

# Groton Daily Independent

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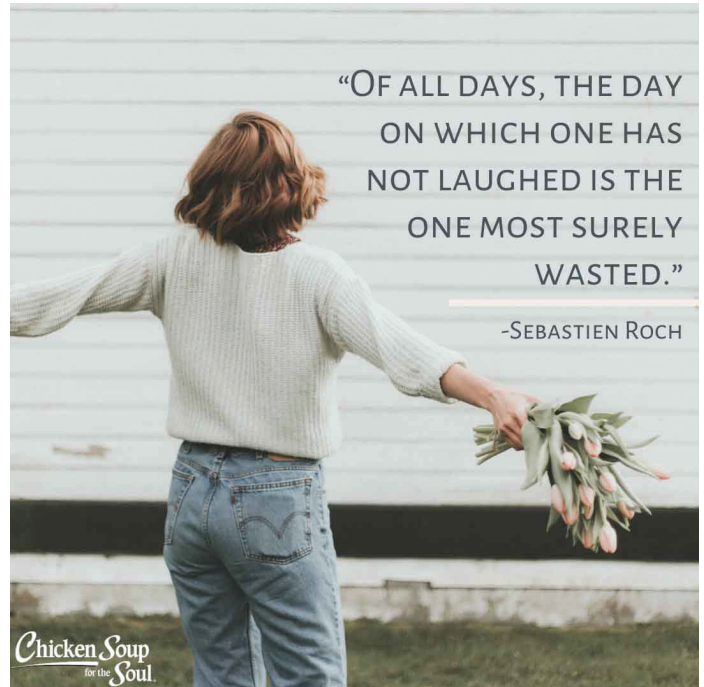
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## **OPEN:** Recycling Trailer in Groton

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

## **Program Now Offering Up To \$5,000 To Innovative Young People**

Most high school and college campuses are now closed. Most students are stuck at home, often filling the hours with TikTok and other social media outlets. But for young people between the ages of 16 and 25 who have a new idea or dream they're trying to pursue, there's now an opportunity to apply for a grant to make those ideas and dreams a reality.

The nonprofit Hunter Brooks Watson Memorial Fund offers competitive grants from \$500 to \$5,000 for those between the ages of 16 and 25. Its focus is on providing financial assistance to help passionate young men and women further their interests and innovative ideas in fields such as the performing arts, technology, music and entrepreneurship.

The Fund is now accepting applications for the next grant cycle. Applications can be submitted online between now and June 15, 2020. There is no application fee or any other cost for applicants for this grant program. Applicants need not be in high school or college, only to have demonstrated enthusiasm and passion in developing a new idea or business.

To date the Fund has helped more than 40 young people expand online businesses, finance music production facilities, attend international relations conferences, develop new social media apps, and undertake a variety of other innovative programs. The Fund provides direct grants to help finance these projects, and also offers mentoring support to help move the awarded projects forward.

The Memorial Fund was created in honor of Hunter Brooks Watson, a young man tragically killed as a passenger in a distracted driving accident just prior to entering his junior year at Syracuse University. Its funding focus is inspired by Hunter's talents and accomplishments in music, performing, starting a business, and computer technology.

Further information about the Memorial Fund, its programs, and the grant application itself, is available online at [www.hunterwatson.org](http://www.hunterwatson.org) The free application process must be completed by June 15, 2020.

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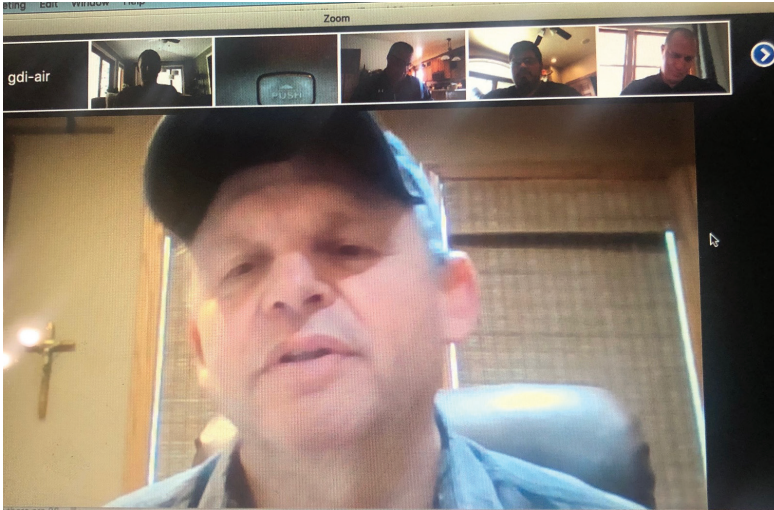
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**Snow, wind and cold came for a visit to the Groton Area on Thursday.** (Photos by Paul Kosel)





**President Steve Smith calls the Zoom meeting to order Thursday evening.** (Photo by Paul Kosel)

## School Board moves district election to June 2nd

The Groton Area School Board held a special meeting Thursday evening via a Zoom conference. Six members of the board were present. The reason for the special meeting was to set the date for the school board election. It was suppose to be held in April; however, due to the COVID-19 outbreak, the state legislature allowed districts to move their elections to June.

There are four precinct in the district - Andover, Bristol, Columbia and Groton.

Mike Weber, business manager, reported on some of the variations of the district. He reported that the Brown County auditor has agreed to run the election in conjunction with the state's primary and the City of Groton's Ward 2 election. Brown County would hire the election works. Brown County would run the election in the Groton and Columbia precincts. The Day County auditor said they would run the Bristol and Andover precincts; however, those voters would have to go to Webster to vote. Weber said that would not be in the best interests of the district, so Groton Area would need to hire the election workers and run the election at the Andover and Bristol precincts.

The Groton City Council will be meeting April 7th and they will vote on their election date. Weber anticipates they will also choose June 2nd as its election date.

Weber said he had secured masks for the election workers, but it was recommended by the CDC that election workers do not wear gloves; but rather, use hand sanitizer after each touch of a driver's license. Weber said he had already had one election worker back out if the election would have been held in April with concern of the COVID-19 outbreak.

## The Life of Jim Dittman



Jim Dittman, 70, of Highmore died March 30, 2020 at St Mary's Hospital in Pierre after one last slug fest with Multiple Sclerosis (MS). A private burial service was held at the Highmore Cemetery on April 1. A celebration will be held at a later date due to COVID-19 pandemic restrictions. If you would like to honor Jim in the meantime, go ahead and work 28 hours per day, eight days a week.

James Walter Dittman was born August 1, 1949 to Fred and Pearl (Bawdon) Dittman. His childhood rivaled a Huck Finn adventure: taking care of livestock on the family farm, spending more time outside than inside of his one-room country schoolhouse (After he had walked there. Uphill. Both ways. Probably in a blizzard.), learning life lessons the hard way, and pranking the local police. "Wildman" graduated from Highmore High School in 1967.

Legend has it, Jim's farming career began at the ripe old age of six when his dad grew tired of him constantly being underfoot, so he allowed Jim to drive his own tractor and haying equipment. His life-long love affair with/addiction to the cattle business began as a teen "with one calf and my dad's corn". Jim was well-respected for his keen eye for quality cattle and his livestock marketing ability. While Jim generally preferred dealing with animals over people, he

befriended a wide range of characters in the livestock industry over the years.

Throughout his entire life, Jim considered the phrase "you can't" as a personal challenge and took extreme pleasure in proving others wrong. This was never more evident than after he was diagnosed with MS at the age of 36. He refused to use his disease and disability as an excuse; instead he relied on grit and stubbornness to expand his business and continue to support his family. Even as his disease progressed, he continued to put in a full day's work.

The best decision Jim ever made was marrying his high school sweetheart, Shirley Kusser, on February 1, 1969. Shirley served as the dedicated mother to his children, farm labor, secretary, cook, and later Jim's sole caregiver despite his advanced disease. Together they raised three daughters. His preference would have been three boys but it turns out girls can be great farmhands too. Jim frequently reminded his girls how lucky they were to "get to" work with him all summer and he loved to take credit for their work ethic.

