new cases were being reported in Europe and the United States.

Speaking at a regular U.N. Geneva briefing, Harris also cited a “glimmer of hope” in hard-hit Italy after two days of slight declines in the number of new cases and deaths, while cautioning it’s “early days yet” — and the trend needed to be monitored.

Global figures compiled by WHO at 17:00 GMT Monday showed more than 334,000 total cases globally, Harris said, “but in fact the outbreak is accelerating very rapidly and the case numbers we received overnight will put that up considerably.”

She said she did not have the exact figures to hand.

The latest WHO Situation report issued late Monday cited 14,788 deaths worldwide, including 1,727 over the latest 24-hour span.

“Just to put it in proportion: It took two years in the worst Ebola outbreak we ever had, the West African outbreak, to reach 11,000 deaths,” Harris said. “So we are really seeing an enormous outbreak here.”

Harris said an increasing in the rollout of testing for new coronavirus infections could partly explain the surge in case counts.

CANBERRA, Australia — Prisoners regarded as vulnerable to the new coronavirus and low risk to society in Australia’s most populous state would be eligible for early parole under emergency legislation passed by the New South Wales Parliament.

It is unclear how many of the state’s 14,000 prisoners could walk free under the legislation proposed by New South Wales Attorney General Mark Speakman.

The emergency legislation includes a raft of reforms that Speakman said will provide public authorities with the powers they need to respond appropriately to this once-in-a-century crisis.

“The threat posed by COVID-19 is rapidly evolving, and the needs of families, businesses, workers and governments are changing every day,” Speakman said in a statement.

VATICAN CITY — The Vatican is under pressure to let more of its employees work from home after several offices remained open even after Italy shut down all nonessential industry in a bid to contain the coronavirus.

Vatican employees in three different offices expressed alarm Tuesday that superiors had adopted different policies about working from home, with no uniformity among them. The concern has been heightened because many Vatican employees live in priestly residences and eat together in communal dining rooms.

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Already, members of two separate religious orders in Rome tested positive for the virus, evidence that the close quarters of religious communities can spread the virus.

The Vatican has adopted some shutdown measures, but has lagged behind the rest of Italy, which is the European epicenter of the outbreak.

COLOMBO, Sri Lanka — Sri Lankan government on Tuesday imposed an indefinite curfew in three districts that includes the capital Colombo as a part of its stringent measures being taken to contain the spreading of the virus as the number of confirmed cases rose to 97.

A government statement says these three districts have been identified as "high risk" areas and the highest number of positive cases are reported from these districts.

Accordingly, the indefinite curfew was imposed in Colombo, Gampaha and Kalutara districts. These three districts have been under a three-day curfew since Friday. Curfew in these districts was lifted only for eight hours on Tuesday to allow people to purchase food and other essentials.

The island is divided into 25 districts for administrative purposes. Curfew prevails in the other 22 districts, but the government previously said curfew in those districts will be lifted on Friday for a few hours.

The government on Monday banned nonessential travel among the districts.

PRAGUE — The Czech Republic has registered its second death caused by the coronavirus.

Health Minister Adam Vojtech said Tuesday the 45-year-old patient died in hospital in eastern town of Havirov. Vojtech said the man was suffering from an unspecified cancer at an advanced stage and the coronavirus worsened his condition.

Several other hospitalized people with COVID-19 are in critical condition in the Czech Republic.

Meanwhile, Vojtech said the country received remdesivir, an experimental antiviral drug from U.S. company Gilead Sciences to treat the first patient who is in critical condition at a Prague clinic.

JOHANNESBURG — South Africa's coronavirus cases have leapt again to 554. It's the most of any country in Africa. Its 57 million people are rushing to prepare for a three-week lockdown that begins Thursday.

Across Africa, 43 of its 54 countries now have cases, with the total at 1,788. Thirteen countries have reported 58 deaths.

Elsewhere in Africa, Nigeria's ban on international flights is beginning. And, Ethiopia's government has issued a proposal to the G20 global forum for economic cooperation ahead of its summit, saying "COVID-19 poses an existential threat to the economies of African countries."

LONDON — Business activity in Europe has fallen at the sharpest pace on record, according to a survey that was started in 1998.

The purchasing managers' index, a gauge of business executives' outlook on the economy, fell to 31.4 points in March for the 19-country eurozone, from 51.6 in February, as governments put limits on business activity to contain the virus outbreak.

The index is at the lowest since the survey was started and is below the trough registered during the global financial crisis in 2009. The 50-point level separates economic growth from contraction.

The index, which is compiled by research firm IHS Markit, shows the biggest hit to the services sector, particular tourism and restaurants. Companies in this sector were cutting jobs at the fastest pace since 2009.

Chris Williamson, chief business economist at IHS Markit, says the survey suggests a quarterly economic contraction of 2%, or over 8% in annualized terms, though that forecast is likely to worsen.

"Business sentiment about the year ahead has plunged to the gloomiest on record, suggesting policy-makers' efforts to date have failed to brighten the darkening picture," he said.

BRATISLAVA, Slovakia — The new government in Slovakia is planning to tighten restrictive measures in efforts to contain the outbreak of the coronavirus.

Prime Minister Igor Matovic said Tuesday it will be mandatory for all citizens to wear face masks in all

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public spaces. People should also keep a distance of 2 meters (6 feet) between one another.

All essential retail businesses that still can be opened, such as food stores and pharmacies, will be closed on Sundays to give employees time to rest.

From the end of March, the temperature of all people entering stores or hospitals will be measured.

Only the pensioners will be allowed to do the shopping from 9 a.m. till 12 p.m. Monday to Saturday.

The government is planning to acquire 200,000 test kits to increase the testing on the coronavirus. Slovakia has reported 204 people infected.

MADRID — Madrid's ice-skating rink is now being used as a makeshift morgue given the rapid increase in deaths in the Spanish capital owing to the COVID-19 outbreak.

Security forces guarded the outside of the Palacio de Hielo complex on Madrid's north-eastern outskirts Tuesday as funeral service vans arrived and entered the building underground car park.

Madrid city authorities took up the rink's offer to use the 1,800 square-meter (2,153 square-yard) center after the city's municipal funeral service said it could take no more coronavirus bodies until it restocked with protective equipment and material.

Madrid is one of the hardest hit of Spain's 17 regions with some 1,300 deaths, approximately half the national total.

BANGKOK — The Southeast Asian nation of Laos has confirmed its first two cases of COVID-19.

The state news agency KPL reported on its website that Deputy Health Phouthone Meuangpak announced the two cases at a Tuesday press conference in the capital city Vientiane, where both patients were hospitalized.

Laos is the last country in Southeast Asia to report any coronavirus cases. Myanmar reported its first two cases on Monday night and Timor Leste confirmed its first case on Saturday.

KPL said a 36-year-old female who served as a guide early this month for visitors from Europe is one patient, and the other is a 28-year-old male staff member of the Crowne Plaza Hotel in Vientiane who is thought to have contracted the virus while attending a workshop in Bangkok, the capital of neighboring Thailand.

MANILA, Philippines — The Philippine Congress on Tuesday approved a bill declaring a national emergency in the country and authorizing the president to launch a massive aid program for 18 million families and tap private hospitals and ships in fighting the coronavirus outbreak.

President Rodrigo Duterte can realign huge budgets of the executive department under the proposed legislation, which will also punish officials who disobey quarantine orders and people spreading "false information" about the COVID-19 disease, legislators said. The law will last for three months but can be extended by Congress.

The Senate and the House of Representatives, which are dominated by Duterte's allies, separately held emergency sessions Monday and worked beyond midnight to deliberate on the bill, with the majority of the lawmakers participating online as a health precaution. Duterte is expected to sign the bill into law soon.

Duterte has locked down the main northern island of Luzon, home to more than 50 million people, by restricting travel to and from the region, where the capital Manila lies. Most residents have been ordered to stay home and work and classes have been suspended under the monthlong containment.

Opposition groups have feared Duterte's extra powers could lead to abuse and called on the government to provide more protective suits for health workers, "safety nets" for the poor and considerably more tests for the virus.

Philippine officials reported Tuesday a total of 552 COVID-19 cases in the country, with 35 deaths.

LONDON — Confusion rippled through Britain on the first morning after Prime Minister Boris Johnson ordered a three-week halt to all nonessential activity to fight the spread of the new coronavirus.

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The government has told most stores to close, banned gatherings of three or more people and said everyone apart from essential workers should leave home only to buy food and medicines or to exercise.

But photos showed crowded trains on some London subway lines Tuesday, amid confusion about who is still allowed to go to work.

London Mayor Sadiq Khan tweeted: "I cannot say this more strongly: we must stop all non-essential use of public transport now. Employers: please support your staff to work from home unless it's absolutely necessary. Ignoring these rules means more lives lost."

The government says police will have powers break up illegal gatherings and fine people who flout the rules. But some expressed doubts about whether the lockdown could be enforced.

"There is no way really that the police can enforce this using powers. It has got to be because the public hugely support it," Peter Fahy, former chief constable of Greater Manchester Police, told the BBC.

JAKARTA, Indonesia — Indonesia reported its biggest daily jump of 107 new COVID-19 cases to bring the country's total to 686 on Tuesday, as some 125,000 rapid test kits have been distributed across the archipelago nation. The government also reported 55 deaths from the coronavirus.

HELSINKI — Martti Ahtisaari, the former Finnish president, UN diplomat and recipient of the 2008 Nobel Peace Prize, has tested positive with the coronavirus.

The office of the Finnish President Sauli Niinisto said Tuesday Ahtisaari, 82, was confirmed with the new coronavirus on Monday and he was doing fine "under the circumstances."

No details were provided of how Ahtisaari became infected, but his wife was confirmed positive with coronavirus on Saturday.

Ahtisaari served as the Finnish head of state for one six-year term from 1994 until 2000.

Trump says he intends to reopen country in weeks, not months

By JILL COLVIN, JOSH BOAK and RICARDO ALONSO-ZALDIVAR Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — As cases of coronavirus rise, President Donald Trump said that he wants to reopen the country for business in weeks, not months, and claimed, without evidence, that continued closures could result in more deaths than the pandemic itself.

"We can't have the cure be worse than the problem," Trump told reporters at a briefing Monday, echoing a midnight Sunday tweet. "We have to open our country because that causes problems that, in my opinion, could be far bigger problems."

Health experts have made clear that unless Americans continue to dramatically limit social interaction — staying home from work and isolating themselves — the number of infections will overwhelm the health care system, as it has in parts of Italy, leading to many more deaths. While the worst outbreaks are concentrated in certain parts of the country, such as New York, experts warn that the highly infectious disease is certain to spread.

But with the economic impact now snapping into focus and millions of people out of work, businesses shuttered and the markets in free fall — all undermining Trump's reelection message — the chorus of backlash is growing louder, with Trump appearing to side with them.

"Life is fragile, and economies are fragile," Trump said, insisting he could protect both.

While he acknowledged there were trade-offs — "there's no question about that" — he claimed that, if closures stretch on for months, there would be "probably more death from that than anything that we're talking about with respect to the virus."

The comments were further evidence that Trump has grown impatient with the pandemic, even before it has reached its expected peak. In recent days, tensions have been rising between those who argue the country needs to get back up and running to prevent a deep economic depression and medical experts who warn that, unless more extreme action is taken, the human cost will be catastrophic.

"We can't shut in the economy. The economic cost to individuals is just too great," Larry Kudlow, Trump's

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top economic adviser, said in an interview Monday on Fox News Channel. "The president is right. The cure can't be worse than the disease, and we're going to have to make some difficult trade-offs."

It's an opinion that has been echoed by others in the White House, some Republicans in Congress and on Fox, where host Steve Hilton delivered a monologue Sunday night that appeared to have, at least partially, inspired Trump's tweet.

"You know that famous phrase, the cure is worse than the disease? That is exactly the territory we're hurtling towards," Hilton told his viewers, describing the economic, social and human impact of the shutdown as an "even bigger crisis" than the virus.

"You think it's just the coronavirus that kills people? This total economic shutdown will kill people," he said, pointing to growing poverty and despair.

Trump, who for the last two weeks has largely allowed doctors to lead the administration's response, already seemed to be shifting in that direction.

"I'm not looking at months, I can tell you right now," Trump said Monday, when asked about easing federal recommendations urging Americans to limit social contact and stay home. He said states with large case loads could continue to enforce stricter measures, while other parts of the country return to work.

Trump tweeted that he would be waiting until the end of the current 15-day period of recommended closures and self-isolation to make any decisions, which would be March 30. At the same time Trump sent that message, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention were exploring new guidance making it possible for people working in "critical infrastructure" jobs who have been exposed to the virus to return to work faster "by wearing a mask for a certain period of time," Vice President Mike Pence said.

It's a change in tone that is drawing criticism from public health experts, who suggested Trump risks making a dangerous mistake if he sets up a conflict between public health and the nation's economic well-being, given how unlikely it is that the threat posed by the virus will subside in another week.

If the U.S. stops social distancing too soon, "you will have more deaths and more dives in the stock market," warned Lawrence Gostin of Georgetown University, a lawyer with extensive public health expertise.

And the outbreak could come surging back once people return to their normal routines of commuting, working, dining out and socializing — further stressing the economy.

John Auerbach, president of the nonpartisan Trust for America's Health, which works with governments at all levels to improve preparedness for public health emergencies, said widespread illness and death also have a powerful economic impact that's impossible to ignore or play down.

"If you don't flatten the curve and minimize those who are getting infected, the amount of sickness will cripple business," said Auerbach.

Even Republican Sen. Lindsey Graham of South Carolina, a close Trump ally, urged Trump to stick with the advice of public health officials.

"There is no functioning economy unless we control the virus," he warned on Twitter. "Try running an economy with major hospitals overflowing, doctors and nurses forced to stop treating some because they can't help all, and every moment of gut-wrenching medical chaos being played out in our living rooms, on TV, on social media, and shown all around the world."

But Stephen Moore, a former Trump economic adviser, said it's time now "to start thinking about what kind of dramatic costs to society are we absorbing from the shutdown," including tens of millions unemployed and potential spikes in drug overdoses and suicides.

He said he has been urging his former colleagues to selectively open the economy in ways that minimize the public health risk with more testing and, for instance, taking people's temperature in public places, as they are now doing in other countries.

"There's no good solutions here. There's just bad solutions," Moore conceded. "And to me, the worst solution is to just grind our economy to a halt."

Other economists warned that if Americans return to work too soon, there could be recurring outbreaks that would only worsen a recession. But if the period of isolation continues for too long, there will be a steep cost in trying to restart and sustain economic growth.

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Joe Brusuelas, chief economist at the consultancy RSM, said lifting restrictions after 15 days would be “potentially a profound policy mistake” because it could lead to a second or third wave of outbreaks that would do even more harm to economic growth.

“We got one shot to get this all right,” Brusuelas said, noting that Trump has a great deal at stake personally, given the upcoming election in November. “The last thing one would want to do from an economic policy perspective is to elevate one’s electoral interests above that of the economy or, most importantly, public health.”

Analysts at Morgan Stanley estimated Monday that the economy will shrink at a record-breaking annualized pace of 30% in the second quarter. The unemployment rate would surge to 12.8% — the highest level ever in data that go back to the 1940s. But this forecast assumes the outbreak peaks in late April, after which there would be fewer reasons to restrict economic activity, and a sharp rebound would begin in the June-August quarter, leading to solid growth in 2021.

Austan Goolsbee, an economist at the University of Chicago and a former adviser to President Barack Obama, says there is no real tension between containing the outbreak and preserving the U.S. economy. He has repeatedly emphasized that halting the outbreak is needed so that growth can resume as companies feel comfortable hiring and consumers ramp up spending.

“Anything that slows the spread of the virus is by far the best thing to restore the economy,” Goolsbee wrote on Twitter.

Another former high-ranking Obama adviser, University of Pennsylvania bioethicist Ezekiel Emanuel, suggested the public won’t trust an “all clear” signal unless medical and public health experts endorse it.

“If people think, ‘Wow, if I go to Disney World, I might die,’ they are not going to go to Disney World,” he said.

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. Worldwide, more than 375,000 cases have been reported, and while most people recover in weeks, more than 16,000 have died from the virus.

Boak reported from Baltimore.

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

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. ‘IT MAKES YOUR HEART WARM’ People are banding together to sew face masks for hospitals running desperately short of personal protective equipment as the coronavirus pandemic intensifies.
2. ONE-FIFTH OF GLOBE FACING LOCKDOWN By shuttering businesses, clearing streets and keeping people away from one another, authorities hope they can slow the spread of the pandemic.
3. TESTING BLUNDERS CRIPPLED US RESPONSE An AP review finds that a series of missteps at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention created a critical shortage of reliable tests for the coronavirus.
4. VOLUNTEERISM A CASUALTY OF VIRUS OUTBREAK With millions staying home during the coronavirus pandemic, charities that help the country’s neediest are struggling to offer critical services.
5. CORONAVIRUS UPENDS CAMPAIGN THEMES The viral pandemic and the nation’s crashing economy are scrambling the themes both political parties thought would carry them to victory in November.
6. ‘I’M NOT AN EDUCATOR!’ States and employers have ordered people to stay home, resulting in a massive, unplanned social experiment that can strain productivity and domestic tranquility.
7. WHAT IS SPURRING WORLD MARKETS Global stock markets and U.S. futures surge after the Federal Reserve promises support to the struggling economy.

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8. **ICONIC PLANT'S END SPELLS DOOM FOR COAL INDUSTRY** The Tennessee Valley Authority power plant at Paradise burned its last load of coal last month, leaving Trump unable to deliver on a campaign promise.

9. **WOODY ALLEN'S MEMOIR FINALLY RELEASED** "Apropos of Nothing" describes his upbringing and high-profile love affairs but darkens and becomes defensive as he recalls his relationship with Mia Farrow and allegations he abused daughter Dylan Farrow.

10. **WHERE SIGNS POINT ON TOKYO OLYMPICS** A longtime member of the International Olympic Committee tells the AP that it's becoming increasingly likely that the games will not take place this summer.

Teams, toddlers and cabinets: The joys of working from home

By **MATT O'BRIEN** and **MAE ANDERSON** AP Technology Writers

In the early days of working from home to prevent spread of the COVID-19 disease, some Massachusetts Institute of Technology researchers talking strategy on a video chat couldn't help but get distracted by their team leader's kitchen cabinets.

"There was absolutely nothing special about them except for the fact that they were in the private home of someone senior to us," said researcher Kate Darling, who started gossiping about the cabinetry in an online back channel.

It was a minor and welcome disruption, an early sign of bigger hiccups that office workers, educators and others around the world are dealing with on the fly as the coronavirus pandemic shuts people out of offices, schools, coffee shops and co-working spaces.

Integrating work life into the home has rarely been easy, but measures to contain the virus have brought those worlds into sudden and sharp collision. Untold numbers of Americans are shifting their day jobs from offices to living rooms, spare bedrooms, kitchens and basements. This massive, unplanned social experiment can strain productivity and domestic tranquility as toddlers scurry around untended and business meetings and classes shift to noisy group video chats that resemble a checkerboard of talking heads.

It is also forcing many parents into unexpected new roles. Carmen Williams, a therapist in Macomb, Michigan, finds herself not only seeing clients sporadically, but shelling out for a babysitter, paying tuition for her seven- and 14-year-old kids — and still teaching them school assignments.

"I'm not an educator!" Williams said. "I'm used to helping with homework, but I am unable to teach thought-out lectures and work. It's overwhelming!"

This plunge into the unknown, accelerated by the growing number of states ordering residents to stay home, could impact how the U.S. weathers an almost certain recession. That will also depend on how well individuals and their families can manage the complications of studying and conducting business from home — at least for the subset of employees with desk jobs and the ability to do their work remotely.

Tech companies are pledging to avert more serious disruptions by increasing data capacity to handle the onslaught of newly quarantined workers and students. Tuesday mornings used to be the peak time for video conference platform Zoom, but now there's an ongoing demand for that amount of data, said Kelly Steckelberg, chief financial officer of the San Jose, California-based company.

Steckelberg said the company has accelerated the opening of two new U.S. data centers to meet the demand and is adding servers to its existing 17 data centers around the world. Cisco, which runs the Webex video conference service, said it has prepared itself for "sustained peaks" in the U.S. after already handling a doubling of usage in Asian countries including China, Japan and South Korea.

Microsoft, which asked 50,000 of its own employees to work from home in the Seattle region before Washington State sent all "nonessential" workers home, has seen dramatic demand spikes for its workplace communications service known as Teams. Rival workplace communications platform Slack has experienced "just a massive outpouring of interest," CEO Daniel Butterfield said on an earnings call earlier this month.

Major phone and cable companies have agreed to open up their wireless hot spots for public use, and said they are also waiving data caps and won't cut homes or business' internet off because of an inability to pay. Experts have said the core of the U.S. network is more than capable of handling the virus-related

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surge in demand because it has evolved to easily handle bandwidth-greedy Netflix, YouTube and other streaming services.

But people confined to their homes have still found it a struggle to maintain human connections.

