

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, March 31, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 262 ~ 1 of 73

- [1- We Miss U](#)
- [2- Foertsch rings bell after final treatment](#)
- [3- McKiver is in self quarantine](#)
- [4-What would you be doing this weekend, if the world hadn't fallen apart?](#)
- [5- Praire Doc: Lessons from Pandemics Past](#)
- [6- Tundra Cartoon](#)
- [6- Potential COVID-19 Exposure in Deadwood](#)
- [7- AREA COVID-19 CASES](#)
- [8- COVID-19 IN THE DAKOTAS](#)
- [9-Covid-19 Update by Marie Miller](#)
- [10- Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs](#)
- [11- Weather Pages](#)
- [14- Daily Devotional](#)
- [15- 2020 Groton Events](#)
- [16- News from the Associated Press](#)

OPEN: Recycling Trailer in Groton
The recycling trailer is located at 10 East Railroad Ave. It takes cardboard, papers and aluminum cans



Kim Weber made this sign on the Groton Area Elementary School fence facing SD 37. She worked on the project Monday afternoon to show the students that the faculty and staff miss their students.

(Photos by Paul Kosel)

Foertsch rings bell after final treatment



Teri Foertsch has completed her journey with a clean bill of health. She was welcomed home Monday with a caravan through Groton on her way home.

According to her mom, Kathy Harry, Teri was diagnosed with Stage 1 breast cancer in January. She had surgery and then underwent chemotherapy every day except for Saturday and Sunday for a total of 21 treatments. She underwent radiation treatment at Sanford in Sioux Falls where they have a machine that protects the heart during the nine-minute treatment. Harry said that the machine at Sanford in Aberdeen does not have that protection. She said that doctors had found out that women who underwent breast treatment ended up having heart problems. Family and friends took her to Sioux Falls.

Foertsch had a few burns, but that will clear up now that the treatments are done. She experienced no nausea during the treatments.

Patti Woods, sister to Harry, lined up the caravan that went through Groton today. "Today was a good day," Harry said. They had contacted the Groton Area Elementary staff members where she works at, as well as family and friends to greet Foertsch with the caravan.

Foertsch posted on her Facebook page on Monday, "I completed my radiation journey today by ringing the bell! I would like to thank everyone that checked on me daily, rode with me to my appointments, brought food and had lunch with me while I was in Sioux Falls every day. I have learned that I have awesome family and friends and that I am stronger than I ever thought I was!"

- Paul Kosel

Teri Foertsch rings the bell after her final treatment. (Photo

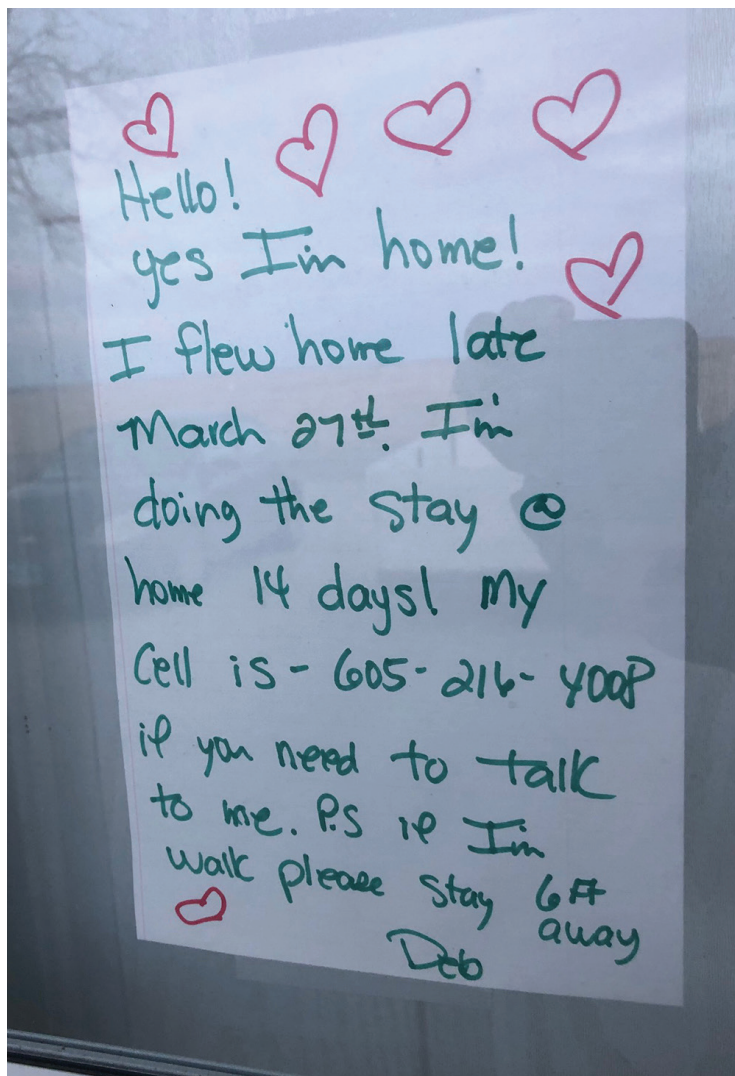
from Teri Foertsch's Facebook Page)



A caravan was held to welcome home Teri Foertsch for her final chemotherapy treatment.

(Photo by Tina Kosel)

McKiver is in self quarantine



Deb McKiver is one of the snowbird that has returned home. Deb said that her son, Nick Olson, was animate about being in self quarantine for 14 days.

She took a flight home, wearing gloves and a face mask on the plane. You can see your silhouette in the window above and to the left is a photo of the sign she has on her door.

She said it won't be that bad as he can work around the yard and she warns people when she is out for a walk to stay at least six feet away.

- Paul Kosel

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, March 31, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 262 ~ 4 of 73

What would you be doing this weekend, if the world hadn't fallen apart?

I was on my second video conference of the day earlier last week and a peer in the meeting said, "Time-out! I need to ask everyone a question." We all agreed, and he said, "What would you be doing this weekend, if the world hadn't fallen apart?" Some people answered by saying they would be meeting with friends or family for a meal. Others offered special events like getting fitted for their wedding dress. Many mentioned normal things -- laundry, cooking, kids, housework, or binge-watching Netflix. But, whatever the answer, we all agreed the way we are living and working today is much different than one month ago.

So, what if I changed that question just a bit and asked you, "How is your community doing after the world fell apart?"

Things are changing quickly around us -- what we knew to be true yesterday, might not be true today and our tomorrow is unclear. And, I'm told change is something rural communities don't do very well.

Rural communities are often publicly criticized for being slow to change. We prove that point by making disparaging remarks about our own hometowns and are quick to reject new ways of getting things done. Too often people around us say, "We're fine the way we are." Those actions lead the world to believe we are in a holding pattern. It sends a negative message that rural communities are not worthy of investment. And, if those mindsets are believed locally it leads toward a path of decline.

My life's work is focused on empowering and connecting rural communities. To support that work, I recently learned a new facilitation practice called Strategic Doing. It is based on four principles of collaborative action that can lead to change in our organizations, communities, and society. We believe... 1) we have a responsibility to build a prosperous sustainable future for ourselves and future generations; 2) no individual, organization or place can build that future alone; 3) open, honest, focused and caring collaboration among diverse participants is the path to accomplishing clear, valuable, shared outcomes; and 4) in doing, not just talking - in alignment with our beliefs. (reference: <https://strategicdoing.net>)

When I think about rural's relationship with change, the Strategic Doing practice excites me! It has the potential to help diverse groups of people create lasting change through a new way of working together. Strategic Doing isn't about fixing the old system -- it's about designing what's next based on what is valued most!

And, what I discovered in the past few weeks, because of the shifts due to the pandemic, has been quite the opposite of the criticism -- rural is slow to change. I have observed rural communities, with well-connected economic development professionals and progressive local leadership, respond quickly to learn new technology so they could connect proactively with numerous partners to meet the immediate and future needs of the community. Rural leaders and their partners are naturally stepping into pieces of the Strategic Doing process to ask the questions: What could we do? What should we do? What will we do? and Who will do it?

The real test for all of us in rural communities will be based on how we continue to embrace change -- new ideas, new supportive practices, new technology, new leaders and new ways to lead -- after the pandemic has gone.

Having a passion for community leadership and development is what drives Paula Jensen's personal and professional life. Paula resides in her hometown of Langford, South Dakota, population 318+. She serves as a Strategic Doing practitioner, grant writer and community coach with Dakota Resources based in Renner, South Dakota. Dakota Resources is a mission-driven 501c3 Community Development Financial Institution working to connect capital and capacity to empower rural communities. Contact her at paula@dakotaresources.org.



Paula Jensen

Vice President of Advancement
Dakota Resources / Dakotas
America

Lessons from Pandemics Past

When I come home from a day at the clinic and hospital, there is no better feeling than my children running up to give me a big hug. For the past couple of weeks, I have had to remind them to stop, and just do an air hug until I have had a chance to change clothes and shower. The idea is to wash away any germs and decrease the risk of getting my family sick after working with several patients and sick people during the day. Maybe these efforts are too much, or maybe they are not enough.

The Covid-19 virus spreads through respiratory droplets, from talking, coughing, or sneezing, and appears to also spread via a fecal-oral route. The fecal-oral route is how the stomach flu often spreads, and many of us know how easily that circulates through families and daycares. Someone who has been to the bathroom may touch a doorknob or a serving spoon, which someone else touches before eating, and they may become infected. That's why we need to wash our hands well and avoid touching our face and our food.

Unfortunately, the virus can spread from people that do not have symptoms, or before they have symptoms which is why, I worry, I may not be doing enough to protect my family from the one person who puts them at the biggest risk: me. Some doctors and nurses are deciding to avoid their families altogether and live in the garage or the basement when they come home. I haven't decided to do that yet, but maybe I should, or maybe I will.

Pandemics and disease have separated families for longer than the history books can tell us. Before they knew the cause, our ancestors knew that if someone had smallpox, quarantine and fire were the only ways to help prevent the spread. People, houses, and entire cities were quarantined. Disease has arguably decided more wars than the battles themselves. During the 1918 influenza pandemic, soldiers from Fort Riley carried the disease to other American military bases and from there, to the battlefield in Europe.

These lessons of history helped us learn about how to control disease. Advancements in infection control, medicines, and vaccinations have turned the tide and made many diseases a distant memory. For Covid-19, we do not yet have proven medications or a vaccine. However, we are learning more every day how to help those who are sick and how to better prevent the spread. In the meantime, my family and I will continue to practice social distancing and similar efforts to do our part to flatten the curve and slow the spread, to give us time to find treatments to combat this current scourge on humanity.

Andrew Ellsworth, MD is part of The Prairie Doc® team of physicians and currently practices family medicine in Brookings, South Dakota. For free and easy access to the entire Prairie Doc® library, visit www.prairedoc.org and follow Prairie Doc® on Facebook featuring On Call with the Prairie Doc® a medical Q&A show streaming on Facebook and broadcast on SDPB most Thursdays at 7 p.m. central.

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From the Prairie Doc® Staff:

Dear Friends - It is with a heavy heart that I write this message after the passing of Dr. Richard P. Holm, founder of Prairie Doc® Perspectives.

It is important to note that shortly after his diagnosis of pancreatic cancer nearly four years ago, Rick and his wife Joanie, co-founders of the Healing Words Foundation established a plan to continue their legacy of service. Rick and Joanie took steps to assure that the work of the Prairie Doc® will go on. Four physicians have agreed to take on the role of hosting Prairie Doc® radio and television programs, as well as authoring the weekly newspaper essays. Rick wanted everyone to know that, while he originally developed the Prairie Doc® programs and had been known by many as "THE" Prairie Doc®, he felt he was always surrounded by a "team of Prairie Docs." He and Joanie recorded this special YouTube video to help convey this message: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vD-24I3huXE>



By Andrew Ellsworth, MD ~ Prairie Doc® Perspectives



Potential COVID-19 Exposure in Deadwood

PIERRE, S.D. – State Health officials announced today that two staff members at Saloon #10 in Deadwood have tested positive for COVID-19. Both workers reported working while ill with COVID symptoms. Any individual who visited Saloon #10 between March 18 and March 21 may have been exposed to COVID-19 and should self-monitor for symptoms of infection. A CDC screening tool is available at [COVID.SD.GOV](https://www.cdc.gov/covid19/screeningtool/).

State Health officials remind all South Dakotans to:

- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds or use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
- Cover your coughs and sneezes with a tissue.
- Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
- Refrain from touching your eyes, nose and mouth.
- Clean frequently touched surfaces and objects.
- Individuals at higher risk for severe COVID-19 illness, such as older adults and people who have chronic medical conditions like heart, lung or kidney disease, should take actions to reduce your risk of exposure.
- Create a family plan to prepare for COVID-19 and develop a stay at home kit with food, water, medication, and other necessary items.

If you develop symptoms:

- Call your health care provider immediately.
- Individuals who are concerned they have COVID-19 should contact their healthcare provider via phone before going to a clinic or hospital to prevent spread in healthcare facilities.
- Avoid contact with other people.
- Follow the directions of your provider and public health officials.

For more information and updates related to COVID-19 visit the [COVID.SD.GOV](https://www.covid.sd.gov) or [CDC.gov](https://www.cdc.gov) or call 1-800-997-2880.

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, March 31, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 262 ~ 7 of 73

AREA COVID-19 CASES

	Mar. 20	Mar. 21	Mar. 22	Mar. 23	Mar. 24	Mar. 25	Mar. 26	Mar. 27	Mar. 28
Minnesota	115	137	169	235	262	287	346	398	441
Nebraska	27	42	50	52	61	68	81	89	108
Montana	15	27	34	45	51	65	90	121	147
Colorado	277	475	591	720	912	1,086	1,430	1,734	2,061
Wyoming	18	24	26	28	33	49	56	73	84
North Dakota	26	28	30	32	36	45	58	68	94
South Dakota	14	14	21	28	30	41	46	58	68
United States		15,219	33,276	43,963	54,812	69,147	85,996	104,837	124,686
US Deaths		201	417	560	780	1,046	1,300	1,711	2,191
Minnesota	115	+22	+32	+66	+27	+25	+59	+52	+43
Nebraska	27	+15	+8	+2	+9	+7	+13	+8	+19
Montana	15	+12	+7	+11	+6	+14	+25	+31	+26
Colorado	277	+198	+116	+129	+192	+174	+344	+303	+327
Wyoming	18	+6	+2	+2	+5	+16	+7	+17	+11
North Dakota	26	+2	+2	+2	+4	+9	+13	+10	+26
South Dakota	14	0	+7	+7	+2	+11	+7	+12	+10
United States		15,219	+18,057	+10,687	+10,849	+14,335	+16,849	+18,841	+19,849
US Deaths		201	+216	+143	+220	+266	+254	+411	+480

	Mar. 29	Mar. 30
Minnesota	503	576
Nebraska	120	153
Montana	161	177
Colorado	2,307	2,627
Wyoming	87	95
North Dakota	98	109
South Dakota	90	101
United States	143,055	164,610
US Deaths	2,513	3,170

Minnesota	+62	+73
Nebraska	+12	+33
Montana	+14	+16
Colorado	+246	+320
Wyoming	+3	+8
North Dakota	+4	+11
South Dakota	+22	+11
United States	+18,369	+21,555
US Deaths	+322	+657

**Governor Noem's News
Conference
Today at 10 a.m.**

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, March 31, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 262 ~ 8 of 73

COVID-19 IN THE DAKOTAS

Both South Dakota and North Dakota had 11 new positive cases reported in Monday's report.

None of the new cases in South Dakota are hospitalized. Thirty-four have fully recovered, including five recorded on Monday. So far, only one has died in South Dakota. South Dakota has had 101 positive tests and 3,478 negative tests.

North Dakota has 19 currently hospitalized with 20 fully recovered and recorded its third death. North Dakota has had 109 positive tests and 3,800 negative tests.

Marshall and Butte counties each reported their first positive test. Brown, Clay, Codington and Pennington counties each had one new positive test, Lawrence County had two new positive tests and Minnehaha County recorded three new positive tests.

Aurora	1
Beadle	20
Bon Homme	1
Brookings	1
Brown	3
Butte	1
Charles Mix	1
Clark	1
Clay	3
Codington	5
Davison	2
Deuel	1
Fall River	1
Faulk	1
Hamlin	1
Hughes	1
Hutchinson	2
Lawrence	5
Lincoln	4
Lyman	1
Marshall	1
McCook	2
Meade	1
Minnehaha	28
Pennington	5
Roberts	1
Todd	1
Turner	1
Union	1
Yankton	4

SOUTH DAKOTA CASE COUNTS

Test Results	# of Cases
Positive*	101
Negative**	3478
Pending***	0

COVID-19 IN SOUTH DAKOTA

Number of Cases	101
Deaths	1
Recovered	34

SEX OF SOUTH DAKOTA COVID-19 CASES

Sex	# of Cases
Male	52
Female	49

0 to 19 years	5
20 to 29 years	19
30 to 39 years	13
40 to 49 years	18
50 to 59 years	22
60 to 69 years	17
70 to 79 years	6
80+ years	1

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, March 31, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 262 ~ 9 of 73

Covid-19 Update by Marie Miller

Having hit you with a ton of information yesterday, tonight I will be brief--just the numbers. Then tomorrow we'll talk vaccines.

So today, we're at 163,417 reported cases in 50 states + DC + 4 territories, PR, GU, VI, and MP. This is only a 16% increase over yesterday, which was only a 15% increase over Saturday. This makes two consecutive days with this lower rate of increase, not yet a trend, but looking trendish. Let's hope it holds--still too soon to pop a cork on the bubbly, especially because we don't yet know how things will trend in some of the away-from-the coast areas. But for today, this is good. (And yes, I never envisioned a world in which I would declare this many sick people to be a good thing. But I guess it's all relative: We live, we learn.)

We're still seeing the bulk--over 50%--of cases in just two states, NY with 67,078 and NJ with 16,636. NY seems to be slowing down too with just a 12% and a 16% increase in the past two days. This looks like a positive sign to me, even though there are clearly rough days ahead. Rounding out the top 10, each with over 4000 cases, are CA, MI, MA, FL, WA, IL, PA, and LA. Those 10 states still show with 78% of cases; they've been at or near 80% for 10 days now, so they're driving all of the trends and have been for a while. We have another 14 states over 1000 cases, another 7 over 500, 18 + DC and PR over 50, and just 1 state + GU, VI, and MP under 50 cases.

There have been 3055 deaths in the US in 48 states + DC and PR. We have now exceeded the number who died on September 11, 2001 in the terrorist attacks, the last such life-altering event in our society. NY has had 1224, WA has had 221, NJ has had 199, MI has had 197, LA has had 186, CA has had 146, and GA has had 102. 4 more states have had over 50 deaths, 19 more are in double digits, and 18 + DC, PR, and GU are in single digits. There are still two states, HI and WY, + VI and MP with no deaths reported. No new state or territory has reported deaths since yesterday.

These numbers are going to increase for quite a while. We figure cases are not going to peak anywhere in the country for a couple of weeks yet. Even if not a single person acquired this infection from this day forward, the 1-2 week incubation period means we're going to continue to see new cases for a while yet. And then, there's another lag until some percentage of those folks gets sick enough to need hospitalization and another lag after that while some of those get sick enough to need intensive care and ventilators. After that, there's yet another lag until folks either die or recover; so the numbers of fatalities will continue to increase for quite some time to come. Remember that Dr. Fauci, one of the foremost experts in the world on this stuff--maybe the single foremost one--thinks we're going to see some enormous numbers before this is over. But we have to get to the other side of the hump to see our way clear to some relief.

Can we all hang in there just a while longer? It appears some of our efforts may be on the verge of paying off. I think we're a long while from life returning to normal, but if we can manage to not mess this thing up, perhaps we can get closer to normal before we forget what that's like. This feels like it's worth a shot, especially when we consider the alternative.

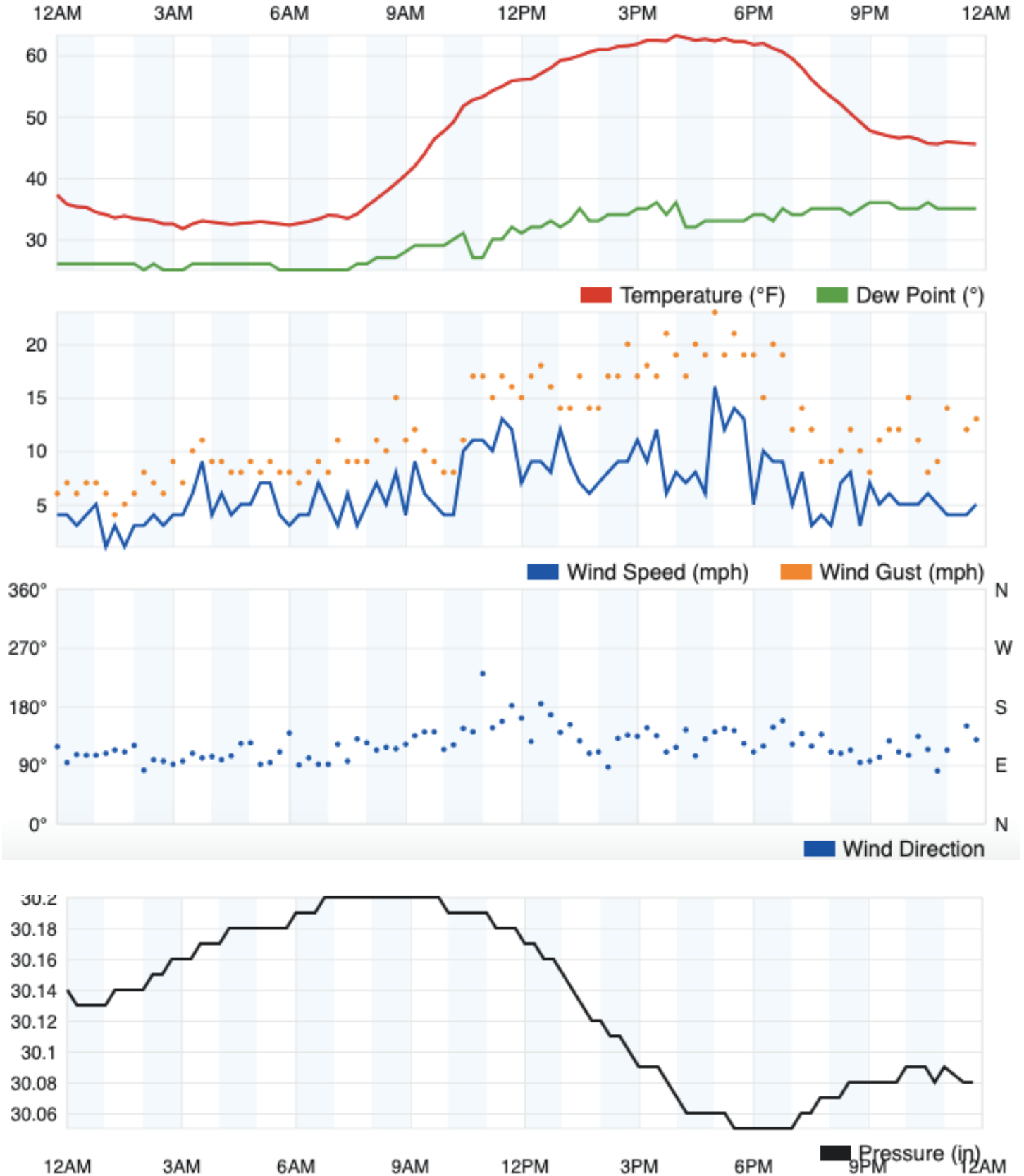
When you start feeling sorry for yourself, go take a look around you: I assure you there's someone worse off nearby. See what you can do for that person. If you don't have any money, then consider how you can help in other ways. If you do have extra money, consider how you can best deploy it to make a material difference to someone's suffering. Despite the divisions and rancor of the past few years, your friends and your neighbors are as human and as deserving of a fulfilling life as you are. See what you can do to contribute to the achievement of this for someone else. I know societies work better when everyone in them is doing OK, and they work worse when substantial numbers of people are not doing OK. So really, you'd be doing yourself a favor. We need to pull together in this terrible time.

Do good. Be well. We'll talk tomorrow.

Groton Daily Independent


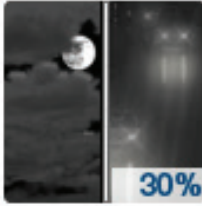

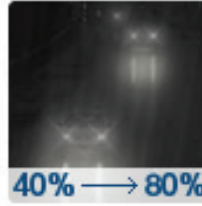

Tuesday, March 31, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 262 ~ 10 of 73

Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs



Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, March 31, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 262 ~ 11 of 73

Today	Tonight	Wednesday	Wednesday Night	Thursday
				
Partly Sunny	Mostly Cloudy then Chance Rain	Slight Chance Rain	Chance Rain then Rain	Rain
High: 55 °F	Low: 40 °F	High: 58 °F	Low: 34 °F	High: 41 °F

Wintry Weather Mid to Late Week

Probability of 4" or More of Snow *Wed Evening - Fri Morning*

High >70%
Medium 40-70%
Low 10-40%
Little/None <10%

What
Snow, freezing precipitation and rain are all possible across the area. Total moisture of 0.50-0.75" for most. Breezy northerly winds are also possible. Accumulating snow is most probable across portions of Central South Dakota.

When
Wed evening through Friday morning, with a slow progression of rain changing over to snow from west to east during this time. May see rounds of precipitation.

Impacts
Travel impacts in the way of slick and/or snow-covered roads are possible.

Uncertainty
Still questions on where the snow/rain line will set up as well as timing of precipitation. Potential for a narrow band of 6+ of snow across central SD?

NATIONAL WEATHER SERVICE
www.weather.gov Updated 3/31/2020 5:35 AM

Mild weather today (highs in the mid-50s to mid-60s) with only a slight chance for showers after dark. Cooler weather and a winter-like system enters the picture Wednesday, leading to measurable snow (mostly central SD), ice, and rain (mostly eastern SD) through Friday. There's still a good deal of uncertainty though, so stay tuned for the latest updates.

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, March 31, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 262 ~ 12 of 73

Today in Weather History

March 31, 1967: Heavy snow of 6 to 15 inches combined with 30 to 50 mph winds, caused blizzard conditions across most of northeast South Dakota. Many people were stranded, especially along Interstate-29 and Highway 12. In Hamlin County, a man was injured when his snowmobile struck a snowplow in Bryant in the early evening. Also, in the early afternoon, 4 miles west of Lake Norden on Highway 28, a car crossed the lane and hit a semi. The car was destroyed with thousands of dollars of damage to the semi. The driver of the car was injured. Many schools were let out early on the 31st and were canceled for April 1st. Many activities and sports events were either postponed or canceled. Some snowfall amounts included 6 inches at Doland, Conde, and Castlewood, 7 inches at Turton and Clear Lake, 8 inches at Clark and Britton, 9 inches at Bryant and Webster, 10 inches near Peever, and 11 inches at Summit. Snowfall amounts of a foot or more included, 12 inches at Watertown and Big Stone City, 13 inches at Victor, the Waubay NWR, and Sisseton, 14 inches at Wilmot, and 15 inches at Milbank.