His grandchildren will remember their Papa for teaching them to "drive" his pickup with his assistance around the farm as preschoolers and then independently once they met his stringent requirement of reaching the gas pedal and seeing out the windshield at the same time. He partnered with them to secure dessert from Grandma; gave them the opportunity to operate farm equipment; and allowed them to do almost anything else they wanted.

Jim fought the war MS had waged against him every day for over 34 years. Knowing that Jim liked to have the last word and was a sore loser, we think he would point out the pain and suffering of MS died with him, so technically they ended in a tie.

Left to tell stories about the grumpy guy are his wife Shirley; daughters: Jackie (Steve) Peck of Prosper, TX, Deb (Collin) Gengerke of Groton, SD, and Bridget Dittman of Franklin, TN; grandchildren: Kendra, Devon, Jenna, and Grant Peck; Patrick, Trey, and Brooke Gengerke; and Brandon Bates; and numerous extended family members.

Jim's dad and father-in-law, Joe, greeted him and his pristine new body on the other side with some perfectly prepared beef and a huge serving of ice cream before they set out for the feedlot.

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## Covid-19 Update by Marie Miller

It appears this reduced rate of increase is settling into a trend; it would be nice to see it bend farther. Guessing we're nearing a peak in the places where stringent precautions were adopted early. Hoping we don't see a trend in a different direction in the places which continue stubbornly refuse to do that.

We're at 234,483 cases in 50 states, DC, and 4 territories, PR, GU, VI, and MP. This represents an 11% increase from yesterday. NY still leads with 92,381, followed by NJ - 25,590, CA - 9816, MI - 9334, LA - 9150, FL - 8010, MA - 7738, PA - 7016, IL - 6980, and WA - 5984. NY and NJ together still have about 50% of cases; these top 10 states still are around 78%. One other state, GA, is over 5000. There are 17 more with over 1000 cases, 9 more plus DC over 500, 13 more plus PR and GU over 100. Only VI and MP remain with fewer than 100 cases.

We have had 5708 deaths in 49 states, DC, and 3 territories (PR, GU, and MP). NY has had 2468, NJ 537, MI 337, and LA 310. 6 more states have lost over 100 people, 2 more + DC and PR have lost more than 10, and 10 + GU and MP have lost less than 10. Only WY and VI have had no deaths reported.

Now, let's talk cytokine storms. This is something we briefly discussed a week or so ago, and there's news on this front. You may recall that the immune response depends on white blood cells that do things like identify a pathogen as foreign, tag it, and destroy it, as well as clean-up guys. These cells secrete chemicals called cytokines (from Greek for cell motion, an apt name) which coordinate all of this activity and recruit more cells to the scene as reinforcements. What generally happens is that this response scales to the size of the threat and then, once all of the invaders are destroyed, goes into a sort of clean-up phase and a diminution of the response since there is no longer any stimulus for it. So everyone goes home again, but with memory of the response so you don't get caught by surprise by this particular pathogen again.

But in some people in some situations—for reasons no one really understands—the response fails to regulate at some point along the way so that cells secrete ridiculous quantities of cytokines which call in huge numbers of cells which secrete even more cytokines which call in ever more cells, etc., snowballing into something that damages multiple organs, including the lungs, and leading to acute respiratory distress syndrome (ARDS) which can be rapidly fatal. This is the cytokine storm, and it sometimes happens in other circumstances—for example in malfunctions of the immune system called autoimmune diseases and in response to some medications. The results are always very serious, frequently fatal if untreated.

The clinical signs of a cytokine storm include rapid heart rate, fever, and a drop in blood pressure. The earlier it's caught, the better the outcome; so it is helpful that there's an easy, fast test available to indicate this is what we have. Ferritin is a protein which stores iron in cells and, in small amounts, carries it in the blood. Normal blood levels are very low; elevated levels occur in a cytokine storm. And once we recognize a cytokine storm, we can treat it. Trick is that we don't have that much information about specific treatments that will be useful in Covid-19 patients. There are candidates, however.

A drug used for rheumatoid arthritis called tocilizumab (which inhibits one particular cytokine, interleukin-6, or IL-6, a major player in storms) has shown some benefit, enough that China's health authority has approved it for treating serious cases and authorized clinical trials. The FDA has now approved a large test in hundreds of patients in the US. This should fairly quickly provide data to allow evaluation of the drug as a treatment; it should be noted that, while it has shown good results in some patients, it hasn't done a thing for others. This probably means there won't be a single silver bullet here, but rather a menu of possibilities from which a physician can choose. Another drug in clinical trials is an IL-1 (another big player) inhibitor called anakinra. We've been hearing a great deal about hydroxychloroquine as well; it also acts to

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tamp down the immune response. And there are always corticosteroids; but they're a fairly blunt weapon in that they suppress the entire immune response rather than delicately targeting just one or the other element of the response. Of course, the risk there would be that now the patient doesn't have much with which to fight the virus—or another infection. Not our first choice if we have options.

I also wanted to say something about the issue of health care providers and personal protective equipment (that PPE you're always hearing about). I continue to find it shocking that we cannot manage to protect these folks with adequate equipment, given—I feel like a broken record here—we had several weeks' head start on this virus. And I continue to see discussions online between people who are determined to wear a medical mask for every trip to the grocery store, even though we've repeatedly been asked NOT to buy these things up, but to leave them for the folks who need them. I had a conversation with a hospital worker yesterday who told me they had to remove the stash of PPE they used to keep ready for use in each patient's room of their hospital AND search bags as visitors leave because they were stealing these items from the rooms. Seriously???

I know, I know: You NEED THEM TOO. Right? You don't want to get this infection at the grocery store and die. You MUST HAVE a mask to protect yourself.

To which I reply: Sit down and shut up. You're going to have nothing like the exposure a health care worker has. And we know for certain that viral dose affects the severity of the illness. The more virus you're exposed to, the more likely you are to get sick and the sicker you're likely to get. Also, if you get sick and can't do anything for a few weeks, that's going to stink and make you unhappy; but if a doctor or nurse or respiratory therapist gets sick and can't work, that's one less patient like you who can receive care so you don't get anything worse than unhappy. Remember in all this talk of how many ventilators are needed in New York or wherever, that all the ventilators in the world are no use if there's no staff to monitor and care for vent patients. That's very intensive care and you can't just assign a double patient load to Bob because Mabel called in sick today: Bob can't manage that many, no matter how good he is. Also, consider that, while you're binging on Netflix and whining about a missed dinner party, these folks are going to work in a cesspool of viruses and then coming home, hoping like hell they're not bringing something terrible home to their families. Think about that, and stop with the masks already. If you have a stash, get them to a hospital where they save lives and stuff. They need them way worse than you do. And they know how to wear them: Those N95 masks everyone wants? If not fitted properly, they're very little use. And my guess is you don't know how to fit one so it's wasted on you anyhow

For the record, I've heard the talk that the CDC may soon recommend wearing a cloth mask when you go out so that, if you have an asymptomatic infection, you are less likely to spread the virus to others. The masks they're talking about there are NOT medical masks; they're nonmedical, even homemade, cloth masks that may reduce the possibility of spreading your infection to others. If we were swimming in excess N95s, I'd be all over everyone getting some and learning to wear them properly. Honestly, I'd like a few myself. But we're not, so I don't have any. If I did, I'd get them to a hospital near me.

And now, here's a cool story that might amount to something—we're trying to find that out right now. There's an antiviral oral spray that's been on the market for several years as an over-the-counter item which is about to enter a clinical trial on health care workers to see whether it prevents Covid-19 infection. It's called Halo, and since it had not yet undergone trials, was not sold as a preventive for viral infection, but as an "oral antiseptic" that "protects against airborne germs," mushy language that won't get the manufacturer into trouble with the FDA for making spurious medical claims. The company that makes this is small and could not afford the kind of research necessary to demonstrate efficacy so that the FDA would permit it to be sold as a preventive, but there was a small study a few years ago that looked very



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promising. Until now, they've been unable to interest a larger entity to take it up as a possibility and invest in the clinical trials required. Now, of course, that calculus has changed.