Washington, D.C. resident Joseph Sprott was just two days into a new marketing job when the office went fully remote, which he said makes it harder to "ingratiate oneself" with the new manager and team.

"Now a simple 'Come check this out' is a three-person conference call," he said.

In the Netherlands, a team of data scientists led by Jeroen Baas was already used to communicating remotely with overseas colleagues. But vacating their Amsterdam office late last week presented new challenges, so Baas started a 15-minute virtual water cooler session to try to restore some of the casual banter lost when his colleagues aren't physically present.

"It gives some time and space to talk about work or take your mind off other things, or maybe rant about what's going on with the virus spread and people hoarding things," he said.

Darling, the MIT researcher, said she is worried about more serious problems as the work-from-home period continues for weeks or more and researchers don't have access to their laboratories and other important tools. As more schools and childcare centers stay closed, she said, remote work will get more disruptive.

Her toddler has been watching the TV show "Daniel Tiger" on repeat. "Otherwise we wouldn't get anything done," she said.

AP Technology Writer Tali Arbel contributed to this report.

Volunteers sew masks for health workers facing shortages

By TAMMY WEBBER, DEE-ANN DURBIN and ANNE D'INNOCENZIO Associated Press

CHICAGO (AP) — Bill Purdue waterproofs basements for a living, but he has spent the past few days in his buddy's Washington, Indiana, auto trim and upholstery shop cutting rectangles of cotton fabric that his friend sews into face masks.

Fashion designer Briana Danyele left Italy last month to return to her mother's Greer, South Carolina, home, where she has turned the living room into a mini sewing factory, making masks that she embroiders with the words, "We Got This!"

They're among scores of people answering pleas from hospitals, doctors and nurses so desperate for personal protective equipment amid the viral pandemic that they've turned to the public, saying do-it-yourself face masks are better than nothing.

And for those sitting at home worrying as the virus strains hospitals and the economy teeters, sewing masks makes them feel less helpless.

"Whatever it takes to get the job done, that's what I want to do," said Purdue, 57, whose daughter works at the women's hospital in Evansville, Indiana. He and his friend Mike Rice responded to a Facebook post last week from Deaconess Health System in Evansville asking the public for help.

The efforts mirror those in other countries, including Spain, where mask-making volunteers include a group of nuns and members of the Spanish Air Force. Around 500 masks a day are coming off sewing machines at the Paratroop School in Murcia, in the country's southeast, according to the Air Force's Twitter account.

In Belgium, what began as a one-woman operation about a week ago grew to a small army of home-sewing mask-makers within days.

For most people, the new 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 recover.

But the virus is spreading rapidly and starting to max out the health care system in several cities.

Deaconess spokeswoman Pam Hight said the hospital system realized it could face a shortage if local infections skyrocket like they have elsewhere. So officials produced and posted a how-to video that has been shared across the country.

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"We had people who wanted to ship them to us from all over the United States and we started saying, 'Please, please use them in your communities,'" she said. "It makes your heart warm; people are so good."

She said Deaconess expects to collect thousands of masks this week at an off-hospital site and sanitize them before distributing them to nurses and doctors or sending them to local nursing homes and homeless shelters.

In a similar effort, Providence St. Joseph's Health in the hard-hit Seattle area is putting together kits using special material and distributing them to people willing to sew them together as part of a 100-million mask challenge.

Dartmouth-Hitchcock Medical Center, New Hampshire's largest hospital, is preparing kits with fabric and elastic and encouraging volunteers to sew face masks for patients, visitors and staff so medical-grade protective equipment can be conserved for front-line health care workers.

Federal officials had previously advised hospital workers to use surgical masks when treating patients who might be infected with coronavirus amid reports of dwindling supplies of fitted and more protective N95 respirator masks.

"If nurses quit or become too fatigued or even become ill themselves, then we don't have a front line anymore," said Wendy Byard of Lapeer, Michigan. She began organizing friends to make masks after learning her daughter, a nurse at a suburban Detroit hospital, was told to wear the same mask all day.

Last week the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention quietly updated its guidance, saying hospitals that run low on surgical masks should consider ways to reuse them or to use them through an entire shift. And if hospitals run out, the CDC said, scarfs or bandanas could be used "as a last resort," though some health officials warned cloth masks might not work.

Mary Dale Peterson, president of the American Society of Anesthesiologists and chief operating officer at a Corpus Christ, Texas, children's hospital, said she declined volunteers' offers to make masks. She said construction and manufacturing industries instead should donate or sell the high-grade masks they have to hospitals.

"It would be only an extremely, extremely last resort that I would have my staff" wear homemade masks, she said. "I really hope it doesn't get to that point in the U.S."

At the Missouri Quilt Museum in Hamilton, Missouri, board members asked local hospitals if masks were needed and "they emphatically said yes," said director Dakota Redford. Soon other health care providers, including ambulance crews and nursing homes, were requesting masks.

"This has been a true grassroots effort that has exploded across the country in the quilting world," she said.

Businesses also are stepping up.

Crafts chain Joann Stores is making all of its 800-plus stores available for up to 10 people at each location to sew masks and hospital gowns, offering sewing machines and supplies, spokeswoman Amanda Hayes said.

Hayes said the number of people allowed in the stores adheres to CDC guidelines, the sewing stations will be six feet apart and staff will continuously sanitize the work areas and materials. The company also has special kits for customers who want to make masks at home.

"We're enabling people to feel like they are contributing at a time when we don't have control," Hayes said.

In Baltimore, almost 160 volunteers with 414 3D printers between them are making plastic face shields for Johns Hopkins and other area hospitals and dropping them off at a maker space called Open Works. Executive Director Will Holman, who organized the effort, said he laid off 21 part-time employees last week because of the virus but has rehired some to assemble, sterilize and package the shields.

Danyeale, the South Carolina fashion designer, said she made about 200 masks bound for a local nursing home and hospitals in Florida, Georgia, Indiana and Illinois.

"If I'm one person creating 200 masks, imagine what we all could do," said Danyeale, 24. "It's super sad that we're at this point, but this is encouraging."

Durbin reported from Detroit and D'Innocenzio from New York. Associated Press writers Jeff McMillan

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and Michael Stobbe in New York; Martha Bellisle in Seattle; Fares Akram in Gaza City, Gaza Strip; Barry Hatton in Lisbon; and Virginia Mayo in Atwerp, Belgium, contributed to this report.

Buddy, can you spare a dime? Echoes of '30s in viral crisis?

By **MARCY GORDON AP Business Writer**

WASHINGTON (AP) — The imagery floats in sepia-colored photographs, faintly recalled images of be-draggled people lined up for bread or soup. Shacks in Appalachian hollows. Ruined investors taking their lives in the face of stock market crashes. Desperation etched on the faces of a generation that would soon face a world war.

By now, it's hard to find someone whose grandparents are old enough to recall the suffering of the Great Depression or the stream of rescue programs the government unleashed in response to it. All but gone, too, are memories of President Franklin Roosevelt's "fireside chats," his attempts to console an anxious populace and quell the "fake news" rumors of the day.

Nearly a century later, the U.S. economy is all but shut down, and layoffs are soaring at small businesses and major industries. A devastating global recession looks inevitable. Deepening the threat, a global oil price war has erupted. Some economists foresee an economic downturn to rival the Depression.

"With the markets destroying wealth so quickly, the two shocks we're seeing globally — the coronavirus and the oil-price war — could morph into a financial crisis," said Carmen Reinhart, a professor of economics and finance at Harvard's Kennedy School of Government. "We will see higher default rates and business failures. It could be like the 1930s."

During the early Depression years, unemployment peaked at 25%. U.S. economic output plunged nearly 30%. Thousands of banks failed. Millions of homeowners faced foreclosure. Businesses failed.

No one knows how this recession may unfold or how effectively the government's rescue programs might help. Ignited by an external event — a raging global pandemic — it is uniquely different from both the Depression and the financial meltdown of 2008-09. And so its possible solutions are trickier.

It isn't a conventional dislocation rooted in a financial collapse or an overheated economy or a burst asset bubble. The twist this time is that the only sure way to defeat the pandemic — with drastic containment measures like lockdowns, quarantines and business closures — is to deliberately cause a recession by bringing business and social life to a halt.

James Bullard, president of the Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis, has gone so far as to warn that unemployment could reach 30% within months and that economic output could shrink 50%. Other outlooks aren't quite as grim. But they're all bleak.

Some economists take heart from the fact that the government possesses more potent tools to stabilize the economy than it did in the 1930s, some of them created in response to the Depression. They include a social safety net in unemployment insurance, a guarantee of bank deposits and federally backed mortgages. And the 2008 financial crisis led to the creation of an array of programs to fortify the banking system and encourage borrowing and spending.

President Donald Trump, after a hesitant start, now backs a bold and multi-pronged federal response to the crisis. It is just the sort of sweeping government involvement in the economy that was pushed this year by Democratic presidential candidates, well before the viral outbreak, but is almost always resisted by Trump and other Republicans.

The plan still being negotiated in Congress would deliver, by far, the largest economic rescue plan in U.S. history. At somewhere near \$2 trillion, the wide-ranging aid package is intended to sustain workers and companies for at least 10 weeks. After that, further help might be needed.

The package is expected to include, among other things, small business loans to help retain workers; unemployment insurance; added liquidity into the economy; and cash payments for families. An earlier \$100 billion-plus package swiftly passed by Congress last Wednesday and signed by Trump includes a guarantee of paid sick leave for some workers affected by the virus.

A major element of the government's intervention will continue to be the Federal Reserve, which is in-

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jecting trillions of dollars in liquidity into the financial system to support key lending programs. On Monday, the Fed unleashed its boldest effort yet to protect the U.S. economy by helping companies and governments pay their bills. With lending markets threatening to shut down, the Fed's intervention is intended to ensure that households, companies, banks and governments can get the loans they need at a time when their own revenue is drying up.

As a whole, the emerging all-guns-blazing federal response is at least an echo of the economic stimulus that Roosevelt engineered in the depths of the Depression. Huge government aid programs put tens of millions to work in the construction of public buildings and roads, the pursuit of conservation projects and development of the arts.

Rural poverty was addressed, in part, by buying low-producing land owned by poor farmers and resettling them in group farms. Fannie Mae was created to buy home mortgages issued by the Federal Housing Administration. After the immediate crisis passed, Congress enacted far-reaching reforms of the financial system and banks and established unemployment insurance.

In contrast to today, the 1930s workforce was predominantly a male-dominated one of manual and farm labor. That changed only later, when the "Rosie the Riveter" wave of women entered factories to help mobilize America to fight World War II — a mobilization whose economic boost finally ended the Depression.

Today's service sector-dominated 21st century economy, populated more by retail, technology and financial services as well as by contractors, freelancers and "gig" workers, is far different. A 2020 equivalent of the Works Progress Administration would be hard to imagine.

In today's environment, more likely than government-created jobs are temporary measures like cash payments and guaranteed paid sick leave. Yet the options for the government are so vast that experts say they could deliver a significant benefit if deployed properly.

"There are more levers now for the government," says Richard Grossman, who teaches economic and financial history at Wesleyan University. "There's a lot now that the government can do that it wouldn't even have thought of doing in the 1930s."

An example was a rarely used 1950s-era lever that Trump invoked last week — the Defense Production Act. It empowers the government to marshal private industry to accelerate production of key supplies in the name of national security. (Critics complain that Trump has yet to put the law fully into action by actually ordering companies to make protective masks and other equipment that hospitals say are running dangerously low.)

Also last week, the president said he was open to giving the government a vast reach into the private sector — by taking equity stakes in companies that have been crippled by the virus, in exchange for giving the companies emergency loans.

This would recall the 2008-09 financial crisis, when the government engineered a \$700 billion bailout of banks and automakers — and, in exchange, acquired equity stakes in those companies. That enabled the government to profit years later, when the companies repaid the taxpayer bailouts. The government took over outright the home mortgage backers Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac.

"Right now, the country's frozen," said Anat Admati, a professor of finance and economics at Stanford University and senior fellow at Stanford Institute for Economic Policy Research. "Policymakers have to decide what's really best for society."

Admati notes that FDR's New Deal and unemployment insurance wove a new safety net after the ravages of the Depression. But the net has eroded over the last decade, she says, along with the rise in gig and part-time workers and low-paid staffers in health care and other service industries. Many of those workers don't stand to benefit much, if at all, from unemployment benefits and other programs built for a different era.

A result is that income inequality could worsen as a result of the crisis and the economic and social dislocation it causes.

"There are bailouts and subsidies coming," Admati said. "The key is how they are targeted."

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Follow Gordon on Twitter at @mgordonap

Coronavirus suddenly upends campaign themes for both parties

By ALAN FRAM Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The coronavirus pandemic and the nation's crashing economy are scrambling the themes both major political parties thought would carry them to victory in November for control of the White House and Congress.

Shattered, certainly for now, is President Donald Trump's ability to tout a brawny economy and record stock market prices as the predicate for his reelection. The GOP could face a hard time calling Democratic candidates socialists with a straight face as Congress works on a bipartisan, near \$2 trillion rescue package that would essentially have government drive the economy indefinitely.

Democrats say they're the party that will protect people's health care, but it's unclear that would be heard by people focused mostly on when life will return to normal. And by pounding away at Trump's competence, they'd risk alienating voters who, during a stressful time, want policymakers to produce solutions, not partisan wrangling.

"We're in the middle of a hurricane. We don't know all the political consequences. We don't know if it's a Cat 1 or a Cat 5," said GOP consultant Matt Mackowiak, referring to categories used to express the strength of storms.

Trump has seized public attention with almost daily briefings about the government's response to the pandemic. That's left former Vice President Joe Biden, the likely Democratic presidential nominee, and his party's congressional candidates searching for ways to break into the news cycle.

Clearly, campaign themes are changing.

Five political advertisers had run ads mentioning the coronavirus through last week, according to Advertising Analytics, a firm that tracks ad data. That included one in Florida, in Spanish, by Biden, and two by Sen. Susan Collins, R-Maine.

"In times like this, we must work together," Collins, who faces a competitive November reelection in a state that prizes independence, tells the camera.

More are coming.

Priorities USA, the largest outside Democratic political organization, planned to start ads Tuesday in election battlegrounds Florida, Michigan, Pennsylvania and Wisconsin. The spot plays Trump's own words, including, "We have it totally under control," as a bar graph displays the skyrocketing number of coronavirus cases.

The spot ends as "AMERICA NEEDS A LEADER WE CAN TRUST" is displayed against a black background. GOP operatives say Republican candidates must emphasize rallying behind the effort to battle the twin crises.

"The message is, 'We all need to come together, support the president and vice president and do all we can to fight the virus,'" Republican strategist John Feehery said. "Throw everything else out the window."

The Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee provided a memo last week offering guidance to its candidates.

"Remind followers through your actions that you take this seriously and would be a calm voice through crisis," the House Democratic political arm said in the guidance obtained by The Associated Press.

It urged candidates to discuss the significance of health care access and affordability — issues that helped the party capture House control in 2018. It suggested asking voters, "How are you doing?" and "Do you need anything" during phone calls.

Among the first to test the new political world will be two rivals for an open seat in a narrowly divided House district in Los Angeles' northern suburbs.

Republican Mike Garcia and Democrat Christy Smith face a special election in May, when voters seem certain to still be focused on the virus and the battered economy. As elsewhere, efforts to curb the infec-

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tion's spread means campaign phone calls and digital communications are replacing public events.

Both concede it's hard to get people's attention, but each said they are already sharpening their appeals to voters.

During tough times, people "remember what the important things are, and that's God, country and family," Garcia, a Trump supporter and former Navy fighter pilot, said in an interview. "We're all on the same team."

"Patriotism alone doesn't set food on people's tables," said Smith, a state assemblywoman. She said that Trump's virus response has put the U.S. "woefully behind" the infection and that it's time for "a reckoning on what effective government looks like."

Both parties say it's too early to know if the virus will be contained and the economy resuscitated by the time voters focus on the fall campaigns — and whether they'll blame or laud Trump and the GOP for the outcome.

Either way, Trump is casting himself as a wartime president in hopes of garnering the broad public support that usually goes to national leaders in times of crisis.

His reelection campaign has been using the emergencies in fundraising appeals that offer supporters autographed "Keep America Great" hats. "Our country is facing unprecedented times right now and President Trump is working around the clock to keep our Nation and its citizens safe," his emails say.

Biden used a fundraiser, held by phone, to swipe at Trump, who's made numerous false statements about the virus, including on its seriousness and the availability of tests.

"We need to tell the American people the truth, the unvarnished truth," Biden said.

"Look what we have in the White House right now," said Rep. Cheri Bustos, D-Ill., using that same theme. Bustos, who heads House Democrats' campaign arm, cited Trump's lashing out at reporters during new briefings and said, "We all look for leaders to lead in a crisis."

Democrats are also using the virus' spread to reprise their call for better health care.

House Speaker Nancy Pelosi and other Democrats marked Monday's 10th anniversary of President Barack Obama signing his health care overhaul into law. "We couldn't need it more" than during this pandemic, Pelosi told reporters about the statute. She blamed Trump for making "mistake after mistake after mistake" in handling the outbreak.

And on the Senate floor Monday, Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, R-Ky., underscored something both parties will be looking for: ways to taint the other for using the life-altering crises to seek political gain.

McConnell accused Democrats of viewing the chamber's blocked economic bill as "a juicy political opportunity" and trying to stuff it with environmental requirements and other priorities.

"Are you kidding me? This is the moment to debate new regulations that have nothing to do with this crisis? That's what they're up to over there," he said.

Still, Republicans concede the party faces a huge downside should the virus remain uncontrolled.

"If we become Italy," said the consultant Mackowiak, citing the country with the highest death toll so far, "there's no question the party in power would pay a political price for that. Absolutely no question."

Testing blunders crippled US response as coronavirus spread

By **MICHAEL BIESECKER, MIKE STOBBE and MATTHEW PERRONE** Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — A series of missteps at the nation's top public health agency caused a critical shortage of reliable laboratory tests for the coronavirus, hobbling the federal response as the pandemic spread across the country like wildfire, an Associated Press review found.

President Donald Trump assured Americans early this month that the COVID-19 test developed by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention is "perfect" and that "anyone who wants a test can get a test." But more than two months after the first U.S. case of the new disease was confirmed, many people still cannot get tested.

In the critical month of February, as the virus began taking root in the U.S. population, CDC data shows government labs processed 352 COVID-19 tests — an average of only a dozen per day.

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"You cannot fight a fire blindfolded," Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, head of the World Health Organization, said at a recent briefing. "We cannot stop this pandemic if we don't know who is infected."

The Department of Health and Human Services, which includes the CDC, has begun an internal review to assess its own mistakes. But outside observers and federal health officials have pointed to four primary issues that together hampered the national response — the early decision not to use the test adopted by the World Health Organization, flaws with the more complex test developed by the CDC, government guidelines restricting who could be tested and delays in engaging the private sector to ramp up testing capacity.

Combined with messaging from the White House minimizing the disease, that fueled a lackluster response that missed chances to slow the spread of the virus, they said.

"There were many, many opportunities not to end up where we are," Dr. Ashish K. Jha, the director of the Global Health Institute at Harvard, told the AP. "Basically, they took this as business as usual. ... And that's because the messaging from the White House was 'this is not a big deal, this is no worse than the flu.' So that message basically created no sense of urgency within the FDA or the CDC to fix it."

Even as private labs have been cleared by government regulators to process tens of thousands of additional tests in the last two weeks, experts warn that the nation is still falling well short of enough testing capacity to keep ahead of the highly contagious virus. And it can often take a week just to get results back.

Trump last week rated his administration's response to the crisis as a perfect 10. However, Dr. Anthony Fauci, the director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, said the CDC's system wasn't designed to test for and track a widespread outbreak, which he characterized as "a failing."

In interviews with the AP, two federal health officials with direct knowledge of the situation said CDC experts don't know why many of the agency's test kits failed to reliably detect the virus. The officials spoke on the condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to speak publicly about what went wrong.

J. Stephen Morrison, a health policy expert at the Center for Strategic and International Studies in Washington, called the testing issues a "debacle," contributing to what he described as a confused and delayed federal response to the crisis.

As a result, he said, the CDC has now been marginalized within the White House — a worrisome development.

"CDC has generally been regarded as the best in the game," Morrison said. "I don't think they anticipated the technical difficulty or the speed with which the virus has been moving. The virus was racing out ahead of them."

FATEFUL DECISIONS

On New Year's Eve, Chinese scientists informed the World Health Organization about a cluster of 27 pneumonia cases of unknown cause in the industrial megalopolis of Wuhan that they linked to the city's wholesale fish market. Less than two weeks later, the Chinese had sequenced the virus' genetic makeup and shared it with the world.

Within days, German scientists had developed a test that could identify a unique part of the virus' DNA. The WHO quickly adopted the German test, publishing technical guidelines on Jan. 17 and working with private companies to produce testing kits.

As they have done with some past outbreaks, officials at the CDC headquarters in Atlanta decided to develop their own test, focusing on three gene targets distinct from what the WHO used. Over the decades, the headquarters lab had built a track record of being among the first to develop tests for new diseases and quickly making them available for disease tracking.