March 31, 2014: A strong surface low-pressure area moving across the region brought mixed precipitation to all of the area including rain, freezing rain, sleet, snow along with some thunder. As the precipitation changed to over to all snow, northwest winds increased substantially to 30 to 40 mph with gusts to 50 to 60 mph causing widespread blizzard conditions. Much of the area received a coating of ice with trace amounts up to a tenth of an inch with several locations receiving up to 2 inches of sleet. Snowfall amounts from 2 to as much as 10 inches occurred with this storm. The precipitation changed over to snow in the morning out west and into the late afternoon hours across the east. The light snow did not end in the eastern portion of South Dakota until the early morning hours of April 1st. Many schools, government offices, and businesses were closed or canceled early. Travel was not advised across much of region with Interstate-29 being closed for a time from Brookings to the North Dakota border. Click [HERE](#) for more information reports.

1890 - Saint Louis, MO, received 20 inches of snow in 24 hours. It was the worst snowstorm of record for the St Louis. (David Ludlum)

1942: 107 inches of rain fell during the month at Puu Kukui at Maui, Hawaii to set the U.S. record for rainfall in one month. The same place also holds the annual rainfall record for the United States with 578 inches in 1950.

1954 - The temperature at Rio Grande City, TX, hit 108 degrees, which for thirty years was a U.S. record for the month of March. (The Weather Channel)

1962: A tornado struck the town of Milton, Florida killing 17 persons and injuring 100 others. It was the worst tornado disaster in Florida history.

1973: A devastating tornado took a nearly continuous 75-mile path through north-central Georgia causing more than 104 million dollars damage.

1987 - March went out like a lion in the northeastern U.S. A slow moving storm produced heavy snow in the Lower Great Lakes Region, and heavy rain in New England. Heavy rain and melting snow caused catastrophic flooding along rivers and streams in Maine and New Hampshire. Strong southerly winds ahead of the storm gusted to 62 mph at New York City, and reached 87 mph at Milton MA. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1988 - March went out like a lion in eastern Colorado. A winter-like storm produced 42 inches of snow at Lake Isabel, including 20 inches in six hours. Fort Collins reported 15 inches of snow in 24 hours. Winds gusted to 80 mph at Centerville UT. Albuquerque NM received 14 inches of snow. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

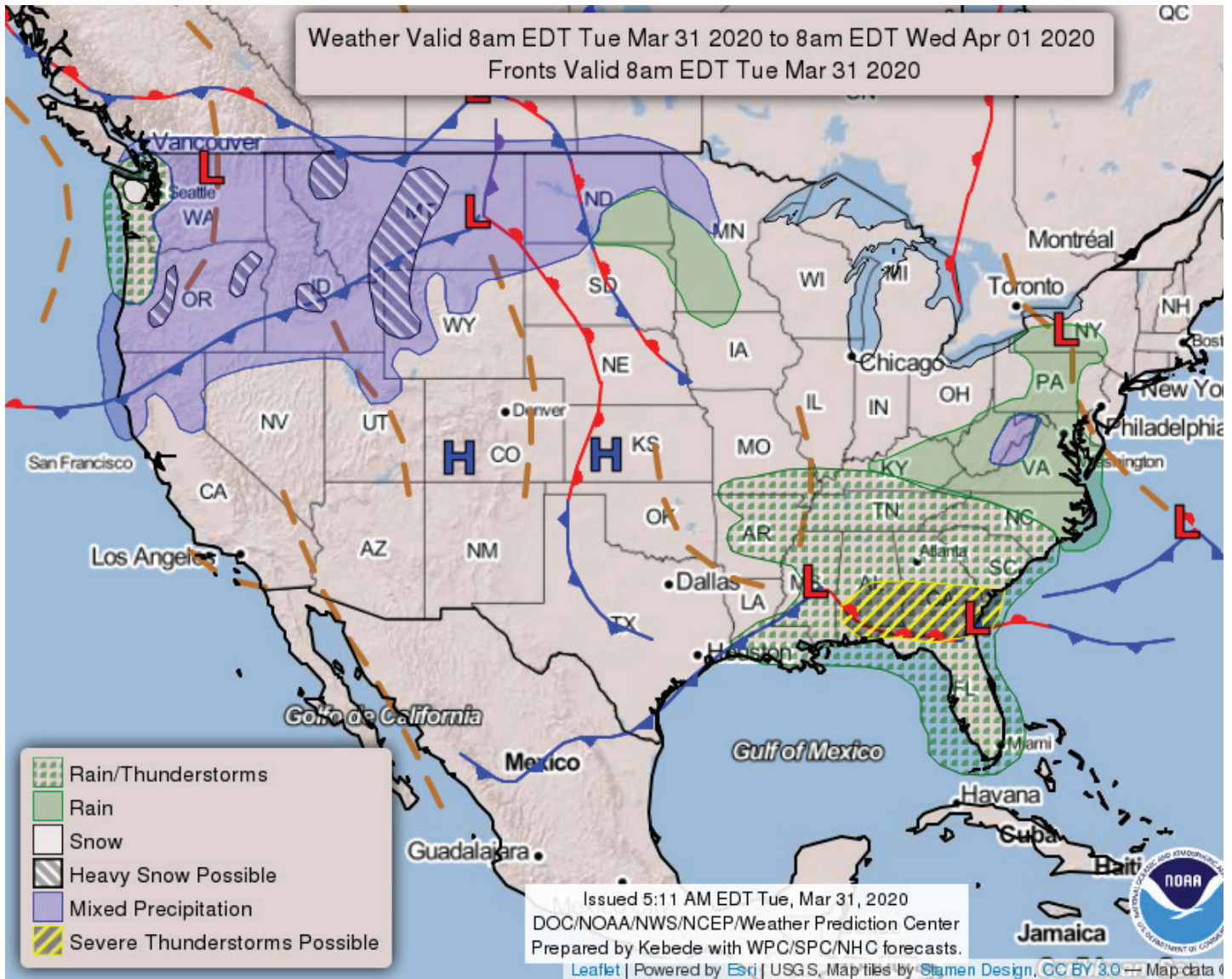
Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, March 31, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 262 ~ 13 of 73

Yesterday's Groton Weather Today's Info

High Temp: 63 °F at 3:59 PM
Low Temp: 32 °F at 3:15 AM
Wind: 23 mph at 4:57 PM
Snow

Record High: 86° in 1946
Record Low: 0° in 1899
Average High: 48°F
Average Low: 26°F
Average Precip in March.: 1.11
Precip to date in March.: 0.00
Average Precip to date: 2.13
Precip Year to Date: 0.35
Sunset Tonight: 8:01 p.m.
Sunrise Tomorrow: 7:13 a.m.



Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, March 31, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 262 ~ 14 of 73



HOW COULD THIS HAPPEN?

A man was found dead next to a dumpster. As they looked in his pockets for his identification, they discovered several checks. When totaled, they were worth more than a thousand dollars. But, they did him no good. He never cashed them to receive their value.

As we read God's Word, we find promise after promise – all having value to the believer when "cashed in." But as with the checks of the dead man, they must be "turned into cash" to have any value. We must go to God and claim His promises to meet our needs.

James said that God "does not resent your asking. But when you ask Him, be sure you really expect Him to answer, for a doubtful mind is as unsettled as a wave of the sea?"

There are times when it is easier to believe in God than it is to believe in the fact that he deeply cares for each of us and our every need. Surely, if He is bound by His Word – and He is - we can go to Him "in faith believing." We must always remember that nothing is so small that it escapes His concern, or that any problem is so large that He cannot solve it.

We limit God by the limitations we place on Him. The problems we have with our faith are our problems – not God's. "Whatever you ask the Father in My name He will give you," said Jesus.

Prayer: Give us a faith, Father, that is larger than our problems and a trust that matches Your power. Help us to grow in Your faith and not remain in our doubts. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: James 1:1-8 If you need wisdom, ask our generous God, and he will give it to you. He will not rebuke you for asking. But when you ask him, be sure that your faith is in God alone. Do not waver, for a person with divided loyalty is as unsettled as a wave of the sea that is blown and tossed by the wind.

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, March 31, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 262 ~ 15 of 73

2020 Groton SD Community Events

- **CANCELLED** Groton Lions Club Easter Egg Hunt - City Park (Saturday a week before Easter Weekend)
 - **CANCELLED** 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.
 - **CANCELLED** 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)

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, March 31, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 262 ~ 16 of 73

News from the Associated Press

The Latest: SD Special Olympics summer games canceled

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — The Latest on the coronavirus outbreak in South Dakota (all times local):
8 p.m..

Officials say the summer games of the South Dakota Special Olympics have been canceled due to the coronavirus outbreak.

The games were to be held in Vermillion. But the board of directors cites the safety of Special Olympic athletes and organizers. And with "so much uncertainty and many moving parts," Special Olympics International determined that rescheduling the event this year is not possible.

President and CEO Darryl Nordquist of Special Olympics South Dakota says the organization is "devastated" that it can't hold the event this year. But Nordquist says the organization is looking forward to holding the 2021 State Summer Games in Vermillion next spring.

Nearly 1,000 people attend the event every year. The summer games returned to Vermillion in 2019 for the first time in 50 years.

12:30 p.m.

South Dakota health officials reported on Monday that they have confirmed 101 cases of COVID-19, more than doubling the number of cases since Thursday.

The South Dakota Department of Health says there are 11 new, confirmed cases of the coronavirus. The state health lab has also cleared a backlog of tests. Between the state lab and commercial labs, over 3,400 people have been tested.

Gov. Kristi Noem doesn't expect the number of infections to peak until at least May.

State epidemiologist Josh Clayton says health officials are recommending tests for people only if they exhibit symptoms of the coronavirus and may have come into contact with someone with the disease.

So far, 34 people in South Dakota have recovered after contracting the coronavirus, while one has died.

For most people, the coronavirus causes mild or moderate symptoms, such as fever and cough that clear up in two to three weeks. Older adults and people with existing health problems are among those particularly susceptible to more severe illness, including pneumonia.

Minnehaha County, the state's most populous county, has 28 cases, an increase of three from Sunday. Beadle County has 20 confirmed cases, but did not see an increase from the day before.

8 a.m.

A Vermillion distillery is among those that have reshaped their usual business plan to meet the needs of the coronavirus pandemic.

Valiant Vineyards Winery & Distillery has turned its focus away from producing award-winning whiskey and their wine to producing sanitizer and sanitary wipes.

Valiant Vineyards CEO Eldon Nygaard tells KELO-TV they've been making their sanitation products since last week and have seen their impact stretch across the area with orders from some communities for the approaching election.

Nygaard says these products make little to no profit for his company, but that they will continue to produce them as long as their needed.

For most people, the coronavirus causes mild or moderate symptoms, such as fever and cough that clear up in two to three weeks. For some, especially older adults and people with existing health problems, it can cause more severe illness, including pneumonia and death.

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, March 31, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 262 ~ 17 of 73

Mayors tell lawmakers Noem's inaction has them "hamstrung"

By STEPHEN GROVES Associated Press

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — Mayors from South Dakota's largest cities told lawmakers Monday that Gov. Kristi Noem's resistance to ordering a statewide business shutdown has left them struggling to take action to stop the spread of the coronavirus.

Legislators convened through a conference call to consider a series of emergency bills, hearing from mayors on a measure that would allow cities and counties to declare a public health emergency and move quickly to shut down businesses.

As the governor's staff explained the bills, Noem's strategy for the coronavirus crisis became more clear: Try to keep businesses open and only step in if things get so bad that the state Secretary of Health needs to declare a public health emergency.

Matt McCaulley, a lawyer who advises Noem, said that shutting down nonessential businesses would not stop the spread of the coronavirus, but would result in continued layoffs.

The governor has said the state could be battling COVID-19 for months and wants communities to find ways to keep businesses open.

Sioux Falls Mayor Paul TenHaken told legislators he has had mayors across the state reach out to him to ask what they should do. He said mayors have been "hamstrung" by the lack of action from Noem.

TenHaken has said that ordering businesses to close could open the cities up to lawsuits in the absence of clear state law. Some cities have not waited for permission, instead closing bars, restaurants and retail stores.

Health officials reported on Monday they have confirmed 101 cases of COVID-19, more than doubling the number of cases since Thursday. So far, 34 people in South Dakota have recovered after contracting the coronavirus, while one has died.

For most people, the coronavirus causes mild or moderate symptoms, such as fever and cough that clear up in two to three weeks. Older adults and people with existing health problems are among those particularly susceptible to more severe illness, including pneumonia.

Legislators were originally scheduled to meet Monday to consider vetoes from the governor, but spent the bulk of their time considering the emergency bills. The proposals cover a range of issues, including pushing local elections back until at least June, waiving requirements on schools for in-person instruction and creating a fund of about \$11 million for loans to small businesses affected by the pandemic.

All the bills could be put into effect immediately if they get a two-thirds majority vote. They all have a sunset clause to expire later in the year.

The remote meetings of the House and Senate were peppered with technological hiccups as lawmakers struggled to navigate the make-do system. Others forgot to turn off their microphones, sharing comments they intended to be private.

Lawmakers said they planned to meet into the night to take action on the bills.

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

Excerpts from recent South Dakota editorials

By The Associated Press undefined

Argus Leader, Sioux Falls, March 24

Postpone city elections to make them fair and safe

From a broader perspective of the COVID-19 pandemic threatening our nation, the question of whether to postpone a local city council election looks like small potatoes. Same goes for the rapidly approaching deadline for legislative candidates to submit their nominating petitions. Most would say there are more pressing matters to worry about.

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, March 31, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 262 ~ 18 of 73

The logistical challenges we face in the months ahead are indeed immense. The early lack of testing kits and the means to process them has hindered our capacity to base public health efforts on accurate counts of novel coronavirus cases, whether in South Dakota or the entire United States. We watch Italy and see how things might play out here, a society and its systems overwhelmed, a sluggish national response limiting the ability to "flatten the curve."

Given the depth of apprehension about our future, it is imperative that we be able to trust in the integrity of our elections. The last thing a restive population already under a heavy cloud of uncertainty needs is to doubt whether our representatives have gained – or maintained – their positions fairly.

The Sioux Falls City Council election is scheduled for April 14, just a few weeks away. In separate letters to Gov. Kristi Noem, council chair Marshall Sellberg and city clerk Tom Greco urged the governor to delay the local election until the June 2 state primary date. Greco pointed out that at least 80% of poll workers are above age 80, putting them at high risk during the coronavirus crisis.

Councilor Christine Erickson also questioned how the traditional Election Day process would work.

"How can we justify telling everyone to stay home – but don't forget to vote?" she asked.

It's a perfectly reasonable question that needs to be answered soon.

Some precinct locations have already been pulled from the list of polling places, including a retirement community and a fire station. It's unthinkable that we should follow our traditional in-person voting paradigm when everything experts know about COVID-19 indicates that we would likely be putting our community at risk.

We don't want to experience the kind of last-minute electoral chaos seen in Ohio last week, where disputes between the governor and courts kept the status of the state's presidential primary election in limbo until just before polls were set to open. Though some states went ahead with their in-person primaries, others have opted to postpone.

The federal government, like the city of Sioux Falls, has limited the size of public gatherings. Crafting a sensibly planned alternative to in-person polls as we approach a period of ramped-up virus transmission seems the most prudent course. Sioux Falls voters can cast absentee ballots in the council election beginning March 30. If mailing in is to be the only way they can vote, the groundwork needs to be laid without delay.

South Dakota Secretary of State Steven Barnett has said that state law does not allow election dates to be changed. That message seemed to contradict what Noem said a day earlier: that there have been conversations about suspending or delaying the election through emergency legislation when lawmakers return to Pierre for veto day, if that doesn't itself get delayed.

House Majority Leader Lee Qualm told the Argus Leader that the legislature isn't planning to make any changes to either the deadline for nominating petitions or the June 2 primary date. That presents a potentially dangerous hurdle for state legislative candidates gathering the necessary number of signatures to be on the ballot, as well as for potential Democratic challengers to U.S. Senator Mike Rounds and U.S. Congressman Dusty Johnson.

There are examples we could follow regarding nominating petitions and COVID-19. Last week, New York Governor Andrew Cuomo issued an executive order that cut the number of required signatures for primary ballot qualification by 70% and suspended the candidate petition process. The leader of the New York Republican Party endorsed the Democratic governor's order, explicitly setting aside partisanship in the interest of public health.

Individual states dictate the way elections happen within their borders, even those at the federal level. How effectively – and honorably – smaller elections are dealt with in this time defined by a new contagion will signal to voters how effectively and honorably they can expect November's general election to be administered.

Every challenge, even a generational one like COVID-19, presents opportunities to improve upon what came before. We urge South Dakota's political leaders to resist their hardwired intransigence and commit to shepherding us through these trials with forethought, soberness and flexibility.

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, March 31, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 262 ~ 19 of 73

Madison Daily Leader, March 25

Being creative in reaching seniors

The most vulnerable in our population to the coronavirus are those who have other health issues and the elderly. Many senior citizens check both boxes.

So extra precautions are being taken to prevent those living in nursing homes, assisted living facilities and retirement centers from contracting the illness. We applaud the efforts of all those who are going to extraordinary measures to protect this part of our population.

We've all read the Centers for Disease Control's recommendations: hand-washing, social distancing, staying home if you are sick, and so on. The CDC's recommendations for senior communities are the same, plus isolation: Keep all visitors out, keep residents in their rooms, no communal activities.

This can be hard on seniors, so let's be creative in how we reach them during this extraordinary time.

Frequent phone calls are extremely valuable, except for the hard of hearing. Texting or posting messages often can help. Especially useful are FaceTime or Skype where the senior can see your face.

Delivering "care packages" can be tricky, because we don't want the virus to be transmitted on a hard surface. However, sending them by mail or other means is said to be better than delivering in person, because the day or two in transit permits the virus to die.

Here's another bold idea: personal letters. Long-lost in the era of texts, emails and posts, letters have a personal quality that many people appreciate, such as handwriting. The CDC states the likelihood of the virus lingering on mail is very low.

Let's try to help the seniors by whatever method works for them. We can all be great helpers to them during this time.

Aberdeen American News, March 28

How many deaths constitute an emergency?

Stop me if you've heard this one before, but you need to stay home unless leaving is unavoidable.

There are a lot of jobs that can't be done from home, of course. Health care workers have to go in. And the people who work to keep the shelves stocked at grocery stores. And folks who work the counter at convenience stores. And construction workers. Police officers. First responders. Firefighters. There are others, but you get the idea. Our thanks to all of them.

But those of us who can should work from home. It's both the responsible thing to do.

That's where the easy work ends.

Some people think the COVID-19 response is overblown or that there's a sense of hysteria. Both definitions can vary from person to person, so let's crunch some numbers and see what they reveal.

There are just north of 39,000 residents in Brown County, according to the latest census estimates. And Gov. Kristi Noem says roughly 30% of the population will catch the virus. That's on the low side of many estimates, but let's use it, assuming it makes sense given the rural nature of South Dakota.

Thirty percent of 39,000 is 11,700. So we can expect that many of our friends and neighbors in Brown County to catch COVID-19, though many cases will likely never be confirmed because not everybody will be tested.

The vast majority of those 11,700 people will display mild or even no symptoms. But what about the others?

The virus' death rate fluctuates wildly depending on age and even from country to country. It's fluid and probably will remain that way since we're talking about a novel virus without a reliable track record. Given that northeast South Dakota's population is older and the death rate is considerably higher for senior citizens, we're probably not going to be at 1.5% or so, which has been where the nation at large has been hovering recently. Hopefully we don't remotely approach the 10%-plus death rate of Italy, which also seems unlikely.

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, March 31, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 262 ~ 20 of 73

For the sake of picking a smaller number, let's use 2.5%. At that rate, 293 Brown County residents would die from the virus.

Spread across South Dakota, that's 6,617 residents.

Will you know some of them? Be related to them? Live with them?

Does that constitute a crisis? An emergency?

Does it spark hysteria? That's a personal decision.

Here's something that won't happen. The virus won't back down in the U.S. like a loud-mouthed foreign leader might after butting heads with the president. COVID-19 doesn't respond like that.

Knowing that, taking action to protect people is necessary. The ordinance being considered by the Aberdeen City Council to restrict public gatherings of 10 or more people and require social distancing of at least 6 feet is a no-brainer. If you disagree with that, your attitude is approaching or beyond willful ignorance.

Requiring the closure of businesses that serve food and beverages or host entertainment options is obviously dicier. But that doesn't mean it should be automatically dismissed. We all know folks who own and work at such businesses, independent and locally owned versions of which are scattered throughout our communities. They are powered by the tireless work of people we care for, love and support.

There's no corporate executive who is going to make the tough call for those locally owned businesses. And there's no corporate financial assistance to tap.

Even so, the council is right to consider a measure that would close such businesses temporarily.

It's easy to say stay home so you aren't exposed to COVID-19. But just as small businesses are at risk, so too are people who have respiratory illnesses or cancer or compromised immune systems. So too are senior citizens and pregnant women. They also need protection. They can care for themselves to a certain extent. But many, at minimum, need to go to stores for supplies and will interact with others when they do. What places have those other people been?

Ignoring, dismissing or downplaying what could happen is a disservice.

The debate about forcing businesses to close in Aberdeen is only days away. It's vital and will have far-ranging consequences.

Lives are on the line — potentially the lives of 6,600 South Dakotans.

How many might you know?

World virus infections top 800,000; Spain sees record deaths

By ARITZ PARRA, DAVID RISING and NICK PERRY Associated Press

MADRID (AP) — Spain's coronavirus deaths jumped by a record number Tuesday as the country's medical system strained to care for its tens of thousands of infected patients and the world total climbed to more than 800,000 case.

In the United States, where the spread of the coronavirus has been accelerating, New York's governor begged for health care reinforcements, saying up to 1 million more workers were needed.

Spain and Italy are still struggling to avoid the collapse of their health systems, with Spain saying hospitals in at least half of its 17 regions are at or very near their ICU bed limits and more than 13,000 medical workers are among the country's reported 94,417 infections.

Dozens of hotels across Spain have been converted into recovery rooms for patients in less-serious condition, and authorities are building makeshift field hospitals in sports centers, libraries and exhibition halls. So far they have added 23,000 beds.

Overnight, Spain recorded 849 new deaths, the highest daily toll since the pandemic hit the southern European country. It has now claimed the lives of 8,189 people in Spain, forcing Madrid to open a second temporary morgue this week after an ice rink pressed into service last week become overwhelmed.

Authorities are shifting ventilating machines to regions with the highest number of ICU patients, and moving the patients themselves between regions "has not been ruled out," said Dr. María José Sierra of Spain's health emergencies center.

Deaths climbed rapidly in the United States, which was poised to overtake China's reported virus death

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, March 31, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 262 ~ 21 of 73

toll of 3,300. But experts say all numbers reported by governments and states in this pandemic are faulty in different ways, due to the lack of testing, mild virus cases that are missed or the determination of some governments to try to shape their pandemic narrative.

"This is going to be a long-term battle and we cannot let down our guard," cautioned Dr. Takeshi Kasai, the World Health Organization's regional director for the Western Pacific. "We need every country to keep responding according to their local situation."

Hard-hit Italy and Spain now account for more than half of the 38,714 COVID-19 deaths reported worldwide and the U.S. has the most confirmed cases at 164,610, according to a tally by Johns Hopkins University.

Italy's death toll rose to nearly 11,600 — the highest in the world by far — but its rates of new infections were slowing.

A 12-year-old girl became the youngest person to die in Belgium, which has counted 705 deaths so far, including 98 in the last day. It was not disclosed whether she suffered from any underlying condition. The country of about 11.5 million people has reported more than 12,705 infections.

National crisis-center coronavirus spokesman Emmanuel Andre said Belgian authorities expect the disease to reach its peak in coming days, and that "we will arrive at a point where we're close to saturation point at our hospitals."

To the east, Russia registered 500 new confirmed cases in the biggest spike since the beginning of the outbreak, bringing its total to 2,337. Moscow, the capital, has been on lockdown since Monday and the government is edging toward declaring a national state of emergency.

In New York, the epicenter of the U.S. outbreak, Gov. Andrew Cuomo and health officials warned that the crisis unfolding there is just a preview of what other U.S. cities and towns will soon face. New York state's death toll climbed by more than 250 people in a day to over 1,200.

"We've lost over 1,000 New Yorkers," Cuomo said. "To me, we're beyond staggering already."

Even before the governor's appeal, close to 80,000 former nurses, doctors and other professionals were volunteering in New York, and a Navy hospital ship arrived with 1,000 beds to relieve pressure on the city's overwhelmed hospitals.

In California, officials put out a similar call for volunteers as coronavirus hospitalizations doubled over the last four days and the number of patients in intensive care tripled.

Experts maintain the pandemic will be defeated only by social distancing measures that have put billions of people on lockdown and upended the world's economy.

Dr. Chiara Lepora in the virus hotspot of Lodi in northern Italy said the pandemic had revealed critical health care problems in developed countries.

"Outbreaks cannot be fought in hospitals," she said. "Hospitals can only deal with the consequences."

In the southern state of Florida, officials were meeting later Tuesday to decide whether to let the infection-plagued cruise ship *Zaandam* dock after more than two weeks at sea.

In a South American dream trip that turned into a nightmare, dozens on the ship have reported flu-like symptoms and four people have died. The company said eight people have tested positive but 2,300 other passengers and crew are in good health.

Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis has said the state's health care resources are stretched too thin to allow the ship to dock.

More than 235 million people — about two of every three Americans — live in the 33 states where governors have ordered or recommended that residents stay home.

Worldwide, 800,049 people have been infected and 166,768 have recovered, according to Johns Hopkins University.

For most people, the coronavirus causes mild or moderate symptoms, such as fever and cough. But for others, especially older adults and people with existing health problems, it can cause severe symptoms like pneumonia and even death.

China on Tuesday reported just one new death from the coronavirus and 48 new cases, claiming that all new infections came from overseas. In Wuhan, people were ready to jump, cry and "revenge shop" as the Chinese city once at the center of the outbreak reopened.

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, March 31, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 262 ~ 22 of 73

About 75% of the shops reopened at the Chuhe Hanjie pedestrian mall. Shopkeepers limited the number of people allowed in, dispensing hand sanitizer and checking customers for signs of fever.

In Serbia, Hungary and other nations, concerns were rising that populist leaders were using the situation to try to seize more power and silence critics.

A human rights expert said while she understands the need to act swiftly to protect lives, the new states of emergency must include time limits and parliamentary oversight.

"A state of emergency — wherever it is declared and for whatever reason — must be proportionate to its aim, and only remain in place for as long as absolutely necessary," said Ingibjörg Sólrún Gísladóttir of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe.

The economic devastation continued, with British Airways suspending all its flights at Gatwick Airport amid a collapse in demand as nations close borders and airlines slash flights.

In Japan, the countdown clocks were reset and ticking again for the Tokyo Olympics. The clocks now read 479 days to go, with the games scheduled to begin on July 23, 2021.

Perry reported from Wellington, New Zealand. Associated Press writers around the world contributed.

Follow AP news coverage of the coronavirus pandemic at <https://apnews.com/VirusOutbreak> and <https://apnews.com/UnderstandingtheOutbreak>

The Latest: Indonesia to release prisoners to limit virus

By The Associated Press undefined

The Latest on the coronavirus pandemic. The new coronavirus causes mild or moderate symptoms for most people. For some, especially older adults and people with existing health problems, it can cause more severe illness or death.