The company has suspended sales of the product out of an ethical concern that people will buy it believing it will protect them from infection when that hasn't been proven. And University Hospitals in Ohio and Case Western Reserve School of Medicine, with funding from a large community charitable organization, are about to begin that trial, saying "We have every reason to believe it will be effective." The spray contains "a common antiviral agent, cetylpyridinium chloride, or CPC, and combines it with an agent that coats the back of the oral cavity and stays in place for at least six hours." It is believed to create a barrier at the back of the mouth that traps and kills viruses. Early trials indicated it decreases the likelihood of respiratory viral infections and reduces the severity and duration of infections that occur. The company is seeking emergency-use authorization from the FDA so it can be made available to health care workers while the trial is underway. If this stuff works, it would be a real David-slays-Goliath kind of story. I'll keep an eye on this one.

And with that, I'm done for the night. If we are, indeed, getting this thing to turn in the right direction, this would be a tragic time to decide to go crazy and have a party--or even a few friends over. I get it, but we need to hunker down a while longer. If the powers that be ever resolve the myriad testing problems we've had so we can sort out who's infected and who's immune after recovery and such, we'll be in a position to gradually and carefully move toward something all of us will recognize as a normal-ish life.

While we wait for that all to happen, it would be lovely if you will seek out a person who is in need of something you can provide and then provide that. Remember, one kind act per day from each of 327 million people adds up to a different sort of society than the one we had going into the crisis. Be nice if all this pain and loss left us with something better than our pre-pandemic ugliness. Up to us to make that happen. Not later, now.

Stay healthy.

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## 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	Mar. 31	Apr. 1	Apr. 2
Minnesota	503	576	629	689	742
Nebraska	120	153	177	214	255
Montana	161	177	198	217	241
Colorado	2,307	2,627	2,966	3,342	3,728
Wyoming	87	95	120	137	150
North Dakota	98	109	126	147	159
South Dakota	90	101	108	129	165
United States	143,055	164,610	189,633	216,722	245,573
US Deaths	2,513	3,170	4,081	5,137	6,058

Minnesota	+62	+73	+53	+60	+53
Nebraska	+12	+33	+24	+37	+41
Montana	+14	+16	+20	+19	+25
Colorado	+246	+320	+339	+376	+386
Wyoming	+3	+8	+25	+17	+13
North Dakota	+4	+11	+17	+21	+12
South Dakota	+22	+11	+7	+21	+36
United States	+18,369	+21,555	+25,023	+27,089	+28,851
US Deaths	+322	+657	+911	+1,056	+921

**Governor Noem's News  
Conference  
Today at 1 p.m.  
Go to  
SD.NET**



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## COVID-19 Update

Roberts and Spink counties were added to the Minimal/Moderate Community Spread category on Thursday while Lawrence and Lincoln counties were added to the Substantial Community Spread category.

South Dakota has gained 36 new positive tests, bringing the total to 165. There were five new hospitalized people, bringing that total to 17. Six more have fully recovered with 57 now being fully recovered. There were no new deaths so the state total remains at two. There were 314 negative tests on Thursday.

Brown, Union and Yankton counties each had two positive cases; Codington, Davison, Hughes, Lake, Pennington, Spink and Turner counties each had one positive case; Lawrence County had three, Lincoln County six and Minnehaha County had 14. No new counties were added to the list.

The virus can live up to three days on hard surfaces like metal and plastic. Much less on paper and cardboard. Main transmittal is droplets from infected individuals.

State is keeping up with PPE requests.

County	# of Cases	# Recovered
Aurora	1	1
Beadle	21	13
Bon Homme	1	1
Brookings	2	2
Brown	6	2
Charles Mix	1	1
Clark	1	1
Clay	3	2
Codington	6	2
Davison	3	2
Deuel	1	0
Fall River	1	1
Faulk	1	1
Hamlin	1	0
Hughes	3	2
Hutchinson	2	2
Lake	1	0
Lawrence	9	3
Lincoln	17	1
Lyman	1	1
Marshall	1	1
McCook	2	1
Meade	1	1
Minnehaha	54	12
Pennington	6	1
Roberts	2	0
Spink	1	0
Todd	1	0
Turner	2	0
Union	3	1
Yankton	10	2

SOUTH DAKOTA CASE COUNTS	
Test Results	# of Cases
Positive*	165
Negative**	4217
Pending***	0

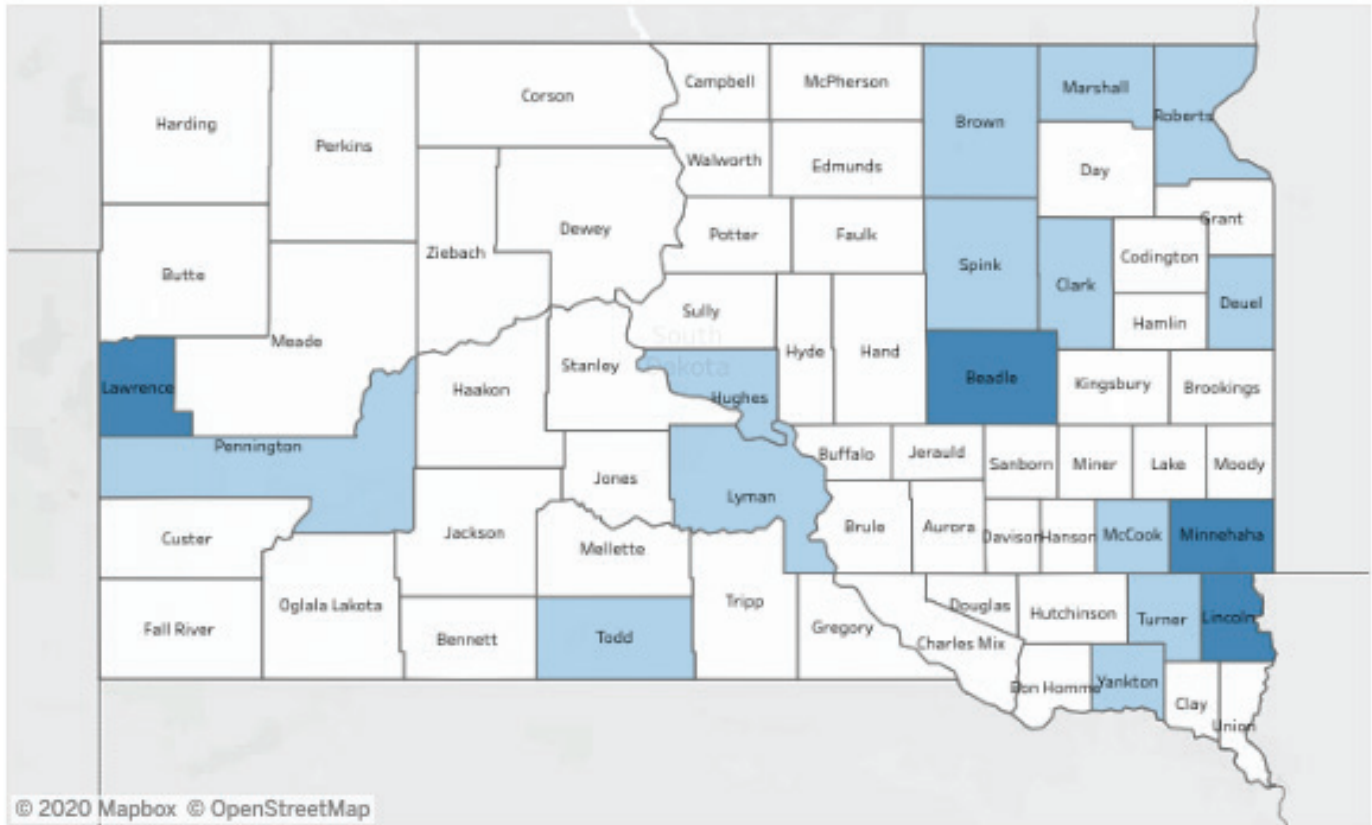
COVID-19 IN SOUTH DAKOTA	
Number of Cases	165
Hospitalized*	17
Deaths	2
Recovered	57