The CDC published the technical details for its COVID-19 test on Jan. 28, 10 days after the WHO. By then, the virus had already been in the U.S. for at least two weeks.

The 35-year-old man who would become the first American to test positive had arrived in Seattle on Jan. 15, following a trip to Wuhan. After swabs from his nose and throat were flown to the CDC lab, federal officials announced the results Jan. 21.

In an interview on CNBC the following day, the Republican president was asked about the risk to the

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nation.

"We have it totally under control," he said. "It's one person coming in from China. ... It's going to be just fine."

With limited capacity at the CDC lab in Atlanta, the agency placed strict criteria on who could be tested: people with fevers, coughing or difficulty breathing who had also visited Wuhan within the preceding two weeks or who had close contact with someone already confirmed or under investigation for having the virus.

On Jan. 30, the day the WHO declared the outbreak a public health emergency, Trump again assured the American people that the virus was "very well under control."

Then he departed for a weekend at his Mar-a-Lago club in Florida, where he tweeted a photo of himself playing golf at his club in West Palm Beach.

"Getting a little exercise this morning!" the president wrote.

The following day, the U.S. declared its own emergency. Still, U.S. citizens returning from China who did not have a fever weren't tested for the virus but were encouraged to self-quarantine at home for 14 days.

At that point, the CDC had confirmed just eight cases of COVID-19 in the U.S. The agency amended its testing criteria to include people with fevers who had traveled to China, rather than just Wuhan.

FLAWED TEST KITS

Four days after the U.S. declared a state of emergency, only 178 patients had been tested and 82 others were listed as "pending," meaning they were awaiting final results, according to CDC data released at the time.

To help increase the number of people being screened, the Food and Drug Administration issued emergency authorization for CDC-certified labs run by state health departments to begin processing swabs, and they were provided with kits that could test 250 patients.

As the first tests were processed at the state labs, technicians reported getting inconclusive results, which the CDC has said could be due to the test looking for signs of generic coronaviruses, of which there are many, rather than the specific virus that causes COVID-19.

Whatever the reason, by mid-February, only about a half-dozen state and local public health labs had reliable tests. But still, CDC Director Dr. Robert Redfield continued to insist his agency had developed "a very accurate test."

"We found that, in some of the states, it didn't work," Redfield said earlier this month. "We figured out why. I don't consider that a fault. I consider that doing quality control. I consider that success."

The testing problems emerged just as the CDC broadened its criteria to include patients who were "severely ill" with COVID-19 symptoms "even if a known source of exposure has not been identified."

As more sick people sought to be tested, many states were forced to limit access because of the flawed CDC test. Accounts began to emerge through social media of people with all the symptoms of COVID-19 who either couldn't get tested or had test results delayed by days or even a week.

"I know of doctor friends of mine who have critically ill patients in the ICU, and we don't know if they have COVID or not because we can't get a test," Jha said last week.

COMMUNITY TRANSMISSION

On Feb. 24, exasperated officials at the Association of Public Health Laboratories sent a letter to the FDA, basically asking permission for state labs to develop their own tests. Within days, the FDA reversed its previous position and said both public and private labs could conduct testing.

Trump continued to insist the virus would die out on its own. "One day, it's like a miracle. It will disappear," he predicted Feb. 27.

By then, experts say, the opportunity to halt the relentless spread of the virus within the U.S. population had been lost.

On Feb. 29, only 472 patients had been tested nationwide, with just 22 cases confirmed, according to CDC data. Of those, nine cases were not related to travel but had spread person-to-person within the U.S.

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By comparison, South Korea had its first confirmed case of COVID-19 on Jan. 20, the same day as the U.S. Officials there used a test that focused on the same gene targets as the WHO test, according to the website of a test manufacturer. They then quickly permitted private-sector labs to run the samples. As a result, a nation with less than one-sixth the population of the U.S. mobilized to test more than 20,000 people a day.

South Korea also instituted drive-thru centers, allowing quicker identification of those who were infected but might not be displaying symptoms, thus slowing the emergence of new cases to a more manageable level.

Meanwhile, the rate of U.S. infections soared.

"The system is not really geared to what we need right now, what you are asking for," Fauci conceded during a congressional hearing earlier this month. "That is a failing. Let's admit it."

SHIFTING BLAME

As public outrage over the lack of available U.S. tests grew, the FDA announced it would allow private diagnostic lab companies to produce new tests without preauthorization from regulators.

Trump and HHS Secretary Alex Azar visited the CDC lab in Atlanta on March 6, praising the agency's performance and promising 4 million test kits would be available by the end of the following week.

That lofty number didn't match the ability of U.S. labs to process tests, however. Private providers were just then ramping up, while CDC and state health labs processed about 25,200 COVID-19 tests in the following seven days, according to CDC data.

At the same news conference, Trump said he wanted infected passengers to remain on a cruise ship off the West Coast to keep the number of confirmed COVID-19 cases in the U.S. low.

"I like the numbers being where they are," Trump said, shortly before departing Atlanta for another week-end of golf in Florida. "I don't need to have the numbers double because of one ship that wasn't our fault."

Trump has also attempted to mislay blame for the testing troubles on the Obama administration. In 2018, Trump disbanded the White House directorate charged with preparing for and responding to global pandemics.

"I don't take responsibility at all," Trump replied when asked about the testing shortfall in a March 13 briefing at the White House.

Morrison said Trump appears to see the virus as a political issue rather than a public health threat.

"You can imagine a White House that said, 'Do whatever it takes to test everybody for the virus,'" he said. "That wasn't the mentality. It was the opposite mentality, and ultimately the responsibility to protect the American people lies with the White House."

Trump and other officials have falsely said they declined to use the WHO test because it isn't reliable.

"Quality testing for our American people is paramount to us," Deborah Birx, who is coordinating the U.S. coronavirus response, said last week. "It doesn't help to put out a test where 50% or 47% are false positives."

"It was a bad test," Trump chimed in.

Tarik Jašarević, a WHO spokesman, told the AP last week that his agency had shipped 1.5 million testing kits manufactured in Germany to 120 countries around the globe, with no such problems emerging.

"The test has been validated in three external laboratories, adapted by WHO and manufactured in line with international quality standards," he said. "It has shown consistently good performance in laboratory and clinical use, and neither a significant number of false-positive nor false-negative results have been reported."

Over the past two weeks, U.S. testing capacity has surged, with private companies joining in. LabCorp began providing tests March 5, and Quest Diagnostics followed four days later. Tests also are being conducted at hospitals and other centers.

With the increased testing has come a skyrocketing number of confirmed cases, zooming from 43 at the beginning of March to 33,404 by Monday.

Only in the last few days has the United States finally begun testing more people each day than far

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smaller South Korea, according to data compiled by Johns Hopkins University.

Jha estimates the U.S. should be testing 100,000 to 150,000 people per day — figures he said should be obtainable given the number of high-quality diagnostic labs in the country.

“We certainly have the capacity. It’s just we’re not doing it,” Jha said Thursday. “We are up to about 40,000 tests per day now — and so we are moving in the right direction. Still far from where we need to be, but moving.”

Stobbe reported from New York. Associated Press writer Maria Cheng in London contributed to this report.

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Negotiators close on a nearly \$2 trillion virus aid package

By **LISA MASCARO, ANDREW TAYLOR and JONATHAN LEMIRE** Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Top congressional and White House officials emerged from grueling negotiations at the Capitol over the nearly \$2 trillion coronavirus rescue package saying they expected to reach a deal Tuesday.

Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin and Senate Democratic leader Chuck Schumer said they had spoken by phone with President Donald Trump during the long night of negotiations. While the two sides have resolved many issues in the sweeping package, some remain.

At midnight Monday, they emerged separately to say talks would continue into the night.

“We look forward to having a deal tomorrow,” Mnuchin told reporters after exiting Schumer’s office.

“The president is giving us direction,” Mnuchin said. “The president would like to have a deal, and he’s hopeful we can conclude this.”

Moments later, Schumer agreed that a deal was almost within reach. “That’s the expectation — that we finish it tomorrow and hopefully vote on it tomorrow evening,” he said.

The long evening of shuttle negotiations came after a long day trying to close the deal. The massive package is a far-reaching effort to prop up the U.S. economy, help American households and bolster the health care system amid the growing crisis. Mnuchin said talks were expected to resume at 9:30 a.m. EDT.

Tensions flared Monday as Washington strained to respond to the worsening coronavirus outbreak, with Congress arguing over a nearly \$2 trillion economic rescue package and an impatient Trump musing openly about letting the 15-day shutdown expire next Monday, March 30.

As the U.S. braces for an onslaught of sick Americans, and millions are forced indoors to avert a spike that risks overwhelming hospitals, the most ambitious federal intervention in modern times is testing whether Washington can act swiftly to deal with the pandemic on the home front.

“It’s time to get with the program, time to pass historic relief,” said an angry Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell earlier in the day as he opened the chamber after a nonstop weekend session that failed to produce a deal. “This is a national emergency.”

Fuming, McConnell warned Democrats — pointedly House Speaker Nancy Pelosi — to quit stalling on “political games,” as he described Democratic efforts to steer more of the aid toward public health and workers, and push other priorities.

Trump, who has largely been hands off from the negotiations, weighed in late Monday from the White House briefing room, declaring that Congress should vote “for the Senate bill as written,” dismissing any Democratic proposal.

“It must go quickly,” Trump said. “This is not the time for political agendas.”

The Republican president also sounded a note of frustration about the unprecedented modern-day effort to halt the virus’ march by essentially shutting down public activities in ways that now threaten the U.S. economy.

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Even though Trump's administration recommended Americans curtail activities starting a week ago, the president said: "We cannot let the cure be worse than the problem itself. At the end of the 15-day period, we will make a decision as to which way we want to go."

"Let's go to work," he said. "This country was not built to be shut down. This is not a county that was built for this."

Trump said that he may soon allow parts of the nation's economy, in regions less badly hit by the virus, to begin reopening, contradicting the advice of medical and public health experts across the country, if not the globe, to hunker down even more firmly.

Pelosi assailed Trump's idea and fluctuating response to the crisis.

"He's a notion-monger, just tossing out things that have no relationship to a well-coordinated, science-based, government-wide response to this," Pelosi said on a health care conference call. "Thank God for the governors who are taking the lead in their state. Thank God for some of the people in the administration who speak truth to power."

The White House team led by Mnuchin worked on Capitol Hill for a fourth straight day of talks as negotiators narrowed on a bipartisan accord.

In the nearly empty building, the virus continued to strike close. Republican Sen. Rand Paul of Kentucky, who announced he tested positive for coronavirus, is now among five senators under self-quarantine. Several other lawmakers have cycled in and out of isolation. And the husband of Sen. Amy Klobuchar, D-Minnesota, is in a hospital with pneumonia after testing positive, she said Monday.

First lady Melania Trump, meanwhile, has tested negative for the coronavirus, Trump said.

With a wary population watching and waiting, Washington labored under the size and scope of a rescue package — larger than the 2008 bank bailout and 2009 recovery act combined.

Democrats are holding out as they argue the package is tilted toward corporations and should do more to help suddenly jobless workers and health care providers with dire needs.

In particular, Schumer, D-N.Y., wants constraints on the largely Republican-led effort to provide \$500 billion for corporations, which Democrats have called a "slush fund." Schumer wants the bill to limit stock buy-backs, CEO pay and layoffs.

Yet, he said, "We're very close to reaching a deal." Even so, another attempt to move the package forward snagged, blocked as Democrats refused to quit negotiating.

Democrats won one concession — to provide four months of expanded unemployment benefits, rather than just three as proposed, according to an official granted anonymity to discuss the private talks. The jobless pay also would extend to self-employed and so-called gig workers.

But Republicans complained Democrats were holding out for more labor protections for workers, wanting assurances that corporations taking federal aid will commit to retaining their employees.

Pelosi came out with the House Democrats' own sweeping \$2.5 trillion bill, which would provide \$1,500 billion directly to the public and \$200 billion to the states, as governors are pleading for aid. She urged Senate negotiators "to move closer to the values" in it.

Trump has balked at using his authority under the recently invoked Defense Protection Act to compel the private sector to manufacture needed medical supplies like masks and ventilators, even as he encourages them to spur production. "We are a country not based on nationalizing our business," said Trump, who has repeatedly railed against socialism overseas and among Democrats.

From his home, Democratic presidential rival Joe Biden criticized Trump for stopping short of using the full force of emergency federal authority.

"Trump keeps saying he's a wartime president," Biden said in an online address. "Well, start acting like one."

On the economic front, the Federal Reserve announced Monday it will lend to small and large businesses and local governments as well as extend its bond-buying programs as part of a series of sweeping steps to support the flow of credit through an economy ravaged by the viral outbreak.

Central to the emerging rescue package is as much as \$350 billion for small businesses to keep making

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payroll while workers are forced to stay home. The package also proposes a one-time rebate of about \$1,200 per person, or \$3,000 for a family of four, as well as extended unemployment benefits.

Hospitals would get about \$110 billion for the expected influx of sick patients, said Mnuchin. But Democrats are pushing for more health-care dollars for the front-line hospitals and workers.

The urgency to act is mounting, as jobless claims skyrocket and financial markets are eager for signs that Washington can soften the blow of the health-care crisis and what experts say is a looming recession.

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.

Bev Banks contributed. Associated Press writers Jill Colvin, Colleen Long, Hope Yen, Mary Clare Jalonick, Ricardo Alonso-Zaldivar, Alan Fram and Padmananda Rama contributed to this report.

Solidarity: Foreign hospitals help French virus hotspot cope

By THOMAS ADAMSON and JEAN-FRANCOIS BADIAS Associated Press

STRASBOURG, France (AP) — The eastern French border city of Mulhouse was fought over by France and Germany across two centuries, but the horrors of the new coronavirus cluster tearing through this community of 110,000 is inspiring unusual solidarity.

While many countries have shut their borders to stem the march of the pandemic — even some nations within the borderless European Union are instituting ID checks — three German states have opened their hospitals to patients from eastern France. Hospitals in bordering Switzerland have done the same.

The Grand Est region is now the epicenter of the outbreak in France, which has buried the third most virus victims in Europe, after Italy and Spain. The crisis there can be traced largely to a dayslong evangelical church gathering in Mulhouse attended by hundreds of people at the end of February.

In a sign of the devastating toll, the local newspaper in Mulhouse has had to add extra obituary pages as the deaths from the coronavirus increase — as has been done in some areas of Italy. In France, only the area around Paris had confirmed more cases than Grand Est as of Sunday, but the capital region has a population more than twice the size.

“Every day we have eight to 12 people who arrive. We don’t know what to do,” said Dr. Patrick Vogt, a general practitioner at the hospital in Mulhouse who recalled a shift just two weeks ago answering the city’s emergency hotline when call after call came in for respiratory problems.

In Germany, the states of Saarland, Rhineland-Palatinate and Baden-Wuerttemberg have offered spare hospitals beds to treat French patients.

The spokesman of Baden-Wuerttemberg state’s health ministry said the state would “naturally try to help our French neighbors,” and authorities have asked all hospitals with free capacity to take in French patients requiring ventilators.

While Germany has many more confirmed virus cases than France, it has a much smaller number of deaths: 123, according to data from Johns Hopkins University, compared to France’s 860.

Today’s scenes in and around Mulhouse are sadly reminiscent of the bloodiest moments in the border region’s turbulent history. It was the stomping ground for armies in the 19th-century Franco-Prussian war and a site of intense battles during the 20th century’s two world wars, which included bitter territorial disputes over the Alsace region, now part of what’s called the Grand Est.

The city was the site of France’s World War I opening attack against Germany in 1914’s Battle of Mulhouse, while bloody battles and burning villages tore it apart again during World War II as German and U.S. forces fought each other.

Regional health officials say that Grand Est is approximately one week ahead of the rest of France in terms of infection rates: As of Monday, according to French government data, the region had recorded

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nearly 4,300 cases in an area with around 5.5 million people. In contrast, the area around France's capital of Paris, home to more than 12 million, had around 6,200 confirmed virus infections.

The analysis serves as a deadly warning for France, a nation of 67 million that has already seen a dramatic lockdown, that the worst could be yet to come.

In addition to the help offered from abroad, Mulhouse has drawn the focus of French President Emmanuel Macron, who ordered a field hospital to be built to help tend to the sick.

Around 50 soldiers have been putting up the structure that will have equipment usually used to make surgery possible in combat zones retrofitted to treat patients with the coronavirus. Authorities hope the five tents, each with six beds, could receive patients starting Monday.

About 100 military health personnel — anesthetists, nurses and nursing assistants — will be available to operate the field hospital.

In an unprecedented move during peacetime, the French army has also started evacuating critical coronavirus patients from the country's east.

On Saturday, there was a new military airlift of patients hospitalized in Mulhouse. The first one took place last week.

"The epidemic is in full swing. The virus continues to spread. The patients keeping coming in serious condition," said Vogt, the doctor in Mulhouse. "So far, there are no signs of hope."

Adamson reported from Leeds, England. Associated Press writers Sylvie Corbet and Lori Hinnant in Paris contributed to this report.

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

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Trump agencies push forward on rollbacks as pandemic rages

By ELLEN KNICKMEYER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Trump administration is steadily pushing major public health and environmental rollbacks toward enactment, rejecting appeals that it slow its deregulatory drive while Americans grapple with the pandemic.

As Americans stockpiled food and medicine and retreated indoors and businesses shuttered in hopes of riding out COVID-19, federal agencies in recent days moved forward on rollbacks that included a widely opposed deregulatory action by the Environmental Protection Agency.

The proposed rule would require disclosure of the raw data behind any scientific study used in the rule-making process. That includes confidential medical records that opponents say could be used to identify people.

The EPA says the rule, first introduced in 2018, is designed to increase transparency. But early drafts drew more than a half-million comments, most of them in opposition. Health experts say it would handcuff federal officials' ability to regulate proven health threats in the future, by making it impossible for regulators to draw on findings of public health studies.

The EPA has dismissed demands from 14 attorneys general, the National Governors Association, the National League of Cities and dozens of other government, public health and environmental groups and officials that it at least tap the brakes on that proposed rule while officials confront "the national emergency that arises from the COVID-19 pandemic."

Asked for comment, EPA spokeswoman Enesta Jones said the agency is "open and continuing our regulatory work as usual."

Jones said that the public can still have its say on the proposed rule. "As regulations.gov is fully function-

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ing, there is no barrier to the public providing comment," Jones said.

President Donald Trump and his agency chiefs have less than 10 months left in his current term to complete the administration's business-friendly easing of the way the federal government enforces scores of environment and public health protections.

The Interior Department, for example, is moving ahead with a measure that would greatly ease protections under the more than century-old Migratory Bird Treaty Act. Interior closed the 30-day comment period for the change as scheduled last week. Critics say the changes could devastate threatened and endangered species and speed an already documented decline in U.S. bird populations overall.

Interior also ticked off required procedural steps in March on consideration of a ConocoPhillips oil and gas project in the Alaska wilderness, and on a development plan for land surrounding New Mexico's Chaco Culture National Historical Park, a World Heritage site at the center of a long debate over oil and gas development, among other projects.

Interior spokesman Conner Swanson called it "unfortunate that these interest groups are playing politics at a time when all Americans need to come together."

"All DOI actions, including comment periods, are being evaluated on a case-by-case basis and adjustments are being made to ensure we are allowing for proper public input, while protecting the health and safety of the public and our employees," Swanson said.

Opponents also say they expect the White House to make public as soon as next week the latest version of its rollback in vehicle emissions standards, weakening one of the Obama administration's major efforts against climate-damaging fossil fuel emissions.

The ongoing push on rule-cutting as most of the world deals with coronavirus shows the EPA "clearly in a hurry to meet procedural rules" to wrap up key rollbacks, said Stan Meiburg, the agency's acting deputy administrator from 2014 to 2017 and a 39-year EPA veteran.

Last week, the EPA released its latest redo of the science rule. The release starts the clock on what the agency said would 30-day public comment period, moving the rule a big step closer toward adaptation.

Attorney generals from 13 states and the District of Columbia say the 30-day timeline is even shorter than the agency's usual 60-day comment period for such a change.

States objecting include New York, where a statewide lockdown is in effect as New York City deals with nearly 10,000 coronavirus cases and nearly 100 deaths. Around the world, more than one-fifth of the global population is under lockdown orders or advisories as officials struggle for medical supplies to face a new contagion that has no known vaccine or treatment.

Rep. Eddie Bernice Johnson, a Texas Democrat and chairwoman of the House Science, Space and Technology Committee, separately wrote the agency of the "massive disruption" of the coronavirus emergency and the "personal and professional turmoil" that health experts and others who normally would speak out on the science rule are facing.

Agencies have moved public hearings on proposed rules online or to conference calls.

Collin O'Mara, head of the National Wildlife Federation, pointed to the many low-income Americans in particular all but unable to have their say now that some public comments have moved online.

Nearly 20 million Americans — most of them rural residents, including many members of tribes — have no access to broadband internet, and another 100 million Americans have no broadband internet subscription, the federal government estimates.