TOP OF THE HOUR:

- With highest death toll, Italy holds minute of silence.
- Spain records its highest number of new deaths from virus.
- Chinese officials warn country's epidemic isn't over yet.

JAKARTA, Indonesia -- Indonesia plans to release 30,000 prisoners to help prevent the spread of COVID-19.

Indonesia Law and Human Rights Ministry's spokesman Bambang Wiyono says the Ministry has issued a Ministerial Decree to regulate the release of adult prisoners that had served two-thirds of their sentences and half of the sentences for children prisoners.

Indonesia Law and Human Rights Ministry recorded 270,386 prisoners across the country while the capacity of the prisons is only 131,931 prisoners.

Indonesia has reported 1,528 confirmed cases of COVID-19 and 136 deaths.

BRATISLAVA, Slovakia — A government health institute in Slovakia estimates the number of people ill with coronavirus could reach the peak by mid-July with some 170,000 infected.

Director Martin Smatana says the strict restrictions approved by the government seems to be helping to slow the spreading of the virus.

Smatana says if the country keeps complying, it has a chance to avoid what happened in the countries and places the worst hit by the pandemic.

Prime Minister Igor Matovic says the authorities are working to double the number of ventilators to 1,000. Slovakia, the country of nearly 5.5 million, has 363 cases of COVID-19. No one has died.

MANILA, Philippines — The Philippine government is studying the possibility of deploying ships that can serve as "floating quarantine hospitals" for people infected by the coronavirus after leading hospitals are filled up to capacity.

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, March 31, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 262 ~ 23 of 73

The government says in a report to Congress that ships could be fitted with medical equipment and deployed anywhere in the archipelago. At least six private metropolitan Manila hospitals have announced they were full and can no longer accept COVID-19 patients.

The Department of Public Works and Highway also created a special group to convert unused public buildings and evacuation shelters into treatment centers, containment areas and emergency food hubs.

Philippine health officials reported 538 new COVID-19 cases Tuesday, bringing the country's total to 2,084 and 88 deaths. The number of infections is expected to spike after more testing laboratories open.

ROME — Italy has observed a minute of silence and flown its flags at half-staff in a collective, nationwide gesture to honor the victims of the coronavirus and their families.

The Vatican also lowered its flags Tuesday to honor the dead in the country with the greatest toll from the virus, which stands at more than 11,500.

The noon minute of silence was observed in cities and towns around the country.

The office of Premier Giuseppe Conte said the gesture was a sign of national mourning and solidarity with the victims, their families "and as a sign of collective participation in mourning with the hardest-hit communities."

BEIJING — Chinese officials say the coronavirus epidemic isn't over in their country and that daunting challenges remain.

Foreign ministry spokeswoman Hua Chunying said Tuesday that authorities need to make sure that infected people arriving from abroad don't spread the disease and start new outbreaks.

She hit back at U.S. criticism of her country's handling of the epidemic, saying that China and the U.S. should work together to fight it.

"We also hope that some U.S. officials can follow through in the spirit of the two heads of states' call and create more favorable conditions for the two countries to cooperate in the fight against the disease," she said. The two leaders talked late last week.

Hua noted that some local Chinese governments and companies have provided virus-related medical supplies to the United States, even as the demand for those supplies remains high in China.

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates — Dubai's government says it will inject equity into Emirates airlines as the Middle East's largest carrier grounds nearly all of its flights due to coronavirus restrictions on travel at its hub in the world's busiest airport for international travel.

Dubai's Crown Prince Sheikh Hamdan bin Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum said in a statement Tuesday that liquidity would be given to the state-owned airline "considering its strategic importance" to Dubai and the economy of the United Arab Emirates, but he did not say how much credit would be pumped into the airline.

Emirates carried around 58 million passengers last year, helping to transform Dubai's airport into the world's busiest for international travel for several years running.

Also Tuesday, low-cost carrier flydubai became the latest airline to announce pay cuts of its staff of nearly 4,000, though not all staff are being affected the same.

The company told The Associated Press it was reducing salaries to between 25-50% for a three-month period starting in April.

MADRID — Spain recorded on Tuesday 849 new coronavirus deaths, the highest number since the pandemic hit the southern European country, according to the country's health ministry.

With both new infections and deaths up around 11% each, to a total of 94,417 confirmed cases and 8,189 fatalities, Spain is seeing a slight rebound in the outbreak.

That's despite an overall timid slowdown in its spread for the past week, allowing authorities to focus on avoiding the collapse of the health system. At least one third of Spain's 17 regions were already at their limit of capacity in terms of intensive care unit usage, while new beds are being added in hotels, exhibition

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, March 31, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 262 ~ 24 of 73

and sports centers across the country.

At least 14% of those infected are much needed medical personnel. Many of them lack proper protective gear.

The government also wants to cushion the social effects of a major economic slowdown. Spain is officially "hibernating," with new measures halting all but essential economic activity coming into full force on Tuesday.

Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez's left-wing Cabinet is expected to add a new 700-million-euro aid package, including zero interest loans, as well as suspend evictions for families who can't afford to pay their home rent.

LONDON — More people with the new coronavirus have died in Britain than previously announced, according to newly published figures that include deaths both in and out of hospitals.

The Office for National Statistics says that 210 deaths recorded England and Wales up to March 20 mentioned COVID-19 on the death certificate. That is 40 more than the 170 deaths among people with the virus reported by the Department of Health for the same period.

The two sets of figures use different reporting methods and timing. The Department of Health statistics record hospital deaths. Tuesday's higher figure includes people who died in nursing homes and other settings. Some of those are people who were not tested for the virus but were suspected of having it.

BERLIN — German zoos are asking the government for a 100 million-euro (\$110 million) aid package to help cover costs as their revenue has fallen away due to the coronavirus crisis.

Germany has largely shut down public life and introduced a ban over a week ago on gatherings of more than two people in public. The restrictions are expected to remain in place until after Easter. An association representing 56 zoos wrote to Chancellor Angela Merkel, her finance and economy ministers as well as state governors on Tuesday.

The group's chairman, Leipzig zoo director Joerg Junhold, said that "unlike other facilities, we cannot simply shut down our operations – our animals still have to be fed and cared for."

With zoos closed to visitors, he said that "at the moment we are working without revenues but with expenses at a consistently high level." He said that a big zoo currently has a weekly revenue shortfall of about 500,000 euros.

BRUSSELS — Belgian authorities say a 12-year-old girl has died of the coronavirus, by far the youngest person among the more than 700 victims in the country.

Announcing the news Tuesday, national crisis-center coronavirus spokesman Emmanuel Andre said it is "an emotionally difficult moment, because it involves a child, and it has also upset the medical and scientific community."

"We are thinking of her family and friends. It is an event that is very rare, but one which upsets us greatly," Andre said. No details about the girl were provided.

He said that 98 people had died from the disease over the last 24 hours, bringing the total toll to 705 in a country of around 11.5 million people. More than 12,705 cases have been confirmed in total so far.

Andre said that Belgian authorities expect the spread of the disease to reach its peak in coming days, and that "we will arrive at a point where we're close to saturation point at our hospitals."

MOSCOW — Russia registered 500 confirmed cases of the new coronavirus on Tuesday in the biggest spike since the beginning of the outbreak that brought the country's total to 2,337 cases.

The report comes as Russia edges closer to declaring a state of emergency, with many regions and cities ordering lockdowns and sweeping self-isolation protocols.

Moscow, the country's capital, has been on lockdown since Monday, with most businesses closed and residents not allowed to leave their apartments except for grocery shopping, buying medicines, taking out

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, March 31, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 262 ~ 25 of 73

trash or walking their dogs. Similar regimes are in place in more than 30 Russian regions.

Human rights advocates and lawyers in Russia argue that, in accordance with the Russian legislation, such lockdowns can't be legally enforced until the state of emergency is declared by the president. The Kremlin has so far said that Moscow authorities have been within their rights to impose a lockdown.

On Tuesday, the State Duma, Russia's lower parliament house, hastily adopted a law allowing the Cabinet to declare the state of emergency, rubber-stamping it through all three required readings in one day.

BEIJING — China will delay the national college entrance exam by a month to ensure the health of students and allow more time for them to prepare, the education ministry announced Tuesday.

Amid sharply declining numbers of virus cases, the hugely important exam will now be held on July 7 and 8. However, the capital Beijing and hardest-hit Hubei Province "can put forward their proposals on the exam dates for their regions" and publish the schedule after gaining approval from the ministry, the announcement said.

More than 10 million students plan to take the exam this year. Schools in some regions have begun to reopen, although ministry officials say the restart of classes will happen gradually, under tight hygienic conditions and only in areas where the threat of the virus is lowest.

China "has passed through the most dangerous, most critical stage of the crisis," but can't afford to let its guard down, Ma Xiaowei, director of the National Health Commission, told reporters at a separate news conference Tuesday.

COPENHAGEN, Denmark — Danish Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen said Denmark could start lifting some restrictions next month if the coronavirus curve continues to flatten out.

Frederiksen said late Monday that if Danes continue to stand together — at a distance — the government will consider gradually opening up in two weeks' time.

She underlined that the crisis was far from over but there was growing evidence that Denmark, which started a gradual lockdown on March 11, had "succeeded in delaying the infection," adding it gave "a rise to optimism."

Also in the Nordic region, Finland has decided to extend by a month the duration of the emergency conditions in the southern part of the country affecting the daily lives of some 1.7 million people, nearly a third of Finland's population.

The measures set by the Prime Minister Sanna Marin's government were originally set to expire April 13 but the restrictions, now extended to May 13, were aimed at slowing "down the spread of coronavirus infections and to protect those at risk."

LONDON — British supermarkets had their busiest month in history as demand soared from people preparing to stay at home to avoid the new coronavirus.

New figures from market research firm Kantar show that British grocery sales jumped by 20.6% in March compared with a year earlier, making it the fastest rate of growth on record.

As Britain prepared for a lockdown, images of supermarket shelves stripped of essentials like pasta and toilet paper circulated on social media, prompting British supermarkets to take out newspaper ads urging people not to panic buy.

Grocery sales totaled 10.8 billion pounds (\$13.3 billion) over the past four weeks, surpassing the level seen during the busy Christmas season, Kantar said. The average household bought the equivalent of five extra days of groceries, it found.

NEW DELHI — A neighborhood in the Indian capital where a religious sect is headquartered has been sealed off from outsiders after police evacuated more than 1,000 people believed to have been exposed to the coronavirus during a religious gathering earlier this month before the government imposed the world's largest lockdown.

Police said on Tuesday that hundreds of people, many of them foreign nationals, carried the virus to several

other parts of India after attending a mosque in the crowded majority-Muslim enclave of Nizamuddin West.

Paramedics have transported hundreds of Muslim worshippers to nearby quarantine facilities. Officials say at least 300 people have symptoms of COVID-19, the respiratory illness caused by the virus.

Officials in other Indian states raced to confine others who attended the Nizamuddin mosque.

India has 1,200 confirmed cases of the coronavirus across the country, including 32 deaths, a quarter of which have been linked to the gathering.

A 21-day long nationwide lockdown that began last week has resulted in the suspension of trains and airline services and effectively kept 1.3 billion Indians at home for all but essential trips to places like markets or pharmacies.

The overall number of known cases in India is small compared with the United States, Italy and China, but health experts say India could be weeks away from a huge surge that could overwhelm its already strained public health system.

Follow AP news coverage of the coronavirus pandemic at <https://apnews.com/VirusOutbreak> and <https://apnews.com/UnderstandingtheOutbreak>

White House turns to statistical models for virus forecast

By RICARDO ALONSO-ZALDIVAR and LAURAN NEERGAARD Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Like forecasters tracking a megastorm, White House officials are relying on statistical models to help predict the impact of the coronavirus outbreak and try to protect as many people as possible.

The public could get its first close look at the Trump administration's own projections Tuesday at the daily briefing.

High numbers of potential deaths estimated under different models have focused President Donald Trump's attention. He's dropped talk of reopening the country by Easter and instead called on Americans to stay home for another month and avoid social contact.

Such models are a standard tool of epidemiology, the branch of medicine that deals with how diseases spread and how to control them. But they're really just fancy estimates, and results vary by what factors the modelers put in. Some models updated on a daily basis may seem disconcerting to average folks searching for certainty.

White House coronavirus task force adviser Dr. Deborah Birx and the National Institutes of Health's Dr. Anthony Fauci have been talking about the models at press briefings. Fauci on Sunday cited one estimate of 100,000 deaths. Birx has described how officials are working to refine their own model.

On Monday, Trump signaled that the White House will explain its forecast soon. "We will meet again tomorrow for some statistics," he told reporters at the daily briefing. As soon as it's released, the White House model is certain to get a thorough vetting by independent experts.

The models can feed in numbers from around the country on deaths and other data points. They use statistical analysis to predict the outbreak's path, ferocity and ultimate impact as measured in people sickened, hospitals overwhelmed and lives lost. Fauci and Birx have talked about using testing data — once enough is available.

Part of the idea is to try to drill down close to the community level, providing a tailored view that can help state and local officials. For example, the age of a local population can make a difference.

A senior administration official said other streams of data being analyzed include local hospital capacity, the ability of health departments to trace the contacts of people who test positive, the types of businesses in a community and whether they could ensure worker safety if they reopen and economic modeling under varying scenarios. The official provided details on the condition of anonymity to discuss ongoing planning.

Birx said the White House task force has looked at about a dozen models designed by other experts.

"And then we went back to the drawing board over the last week or two and worked from the ground up, utilizing actual reporting of cases," she explained.

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, March 31, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 262 ~ 27 of 73

Birx singled out projections by the Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation at the University of Washington in Seattle, suggesting that model is close to how government experts see the situation.

As of Tuesday morning, the IHME forecast predicted about 84,000 U.S. deaths through early August, with the highest number of daily deaths occurring April 15. That would be three days after Easter.

The model generated attention because it offered the first state-by-state outlook for the next several months, based on how the outbreak is reacting to the various containment efforts put in place at different times around the country. It shows how the outbreak will unfold at a different pace in various states. For example, the model predicts it will peak about a month earlier in New York than in Texas.

The IHME model is what's called a "planning model" that can help local authorities and hospitals plan for such things as how many ICU beds they'll need from week to week.

"Nobody has a crystal ball," said Dr. Christopher Murray of the University of Washington, who developed the model. It is updated daily as new data arrives. While it is aimed at professionals, Murray hopes the model also helps the general public understand that the social distancing that's in place "is a long process."

Just like a massive evacuation can save lives in a Category 4 hurricane, social distancing and shuttered workplaces can slow the rate at which the virus spreads, in hopes that severe illness and deaths may not hit a particular locality all at once. Overwhelmed hospitals unable to care for patients could make things worse.

Fauci says models are useful, but they represent well-informed guesswork. They involve a wide span of possible results, from a best-case scenario to calamitous impacts. Usually the mid-range estimate gets cited. But sometimes, it's worst-case projection.

"What I like to do — as a scientist, a physician, a public health official — is to not ignore models," said Fauci. But to "look at the data as it's evolving and do everything you possibly can to mitigate that instead of getting overly anxious about the extremes of the model."

For most people, the new coronavirus causes mild or moderate symptoms, such as fever and cough that clear up in two to three weeks. For some, especially older adults and people with existing health problems, it can cause more severe illness, including pneumonia, or death. The vast majority of people recover.

The virus has caused a global pandemic that has sickened about 800,000 people and killed tens of thousands, according to figures compiled by Johns Hopkins University.

How dire projections, grim images dashed Trump's Easter plan

By JONATHAN LEMIRE, JILL COLVIN and ZEKE MILLER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The two doctors spread out their charts on the Resolute Desk in the Oval Office.

The projections were grim: Even if the U.S. were to continue to do what it was doing, keeping the economy closed and most Americans in their homes, the coronavirus could leave 100,000 to 200,000 people dead and millions infected. And the totals would be far worse if the nation reopened.

Those stark predictions grew even more tangible and harrowing when paired with televised images of body bags lined up at a New York City hospital not far from where President Donald Trump grew up in Queens.

The confluence of dire warnings and tragic images served to move the Republican president off his hopes for an Easter rebirth for the nation's economy.

But while Trump sided with the White House doctors over its economists, at least for now, the decision shed light on a West Wing beset with divisions and a commander in chief torn between an instinct to embrace the image of a wartime president fighting an invisible enemy and the desire to protect the nation's bottom line as he barrels into a bruising reelection fight.

The abrupt change in Trump's tone was startling: Easter was no longer going to be the sunrise after blackest night. Instead, it could be the darkest moment before dawn.

"We're thinking that around Easter that's going to be your spike. That's going to be the highest point we think, and then it's going to start coming down from there," Trump said Monday on "Fox & Friends." "The worst that can happen is you do it too early and all of a sudden it comes back. That makes it more

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, March 31, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 262 ~ 28 of 73

difficult.”

The bleak forecasts were carried into the Oval Office by Dr. Anthony Fauci and Dr. Deborah Birx, who displayed to Trump projections that, on the low end, could yield 100,000 American deaths from COVID-19. One model showed that deaths could have soared past 2 million had there been no mitigation measures.

“We showed him the data. He looked at the data. He got it right away. It was a pretty clear picture,” Fauci told CNN on Monday. “Dr. Debbie Birx and I went into the Oval Office and leaned over the desk and said, ‘Here are the data, take a look.’ He just shook his head and said, ‘I guess we got to do it.’”

But as is often the case with Trump, it also took the power of images to prompt him to act.

Over the weekend, the death count in New York City skyrocketed, the silence of the city’s empty streets shattered only by ambulance sirens. Makeshift medical tents were hastily erected in Central Park. And hospitals, including Elmhurst Medical Center in Queens, not far from Trump’s childhood home, were so overwhelmed that patients were lying in hallways and corpses stowed in refrigerated trucks.

“This is essentially in my community, in Queens, Queens, New York,” Trump said. “I’ve seen things that I’ve never seen before.”

Aides likened Trump’s emotional response to his reaction to the 2017 pictures of dead Syrian children that prompted him to give the order for the first air strike of his presidency. Trump also invoked some friends — he did not identify them — who he said are battling the virus.

“I have some friends that are unbelievably sick,” he said Monday in a Rose Garden press conference. “We thought they were going in for a mild stay and in one case, he’s unconscious — in a coma.”

The weekend decision also revealed the sharp divides among those advising Trump, both inside and outside the West Wing.

For weeks, those in the White House who warned that the doctors’ strict recommendations would cripple the economy — and Trump’s reelection chances — had the president’s ear and pushed him toward the idea of restarting business in the states where infections were low.

Trump’s decision to extend national guidelines to clamp down on activity left them disappointed.

Stephen Moore, a former Trump adviser who had been pushing the administration publicly and privately to roll back restrictions in places with low infection rates, said the economic impact would grow worse every day that the shutdown continues, with more bankruptcies and more jobs lost. He had urged Trump to begin to reopen in places like Idaho, Iowa and Nebraska, far from the infection hot spots.

But Trump was swayed by arguments that the fiscal pain would be worse if the economy was reopened and then forced to be shut again.

As in the early, chaotic days of his administration, Trump’s White House has become increasingly siloed in recent weeks, with different working groups functioning separately and sometimes in competition. Members of Trump’s coronavirus task force, led by Vice President Mike Pence and including Fauci and Birx, did not know that Trump would be floating the idea of a quarantine of the New York area over the weekend — and then quickly moved to walk him back, according to three administration officials not authorized to publicly discuss private conversations.

The president is getting conflicting advice from outside the White House as well.

While some Republican governors, like Henry McMaster of South Carolina, have urged the president to reopen the economy, Gov. Ron DeSantis of Florida considered banning travelers from hot spots like New York from entering his state, which experts believe is poised to see a surge in coronavirus cases.

After speaking with DeSantis, Trump mused to reporters Saturday about a quarantine of New York, as well as parts of New Jersey and Connecticut, blindsiding their governors and raising questions about federal authority.

Even if the measure was unenforceable, Trump thought it could be a signal to supporters elsewhere that he was walling off a virus hot zone comprised of three Democratic states. But Fauci and other advisers persuaded him that it would accomplish little except ignite worry.

Like forecasts for a monster hurricane, the pandemic projection models can disagree with one another. But the coronavirus models all agree that this outbreak and its consequences are extremely serious.

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, March 31, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 262 ~ 29 of 73

Birx singled out one by the Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation at the University of Washington in Seattle, suggesting it's close to how government experts see things. That model predicts more than 84,000 total U.S. deaths through early August, with the highest number of daily deaths — an estimated 2,200 — occurring April 15.

That would be three days after Easter.

For most people, the new coronavirus causes mild or moderate symptoms, such as fever and cough that clear up in two to three weeks. For some, especially older adults and people with existing health problems, it can cause more severe illness, including pneumonia, or death. The vast majority of people recover.

The virus has caused a global pandemic that has sickened about 800,000 people and killed tens of thousands, according to figures compiled by Johns Hopkins University.

Lemire reported from New York. Associated Press writer Ricardo Alonso-Zaldivar contributed reporting from Washington.

US outlines plan for Venezuela transition, sanctions relief

By JOSHUA GOODMAN Associated Press

MIAMI (AP) — The Trump administration is prepared to lift sanctions on Venezuela in support of a new proposal to form a transitional government representing allies of both Nicolas Maduro and opposition leader Juan Guaidó, U.S. officials said.

The plan, which will be presented Tuesday by Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, echoes a proposal made over the weekend by Guaidó that shows how growing concerns about the coronavirus, which threatens to overwhelm the South American country's already collapsed health system and crippled economy, are reviving U.S. attempts to pull the military apart from Maduro.

What's being dubbed the "Democratic Framework for Venezuela" would require Maduro and Guaidó to step aside and hand power to a five-member council of state to govern the country until presidential and parliamentary elections can be held in late 2020, according to a written summary of the proposal seen by The Associated Press.

Four of the members would be appointed by the opposition-controlled National Assembly that Guaidó heads. To draw buy-in from the ruling socialist party, a two-third majority would be required. The fifth member, who would serve as interim president until elections are held, would be named by the other council members. Neither Maduro nor Guaidó would be on the council.

"The hope is that this setup promotes the selection of people who are very broadly respected and known as people who can work with the other side," U.S. Special Representative for Venezuela Elliott Abrams told the AP in a preview of the plan. "Even people in the regime look at this and realize Maduro has to go, but the rest of us are being treated well and fairly."

The plan also outlines for the first time U.S. requirements for lifting sanctions against Maduro officials and the oil industry — the source of nearly all of Venezuela's foreign income.

While those accused of grave human rights abuses and drug trafficking are not eligible for sanctions relief, individuals who are blacklisted because of the position they hold inside the Maduro government — such as members of the supreme court, electoral council and the rubber-stamp constitutional assembly — would benefit.

But for sanctions to vanish, Abrams said the council would need to be functioning and all foreign military forces — from Cuba or Russia — would need to leave the country.

"What we're hoping is that this really intensifies a discussion inside the army, Chavismo, the ruling socialist party and the regime on how to get out of the terrible crisis they're in," Abrams said.

For months, the U.S. has relied on economic and diplomatic pressure to try and break the military's support for Maduro and last week U.S. prosecutors indicted Maduro and key stakeholders — including his defense minister and head of the supreme court — on drug trafficking and money laundering charges.

Still, any power-sharing arrangement is unlikely to win Maduro's support unless the thorny issue of his

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, March 31, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 262 ~ 30 of 73

future is addressed and he's protected from the U.S. justice system, said David Smilde, a senior fellow at the Washington Office on Latin America. While Venezuelans are protected from extradition by Hugo Chavez's 1999 constitution, the charter could be rewritten in a transition, he said.

"It's a little hard to see how this is going to be convincing to the major players in the government," said David Smilde, a senior fellow at the Washington Office on Latin America. "They seem to think the military is going to step in, but that seems extremely unlikely."

It also would require the support of Cuba, China or Russia, all of whom are key economic and political backers of Maduro. In a call Monday with Vladimir Putin, President Donald Trump reiterated that the situation in Venezuela is dire and told the Russian leader we all have an interest in seeing a democratic transition to end the ongoing crisis, according to a White House readout of the call.

A senior administration official said Monday that the U.S. is willing to negotiate with Maduro the terms of his exit even in the wake of the indictments, which complicate his legal standing.

But recalling the history of Gen. Manuel Noriega in Panama, who was removed in a U.S. invasion after being charged himself for drug trafficking, he cautioned that his options for a deal were running out.

"History shows that those who do not cooperate with U.S. law enforcement agencies do not fare well," the official said in a call with journalists on condition of anonymity to discuss U.S. policy. "Maduro probably regrets not taking the offer six months ago. We urge Maduro not to regret not taking it now."

Guaidó, who has been recognized by the U.S. and nearly 60 other countries as the lawful leader of the country following a widely viewed fraudulent re-election of Maduro, called on Saturday for the creation of a "national emergency government."

He said international financial institutions are prepared to support a power-sharing interim government with \$1.2 billion in loans to fight the pandemic. Guaido said the loans would be used to directly assist Venezuelan families who are expected to be harmed not only by the spread of the disease but also the economic shock from a collapse in oil prices, virtually the country's only source of hard currency.

The spread of the coronavirus threatens to overwhelm Venezuela's already collapsed health system while depriving its crippled economy of oil revenue on which it almost exclusively depends for hard currency.

The United Nations said Venezuela could be one of the nations hit hardest by the spread of the coronavirus, designating it a country for priority attention because of a health system marked by widespread shortages of medical supplies and a lack of water and electricity.

Last September, Guaidó proposed a similar transitional government in talks with Maduro officials sponsored by Norway, which never gained traction.

But with the already bankrupt country running out of gasoline and seeing bouts of looting amid the coronavirus pandemic, calls have been growing for both the opposition and Maduro to set aside their bitter differences to head off a nightmare scenario.

"The regime is under greater pressure than it has ever before," Abrams said.

AP writers Deb Riechmann in Washington, and Scott Smith in Caracas, Venezuela, contributed to this report.

10 Things to Know for Today

By The Associated Press undefined

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

1. WHERE VIRUS IS USED AS AN EXCUSE TO QUELL DISSENT In places like Serbia, Hungary and Israel, leaders are assuming more power while they introduce harsh measures they say are necessary to halt the coronavirus spread.

2. POLITICAL PRISONERS FEAR INFECTION In some cells in Iran, Syria and other countries in the Middle East, prisoners crammed into filthy jails fear the coronavirus could run rampant.

3. 'PLEASE COME HELP US' New York Gov. Andrew Cuomo says up to 1 million more health care workers are needed for his virus-ravaged city as the U.S. closes in on China's death toll of 3,300.

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, March 31, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 262 ~ 31 of 73

4. PROJECTIONS SHAPING VIRUS POLICY White House officials are relying on statistical models to predict the impact of the COVID-19 outbreak and try to protect as many people as possible.

5. `FOR SOMEONE LIKE YOU, THIS MUST BE HELL' Extroverts, and introverts, too, face quarantine challenges as self-isolation designed to arrest the coronavirus' spread turns the tables on many societal norms.