Age Range	# of Cases
0 to 19 years	6
20 to 29 years	30
30 to 39 years	22
40 to 49 years	31
50 to 59 years	36
60 to 69 years	26
70 to 79 years	8
80+ years	6

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Level of Community Transmission or Impact of COVID-19 by County, South Dakota



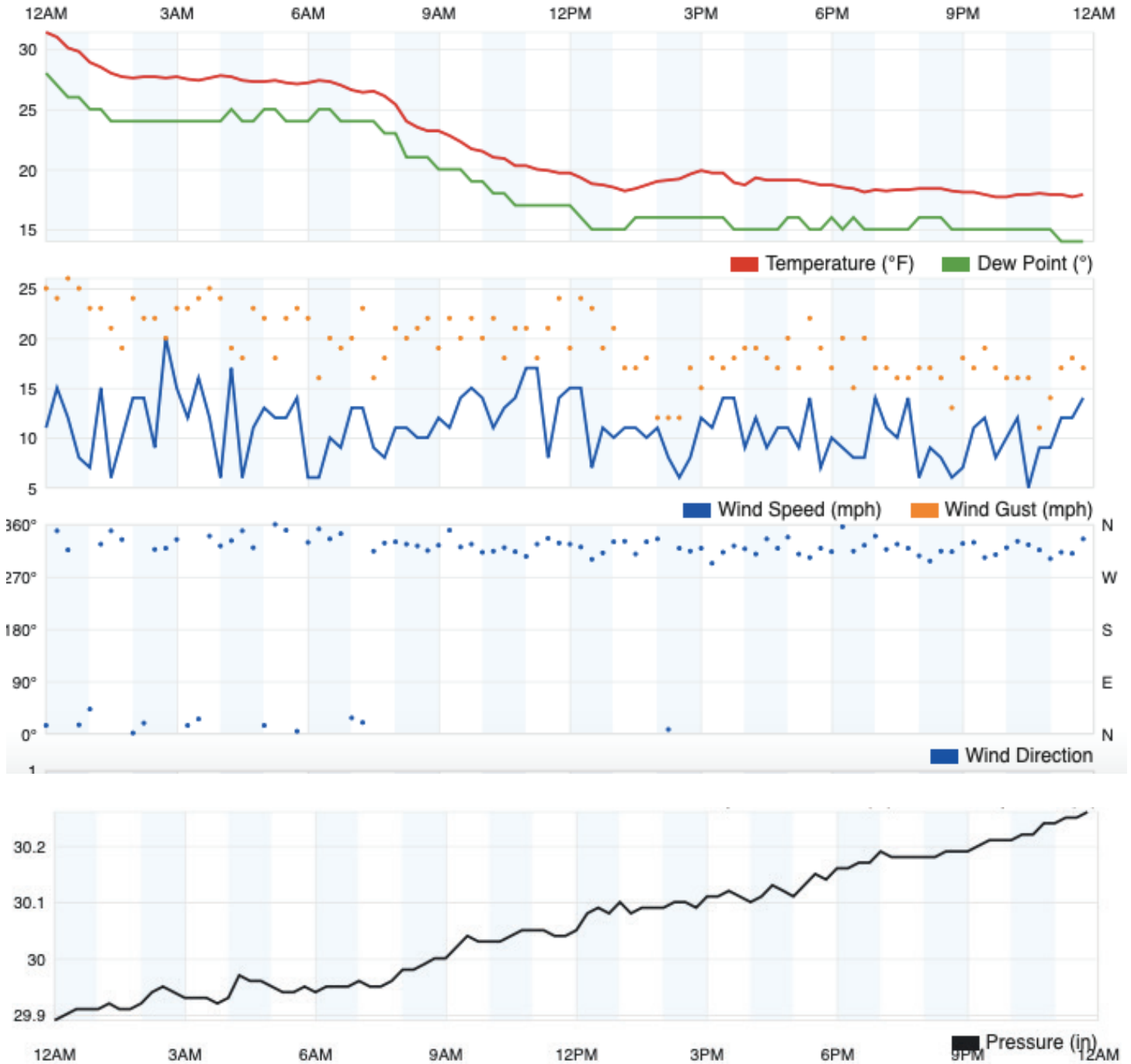
## Impact Level

- No Community Spread
- Minimal/Moderate Community Spread
- Substantial Community Spread

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## Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs








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Today	Tonight	Saturday	Saturday Night	Sunday
				
Slight Chance Snow then Sunny	Clear	Mostly Sunny	Mostly Clear	Partly Sunny
<b>High: 31 °F</b>	<b>Low: 11 °F</b>	<b>High: 43 °F</b>	<b>Low: 26 °F</b>	<b>High: 52 °F</b>

## 5 Day Outlook

*Warming Trend Ahead Apr 3-7*

Friday	Saturday	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday
				
Improving conditions through the day. Chilly tonight.	Southerly breezes usher in warmer air.	Increasing clouds, slight chance for rain later in the day.	Can't rule out a stray rain shower	Much above average temperatures
<b>HI: 26 to 36°</b> <b>LO: 8 to 18°</b>	<b>HI: 38 to 52°</b> <b>LO: 20 to 30°</b>	<b>HI: 46 to 62°</b> <b>LO: 32 to 40°</b>	<b>HI: 52 to 66°</b> <b>LO: 36 to 46°</b>	<b>HI: 58 to 70°</b> <b>LO: 32 to 42°</b>

Note: In most cases, south central South Dakota will be warmer than the rest of the forecast area (on the higher end of the high temperature ranges above)

NATIONAL WEATHER SERVICE  
OCEANIC AND ATMOSPHERIC ADMINISTRATION

www.weather.gov/abr Updated: 4/3/2020 6:13 AM Central

Take it slow out there on the roads this morning, as they may be slick from recent snow and mixed precipitation. Sunshine will overtake the region through the day as high pressure builds in. After a chilly night into Saturday morning, expect mild air to build more and more with each passing day.



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## Today in Weather History

April 3, 1968: Heavy snowfall, up to ten inches, was accompanied by winds of over 60 mph in parts of South Dakota. Snowdrifts of up to 4 feet were reported, and many roads were closed. Aberdeen was one of the hardest hit areas with 10.5 inches of snow and wind gusts of 62 mph. The strong winds and localized areas of icing caused considerable damage to utility lines.

April 3, 2003: Dry vegetation, along with windy conditions, caused a grassland burn northeast of Bath, near the James River in South Dakota, to get out of control during the early afternoon hours. Strong north to northeast winds of 20 to 35 mph caused the fire to spread quickly south along the James River. The fire became one and a half miles wide and burned six miles to the south before it was brought under control. A total of 4,000 acres were consumed. The smoke from the fire could be seen from miles around and lowered visibilities enough to close State Highway 12 two different times. At one point, traffic had to be diverted on Highway 12 for six hours due to the low visibility in smoke. Also, the Burlington Northern/Santa Fe Railroad was delayed in Bristol and Andover on April 3rd because of the smoke. Twenty-one fire departments with around 250 people worked to bring the fire under control.

April 3, 2007: A sharp frontal boundary along with an upper-level disturbance brought an unusual band of heavy snow across northern South Dakota. Snowfall amounts of 6 to 12 inches occurred from Eureka to Summit. Roads became snow covered or slushy making travel difficult. Due to the poor road conditions, several vehicles ended up in the ditch. Several schools and events were either postponed or canceled. Snowfall amounts included, 6 inches at Eureka and Milbank, 7 inches at Conde, 8 inches at Hosmer, Columbia, Summit, and Britton, 10 inches at Webster, and 12 inches at Waubay.

April 3, 2009: An area of low pressure moved across the Central Plains producing widespread snow over central and north central South Dakota. Along with the snow came strong north winds of 15 to 30 mph causing areas of blowing snow and reduced visibilities. The snow and reduced visibility caused some travel problems. Snowfall amounts ranged from a few inches to almost a foot of snow. Some of the snowfall amounts included; 6 inches near Presho and Okaton, Fort Thompson, and Timber Lake; 7 inches in Murdo and 16 S Ree Heights; 8 inches 14 NNE Isabel and 11 inches 3 NW Parade and 6 E Hayes.