In the regulatory world, the public comment periods are vital both for showing support or opposition for a rule change, and for laying out the groundwork for any future legal challenges.

In Washington state, the first big U.S. battleground in the pandemic, Joseph Bogaard took time for a telephone call-in comment period on a U.S. Army Corps of Engineers plan for the Snake River this month, even as he worried for elderly parents vulnerable to the disease, and for a daughter forced to make her way home when her California university closed because of the virus.

"What we're finding is people are so distracted and concerned" for families that it seemed wrong to ask the public at large to divert attention to the Corps' public comment period, Bogaard said last week. That's

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even though earlier, in-person public hearings on the same matter routinely drew hundreds of people.

"We made a decision, and a bunch of others did too, that we're not going to try to organize people and encourage people to turn out, whether it's meetings or phone calls right now," he said. "Because people were so distracted."

Associated Press writers Matthew Brown in Billings, Montana, and Susan Montoya Bryan in Albuquerque, New Mexico, contributed to this report.

Asian stocks gain after U.S. Fed promises economic support

By JOE McDONALD AP Business Writer

BEIJING (AP) — Asian stock markets gained Tuesday after the U.S. Federal Reserve promised support to the struggling economy as Congress delayed action on a \$2 trillion coronavirus aid package.

Market benchmarks in Tokyo and South Korea rose nearly 7% while Shanghai, Hong Kong and Australian markets also gained.

Traders were encouraged by the Fed's promise to buy as many Treasuries and other assets as needed to keep financial markets functioning.

That came as Wall Street fell 3% after Congress failed to approve an economic support package. It would send checks to U.S. households and offer support for small businesses and the hard-hit travel industry, but Democrats say it favors companies too heavily at the expense of workers and public health.

"Asian investors like what they see from an all-in Fed which is being viewed in a very impressive light for both Main and Wall Street even as the U.S. congress dithers," said Stephen Innes of AxiCorp. in a report.

The Nikkei 225 in Tokyo rose 6.7% to 18,009.50 and Seoul's Kospi gained 6.9% to 1,585.46. The Shanghai Composite Index rose 1.7% to 2,706.80.

The Hang Seng in Hong Kong was 3.8% higher at 22,513.69 and Australia's S&P-ASX 200 gained 2.9% to 4,677.70.

The Fed's promise goes beyond the \$700 billion in purchases announced last week.

The central bank said it will buy a wide range of investments, including corporate bonds for the first time, to improve trading in markets that help home buyers purchase houses, state and local governments borrow and businesses to get enough short-term cash to make payroll.

"The pressure is now on Congress to get its act together and provide the support that the Fed cannot do — helping the vulnerable people who face the biggest health and economic consequences," said James Knightley of ING in a report.

"The risk is that this wall of support from the Fed and the positive reaction in markets may give Congress a sense that it has more time and the pressure to deliver a package is reduced," Knightley said.

As Congress was locked in stalemate, the number of known infections worldwide jumped past 380,000. After just a few weeks, the United States has more than 46,000 cases and more than 600 deaths.

For most people, the coronavirus causes only mild or moderate symptoms, such as fever and cough. 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. Recovery could take six weeks in such cases.

Also Monday, trading on the New York Stock Exchange went all-electronic for the first time after the trading floor was temporarily closed as a precaution. The exchange announced the move last week after two employees tested positive for the virus. The number of floor traders had dwindled sharply in recent years as more trading became electronic.

Wall Street and some other stock markets have lost nearly one-third of their value over the past month as business shutdowns spread and airlines, retailers and other industries suffer rising losses.

Economists increasingly say a recession seems inevitable. Analysts are slashing their forecasts for upcoming corporate profits. Forecasters say they cannot project how deep the downturn might be or how long it will last.

Professional traders say investors need to see a decline in numbers of new infections before markets

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can find a bottom.

Congress debated through the weekend on the rescue plan, but White House officials and congressional leaders are struggling to finalize it. Democrats blocked a vote to advance the package Monday. They want to steer more of the assistance to public health and workers.

Even if the two sides find a compromise, Congress may need to go through more rounds of similar negotiations if the outbreak isn't brought under control.

On Wall Street, the benchmark S&P 500 index 2.9% to 2,237.40 in another day of sudden swings. It was down as much as 4.9% and as little as 0.2% earlier in the day.

The Dow Jones Industrial Average fell 3% to 18,591.93. The Nasdaq, which is dominated by technology companies, lost only 0.3% to 6,860.67 as tech shares held up better than the rest of the market.

In energy markets, benchmark U.S. crude gained 73 cents to \$23.36 per barrel in electronic trading on the New York Mercantile Exchange. The contract lost \$2.59 the previous session to close at \$22.63. Brent crude, used to price international oils, added 5 cents to \$27.03 per barrel in London. It lost \$1.49 the previous session to \$26.98.

The dollar declined to 110.33 yen from Monday's 111.23. The euro gained to \$1.0795 from \$1.0721.

Analysis: Trump struggles to adjust to crisis presidency

By JONATHAN LEMIRE, JILL COLVIN and ZEKE MILLER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump has never been known for his patience or long attention span.

Now, as the coronavirus crisis threatens his presidency, and upends his campaign for reelection, Trump is rapidly losing patience with the medical professionals who have made the case day after day that the only way to prevent a catastrophic loss of life is to essentially shut down the country — to minimize transmission and “flatten the curve” so hospitals aren't overwhelmed with critical patients.

The president also has been furious that his efforts to halt the harrowing drop in the stock market have so far proven ineffective. He has been calling friends and economists at all hours and berated aides and reporters who try to persuade him to recognize the severity of the outbreak.

Beyond the crisis, he has been agitated that he can't run the campaign he wants against Democrat Joe Biden, and he has used daily, hour-long briefings as near proxies for his campaign rallies, guaranteed to attract attention and to maintain the backing of his fervent political case.

This account is based on interviews with a dozen White House aides, former administration officials and Republicans close to the White House granted anonymity to discuss private conversations.

In a sign of his growing restiveness, Trump tweeted just before midnight:

“WE CANNOT LET THE CURE BE WORSE THAN THE PROBLEM ITSELF. AT THE END OF THE 15 DAY PERIOD, WE WILL MAKE A DECISION AS TO WHICH WAY WE WANT TO GO!”

He followed up early Monday with a series of retweets that seemed to endorse re-opening American society upon the conclusion of the initial 15-day restrictions, meant to slow the spread of the virus, on March 30.

It reflected the view from a growing number senior of administration officials who believe the closing of the economy was too harsh but that re-opening it would directly contradict the advice of health experts, a bipartisan group of governors and mayors and potentially set up a confrontation with his own medical advisers, including top infectious disease expert Dr. Anthony Fauci.

Trump tried to minimize the threat of the virus from the outset and in recent days has vacillated between acknowledging the crisis and suggesting that it would all soon be over.

With his Mar-a-Lago club shuttered and his frequent trips to the golf course now off limits, Trump has been largely stuck in the White House. Even in good times, other presidents have likened life in the White House to being like prison.

For Trump, that feeling is magnified by walling himself off during the crisis. Unable to travel and unsure of what to do, he's been crashing West Wing meetings, often forcing staffers to hurriedly adjust agendas

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as the president frequently gets in the way of health professionals trying to chart a course of action.

While some around him have suggested that he should only appear when there is big news to announce, Trump has been missing the spotlight and has told people that he knows the nation is watching the briefings and doesn't want to give up the stage.

On Sunday, he asked the briefing, originally slated for 4:30 p.m. to be pushed back later into the evening, when more people would be watching — including those tuning in for "60 Minutes," the president's favorite broadcast news magazine.

Trump has rebuked reporters whose questions he does not like, and behind closed doors, it has been much the same. The president has snapped at aides delivering news that contradicts his relentless belief the crisis will be resolved soon.

Upon his return from a trip to India last month, Trump lit into aides about Dr. Nancy Messonnier, the director of the National Center for Immunization and Respiratory Diseases at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, who had provided a dire warning about the virus' potential impact. He chided Vice President Mike Pence in a West Wing meeting for defending Washington Gov. Jay Inslee, a one-time Democratic presidential contender, for his handling of the crisis. And he angrily upbraided medical providers who called on his administration to do more, saying they should be upset instead with their local leadership.

And he has railed against journalists for investigating his sluggish response, driven, in part, by a desire to discredit the media at a time when he knows the headlines are only going to get worse.

"I watch and listen to the Fake News, CNN, MSDNC, ABC, NBC, CBS, some of FOX (desperately & foolishly pleading to be politically correct), the @nytimes, & the @washingtonpost, and all I see is hatred of me at any cost," he tweeted over the weekend. "Don't they understand that they are destroying themselves?"

That line has been picked up by others in the administration who also made clear that they don't see value in reporters digging into how the administration prepared for the looming crisis.

"I don't think it's appropriate right now for the press to be going backwards," echoed White House press secretary Stephanie Grisham. "There's no reason to go backwards and figure out tick-tocks of what happened when. We've got a crisis on our hands, we've got a coronavirus in this country, and the press should -- they've got a real opportunity...to also spread great information to this public and give information that our task force is trying to get out there."

It wasn't supposed to be this way.

Mere weeks ago, Trump and his reelection campaign had planned to use his massive financial advantage to try to define his opponent to the public in the race's early months, much like former President Barack Obama did to Republican Mitt Romney in 2012.

Trump had planned to frame the race as a contest between a decisive president who had ushered in an economic golden age, versus either an avowed socialist like Vermont Sen. Bernie Sanders or a creature of the Washington establishment, Biden, who was struggling to raise money and enthusiasm.

But instead of facing a wounded Democrat at the end of a drawn-out nomination fight, an emboldened Biden has emerged as his party's clear front-runner, having coalesced much of the party around him while addressing his cash shortage. And now Trump is staring at a recession, a potentially lethal political blow for any incumbent, but particularly one who has so tethered his fortunes to the stock market and a once buoyant economy.

Unable to hold his rallies, Trump has lost his favorite outlet and deprived his campaign of compiling valuable voter data. And while his campaign's war chest remains robust, any sort of TV ad campaign has been sidelined, though anti-Biden digital spots are still being produced and aides have expressed surprise and relief that the former vice president has largely ceded Trump the spotlight the last two weeks.

With no chance of any trips anytime soon aboard Air Force One, where Trump often spends his time talking out campaign strategy and socializing with old friends and allies, he's unleashed his anger on Twitter — including at Democratic governors who dare criticize him — and has been on the phone constantly, peppering people with calls.

In recent days, the president tried to reach one economist late at night but the person slept through

multiple calls.

So Trump just kept calling. Eventually, the economist woke up.

— Lemire reported from New York

Charities face growing need in pandemic without volunteers

By MARTHA MENDOZA, JULIET LINDERMAN and MAYE-E WONG undefined

For more than a week, Elaine Peoples, who cooked for a now-shuttered day care center, has been out of work. At 68, she's also at a higher risk for catching the new coronavirus. Nonetheless, she's showing up four days a week for her volunteer shift at an increasingly crowded Brooklyn soup kitchen and food pantry.

"Volunteering is vital," said Peoples, who herself is experiencing financial strain. "Everything I get goes to bills. My budget is stretched to the limit. There is no extra."

These days low-income families still need food. Homeless people still need beds. And those puppies in the animal shelter still need walks.

For decades, American nonprofits have relied on a cadre of volunteers who — quite suddenly — aren't able to show up. With millions staying home during the pandemic, charities that help the country's neediest are finding themselves in need.

"This is a time when we do need everybody pulling together to help us out," said Leslie Bacho, CEO of Second Harvest of Silicon Valley, one of the nation's largest food banks.

Many Americans have now been ordered to stay inside their homes, although there are exceptions for people providing essential services, and, in orders reviewed by The Associated Press, that includes volunteering at food banks.

Nonetheless, Bacho said half of the bank's volunteers — the equivalent of 107 full-time staffers — aren't showing up. This means as more people need food, there's less ability to get it to them.

"Volunteers are needed the most in times of crisis," said Dr. Grover Gilmore, dean of Case Western's school of social sciences. "This is simply another example, and an extreme example, of everyone needing to help as best they can."

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

One out of four Americans volunteers, performing an estimated 8 billion hours a year of service. The most common work? Collecting, preparing, distributing or serving food, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics.

Kathryn Strickland, chief network officer at Feeding America, the nation's largest organization of food banks, with some 200, said the group has seen a "sharp decline" in volunteers across the country, and is asking for new volunteers and scrambling to hire additional staff for pay.

Sheila Williams usually has 25 volunteers to feed about 100 people a day at St. Stephen Outreach in Brooklyn.

Now she's down to just 10, including Peoples, with lines out the door, more people than she's ever seen.

"Folks that don't normally come are coming," she said, after dishing out countless plates of franks, rice, beans and fruit. "They've lost their job, there's nothing in the supermarket."

Jose Rosa, 63, comes to the soup kitchen once a week. He lives in a homeless shelter and says he doesn't get enough to eat there.

"It keeps me healthy, it keeps food in my stomach," he said of his trips to St. Stephen. Without it, he said, "I'd go hungry."

In Silicon Valley, some 10,000 homeless people are in a terribly vulnerable situation, said Jennifer Loving, CEO of Destination:Home, a public-private partnership that addresses homelessness. Public health experts have warned that people living in tents or under tarps have less access to soap and water and are more exposed to disease and violence.

"Further, many others, like intake and shelter workers and food delivery workers are some of our lowest paid residents and are now called to the front lines," she said. "We must do everything we can to protect

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these heroes from further economic and health peril.”

Food banks are also largely canceling soup kitchens to avoid close contact that can spread the virus. Instead, they’re planning to drop boxes of food into people’s trunks at drive through stations.

In Seattle, the initial epicenter of the U.S. outbreak, Food Lifeline is struggling. It relies on roughly 18,000 volunteers every year to collect and sort food donations, package boxes and deliver goods. The organization is now telling all but a small core group of volunteers to stay home.

“We can’t take those food donations because we can’t sort and repack them,” Mark Coleman said. Instead, they’re buying prepackaged food that doesn’t require sorting, at roughly \$30 per box. All of this is happening as they expect demand for their services to double, Coleman said. Before the crisis, they packaged 72,000 boxes a month.

“It’s really tough. The stock market crash in 2008 was tough, but nothing like this,” he said.

Joe Burns, 69, is among just 20 volunteers still pitching in at Food Lifeline. For the past four years, he’s come four days a week to sort apples, oranges and other fresh fruits and vegetables. That won’t change, he said.

“People are getting laid off left and right and going on unemployment and very soon aren’t going to have any means for buying groceries,” he said. “There’s a need right now so you just gotta step up to the plate.”

It’s not just food banks whose volunteer workforce has dwindled.

Laura Condouris, 38, a graphic designer, continued to show up for her weekly shift at the Maryland Society for the Prevention of the Cruelty to Animals in Baltimore until it closed on Monday. But even then her work wasn’t over: That night, Condouris brought a mutt named Roxie, who’d been staying at another shelter, to a new foster home.

“The volunteers who are usually there on weekdays are retirees and older people,” Condouris said. “Some of the people I normally see there can and should be staying home, so I’ve got to pick up the slack.”

While the humans were hustling, Roxie, whose muzzle is white and whose left ear sags, seemed unperurbed by her move.

In global fight vs. virus, over 1.5 billion told: Stay home

By ADAM GELLER and LORI HINNANT Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — With masks, ventilators and political goodwill in desperately short supply, more than one-fifth of the world’s population was ordered or urged to stay in their homes Monday at the start of what could be a pivotal week in the battle to contain the coronavirus in the U.S. and Europe.

Partisan divisions stalled efforts to pass a colossal aid package in Congress, and stocks fell again on Wall Street even after the Federal Reserve said it will lend to small and large businesses and local governments to help them through the crisis.

Britain became the latest European country to order a near lockdown, imposing its most draconian peacetime restrictions in one of the world’s largest economies. It came the same day the head of the World Health Organization warned that the outbreak was accelerating and called on countries to take strong, coordinated action.

“We are not helpless bystanders,” Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said, noting that it took 67 days to reach 100,000 cases worldwide but just four days to go from 200,000 to 300,000. “We can change the trajectory of this pandemic.”

The scramble to marshal public health and political resources intensified in New York, where a statewide lockdown took effect amid worries the city of 8.4 million is becoming one of the world’s biggest hot spots. More than 12,000 people have tested positive in the city and more than 100 have died.

The governor announced plans to convert a mammoth New York City convention center into a hospital with 1,000 beds. The mayor warned that the city’s hospitals are just 10 days away from shortages in basic supplies.

“This is going to get much worse before it gets better. We are still in the relative calm before the storm,” Gov. Andrew Cuomo said.

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In Italy, the hardest-hit country, declines in both new cases and deaths for a second consecutive day provided a faint glimmer of hope, though it is too soon to say whether the crisis is leveling off.

Italian officials said Monday that the virus had claimed just over 600 more lives, down from 793 two days earlier. All told, the outbreak has killed more than 6,000 Italians, the highest death toll of any country, and pushed the health system to the breaking point there and in Spain.

The risk to doctors, nurses and others on the front lines has become plain: Italy has seen at least 18 doctors with coronavirus die. Spain reported that more than 3,900 health care workers have become infected, accounting for roughly 12% of the country's total cases.

British health workers pleaded for more gear, saying they felt like "cannon fodder." In France, doctors scrounged masks from construction workers, factory floors, an architect.

"There's a wild race to get surgical masks," François Blanchecott, a biologist on the front lines of testing, told France Inter radio. "We're asking mayors' offices, industries, any enterprises that might have a store of masks."

The way U.S. officials respond to the severe pressure on hospitals — and people's willingness to keep their distance from others — will prove critical in coming days, public health experts said.

"Actions taken right now will have a huge impact on the course of this epidemic in the U.S.," said Josh Michaud, associate director of global health policy with the Kaiser Family Foundation in Washington. "It's an important moment."

In Britain, Prime Minister Boris Johnson called the virus the "biggest threat this country has faced for decades" as he ordered people to stay home and directed shops that don't sell essential goods to shut down. He warned that police would be authorized to break up public gatherings of more than two people. Johnson faced pressure to roll out tougher measures because many have ignored advice on social distancing.

In the U.S., President Donald Trump told reporters he believes the American economy, which has been virtually shut down, could be reopened in weeks, not months. Trump wouldn't say when businesses would be up and running but that he wasn't "looking at months, I can tell you right now. We're going to be opening up the country."

Amid complaints of hospitals running low on masks, gloves and other critical gear, Trump signed an executive order making it a crime to stockpile supplies needed by medical workers. Attorney General William Barr said investigators will go after those hoarding goods on "an industrial scale" and price gouging.

"If you are sitting on a warehouse with surgical masks, you will be hearing a knock on your door," Barr told reporters.

China is now sending planeloads of protective gear and doctors to Europe as the crisis kept easing in the country where the virus first emerged late last year. For more than a week, the vast majority of China's cases have been in people coming into the country rather than from community spread, according to the National Health Commission.

"The U.S. is completely wasting the precious time that China has won for the world," said Geng Shuang, the Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman.

Dr. Anthony Fauci, the U.S. government's top infectious-disease expert, promised that medical supplies are about to start pouring in and will be "clearly directed to those hot spots that need it most."

Democratic presidential candidate Joe Biden criticized Trump for not using the full force of federal authority to combat the virus.

"Trump keeps saying he's a wartime president," Biden said in an online address. "Well, start acting like one."

On Capitol Hill, a nearly \$2 trillion plan that would prop up businesses and send checks to American households has stalled. Democrats argued it was tilted toward corporations rather than workers and health care providers.

Meanwhile, industries big and small kept shutting down. Boeing announced it was suspending production in the Seattle area, where it has two mammoth aircraft plants employing about 42,000 people.

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More than 380,000 people worldwide have been infected and over 16,500 have died from the virus, according to a running tally kept by Johns Hopkins University. More than 1.5 billion people around the globe have been instructed to stay in their homes.

After just a few weeks, the U.S. has more than 46,000 cases and over 500 deaths. Indiana, Michigan, Washington state and West Virginia joined states including California, Illinois and New York in asking or ordering residents to stay home and keep businesses closed — directives that cover more than one-third of the U.S. population in a patchwork of rules imposed by governors or cities.

Louisiana's governor urged residents to comply with his stay-at-home order, with New Orleans officials even removing basketball hoops from playgrounds and parks because people were still playing.

"The virus is here, and everybody needs to act as if they already have it," Gov. John Bel Edwards said.

For most people, the coronavirus causes only mild or moderate symptoms, such as fever or coughing. But for some older adults and people with existing health problems, it can cause more severe illness, including pneumonia. Over 100,000 people have recovered, mostly in China.

Former Hollywood studio boss Harvey Weinstein tested positive at the prison in New York where he is serving a 23-year sentence for rape and sexual assault, the head of the guards union said.

Authorities kept up their push to get people to stay home, but some were not listening. Social media showed snapshots of packed London Underground trains.

In New York, Cuomo fumed over gatherings of young people, saying, "It's reckless and it's violative of your civic spirit and duty as a citizen, as far as I'm concerned."