6. WHAT THE EPA IS PLANNING Legal challenges are expected as the environmental agency plans to roll back Obama-era standards for raising vehicle mileage standards and producing electric automobiles.

7. DEBATE ON MAIL-IN BALLOTS REVIVED Democrats have argued that elections should be conducted by mail to make them easier for voters, but logistical challenges and Republican opposition would be major barriers to overcome.

8. GLOBAL STOCKS MOSTLY RISE World shares were mostly higher after China reported strong manufacturing data, extending an overnight rally on Wall Street.

9. SONY PICTURES DELAYS ANTICIPATED FILMS The Hollywood studio clears out its summer calendar due to the viral outbreak, postponing the releases "Ghostbusters: Afterlife" and the Marvel movie "Morbius" to 2021.

10. USA BASKETBALL MAY FACE ROSTER CHALLENGES FOR 2021 Knowing when the rescheduled Tokyo Olympics will be solves one problem for the organization, but NBA free agency in 2021 creates another.

Europe's hospitals among the best but can't handle pandemic

By MARIA CHENG AP Medical Writer

LONDON (AP) — As increasing numbers of European hospitals buckle under the strain of tens of thousands of coronavirus patients, the crisis has exposed a surprising paradox: Some of the world's best health systems are remarkably ill-equipped to handle a pandemic.

Outbreak experts say Europe's hospital-centric systems, lack of epidemic experience and early complacency are partly to blame for the pandemic's catastrophic tear across the continent.

"If you have cancer, you want to be in a European hospital," said Brice de le Vingne, who heads COVID-19 operations for Doctors Without Borders in Belgium. "But Europe hasn't had a major outbreak in more than 100 years, and now they don't know what to do."

Last week, the World Health Organization scolded countries for "squandering" their chance to stop the virus from gaining a foothold, saying that countries should have reacted more aggressively two months ago, including implementing wider testing and stronger surveillance measures.

De le Vingne and others say Europe's approach to combating the new coronavirus was initially too lax and severely lacking in epidemiological basics like contact tracing, an arduous process where health officials physically track down people who have come into contact with those infected to monitor how and where the virus is spreading.

During outbreaks of Ebola, including Congo's most recent one, officials released daily figures for how many contacts were followed, even in remote villages paralyzed by armed attacks.

After the new coronavirus emerged late last year, China dispatched a team of about 9,000 health workers to chase thousands of potential contacts in Wuhan every day.

But in Italy, officials in some cases have left it up to ill patients to inform their potential contacts that they had tested positive and resorted to mere daily phone calls to check in on them. Spain and Britain have both declined to say how many health workers were working on contact tracing or how many contacts were identified at any stage in the outbreak.

"We are really good at contact tracing in the U.K., but the problem is we didn't do enough of it," said Dr. Bharat Pankhania, an infectious diseases physician at the University of Exeter in southwestern England.

As cases began picking up speed in the U.K. in early March, Pankhania and others desperately pleaded for call centers to be transformed into contact tracing hubs. That never happened, in what Pankhania calls "a lost opportunity."

Pankhania added that while Britain has significant expertise in treating critical care patients with respiratory problems, like severe pneumonia, there are simply too few hospital beds to cope with the exponential

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, March 31, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 262 ~ 32 of 73

surge of patients during a pandemic.

"We are already running at full capacity, and then on top of that we have the arrival of the coronavirus at a time when we're fully stressed and there isn't any give in the system," he said, noting years of reductions in bed capacity within Britain's National Health Service.

Elsewhere, the fact that health care workers and hospital systems have little experience with rationing care because European hospitals are generally so well resourced is now proving problematic.

"Part of the issue is that Italian doctors are getting very distressed to make decisions about which patients can get the ICU bed because normally they can just push them through," said Robert Dingwall, of Nottingham Trent University, who has studied health systems across Europe. "Not having the triage experience to do that in a pandemic situation is very overwhelming."

In a departure from their normal role as donors who fund outbreak responses in poorer countries, countries including Italy, France and Spain are all now on the receiving end of emergency aid.

But Dr. Chiara Lepora, who heads Doctors Without Borders' efforts in the hot spot of Lodi in northern Italy, said the pandemic had revealed some critical problems in developed countries.

"Outbreaks cannot be fought in hospitals," she said. "Hospitals can only deal with the consequences."

Doctors in Bergamo, the epicenter of Italy's outbreak, described the new coronavirus as "the Ebola of the rich" in an article in the New England Journal of Medicine, warning that health systems in the West are at risk of being as overrun by COVID-19 as West African hospitals were in the devastating 2014-2016 Ebola outbreak.

"Western health systems have been built around the concept of patient-centered care, but an epidemic requires a change of perspective toward community-centered care," they wrote.

That model of community care is more typically seen in countries in Africa or parts of Asia, where hospitals are reserved for only the very sickest patients and far more patients are isolated or treated in stripped-down facilities — similar to the field hospitals now being hastily constructed across Europe.

Even Europe's typically strong networks of family physicians are insufficient to treat the deluge of patients that might be more easily addressed by armies of health workers — people with far less training than doctors but who focus on epidemic control measures. Developing countries are more likely to have such workforces, since they are more accustomed to massive health interventions like vaccination campaigns.

Some outbreak experts said European countries badly miscalculated their ability to stop the new coronavirus.

"But I think the fact that this is a new disease and the speed at which it moved surprised everyone," said Dr. Stacey Mearns of the International Rescue Committee.

Mearns said the current scenes of desperation across Europe — doctors and nurses begging for protective gear, temporary morgues in ice rinks to house the dead — were unimaginable just weeks ago. In Spain, 14% of its coronavirus cases are infected medical workers, straining resources at a critical time.

"We saw hospitals and communities get overwhelmed like this during Ebola in West Africa," she said. "To see it in resource-wealthy nations is very striking."

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>

Administration to release final rule on mileage rollback

By ELLEN KNICKMEYER and TOM KRISHER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump is poised to roll back ambitious Obama-era vehicle mileage standards and raise the ceiling on damaging fossil fuel emissions for years to come, gutting one of the United States' biggest efforts against climate change.

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, March 31, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 262 ~ 33 of 73

The Trump administration is expected to release a final rule Tuesday on mileage standards through 2026. The change — making good on the rollback after two years of Trump threatening and fighting states and a faction of automakers that opposed the move — waters down a tough Obama mileage standard that would have encouraged automakers to ramp up production of electric vehicles and more fuel-efficient gas and diesel vehicles.

“When finalized, the rule will benefit our economy, will improve the U.S. fleet’s fuel economy, will make vehicles more affordable, and will save lives by increasing the safety of new vehicles,” Environmental Protection Agency spokeswoman Corry Schiermeyer said Monday, ahead of the expected release.

Opponents contend the change — gutting his predecessor’s legacy effort against climate-changing fossil fuel emissions — appears driven by Trump’s push to undo regulatory initiatives of former President Barack Obama and say even the administration has had difficulty pointing to the kind of specific, demonstrable benefits to drivers, public health and safety or the economy that normally accompany standards changes.

The Trump administration says the looser mileage standards will allow consumers to keep buying the less fuel-efficient SUVs that U.S. drivers have favored for years. Opponents say it will kill several hundred more Americans a year through dirtier air, compared to the Obama standards.

Even “given the catastrophe they’re in with the coronavirus, they’re pursuing a policy that’s going to hurt public health and kill people,” said Chet France, a former 39-year veteran of the EPA, where he served as a senior official over emissions and mileage standards.

“This is first time that an administration has pursued a policy that will net negative benefit for society and reduce fuel savings,” France said.

Delaware Sen. Tom Carper, the senior Democrat on the Senate Environmental and Public Works Committee, called it “the height of irresponsibility for this administration to finalize a rollback that will lead to dirtier air while our country is working around the clock to respond to a respiratory pandemic whose effects may be exacerbated by air pollution.

“We should be enacting forward-looking environmental policy, not tying our country’s future to the dirty vehicles of the past,” Carper said.

In Phoenix, meanwhile, resident Columba Sainz expressed disappointment at the prospect of losing the Obama-era rule, which she had hoped would allow her preschool age children to break away from TV indoors and play outside more. Sainz reluctantly limited her daughter to a half-hour at the park daily, after the girl developed asthma, at age 3, at their home a few minutes from a freeway.

“I cried so many times,” Sainz said. “How do you tell your daughter she can’t be outside because of air pollution?”

Trump’s Cabinet heads have continued a push to roll back public health and environment regulations despite the coronavirus outbreak riveting the world’s attention. The administration — like others before it — is facing procedural rules that will make changes adopted before the last six months of Trump’s current term tougher to throw out, even if the White House changes occupants.

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, which has been the main agency drawing up the new rules, did not immediately respond to a request for comment Monday.

The standards have split the auto industry with Ford, BMW, Honda and Volkswagen siding with California and agreeing to higher standards. Most other automakers contend the Obama-era standards were enacted hastily and will be impossible to meet because consumers have shifted dramatically away from efficient cars to SUVs and trucks.

California and about a dozen other states say they will continue resisting the Trump mileage standards in court.

Last year, 72% of the new vehicles purchased by U.S. consumers were trucks or SUVs. It was 51% when the current standards went into effect in 2012.

The Obama administration mandated 5% annual increases in fuel economy. Leaked versions of the Trump administration’s latest proposal show a 1.5% annual increase, backing off from its initial proposal simply to stop mandating increases in fuel efficiency after 2020.

The transportation sector is the nation’s largest source of climate-changing emissions.

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, March 31, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 262 ~ 34 of 73

John Bozzella, CEO of the Alliance for Automotive Innovation, a trade group representing automakers, said the industry still wants middle ground between the two standards, and it supports year-over-year mileage increases. But he says the Obama-era standards are outdated due to the drastic shift to trucks and SUVs.

The Trump administration standards are likely to cause havoc in the auto industry because, with legal challenges expected, automakers won't know which standards they will have to obey.

"It will be extraordinarily disruptive," said Richard J. Pierce Jr., a law professor at the George Washington University who specializes in government regulations.

States and environmental groups will challenge the Trump rules, and a U.S. District Court likely will issue a temporary order shelving them until it decides whether they are legal. The temporary order likely will be challenged with the Supreme Court, which in recent cases has voted 5-4 that a District judge can't issue such a nationwide order, Pierce said. But the nation's highest court could also keep the order in effect if it determines the groups challenging the Trump standards are likely to win.

"We're talking quite a long time, one to three years anyway, before we can expect to get a final decision on the merits," Pierce said.

Krisher reported from Detroit.

Dismantling democracy? Virus used as excuse to quell dissent

By DUSAN STOJANOVIC Associated Press

BELGRADE, Serbia (AP) — Soldiers patrol the streets with their fingers on machine gun triggers. The army guards an exhibition center-turned-makeshift-hospital crowded with rows of metal beds for those infected with the coronavirus. And Serbia's president warns residents that Belgrade's graveyards won't be big enough to bury the dead if people ignore his government's lockdown orders.

Since President Aleksandar Vucic announced an open-ended state of emergency on March 15, parliament has been sidelined, borders shut, a 12-hour police-enforced curfew imposed and people over 65 banned from leaving their homes — some of Europe's strictest measures to combat the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Serbian leader, who makes dramatic daily appearances issuing new decrees, has assumed full power, prompting an outcry from opponents who say he has seized control of the state in an unconstitutional manner.

Rodoljub Sabic, a former state commissioner for personal data protection, says by proclaiming a state of emergency, Vucic has assumed "full supremacy" over decision-making during the crisis, although his constitutional role is only ceremonial.

"He issues orders which are automatically accepted by the government," Sabic said. "No checks and balances."

In ex-communist Eastern Europe and elsewhere, populist leaders are introducing harsh measures including uncontrolled cellphone surveillance of their citizens and lengthy jail sentences for those who flout lockdown decrees.

The human rights chief of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe said while she understands the need to act swiftly to protect populations from the COVID-19 pandemic, the newly declared states of emergency must include a time limit and parliamentary oversight.

"A state of emergency — wherever it is declared and for whatever reason — must be proportionate to its aim, and only remain in place for as long as absolutely necessary," said the OSCE rights chief, Ingibjörg Sólrún Gísladóttir.

In times of national emergency, countries often take steps that rights activists see as curtailing civil liberties, such as increased surveillance, curfews and restrictions on travel, or limiting freedom of expression. China locked down whole cities earlier this year to stop the spread of the virus as India did with the whole nation.

Amnesty International researcher Massimo Moratti said states of emergency are allowed under international human rights law but warned that the restrictive measures should not become a "new normal."

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, March 31, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 262 ~ 35 of 73

"Such states need to last only until the danger lasts," he told The Associated Press.

In European Union-member Hungary, parliament on Monday passed a law giving Prime Minister Viktor Orbán's government the right to rule by decree for as long as a state of emergency declared March 11 is in effect.

The law also sets prison terms of up to five years for those convicted of spreading false information about the pandemic and up to eight years for those interfering with efforts to contain the spread of the coronavirus, like a curfew or quarantine.

Rights groups and officials say the law creates the possibility of an indefinite state of emergency and gives Orbán and his government carte blanche to restrict human rights and crack down on freedom of the press.

"Orban is dismantling democracy in front of our eyes," said Tanja Fajon, a member of the European Parliament, "This is a shame for Europe, its fundamental values and democracy. He (Orban) abused coronavirus as an excuse to kill democracy and media freedom."

"This is not the way to address the very real crisis that has been caused by the COVID-19 pandemic," said David Vig, Amnesty International's Hungary director.

Hungarian Justice Minister Judit Varga said criticism of Hungary's bill were "political attacks based on the wrong interpretation or intentional distortion" of its contents.

Other governments have also adopted extreme measures.

In Israel, Benjamin Netanyahu's caretaker government passed a series of emergency executive measures to try to quell the spread of the new virus. These include authorizing unprecedented electronic surveillance of Israeli citizens and a slowdown of court activity that forced the postponement of Netanyahu's own pending corruption trial.

In Russia, authorities have turned up the pressure on media outlets and social media users to control the narrative amid the country's growing coronavirus outbreak. Moscow went on lockdown Monday and many other regions quickly followed suit.

Under the guise of weeding out coronavirus-related "fake news," law enforcement has cracked down on people sharing opinions on social media, and on media that criticize the government's response to the outbreak.

In Poland, people are worried about a new government smartphone application introduced for people in home quarantine.

Panoptykon Foundation, a human rights group that opposes surveillance, says some users who support government efforts to fight the pandemic worry that by using the app they could be giving too much private data to the conservative government.

While nearly 800 coronavirus cases and 16 deaths have been recorded in Serbia, according to Johns Hopkins University, testing has been extremely limited and experts believe the figures greatly underrepresent the real number of victims. Most people suffer mild or moderate symptoms, such as fever and cough, from the virus but for some, especially older adults and people with existing health problems, more severe illness can occur, including pneumonia and death.

Images of the transformation of a huge communist-era exhibition hall in Belgrade into a makeshift hospital for infected patients has triggered widespread public fear of the detention camp-looking facility that is filled with row-upon-row of 3,000 metal beds.

The Serbian president said he was glad that people got scared, adding he would have chosen even a worse-looking spot if that would stop Serbs from flouting his stay-at-home orders.

"Someone has to spend 14 to 28 days there," Vucic said. "If it's not comfortable, I don't care. We are fighting for people's lives."

"Do not Drown Belgrade," a group of civic activists, has launched an online petition against what they call Vucic's abuse of power and curtailing of basic human rights. It says his frequent public appearances are creating panic in an already worried society.

"We do not need Vucic's daily dramatization, but the truth: Concrete data and instructions from experts,"

the petition says.

Associated Press writers Jovana Gec, Pablo Gorondi in Budapest, Hungary, and Vanessa Gera in Warsaw contributed to this report.

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

Extroverts (and introverts, too) face quarantine challenges

By DEEPTI HAJELA Associated Press

Within days, Vicktery Zimmerman had figured out how to connect with friends and family even as she and her husband shelter in place at their Chicago home.

There are the FaceTime calls. There's the movie night (remote, of course) with another couple. There are plans for a game night. Whatever it takes to keep the 30-year-old self-professed extreme extrovert and public relations specialist from, as she puts it, "spinning in circles."

Justin Zimmerman, 32, her introverted husband, is bemused — and amused — by it all.

"Now it's become a thing where people are FaceTiming us all day, every day to say 'Hi,'" the doctoral student said, laughing. "I'm like, 'You really don't have to.'"

The self-isolation designed to arrest the coronavirus' spread has turned the tables on many norms — like living life outside the four walls of home, gathering socially at the drop of a hat and having everyday social interactions with anyone from your local barista to the guy at the corner store.

But even in pre-virus times, there were people for whom those things were more pressure than pleasure: introverts, those who largely get their energy from inside themselves and selected interactions with people, as opposed to extroverts, who obtain it from outside themselves.

The quarantines and distancing have upended that. It's a relief for some introverts who now don't need excuses for why they don't want to be out — and, equally, a struggle for extroverts seeking out social connection in a world where that's suddenly a limited commodity.

Eric Bellmore, an avowed extrovert, found himself yelling a greeting across the road to someone he didn't know when he went for a jog near his home. He just wanted a moment of interaction.

"It's mind-boggling to grasp how much I need to be around other folk," said Bellmore, 47, who works in IT in Mount Pleasant, Michigan.

"My wife actually said to me last week: 'For someone like you, this must be hell.'"

It's been a relief for David Choi, a 34-year-old Los Angeles musician who is an avowed introvert even as the demands of professional musicianship required him to be networking and making the social rounds.

The demand to quarantine, he says, "gives you an excuse to stay home which is what you want to do in the first place."

The world generally has been a place where extroverts are rewarded and introverts get a side-eye, says Lisa Kaenzig, the highly extroverted dean of William Smith College. She has studied introverted learners for years.

But the quarantines have changed those assumptions, she says. While everyone shares in the anxiety and worry over the virus, the actual demand of staying home and limiting social interaction has felt like a boon to the introverts she's spoken to.

"All of the things that make the world harder for them as introverts, the world is better for them right now. They're adapting much more quickly," she says.

One introvert she spoke to was actually leery of the post-quarantine return to socializing, Kaenzig said, not looking forward to being swarmed by effusive extroverts looking for hugs of greeting.

For some introverts, though, there has been a struggle with the idea that staying home is a matter of government demand, that there's no option of going to a cafe or coffee shop if they did want some human interaction.

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, March 31, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 262 ~ 37 of 73

Jackie Aina would often do just that to break up the monotony of working from home, where the makeup artist and online content creator already spends most of her time.

"Being able to go to the local coffee shop, it's nice just to switch up the environment," says Aina, 32, of Los Angeles.

"Now that control is being taken away," she says. "That's very different than choosing when and how you get to stay at home."

And of course, for those extroverts and introverts who share homes where they are being told to self-isolate, it's created a new level of challenge: learning to live with each other.

Extroverts have found ways to do many things remotely — video conference calls for work and school or even lunch dates, regular check-ins with loved ones over phones or computers, sometimes to the bafflement of the introverts they live with.

Jackie Hardt, 34, of Buffalo, New York, recently used video conferencing to have a long coffee date with a colleague or a lunch date with friends. Her introverted husband, she says, doesn't understand that the least bit.

"It would be very hard for him to make virtual happy hour or virtual coffee," she said. "He'd be perfectly fine not seeing his friends until this is all over. For me, that would be a lot harder."

Through the recent days of unusually close quarters, they've been trying to respect each other's needs.

"I think he recognizes I might need more interaction during the day," she said. At the same time, she said, after several years of marriage, "I know when he needs to be quiet and be by himself. I'm trying to recognize that a little bit more."

In light of what the world is facing, she has an idea for a marriage vow that she believes would be more apt for the times: "In quarantine and social isolation is really what they should make you promise to each other."

Deepti Hajela covers issues of race, ethnicity and immigration for The Associated Press. Follow her on Twitter at <http://twitter.com/dhajela>

Crammed in filthy cells, political prisoners fear infection

By MAGGIE MICHAEL, SARAH EL DEEB and LEE KEATH Associated Press

CAIRO (AP) — Reza Khandan got the word from friends locked away in Iran's most feared prison, Evin. A prisoner and a guard in their cell block had been removed because they were suspected of having coronavirus, and two guards in the women's ward had shown symptoms.

It was frightening news. Khandan's wife, Nasrin Sotoudeh, one of Iran's most prominent human rights lawyers, is imprisoned in that ward in close quarters with 20 other women. Only days earlier, the 56-year-old Sotoudeh — known for defending activists, opposition politicians and women prosecuted for removing their headscarves — had held a five-day hunger strike demanding prisoners be released to protect them from the virus.

"The virus has entered the jail, but we don't know the extent of it," Khandan, who had until recently been imprisoned in Evin as well, told The Associated Press by phone from Tehran.

"It will be impossible to control," Khandan warned.

Tens of thousands of political prisoners are jailed in Iran, Syria and other countries around the Middle East, punished for anything from advocating for democracy and promoting women's or workers' rights to holding Islamist views, protesting or simply criticizing autocratic leaders on Facebook or YouTube.

Alarm is growing over the danger the coronavirus pandemic poses to prisoners: if one guard, visitor or new inmate introduces the infection, the virus could race rampant through a captive population unable to protect itself.

Conditions are prime for the disease to spread rapidly. Inmates are often packed by the dozens into dirty cells with no access to hygiene or medical care. Torture, poor nutrition and other abuses leave prisoners weaker and more vulnerable.

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, March 31, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 262 ~ 38 of 73

So far, Iran, which faces the Mideast's biggest outbreak with thousands infected and hundreds dead, has not confirmed any coronavirus cases in its prisons. But Khandan's is one of several reports of cases that have emerged from Iranian facilities. Egypt and Syria, which have large numbers of political detainees, also have not reported any cases within prisons.

The concern over prisons is worldwide. Multiple countries — including Iran — have released some inmates to reduce crowding. Others say they are sterilizing cells, halting family visits or increasing monitoring of guards and staff. Riots have broken out in prisons in several countries among inmates fearful not enough is being done.

In authoritarian nations, ensuring protections for detainees is even more difficult. Activists, rights organizations and aid groups have grown bolder in pressing governments in the area to take action. Amnesty International called on Iran to free more prisoners, particularly rights defenders and peaceful protesters.

"They should not be in detention in the first place," it said.

Egypt last week briefly detained four women — including three relatives of a prominent jailed activist — who called for prisoner releases. Mohsen Bahnsi, an Egyptian lawyer who also called for prisoner releases, was arrested from his home, though it was not clear why, according to the Arab Network for Human Rights Information.

The International Committee of the Red Cross — one of the few organizations that sometimes gets access to prisons in the region — is stepping up efforts to help.

"We must act now to try to prevent it from entering places of detention. Trying to contain it after the fact will be almost impossible," said Fabrizio Carboni, the ICRC's Near and Middle East regional director.

He said the ICRC has already begun distributing soap, disinfectant and protective equipment at prisons in several places in the Mideast. It has requested permission from Syria to do the same in its facilities and is hopeful it will get access, he said.

Syria is the darkest black hole in the region. In the long civil war, tens of thousands of activists, protesters and others have been swallowed with hardly a trace into prisons run by President Bashar Assad's government.

Syria has confirmed nine cases of coronavirus and one death, none of them in its prisons.

If coronavirus were spreading within prison walls, it's doubtful the outside world would find out, said Dr. Amani Ballour, who previously ran a hospital in a rebel-held enclave near the Syrian capital, Damascus.

"The regime doesn't care," she said. "If there is (an outbreak), they won't declare it because they're killing detainees anyway — or trying to." Ballour has searched in vain for her brother and brother-in-law in Syrian prisons for nine years. "I don't imagine anyone surviving the regime prisons," she said.

Conditions inside are perhaps the most terrifying in the region. Rights groups and former detainees describe Syria's detention facilities as slaughterhouses where detainees undergo constant torture, including beatings, burnings, electric shocks, mutilations and rapes. Authorities almost never confirm arrests, and detainees are kept incommunicado out of the regular prison system.

As many as 50 people are locked in a 4-by-6-meter cell for weeks, month and years — sleeping on top of each other, almost never allowed to bathe, given meager and rotten food and dirty water. Amnesty International estimated 17,723 people were killed in custody across Syria between 2011 and 2015, with the actual number likely higher. There's no reason to believe conditions have changed since, said Amnesty's Lynn Maalouf.

There is a "deliberate policy of letting people die of illness," said Mohammad al-Abdallah, head of the Washington-based Syria Justice and Accountability Center. The overcrowded, dirty cells are "exactly the formula a disease like corona needs to grow," he said.

The U.S. State Department last week warned that an outbreak in the Syria's prison would "have devastating impact" and demanded Damascus free all arbitrarily detained civilians — including Americans.

Among the detained Americans is Majd Kamalmaz, who vanished a day after entering Syria in February 2017 to visit family for the first time in six years. A 62-year-old clinical psychologist from Virginia, he was not involved in politics and was engaged in international humanitarian work.

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, March 31, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 262 ~ 39 of 73

"To this day we don't know why they detained him," his daughter Maryam said.

At her home outside Dallas, Texas, Maryam's family are taking all precautions against the pandemic: she and her children haven't left the house for days and her husband goes out only to get groceries. She worries about her mother, alone in an apartment nearby. Majd's disappearance "truly affected her health and she gets sick very easily now," Maryam said.

"We are very, very concerned" that her father could contract coronavirus, she said. He is diabetic and had a stroke and a heart attack.

In January, a contact in Syria told the family that Kamalmaz had been moved from his prison, but they have no idea why or where to. He may have been put under closer observation amid pressure by American and European officials for his release.

"We know that the Syrian regime doesn't care much about human life and the idea of them saying oh yes he might have passed with the coronavirus and not really caring much is very worrisome to us," Maryam said.

In Iran, authorities say they have temporarily freed some 100,000 inmates — around half the prison population, in a sign of their alarm at the outbreak.

But hundreds of prisoners of conscience and other dissidents remain imprisoned, Amnesty said. It said there have been multiple reports of coronavirus cases within Iran's prisons, including two deaths, though the government has not confirmed any.

Siamak Namazi, an Iranian-American businessman who was not among those released, has reported "multiple cases on his hallway" in Evin Prison, his Washington-based lawyer, Jared Genser, has said.

One furloughed prisoner, Babak Safari, said in an online video that immediately after leaving prison he began having fevers, chills and difficulty breathing and had to be hospitalized. He said he was certain he contracted coronavirus in prison.

"All the political prisoners being held in Tehran prison are in great danger. Save them," Safari said.

In some places, prisoners appear to be lashing out in fear of the virus. Italy, Colombia and Jordan have all seen riots by inmates complaining of insufficient protections, and a string of prison riots has broken out in Iran. Palestinians in Israeli prisons have threatened hunger strikes after one guard tested positive.

In eastern Syria, Islamic State group militants rioted in a prison run by U.S.-backed Kurdish fighters. A spokesman for Kurdish-led forces, Mustafa Bali, said there did not appear to be a connection to coronavirus fears. But overcrowding has plagued the more than two dozen facilities where the Kurds are holding some 10,000 IS militants, including 2,000 foreigners whose home countries have refused to repatriate them.

Afghanistan's largest prison, Pul-e-Charkhi, was built in the 1970s to house 5,000 prisoners but now holds 10,500.