1898: An avalanche near Chilkoot Pass, Alaska in the Yukon during the Gold Rush buried 142 people and killed 43 others. Click [HERE](#) for more information from the Library and Archives of Canada.

1964: KAUZ in Wichita Falls, Texas broadcast the first live television pictures of an F5 tornado moving through the city. Seven people were killed, 111 injured and 225 homes were destroyed during the twisters 5 to a 6-mile path. Extensive damage was done at Sheppard Air Force Base where three tanker planes, a hanger, the power plant, and the chapel were all destroyed. Damage estimates exceeded \$15 million.

1974: A "Super-Outbreak" of tornadoes ravaged the Midwest and the eastern U.S. Severe weather erupted early in the afternoon and continued through the next day. Severe thunderstorms spawned 148 tornadoes from Alabama to Michigan, most of which occurred between 1 PM (CST) on the 3rd and 1 AM on the 4th. The tornadoes killed 315 persons, injured 5300 others, and caused 600 million dollars damage. Alabama, Kentucky, and Ohio were especially hard hit in the tornado outbreak. One tornado destroyed half of the town of Xenia, Ohio killing 34 persons. Another tornado, near the city of Stamping Ground, Kentucky produced a path of destruction a record five miles in width. A tornado raced through Guin, Alabama at a speed of 75 mph. Two powerful tornadoes roared across northern Alabama during the early evening hours, killing fifty persons and injuring 500 others. Some rescue vehicles responding to the first tornado were struck by the second.

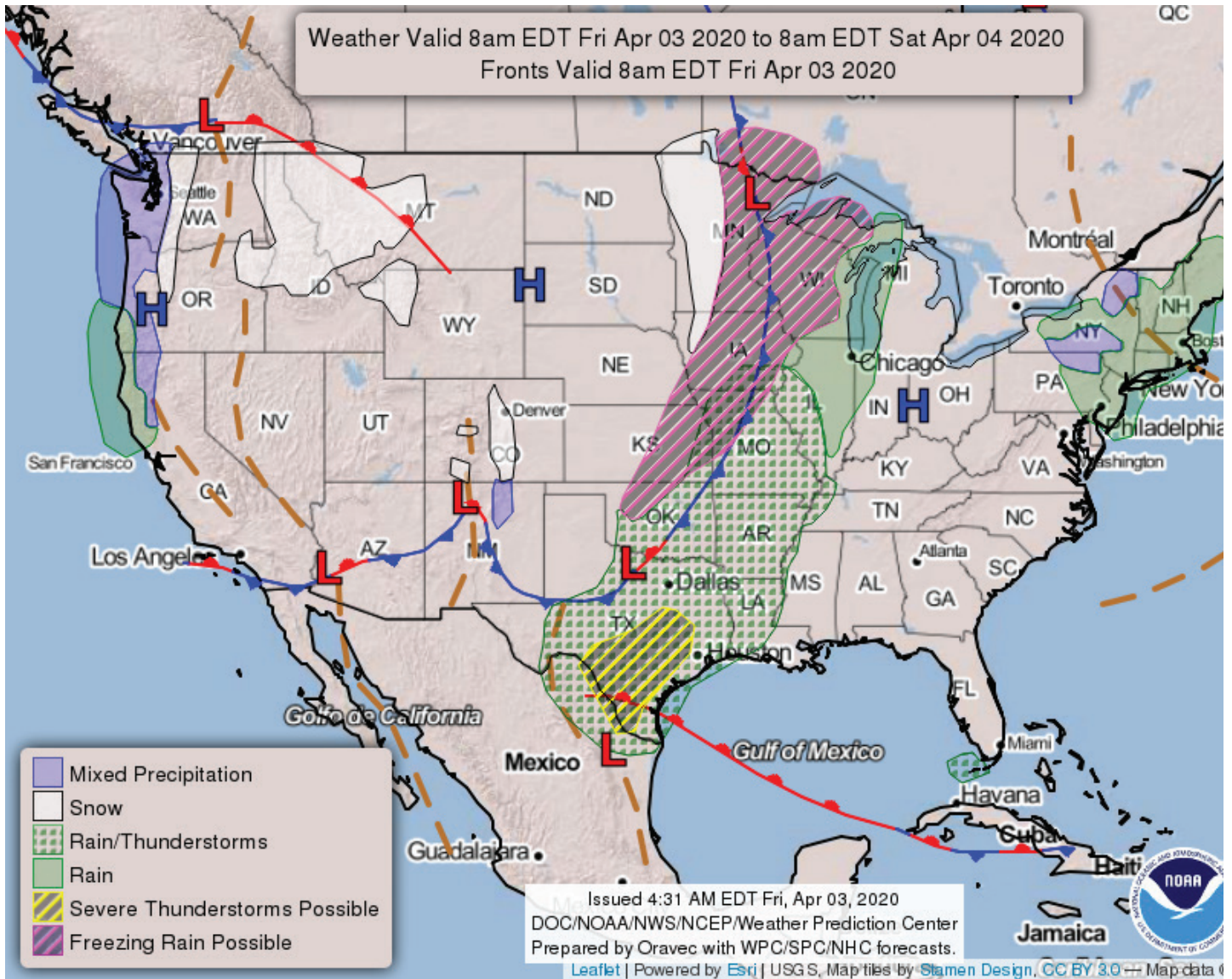
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## Yesterday's Groton Weather Today's Info

**High Temp: 31 °F at 12:00 AM**  
**Low Temp: 18 °F at 9:41 PM**  
**Wind: 26 mph at 12:29 AM**  
**Snow: 4"**

**Record High: 83° in 1921**  
**Record Low: -2° in 1918, 1975**  
**Average High: 50°F**  
**Average Low: 27°F**  
**Average Precip in April.: 0.09**  
**Precip to date in April.: 0.00**  
**Average Precip to date: 2.27**  
**Precip Year to Date: 0.35**  
**Sunset Tonight: 8:05 p.m.**  
**Sunrise Tomorrow: 7:07 a.m.**



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## QUIET PLEASE

The young boys in a Paris school felt that they had learned enough for one week and decided that they would go to the park that Friday afternoon. One of them picked up a pebble and began to tap it on a bench as he sat gazing across a bed of flowers. Intrigued, a boy at the other end of the bench knelt down and put his ear to the board and was able to hear the tapping.

Smiling, he said to his friend, "I heard two gentle taps, a pause and then several loud taps." A doctor sat watching them with great interest. Suddenly he stood up with a distant look in his eyes as though he was trying to imagine something he had not seen before. At that moment an idea was born in his mind. Whenever he wanted to hear the sounds going on in a person's body, he would place his ear above the organs he was trying to hear. Eventually, he wondered if it were possible to hear the sounds of a patient's organs more clearly if he placed a hollow tube on the person's body. From that idea, the stethoscope was born.

You and I are "God's stethoscopes." He has given us ears to hear the cries of those around us who are suffering and crying out for His hope, help, and healing. It is sad, however, that our ears are often "stuffed" with the noises of this world that we cannot hear their cries and help them find the solution to their problems through the love of God!

Prayer: Lord, all around us are those who need someone to hear their cries, wipe away their tears, and share Your love. Help us to see, hear and help those in need. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: Psalm 34:15 The eyes of the Lord watch over those who do right; his ears are open to their cries for help.



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## 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)



## News from the Associated Press

### Lawmakers to probe if Senate leader was drunk during meeting

By **STEPHEN GROVES** Associated Press

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — South Dakota legislators decided Thursday to investigate allegations that Senate Majority Leader Kris Langer was drunk during a meeting earlier this week that involved legislation related to the coronavirus outbreak.

Both Langer, a Dell Rapids Republican, and Senate Pro Tempore Brock Greenfield, a Clark Republican, will be under investigation for their conduct during a marathon session that stretched from Monday night into the early hours of Tuesday morning.

Langer and Greenfield oversaw the Senate proceedings from a conference room in the Capitol as lawmakers convened through teleconference to decide on a series of emergency bills for the coronavirus outbreak. As the Senate prepared to adjourn Tuesday morning, Sen. Phil Jensen, a Rapid City Republican, said he had heard Langer was intoxicated and had interrupted meetings in the House and Senate. He then attempted to move to create a disciplinary committee.