In a city where many people live in buildings with small elevators, a 21-story high-rise in the Chelsea neighborhood posted a notice in the lobby warning that there should be just one person per elevator, and those going to the laundry room shouldn't use a washing machine next to another one in use.

"People are really only going to get food and going back. That's what we need," said Matt Comet, making a brief dash into the nearly empty streets of his Manhattan neighborhood to pick up a carryout meal.

"I'm OK to have a book and watch TV for a bit, but if it continues for another month, another two months, it'll be pretty crazy," he said.

Closures upended life worldwide.

India took the extraordinary step of shutting down the nation's vast rail system, the lifeblood of the country of 1.3 billion people.

Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe acknowledged that postponing this year's Summer Olympics in Tokyo could be unavoidable. The International Olympic Committee said it will examine the situation over the next few weeks.

Nepal has ordered a weeklong lockdown, while Myanmar reported its first two cases of the virus.

U.N. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres called for an immediate cease-fire in conflicts around the world to tackle the pandemic.

"It is time to put armed conflict on lockdown and focus together on the true fight of our lives," he said.

Associated Press reporters around the world contributed to this report.

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

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

Europe eyes smartphone location data to stem virus spread

By FRANK BAJAK and NICOLE WINFIELD Associated Press

Several European nations are evaluating powerful but potentially intrusive tools for fighting the coronavirus pandemic, a move that could put public health at odds with individual privacy.

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The tools in question are apps that would use real-time phone-location data to track the movements of virus carriers and the people they come in contact with. The aim would be to develop a better sense of where infections are flaring up, how they are spreading and when health authorities need to order quarantines and related measures to limit the spread of COVID-19.

Britain, Germany and Italy are among the nations considering the enlistment of individual location data in the fight against the virus. That worries privacy advocates, who fear such ubiquitous surveillance could be abused in the absence of careful oversight, with potentially dire consequences for civil liberties.

"These are testing times, but they do not call for untested new technologies," a group of mostly British activists said in an open letter Monday to the country's National Health Service. The letter noted that such measures could put human rights at risk and may not work.

Unless the data in question can be effectively anonymized, the new tools would mark a substantial departure from existing European disease-surveillance efforts, which have focused on tracking people's movements with aggregated phone location data designed not to identify individuals. Italian police also began mobilizing drones on Monday to enforce restrictions on citizens' movements.

But there is a powerful argument in favor of more powerful digital tools, even if they shred privacy: They have been used by several of the Asian governments most successful at containing the pandemic, including in China, Taiwan, Hong Kong, South Korea and Singapore.

Last week, Israel took the most extreme step yet by charging its Shin Bet domestic security agency with using smartphone location data to track the movements of virus carriers for the prior two weeks, using historical data to identify possible transmission. Epidemiologists call this process "contact tracing," although traditionally it involves questioning newly diagnosed individuals about their contacts with others.

So far, there's no indication the U.S. government plans to track identifiable individuals for disease surveillance. A spokesperson for the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy said it was not currently working on such an app. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention did not immediately respond to questions from The Associated Press.

The White House has reached out to Big Tech companies for help in the worst pandemic in a century, but Google and Facebook both told the AP they are not sharing people's location data with governments.

A Google spokesperson said the company was exploring ways to use aggregated location information against COVID-19, but added that the location data Google normally gathers from phone users isn't accurate enough for contact tracing.

An AT&T spokesperson said the company was not sharing real-time location tracking with U.S. government virus-trackers. Sprint declined to comment and Verizon did not immediately respond to a query.

Contact-tracing apps being considered by European governments would, like Israel's effort, go well beyond what those governments are currently getting from wireless carriers to identify "hot spots" of disease and human concentration.

While legal safeguards exist in most democracies to protect digital privacy, the danger of the coronavirus could quickly compel policymakers to override them. On Friday, the European Union's Data Protection Authority cautiously endorsed putting privacy on pause during the public health emergency.

Italy's Lazio region, which includes Rome and is home to 5.9 million people, rolled out a voluntary app over the weekend to assist people placed under quarantine or who think they've been in contact with others infected by the coronavirus. Privacy advocates worry that such apps can be used to track people. Poland has introduced a more intrusive app — its instructions say it's voluntary — to enforce 14-day quarantine for an estimated 80,000 people.

Jens Wille, CEO of the Hamburg digital mapping company UbiLabs, developed an opt-in app prototype for contact tracing that he said German officials evaluated but chose not to adopt. Officials at the Robert Koch Institute, which is managing the country's COVID-19 response, told the AP they did not yet have anything to say on the issue. "They are working on something," said Wille.

The chief executive of the innovation arm of Britain's National Health Service, Matthew Gould, said in a statement that his office was "looking at whether app-based solutions might be helpful in tracking and managing coronavirus, and we have assembled expertise from inside and outside the organisation to do

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this as rapidly as possible.”

In South Korea, a compulsory app enforces self-isolation for those ordered to maintain it. Anyone violating quarantine could face a \$8,400 fine or up to a year in prison. Taiwan and Singapore also use smartphone apps to enforce quarantines via “electronic fences” that alert authorities when someone moves out of quarantine. Hong Kong health authorities use electronic wristbands to monitor all overseas travelers ordered into self-isolation.

Italy’s minister of technological innovation, Paola Pisano, said in an interview Monday that a government task force is putting out a request for tracking-app candidates on Tuesday and expects to evaluate them by the end of the week.

Pisano said she expects Italy’s app to be voluntary and for the government to protect individual privacy. One-sixth of Italy’s 60 million people don’t use the internet, she said, and older people — those most susceptible to being killed by the virus — are generally disinclined to download a new app, and might rebel if forced to do so.

Europeans are closely examining the South Korean model of contact tracing, which involves the use of personal information such as immigration, public transportation and credit-card records in addition to location-tracking GPS data.

But the Korean government disclosed so much ostensibly anonymous personal data that digital sleuths were able to identify virus carriers based on such information as where patients visited just before testing positive. Some people boycotted businesses, stigmatized carriers and even used the data to track alleged marital infidelity. On Friday, South Korea’s Centers for Disease Control and Prevention said it was drafting new guidelines to scale back such abuses.

Michael Parker, an ethicist on an Oxford University team, said people are more likely to contact-tracing app if they’re not coerced — and the greater the participation the better the odds of identifying ‘hot spots’ and containing the virus.

“Identification and notification could be done anonymously,” he said. “You wouldn’t need to have to tell people where their possible infection came from.”

But Ashkan Soltani, a former U.S. Federal Trade Commission chief technologist, cautioned that contact tracing via app needs to be complemented with other means of disease surveillance, as in South Korea. That begins with universal testing for the virus, which the U.S. doesn’t have yet.

There are other problems. Location data from wireless carriers alone can produce a lot of false positives. Even phone-based GPS data is often inaccurate, Soltani noted, and could inaccurately identify strangers as meeting when they’re actually just in the same high-rise apartment building.

Israel’s Army Radio reported Monday that some people had been erroneously forced into quarantine as a result of location errors. It did not say how many. Adi Carmi, a former Shin Bet official, told the station that such anomalies happen with any large scale system. “It’s reasonable to assume that there will be mistakes here and there,” he said.

Amid the uproar, the Israeli health ministry launched a smartphone app that lets users opt into tracking system so it can notify them if they have overlapped with any virus carriers over the past 14 days. The app is constantly updated with epidemiological data.

The closest analogues in the U.S. are apps from startups K Health and Buoy Health that let people self-diagnose with an online questionnaire. If their symptoms are consistent with COVID-19, the individual can be connected with medical professionals to determine next steps.

New York-based K Health shares data with the government for a “heat map” of virus spread but says it is keeping personal data private.

AP correspondents Kelvin Chan in London, Ilan Ben Zion in Jerusalem, Tong-hyung Kim in Seoul and Frank Jordans in Berlin contributed to this report. Bajak reported from Boston, Winfield from Rome.

Networks face decision: How long to stick with Trump?

By DAVID BAUDER AP Media Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Six television networks began showing President Donald Trump's briefing on the coronavirus outbreak late Monday, but only Fox News Channel stuck it out to the end nearly two hours later.

It was a notable turning point in coverage of the president's now-daily briefings. Networks had been starting to hear criticism of how much time they have been showing the president answering questions live, reminiscent of a similar debate in the past about showing Trump's campaign rallies.

Still, there's a difference between political rallies and a White House discussion of a national emergency.

ABC, CBS and NBC all covered Trump at the beginning of Monday's briefing, which began about 6:10 p.m. Eastern. After 20 minutes, they switched to the network evening newscasts, never to return to Trump. The president spoke until shortly after 8 p.m.

The cable news networks have given Trump blanket coverage for his briefings, but CNN cut away Monday at around 7:20 p.m. MSNBC followed within five minutes.

Of its own decision to stop showing Trump live, CNN said that "if the White House wants to ask for time on the network, they should make an official request. Otherwise we will make our own editorial decisions."

MSNBC, through a spokesperson, said that "we cut away because the information no longer appeared to be valuable to the important ongoing discussion around public health."

The network's top star, Rachel Maddow, had said Friday night that television networks should no longer show Trump live. She cited examples of what she called false or misleading statements the president had made in past briefings, from general suggestions that the government had the virus under control to more specific discussions about drug treatments.

"All of us should stop broadcasting it, honestly," she said. "It's going to cost lives."

The Washington Post's media critic, Margaret Sullivan, wrote Monday that the briefings were beginning to sound like substitutes for Trump's campaign rallies, and were working against the goal of giving the public critical and truthful information.

"They have become a daily stage for Trump to play his greatest hits to captive audience members," she said.

On Monday, after he had dismissed most of the administration officials who had stood near him on the podium, Trump talked about his briefings. By then, only Fox was televising him.

"I don't want to stand here for two hours and do this but I think it's important," he said. "I call it getting it out of your system. We don't want to just answer two questions and leave."

He said some of the questions were repetitive, but others were good and led to problems being solved.

"At least you can say I'm very transparent," he said.

He spoke to an emptier room of reporters. More space has been placed between reporters since it was revealed that one correspondent had a suspected case of the disease.

The briefings have attracted public interest, perhaps in part due to more people being at home and able to watch. For the three cable news networks, five Trump briefings last week each had more than double the audience the networks had for the same time period a year earlier, the Nielsen company said.

For example, Fox News Channel, CNN and MSNBC attracted 8.28 million viewers for Trump's briefing Friday, nearly half of them watching Fox. The audience for those networks a year earlier was 2.82 million, Nielsen said.

"When people are tuning in in droves to watch a news event, that tells you that they're interested in it — and you have to pay attention to that," said Jonathan Klein, a former CNN president.

One option for news executives worried that Trump might try to mislead the public could be to air briefings on tape delay so inaccuracies could be pointed out, he said.

Given the importance of the story, though, "I don't think they have a choice" but to air the briefings, said Klein, who spoke in an interview shortly after Monday's session began.

Fed makes strongest bid yet to protect firms and governments

By CHRISTOPHER RUGABER AP Economics Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Federal Reserve is unleashing its boldest effort yet to protect the U.S. economy from the coronavirus by helping companies and governments pay their bills and survive a devastating crisis.

With lending in Treasury and mortgage markets threatening to shut down, the Fed announced an aggressive set of programs Monday to try to smooth out those markets. To do so, it committed to buy as much government-backed debt as it deems necessary. And for the first time ever, the Fed said it plans to buy corporate debt, too.

Its intervention is intended to ensure that households, companies, banks and governments can get the loans they need at a time when their own revenue is fast drying up as the economy stalls.

The Fed's all-out effort to support the flow of credit through an economy ravaged by the viral outbreak has now gone beyond even the extraordinary drive it made to rescue the economy from the 2008 financial crisis.

"The coronavirus pandemic is causing tremendous hardship across the United States and around the world," the Fed said in a statement. "Aggressive efforts must be taken across the public and private sectors to limit the losses to jobs and incomes and to promote a swift recovery once the disruptions abate."

The announcement initially lifted stocks in early trading. But rancorous talks in Congress over a \$2 trillion rescue package — and uncertainty over when any agreement might be reached — depressed shares about 2.5% in volatile midday trading. The yield on the 10-year Treasury bond fell, a sign that more investors are willing to purchase the securities.

With its new programs, the Fed, led by Chair Jerome Powell, is trying to both stabilize the economy and allay panic in financial markets. As the need for cash has escalated among many corporations and city and state governments, large businesses have been drawing as much as they can on their existing borrowing relationships with banks.

The intensifying need for money means that banks and other investors are seeking to rapidly unload Treasuries, short-term corporate debt, municipal bonds and other securities. The Fed's move to intervene as a buyer of last resort is intended to supply that needed cash.

President Donald Trump, a frequent Fed critic, had rare praise for Powell on Monday.

"I really think he's caught up and he's done the right thing," Trump said during a White House press conference. He said he called Powell on Monday and said, "Jerome, good job." Less than two weeks ago, Trump was noting that he had the power to fire or demote the Fed chief.

The central bank's actions, meanwhile, increase pressure on Congress to approve an agreement that would include funds to backstop the Fed's lending. Many economists say that whatever financial support Congress eventually provides will likely be even more important than the Fed's intervention. And they warn that such fiscal help needs to come soon.

The Fed's intervention is not a substitute for fiscal stimulus," said Joseph Gagnon, a former Fed economist who is now senior fellow at the Peterson Institute for International Economics. "Let's hope Congress passes something quickly."

Joe Brusuelas, chief economist at RSM, a tax and advisory firm, said that if Congress can pass the legislation and have it signed into law by Tuesday, banks could start making loans to small and medium-sized businesses, with the Fed's support, by Friday.

In its announcement Monday, the Fed said it will establish three new lending facilities that will provide up to \$300 billion by purchasing corporate bonds, a wider range of municipal bonds and securities tied to such debt as auto and real estate loans. It will also buy an unlimited amount of Treasury bonds and mortgage-backed securities to try to hold down borrowing rates and ensure those markets function smoothly.

The central bank's go-for-broke approach is an acknowledgment that its previous plans to keep credit flowing smoothly, which included dollar limits, wouldn't be enough in the face of the viral outbreak, which has brought the U.S. economy to a near-standstill as workers and consumers stay home. Last week, it said it would buy \$500 billion of Treasuries and \$200 billion of mortgage-backed securities, then quickly

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ran through roughly half those amounts by week's end.

And on Monday, the New York Federal Reserve said it would buy \$75 billion of Treasuries and \$50 billion of mortgage-backed securities each day this week.

"They're really setting the economy up" to start functioning again when the health crisis subsides, said Donald Kohn, a former Fed vice chair who is a senior fellow at the Brookings Institution. "Part of this is about the other side of the valley: Make sure the credit is there."

Kohn noted that it would take time to set up some of the Fed's programs, but just knowing that they are on the way should reassure businesses.

Many companies seeking loans are worried about cash flow as their revenue dries up along with their customers. Elizabeth Cooper McFadden, who runs Novella Brandhouse, a marketing firm in Kansas City, Missouri, has applied for a disaster loan from the Small Business Administration. But she's concerned about how long that loan will take to be processed and wonders if the Fed program might be faster. She will need more money in the next 30 to 60 days.

McFadden would also like to see more lenient terms than SBA loans allow.

"We're looking at any and all options," she said, adding, hopefully: "I feel that 90 days from now, it's going to be a different picture — in a positive way."

The Fed mostly creates the money it will use to buy bonds and lend to large and small businesses. But it seeks to avoid credit losses. It has been using money from a Treasury fund to offset any losses on its loans. That fund has already committed most of that money to the Fed's existing facilities. The congressional legislation could boost that amount by about \$500 billion.

"The steps announced today, combined with the previous ones ... should substantially improve market functioning and should provide some important support for the economy," said Roberto Perli, a former Fed economist who is now head of global policy research at Cornerstone Macro.

But Perli cautioned that the benefits won't be felt immediately.

"The next couple of quarters will still be probably bad," he said.

The new programs announced Monday by the Fed include two that will buy corporate debt issued by large companies.

One program will buy newly issued corporate debt. This is an effort to revive that market, which has effectively come to a standstill. The second will buy previously issued corporate debt. Both programs will include \$10 billion provided by the Treasury to offset any losses.

A third new lending program will buy securities backed by packages of auto loans, credit card loans and some small business loans. Lending in those areas hinges on the ability of banks to package those loans into securities and sell them. So the Fed's move is critical to the ability of banks to continue to provide these loans as the economy falters.

The Treasury will also provide \$10 billion to that program to offset any losses. All told, those three programs can lend up to \$300 billion.

The Fed said that companies "that are expected to receive direct financial assistance under pending federal legislation" are not eligible to participate in the corporate lending programs — a reference to the airline industry and perhaps others under consideration.

Companies will have to be rated at investment grade, or above junk level, to be eligible for lending. The companies can defer payments for up to six months, the Fed said. If they do suspend payment, they are not allowed to buy back their shares or pay dividends, it said.

The Fed also said it will soon establish a "Main Street Business Lending Program" to support lending to small and medium-sized businesses. But it provided few details and didn't say when that program would begin.

That program will likely be funded by and is intended to complement the congressional stimulus legislation, which also includes a provision to provide financing to very small companies. The Fed's Main Street program will target medium-sized businesses, officials said.

Brusuelas noted that by announcing the Main Street lending program, the Fed had committed to some-

thing before a congressional backstop was in place, a virtually unheard-of step.

"You're never going to see that again, hopefully," he said.

AP writers Paul Wiseman, Martin Crutsinger and Kevin Freking contributed to this report.

What you need to know today about the virus outbreak

By The Associated Press undefined

The head of the World Health Organization says the coronavirus outbreak is accelerating but insists "we can change the trajectory of this pandemic." More than 1.5 billion people — one-fifth of the world's population — were urged or ordered to stay home Monday to try to blunt the spread of coronavirus. The death toll from the pandemic has surpassed 16,000 people worldwide, and the virus has sickened more than 370,000.

Partisan divisions stalled efforts to pass a colossal aid package in Congress, and stocks fell again on Wall Street even after the Federal Reserve said it will lend to small and large businesses and local governments to help them through the crisis. The Dow Jones Industrial Average lost more than 580 points, or 3%.

In Italy, both new cases and deaths declined for a second consecutive day, providing a faint glimmer of hope, though it is too soon to say whether the crisis is leveling off.

A surge in infections has caused a critical shortage of medical supplies in many places. The hunt for ventilators and other critical items is consuming Europe and the U.S.

Here are some of AP's top stories Monday on the world's coronavirus pandemic. Follow [APNews.com/VirusOutbreak](https://www.apnews.com/VirusOutbreak) for updates through the day and [APNews.com/UnderstandingtheOutbreak](https://www.apnews.com/UnderstandingtheOutbreak) for stories explaining some of its complexities.

WHAT'S HAPPENING TODAY:

—More than 1.5 billion people have been urged or ordered to stay home to try to blunt the spread of coronavirus.

— Britain's prime minister, Boris Johnson, ordered citizens to stay at home and banned gatherings of more than two people who do not live together.

—The coronavirus has arrived in the Gaza Strip and Syria, raising fears that the pandemic may now prey on some of the most vulnerable populations in the world.

—The International Olympic Committee announced it was considering a postponement and would make a final decision within four weeks. Major Olympic nations like Canada and Australia have added pressure by saying they will not send teams if the games are staged this year.

—Stocks fell about 3% on Wall Street as Congress hit another roadblock in talks to inject nearly \$2 trillion into the economy.

—Those defying social distancing and lockdown restrictions from France to Florida to carry on as normal are coming under fire. One French minister was furious: "Some consider they're little heroes when they break the rules. Well, no. You're an imbecile, and especially a threat to yourself."

—The virus was stirring calls for sanctions that have been levied against Venezuela and Iran to be eased. Those countries were urging the Trump administration to ease crippling economic sanctions they contend are contributing to the growing death toll caused by the coronavirus pandemic.

—Grieving has become even more upsetting for families in the time of coronavirus. An untold number of burials around the globe now go forward with nothing more than a cleric, a funeral home employee and a single loved one. Others receive what would have once been called pauper's funerals, buried in the clothes they died in.

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.

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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 fingernails before rinsing off.

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

Misinformation overload: How to separate fact from fiction and rumor from deliberate efforts to mislead.

ONE NUMBER:

\$300 BILLION: In a series of sweeping steps, the Fed will lend to small and large businesses and local governments as well as extend its bond-buying programs. It's all part of the Fed's ongoing efforts to support the flow of credit through an economy ravaged by the viral outbreak.

IN OTHER NEWS:

AP'S MARCH MADNESS: The virus may have canceled March Madness, but the AP is counting down the top 10 men's basketball games in the history of the NCAA Tournament. We're counting them down through April 5, along with a host of memorable moments through the eyes of players who were there.

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>

US slashes aid to Afghanistan after Pompeo visit to Kabul

By **MATTHEW LEE AP Diplomatic Writer**

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Trump administration is slashing \$1 billion in assistance to Afghanistan and threatening further reductions in all forms of cooperation after the country's rival leaders failed to agree on forming a new government.