Keeping a safe distance is impossible "with two persons sleeping together in a one-meter space," said Naiz Mohammad, one of around 3,000 Taliban in the prison, speaking by telephone from his cell. He said promises of extra soap and disinfectant had not materialized.

"Everyone here is worried. If you see inside the cells, the bars, the locks, everything is all dirty," he said.

In Egypt, families are desperate for information on loved ones in prisons, where rights groups say overcrowding, abuses and poor hygiene are rampant.

Tens of thousands have been jailed in crackdowns since 2013 that expanded from Islamists to secular democracy advocates and critics of the government. Over that time, the government has built more than a dozen new prisons and it repeatedly has said conditions are humane. In recent weeks, a handful of activists and other prisoners have been released.

But former prisoners have said cells are still often packed tightly. One meme circulating online showed a photo of President Abdel-Fattah el-Sissi sitting 2.5 meters from his ministers — and noted that in the prisons, that space might be filled by 10 detainees. Former president Mohammed Morsi, deposed by el-Sissi in 2013, collapsed in court and subsequently died last year, and his family and lawyers blamed poor conditions and lack of medical care.

Celine Lebrun Shaath said her husband, Palestinian-Egyptian activist Ramy Shaath, is kept in a 25 square meter cell with 18 others, and any illness or scabies passes easily among them. Ramy Shaath, the son of

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, March 31, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 262 ~ 40 of 73

a former Palestinian foreign minister, was detained last summer but has not been charged, and his wife, a French citizen, was deported.

She noted that while visits and deliveries of food or other supplies to prisoners is forbidden, guards and other staff move in and out to their homes and neighborhoods, taking crowded public transportation.

"The doors are open for them. We are worried about the entire system."

El Deeb reported from Beirut. Associated Press writers Jon Gambrell in Dubai, United Arab Emirates; Mohammed Daraghmeh in Ramallah, West Bank; Ilan Ben Zion in Jerusalem; Zarah Khan in Islamabad and Tameem Akhgar in Kabul contributed to this report.

Brazilian pews become trenches in fight against quarantine

By **DIANE JEANTET** Associated Press

RIO DE JANEIRO (AP) — Like every Sunday, Brazilian Pastor Silas Malafaia took the stage of his Pentecostal temple in a middle-class Rio de Janeiro neighborhood. But this week, he wore a T-shirt instead of a blazer and, behind the three cameras broadcasting to his legion of YouTube followers, were thousands of empty seats.

Brazil's churches have landed on the front lines of a battle between state governors, who have introduced quarantine measures designed to contain spread of the new coronavirus, and President Jair Bolsonaro, who is actively undermining them and says a broad lockdown will ultimately destroy Brazil's economy.

Brazil's politically powerful evangelicals helped bring the far-right president to power in the 2018 election and Bolsonaro is letting them know they aren't forgotten, political analysts said. The most influential pastors are backing the president's radical coronavirus stance while begrudgingly respecting governors' orders, and either canceling services or moving them online. There are signs some churches are disobeying.

"I'm asking, which is worse: coronavirus or social chaos?" Malafaia, one of Brazil's most prominent pastors who leads the Assembly of God Victory in Christ Church, told The Associated Press. "I can guarantee you that social convulsion is worse."

It mirrors the argument of Bolsonaro, who has urged governors to abandon lockdown and likened COVID-19 to a "little flu" that mainly threatens the elderly and those with preexisting health problems. On Sunday, he hit the streets wearing no gloves or mask and joined multiple gatherings, in defiance of recommendations from his own health ministry.

Bolsonaro, a conservative Catholic who married an evangelical in a service Malafaia administered, has zeroed in on the need to reopen the churches. "God is Brazilian," he told people on Sunday, *O Globo* newspaper reported.

Some religious organizations, such as the National Conference of Brazilian Bishops, have welcomed measures in Rio and Sao Paulo, where all non-essential businesses shut down. Their leader Pope Francis warned in a letter, parts of which were published Monday, of "viral genocide" if countries prioritize economies over people.

In contrast, Malafaia and other evangelical leaders across Brazil have voiced outrage at governors' decisions, warning they would only cooperate under court order.

"The media say thousands and thousands of people are going to die," Malafaia said in the interview. "All these catastrophic predictions, I want to reject them."

Malafaia argued European-style confinement measures cannot be replicated in Brazil, where millions survive in the informal sector and a day without work can mean a day without food.

On social media, some pastors downplayed health risks posed by COVID-19, claiming one cannot catch the virus inside a house of God, but could be infected at home if failing to attend services.

From March 16 to 25, Rio state prosecutors received dozens of complaints from citizens who said they had seen churches welcome parishioners even after the state imposed quarantine measures. They are looking into the complaints and could file civil suits.

"My mother is 74 and has hypertension and goes almost every day to the church that encourages even

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, March 31, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 262 ~ 41 of 73

at-risk people," read one of the anonymous complaints reviewed by the AP.

The virus is real indeed, and not sparing religious communities. The leader of a South Korean church, which claims 200,000 members, bowed in apology after receiving blame for an outbreak of infections. In France, local media reported a large evangelical gathering in Mulhouse transformed the surrounding area into the country's largest concentration of cases. In Washington state, a Presbyterian choir rehearsal attended by 60 people, all seemingly without symptoms, apparently produced 45 infections and two deaths, the Los Angeles Times reported Sunday.

For most people, the new coronavirus causes mild or moderate symptoms, such as fever and cough that clear up in two to three weeks. For some, especially those in at-risk groups, it can cause more severe illness, including pneumonia and death.

Brazil reported 4,579 confirmed cases and 159 deaths as of Monday afternoon.

On Thursday, Bolsonaro passed a decree that added religious activities to the list of "essential services," meaning temples could remain open even though citizens were asked to stay home. The decree was overruled by a federal court the following day. Sunday, on the streets, he again defended people getting back to work.

"Open the churches, please, we need them," one woman begged repeatedly in one of the videos he posted to social media. He replied with reassuring words.

Analysts say Bolsonaro is addressing his electoral base. Brazil is home to the world's largest number of Catholics — some 123 million, according to the latest census, in 2010. But evangelicals are a growing force, with 42 million believers, about 20 percent of the total population.

"No political party in Brazil manages to bring together as many people, in as many places, as many times a week as churches do," said Carlos Melo, a political science professor at Insper University in Sao Paulo. "And people tend to follow the pastors' directions."

Growth is particularly fast among Pentecostals, and Brazil has outpaced the U.S. to become the world's largest population, said Andrew Chesnut, a professor of religious studies at Virginia Commonwealth University.

Pastors "say that coronavirus is just a test sent by Satan and that we all just need to gather together and pray and we'll be able to repel it," said Chesnut. "It's specifically evangelicals that are anti-science and it's the same thing in the U.S. They always have been. It goes back to having a literal, fundamentalistic interpretation of the Bible."

Rio's governor has extended lockdown measures for another 15 days. As such, Malafaia ended his service by informing his congregation that his temple would remain closed the following Sunday.

"Lord, have mercy on our nation. Lord, illuminate our authorities, give them the direction to do the right thing," he said. "That is what I'm praying and what I'm asking."

He lifted his hand and shouted a blessing, as though his temple were packed as usual, but was met with no rapturous 'hallelujahs.' It was so silent one could hear his microphone thud lightly as he placed it upon his lectern.

South Korea shoe cobbler donates for needy amid coronavirus

By HYUNG-JIN KIM Associated Press

PAJU, South Korea (AP) — Kim Byung-rok survived tuberculosis when he was 23, but was left with one good lung. In his work polishing and mending shoes, he inhaled too much dirt.

So when he bought land on a small, quiet mountain in 2014, he wanted to heal, to do some farming — and to breathe fresh air.

But now Kim, 60, wants to donate a big chunk of his holdings to the local government. So many South Koreans are shutting their businesses and face declining incomes due to the coronavirus outbreak, which has hit the country hard; Kim thought the value of his land could be put to good use.

"I went through a rough childhood and I got help from others all the time. I've always thought I should one day become a person who helps others," Kim said at his Seoul shop, the thick grime under his nails

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, March 31, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 262 ~ 42 of 73

testimony to how he spends his days.

"Wouldn't it be good if I give the people strength and courage?" he said.

It has had that effect. An online media story on his offer has garnered more than 2,100 comments. Some call him "an angel" or "a person who deserves a seat in heaven."

Kim's three plots of land are located in Paju, near the border with North Korea. He has pledged the largest parcel of about 10,000 pyeong (a bit more than 8 acres). Local officials value the gift at between 500 and 700 million won, or between \$400,000 and \$570,000.

There are technicalities that must be worked out. Authorities are trying to make sure Kim will not face gift taxes, but he's adamant: "If I have to pay that, I would accept that."

Kim, a devout Christian who jokingly calls himself "a lamb," has led a turbulent life.

His father died when he was 6, and his mother later married a man who beat and abused him. Kim ran away from his home and began working as a shoeshine boy when he was 10.

Tormented by the separation from his family, Kim drank and smoked excessively. Then came the TB. When he survived, he found relief in his faith and in volunteer service.

For the past 25 years, he has fixed thousands of used or castoff shoes and donated them to poor people, and provided free haircuts to older people with dementia or other health problems.

Kim and his wife now work together and make about 2-3 million won (\$1,635-\$2,450) a month, considerably less than South Korea's average household income of 4.8 million won. They live in a small, two-room apartment with two of their three adult children, one of them a 26-year-old son with Down syndrome.

Kim said that "what aches my heart the most" is the reaction of some friends and neighbors to his plan.

"They tell me things like, 'Hey, what the heck are you doing. ... Take care of your children first,'" Kim said. "But I've never had my kids go hungry and I've been living happily. ... I'm satisfied with my life and can't just ignore the poor and needy."

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.

Stranded cruise ship hit by virus begs Florida to dock

By ADRIANA GOMEZ LICON undefined

MIAMI (AP) — As a cruise ship stranded at sea with dozens sick and four dead makes for Florida, passengers who have been confined to their rooms for more than a week are anxious for relief, hoping Gov. Ron DeSantis will change his mind and allow them to disembark despite confirmed coronavirus cases aboard.

Orlando technical writer Laura Gabaroni and her husband, Juan Huergo, have wanted to explore the southernmost tip of South America for years — to see the penguins on the Falkland Islands and the glacial landscapes of the Strait of Magellan. But their vacation turned harrowing as countries shunned them and people fell ill.

"It's been a trying time, especially because of the many ups and downs we've seen along the way," Gabaroni said. "We are unable to leave our rooms, haven't had fresh air in days."

Hundreds of passengers and crew members from the Zaandam have not stepped on dry land for 15 days as the novel coronavirus prompted authorities around the world to seal borders, implement checkpoints and force people into quarantines. Passengers were asked to keep their rooms dark and leave their drapes closed when they passed through the Panama Canal on Sunday night after days of wrangling with local authorities.

The Zaandam's plans to dock as early as Wednesday in Florida are still up in the air but have already been rebuked by local officials and DeSantis, who says health care resources are stretched too thin. The governor said he has been in contact with the Coast Guard and the White House about diverting the ship.

Broward County officials will meet Tuesday to decide whether to let the ship dock at its Port Everglades cruise ship terminal, where workers who greet passengers were among Florida's first confirmed corona-

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, March 31, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 262 ~ 43 of 73

virus cases.

Dozens on board the Holland America Line ship have reported flu-like symptoms and four people have died, with at least two of the deaths blamed on the coronavirus by Panamanian authorities. The company said eight others have tested positive for COVID-19 but 2,300 passengers and crew members are in good health.

Gabaroni and hundreds of others who were fever free and not showing any symptoms were transferred to a sister ship, the Rotterdam, sent last week with supplies and staff to replenish the stranded boat.

The Zaandam was originally scheduled to travel on March 7 from Buenos Aires to San Antonio, Chile, and then depart on March 21 for a 20-day cruise to arrive in Fort Lauderdale in early April. But beginning March 15, the Zandaam was denied entry by South American ports, even before passengers reported their first flu-like symptoms on March 22. The ship approached the coast of Panama last week and negotiated permission to cross the famous canal to the Atlantic Ocean on its way to Florida.

Canal administrator Ricaurte Vásquez said the country is not allowing any vessels with positive coronavirus cases through but made an exception for the ships.

"That case (the Zaandam) was simply for humanitarian reasons," Vásquez said.

Passenger Emily Spindler Brazell, of Tappahannock, Virginia, said the company has been accommodating, offering passengers extravagant meals, wine and unlimited phone calls. At the same time, it has been clear they have to stay in their rooms and not have any contact with crew members.

"The captain said something like, 'This is not a trip anymore. This is not a cruise. This is a humanitarian mission,'" said Brazell, who was transferred to the Rotterdam on Saturday.

The Rotterdam now has nearly 800 guests and more than 600 crew members. Holland America said 450 guests and 602 crew members are left on the Zaandam, with more than 190 reported influenza-like illness symptoms. More than 300 U.S. citizens are on both ships combined.

Holland America President Orlando Ashford penned an opinion column in the South Florida Sun Sentinel to plead with officials and residents to let the passengers disembark.

"Already four guests have passed away and I fear other lives are at risk," Ashford wrote. "The COVID-19 situation is one of the most urgent tests of our common humanity. To slam the door in the face of these people betrays our deepest human values."

Passenger Gabaroni, 48, says she hopes her elected officials do the right thing. Gabaroni wrote a letter to DeSantis imploring him to let the two ships dock in Florida.

"Florida continues to receive flights from New York, and it allowed spring break gatherings to go on as planned. Why turn their backs on us?" Gabaroni said.

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

Judges slow abortion bans in Texas, Ohio, Alabama amid virus

By DAVID PITT and PAUL J. WEBER Associated Press

DES MOINES, Iowa (AP) — Federal judges on Monday temporarily blocked efforts in Texas and Alabama to ban abortions during the coronavirus pandemic, handing Planned Parenthood and other abortion providers a victory as clinics across the U.S. filed lawsuits to stop states from trying to shutter them during the outbreak.

A new Ohio order is also unconstitutional if it prevents abortions from being carried out, a separate judge ruled Monday. The ruling instructed clinics to determine on a case-by-case basis if an abortion can be delayed to maximize resources — such as preserving personal protective equipment — needed to fight the coronavirus. If the abortion is deemed necessary and can't be delayed, it's declared legally essential.

The rulings indicated judges were pushing back on Republican-controlled states including abortion in sweeping orders as the outbreak grows in the U.S. In Texas, the ruling came down after state Attorney General Ken Paxton, a Republican, said abortion was included in a statewide ban on nonessential surgeries.

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, March 31, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 262 ~ 44 of 73

But U.S. District Judge Lee Yeakel said the "Supreme Court has spoken clearly" on a woman's right to abortion. One abortion provider in Texas, Whole Woman's Health, said it had canceled more than 150 appointments in the days after the Texas order went into effect.

"There can be no outright ban on such a procedure," Yeakel wrote. Paxton said the state would appeal.

The rulings happened Monday as lawsuits were also filed in Iowa and Oklahoma, after governors in those states similarly ordered a stop to non-emergency procedures and specifically included abortion among them.

The lawsuits were filed by Planned Parenthood, the American Civil Liberties Union, the Center for Reproductive Rights and local lawyers in each state. Their aim, like abortion providers in Texas, is to stop state officials from prohibiting abortions as part of temporary policy changes related to the coronavirus pandemic.

Oklahoma Gov. Kevin Stitt announced Friday that abortions were included in his executive order banning all elective surgeries and minor medical procedures until April 7, unless the procedure was necessary to prevent serious health risks to the mother. Stitt said the order was needed to help preserve the state's limited supply of personal protective equipment, like surgical masks and gloves.

A spokesman for Stitt referred questions about the challenge to Attorney General Mike Hunter, who vowed in a statement to defend the ban.

"My office will vigorously defend the governor's executive order and the necessity to give precedence to essential medical procedures during this daunting public health crisis," Hunter's statement said. "Make no mistake, this lawsuit will itself drain significant resources, medical and legal, from emergency efforts, and likely, directly and indirectly, bring harm to Oklahomans as a result."

Monday night, U.S. District Judge Myron Thompson issued a temporary restraining order against Alabama's order, saying the ruling will be in effect through April 13 while he considers additional arguments.

Thompson wrote the state's concerns about conserving medical equipment during the pandemic, does not "outweigh the serious, and, in some cases, permanent, harms imposed by the denial of an individual's right to privacy."

Attorneys for the Alabama clinics said facilities had canceled appointments for 17 people scheduled this week.

"Patients that have already had their appointments canceled have been devastated; in many instances the calls cancelling the appointments have ended in tears," lawyers for the clinics wrote.

Alabama closed many nonessential businesses with a state health order, effective Saturday. Alabama Attorney General Steve Marshall said earlier Monday the state would not offer a "blanket exemption" to abortion clinics.

In Ohio, Planned Parenthood and abortion clinics that sued last year to try to thwart a law that bans most abortions after a first detectable fetal heartbeat are asking a court to speed up its decision in that case and to consider a recent coronavirus order by the state health director. In filings Monday, the groups' attorneys argued "the state is again attempting to ban abortions" through Dr. Amy Acton's directive barring all "non-essential" procedures and Attorney General Dave Yost's threats that it will be rigidly enforced.

Iowa Gov. Kim Reynolds spokesman Pat Garrett said the governor "is focused on protecting Iowans from an unprecedented public health disaster, and she suspended all elective surgeries and procedures to preserve Iowa's health care resources."

Reynolds said Sunday the move was not based on her personal ideology but a broad order to halt non-essential procedures to conserve medical equipment.

The Iowa lawsuit said abortion procedures do not require extensive use of medical equipment and do not use N95 respirators, the devices in shortest supply during the COVID-19 pandemic.

"Patients' abortions will be delayed, and in some cases, denied altogether," the lawsuit states. "As a result, Iowa patients will be forced to carry pregnancies to term, resulting in a deprivation of their fundamental right to determine when and whether to have a child or to add to their existing families."

The lawsuits seek court orders halting action pertaining to abortions and ask judges for immediate hearings.

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, March 31, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 262 ~ 45 of 73

Weber reported from Austin, Texas. AP Writers Sean Murphy in Oklahoma City; Kimberly Chandler in Montgomery, Alabama; Julie Smyth in Columbus, Ohio contributed to this story.

'Please come help us': New York begs for medical workers

By **JOCELYN NOVECK, LARRY NEUMEISTER and MARINA VILLENEUVE** Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — New York's governor urgently appealed for medical volunteers Monday amid a "staggering" number of coronavirus deaths, as he and health officials warned that the crisis unfolding in New York City is just a preview of what other U.S. communities could soon face.

"Please come help us in New York now," Gov. Andrew Cuomo said as the state's death toll climbed by more than 250 people in a day to a total of over 1,200, most of them in the city. He said an additional 1 million health care workers are needed to tackle the crisis.

"We've lost over 1,000 New Yorkers," Cuomo said. "To me, we're beyond staggering already. We've reached staggering."

Even before the governor's appeal, close to 80,000 former nurses, doctors and other professionals were stepping up to volunteer, and a Navy hospital ship, also sent to the city after 9/11, had arrived with 1,000 beds to relieve pressure on overwhelmed hospitals.

"Whatever it is that they need, I'm willing to do," said Jerry Kops, a musician and former nurse whose tour with the show Blue Man Group was abruptly halted by the outbreak.

He returned to his Long Island home, where he volunteered to be a nurse again. While waiting to be reinstated, Kops has been helping at an assisted-living home near his house in Shirley, N.Y.

The spike in deaths in New York was another sign of the long fight ahead against the global pandemic, which was filling Spain's intensive care beds and shutting millions of Americans inside even as the crisis in China, where the outbreak began in December, kept easing.

More than 235 million people — about two of every three Americans — live in the 33 states where governors have declared statewide orders or recommendations to stay home.

In California, officials put out a similar call for medical volunteers as coronavirus hospitalizations doubled over the last four days and the number of patients in intensive care tripled.

"Challenging times are ahead for the next 30 days, and this is a very vital 30 days," President Donald Trump told reporters. "The more we dedicate ourselves today, the more quickly we will emerge on the other side of the crisis."

In Europe, meanwhile, hard-hit Italy and Spain saw their death tolls climb by more than 800 each, but the World Health Organization's emergency chief said cases there were "potentially stabilizing." At the same time, he warned against letting up on tough containment measures.

"We have to now push the virus down, and that will not happen by itself," Dr. Michael Ryan said.

More than three-quarters of a million people worldwide have become infected and over 37,000 have died, according to a count by Johns Hopkins University.

The U.S. reported more than 160,000 infections and over 3,000 deaths, with New York City the nation's worst hot spot. New Orleans, Detroit and other cities also had alarming clusters.

"Anyone who says this situation is a New York City-only situation is in a state of denial," Cuomo said. "You see this virus move across the state. You see this virus move across the nation. There is no American who is immune to this virus."

Some hospitals are now parking refrigerated trailers outside their doors to collect the dead. At two Brooklyn hospitals, videos posted by bystanders and a medical employee showed workers in masks and gowns loading bodies onto trailers from gurneys on the sidewalk.

Dr. Anthony Fauci, the U.S. government's top infectious-disease expert, also warned that smaller cities are likely about to see cases "take off" the way they have in New York City.

"What we've learned from painful experience with this outbreak is that it goes along almost on a straight line, then a little acceleration, acceleration, then it goes way up," he said on ABC's "Good Morning America."

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, March 31, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 262 ~ 46 of 73

In other developments around the world:

— Bells tolled in Madrid's deserted central square and flags were lowered in a day of mourning as Spain raced to build field hospitals to treat an onslaught of patients. The death toll topped 7,300.

— In Japan, officials announced a new date for the 2020 Tokyo Olympics — summer of 2021 — as a spike in reported infections fueled suspicions that the government had been understating the extent of the country's outbreak in recent weeks while it was still hoping to salvage the Summer Games.

— Moscow locked down its 12 million people as Russia braced for sweeping nationwide restrictions.

— Israel said 70-year-old Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu is quarantining himself after an aide tested positive for the virus. In Britain, Prince Charles, the heir to the throne who tested positive, ended his period of isolation and is in good health, his office said.

Italy's death toll climbed to nearly 11,600. But in a bit of positive news, the numbers showed a continued slowdown in the rate of new confirmed cases and a record number of people recovered.

"We are saving lives by staying at home, by maintaining social distance, by traveling less and by closing schools," said Dr. Luca Richeldi, a lung specialist.

At least six of Spain's 17 regions were at their limit of intensive care unit beds, and three more were close to it, authorities said. Crews of workers were frantically building more field hospitals.

Nearly 15% of all those infected in Spain, almost 13,000 people, are health care workers, hurting hospitals' efforts to help the tsunami of people gasping for breath.

For most people, the coronavirus causes mild or moderate symptoms, such as fever and cough. But for others, especially older adults and people with existing health problems, the virus can cause severe symptoms like pneumonia. More than 160,000 people have recovered, according to Johns Hopkins.

In China, the crisis continued to ease. It reported Monday 31 new COVID-19 cases, among them just one domestic infection, and the city at the center of the outbreak, Wuhan, began reopening for business as authorities lifted more of the controls that locked down tens of millions of people for two months.

"I want to revenge-shop," one excited customer declared.

Japanese automaker Toyota halted production at its auto plants in Europe, but all of its factories in China resumed work Monday.

Associated Press writers around the world contributed to this report.

Follow AP news coverage of the coronavirus pandemic at <https://apnews.com/VirusOutbreak> and <https://apnews.com/UnderstandingtheOutbreak>

Abortion providers sue Texas over virus outbreak order

By PAUL J. WEBER Associated Press

AUSTIN, Texas (AP) — Planned Parenthood joined other abortion providers Wednesday in suing Texas over moving to ban abortions during the coronavirus outbreak, including one clinic owner saying Republican Gov. Greg Abbott's weekend order has already resulted in more than 150 canceled appointments.

The federal lawsuit filed in Austin, Texas, is among the most high-profile challenges to a government response to the coronavirus pandemic. Abortion providers accused Republican leaders in Texas of exploiting the pandemic for politics after Abbott on Sunday halted nonessential surgeries in order to free up medical supplies to fight COVID-19, the disease caused by the virus.

That was followed by Texas Attorney General Ken Paxton, a Republican, saying the order banned "any type of abortion that is not medically necessary to preserve the life or health of the mother."

The order in Texas is in effect until at least April 21.

"Abortion is essential healthcare, and it is a time-sensitive service," said Amy Hagstrom Miller, president of Whole Woman's Health. She said the 150-plus cancellations across her three clinics in Texas left some women "begging for the abortions they needed."

Hours before the lawsuit was filed, Paxton said in an interview with a conservative group called Texas

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, March 31, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 262 ~ 47 of 73

Values that the state would be watching all medical procedures and that any unnecessary procedures needed to be stopped, which he said included abortion.

In a statement released Wednesday night, Paxton called it "unconscionable that abortion providers are fighting against the health of Texans and withholding desperately needed supplies and personal protective equipment in favor of a procedure that they refer to as a 'choice.'

"My office will tirelessly defend Governor Abbott's Order to ensure that necessary supplies reach the medical professionals combating this national health crisis," the attorney general said.

He has previously said that failure to comply with the order can result in penalties of up to \$1,000 or 180 days of jail time.

"This is obviously going to save some lives, which we hope would continue on," Paxton said. "I don't even see how people who are on the other side of this issue at this time would dispute that we need our hospitals to take care of the really sick."

The lawsuit disputed that view, saying that the "COVID-19 pandemic and its fallout do not reduce patients' needs for abortion; if anything, they make timely access to abortion even more urgent."

Texas has more than 1,200 cases of coronavirus, according to a running count kept by Johns Hopkins University. At least a dozen people have died.

For most people, the new coronavirus causes mild or moderate symptoms, such as fever and cough that clear up in two to three weeks. For some, especially older adults and people with existing health problems, it can cause more severe illness, including pneumonia, and death.

Texas has been a battleground over abortion rights for a decade. Whole Woman's Health had also sued Texas over a sweeping 2013 anti-abortion law that resulted in more than half of Texas' abortion clinics shuttering before it was overturned by the U.S. Supreme Court.

The issue over abortion during the pandemic also has also flared during the pandemic also has flared in Ohio, where abortion clinics received letters Friday from Republican Attorney General Dave Yost ordering them to cease all "non-essential" surgical abortions. Yost wrote that the procedures violate a March 17 order issued by the state health director.

However, representatives of Ohio clinics said that they were in compliance with the health director's order and planned to continue providing abortions.

What you need to know today about the virus outbreak

The Associated Press undefined

The governors of New York and California are moving to rapidly expand the ranks of health care workers, as the death toll from COVID-19 in New York surged past 1,200 while hospitalizations in California doubled in the last four days.

The spike in deaths in New York was another sign of the long fight ahead against the global pandemic, which has infected three-quarters of a million people worldwide, filled Spain's intensive care beds to capacity and shut millions of Americans indoors.

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:

-The city at the center of China's virus outbreak was reopening for business after authorities lifted more of the controls that locked downs tens of millions of people for two months. "I want to revenge shop," declared an excited customer at one of Wuhan's major shopping streets.

- Macy's, Kohl's and Gap Inc. all said they will stop paying tens of thousands of employees who were thrown out of work when the chains temporarily closed their stores and sales collapsed as a result of the pandemic. Macy's said the majority of its 125,000 employees will be furloughed this week and that it is transitioning to an "absolute minimum workforce" needed to maintain basic operations.