Jensen declined to tell The Associated Press who had told him about Langer's behavior, but said he noticed on a video broadcast of the meeting room that both Langer and Greenfield's speech was slurred. He did not make an accusation regarding Greenfield on Tuesday morning.

Greenfield told his colleagues on the phone that he had not seen Langer drinking. The Senate decided that Jensen could not move to immediately establish the committee due to a technicality, but Senators suggested he could bring it up to the Executive Board, a committee of senior legislators from the House and Senate that decides on legislative proceedings.

Langer and Greenfield did not immediately respond to attempts to reach them for comment.

The Executive Board, which convened by teleconference on Thursday, met for about half-an-hour in a private meeting, saying they could do so because the issue was a personnel matter. Greenfield, who is the chair of the committee, recused himself from proceedings. Lawmakers then decided to create a committee of nine Senators to investigate the conduct of Langer and Greenfield.

It is against the Legislature's rules to drink or store alcohol in the Capitol.

Sen. Jim Bolin, a Canton Republican, initiated the measure, saying he wanted to "deal with this as quickly as we can" so they could come to a conclusion on what happened during the meeting earlier this week.

The committee will have five Republicans and four Democrats. They have until June 30 to report their findings.

### Two South Dakota weeklies fold under virus downturn

DeSMET, S.D. (AP) — Two longtime South Dakota weekly newspapers have folded under pressure from the economic downturn caused by the coronavirus pandemic.

The Lake Preston Times and The DeSmet News both printed their final editions Wednesday after over 100 years of continuous publication.

Publisher Dale Biegen, who publishes both papers, wrote in a front-page editorial that the newspaper never fully recovered from the Great Recession and the negative effects of the internet and social media, and that the COVID-19 outbreak "pushed us over the edge."

KELO-AM reports the South Dakota Newspaper Association tweeted "Journalism will persevere these difficult times. Still, there will be newspaper casualties along the way."

According to the SDNA's 2018 newspaper directory, the Lake Preston Times had a circulation of 691 and The DeSmet News had a circulation of 1,046.

## With US border work on track, rural towns fear virus spread

By **MATTHEW BROWN, STEPHEN GROVES and CEDAR ATTANASIO** Associated Press

BILLINGS, Mont. (AP) — Major construction projects moving forward along the U.S. borders with Canada and Mexico are raising fears the coronavirus could race through temporary work camps and spread to rural communities unable to handle an outbreak.

Despite a clampdown on people's movements in much of the country, groups of workers travel every day from camps in New Mexico to build President Donald Trump's border wall.

Along the northern border, a Canadian company says it will start work this month on the disputed Keystone XL oil pipeline, another Trump-supported project that could bring thousands of workers to rural communities in Montana, South Dakota and Nebraska.

Residents, tribal leaders and state officials have warned that the influx of outsiders could make problems worse in rural areas with little or no medical infrastructure capable of dealing with a surge of infections. The border wall and pipeline are exempt from stay-at-home restrictions intended to reduce the virus's spread.

Faith Spotted Eagle, an environmental activist and member of the Yankton Sioux Tribe in South Dakota, said she's reminded of her grandmother's stories about the tribe's struggles to survive smallpox and the Spanish flu.

"It's the 1800s again, the cavalry is coming in and they're going to set up their fort, whether it's justified or not," she said.

In most people, the coronavirus causes mild or moderate symptoms that clear up within a few weeks. For some, especially older adults and people with health problems, it can cause severe illness and even death.

Cities have borne the brunt of the virus so far in the U.S., but rural areas are expected to be hit, too.

That's a fear in tiny Columbus, New Mexico, where residents worry about border wall workers who often gather outside the town's few restaurants despite an order to stay home and keep away from others.

In the town of less than 1,500 people, about 30 construction workers are living in tightly packed trailers, residents say. Others are staying at two small hotels while they put up bollard-style fencing along the scrub desert — a small piece of about 200 miles (320 kilometers) of barrier being built at the U.S.-Mexico border.

"My bottom line is nothing is worth thousands or hundreds or tens of people getting COVID," said July McClure, who manages a local RV park and volunteers with the fire department.

About 100 miles (160 kilometers) west, Diana Hadley said construction has been "going on like mad" along the border in Arizona. Hadley, whose family owns a nearby cattle ranch, says workers carpooling and staying together in hotels makes it more likely the virus will spread.

"It would be safer if they just shut down the work — safer for them and for everyone else," she said.

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, which oversees contractors working on the southern border, said it follows federal guidelines but declined to share specifics on how it's protecting public health during construction.

Just south of the Canadian border, workers began arriving last month in the small Montana town of Glasgow where they'll stay during the 1,200-mile (1,930-kilometer) pipeline project. Keystone would carry up to 830,000 barrels (35 million gallons) of crude daily to a Nebraska terminal for refining or export through the Gulf of Mexico.

First proposed in 2008, the pipeline was rejected twice under President Barack Obama and revived by Trump. Alberta's government said it's investing more than \$1 billion to get work going quickly.

Calgary-based TC Energy, the project's sponsor, negotiated with health officials in Montana on a plan to minimize risks, including checking everyone entering work sites for fever and ensuring workers practice social distancing.

"Is it a perfect system? No. It's the best we can do to protect the county and our workers from them and them from us," said Anne Millard, health officer for Valley County, where the workers are staying.

The company had planned to build 11 camps housing up to 1,000 workers each along the pipeline's route — six in Montana, four in South Dakota and one in Nebraska. Those plans are now under review, and Millard and other officials say they don't expect camps to be built until after the immediate threat of

the virus has passed.

"We're very cognizant of what's going on," TC Energy spokesman Terry Cunha said. "We're talking about thousands of jobs. ... We want to make sure what they do will ensure the safety of everybody."

The company says the \$8 billion project would create more than 10,000 construction jobs, with about 100 workers initially at the border crossing.

Several tribes whose land is skirted by the proposed pipeline route in South Dakota and Montana have enacted stricter coronavirus measures than the states. Tribal members worry what a widespread outbreak would do to people already at risk because many have diabetes and high blood pressure.

Spotted Eagle said she did not believe quarantining workers and regular screenings would be enough to keep communities safe. Many health clinics have just a few beds and even fewer ventilators.

Floyd Azure, chairman of the Assiniboine and Sioux tribes on Montana's Fort Peck Reservation, said the virus has so far spared the reservation.

He has no authority to stop work on the pipeline, which would run just outside the reservation's boundaries. Azure worries construction workers will bring a repeat of the problems that accompanied an oil boom in the region last decade — from drugs to sex trafficking — now exacerbated by the virus.

"We're worried sick about it. We have enough problems on this reservation without someone creating more for us," he said.

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Groves reported from Sioux Falls, South Dakota, and Attanasio reported from El Paso, Texas. Follow Brown at <https://twitter.com/matthewbrownap>, Groves at <https://twitter.com/stephengroves> and Attanasio at <https://twitter.com/viaCedar>.

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## South Dakota Gov. tasks National Guard to expand hospitals

By **STEPHEN GROVES** Associated Press

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — Gov. Kristi Noem on Thursday said she was activating the National Guard to set up temporary hospitals in Sioux Falls and Rapid City.

The temporary hospitals will add 100 beds in each of the state’s largest cities as hospitals prepare for a



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surge of COVID-19 patients. They will be used to separate people with the coronavirus from other people at the hospital, said Secretary of Health Kim Malsam-Rysdon. The National Guard is looking at sites where they could set up the hospitals, which would take several weeks to set up, according to Malsam-Rysdon. She did not give an estimated date for when they could be running.

The Republican governor said that utilizing the National Guard was part of her effort to prepare for months of increasing infections, which she doesn't expect to peak until the end of June at the earliest.

Noem said she hopes that social distancing efforts blunts the onset of COVID-19 patients, allowing the state's hospital system to work through manageable waves of infections rather than be swamped with a tsunami of people needing life-saving care. But the governor has resisted mandating business closures or issuing stay-at-home orders, a move she argues is necessary to sustain some semblance of life and economic activity over the months.