The decision to cut the aid was made on Monday by Secretary of State Mike Pompeo after he made an unannounced, urgent visit to Kabul to meet with Ashraf Ghani and Abdullah Abdullah, the rival Afghan politicians who have each declared themselves president of the country after disputed elections last year. Pompeo had hoped to break the deadlock but was unable to.

In an unusually harsh statement, Pompeo slammed the two men for being unable to work together and threatening a potential peace deal that could end America's longest-running conflict. The U.S. has been the prime backer of the Afghan government since it invaded the country in 2001 and overthrew the Taliban after the 9/11 attacks.

"The United States deeply regrets that Afghan President Ashraf Ghani and former Chief Executive Abdullah Abdullah have informed Secretary Pompeo that they have been unable to agree on an inclusive government that can meet the challenges of governance, peace, and security, and provide for the health and welfare of Afghan citizens," he said.

Pompeo said the U.S. was "disappointed" in both men and their conduct, which he said had "harmed U.S.-Afghan relations and, sadly, dishonors those Afghan, Americans, and coalition partners who have sacrificed their lives and treasure in the struggle to build a new future for this country."

Pompeo said their inability to work together posed a "direct threat" to U.S. national interests and that the administration would begin an immediate review of all its support programs for Afghanistan, starting with a reduction of \$1 billion in aid this year. He said it could be reduced by another billion dollars in 2021.

"We have made clear to the leadership that we will not back security operations that are politically motivated, nor support political leaders who order such operations or those who advocate for or support parallel government," Pompeo said.

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Speaking to reporters aboard his plane on the return flight home, Pompeo said he was hopeful Ghani and Abdullah "will get their act together and we won't have to" cut the assistance. "But we're prepared to do that," he said. He defended his written statement from interpretations that it is overly harsh saying it "is neither hopeful nor threatening. It is factual. These are the expectations that we have."

Pompeo, who after leaving Kabul met with a senior Taliban official in Qatar, also said Ghani and Abdullah were acting inconsistent with agreements they made to support a U.S.-Taliban peace agreement signed last month. That deal called for intra-Afghan peace talks to begin within 10 days, by March 10, but they have not begun. Ghani and Abdullah have not yet even agreed on who should be part of the non-Taliban delegation nor have they agreed to prisoner swaps with the Taliban as envisaged by the deal.

"It's all gotta come together," Pompeo said. Asked if the Taliban had also been acting "inconsistently" with the agreement, he replied: "No. They committed to reducing violence and they've largely done that and they are working towards delivering their team to the ultimate negotiations."

Pompeo said the United States would continue to withdraw its troops from Afghanistan under the terms of its agreement with Taliban, which calls for the reduction in the next several months from about 13,000 to 8,600.

Pompeo added that the U.S. would be willing to look again at the aid cuts if the two leaders can form an inclusive government and said Washington remained committed to partnership with the people of Afghanistan. As a demonstration of that, he said, the U.S. would provide \$15 million in assistance to help Afghanistan fight the spread of the coronavirus.

Pompeo had left Afghanistan earlier Monday without saying whether he was able to broker an agreement between the squabbling political leaders. He'd traveled thousands of miles despite a near-global travel shutdown because of the coronavirus pandemic, at a time when world leaders and statesmen are curtailing official travel.

But as he departed there was no sign the impasse was over and there were reports in Kabul that Pompeo had given Ghani and Abdullah until Tuesday to come up with a compromise.

From Kabul, Pompeo flew to Doha, Qatar, where he had witnessed the signing of the U.S.-Taliban deal on Feb. 29, to meet Taliban officials, including Mullah Abdul Ghani Baradar, a co-founder of the Taliban and head of their political office in Qatar. Baradar signed the agreement on behalf of the group. The State Department said Pompeo's aim was "to press the Taliban to continue to comply with the agreement signed last month."

Since the U.S.-Taliban deal was signed, the peace process has stalled amid political turmoil in Afghanistan, as Ghani and Abdullah remained deadlocked over who was elected president in last September's presidential polls. They both declared themselves president in dueling inauguration ceremonies earlier this month.

Pompeo had met separately with Ghani and then Abdullah on Monday before meeting together with both men together.

The United States pays billions every year toward the Afghan budget, including the country's defense forces. Afghanistan barely raises a quarter of the revenue it needs to run the country, giving Pompeo considerable financial leverage to force the two squabbling leaders to overcome the impasse.

The political turmoil has put on hold the start of intra-Afghan peace talks that would include the Taliban. Those talks are seen as a critical next step in the peace deal, negotiated to allow the United States to bring home its troops and give Afghans the best chance at peace.

The U.S. and NATO have already begun to withdraw some troops from Afghanistan. The final pullout of U.S. forces is not dependent on the success of intra-Afghan negotiations but rather on promises made by the Taliban to deny space in Afghanistan to other terror groups, such as the insurgents' rival Islamic State group.

But within days of the U.S. and the Taliban signing the peace deal in Qatar, Afghanistan sunk into a political crisis with Ghani and Abdullah squaring off over election results and Ghani refusing to fulfill his part of a promise made in the U.S.-Taliban deal to free up to 5,000 Taliban prisoners. The insurgents were to free 1,000 Afghan officials and soldiers they hold captive. The exchange was meant to be a goodwill gesture by both sides to start the negotiations.

The urgency of Pompeo's surprise visit was highlighted by the fact that the State Department has warned American citizens against all international travel, citing the spread of the coronavirus. Pompeo's last overseas trip in late February was to Doha for the signing of the U.S.-Taliban peace deal he is now trying to salvage.

Pompeo's visit was also extraordinary for the fact that the U.S., like the United Nations, had earlier said it would not be drawn into mediating feuding Afghan politicians as it did in 2014 presidential polls. While the Afghan election commission this time gave the win to Ghani, Abdullah and the election complaints commission charged widespread irregularities to challenge Ghani's win

Associated Press writers Rahim Faiez in Kabul and Kathy Gannon in Islamabad contributed to this report.

PG&E to plead guilty to lethal crimes in 2018 wildfires

By MICHAEL LIEDTKE and OLGA R. RODRIGUEZ Associated Press

SAN FRANCISCO (AP) — Pacific Gas & Electric will plead guilty to 84 counts of involuntary manslaughter for a swath of death and destruction left behind after its fraying electrical grid ignited a 2018 wildfire that destroyed three Northern California towns and drove the nation's largest utility into bankruptcy.

The plea agreement announced Monday resolves the charges facing PG&E as part of a previously sealed indictment in Butte County. It marks the second time this decade that the company's neglect has culminated in it being deemed a criminal. PG&E already is serving a five-year criminal probation imposed after it was convicted of six felony counts for falsifying records and other safety violations underlying a natural gas explosion that blew up a neighborhood in 2010 and killed eight people in San Bruno, California.

As with its prior criminal conviction, no one from PG&E will go to prison for the company's felony crimes. Instead, its plea agreement with the Butte County District Attorney's office calls for PG&E to pay a \$4 million fine, the maximum allowed. It will also help pay for efforts to restore access to water for residents affected by the loss of a canal destroyed by what became known as the Camp Fire.

"We cannot replace all that the fire destroyed, but our hope is that this plea agreement, along with our rebuilding efforts, will help the community move forward from this tragic incident," PG&E Corp. CEO Bill Johnson said.

In a statement, Butte County District Attorney Mike Ramsey said he hopes the plea agreement will bring "a bit of a sense of justice done" for the fire.

Camp Fire survivor Lisa Williams was outraged with the outcome. "It's a crime against society," she said. "A fine doesn't change their behavior. They pay it and repeat bad behavior."

One of those who died was Jay Downer's wheelchair-using brother, with his dog by his side. Jay Downer also said he was dismayed by the price PG&E will pay for its lethal negligence. "If I fell asleep at the wheel of a car and killed one person, I would be charged with manslaughter and I would be spending time in jail," Downer said.

PG&E is scheduled to enter its plea and face sentencing at a court hearing scheduled for April 24.

Investors seemed pleased with the PG&E's plea as the company's shares surged more than 12% to close at \$8.12 while the overall stock market tanked.

The Nov. 8, 2018, Camp Fire was fanned by strong winds, forcing thousands of people to quickly flee in their cars as flames ripped through the narrow canyon communities. Survivors described caravans of vehicles engulfed by the fire.

Butte County officials have pegged the 2018 wildfire's death toll at 85, but Ramsey disclosed Monday that further evidence cast doubt about whether one of the deaths was directly caused by the blaze.

The Camp Fire followed a series of 2017 blazes that tore through Northern California and killed 44 people. Although state investigators didn't find PG&E culpable for those fires, the company is accepting responsibility for them in its bankruptcy case as part of a \$13.5 billion settlement that will pay the victims of the 2017 and 2018 fires.

Less than three months after the Butte County fires, PG&E filed for bankruptcy in early 2019 to help shield the utility from more than \$50 billion in claimed losses stemming from a badly outdated electrical

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grid. PG&E has settled those claims for \$25.5 billion, including the fund set up for the wildfire victims.

Since the bankruptcy filing, PG&E hired Johnson as its new leader to shape up its culture as the company steps up its efforts to improve the safety and reliability of its power lines.

Johnson hailed the plea agreement as a sign that PG&E is "working to create a better future for all concerned. We want wildfire victims, our customers, our regulators and leaders to know that the lessons we learned from the Camp Fire remain a driving force for us to transform this company."

Johnson has previously acknowledged that it will take many years to pull that off while PG&E pours an estimated \$40 billion into badly needed upgrades.

In the meantime, PG&E plans to periodically turn off the power during extremely windy and dry conditions to minimize fire risks in parts of a sprawling service territory that provides electricity to 16 million people. By its own admission, PG&E bungled the deliberate blackouts it imposed last autumn to the exasperation of customers and community leaders who complained about not being told about the outages.

California Gov. Gavin Newsom had previously expressed doubts about whether the company has made enough changes to reform its ways, and he had been threatening to block PG&E's plan to get out of bankruptcy this summer. PG&E's chief regulator, the California Public Utilities Commission, still must approve the company's bankruptcy plan, a decision that's expected within the next few weeks.

Last week Newsom dropped his objections amid the coronavirus outbreak that prompted him to order everyone in the state to remain in their homes as much as possible to reduce the spread of COVID-19.

California holds unusual leverage over PG&E's fate in bankruptcy because the company needs state approval of its plan to qualify for coverage from a wildfire insurance fund that the state created last summer. Newsom backpedaled in a Friday bankruptcy court filing, saying he now believes PG&E's plan qualifies it for the coverage. As part of his deal with PG&E, the Democratic governor is still reserving the right to pursue a government-financed takeover of the company if it doesn't emerge from bankruptcy by a June 30 deadline.

This story has been corrected to reflect that California Gov. Gavin Newsom has dropped all his objections to PG&E's bankruptcy plan. An earlier version said he had only dropped some objections

Loss of smell, taste, might signal pandemic virus infection

By MALCOLM RITTER AP Science Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — A loss of smell or taste might be an early sign of infection with the pandemic virus, say medical experts who cite reports from several countries.

It might even serve as a useful screening tool, they say.

The idea of a virus infection reducing sense of smell is not new. Respiratory viral infection is a common cause of loss of smell, because inflammation can interfere with airflow and the ability to detect odors. The sense of smell usually returns when the infection resolves, but in a small percentage of cases, smell loss can persist after other symptoms disappear. In some cases, it is permanent.

Now, there's "good evidence" from South Korea, China and Italy for loss or impairment of smell in infected people, says a joint statement from the presidents of the British Rhinological Society and of ENT UK, a British group that represents ear, nose and throat doctors. In South Korea, some 30% of people who tested positive for the virus have cited loss of smell as their major complaint in otherwise mild cases, they wrote.

So that might be useful as a way to spot infected people without other symptoms — fever, coughing and shortness of breath — of the new coronavirus, they wrote.

A similar proposal was published Sunday by the American Academy of Otolaryngology-Head and Neck Surgery. It noted "rapidly accumulating" anecdotal evidence from around the world that the pandemic virus can cause not only loss of smell but also a diminished sense of taste. So the appearance of those symptoms in people without another explanation should alert doctors to the possibility of a COVID-19 infection, the group said.

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Maria Van Kerkhove, an outbreak expert at the World Health Organization, told reporters Monday that the U.N. health agency is looking into the question of whether the loss of smell or taste are a defining feature of the disease.

Dr. Eric Holbrook, an expert on nasal and sinus disease at the Massachusetts Eye and Ear hospital in Boston, said the reports have been a hot topic among researchers and doctors. But "we don't have hard evidence right now" about how often smell loss occurs in people infected with the pandemic virus, he said in an interview Monday.

Holbrook said the reports he has seen suggest the sense of smell returns within a couple weeks, but how long it lasts has yet to be firmly established.

He also said it's difficult to assess reports of a loss of taste because people with an impaired sense of smell often report a loss of flavor, which is technically different from an impairment in taste.

Holbrook said he is trying to set up a study of smell in people being tested for the coronavirus at Boston-area hospitals.

AP Medical Writer Maria Cheng in London contributed to this report.

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Malaria drugs' promise for coronavirus spurs hope, shortages **By MARILYNN MARCHIONE AP Chief Medical Writer**

Excitement about treating the new coronavirus with malaria drugs is raising hopes, including with President Donald Trump. But the evidence that they may help is thin, and a run on the drugs is complicating access for people who need them for rheumatoid arthritis or lupus.

Chloroquine and a similar drug, hydroxychloroquine, showed encouraging signs in small, early tests against the coronavirus. But the drugs have major side effects, one reason scientists don't want to give them without evidence of their value, even in this emergency.

Yet those preliminary studies sparked intense interest after Trump tweeted that hydroxychloroquine plus an antibiotic could be "one of the biggest game changers in the history of medicine" and should "be put in use immediately." He cited a French study that gave the combo to six patients.

Some French doctors and politicians also are pushing to expand hydroxychloroquine's use. The mayor of the French city of Nice, Christian Estrosi, said on television Monday that he was on his sixth day of treatment and has "the sense I've been cured."

Scientists, however, warn about raising false hopes and say major studies are needed to prove the drugs are safe and effective against coronavirus, and to show that people would not have recovered just as well on their own. One such study starts Tuesday in New York.

"Right now, there is no drug that looks like it's proven so overwhelming in early-stage clinical trials that we can say it's highly promising," former Food and Drug Administration commissioner Dr. Scott Gottlieb said Sunday on CBS' "Face the Nation."

Some people are even trying to take matters into their own hands, with disastrous consequences. A Phoenix-area man died and his wife is in critical condition after taking chloroquine phosphate, an additive used to clean fish tanks. The cleaning agent has the same active ingredient as the medicine chloroquine but is formulated differently.

Dr. Daniel Brooks of Banner Health Care's poison center in Phoenix urged people not to self-medicate. "The last thing that we want right now is to inundate our emergency departments with patients who believe they found a vague and risky solution," he said.

THE DRUGS AND SIDE EFFECTS

Chloroquine has been used to treat malaria since the 1930s. Hydroxychloroquine came along a decade later and has fewer side effects. The latter is sold in generic form and under the brand name Plaquenil for use against several diseases.

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The drugs can cause heart rhythm problems, severely low blood pressure and muscle or nerve damage. Plaquenil's label warns of possible damage to the retina, especially when used at higher doses, for longer times and with certain other medicines such as the breast cancer drug tamoxifen.

"Chloroquine is an extremely toxic drug with a terrible side effect profile. Hydroxychloroquine is far safer, but its side effects are still significant," Meghan May, a microbiologist at the University of New England College of Osteopathic Medicine in Biddeford, Maine, wrote in an email. "If it is not abundantly clear that it is beneficial, giving this drug to a critically ill patient feels risky."

THE EVIDENCE

That's where the evidence comes in — and, so far, there is not much. Hydroxychloroquine curbed coronavirus' ability to enter cells in lab tests, researchers reported last week in the journal *Nature Medicine*. That doesn't mean it would do the same in people or that they could tolerate the doses tested in the lab.

A report from China claimed chloroquine helped more than 100 patients at 10 hospitals, but they had various degrees of illness and were treated with various doses for different lengths of time. They also might have recovered without the drug — there was no comparison group.

The French study has attracted the most attention. Doctors gave hydroxychloroquine to 26 people with confirmed coronavirus infections, including some with no symptoms. Six also were given the antibiotic azithromycin.

Some of the 26 were not counted in the final results because they didn't complete the study — what's known as "lost to followup" — but that included three who worsened and were sent to intensive care, one who died a day after later testing negative for the virus, and one who stopped treatment because of nausea.

After six days, no patients given hydroxychloroquine plus azithromycin had virus detected in swabs from the back of the nose, versus 57% of those given the malaria drug alone and 12.5% of some other patients who received neither drug.

That's encouraging, but many things could have affected the outcome, such as how sick people were, when they were treated, what other treatments they received, as well as their age, gender and underlying health conditions.

"It is a very weak study ... leaving us in suspension of whether the combination strategy has any merit," said Dr. Eric Topol, a cardiologist and head of the Scripps Research Translational Institute in San Diego.

Its biggest limitation: A drop in detected virus doesn't mean the drugs will improve survival or shorten illness.

"It could very well be that the drug is reducing viral shedding but having no impact on the clinical course of those patients," Gottlieb said.

A STRAINED SUPPLY

The supply already is pinched for patients who need the drugs for other reasons. A University of Utah service that tracks shortages says four of the seven companies that make generic hydroxychloroquine have reported them. Three other generic drugmakers previously stopped making the tablets.

Five manufacturers have stopped making chloroquine, but three others still do.

Erin Fox, senior director of the Utah service, wrote in an email that the university's health system has detected that some doctors are writing prescriptions for hydroxychloroquine "for themselves and family friends to have on hand or hoard just in case."

The university refuses to fill those prescriptions, and at least one state has banned hoarding: The Ohio Board of Pharmacy says pharmacists can't dispense hydroxychloroquine or chloroquine unless for lupus or rheumatoid arthritis or a confirmed COVID-19 case.

Patients already are feeling pinched. Toni Grimes, 47, has been taking hydroxychloroquine for 13 years for lupus and said Monday that, for the first time, her standard 90-day refill order is being delayed until March 30. Grimes, who runs a Phoenix-area Lupus Foundation support group, said another member also hasn't received her refill.

"This is our mainstay" treatment, she said.

STUDIES HAVE STARTED

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Among the studies underway is one led by the University of Minnesota throughout the U.S. to see if hydroxychloroquine can prevent people exposed to the virus from getting sick or reduce the severity of illness if they do. It's aimed at health care workers and people with someone in their home who has tested positive. People can email covid19@umn.edu if they think they're eligible.

Associated Press writers Lindsey Tanner in Chicago, Angela Charlton in Paris, Linda A. Johnson in Trenton, New Jersey, and Astrid Galvan in Phoenix contributed to this report.

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

All signs point to Tokyo Olympics being postponed

By EDDIE PELLIS AP National Writer

IOC members, national Olympic committees and athletes were all racing toward the same conclusion Monday: The Tokyo Olympics are not going to take place this summer.

Craig Reddie, a longtime member of the International Olympic Committee, told The Associated Press that everyone can see where things are headed, with the coronavirus pandemic spreading and Olympic hopefuls around the world unable to train.

"In the balance of probabilities, the information known about conditions in Japan and the COVID-19's effect on the rest of world clearly indicates the likelihood of postponement," Reddie said. "The length of postponement is the major challenge for the IOC."

Earlier in the day, IOC member Dick Pound told USA Today that he had reached the same conclusion about the games, which are scheduled to start July 24. A tweet put out by the newspaper read: "The 2020 Summer Olympics Have Been Postponed Over Coronavirus Concerns."

The IOC said no decision had been made, and Reddie was quick to acknowledge that he was speaking only for himself and not because of any insight provided to him by IOC president Thomas Bach, who will guide the final decision. Pound did not return a message left by AP. Earlier in the day, after Pound's pronouncement, an IOC spokesman said, "It is the right of every IOC member to interpret the decision of the IOC (executive board) from Sunday."

Indeed, the interpretations and opinions are just that and haven't always been spot-on. Last month, Pound told AP that cancellation, not postponement, was the only real option if the Tokyo Games couldn't start on time.

But a lot has changed since then, and the rapid momentum of the "postpone" movement among athletes and nations seemed to diminish the likelihood that it will take all of four weeks for the IOC to reach a conclusion. That was the timeline the IOC's executive committee decided on Sunday when it announced it was putting together working groups to study the massive logistical issues involved in postponing the games.

Among those issues include the availability of venues in Japan, the disruption to the international sports calendar during whatever new date is chosen, the resetting of qualifying procedures, and insurance considerations; both the IOC and the Japanese organizing committee hold massive policies, the legalese of which will take time to unwind.

After that IOC announcement, however, both Canada and Australia — whose senior Olympic official is IOC member John Coates, the leader of the Tokyo inspection team — sent word that they would not or could not send teams to Japan for an Olympics that start in July.

"I know this is heartbreaking for so many people — athletes, coaches, staff and fans — but this was absolutely the right call, and everyone should follow their lead," Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau said.