-President Donald Trump on Monday defended his decision to extend restrictive social distancing guidelines

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, March 31, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 262 ~ 48 of 73

through the end of April, while bracing the nation for a coronavirus death toll that could exceed 100,000.

- New York's governor issued an urgent appeal for medical volunteers Monday amid a surging number of deaths, as health officials warned that the crisis unfolding in New York City is just a preview of what other communities across the U.S. could soon face.

-California is enlisting retired doctors and medical and nursing students to help treat an anticipated surge of coronavirus patients, the governor announced Monday. The California Health Corps effort comes as the nation's most populous state anticipates hospitals becoming overwhelmed with patients and while it is preparing stadiums and convention centers to handle a crush of cases.

— An exclusive data analysis from AP finds that more than a third of counties across the U.S. still haven't reported a positive test result for infection across what are predominantly poor, rural areas.

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW:

For most people, the coronavirus causes mild or moderate symptoms, such as fever and cough that clear up in two to three weeks. For some, especially older adults and people with existing health problems, it can cause more severe illness, including pneumonia and death. The vast majority of people recover.

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

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

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

TRACKING THE VIRUS: Drill down and zoom in at the individual county level, and you can access numbers that will show you the situation where you are, and where loved ones or people you're worried about live.

ONE NUMBER:

\$20: Benchmark U.S. crude fell more than 6% and dropped below \$20 per barrel at one point for the first time since early 2002. Oil started the year above \$60, and prices have plunged on expectations that a weakened global economy will burn less fuel. The world is awash in oil, meanwhile, as producers continue to pull more of it out of the ground.

IN OTHER NEWS:

LIFE UNDERWATER: Submariners stealthily cruising the ocean deeps, purposefully shielded from above-water worries to focus on their top-secret missions of nuclear deterrence, may be among the last pockets of people anywhere who are still blissfully unaware of how the pandemic is turning life upside down.

TELL ME HOW TO WASH: Elmo, Rooster and Cookie Monster are doing their part to help keep kids safe during the pandemic. The beloved Sesame Street characters are featured in some of four new animated public service spots reminding young fans to take care while doing such things as washing hands and sneezing.

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

'Strega Nona' author Tomie dePaola is dead at age 85

By KATHY McCORMACK Associated Press

CONCORD, New Hampshire (AP) — Tomie dePaola, the prolific children's author and illustrator who delighted generations with tales of Strega Nona, the kindly and helpful old witch in Italy, died Monday at age 85.

DePaola died at the Dartmouth-Hitchcock Medical Center in Lebanon, New Hampshire, according to his literary agent, Doug Whiteman. He was badly injured in a fall last week and died of complications follow-

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, March 31, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 262 ~ 49 of 73

ing surgery.

He worked on over 270 books in more than half a century of publishing, and nearly 25 million copies have been sold worldwide and his books have been translated into more than 20 languages.

Author Lin Oliver mourned his loss, tweeting that "He was a creator of beauty and a beloved friend." New Hampshire Governor Chris Sununu issued a statement, praising dePaola as "a man who brought a smile to thousands of Granite State children who read his books, cherishing them for their brilliant illustrations."

Strega Nona, his most endearing character, originated as a doodle at a dull faculty meeting at Colby Sawyer College in New London, New Hampshire, where dePaola was a member of the theater department. The first tale was based on one of his favorite stories as a child, about a pot that keeps producing porridge. "Strega Nona: An Original Tale," which came out in 1975, was a Caldecott finalist for best illustrated work. Other books in the series include "Strega Nona's Magic Lessons" and "Strega Nona Meets Her Match."

Reflecting on her popularity, dePaola told The Associated Press in 2013, "I think it's because she's like everybody's grandmother. She's cute, she's not pretty, she's kind of funny-looking, but she's sweet, she's understanding. And she's a little saucy, she gets a little irritated every once in a while."

DePaola said he put Strega Nona in Calabria, in southern Italy, because that's where his grandparents came from.

He said over the years, the visualization of Strega Nona — who grew out of his drawing of Punch from the commedia dell'arte — became more refined. But his liberal use of color and folk art influences in her stories were a constant. After saving her village from being flooded with pasta from a magic pot by her assistant, Big Anthony, Strega Nona went on to star or play a supporting role in about a dozen more books.

"I remember laughing at the pictures of Big Anthony, the townspeople, and even cute little Strega Nona," wrote one of his many fans in 2013, a woman who recalled her mother reading the book to her growing up. "She is ingrained in my childhood ... I hope to read Strega Nona to my kids one day."

In 2011, dePaola received a lifetime achievement award from the American Library Association.

"Tomie dePaola is masterful at creating seemingly simple stories that have surprising depth and reflect tremendous emotional honesty," the committee chair Megan Schliesman said at the time. "They have resonated with children for over 40 years."

At age 4, dePaola knew he was going to be an artist and author — and he told people so. He received a lot of encouragement from his family. "They gave me half of the attic for my 'studio.' Now, how neat is that?" he said.

His family, in turn, became central characters in a number of his autobiographical books, such as "26 Fairmont Avenue," about growing up in Connecticut during the Great Depression, and "The Art Lesson," about reaching a compromise with his art teacher on drawing in class. The former received a Newbery Honor Award in 2000.

DePaola wrote about doodling on his bedsheets and on his math work in second grade, telling his teacher he wasn't going to be an "arithmetic-er."

Many of his books bring to life folktales, legends, and spirituality — he often incorporated images of a white dove among the pages. Christmas, his favorite holiday, was a popular subject of many of his works exploring traditions of the season, and offered some storylines for Strega Nona.

In 2013-2014, dePaola had two exhibitions at Colby-Sawyer College, "Then," and "Now." The first showed his early artistic efforts, his formative years at the Pratt Institute and his work, influenced by Fra Angelico and George Roualt, among others; the second came out shortly after dePaola turned 80 and it focused on his more recent artwork.

"Even though I love doing my books and I try to be as creative as possible, there's always a restriction," he said in 2013. "I have to please other people, I have to please my art director, my editor, and then there's all the public to please. Some of the books I've considered my best artistic personal accomplishments aren't necessarily the books that appeal to children. And that's OK."

DePaola spent much of time working in his 200-year-old barn in New London, which houses his studio and library. It includes wall niches displaying folk art and a corner with a chair facing a small altar, where he meditated. More Native American, Mexican and early American folk art decorated his nearby home.

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, March 31, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 262 ~ 50 of 73

DePaola received many letters through the years from children with questions about his life and books, and he often took the time to chat with them at book signings and other events. It was always important to him to keep that voice active.

"I just keep the inner critic," he said in an interview. "Don't let the little 4-year-old get jaded. I listen to him. He stands beside me and says, 'No, I don't like that.'"

FBI reaches out to Sen. Burr over stock sales tied to virus

By ERIC TUCKER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The FBI has reached out to Sen. Richard Burr about his sale of stocks before the coronavirus caused markets to plummet, a person familiar with the matter said Monday.

The outreach suggests federal law enforcement officials may be looking to determine whether the North Carolina Republican exploited advance information when he dumped as much as \$1.7 million in stocks in the days before the coronavirus wreaked havoc on the economy.

Burr has denied wrongdoing but has also requested an ethics review of the stock sales.

The Justice Department's action, first reported by CNN, was confirmed by a person familiar with the matter who was not authorized to discuss it and spoke on condition of anonymity. The Justice Department declined to comment.

In a statement, Alice Fisher, an attorney for Burr, said, "The law is clear that any American — including a Senator — may participate in the stock market based on public information, as Senator Burr did.

"When this issue arose, Senator Burr immediately asked the Senate Ethics Committee to conduct a complete review, and he will cooperate with that review as well as any other appropriate inquiry. Senator Burr welcomes a thorough review of the facts in this matter, which will establish that his actions were appropriate," the statement said.

Burr, whose stock sales were first reported by ProPublica and The Center for Responsive Politics, is one of several senators whose financial dealings have generated scrutiny in recent weeks.

Senate records show that Burr and his wife sold between roughly \$600,000 and \$1.7 million in more than 30 transactions in late January and mid-February, just before the market began to nosedive and government health officials began to sound alarms about the virus. Several of the stocks were in companies that own hotels.

Burr has acknowledged selling the stocks because of the coronavirus but said he relied "solely on public news reports," specifically CNBC's daily health and science reporting out of Asia, to make the financial decisions.

There is no indication that Burr, whose six-year term ends in 2023 and who does not plan to run for reelection, was acting on inside information. The intelligence panel he leads did not have any briefings on the pandemic the week when most of the stocks were sold, according to a person familiar with the matter who spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss confidential committee activity.

Associated Press writers Mary Clare Jalonick and Michael Balsamo in Washington contributed to this report.

Gas is cheap, but for many motorists there's nowhere to go

By DAVID KOENIG AP Business Writer

DALLAS (AP) — U.S. gasoline prices have dropped to their lowest levels in four years, and they are almost sure to go lower as oil prices plunge.

Price-tracking services put the national average Monday around \$2 a gallon. Some stations were spotted charging under a dollar.

But don't expect a stampede to the pumps. Demand is weak because so many Americans are under shelter-in-place rules and businesses have been shuttered because of the coronavirus outbreak.

"For most Americans who are home practicing social distancing and not driving to work or taking their

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, March 31, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 262 ~ 51 of 73

children to school, you are only filling up maybe once a week, maybe every couple of weeks," said Jeanette Casselano, a spokeswoman for the AAA auto club. "You are not reaping the benefits."

Prices have plenty of room to keep falling — maybe below \$1.50, according to analysts.

Patrick DeHaan, an analyst for price tracker GasBuddy, said that eventually retail prices will reflect the even faster decline in wholesale prices

"Retailers are taking their time lowering prices because they have a lot of uncertainty around the corner," DeHaan said, adding that the practice boosts service station profit margins. "We've never seen gasoline retailers doing as well as they are now."

Investors expect weak demand to continue pushing gasoline prices lower. Contracts in New York for gasoline futures plunged to well under \$1 a gallon on Monday.

Oil accounts for about half the price of gasoline, and the drop at the pump is shadowing the steep slide in crude, which briefly on Monday hit the lowest levels since 2002. Benchmark prices for U.S. and international crude have both fallen by more than half in the past five weeks, as more Americans and Europeans have come under lockdown, cutting into demand for oil, and Saudi Arabia and Russia engaged in a price war.

Falling prices is likely to lead to less production in the Permian Basin of west Texas and New Mexico and other U.S. oilfields. Chevron is cutting back spending in the Permian, where shale drilling turned the U.S. into the world's biggest oil producer.

AAA put Monday's national average for gasoline at \$2.01 a gallon, down from \$2.69 a year ago. GasBuddy said it was \$1.99. Both were within 20 cents of price lows set in early 2016 and late 2008, according to government figures.

The cheapest prices are in a swath of the country from Texas to Wisconsin and Michigan, with most states in that band averaging under \$1.77 a gallon. At the other end were California, at \$3.06, and Hawaii, \$3.36 on average.

Carrie Antlfinger in Milwaukee contributed to this report.

Trump administration rules gun shops 'essential' amid virus

By LISA MARIE PANE Associated Press

The Trump administration has ruled that gun shops are considered "essential" businesses that should remain open as other businesses are closed to try to stop the spread of coronavirus. Gun control groups are balking, calling it a policy that puts profits over public health after intense lobbying by the firearms industry.

In the past several weeks, various states and municipalities have offered different interpretations of whether gun stores should be allowed to remain open as Americans stay at home to avoid spreading the virus. In Los Angeles, for example, County Sheriff Alex Villanueva has twice ordered gun shops in his territory to close, leading to legal challenges from gun rights advocates.

After days of lobbying by the National Rifle Association, the National Shooting Sports Foundation and other gun groups, the Department of Homeland Security this past weekend issued an advisory declaring that firearms dealers should be considered essential services — just like grocery stores, pharmacies and hospitals — and allowed to remain open. The agency said its ruling was not a mandate but merely guidance for cities, towns and states as they weigh how to prevent the spread of the coronavirus.

Still, gun control groups called it a move to put profits over public health. The Brady group on Monday filed a Freedom of Information request with DHS seeking emails and documents that explain how the agency reached its decision to issue the advisory and to determine if it consulted with any public health experts.

For most people, the new coronavirus causes mild or moderate symptoms, such as fever and cough, that clear up in two to three weeks. For some, especially older adults and people with existing health problems, it can cause more severe illness, including pneumonia, and death.

"The gun lobby is not willing to stand for a few days or a few weeks of less profit in order to protect public health, and it's outrageous and definitely not required by the Second Amendment," said Jonathan

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, March 31, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 262 ~ 52 of 73

Lowy, chief counsel for Brady. He added later: "It's a public health issue, not a Second Amendment issue. The fact is that guns, the nature of guns, require that they be sold with a lot of close interaction. They can't be sold from vending machines, can't be sold with curbside pickup."

The gun lobby has been pushing back vigorously against places where some authorities have deemed federally licensed gun dealers are not essential and should close as part of stay-at-home directives. The gun lobby has said it's critical these shops remain open so Americans, who are buying firearms in record numbers, have the ability to exercise their constitutional rights.

In recent weeks, firearm sales have skyrocketed. Background checks — the key barometer of gun sales — already were at record numbers in January and February, likely fueled by a presidential election year. Since the coronavirus outbreak, gun shops have reported long lines and runs on firearms and ammunition.

Background checks were up 300% on March 16, compared with the same date a year ago, according to federal data shared with the NSSF, which represents gunmakers. Since Feb. 23, each day has seen roughly double the volume over 2019, according to Mark Oliva, spokesman for the group.

In Texas, the attorney general there issued a legal opinion saying that emergency orders shuttering gun shops are unconstitutional. That stands in contrast to some municipalities, such as New Orleans, where the mayor has issued an emergency proclamation that declares the authority to restrict sales of firearms and ammunition.

NSSF and other gun lobbying groups hailed the ruling as a victory for gun owners, especially first-time buyers of a firearm who are concerned that upheaval and turmoil over the virus could affect personal safety.

"We have seen over the past week hundreds of thousands, even millions, of Americans choosing to exercise their right to keep and bear arms to ensure their safety and the safety of loved ones during these uncertain times," said Lawrence Keane, senior vice president and general counsel for NSSF. "Americans must not be denied the ability to exercise that right to lawfully purchase and acquire firearms during times of emergency."

Brady's Lowy said it shouldn't be considered a violation of Second Amendment rights since it's temporary and in the midst of a pandemic. He likened it to constitutional rights to peaceably assemble, a right that is being curtailed at the moment as Americans practice social distancing.

"If you have a gun in the home, you are exercising your Second Amendment rights. No court has held that you have a Second Amendment right to a stockpile of guns," he said.

The vast majority of states are allowing gun shops to remain open. However, some states that have been the hardest hit by the coronavirus have ruled that gun shops are not essential and should close. In the absence of a mandate from federal authorities, gun groups have been filing lawsuits challenging state and local authorities who are ordering gun shops and ranges to close.

The NRA thanked President Donald Trump for the DHS ruling. The NRA has been an unflinching backer of Trump, pumping about \$30 million toward his 2016 campaign.

Urgent question from small businesses: When will aid arrive?

By JOYCE M. ROSENBERG AP Business Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — When will the money arrive?

That's the urgent question for small business owners who have been devastated by the coronavirus outbreak. They're awaiting help from the \$2 trillion rescue package signed into law Friday. But with bills fast coming due, no end to business closings and an economy that's all but shut down, owners are worried about survival.

Millions of owners face April 1 due dates for rent, mortgage, credit card and other payments. Some have been granted leniency from landlords and lenders. But even then, there are other business and personal bills that are owed. And employees — at least those who haven't been laid off — must be paid.

"How quick can we get these funds?" says Adam Rammel, co-owner of Brewfontaine, a bar and restaurant in Bellefontaine, Ohio, that's now limited to takeout and delivery service. His revenue is down 60%. Yet he has eight staffers, down from his usual 25, whom he must pay.

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, March 31, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 262 ~ 53 of 73

"Relief can't come soon enough — we're a cash business with small margins," says Rammel, who is looking to Small Business Administration loans. He needs the money despite receiving some concessions from his banker.

Freelancers and people whose gig work has vanished are also anxious about having to wait.

"I need to pay my electric bill and the mortgage," says Krista Kowalczyk, whose Southwest Florida photography business has come to a halt as weddings have been canceled and customers have decided against having portraits shot.

She feels somewhat reassured that she can receive unemployment benefits. But while she waits, "I am terrified that not only do I have no revenue coming in, I have also been asked for thousands of dollars in refunds."

At companies small and large, from restaurants and retailers to sports and entertainment venues, revenue has essentially dried up. The same for the businesses that support those companies. Even employers that are still operating have lost business as their customers have become too cautious to continue doing business.

The rescue package signed into law Friday provides for Small Business Administration loans to companies as well as to sole proprietors and freelancers. The loans can be used for payroll, mortgages, rent and utilities, with those amounts forgiven and payments deferred. It will also supply small loans that can, depending on an owner's credit score, be approved quickly. Employers can receive tax credits for retaining workers, though not if they have obtained one of the SBA loans.

Many owners are also seeking separate SBA economic injury disaster loans. And the Federal Reserve plans to set up a program to lend directly to small business owners.

In addition, freelancers are now eligible for unemployment benefits. And owners can be eligible for the \$1,200 per person payment that's available to many Americans depending on their income.

Whatever the source of funding, how fast it arrives at businesses across the country is sure to have a significant impact on the economy. Slightly more than half of American workers are employed at businesses with 500 or fewer employees. Every lost job means another person will struggle to pay rent or other bills. Unpaid bills, in turn, cut revenue for other businesses.

Layoffs are mounting, and most analysts forecast that the economy will shrink significantly in the April-June quarter, with some estimating a 30% annual plunge for the quarter. That would be deepest economic contraction for any quarter in records dating to World War II. In the week that ended March 21, roughly 3.3 million people applied for unemployment benefits — more than 10 times the number for the previous week and nearly five times the prior record high.

Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin has said the small loans would be available starting Friday, and in an interview with the Fox Business Network, Mnuchin said he hoped to release loan forms later Monday.

Katie Vliestra, an executive at the National Association for the Self-Employed, an advocacy group, says she's concerned about the lag time between application and approval for even the small loans that are intended to have the fastest turnaround. Most small companies have only 15 to 30 days of cash on hand, she said.

There are also worries about potential logjams at the SBA. The agency's inspector general's office found that the SBA failed to quickly turn around thousands of loans after Hurricane Harvey devastated the Houston area in 2017. (The SBA didn't immediately respond to a request for information about handling an influx of applications.)

John Arensmeyer, CEO of the advocacy group Small Business Majority, says he's concerned that the loans will be processed through the SBA's traditional business loan program, which relies on banks to handle the initial applications.

"Banks have to retool their technology to do this," Arensmeyer says. "It's going to be months before this money gets out there. How many people are going to be able to maintain payroll, hoping to get this money?"

On its face, the rescue aid appears to address some of the most vital needs of small businesses, nota-

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, March 31, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 262 ~ 54 of 73

bly their ability to maintain or hire back furloughed workers eventually. The issue is whether it will come quickly enough.

"The challenge is cash flow," says Jason Duff, owner of Six Hundred Downtown, a restaurant in Bellefontaine, Ohio. He has a staff of eight, down from 27, handling deliveries and pickups.

Duff has less than a week of working capital funds available. He is seeking loans from family and friends as well as some patience from vendors while he awaits federal help.

Don Allison has bills coming due this week for his business, a publisher of books about the Civil War and northwest Ohio history. He and his wife are looking forward to a combined \$2,400. But the royalty checks he must send out require a bigger cash infusion. And he's concerned about being in a long line of owners hoping to receive SBA loans.

"They're going to be slammed," Allison says of the SBA. "How big a delay is there going to be?"

AP Economics Writer Christopher Rugaber in Washington contributed to this report.

Follow Joyce Rosenberg at www.twitter.com/JoyceMRosenberg. Her work can be found here: <https://apnews.com>

Conditions for companies that get virus aid: Room for abuse?

By MARCY GORDON AP Business Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — A \$500 billion federal aid package for companies and governments hurt by the coronavirus includes rules aimed at ensuring that the taxpayer money is used in ways that would help sustain the economy. But questions are being raised about whether those guardrails will prevent the kinds of abuses that have marked some corporate bailouts of the past.

In return for the emergency loans, which could be spun by the Federal Reserve into up to \$4.5 trillion, companies will face temporary limits on what they can pay executives. They'll also need to keep their workforces stable or at least not lay off more than 10% for several months. And they'll face restrictions on stock buybacks and dividend increases.

Yet loopholes may lurk in the legislation.

"On paper, it looks like we learned the lessons," said James Angel, an associate professor of finance at Georgetown University's McDonough School of Business. "But the devil is in the details. ... There's a lot of room around the edges."

The legislation establishes a system of oversight on how companies use the rescue money. The oversight is widely thought to exceed the standards for the bailouts of banks and automakers in the 2008-09 financial crisis. Critics have long attacked those bailouts as an unwarranted giveaway to corporations whose conduct contributed directly to the crisis.

Under the just-enacted \$2.2 trillion package, a government watchdog and a panel appointed by Congress will monitor how the billions in aid are deployed and whether its corporate recipients are meeting the restrictions.

President Donald Trump wasted little time, though, in throwing the oversight system into question. After signing the relief package Friday, Trump issued a statement that seemed to reject the independence of a new inspector general's office. He said he wouldn't recognize the inspector general's right to report to Congress without "presidential supervision." Trump's statement went on to dispute other aspects of the oversight rules, including that Congress should be consulted in the allocation of relief money.

It will be up to Trump to appoint the special inspector general for the bailout fund, who will have to be confirmed by the Senate.

By any standards, the overall package is a staggering pot of money — by far the largest in the history of crisis relief for industries and local governments. About \$425 billion is to be used by the Treasury Department to support the Fed's emergency lending programs. These include loans for small and medium-sized businesses. Because the companies, states and cities are deemed likely to repay the loans, the Fed is able

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, March 31, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 262 ~ 55 of 73

to to leverage the money into up to roughly \$4 trillion in actual lending.

"A program of this scale and scope ... when things are moving so fast, will need vigorous scrutiny," said Phil Angelides, a former California state treasurer who led the 10-member congressional oversight panel for the financial-crisis bailout.

Peter Henning, a law professor at Wayne State University and a former Justice Department attorney, notes that the bailout program gives wide latitude to Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin.

"Secretary Mnuchin has authority to basically negotiate any kind of loan that he wants," Henning said. "We'll see who gets favored and who doesn't."

For companies that receive emergency aid, there may be wiggle room in the conditions attached to it. While they can't shrink their workforce by more than 10% through the fall, there's no prohibition against cutting employee wages — except for airlines that receive direct grants. These grants must be used for employee pay and benefits.

Companies could also reduce workers' hours and overtime without running afoul of a ban on breaching union contracts.

"A lot of people are going to see their compensation fall even though they still have a job," Georgetown's Angel said. "Just the fear of that puts the brakes on the economy."

In addition, some corporate recipients of aid will likely find ways to bypass limits on executive compensation, Angel suggested, through how stock options are valued or through non-financial perks like housing and travel expenses.

During the financial crisis, public advocates railed against revelations of excessive pay packages for executives at some banks and automakers that received billions in taxpayer aid. The Treasury did take equity stakes in the companies in exchange for emergency loans — an idea that Trump has endorsed for the new aid program. This is likely to be the case for airlines that receive direct federal grants.

Another condition is that recipient companies cannot buy back their own shares from investors for at least a year after the loan term ends. This restriction may be easier than others to monitor because of public reporting requirements for stock transactions.

Buybacks tend to inflate stock prices by reducing the number of shares in circulation. This can produce a bonanza for executives whose compensation comes mainly in stock awards and options rather than salary. Better to use the aid, critics say, to preserve employee jobs or wages, invest in expansion or build cash reserves for future emergencies.

Four big airlines — American, United, Delta and Southwest — spent a combined \$39 billion in the past five years on share buybacks, according to S&P Global. The new \$500 billion relief fund earmarks up to \$50 billion for loans and grants to airlines; \$8 billion for cargo carriers; and up to \$17 billion for "businesses critical to maintaining national security" — regarded as a life vest for Boeing. The struggles of the aircraft giant, reeling from the grounding of its 737 Max jet, have deepened as air travel has nearly halted.

In addition to airlines, the distressed industries that have pleaded for federal help include hotels, restaurants, retailers and manufacturers.

The emergency loans for corporations, to run up to five years, bar executives at recipient companies who earned over \$425,000 last year from receiving compensation that would exceed their 2019 total. Nor will "golden parachutes" payments for senior executives who are let go be allowed to exceed twice an executive's 2019 compensation if it topped \$425,000. And executives who earned over \$3 million last year cannot receive compensation exceeding \$3 million plus half of any 2019 pay over \$3 million.

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Moscow goes into lockdown, rest of Russia braces for same

By VLADIMIR ISACHENKOV Associated Press

MOSCOW (AP) — The Russian capital, Moscow, on Monday woke up to a lockdown obliging most of its 13 million residents to stay home, and many other regions of the vast country quickly followed suit to

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, March 31, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 262 ~ 56 of 73

stem the spread of the new coronavirus.

A stern-looking President Vladimir Putin warned his envoys in Russia's far-flung regions that they will be personally responsible for the availability of beds, ventilators and other key equipment.

"We have managed to win time and slow down an explosive spread of the disease in the previous weeks, and we need to use that time reserve to the full," Putin said.

Russia so far has been relatively spared by the outbreak, with 1,836 confirmed cases and nine deaths, but the number of people testing positive has risen quickly in recent days and authorities are bracing for the worst.

Putin has declared that only people employed by essential sectors should work this week, leaving it to regional authorities to spell out the details.

Moscow Mayor Sergei Sobyenin followed up by ordering Muscovites to stay home starting Monday except for medical emergencies and runs to nearby shops. He said the city will issue special passes for those who need to keep working and track all others with electronic surveillance.

"We will steadily tighten controls," Sobyenin told a Cabinet meeting. "I hope that by the week's end we will have information systems allowing us to fully control citizens' movements and prevent possible violations."

On Tuesday, the Russian parliament is scheduled to approve a bill that imposes prison terms of up to seven years and fines of up to 2 million rubles (about \$25,000) — a huge sum in a country where an average monthly salary hovers around \$500 — on violators of the lockdown.

Moscow has a sprawling system of surveillance cameras complete with facial recognition technology, which were tested during anti-Kremlin rallies last year to track down protesters.

City authorities have also used cell phone location data from mobile providers to monitor those who were ordered to self-quarantine for two weeks after arriving from abroad.

Russia took early steps to counter the outbreak, closing the borders with China and then barring access to Chinese citizens last month when China was still the world's hottest coronavirus spot.

Authorities followed up by screening arrivals from Italy, France, Spain and other countries worst-affected by the outbreak, and obliging them to self-quarantine. Last week Russia cut all international commercial flights and finally fully closed its borders effective Monday, with the exception of diplomats, truck drivers and a few other categories.

Russian officials said those measures helped slow down the spread of COVID-19, but acknowledged that the disease is accelerating rapidly and relatively low numbers of confirmed cases could be explained by insufficient screening.