South Dakota health officials continued to report rising numbers of infections Thursday, announcing that 36 more people have confirmed infections. The state has total 165 confirmed cases. Two people who have tested positive for COVID-19 have died; while 57 people have recovered.

For most people, the new 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.

"Hang in there everybody, we will get through this together," Noem said.

The governor called newly released unemployment figures "alarming." 6,645 people made new claims for unemployment benefits last week in the state, but Noem said she hoped that allowing businesses to stay open would reduce layoffs.

Labor and Regulation Secretary Marcia Hultman said people have had to wait an hour-and-a-half to file unemployment claims with the state's call center. She encouraged people to file online to reduce that surge.

## Virus spreads through South Dakota family's close ties

By **STEPHEN GROVES** Associated Press

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — After South Dakota lawmaker Bob Glanzer became one of the first people in the state to be sickened by the coronavirus from an unknown source, his hometown of Huron acted quickly to try to blunt the infection rate, but officials couldn't stop the disease from spreading among his extended family.

Within days of the 74-year-old Glanzer announcing he has the coronavirus, his wife, brother-in-law, and sister-in-law also tested positive. Glanzer is in critical condition and his niece, 51-year-old Mari Hofer, has died of the virus, according to her husband Quint Hofer. Several other relatives have symptoms, said Tom Glanzer, the Republican lawmaker's son.

The coronavirus didn't spread through bus or subway systems in Huron as it has in major cities with dense populations. Instead, it ripped through a close-knit family. Infectious disease experts say this kind of spread is expected.

"The simple fact that our family loves each other is probably what caused this to spread," Tom Glanzer said.

Bob Glanzer's wife, Penny, received treatment for breast cancer in early March. As she recovered at home, family members dropped by with meals or to help around the house. Meanwhile, unbeknownst to any of them, Bob Glanzer had the virus.

Once he was hospitalized, the family isolated themselves. But by then it was too late and family members started to display symptoms.

South Dakota health officials reported on Thursday that 36 more people have tested positive for COVID-19, bringing the the state's total to 165. Two have 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.

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Gov. Kristi Noem on Wednesday said the state's sparse population would slow the spread of the virus, factoring into her plans to not issue stay-at-home orders and instead to rely on voluntary compliance with recommendations to halt group gatherings.

But Caterina Scoglio, a professor at Kansas State University who studies how viruses spread through rural communities, said small towns can have unique vulnerabilities that cities don't have.

"In rural areas, there are normally fewer contacts with people but those contacts are based on strong ties," she said.

That's why health care workers in South Dakota are emphasizing that family members should help each other by staying apart.

It's counterintuitive for some people, said Misty Rudebusch, a physician's assistant who runs a clinic in the town of Howard.

"We have generations of families that make those communities," she said. "Everyone learns to rely on their neighbor."

But people are finding creative ways to communicate their support, even if they can't be near each other.

Tom Glanzer shared a video of a "prayer caravan" of dozens of minivans and trucks that drove past his mother's house to show support. He said his family has grown closer, even while they can only talk through video chats.

"With everything that happened, you'd think everything is falling apart, but we're all held together with that same bond of family and faith in God," he said.

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This story has been corrected to show that Glanzer's brother-in-law tested positive for COVID-19, not his brother.

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

## 'We love you NHS': UK health service gears up for virus peak

By DANICA KIRKA AND JO KEARNEY Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — Dr. Nishant Joshi is on the front line of the coronavirus pandemic — and he's angry.

The emergency medicine specialist says he risks his life every time he walks into a British hospital because doctors and nurses haven't been equipped with the personal protection equipment they need to prevent them from being infected with COVID-19.

But he's not just a doctor: he's a 31-year-old husband expecting his first child.

"Some of my colleagues have been taking out life insurance in the last few weeks," Joshi told The Associated Press. "The government has to take square responsibility for this, because you should never be putting your health care workers in a situation where we are scared for our lives."

Britain's National Health Service, the cornerstone of the nation's post-war welfare state, will be stretched to the breaking point in the coming weeks as hospitals treat an expected tsunami of critically ill patients when the pandemic reaches its peak across the United Kingdom.

Created in 1948, the NHS is a revered institution that promises free medical care to everyone in the U.K.

Yet with years of austerity cuts and rising demand already straining resources, the health service is facing the biggest test in its 72-year history. After delays that have been sharply criticized, the Conservative government is racing to ensure that hospitals and clinics across the country have the staffing and equipment they need to cope with the coronavirus onslaught.

Authorities have urged retired doctors and nurses to return to work — and some 20,000 have complied. Routine surgeries are being canceled so resources can be focused on COVID-19. The government is building several makeshift hospitals as it scrambles to find thousands of additional ventilators and build up stocks of masks, gloves and other protective equipment.

But Britain, like other countries around the world, is relying on one non-medical tactic to stretch NHS

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resources: emergency rules that require most people to stay indoors except to buy groceries, exercise or work in essential industries. Public health officials hope this social distancing will slow the rate of infections, delaying the flood of cases so the peak of the wave is lower and hits after the flu season. Some 750,000 volunteers have stepped forward to help bring food and medicine to people who cannot leave their homes.

Even so, the mood in Britain is somber.

"It's important for me to level with you — we know things will get worse before they get better," Prime Minister Boris Johnson said in a letter sent to 30 million households. "But we are making the right preparations, and the more we all follow the rules, the fewer lives will be lost and the sooner life can return to normal."

In the meantime, the British military has mobilized. Soldiers are delivering millions of face masks to hospitals and helping to build makeshift medical facilities, including one at London's massive ExCel convention center that can treat as many as 4,000 patients.

Ventilators are an especially pressing need because COVID-19 can cause severe damage to the lungs in the most serious cases. Industries in Britain are scrambling to build the lung machines.

NHS Professionals, which provides a pool of medical staff who can be deployed wherever there is a need, is working overtime to get skilled healthcare workers to the right places.

This includes registering retired doctors and nurses so they can return to work and helping them get training, said Juliette Cosgrove, the former chief nurse of the job bank, who is now herself working at a front-line hospital.

"We're asking people to step into situations which they've never stepped into before," she said.

The additional resources are helping the NHS plug gaps in a system that struggles to meet the demand every winter flu season.

In November, all of England's 118 major accident and emergency units failed to meet a government target that 95% of patients be seen within four hours and recorded its worst performance since the metric was introduced in 2004.

The NHS also missed its targets for starting treatment of cancer patients and for waiting times for non-emergency procedures.

The editor of a respected British medical journal has put the blame on the Conservative government, accusing it in a scathing editorial of doing too little, too late, to expand virus testing capacity, distribute protective gear and set up training programs for protecting NHS staff.

"Patients will die unnecessarily. NHS staff will die unnecessarily," Dr. Richard Horton wrote in a commentary on the The Lancet website. "It is, indeed, as one health worker wrote last week, 'a national scandal.' The gravity of that scandal has yet to be understood."

That has left doctors and nurses on the front lines shaken as they look at the devastation already taking place among medical workers in Italy, Spain and France. Over 60 doctors have died in the last few months in Italy alone.

"I never thought in my wildest dreams that I wouldn't be sure of a surgical mask in this country," Joshi said. "I never thought in my wildest dreams that we would be feeling consistently unsafe as doctors."

"In Italy, they said we didn't take care of our doctors first — now they're dropping like flies. Just do what you can to protect your health-care staff because we are no good when we're lying on the bed next to our patients."

Ordinary Britons somehow grasp what their beloved NHS staff is facing.

In what is becoming a weekly ritual, hundreds of thousands of people open their front doors and windows at night, clapping hands, banging pots and cheering for the medical workers battling the virus. Children have been drawing "Thank You NHS" cards.

Doctors like Joshi appreciate the applause and the volunteers who show up with cake, pizzas and other acts of kindness. But that doesn't ease his worries.

"I've taken out life insurance as well," he said.