Other key delegations that have pushed for a postponement include World Athletics, the international federation for the centerpiece sport of the Olympics, along with Olympic committees in Brazil, Slovenia and Germany. USA Swimming and USA Track and Field, which combine to form about a third of the U.S. team, also want a new date.

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Athletes also grew louder in their request for postponement. A track group called The Athletics Association joined another athlete group, Global Athlete, in pressing the IOC to act.

The track group is led by two-time Olympic champion Christian Taylor of the U.S., who said more than 4,000 track and field athletes responded to a survey, and 87% said their training had been adversely affected by the coronavirus.

Individual athletes continued to speak out as well.

"Although I am upset that the Olympics will not be happening this year, I agree that this is the best decision in order to keep the athletes and spectators healthy and to prevent the virus from spreading further," U.S. gymnast Morgan Hurd said in a tweet, reacting to Pound's comments.

And while saying it's a done deal might be jumping the gun, it feels inevitable the announcement will come.

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

Monday: Big layoffs, bigger hirings, massive markets swings

By The Associated Press undefined

The rapid spread of the coronavirus since it was first reported in China has dealt an unprecedented shock to the global economy.

Following are business developments Monday related to the outbreak as governments attempt to stabilize their economies, companies struggle to cope and millions of people face job losses and disruptions in supplies of goods and in services.

AIRLINES: Airlines can't seem to cut capacity as fast as air travel is fading as businesses and vacationers pull back on plans. Industry analysts are slashing their expectations even faster, with cuts of 40% or more the norm.

Air Canada is laying off more than 5,000 flight attendants as the country's largest airline cuts routes amid plunging demand. The layoffs will take effect by April and affect roughly 60% of flight attendants. Air Canada says it will suspend most of its international and U.S. flights by March 31.

GE aviation will cut about 10% of its U.S. workforce. David Joyce, vice chairman of GE and CEO of GE Aviation, will give up half of his salary starting April 1. The aviation arm of General Electric had already announced a hiring freeze, the cancellation of a salaried merit increase, a dramatic reduction of all non-essential spending, and a significant decrease in its contingent workforce.

Canadian airline and travel company Transat AT Inc. has temporarily laid off about 70% of its workforce in Canada, or about 3,600 people.

The United Arab Emirates is suspending passenger transits through Dubai, the world's busiest international airport, for two weeks to help stop the spread of the coronavirus. Suspending transit through Dubai, which connects Europe with Asia and Australia, will affect travelers around the world.

Low-cost airline Eastar Jet has become the first South Korean carrier to shut down all flights as demand plunges. The company says it will temporarily suspend its domestic flights from Tuesday to April 25.

REPURPOSED: General Motors is exploring the production of ventilators at a facility in Kokomo, Indiana. The automaker said Monday that it's working around the clock with Ventec Life Systems of Washington State to build more of the critical medical devices. GM spokesman Dan Flores said he can't comment on how many more ventilators Ventec will make or how soon they will come. The GM statement also didn't say when the Kokomo facility might be in operation. Supply chain experts say it will be difficult to repurpose an auto plant to build a smaller, unrelated product such as ventilators. They say such a change could take months, but GM may be doing it faster. In an email to GM senior management late Sunday, Shilpan Amin, the company's vice president of purchasing, wrote that GM has commitments from Ventec's parts companies to supply 93% of the ventilator's parts to GM. The company is developing plans for the remaining 28 parts, he said in the email.

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Yves Saint Laurent and Balenciaga are the latest luxury fashion labels ramping up the manufacturing of surgical masks to help the fight against COVID-19. The Kering Group, which owns the labels, says French workshops that usually make clothes for Yves Saint Laurent and Balenciaga will switch over to manufacturing masks. Kering said it will also buy and import 3 million surgical masks from China for donation to the French health service. The world's largest luxury group — Paris-based LVMH —has also said it has reached a deal with a Chinese industrial supplier to deliver 10 million masks to the French population.

CORPORATE FIREWALLS: Airbus is canceling a planned dividend payment and lining up 15 billion euros (\$16 billion) in new credit to give the European aircraft giant more cash to weather the crisis. The plane maker had shut several plants last week to adapt them to safer health conditions.

Apparel company VF Corp. says it will draw down \$1 billion from its revolving credit facility.

Royal Dutch Shell will reduce its operating costs by between \$3 billion to \$4 billion for the next 12 months to adapt to the virus outbreak crisis and plunging oil prices. The company is also reducing capital expenditure to a maximum of \$20 billion, down from its previous expectation of \$25 billion.

HEAVY INDUSTRY: Millions of people are working at home. However, heavy industrial sectors have come to a standstill because the risk of infection, if operations continue, would be unavoidable.

A big auto industry trade group is telling Congress that 95% of U.S. auto assembly plants have been forced to close due to the coronavirus outbreak.

The Alliance for Automotive Innovation says in a letter obtained by The Associated Press that 42 of 44 U.S. auto assembly plants were closed as of Friday. The letter says 87% of the assembly plants in North America have been closed, including all seven in Canada and 60 of 69 in Mexico. It says analysts expect March sales to fall by up to 40% from 2019 figures. The association is asking Congress for loans and loan guarantees for affected companies. It also is asking that businesses with more than 500 workers that provide paid leave for employees get a tax deduction or credit. Most U.S. auto assembly workers are being paid through the closure, which in most cases is scheduled to last into late March and early April. The industry also wants Congress to delay 2020 quarterly federal tax payments, start a temporary payroll tax holiday, extend expensing for machinery, and delay the June 1 effective date of the USMCA trade pact, which replaces the North American Free Trade Agreement.

Forecasting as much as a 60% decline in reservations for April due to coronavirus travel restrictions, rental car giant Avis is cutting staff, reducing its fleet and pausing capital spending, among other actions. The company says it will also evaluate compensation expenses for senior employees, including executive leadership, as it looks to save \$400 million on an annualized basis. The Parsippany, N.J.-based Avis Budget Group said it has accessed \$1.1 billion in cash from equity in its vehicle fleet and has an estimated \$750 million in revolving credit, giving it the liquidity to operate "through the end of 2020 and beyond."

Winnebago Industries halted production to protect workers from coronavirus exposure and to adjust production as demand for the company's products is rapidly changing. Winnebago, which employs about 5,000 people, makes motor homes, travel trailers and boats under the Winnebago, Grand Design, Newmar and Chris-Craft brands. The Forest City, Iowa-based company has production facilities in Iowa, Indiana, Oregon, Minnesota and Florida. The company said Monday that production will cease until at least April 12. Benefits and base pay will continue for the first two weeks.

Ford Motor Co. has suspended vehicle and engine production at its International Markets Group manufacturing sites located in India, Vietnam, South Africa and Thailand. The suspensions started Saturday and will continue for several weeks.

REAL ESTATE: To conserve capital, Zillow Group postponed home buying in the 24 markets where it participates in such activity. Zillow stopped open houses for homes in all markets last week.

U.S. home sales jumped 6.5% in February, their highest level in 13 years. But that was for contracts that were signed in December and January, with closings in February. The first report of a coronavirus infection in the U.S. occurred on Jan. 21 and economists are expecting a vast slowdown in the next report with sellers closing their homes to potential buyers.

The commercial real estate market is at risk of collapse, cautions the founder of Colony Capital, as mort-

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gage loans experience growing pressure. Thomas Barrack said in a blog post that liquidity has dried up as businesses get hit with a temporary cash flow deficit and a rapid decline in revenue. "The market for commercial real estate mortgage loans in the United States stands on the brink of collapse," Barrack wrote.

RENTERS: The federal regulator of giant mortgage buyers Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac is aiming to provide relief from eviction for renters in multifamily buildings who are affected by the viral crisis. The Federal Housing Finance Agency says Fannie and Freddie will offer owners of multifamily properties forbearance relief on their mortgages, on condition they suspend all evictions of renters who are unable to pay due to the impact of the virus. The two companies together guarantee about half of the U.S. home-loan market. Last week they temporarily suspended foreclosures and evictions of borrowers in single-family homes whose mortgages they guarantee.

SUPERMARKETS: B.J.'s Wholesale Club is the latest to offer a bump in hourly wages to workers restocking shelves while others stay home. Increased hourly pay would extend at least through April 12. Managers and key personnel will get a one-time bonus, ranging from \$500 to \$1,000. Walmart, Target and Amazon are among the other company's giving pay hikes. Walmart is also giving one-time bonuses to its hourly part-time and full-time workers.

HIRING: The spread of the virus has created a massive disruption in the work place, with many companies sending workers home. However, other companies, largely those considered essential during the outbreak, have gone on a hiring binge.

Dollar General will hire up to 50,000 workers by the end of April as people ordered to stay home clear the bargain chain's shelves and stock up pantries. Dollar General said Monday that most of the jobs will be temporary, but that some may be long term.

Papa John's is hiring up to 20,000 people with demand for pizza elevated. The need for new workers is so great, the company said Monday that interviews can turn into punching the clock on the same day. Domino's already announced additional hiring.

CVS Health also announced Monday that it is looking to fill 50,000 full-time, part-time and temporary roles across the country. Positions include store associates, prescription delivery drivers, distribution center employees and member/customer service professionals. The company is also giving employee bonuses ranging from \$150 to \$500 to workers required to be at its facilities.

Instacart is looking to add 300,000 gig workers to its platform over the next three months, more than doubling the number of people it has picking and delivering groceries for customers. Online retailers have seen demand for orders surge as more people are stuck at home and shopping online. Instacart said it will focus on bringing on more personal shoppers in 10 states where demand is the highest: California, Florida, Georgia, Illinois, New Jersey, New York, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Texas and Virginia.

THE STORES: H&M warned Monday that it may need to permanently lay off workers as it wrestles with the financial implications of the virus. The Swedish fast fashion company said that 3,441 out of its 5,062 stores globally are temporarily closed. The closures, aimed to stop the spread of the virus, has had "significant negative impact on sales so far in March," the company said.

THE WAITING: Amazon is telling shoppers some items could take up to a month to deliver as it deals with a rush of online orders. The company said it is focusing on getting medical supplies, hand sanitizers, baby formula and other essential items to customers first. Some best-selling books, for example, said they would be delivered at the end of April, much longer than two-day or less deliver times Amazon typically promises. The online retailer recently said it plans to hire 100,000 people in the U.S. to keep with an increase in orders as more people stay home and shop online.

ENERGY: The energy sector has lost almost half of its overall value in the month of March. Economic forecasts indicate a vast reduction in the amount of energy that will be needed as national economies are broadsided.

Total announced Monday that it is planning more than \$3 billion in organic capital expenditure cuts and suspending its \$2 billion buyback program. The company is also now planning \$800 million in savings this year, up from its previously announced \$300 million in savings.

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When the company had announced its buyback program, oil was around \$60 per barrel. Since the coronavirus outbreak and oil dispute between Saudi Arabia and Russia, oil has fallen as low as \$24 a barrel.

GIG ECONOMY DISRUPTED: Uber CEO Dara Khosrowshahi is calling on the federal government to help independent workers such as the drivers and delivery workers on its platform, not just full-fledged employees. Khosrowshahi sent a letter to President Donald Trump Monday. Uber has 1.3 million people working on its platform in the United States. Khosrowshahi says they are delivering food to people staying home and providing essential transportation services. The company has offered up to 14 days of financial assistance to drivers and delivery workers who were diagnosed with Covid-19 or placed in quarantine.

Online posts falsely claim census response will lead to cash

By AMANDA SEITZ Associated Press

CHICAGO (AP) — You won't get a check in the mail for filling out this year's census as claims circulating on social media suggest.

The inaccurate posts on sites including Facebook and Twitter urge people to respond to the census. They claim if you do so you will receive one of the stimulus checks that the federal government is considering sending to American households to buffer the economic impact of the coronavirus pandemic. The virus spreading across the U.S. has left millions out of work and sent the economy into a tailspin.

Congress and the White House were struggling Monday to agree on a nearly \$2 trillion economic rescue package that could include sending a one-time rebate check of about \$1,200 to those who qualify or \$3,000 for a family of four.

But even if Congress agrees to send money directly to Americans, federal law prohibits the government from using information on the census to mail out those stimulus checks.

The U.S. Census Bureau cannot legally share individual responses on the once-every-decade form, and is only allowed to use that information to produce statistics.

"Your answers cannot be used to impact your eligibility for any government benefits, including any potential stimulus package," the bureau said in a statement Saturday, quashing the rumors that have circulated in recent days.

The timing could be fueling some of those social media rumors.

The Census Bureau mailed invitations asking Americans to fill out the census online earlier this month, just as the coronavirus hastened its spread in the U.S., leading to the closure of schools and businesses. The pandemic has kept more than a billion people at home, left millions out of work, and at least 350,000 people infected worldwide.

For most people, the new coronavirus causes only mild or moderate symptoms, such as fever or coughing. But for some older adults and people with existing health problems, it can cause more severe illness, including pneumonia. Over 100,000 people have recovered, mostly in China.

The census helps determine how \$1.5 trillion worth of federal money is distributed, and this is the first year that people can fill out the census form online. Census workers will be sent out to knock on the doors of homes of people who haven't responded by May.

The new town hall: Anxiety, fear and few satisfying answers

By SARA BURNETT Associated Press

CHICAGO (AP) — A Michigan woman recounted for her congressman how she and her feverish 82-year-old husband were sent away from an almost empty emergency room after a fruitless, dayslong effort to get him tested for COVID-19. "Where are the sick people going?" she wanted to know.

In Iowa, a 55-year-old nurse who gets groceries for her 91-year-old father worried she may unknowingly infect him because it takes days to receive results once a person is tested for the coronavirus. Her question: Is anyone coming up with a faster test?

And in Phoenix, the owner of a small bar and restaurant told his congressman that a payroll tax credit

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Washington approved in response to the pandemic would do nothing to help his business survive an order closing bars and banning dine-in service.

"That doesn't help me today," the man, identified only as William, told Rep. Andy Biggs on a telephone town hall on Thursday night, his voice rising. "I need relief now."

Across the country, anxious Americans are finding an audience for their questions -- if few answers -- in telephone town halls with their senators and representatives. These are the socially distanced versions of the constituent meetings that have long been held in community centers, libraries and city halls. But these are not the town halls of the past — there's little ideological warfare or finger-pointing.

Instead, the calls can feel like listening in on painful family conversations. The questions are far more personal than political. Politicians have been measured, largely dodging overt partisan swipes and trying to focus on dispensing sometimes hard-to-come-by information. The voices on the end of the line are often filled with desperation, fear and confusion.

Associated Press reporters listened in on more than 12 hours of town halls across nine states in recent days and heard questions that ranged from technical — such as how to qualify for a Small Business Administration loan — to specific. A New York woman wondered how to help her parents who were stuck in Morocco after the government banned air travel in and out of the country. One almost 70-year-old man asked what precautions he should take in his job transporting Medicaid patients besides sanitizing his taxi after each trip. The tough-but-strong advice of the two doctors who joined New York Rep. Anthony Brindisi's town hall: Quit your job.

And while most of the lawmakers were joined by health officials and other subject matter experts, many questions still had no clear answers, like the one a man named Andy posed to Michigan Rep. Bill Huizenga on Friday morning: "When are we going to go back to normal?"

In an effort to slow the spread of the dangerous virus, some states have issued stay-at-home orders, air travel has been restricted, and schools, restaurants and other businesses have been closed, wreaking havoc on the economy.

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. Across the globe, there are more than 360,000 confirmed cases of the coronavirus and over 15,000 deaths.

Lawmakers in Washington have passed measures to address both the health care and economic crisis — and continue to negotiate over additional emergency measures. President Donald Trump, meanwhile, has held almost daily briefings for reporters on the federal government's response, events that have at times been heated, confusing and inaccurate. Several governors have also started holding regular press conference in an effort to spread information, issue warnings and offer what little reassurance they can.

But the tele-town halls have become the chief forum for Americans to talk, instead of listen, to their leaders. Many of the discussions focused on the federal aid, with Democratic lawmakers who supported the most recent measure saying it would help small businesses and Republicans like Biggs explaining why he voted no, noting the same concerns as the bar and restaurant owner who said the relief would come too late.

But members of both parties shut down comments that were too critical of the other side. When a man on a call with Democratic Rep. Abby Finkenauer of Iowa asked why Congress doesn't go around Trump and accused the Republican president of dragging his feet and other "B.S.," the congresswoman, a freshman moderate, responded, "Let's not talk Democrat or Republican."

The calls aren't a perfect listening post. Lawmakers' aides often screen the calls, filtering out the most partisan or off-topic. Michigan's Huizenga noted that many of the prescreened questions that didn't get asked were about Trump or the state's Gov. Gretchen Whitmer, a Democrat, who he acknowledged had

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been taking swipes at each other.

"There will be a time for politics," the Republican from West Michigan said. "Now is not the time."

Universally, the lawmakers urged constituents to take the situation seriously. Rep. Donna Shalala, a Florida Democrat who was health and human services secretary under President Bill Clinton, told people to change their behavior but not panic. Rep. Ralph Norman, a South Carolina Republican, suggested that constituents alert authorities to large gatherings that shouldn't be happening, adding that he called a local sheriff after he learned a racetrack in his district planned to carry on as usual. The sheriff shut them down, Norman said.

And Huizenga said he had "robust conversations" with friends and family who planned to take trips, sharing with people on the call what he'd said.

"Do not go away on spring break, please. This is not the time to go on vacation."

Some of the lawmakers specifically sought out vulnerable constituents. In El Paso, Texas, Democratic Rep. Veronica Escobar sent out invitations for the event via a robocall directed at landlines — an effort to reach older people most at-risk of serious illness from infection. She also offered a Spanish-language version of the call. Within a few minutes, some 1,200 people were on the line.

In New York, Brindisi participated in his town hall from his home, where he was in self-quarantine after being in contact with another member of Congress who tested positive for COVID-19. He compared the moment of fear and uncertainty with the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks, taking an optimistic tone.

"We are going to get through this just like we got past 9/11, and we'll come together as a country."

More than 6,000 people were on the line Friday night for a town hall with Republican Rep. Bryan Steil of Wisconsin, but satisfying answers were in short supply.

A nurse educator from Whitewater said she was concerned about a shortage of critical personal protective equipment for health care workers. Andrea Palm, Wisconsin's health secretary, said that the state was competing with others around the world for the necessary supplies and won't have enough to meet demand.

"No one, I think, is satisfied with where we're at," Steil said.

Associated Press writers Scott Bauer in Madison, Wis., Cedar Attanasio in El Paso, Texas, and Curt Anderson in Miami contributed to this report.

Vital meals help Holocaust survivors amid coronavirus crisis

By **LUIS ANDRES HENAO** and **JESSIE WARDARSKI** Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Brooklyn caterer Israel Frischman is continuing to prepare dozens of meals for elderly Holocaust survivors even though the Jewish community center that provides them owes him money.

The Nachas Health and Family Network in Brooklyn has been forced to suspend its counseling services, exercise classes and Torah lessons due to the coronavirus outbreak. But it's relying on the kindness of Frischman and volunteers to continue delivering vital kosher meals to survivors, many of whom live in poverty, and are in their 80s and 90s and at a high-risk of the contagion.

Frischman and volunteer Freida Rothman are united by their roots and their cause. Their grandparents survived the Holocaust, and they say it's their duty to help others who suffered unspeakable horrors in concentration camps and who are now isolated at home, fearing the impact of the fast-spreading virus.

"People have to do what they have to do. They have to be kind," Frischman said via videoconferencing. "Sometimes it doesn't suit our pockets the right way, but it's not about what goes into our pocket. ... We have to make sure that people have what they need to continue to survive."

The coronavirus has infected more than 350,000 people worldwide and killed more than 15,000. The virus causes only mild or moderate symptoms, such as fever and cough, for most people, but severe illness is more likely in the elderly and people with existing health problems. More than 100,000 people have recovered from the illness.

"This is going to go down in history, and you're going to think back: 'What did I do to make a difference? How did I make other peoples' lives easier and better?'" Rothman said, before she delivered meals

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in Brooklyn's Borough Park neighborhood.

"My grandmothers are the most empowered women I know — both survivors of Auschwitz. So, for me, my first reaction was: "What are we doing for the elderly? What are we doing for the survivors, who are not only important to me, but to the whole community, and really, to the whole world," Rothman said.

Before the virus outbreak, about 40 survivors would come daily to Nachas (Yiddish for "joy") to receive legal assistance, study Torah, exercise, get counseling — and to eat. All activities were suspended as New York state asked residents to stay at home unless they have vital reasons to go out.

"We've all heard the news and we know what's going on, and that the elderly should not be out on the streets and running around," Frischman said. "But we make sure that these people get their food, regardless."

Many Holocaust survivors in the U.S. live in poverty and rely on donations because they struggle to pay their rent and even buy food.

Frischman delivers 30 to 35 kosher meals three times a week to Nachas. The menu includes options, like tilapia or flounder with vegetables, chicken with potato souffle, and baked ziti or eggplant parmesan. The women love the food and used to eat at the center before the crisis and always took a packed meal home.

These days, though, they've relied on volunteers to deliver them, including Rothman, a jewelry designer, who last year organized a "Women of Strength" gathering for dozens of Holocaust survivors, and who now tells their story of courage in her Instagram account.