For most people, the coronavirus causes mild or moderate symptoms such as fever and cough. But for others, especially older adults and people with prior health problems, it can cause severe symptoms like pneumonia and can be fatal.

Authorities have converted several hospitals in Moscow to treat coronavirus patients and thousands of construction workers labored around the clock at a construction site on Moscow's outskirts to build a new specialized hospital to be ready in a few weeks.

The Defense Ministry also launched a massive effort to build 16 hospitals across the country in a matter of weeks. Last week, the military also conducted massive drills across Russia to disinfect and quarantine broad areas.

Despite those efforts, many in Russia worry that the nation's underfunded health care system that just recently underwent massive cuts could be easily overwhelmed by the crisis.

Putin told his envoys in the regions Monday that they must quickly report the real situation with ventilators and other essential equipment, prepare for moving seriously ill patients between regions and mobilize medical personnel, including medical students. He also ordered a sharp increase in screening. Until last week, just one laboratory in Siberia was analyzing the coronavirus tests.

In a move reflecting the gravity of the crisis, Putin last week postponed a vote on constitutional amendments that would allow him to stay in office until 2036 if he chooses.

Russian authorities haven't restricted travel to and from the capital city. Many residents of the Moscow

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, March 31, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 262 ~ 57 of 73

region commute to work in the capital.

In a sign of lack of sync between various state agencies amid quick-paced developments, police in the Moscow region on Sunday night announced a curfew on top of the lockdown, but the authorities quickly denied the announcement.

Putin has hailed Moscow's lockdown as "necessary and justified." St. Petersburg, Russia's second largest city, and over a dozen other regions from the westernmost exclave of Kaliningrad to Tatarstan on the Volga River to the Yekaterinburg region in the Urals quickly followed Moscow's example and imposed similar lockdowns.

Russia's leading opposition figure, Alexei Navalny, on Monday blasted the Kremlin for longtime neglect of the country's hospitals and called for public donations to help them. He posted a letter from a doctor at one of Moscow's hospitals treating coronavirus patients who said staff have run out of protective suits and have to reuse those they have worn.

Kremlin critics also voiced concern that the government would use the lockdown to further tighten political controls and crack down on dissent. The authorities already have declared a campaign against "fake news" about the coronavirus, tracking down social media users making claims that contradict official figures on coronavirus figures. Some already have been given heavy fines.

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Coronavirus response highlights deepening partisan divide

By **STEVE PEOPLES AP National Political Writer**

NEW YORK (AP) — In Los Angeles, Mayor Eric Garcetti has instituted a shutdown on a city of nearly 4 million people and threatened uncooperative business owners with power shutoffs and arrest.

In Mississippi, home to nearly 3 million people, Gov. Tate Reeves has allowed most businesses to stay open — even restaurants, so long as they serve no more than 10 people at a time.

The divergent approaches are evidence that not even a global pandemic can bridge the gaping political divisions of the Trump era. The fierce tribalism that has characterized debates over immigration, taxes and health care is now coloring policy-making during a coronavirus outbreak that threatens countless lives and local economies across nation.

There are exceptions, but Republican leaders have been far more likely to resist the most aggressive social distancing measures, emboldened by President Donald Trump's initial rosy outlook and a smaller early caseload in their more rural communities across middle America. But in the more crowded population centers on the East and West coasts where the disease first appeared, the Democrats in charge have been more willing to embrace strict steps such as curfews, sweeping business closures and law enforcement assistance.

"This epidemic has been a window into our politics," said Larry Levitt, who leads health policy for the Kaiser Family Foundation, which has been tracking responses. "Particularly over the past couple of weeks, a political divide has emerged."

It is an election year divide that could have deadly consequences.

As his campaign struggles for attention, leading Democratic presidential contender Joe Biden has called for a nationwide lockdown to replace the patchwork of local responses, which have varied even among neighboring communities in the same states. Trump, meanwhile, is largely allowing local officials to choose their own course and has encouraged them to compete for scant federal resources.

Politically, the strategy may be working for the first-term Republican president. With the election seven months away, Trump's favorable ratings are ticking up, even if his numbers have fallen short of past presidents during times of crisis. Yet the GOP's loyalty will almost certainly be tested in the weeks ahead as the virus spreads from the blue-state coastal communities deeper into red-state middle America.

Democrats like Garcetti fear the politics that are shaping conflicting pandemic responses will have real-

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, March 31, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 262 ~ 58 of 73

world consequences far more important than the next election.

"I do worry that making this a partisan issue will kill more people in redder states," the Los Angeles mayor said in an interview. "There is no way to keep this out of your city."

In Mississippi, Reeves has adopted many social distancing measures such as limiting groups to 10 people, even if he's resisted some of the most aggressive steps. In an interview late last week, the Republican governor reiterated his opposition to a stay-at-home order, adding that he's heeding the guidance of state health officials and Vice President Mike Pence himself, who told him directly during a recent conversation that the Trump administration is not recommending a blanket shutdown.

Reeves dismissed those who think he's not doing enough as enemies of Trump who "don't like the fact that I'm a conservative and I'm willing to pray."

He warned that extended social distancing orders could cause a more dangerous fallout than the pandemic by destroying the nation's economy.

"I don't think there's any doubt that if the United States found themselves in a severe depression with 20% to 30% unemployment that the abject poverty that could create could lead to more health problems than this particular virus is causing," Reeves said.

He added: "One size doesn't fit all in this country."

No nation has more documented cases of the deadly virus than the United States, which surpassed 143,000 total infections and 2,400 related deaths as of Monday morning. Yet Trump's coronavirus task force coordinator, Dr. Deborah Birx, reported Monday that the nation has perhaps only seen roughly 1% or 2% of the total number of deaths expected in a best-case scenario.

"If we do things together well, almost perfectly, we could get in the range of 100,000 to 200,000 fatalities," Birx said Monday on NBC's "Today."

But she warned that every part of the country isn't perfectly responding "in a uniform way to protect one another."

"Cities that don't social distance, that don't stay at home, that believe you can have social interactions, that believe you can have gatherings at homes of 20 and 10 people even, that is going to spread the virus even if everyone looks well," Birx said.

The partisan divide in infections and responses is difficult to ignore.

Fifteen of the 21 states that have issued statewide stay-at-home orders so far are led by Democratic governors, according to Kaiser. The Republican-led holdouts include Florida, where Gov. Ron DeSantis has so far agreed with Trump's preference for a more incremental approach in the premier swing state, suggesting that restrictive measures be put in place only in the hardest-hit counties.

All 50 states have reported cases, but the seven with the most infections are led by Democrats. New York may offer a cautionary tale for other states: The state reported its first case on March 1 and nearly reached 60,000 infections and 1,000 deaths on Monday.

The bottom six states in total cases are rural states led by Republicans. Numbers have been escalating virtually everywhere, however, particularly in more populous red states like Louisiana, Tennessee and Texas, which reported more than 8,100 cases and 200 deaths combined as of Monday.

Some Republicans have been more assertive than others.

Maryland Gov. Larry Hogan, a Republican, has split with Trump over when normal life might resume. And Ohio's Republican governor, Mike DeWine, has been one of the most aggressive leaders in either party, banning spectators from sporting events the first week of March. He was among the first governors in the nation to close public schools.

Aggressive steps by DeWine and others, however, have been complicated by Trump's inconsistent rhetoric. After repeatedly downplaying the threat at first, the Republican president adopted a more serious tone before suddenly suggesting last week that the worst could be over by Easter, which is April 12. He has now reversed that view, calling it an "aspiration," with the extension of the social distancing guidelines through April.

Trump has also engaged in a war of words with Democratic governors in key states, like Michigan and

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, March 31, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 262 ~ 59 of 73

New York, where elected officials have openly complained about the lack of federal assistance to stem a dangerous shortage of coronavirus tests and medical equipment.

Many conservatives have cheered Trump's response, particularly his reluctance to encourage a nationwide stay-at-home order.

"They have no right to tell me I need to stay in my house. They cannot impose a travel ban on me. They can't. It's unconstitutional," said Texas-based activist Mark Meckler, a co-founder of the Tea Party Patriots who now leads the Convention of States Project.

Meckler began conversations in recent days with other grassroots conservatives leaders to explore the possibility of filing lawsuits to block some of the more aggressive social distancing measures. In the meantime, he's encouraging like-minded conservatives to embrace "peaceful resistance."

"I'm not going along with it," Meckler said. "It doesn't mean we won't be smart, but we don't want to be sheep."

Meanwhile, the numbers are shooting up in California, which has reported more than 6,300 infections and 130 deaths as of Monday morning.

Los Angeles Mayor Garcetti has assigned teams of city workers to ensure non-essential local businesses are complying with shut down orders. He is empowered to shut off their water and power if necessary, and the California Democrat has authorized the police to arrest those who continue to resist.

Garcetti said there have been no shutoffs or arrests so far and predicts that "99 out of 100 will comply."

He also offered a dire message to Republicans who have resisted similar steps: "In the projections, you could see this taking tens of thousands of lives in America or millions. You chose. But I don't think anybody wants the second to be on their hands."

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

Hay fever or virus? For allergy sufferers, a season of worry

By MICHAEL RUBINKAM Associated Press

HAMBURG, Pa. (AP) — The spring breezes of 2020 are carrying more than just tree pollen. There's a whiff of paranoia in the air.

For millions of seasonal allergy sufferers, the annual onset of watery eyes and scratchy throats is bumping up against the global spread of a new virus that produces its own constellation of respiratory symptoms. Forecasters are predicting a brutal spring allergy season for swaths of the U.S. at the same time that COVID-19 cases are rising dramatically.

That's causing angst for people who never have had to particularly worry about their hay fever, other than to stock up on antihistamines, decongestants and tissues. Now they're asking: Are these my allergies? Or something more sinister?

"Everyone is sort of analyzing every sneeze and cough right now," said Kathy Przywara, who manages an online community of allergy sufferers for the Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America.

Never mind the differing symptoms — that sneezing and runny nose, hallmarks of hay fever, are not typically associated with COVID-19, which commonly produces coughing, fever and in more serious cases shortness of breath. Never mind that allergies don't cause fevers. Allergy sufferers fret that there's just enough overlap to make them nervous.

Allergy season is already underway in Oceanside, California, where Ampie Convocar is dealing with a runny nose, sinus pain and headache, and an urge to sneeze. Last year, she would've considered her symptoms mere annoyance. Now they cause tremendous anxiety. People with asthma, like Convocar, are at higher risk of severe illness from COVID-19.

"I consider it as something that could kill me because of COVID-19 floating around," Convocar said via email. With a family member still traveling to work every day, she said, "I don't know what he got out there."

Many garden-variety hay fever sufferers, of whom there are about 19 million adults in the U.S., are also on heightened alert.

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, March 31, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 262 ~ 60 of 73

They're taking their temperatures each day, just in case. They're hiding their sneezes and sniffles from suspicious colleagues and grossed-out grocery shoppers. They're commiserating with each other and sharing memes on social media ("I don't know if I should buy Zyrtec or turn myself in to the CDC").

Pamela Smelser is reminded of allergy season every time she looks out the window of her home office, where her cherry tree is blooming. Spring came early to Maryland, she said, and lots of people are coughing and sneezing from the pollen.

"You do what you have to do: You take your meds for allergies and stay away from people," Smelser said. "People get really hinky about coughing right now."

Though she's had allergies for years, Smelser, a semi-retired social worker and community college teacher outside Baltimore, admits to being a touch paranoid. She takes her temperature every day because she's 66 and, well, you can never be too careful.

"I can't rule out that I have anything," she said. "That's the paranoia: You can't even get a test to say, 'This is all seasonal allergies.'"

In Pennsylvania, pear trees are budding, red maple are beginning to flower and Leslie Haerer's allergies are already in full bloom. The 64-year-old retired nurse, who lives about an hour north of Philadelphia, is coping with a scratchy throat, an urge to sneeze and a headache behind the eyes.

As a medical professional, Haerer knows her symptoms are attributable to her allergies. She also knows that other people are "really flipped out about this," including the scowling family of three who saw her sneeze into her elbow outside a Chinese restaurant and, instead of continuing on to their destination — the pizza shop next door — got in their car and sped away.

"I was like, 'I'm sorry you missed your pizza,'" Haerer said. "People's reactions are just over the top."

In Austin, Texas, where pollen counts are high, Marty Watson initially dismissed his itchy eyes, mild headache, coughing and sneezing as the product of a tree allergy, even after his temperature became slightly elevated. Then, in mid-March, he realized he could no longer smell a pungent sourdough starter, and friends began sending him news stories that said a loss of smell sometimes accompanied a coronavirus infection.

"Austin is notorious for all sorts of allergies, and it became really hard to tell: Is it this? Is it that?" said Watson, 52.

For most people, the new coronavirus causes mild or moderate symptoms that clear up in a couple weeks. Older adults and people with existing health problems are at higher risk of more severe illness, including pneumonia and death.

As allergy season ramps up in Pennsylvania, Dr. Laura Fisher, an allergist in Lancaster, expects an influx of worried patients. She is advising them to keep up with their medications, stay at home as much as possible and monitor for symptoms that seem unrelated to their allergies.

"I think people are more afraid of catching it, more afraid of going out and getting it from the grocery store or drive-thru, than they are of their usual symptoms being COVID," said Fisher, president of the Pennsylvania Allergy and Asthma Association.

Jessica Tanniehill initially blew off her symptoms as allergy-related.

Tanniehill, 39, of Adamsville, Alabama, started with a runny nose and sneezing. Body aches and a cough came next, following by shortness of breath. She thought her seasonal allergies had led to a bout of anxiety, nothing more, especially since she'd been outside all day doing yard work and washing her truck. "I didn't take it seriously," she said.

Turns out she'd contracted COVID-19 — which doesn't preclude the possibility that she'd had allergies as well.

Tanniehill, who's now on the mend, acknowledged that she "was one of the people that was saying they're overreacting to all this. But now I wish I was more careful."

Michael Rubinkam covers eastern and central Pennsylvania for The Associated Press. Follow him on Twitter at <http://twitter.com/michaelrubinkam>

Rent strike idea gaining steam during coronavirus crisis

By JIM SALTER Associated Press

ST. LOUIS (AP) — With millions of people suddenly out of work and rent due at the first of the month, some tenants are vowing to go on a rent strike until the coronavirus pandemic subsides.

New York, Boston, Los Angeles, San Francisco and St. Louis are among many cities that have temporarily banned evictions, but advocates for the strike are demanding that rent payments be waived, not delayed, for those in need during the crisis. The rent strike idea has taken root in parts of North America and as far away as London.

White sheets are being hung in apartment windows to show solidarity with the movement that is gaining steam on Twitter, Instagram and other social media sites. Fliers urging people to participate are being posted in several cities, including bus stops in St. Louis, where 27-year-old Kyle Kofron still has his job at an ice cream factory, but his three roommates have suddenly found themselves unemployed. Their property manager so far hasn't agreed to a payment plan, Kofron said.

"For me personally, with everyone losing their jobs and unable to pay, it's really the only thing we can do," Kofron said of the strike. "It's just like we the people have to do something. We just can't stand idly by while the system takes us for a ride."

Stay-at-home orders and strict limits on gathering sizes have forced shops, restaurants and bars to shut down indefinitely. Many service industry workers thrust into unemployment are living paycheck-to-paycheck in the best of times. Now, many say they don't have the money to pay rent.

Some politicians have expressed support, if not directly for a strike, then for a temporary rent moratorium, including Democratic presidential candidate Bernie Sanders.

In New York, the state hit hardest so far by the pandemic, Democratic state Sen. Mike Gianaris of Queens introduced a bill that would forgive rent and mortgage payments for 90 days for people and small businesses struggling because of the coronavirus. It has 21 co-sponsors.

"Tenants can't pay rent if they can't earn a living. Let's #CancelRent for 90 days to keep people in their homes during the #coronavirus crisis," Gianaris said on Twitter.

Strike advocates aren't waiting for legislative approval. Activist organizations in many places are leading the push for a strike. A group called Rent Strike 2020 is organizing on the national level.

"Our demands to every Governor, in every state, are extremely simple: freeze rent, mortgage, and utility bill collection for 2 months, or face a rent strike," Rent Strike 2020's website states.

Advocates in St. Louis are encouraging those who can afford rent to join the movement in solidarity with those who can't. Without a large number of participants, landlords will simply evict strikers, said Chris Winston, of For the People STL.

Others say a rent strike could further worsen the economy if landlords and property managers themselves are forced to default on loans. Some strike advocates have urged banks to suspend requiring payments from landlords and property management companies so that those groups can better absorb their own financial losses from a rent strike or moratorium.

Matthew Chase, an eviction attorney in St. Louis County, said property management companies and landlords have employees to pay, utility bills and other costs. A widespread rent strike could force them to lay off their own workers, cut back on property maintenance or even close apartment complexes.

Chase cited one client who relies on income from renting a couple of homes.

"She's the big, bad landlord to these rent strike folks," Chase said.

Nick Kasoff, who lives in the St. Louis suburb of Ferguson, calls himself a "small-time landlord." He had words of warning for anyone refusing to pay their rent.

"Courts are closed, but they won't be closed forever," Kasoff wrote on Facebook. "If you choose not to pay rent when you are able, your landlord will be down there filing an eviction the day they open back up. You will lose your home, ruin your credit, and make it difficult to get any sort of decent housing in the future. A 'rent strike' isn't going to liquidate capitalism and make you a homeowner, it's going to demolish your credit and make you homeless."

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, March 31, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 262 ~ 62 of 73

AP Photojournalist Jeff Roberson in St. Louis contributed to this report.

Gray hair, don't care: Cuts and color lead to home travails

By **LEANNE ITALIE** Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Sister love playing out in a living-room hair trim. A botched home dye job with a silver lining. Stylists shipping out kits of personalized color with promises to talk their regulars through the process via FaceTime.

As the spread of the coronavirus sends more people into isolation, trips to beloved salons and barber-shops for morale-boosting services and camaraderie are on hold.

While some brazenly cut themselves new bangs, turn to over-the-counter color or try picking up electric clippers and scissors to work on the heads of loved ones, others are letting nature take its course.

Mememes and real-life stories are flying about cuts gone bad and the onslaught of gray hair, along with out-of-control eyebrows, sad lash extensions and overdue nail work. While such things seem frivolous in the sad and desperate crush of the pandemic, many people are reaching for rituals as emotional relief and connection to their longstanding way of life.

Mary Beth Warner in Syracuse, New York, has a lighthearted air about her as she hunkers down with her husband and 17-year-old son, but she isn't laughing on the inside.

"I remember my mom used to say during the war, as long as they could get lipstick they were happy," she said. "That's how I feel right now about my hair."

Warner, 63, usually travels to Manhattan for color appointments every four weeks with Frank Friscioni at Oon Arvelo Salon. He's been doing her color (blonde) for 25 years.

She's past her regular appointment, but rather than take on the task herself, she's wearing a baseball cap to walk her dog until she can coax Friscioni up for a house call, something he's doing with other clients closer to the city.

"Oh I love my Frank," Warner said. "I don't trust anybody else. Right now I'm mortified for anybody to see. Emotionally, it means a lot. I don't care if I die as long as my hair is blonde in that coffin."

Others are more settled in letting their gray hair fly. Comedian-actor Kevin Hart puts videos on Instagram chronicling his life at home with salt-and-pepper hair and beard. Hashtag: #GreyHairDon'tCare.

"Everybody's going gray. I'm going to embrace it right now. I look like Morgan Freeman's nephew," he told Ellen DeGeneres in one of the celebrity phone chats she's posting on Instagram from her Los Angeles home.

For others, styles are going shaggy as they rediscover ponytails, buns, and dusty stashes of headbands and hair baubles.

Not the Hinds sisters.

The younger, 18-year-old Sophie, calmly read a book as her 20-year-old sister, Fiona, nervously lopped a good 7 inches off her long reddish blonde hair at home on Manhattan's Upper West Side, creating an adorable bob.

Fiona said she boned up for the task by watching "one YouTube video that we didn't even finish. We watched the first five minutes."

To which Sophie responded: "Are you kidding? You didn't tell me that."

In Fayetteville, Arkansas, stylist Scarlett Howell voluntarily canceled all appointments for at least two weeks. She's relying in part on savings to pay her bills.

"There's a lot of salon owners and stylists who refuse to close until it's mandated, and so they're actively putting people at risk," she said. "It's incredibly frustrating."

Howell doesn't recommend DIY cuts or coloring using professional products that are stronger and trickier than over-the-counter varieties.

"It's really damn hard to cut your own hair," she said.

Some of her regulars are paying for their canceled appointments.

"My clients are my family," Howell said, breaking down in tears. "It really means a lot for people to reach

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, March 31, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 262 ~ 63 of 73

out.”

Kelly Cardenas, who shut down his salons in Las Vegas, Chicago and Carlsbad, California, calls the DIY hair experiments playing out in homes and on social media a mere “15 minutes of feeling OK that could take your hairdresser up to a year to fix.”

Debra Hare-Bey, a braider and stylist in Brooklyn, said black hair, depending on texture, length and style, might pose home challenges for those used to relying on specialists. Asked how her clients are feeling now that her home business is closed until the health emergency subsides, she said: “It’s pandemonium. Pure and simple. They’ve lost their minds.”

Mylena Sutton, 43, in Haddonfield, New Jersey, isn’t ready to take matters into her own hands.

“I’m an African American woman with very kinky, curly hair that tends toward being dry. I don’t relax my hair, but I do color it and there’s no way in the world that I’m attempting that at home,” she said.

For now, she’s covering her roots with hats, headbands and “overall hiding.”

Kody Christiansen, a student at New York University, went the box-color route with a slight mishap, but has no regrets. The 30-something about to graduate with an associate’s degree was going for platinum, like the person on the box. He wound up a brassy yellow instead, but used a silver spray he had on hand to even out his color for a two-tone effect.

“It’s a metaphor for my life,” said the Bronx actor and author, who until a few years ago was homeless and addicted to drugs and alcohol. “Until recently, my life wasn’t anything like life on the box.”

Brian Coughlin, 35, in Evanston, Illinois, usually heads to the barber every eight to 10 weeks. He was about a month overdue when he asked his wife, Ashley, to try the clippers.

“Huh! huh!” Ashley gasped near the end of a YouTube video they made during the process. She forgot to snap on the appropriate attachment for the clippers and carved a bald spot into the back of his hair.

“I’m sorry. I was doing so good,” she said, to which Brian replied: “It’s OK. Just cut around it and we’ll see what we can do.”

Follow Leanne Italie on Twitter at <https://twitter.com/litalie>

Coronavirus hits rich and poor unequally in Latin America

By **MICHAEL WEISSENSTEIN, EVENS SANON and FRANKLIN BRICEÑO** Associated Press

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti (AP) — From Mexico City to Port-au-Prince, Haiti, and Santiago, Chile, the coronavirus is taking root in the world’s most unequal region, where many of Latin America’s first cases arrived with members of the elite returning from vacations or work trips to Europe and the United States.

Many of the wealthy are already recovering, but experts warn that the virus could kill scores of the poorest people, who must work every day to feed their families, live in unsanitary conditions and lack proper medical care. Some countries are making payments to informal workers — maids, street sellers and others who have been told to stay home to reduce the spread of the virus, but the effort is patchwork and doesn’t apply to everyone who needs help.

“I stay home, I will lose all my goods. I have no way to save them,” said Marie-Ange Bouzi, who sells tomatoes and onions on the street of Haiti’s capital. “I am not going to spend money fighting corona. God is going to protect me.”

Haiti, the Western Hemisphere’s poorest country, reported its first two cases of the virus on March 20. One was imported by one of its most successful artists, an R&B singer who had just returned from France, according to the director of health in Port-au-Prince.

Singer Roody Roodboy, who’s real name is Roody Pétuel Dauphin, quarantined himself when he got back to avoid infecting others and sent his entourage to be tested, manager Narcisse Fievre said. He said the singer had received death threats from people who accuse him of bringing the disease to Haiti, although there is no evidence Dauphin had infected anyone else.

For hundreds of thousands of Haitians who earn a few dollars a day selling goods on the street, quarantine like Dauphin’s would mean near-starvation.

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, March 31, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 262 ~ 64 of 73

"People are not going stay home. How are they going to eat?" Bouzi said. "Haiti isn't structured for that."

The Haitian government has cut banking and government office hours, closed schools and broadcast radio messages asking people to stay home. But thousands in Port-au-Prince still crowded this week into street markets, buses and repurposed pickup trucks known as tap-taps.

In Chile, which has seen cases grow to more than 2500 since March 3, many coronavirus diagnoses have been in upper-middle-class neighborhoods, in people just back from Europe, particularly Italy.

Health Minister Jaime Mañalich has complained that wealthy residents of the Las Condes and Vitacura sections of Santiago, the capital, are routinely violating required quarantines after they tested positive or encountered someone who did.

Las Condes Mayor Joaquín Lavín says more than half the cases in the city are in Las Condes and Vitacura.

The health minister says he has personally called wealthy residents supposedly in quarantine and discovers they are defying the order.

"You hear honking and street noises, which tells me they're fooling us and disrespecting the quarantine," Mañalich said.

Mexican authorities say at least 17 of the country's wealthiest people returned after being infected during a ski trip to Vail, Colorado.

The first person to die in Rio state was Cleonice Gonçalves, a 63-year-old who worked as a maid for a woman in Leblon, one of the wealthiest neighborhoods in Brazil. The woman of the household was infected during a trip to Italy but Gonçalves' family members said she wasn't informed her boss was in isolation awaiting test results, according to Camila Ramos de Miranda, health secretary for the town of Miguel Pereira. Gonçalves, who had hypertension and diabetes, fell ill and died on March 17 in Miguel Pereira two hours north of the capital.

"I know we need to work, need our daily bread, but nothing is more important than the value of a life," Miguel Pereira Mayor André Português said in a video posted on Facebook.

In Lima, Peru, the fallout from the pandemic is starkly different depending on class.

Nadia Muñoz watched her 8-year-old son, Luka, follow online lessons from his private Catholic school on a recent afternoon. The makeup artist and her family live in an upper-middle-class neighborhood, where Lima's 15-day quarantine hasn't been too disruptive.

"We have a supermarket nearby, light, water, internet, a phone and cable TV," Muñoz said as she recorded a makeup lesson to post on Instagram.

In a shack on a nearby hill, Alejandro de la Cruz, 86, his wife María Zoila, and his son Ramiro, who sold clothes on the street until the quarantine started this month, were cooking with charcoal. They have no running water, electricity, internet or phone service.

They live among security guards, cooks, drivers, tailors, shoemakers, car mechanics and construction workers who are unemployed during the lockdown.

While there are more poor people in other regions of the world, Latin America remains the region in which the greatest proportion of wealth is held by a small number of citizens.

"Latin America is the most unequal region in the entire world. We're talking about class disparities that are unlike anywhere else on the planet," said Geoff Ramsey, a researcher at the Washington Office on Latin America.

Some Latin American governments were striving to help workers whose informal jobs provide them no access to the social safety net, including unemployment payments or severance packages.

Peru has announced a payment of \$108 for the 2.7 million homes classified as poverty stricken. But the hillside shanty where de la Cruz and his unemployed neighbors are waiting out the quarantine aren't poor enough to qualify.