On a recent day, she arrived at the home of survivor Hannah Nudel, wearing latex gloves and a turquoise face mask. After delivering a warm meal on her doorstep, Rothman and Nudel chatted from a safe distance.

"Hannah, is there anything else you need? Anything? We'll bring it for you," Rothman said from the hall.

From her floral-wallpapered kitchen, Nudel paused and said with a sigh: "I need a refuah shlema" — Hebrew for a "complete recovery."

"You need a refuah shlema?" Rothman asked, then added: "Refuah shlema to you!"

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

Virus sends a nation of restaurant-goers back to the kitchen

By MELISSA RAYWORTH Associated Press

Last Tuesday night in Tennessee, bluegrass musicians David and Virginia Blood were busy making sandwiches. In Pittsburgh, real estate agent Michelle Bushee was stirring a pot of homemade black-bean chili in her kitchen instead of shepherding curious buyers through potential dream homes. Marty Prudenti, whose nights are usually spent working backstage at New York City's Lincoln Center, was in his Long Island backyard grilling burgers for his twins.

And in Texas, Babette Maxwell — who would otherwise have been running at least one of her three teenage sons to sports practices or school events — was Googling recipes to engineer homemade versions of her boys' favorite Taco Bell items.

Throughout the U.S., lives have been radically upended by the COVID-19 pandemic. There is worry and washing of hands. But one bright spot is emerging from self-quarantine and mandatory working from home: In this nation that so often dines out or gobbles processed food on the run, Americans are suddenly cooking a whole lot more.

Before the coronavirus emerged, Kim Bierly often worked late at her office and then met her husband for a quick dinner at one of the restaurants in their central Pennsylvania neighborhood. If they didn't eat out, they'd reach into the refrigerator and choose something packaged to heat up.

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"I've always enjoyed cooking," Bierly says. "But it was being saved for weekends. And by the time you get to the weekend you had all the other things you need to do. So it would be something quick or something prepared."

Now working from home, she's pulling out old recipes — the kinds of things she remembers her mother making, like stuffed pork chops or a bubbling pot of chicken and noodles.

"I think we need comfort right now," she says, "and food is comfort."

Unavoidably, these home-cooked dishes come with a side of stress. We're trying to protect ourselves from germs at the grocery store, and may wonder whether supermarket shelves will become emptier in the coming weeks. But those worries are encouraging people to get creative by trying new ingredients and sharing advice on how to use unfamiliar vegetables or cuts of meat bought out of necessity.

What can you do with the canned foods that have been idling since last year at the back of your kitchen cabinets? Facebook groups like Pandemic Pantry have sprouted up as gathering places for strangers to share advice.

Michael Volpatt, owner of the gourmet Big Bottom Market in Sonoma County, California, tackled the subject of canned goods on a recent installment of the impromptu cooking show he began hosting from his kitchen on March 14. Scrolling through Facebook while gathering ingredients to make himself dinner that night, Volpatt noticed the Facebook "Live" button on his phone screen. With his store closed, he realized it was a way to connect with friends and customers, and not be alone while preparing his meal.

"Hey everybody," his first broadcast began. "I've never done Facebook Live before. But I figured since I'm kind of staying at home and going to do some cooking later on, you're going to join me."

A growing audience now watches and comments nightly as he prepares everything from his mother's marinara sauce to pot pies made with his Big Bottom Market biscuit mix, which appeared on Oprah's Favorite Things list in 2016.

"It's heartwarming," Volpatt says, "and it takes a lot of the awkwardness of this whole experience away."

Returning to old recipes and learning new ones can be both a necessity and a welcome distraction during this strange time.

"Cooking brings back good memories," Bierly says, "like standing there at the pot on my stove, cooking the spaghetti and thinking of when my mother used to do that."

Food Network president Courtney White says her channel has seen a double-digit ratings increase in the past week, as viewers watch marathons of comfort food-focused shows like Guy Fieri's "Diners, Drive-ins and Dives." FoodNetwork.com has also had a double-digit increase in visitors and page views, White says. And many of the channel's chefs have been broadcasting informally from their home kitchens via social media, while viewers pepper them with questions in real-time.

Alone at our stoves, we're realizing how good it can feel to make dinner from scratch by using just a few ingredients consciously and carefully. Families are also getting their kids involved.

"Now, more than ever, we hope you'll find moments of peace when gathering around the dinner table," the co-founders of the retail chain Savory Spice wrote in a website post to their customers over the weekend. "We hope you'll find moments of joy when preparing food with your little ones. We hope the simplicity of a home cooked meal is a quiet reprieve from the chaos outside."

EDITOR'S NOTE — Melissa Rayworth writes lifestyles stories for The Associated Press. Follow her on Twitter at @mrayworth.

Fallout of '08 bailout looms over Washington negotiations

By JULIE PACE and STEVEN SLOAN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — In the fall of 2008, an unlikely alliance of lawmakers, regulators and Bush administration officials banded together to rescue an economy they feared was hours away from collapse. They also unwittingly reshaped American politics, unleashing a populist furor that lingers in both parties to this day.

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More than a decade later, those same political forces are shadowing a new debate over emergency government spending — only with far more taxpayer money at stake and even greater uncertainty over Americans' futures.

On the table: a nearly \$2 trillion rescue package for major industries, small businesses and individuals impacted by the fast-moving coronavirus.

Though more emergency money could be needed, this package is already larger than the \$700 billion bank bailout President George W. Bush requested in 2008 and the almost \$800 billion his successor, President Barack Obama, sought in stimulus in 2009. That response stabilized the economy, but upended politics and helped fuel President Donald Trump's path to power.

The circumstances that led to each extraordinary moment are different, one a financial crisis prompted by risky Wall Street investments, the other a pandemic that has crippled airlines, restaurants and scores of other businesses. But they both put the onus on Washington to act quickly to address complex matters, leaving leaders with decisions that could define their careers.

"Heads snap up pretty quickly when they remember how deeply angry the American people were about a no-strings bailout that rewarded executives and shareholders while families continued to suffer," Massachusetts Sen. Elizabeth Warren, one of the most prominent political figures to emerge from the progressive awakening that followed the Wall Street bailout, said in an interview.

Warren is among the Democrats pushing for restrictions on big businesses that receive a government bailout and for pledges to keep workers on payroll. She joined other Senate Democrats on Sunday night in blocking the \$2 trillion measure, arguing that there would be little oversight of the companies propped up with taxpayer money.

There's also worry about the scope — and political cost — of the pending bailouts among some on the right as the Trump administration and lawmakers continue negotiations.

Trump said Sunday he wanted to ensure that any company that received public money couldn't use it to buy back their stock and raise its value. The Senate bill, written by Republicans, includes a ban on stock buybacks that has been criticized as weak.

"I may be Republican but I don't like that," Trump said. But he angered many Democrats by refusing to rule out the possibility that his family's company, which runs hotels and resorts, might receive government funds.

Nikki Haley, the former Trump Cabinet official and a likely GOP presidential hopeful in 2024, announced last week that she was stepping down from the board of Boeing because she was uncomfortable with the company's decision to seek government help.

"I cannot support a move to lean on the federal government for a stimulus or a bailout that prioritizes our company over others and relies on taxpayers to guarantee our financial position," Haley wrote in announcing her decision. "I have long held strong convictions that this is not the role of government."

Warren, Trump and Haley represent the poles of the populist waves that swept through both parties after the Great Recession.

On the left, Warren and Sen. Bernie Sanders argued against a system "rigged" in favor of the wealthy, called for breaking up large companies, and championed proposals to replace private businesses, such as the health insurance industry, with government-run programs. Though their positions are still deemed outside the mainstream by many Democrats — and Sanders could soon follow Warren in ending his presidential campaign — they have succeeded in pushing their party further to the left over the past decade.

Indeed, Sanders was still railing against the 2008 Wall Street bailout last week in his presidential debate with Joe Biden, the likely Democratic nominee who voted for the package while he was in the Senate and helped administer it as Obama's vice president.

"We need to stabilize the economy, but we can't repeat what we did in 2008," said Sanders, who voted against the bailout package.

On the right, the tea party movement tapped into a viscerally anti-government sentiment among some voters after the bailout, helping propel a new crop of political candidates and taking down numerous Republican stalwarts who were deemed too cozy with the same Wall Street banks that benefited from the

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bailout.

"Back in '08 there was an industry to blame," said Eric Cantor, the former Republican House Majority Leader who lost his 2014 primary to Dave Brat, a little-known economics professor backed by the tea party. "And that's exactly where the government aid and assistance went — to the industry that was the facilitator of the problem."

That's where the coronavirus crisis most starkly differs from the financial collapse. There's no corporate interest to blame and economic activity has slowed dramatically or halted for virtually every sector.

"We had the financial crisis because people did bad things," said Barney Frank, a former Massachusetts Democratic congressman who helped author a 2010 bill that was the most sweeping overhaul of financial regulation since the Great Depression. "Nobody's done bad things to get the coronavirus."

Still, less than eight months before the next presidential election, politicians in both parties are mindful of the potential fallout from plunging nearly \$2 trillion into the economy, with much of the money heading toward large companies.

The Senate Republican framework backed by Trump calls for \$350 billion to help small businesses make payroll, as well as \$1,200 checks for millions of Americans. Trump has also proposed having the government take equity positions in companies that receive bailouts — something that has happened in the past but is still a departure from the GOP's traditional aversion to government intervention in private business.

So far he has stopped short of fully exploiting the Defense Protection Act which gives him the power to compel private businesses to meet government needs.

Yet some Trump allies are still raising concerns.

Stephen Moore, founder of the conservative Club for Growth and an economic adviser to the president, said the White House and Congress need to be careful to avoid the impression that the government is picking winners and losers as it authorizes money to struggling industries.

"Where do you stop with this?" he said. "If you're going to pick the airlines, what about the oil companies, are you going to pick them? What about the movie theaters? What about the corner shop that's closed down?"

Warren said lawmakers would be wise to proceed with caution before allocating massive sums of taxpayer money to private businesses, arguing that many Americans are still stung by Washington's actions more than a decade ago.

"The anger is real still," she said, recounting conversations she had with voters during her recent presidential campaign. "I would have people come through the selfie line and say, 'I was in high school when my family lost their home during the 2008 crash and there was nobody there to help us.'"

"People still live it in a very real way," she said.

Tokyo Olympics seem sure to happen -- but in 2021, not 2020

By **STEPHEN WADE** and **MARI YAMAGUCHI** Associated Press

TOKYO (AP) — The Tokyo Olympics are probably going to happen, but almost surely in 2021 rather than in four months as planned.

That became clear after the IOC on Sunday announced it was considering a postponement and would make a final decision within four weeks. Major Olympic nations like Canada and Australia have added pressure by saying they will not send teams if the games are staged this year.

International Olympic Committee President Thomas Bach sent a letter to athletes explaining the decision, while also acknowledging the extended timeline might not be popular.

"I know that this unprecedented situation leaves many of your questions open," he wrote. "I also know that this rational approach may not be in line with the emotions many of you have to go through."

The IOC's move seemed inevitable for weeks with pressure mounting from all quarters — athletes, sponsors, broadcasters, more than 200 national Olympic committees and international sports federations.

Shortly after Bach's statement, the Canadian Olympic Committee said it would not send athletes to the Olympics unless the games are postponed by a year. Australia issued a statement saying it was advising

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its athletes to prepare for an Olympics in 2021.

John Coates is the head of the Australian Olympic Committee and the IOC member who heads the inspection team for Tokyo.

World Athletics President Sebastian Coe sent a letter to Bach saying that holding the Olympics in July "is neither feasible nor desirable." He outlined a number of reasons, including competitive fairness, the likelihood athletes would overtrain if given a compressed schedule and the uncertainty caused by orders in many countries barring people from gyms and other workout venues.

National Olympic committees in Brazil and Slovenia had also called for postponement until 2021. Norway's Olympic body said it did not want athletes going to Tokyo until the global health crisis is under control.

The United States governing bodies of swimming and track — two of the three top-tier Summer Games sports — had called on their national Olympic officials to push for a postponement.

Japan's politicians fell in line quickly on Monday as they awakened to Bach's move, which was announced at 3 a.m. in Tokyo as most of the city slept.

Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, speaking at a parliamentary session, said a postponement of the Tokyo Olympics would be necessary if the games cannot be held in a complete way because of the coronavirus pandemic.

"If it is difficult to hold (the games) in a complete way, a decision of postponement would be unavoidable," he said.

Abe said he hoped the IOC would announce a decision quickly, and Tokyo Governor Yuriko Koike echoed him.

The IOC holds most of the cards in any rescheduling, spelled out in a Host City Contract signed in 2013 between the IOC, the Japanese Olympic Committee and the city of Tokyo.

Japan is officially spending \$12.6 billion to organize the Olympics, but a national audit put the figure at more than twice that much. The bill is sure to increase with any postponement, and the vast majority of the spending is from the public treasury.

The IOC has a reserve fund of about \$2 billion to tide itself over, and also has insurance against postponement or cancellation.

Yoshiro Mori, the president of the organizing committee, said he talked with Bach by teleconference about the delay and was joined by CEO Toshiro Muto.

"Honestly speaking, four weeks is quite a short time to consider all the necessary elements," Mori said at a Monday news conference. "It requires a tremendous amount of time and we have to hurry to go through this."

Both were asked about added cost, and who would pay. And both shied away from a direct response.

Mori said cost calculations had to be made, and the availability of venues — presumably for next summer in the northern hemisphere — had to be examined. A decision also has to be made about who pays for the maintenance of venues if the Olympics are postponed.

Similar questions will be asked about the massive Olympic Village, which is to house 11,000 Olympians and 4,400 Paralympians before the high-priced units around Tokyo Bay are sold off by private developers.

"I respect Mr. Bach," Mori said. "And we trust Mr. Bach. We have been always together walking side by side. I consider Mr. Bach as my best friend."

The 82-year-old Mori, a former prime minister who has been undergoing treatment for an undisclosed illness, was asked if he could endure more work on the Olympics.

He called it a "rude" question.

"I've got about two years left to live," he replied, half smiling as he said it.

The Olympic torch arrived last Friday in northern Japan from Greece. The torch relay it set to begin on Thursday from Fukushima prefecture, the area devastated by the 2011 earthquake, tsunami and the meltdown of three nuclear reactors. Organizers said the relay is still on, but said plans could change very quickly.

On Sunday, thousands crowded the northern city of Sendai to view the flame, which forced organizers

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the restrict the entry for viewing.

Jeff Kingston, who studies Japanese politics at Temple University in Tokyo, said postponed Olympics will be a minor worry for most people.

"The public is expecting and supports postponement, so it won't be a big deal," Kingston said in an email to The Associated Press. "People are way more worried about the economic consequences and their jobs and if the number of cases ramps up."

A recent poll by the Japanese news agency Kyodo said 69.9% did not expect the Olympics to open on schedule.

As of Sunday, Japan had 1,719 confirmed cases of the virus, including 712 from a cruise ship, with 43 deaths.

Former IOC marketing director Michael Payne said the delay might work to the advantage of the IOC and Japan.

"What better platform is there going to be than the Olympic Games when the world has pulled through the virus," Payne told the AP in an interview Sunday, just before the IOC announcement. "You've got a dynamic that will be even more powerful for Japan and the rest of the world. But you are going to have a tough road getting there."

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

Today in History By The Associated Press

Today in History

Today is Tuesday, March 24, the 84th day of 2020. There are 282 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On March 24, 1989, the supertanker Exxon Valdez (vahl-DEEZ') ran aground on a reef in Alaska's Prince William Sound and began leaking an estimated 11 million gallons of crude oil.

On this date:

In 1765, Britain enacted the Quartering Act, requiring American colonists to provide temporary housing to British soldiers.

In 1882, German scientist Robert Koch (kohk) announced in Berlin that he had discovered the bacillus responsible for tuberculosis.

In 1955, the Tennessee Williams play "Cat on a Hot Tin Roof" opened on Broadway.

In 1958, Elvis Presley was inducted into the U.S. Army at the draft board in Memphis, Tennessee, before boarding a bus for Fort Chaffee, Arkansas. (Presley underwent basic training at Fort Hood, Texas, before being shipped off to Germany.)

In 1975, Muhammad Ali defeated Chuck Wepner with a technical knockout in the 15th round of a fight in Richfield, Ohio. (Wepner, a journeyman known as the "Bayonne Bleeder," inspired Sylvester Stallone to make his "Rocky" films.)

In 1976, the president of Argentina, Isabel Peron, was deposed by her country's military. British war hero Field Marshal Viscount Montgomery, 88, died in Alton, Hampshire, England.

In 1980, one of El Salvador's most respected Roman Catholic Church leaders, Archbishop Oscar Arnulfo Romero, was shot to death by a sniper as he celebrated Mass in San Salvador.

In 1988, former national security aides Oliver L. North and John M. Poindexter and businessmen Richard V. Secord and Albert Hakim pleaded not guilty to charges stemming from the Iran-Contra affair. (North and Poindexter were convicted, but had their verdicts thrown out; Secord and Hakim received probation after each pleaded guilty to a single count under a plea bargain.)

In 1995, after 20 years, British soldiers stopped routine patrols in Belfast, Northern Ireland.

In 1998, two students, ages 13 and 11, opened fire outside Jonesboro Westside Middle School in Arkansas, killing four classmates and a teacher. (The gunmen were imprisoned by Arkansas until age 18, then

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by federal authorities until age 21.)

In 1999, NATO launched airstrikes against Yugoslavia, marking the first time in its 50-year existence that it had ever attacked a sovereign country. Thirty-nine people were killed when fire erupted in the Mont Blanc tunnel in France and burned for two days.

In 2001, U.S. skater Michelle Kwan won her fourth World Figure Skating title in Vancouver, British Columbia; Irina Slutskaya of Russia got the silver, and American Sarah Hughes earned the bronze.

Ten years ago: Keeping a promise he'd made to anti-abortion Democratic lawmakers to assure passage of his historic health care legislation, President Barack Obama signed an executive order against using federal funds to pay for elective abortions covered by private insurance. Actor Robert Culp died in Los Angeles at age 79. Singer Johnny Maestro died in Florida at age 70.

Five years ago: Germanwings Flight 9525, an Airbus A320, crashed into the French Alps, killing all 150 people on board; investigators said the jetliner was deliberately downed by the 27-year-old co-pilot, Andreas Lubitz. President Barack Obama received Afghan President Ashraf Ghani at the White House, where Obama agreed to slow the U.S. military pullout from Afghanistan at the request of its new government but insisted the delay would not jeopardize his commitment to end America's longest war before leaving office.

One year ago: Attorney General William Barr reported that special counsel Robert Mueller did not find evidence that President Donald Trump's campaign "conspired or coordinated" with Russia to influence the 2016 presidential election, but reached no conclusion on whether Trump obstructed justice; Democrats pointed out that Mueller had found evidence for and against obstruction, and they demanded to see his full report. (The report would be released in April.) New England Patriots tight end Rob Gronkowski announced that he was retiring from the NFL after nine seasons, which had included three Super Bowl victories.

Today's Birthdays: Poet Lawrence Ferlinghetti is 101. Actor William Smith is 87. Fashion and costume designer Bob Mackie is 81. Former Washington Gov. Christine Gregoire is 73. Rock musician Lee Oskar is 72. Singer Nick Lowe is 71. Rock musician Dougie Thomson (Supertramp) is 69. Fashion designer Tommy Hilfiger is 69. Comedian Louie Anderson is 67. Actress Donna Pescow is 66. Actor Robert Carradine is 66. Sen. Mike Braun, R-Indiana, is 66. Former Microsoft CEO Steve Ballmer is 64. Actress Kelly LeBrock is 60. Rhythm-and-blues DJ Rodney "Kool Kollie" Terry (Ghostown DJs) is 59. TV personality Star Jones is 58. Country-rock musician Patterson Hood (Drive-By Truckers) is 56. Actor Peter Jacobson is 55. Rock singer-musician Sharon Corr (The Corrs) is 50. Actress Lauren Bowles is 50. Actress Lara Flynn Boyle is 50. Rapper Maceo (AKA P.A. Pasemaster Mase) is 50. Actress Megyn Price is 49. Actor Jim Parsons is 47. Christian rock musician Chad Butler (Switchfoot) is 46. Actress Alyson Hannigan is 46. Former NFL quarterback Peyton Manning is 44. Actress Amanda Brugel (TV: "The Handmaid's Tale") is 43. Actress Olivia Burnette is 43. Actress Jessica Chastain is 43. Actor Amir Arison is 42. Actress Lake Bell is 41. Rock musician Benj Gershman (O.A.R.) is 40. Neo-soul musician Jesse Phillips (St. Paul & the Broken Bones) is 40. Actor Philip Winchester (TV: "Strike Back") is 39. Dancer Val Chmerkovskiy is 34. Actress Keisha Castle-Hughes is 30.

Thought for Today: "Either you think, or else others have to think for you and take power from you, pervert and discipline your natural tastes, civilize and sterilize you." — F. Scott Fitzgerald, American author (1896-1940).