"My son hasn't worked for a week, there's barely enough to buy a bit of food," Zoila said.

In Argentina, the center-left government approved a \$151 payment in April for informal workers, who make up 35% of the nation's economy. Argentina plans to make more payments soon.

Brazil's right-wing government has no such plans. On Twitter last week, left-leaning politicians called for maids to receive their salaries while self-isolating, adding the hashtag #PaidQuarantineNow.

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, March 31, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 262 ~ 65 of 73

The lack of help worries Patricia Martins, who lives in Brazil's largest favela, or slum, Rocinha in Rio de Janeiro, which houses about 70,000 people in brick homes packed tightly together on steep slopes overlooking the Atlantic Ocean. Clean water is sporadic, sewage often runs in the streets and winding alleys and soaring staircases make it difficult for medical professionals to retrieve a sick person in an emergency.

"My concern is that if someone gets that sickness, this is going to be a focal point, like it's a focal point for tuberculosis and for HIV," said Martins, a 45-year-old cleaning woman.

"The person who's a cleaner, the person who counts on that money to survive, to sustain their family — they're going to bring in money from where?" she said of anti-virus measures. "If everything stops, it will end people's lives! There will be nothing people can do to survive!"

Weissenstein reported from Havana and Briceño from Lima, Peru. Eva Vergara in Santiago, Chile; Maria Verza in Mexico City; David Biller in Rio de Janeiro; and Almudena Calatrava in Buenos Aires contributed to this report.

Nipsey Hussle's legacy endures a year after his death

By JONATHAN LANDRUM Jr. AP Entertainment Writer

LOS ANGELES (AP) — The year since Nipsey Hussle was gunned down has not diminished the rapper's legacy, but rather cemented it and continues to prove true his catchphrase, "The Marathon Continues."

Tuesday marks the first anniversary of Hussle's death and his popularity and influence pushes forward as strong as ever. He won two posthumous Grammys in January, he remains a favorite of his hip-hop peers and his death has reshaped his hometown of Los Angeles in some unexpected ways.

Throughout the city, murals dedicated to Hussle have been painted, rival gangs have had peace talks and a group of men convene in a cross-country book club to discuss books recommended by the rapper.

"It shows you how powerful and great he is," said DJ Khaled, who won a Grammy with Hussle and Legend for "Higher" for best rap/sung performance. Hussle's song "Racks in the Middle" featuring Roddy Ricch and Hit-Boy took home an award for best rap performance.

"He was so much of a blessing as a father, entrepreneur, an incredible artist and young mogul," said Khaled, who took part in a poignant Grammy tribute to Hussle. "We learned a lot from him, and we're still learning. His music spoke volumes. It touched people in different ways. I was blessed to work with him."

Hussle's allure grew to new heights after he was killed outside of his South Los Angeles clothing store, The Marathon. The rapper's alleged shooter, Eric Holder Jr., is in a Los Angeles County jail awaiting a trial that was expected to begin by late spring, but proceedings have been delayed because of a court shutdown over the coronavirus.

A grand jury indicted Holder for murder for Hussle's killing and attempted murder after two men who were standing next to the rapper were wounded. Holder has pleaded not guilty. Testimony released last year provided a detailed accounting of what led up to the killing, including a conversation between Hussle and Holder that discussed snitching.

After Hussle's death, an unexpected cease-fire developed between some rival gang members.

"It created an opportunity for conversations to happen, for communication to happen, for leadership to happen that maybe wouldn't have happened otherwise in the memory and spirit of Nipsey Hussle," Anne Tremblay, director of Gang Reduction and Youth Development program in Los Angeles, said earlier this year.

The 33-year-old rapper, whose real name was Ermias Asghedom, was an Eritrean-American father of two who was engaged to actress Lauren London. He was a beloved figure for his philanthropic work that went well beyond the usual celebrity "giving back" ethos. Following his death, political and community leaders were as effusive in their praise as his fellow hip-hop artists.

"The biggest thing that he left behind in his legacy is to go the extra mile for other people and be aware of your community," singer Tinashe said in an interview last week. "That spirit is really important. It's important to bring people together. I think that's part of his message. It's looking out for one another."

The rapper was also a wildly popular figure among professional athletes, especially those based in LA,

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, March 31, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 262 ~ 66 of 73

where he was a regular on the sidelines. Players admired him for his community building.

After years of selling his highly popular mixtapes out his car trunk, Hussle broke through in 2018 with "Victory Lap." His critically-acclaimed, major-label debut album on Atlantic Records earned him his first Grammy nomination, though he lost out to Cardi B's "Invasion of Privacy."

Rapper Slim Thug called Hussle's music "timeless."

"You can go back and listen to his old music and find these gems just like you're listening to on 'Victory Lap,'" said Thug, who recorded the song "Go Long" with Hussle and Z-Ro. "He's got so much old music I listen to. It's timeless, because he's a storyteller. His music doesn't get dated. I hate that he's not here in the flesh and seeing the praise he certainly deserves. A lot of people didn't even know about him until he passed. I hate to see that he had to pass to get his shine."

Hussle purchased the strip mall where The Marathon is located and planned to redevelop it into a mixed-use commercial and residential complex. The plan was part of Hussle's broader ambitions to remake the neighborhood where he grew up and attempt to break the cycle of gang life that lured him in when he was younger.

However, since Hussle's death, his flagship store has been fenced off and closed for the "foreseeable future," the business announced on social media last year. The online store still accepts orders, and Puma reissued Marathon clothing.

It's unknown when Hussle's family will release any new music. But his production company, Marathon Films, and filmmaker Ava DuVernay are in discussions with Netflix to produce about documentary about the rapper.

"Everything he embodied and encompassed is living on through him," said Karen Civil, a former business partner and co-founder of the Marathon Agency, a marketing and branding firm. She played a pivotal role in planning his memorial service at the Staples Center, where she read an open letter from former President Barack Obama to Hussle.

"That's the incredible part about him," she said. "He not only created change in his community, but all around the globe."

Associated Press Writers Andrew Dalton, Gary Gerard Hamilton and Stefanie Dazio contributed to this report.

Follow AP Entertainment Writer Jonathan Landrum Jr. on Twitter: <http://twitter.com/MrLandrum31>

'Calling all scientists': Experts volunteer for virus fight

By ELANA SCHOR undefined

NEW YORK (AP) — Michael Wells was looking for a chance to use his scientific training to help fight the coronavirus when — on the same day the pandemic forced his lab to temporarily close — he decided to create his own opportunity.

"CALLING ALL SCIENTISTS," he tweeted on March 18. "Help me in creating a national database of researchers willing and able to aid in local COVID-19 efforts. This info will be a resource for institutions/ (government) agencies upon their request."

That's how the 34-year-old neuroscientist at the Broad Institute and Harvard University launched a national effort to marshal scientists to volunteer in the fight against the virus.

Less than 10 days later, more than 7,000 scientists had joined Wells' database. Organizations and governmental departments in a dozen states, as well as the Federal Emergency Management Agency, have tapped into the information. Wells is also working with EndCoronavirus.org, a project of the research-focused New England Complex Systems Institute, to help maximize the usefulness of the volunteer scientist cavalry he has assembled.

As health care workers risk their own lives to treat patients and some scientists work toward a vaccine, Wells' database offers a way forward for other science professionals who want to be of use. Scientists

are asked to match their specific training with potential needs in the battle against the disease, including experience with RNA viruses such as the coronavirus.

Wells, an Ohio native, has lived for nearly a decade in the research hotbed of Cambridge, Massachusetts. He created the database, he explained, in part to help ensure that in places without access to nearby major academic centers, governmental entities and institutions — and by association, citizens — can tap into scientific knowledge.

“Scientists are a tremendous resource for this country. And it’s not something that should just be confined to the coasts,” Wells said. “It’s something that everyone should be able to benefit from.”

His project isn’t the only one looking to match scientists eager to help battle the virus with opportunities to use their skills — regional efforts were already underway when Wells first created his Google spreadsheet.

One focus of the project is to identify volunteer scientists qualified to be deployed like “cavalry” to hotspots to conduct tests. The database also asks if scientists are able to donate testing materials, such as RNA extraction kits and nasal swabs, an acknowledgement that a lack of testing capacity at labs and supplies is also a concern.

Wells has experience in virus research, but the database includes experts from multiple backgrounds, including bioinformatics experts who can help localities and other researchers more effectively map and visualize data on the effects of the pandemic.

Organizations or governmental entities have to request access to the full version of the database. Requests unrelated to the pandemic, such as companies scouting potential employees, have been denied.

Wells and his collaborators acknowledge to scientists who sign onto the database that while they “hope that every single one of you get the opportunity to use your advanced skills in the fight against this outbreak,” it’s likely that many who enlist won’t be called upon.

No matter how the database is used, Wells said, scientists “want to be part of the solution to this global problem.” The database, he said, ensures “that when we’re called upon, we’re ready to go right away.”

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.

Ill man seeks return to US amid West Bank virus restrictions

By **RANDALL CHASE** and **JOSEF FEDERMAN** Associated Press

Ismail “Sam” Mousa is very worried.

The 48-year-old Uber driver and Subway worker from Delaware has chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, which means contracting the coronavirus could be deadly for him. He is in self-quarantine at his sister’s house in the West Bank, but his medication is running out — with no way to get more — and travel restrictions have blocked him from returning to the U.S.

With the help of U.S. diplomatic officials, Mousa and his 12-year-old daughter, Anisa, have been granted permission to fly home later this week from Tel Aviv, Israel — if Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu doesn’t lock down the country to contain the spread of the coronavirus.

“If I get the virus, I will be gone,” Mousa said in a telephone interview from the small West Bank village of Qaryout.

The Palestinian Authority, which governs parts of the Israeli-occupied West Bank, has reported more than 100 cases of coronavirus.

Mousa, a U.S. citizen and West Bank native who has lived in the United States for the past 22 years, traveled with Anisa to Jordan on Feb. 25, and then crossed into the West Bank several days later. They

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, March 31, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 262 ~ 68 of 73

were supposed to stay until March 31. When the coronavirus crisis began to worsen midmonth, Mousa was able to secure earlier plane tickets back to Delaware.

But he wasn't able to use them. With little notice, the country of Jordan halted flights out of the Amman airport on March 17 and shuttered its crossings with the West Bank.

Mousa, who holds a Palestinian ID, is not allowed to fly out of Israel's Ben-Gurion airport, which still has a handful of flights to the U.S. each day. And while he would have been allowed earlier to travel to Israel to get the medication he needs, that country has now also closed its crossings with the West Bank because of the virus.

Further complicating things, The Palestinian Authority halted movement between communities in the West Bank on the very day Anisa went to the city of Ramallah to stay with a cousin, the child of Mousa's brother. So the father and daughter have not seen each other for nearly two weeks.

"I'm going to have trouble sleeping again," Anisa wrote last Thursday to her mother, Michelle Mousa, who said she has been sick with worry at their home in the southern Delaware town of Selbyville.

"She really just wants to come home," Michelle Mousa said.

Family members have been working with the U.S. Embassy and the office of Delaware U.S. Sen. Chris Coons to try to get permission for the father and daughter to fly home. Initially, authorities said only Anisa could leave because she is not a Palestinian ID holder and is allowed to fly out of the airport in Israel.

"I told them, 'I cannot let her go alone. She's 12 years old,'" Ismail Mousa said.

After days of frantically seeking help from lawmakers and diplomatic officials, Michelle Mousa, 33, received the news on Friday that both her husband and daughter had been granted permission to fly home from Tel Aviv this week.

But there was still the possibility that Netanyahu could order a lockdown. Israel has already imposed strict restrictions on movement to contain a rapidly spreading coronavirus outbreak, but several flights to the U.S. continue to operate.

"Tuesday is the absolute earliest that they could leave because of this travel permit," Michelle Mousa said. "So if this happens before then, that is really terrifying."

Ismail Mousa implored Israeli and Palestinian authorities to make an exception and let him get back to his home in Delaware, where he and his wife also have a 7-year-old son and 1-year-old daughter.

"It's an emergency. You know all my history, you know all my background checks and everything," he said. "I'm just trying to get home safely to my kids. Just let me go."

Ismail Mousa said Monday that his wife was still booking his ticket and he hoped to be home by Wednesday or Thursday.

"I feel very happy. I'm so ready to come home, honestly. My daughter is so excited," he said. "It was a bad situation when you are away from home and the kids."

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

In Zimbabwe, 'you win coronavirus or you win starvation'

By FARAI MUTSAKA Associated Press

HARARE, Zimbabwe (AP) — "We are already ruined. What more harm can coronavirus do?" Irene Kampira asked as she sorted secondhand clothes at a bustling market in a poor suburb of Zimbabwe's capital, Harare.

People in one of the world's most devastated nations are choosing daily survival over measures to protect themselves from a virus that "might not even kill us," Kampira said.

Even as the country enters a "total lockdown" over the virus on Monday, social distancing is pushed aside in the struggle to obtain food, cash, cheap public transport, even clean water. The World Health Organization's recommended virus precautions seem far-fetched for many of Zimbabwe's 15 million people.

"It's better to get coronavirus while looking for money than to sit at home and die from hunger," Kampira

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, March 31, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 262 ~ 69 of 73

said, to loud approval from other vendors.

The southern African nation has few cases but its health system is in tatters, and the virus could quickly overwhelm it. Hundreds of public hospital doctors and nurses have gone on strike over the lack of protective equipment. Many Zimbabweans are already vulnerable from hunger or underlying health issues like HIV, which is present in 12% of the population.

Last year a United Nations expert called the number of hungry people in Zimbabwe "shocking" for a country not in conflict. The World Food Program has said more than 7 million people, or half the country, needs aid.

Harare, like most cities and towns across Zimbabwe, has an acute water shortage and residents at times go for months, even years, without a working tap. Many must crowd communal wells, fearing the close contact will speed the coronavirus' spread.

"If the taps were working we wouldn't be here, swarming the well like bees on a beehive or flies on sewage. We are busy exchanging coronavirus here coughing and spitting saliva at each other," said 18-year old Anastancia Jack while waiting her turn.

The government has closed borders and banned gatherings of more than 50 people while encouraging people to stay at home.

But the majority of Zimbabweans need to go out daily to put food on the table. With inflation over 500% most industries have closed, leaving many people to become street vendors. Zimbabwe has the world's second-largest informal economy after Bolivia, according to the International Monetary Fund.

Police in recent days have tried to clear vendors from the streets, in vain. As in other African countries where many people rely on informal markets, a lockdown could mean immediate food shortages.

Once-prosperous Zimbabwe was full of renewed promise with the forced resignation in late 2017 of longtime leader Robert Mugabe. But President Emmerson Mnangagwa has struggled to fulfil promises of prosperity since taking power. He blames the country's crisis in part on sanctions imposed on certain individuals, including himself, by the U.S. over rights abuses.

Daily necessities in Zimbabwe make social distancing an elusive ideal. In downtown Harare, hordes of people congregate at banks for cash, which is in short supply. Others pack public transport.

"We are the only ones practicing social distancing, we sit in our cars all day," said Blessing Hwiribisha, a motorist in a fuel line snaking for more than a kilometer in the poor suburb of Kuwadzana.

"Look at them," he said. He pointed at a supermarket across the road where hundreds of people shoved to buy maize meal, which has become scarce due to a devastating drought and lack of foreign currency to import more.

"What is happening in Zimbabwe is very scary. It's like we are playing cards. Its either you win coronavirus or you win starvation," said Tinashe Moyo at the supermarket. "I am very scared."

Few health workers are available as doctors and nurses strike.

"There is a difference between being heroic and being suicidal," said Tawanda Zvakada, president of the Zimbabwe Hospital Doctors Association.

Health workers described a lack of disinfectants, sanitizers and even water at hospitals.

And yet Health Minister Obadiah Moyo repeatedly says Zimbabwe is "well prepared" to deal with COVID-19 cases.

But frightened health workers cited the death of a prominent broadcaster at an ill-equipped isolation center specifically reserved for COVID-19 cases.

"They didn't have a ventilator to help him," Zvakada said. "The inability of our system to manage one patient is worrying. What about when there are 50 patients?"

Zimbabwe has less than 20 ventilators to help people in severe respiratory distress, he said. He said the country needs hundreds to adequately deal with the virus.

"We see a situation where Zimbabwe can become a graveyard if we are not careful," said Itai Rusike, director of the Harare-based Community Working Group on Health.

How would overwhelmed hospitals decide who to treat first?

By **CANDICE CHOI, LORI HINNANT and NICOLE WINFIELD Associated Press**

NEW YORK (AP) — A nurse with asthma, a grandfather with cancer and a homeless man with no known family are wracked with coronavirus-induced fevers. They are struggling to breathe, and a ventilator could save their lives. But who gets one when there aren't enough to go around?

Health care workers are dreading the prospect of such dire scenarios as U.S. hospitals brace for a looming surge in patients who need breathing machines and other resources that could soon be in critically short supply.

That has meant dusting off playbooks they've never before had to implement on how to fairly ration limited resources during an emergency.

"I pray for their good judgment and their capacity as they make very difficult choices," said Erik Curren, whose 77-year-old father died this month from respiratory complications related to the virus after becoming infected at an assisted living home in Florida.

Harrowing scenarios already are unfolding in country after country hard-hit by the COVID-19 pandemic, including Spain, where one nursing home official said sick residents are dying after being unable to get into overflowing hospitals.

Like much of the rest of the world, ventilators that help people breathe are in particular demand across the U.S., given the respiratory problems common among people severely ill with COVID-19.

As many as 900,000 coronavirus patients in the U.S. could need the machines during the outbreak, according to the Society for Critical Care Medicine. Yet the group estimates the country has only 200,000, many of which already are being used by other patients.

In New York, the U.S. epicenter of the outbreak, one city hospital has already logged 13 coronavirus deaths in a single day and officials are setting up hundreds of hospital beds in a sprawling convention center as cases climbed past 30,000 in the city.

In preparation, health officials across the country are reviewing guidelines from sources including state governments and medical groups on how to ration limited resources in emergencies.

The general principle spanning those plans: Bring the most benefit to the greatest number of people and prioritize those with the best chance of recovery. But exactly how that's determined is fraught.

Automatically excluding certain groups from receiving ventilators, such as those with severe lung disease, invokes ethical issues, said Dr. Douglas White at the University of Pittsburgh. Many hospitals seeking guidance on COVID-19 in recent weeks have adopted a policy he devised without such exclusions, he said.

Guidelines previously developed by New York state's health department exclude some seriously ill people from receiving limited ventilators in major emergencies, but note that making old age an automatic disqualifier would be discriminatory. The plans go on to add, however, that given the "strong societal preference for saving children," age could be considered in a tie-breaker when a child's life is at stake.

Recommendations published this week by German medical associations in response to COVID-19 also say age alone shouldn't be a deciding factor. Among the situations where they said intensive care should not be provided if availability is in short supply: if the patient would need permanent intensive care to survive.

The crushing emotional burden of carrying out potentially life-and-death decisions is why the guidelines typically designate separate triage teams to make the call, rather than leaving it to the doctors and nurses providing bedside care.

"This is a really terrifying decision -- you don't want any doctor or nurse to be alone with this decision," said Nancy Berlinger of the Hastings Center, a bioethics research institute.

Having separate teams make decisions also is intended to ensure patients get a fair shot at care regardless of their race, social status or other personal factors.

Berlinger noted that underlying social inequities can still persist -- for example, poorer people tend to be sicker -- but that those are deeper injustices that can't be remedied in the throes of a pandemic.

Another grim calculation that experts say hospitals could make is how long a patient might need a hospital bed or ventilator and how many more lives the machine might otherwise save. That would help forestall

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, March 31, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 262 ~ 71 of 73

an even more wrenching decision many doctors in the U.S. likely have never faced -- whether to take a patient off a machine to free it up for others.

The norms don't apply in the current crisis and taking precious resources away from one patient to save others in a pandemic "is not an act of killing and does not require the patient's consent," said a paper addressing the COVID-19 emergency published last week in the New England Journal of Medicine.

The authors noted that patients and their families should not be shielded from the realities and should be warned in advance of the possibility their loved one could be taken off a machine.

Hospitals should also prepare alternatives for those who don't make it to the top of the list for limited resources, such as stocking up on morphine, said Philip Rosoff of Duke University's Trent Center for bioethics.

It's not yet known how dire the crisis in the U.S. will get. Last week, Dr. Deborah Birx, the White House coordinator for the coronavirus response, sought to calm fears, noting there's no evidence yet that a hospital bed or ventilator won't be available for Americans when they need it. Even in New York, she said, beds are still available in intensive care units and a significant number of ventilators aren't being used.

But what's happening overseas has health care workers around the world preparing for worst-case scenarios.

In France and Spain, hospital and nursing officials say nursing home residents who come down with symptoms of coronavirus are not necessarily admitted to intensive care.

In hard-hit regions, "they are hospitalized only when there is a chance to save them," said Marc Bourquin of the French Hospital Federation.

Jesús Cubero, general secretary of AESTE, an association of nursing homes, said some residents end up dying after being unable to get into full hospitals.

In northern Italy, Dr. Luca Lorini at the Pope John XXIII hospital in hard-hit Bergamo, compared how patients are being triaged to people waiting for an organ transplant.

"One heart and 10 people who are waiting for a heart transplant. Who gets the heart? The one who has the greatest chance of living better and longer with that heart," he said.

In the U.S., the rapidly multiplying cases is creating fear that hospitals could soon be overwhelmed.

"The fact that we're in a situation that one day we may not have enough ventilators is terrible and unacceptable," said Zachary Shemtob, whose husband has been sedated and on one of the machines at NYU Langone hospital since testing positive for the virus.

Curren, the Virginia man whose father died of COVID-19 last week, said he wouldn't fault health-care workers for any of the agonizing decisions they may have to make in coming weeks -- and trusts that they have the training to do so.

"These people are doing a fantastic job under war-time conditions," he said.

Hinnant reported from Paris and Winfield reported from Rome. Trisha Thomas in Rome, Aritz Parra in Madrid, Jim Mustian in New York and Adriana Gomez Licon in Miami contributed.

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Today in History By The Associated Press undefined

Today in History

Today is Tuesday, March 31, the 91st day of 2020. There are 275 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On March 31, 1968, at the conclusion of a nationally broadcast address on Vietnam, President Lyndon B. Johnson stunned listeners by declaring, "I shall not seek, and I will not accept, the nomination of my party for another term as your President."

On this date:

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, March 31, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 262 ~ 72 of 73

In 1811, German scientist Robert Bunsen, who helped develop the Bunsen burner, was born.

In 1880, Wabash, Ind., became the first town in the world to be illuminated by electrical lighting.

In 1931, Notre Dame college football coach Knute Rockne (noot RAHK'-nee), 43, was killed in the crash of a TWA plane in Bazaar, Kan.

In 1933, President Franklin D. Roosevelt signed the Emergency Conservation Work Act, which created the Civilian Conservation Corps.

In 1943, "Oklahoma!" the first musical play by Richard Rodgers and Oscar Hammerstein II, opened on Broadway.

In 1975, "Gunsmoke" closed out 20 seasons on CBS with its final first-run episode, "The Sharecroppers."

In 1976, the New Jersey Supreme Court ruled that Karen Ann Quinlan, a young woman in a persistent vegetative state, could be disconnected from her respirator. (Quinlan, who remained unconscious, died in 1985.)

In 1995, Mexican-American singer Selena Quintanilla-Perez, 23, was shot to death in Corpus Christi, Texas, by the founder of her fan club, Yolanda Saldivar, who was convicted of murder and sentenced to life in prison.

In 2004, four American civilian contractors were killed in Fallujah, Iraq; frenzied crowds dragged the burned, mutilated bodies and strung two of them from a bridge.

In 2005, Terri Schiavo (SHY'-voh), 41, died at a hospice in Pinellas Park, Florida, 13 days after her feeding tube was removed in a wrenching right-to-die court fight.

In 2009, Benjamin Netanyahu took office as Israel's new prime minister after the Knesset approved his government.

In 2014, an umpire's call was overturned for the first time under Major League Baseball's expanded replay system, with Milwaukee Brewers star Ryan Braun ruled out instead of safe in a game against the Atlanta Braves. (The Brewers won, 2-0.)

Ten years ago: President Barack Obama threw open a huge swath of East Coast waters and other protected areas in the Gulf of Mexico and Alaska to oil drilling. A Chechen militant claimed responsibility for deadly attacks on the Moscow subway two days earlier that claimed 40 lives; the claim came hours after two more suicide bombers struck in the southern Russian province of Dagestan, killing a dozen people.

Five years ago: Lawyers for Boston Marathon bomber Dzhokhar Tsarnaev (joh-HAHR' tsahr-NEYE'-ehv) rested their case in his federal death penalty trial, a day after they began presenting testimony designed to show his late older brother, Tamerlan, was the mastermind of the 2013 terror attack. Muhammadu Buhari (moo-HAH'-mah-doo boo-HAH'-ree), a former general who once rose to power in a military coup, won Nigeria's presidential election, defeating President Goodluck Jonathan.

One year ago: Rapper Nipsey Hussle was fatally shot outside the clothing store he had founded to help rebuild his troubled South Los Angeles neighborhood; he was 33. Former Vice President Joe Biden defended his interactions with women; saying he didn't believe he had ever acted inappropriately. Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro announced a 30-day plan to ration electricity, following nationwide power cuts that had inflicted misery on millions of people and ignited protests. Michigan State reached the NCAA Final Four by knocking out overall top seed Duke, 68-67, marking the end of Duke star Zion Williamson's college career; Auburn beat Kentucky 77-71 in overtime to win the Midwest Region finals and reach the Final Four for the first time in school history.

Today's Birthdays: Actor William Daniels is 93. Actor Richard Chamberlain is 86. Actress Shirley Jones is 86. Musician Herb Alpert is 85. Sen. Patrick Leahy, D-Vt., is 80. Former U.S. Rep. Barney Frank, D-Mass., is 80. Actor Christopher Walken is 77. Comedian Gabe Kaplan is 76. Sen. Angus King, I-Maine, is 76. Rock musician Mick Ralphs (Bad Company; Mott the Hoople) is 76. Former Vice President Al Gore is 73. Author David Eisenhower is 72. Actress Rhea Perlman is 72. Actor Robbie Coltrane is 70. Actor Ed Marinaro is 70. Rock musician Angus Young (AC/DC) is 65. Actor Marc McClure is 63. Actor William McNamara is 55. Alt-country musician Bob Crawford (The Avett (AY'-veht) Brothers) is 49. Actor Ewan (YOO'-en) McGregor is 49. Actress Erica Tazel is 45. Actress Judi Shekoni is 42. Rapper Tony Yayo is 42. Actress Kate Micucci

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, March 31, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 262 ~ 73 of 73

is 40. Actor Brian Tyree Henry (TV: "Atlanta" Stage: "Book of Mormon") is 38. Actress Melissa Ordway is 37. Jazz musician Christian Scott is 37. Pop musician Jack Antonoff (fun.) is 36. Actress Jessica Szohr is 35.

Thought for Today: "An optimist may see a light where there is none, but why must the pessimist always run to blow it out?" — Rene Descartes, French philosopher (born this date in 1596, died 1650).