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

## The Latest: Thailand bans public gatherings to stop spread

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:

- Slovakia reaches deal with banks to impose moratoriums on mortgages and loans.
- Thailand bans public gatherings to stop the spread of the new coronavirus.
- European medical workers strain to save thousands of desperately ill coronavirus patients.
- Prince Charles opens temporary hospital in London.

**BRATISLAVA, Slovakia** — Slovakia's government has reached an agreement with the country's banks on imposing moratoriums on mortgages and loans to help households and businesses amid the the coronavirus pandemic.

Prime Minister Igor Matovic says the deal makes private individuals, self-employed people and small and middle size companies with up to 250 employees eligible to delay payments by up to nine months.

The government has asked people to only use the delay if they need it. The program is free. Slovakia has 450 positive tests for the coronavirus.

**BANGKOK** — Thailand has banned all public gatherings to stop the spread of the new coronavirus.

The order signed Friday by Chief of Defense Forces Gen. Pornpipat Benyasri prohibits people from public gatherings, carrying out activities, or gathering for unlawful purposes in a manner that risks spreading the coronavirus.

It also bans any act that aggravates people's suffering and pranks to spread the virus. That's an apparent reference to anti-social actions such as spreading saliva on elevator buttons.

Family gatherings at residences and civic activities carried out according to safe social distancing guidelines are allowed.

Violation of the order carried a maximum penalty of two years imprisonment and a fine of 40,000 baht (\$1,213).

A nationwide begins at 10 p.m. Friday night.

**BERLIN** — Germany's auto industry association says new car registrations in the country dropped 38% in March compared with a year earlier. It is the steepest drop it has measured since German reunification three decades ago.

Restrictions on public life in Germany kicked in in mid-March and automakers have largely suspended production. The association says production was down 37% in March to 287,900 and the number of cars exported dropped 32% to 234,500.

**LONDON** -- Prince Charles has formally opened the new Nightingale Hospital at London's main exhibition and conference center.

Charles launched the temporary facility at the ExCel center in east London via video link from his Scottish home of Birkhall and paid tribute to everyone involved in its construction, which took just nine days.

The heir to the U.K. throne said he was "enormously touched" to be asked to open the hospital that will rise from a capacity of 500 beds to an eventual 4,000.

Charles earlier this week emerged from self-isolation after testing positive for COVID-19 said he was lucky to only mild symptoms.



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He says he hopes the hospital named after Florence Nightingale is only need for a short a time and as few people as possible.

**COLOMBO, Sri Lanka** — Sri Lanka's national carrier says it will slash staff pay and negotiate deferred payment plans and deductions with key suppliers in it's efforts to preserve the airline's liquidity.

SriLankan Airlines faces a grave crisis due to COVID-19. The state-run airline says it will also implement a mandatory salary reduction of 25% for three months and will freeze all salary increments in 2020.

The airline is temporarily terminating operations from April 07 to April 21 with the exception of cargo services.

**RIGA, Latvia** — Latvian health authorities confirmed the first death linked to COVID-19 in the Baltic nation. The fatality was a 99-year-old woman being treated in an intensive care unit at a hospital in the capital of Riga.

Public broadcaster Latvian Television says it is not clear how the woman was infected but she had been in a chronic condition for a period of time.

Latvia is a nation of nearly 2 million and has now reported 493 coronavirus cases.\_\_\_\_\_

**LONDON** — Google has started releasing location data to help public health officials track how people are responding to lockdowns during the coronavirus pandemic.

The U.S. tech giant said Friday that it's publishing aggregated, anonymized data for 131 countries and regions to highlight movement trends over time.

The information is gathered from Google Maps or the search giant's other services, but no personal details, such as an individual's location, contacts or movement, is disclosed. Google plans to update the reports regularly, with a lag of two to three days.

The reports chart whether more or less people are flowing into shops, parks, grocery stores, pharmacies, subway stations and offices. The company said it has heard from health officials who say the readings could be helpful for making critical decisions on how to fight the virus.

For example, "persistent visits to transportation hubs might indicate the need to add additional buses or trains in order to allow people who need to travel room to spread out for social distancing," Google said.

**THE HAGUE, Netherlands** — The European Union's police agency is warning that the proliferation in people working online from home or killing time in isolation by trawling the internet during the coronavirus crisis is potentially opening the door to cybercriminals.

Executive Director of Europol Catherine De Bolle says in a report published Friday, "This pandemic brings out the best but unfortunately also the worst in humanity."

She warned in particular about criminals preying on children, saying: "I am very concerned about the rise of child sexual abuse online."

Europol, based in The Hague, Netherlands, says some of its member states, including Spain, have already reported an increase in attempts to access illegal websites displaying "child sexual exploitation material."

The agency adds that "Isolated and 'bored' offenders" are expressing increasing interest in trading such material and some countries have seen an increase in offenders trying to contact children on social media.

Cybercriminals also are launching phishing and ransomware campaigns exploiting the coronavirus, the report says, and it warns about online sales of virus protection items like masks and test kits.

"Although the intention may purport to be good, this is an easy way to sell fake, counterfeit or poor quality articles anonymously," Europol warns.

**PARIS** — French students won't take the national end-of-high-school exam known as the Baccalaureat this year, a first in the country's history due to school closures amid the coronavirus crisis.

French Education minister Jean-Michel Blanquer announced Friday that the final exam is cancelled. Instead, students in their last year of high school will be able to get the so-called "Bac" based on school

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grades before and possibly after the confinement period.

A jury will examine their academic transcript to ensure fair conditions for all 740,000 concerned students. The issue is sensitive in France where the exam represents an important rite of passage and a symbol of egalitarianism.

French schools have been closed since March 16 and students and teachers had to shift to online learning. They won't be able to reopen before May, if not later, Blanquer said.

The Baccalaureat, born in 1808, is the main qualification required to pursue studies at university.

MADRID — Spain is closing Friday a black week with its death toll for the new coronavirus nearing 11,000, more than half of those during the past seven days, and more infections than any other country in Europe.

The bottleneck in Spanish labs conducting the tests has led to relatively low levels of testing in Spain compared to other European countries, authorities have acknowledged.

But even with statistics that are believed to be conservative in showing the extent of the epidemic, Spain on Friday neared 118,000 cases, second only to the United States. Official Health Ministry data showed that 7,472 of those infections had been in the past 24 hours.

Italy, with more than 115,000 reported cases as of Friday morning, has seen new infections leveling off after three weeks of the West's first nationwide shutdown.

Spain also registered 932 new deaths, 18 less than its daily record of 950 the day before.

BERLIN — German Chancellor Angela Merkel is returning to work at the chancellery after two weeks in quarantine at home following an encounter with a doctor who tested positive for the new coronavirus.

Merkel's spokesman, Steffen Seibert, said that Merkel was returning to her office on Friday after the recommended 14-day precautionary quarantine. He said that "thankfully the chancellor tested negative for the coronavirus several times."

The 65-year-old German leader went into quarantine on March 22 after being informed that a doctor who had administered a vaccination to her had tested positive for the new coronavirus. She received the precautionary vaccination against pneumococcal infection two days previously.

Merkel has continued to lead Cabinet meetings and take part in domestic and international videoconferences from home.

TOKYO — Tokyo Gov. Yuriko Koike on Friday said the city is preparing to rent out a hotel or a public facility for patients with no or slight symptoms to relieve hospitals' burdens and make room for severely-affected patients as new COVID-19 cases continue to rise in the Japanese capital.

Infections have accelerated in Tokyo since late March, prompting Koike to make a weekend stay-at-home request to Tokyo residents until mid-April, while suggesting a possibility of a lockdown if the number of infections turns explosive.

Koike told reporters Friday that officials plan to rent out accommodations including hotels and public facilities for asymptomatic and slightly-sick COVID-19 patients to stay under medical attention until they fully recover. Koike said she wants to start a pilot case next week.

Under Japanese infectious diseases law, everyone who tests positive must be hospitalized. The health ministry eased the requirement Friday to relieve burden on hospitals and allow them to focus on the most severely-ill patients.

Prime Minister Shinzo Abe is preparing for a possible state of emergency. If declared, Koike is expected to launch a "lockdown" of Tokyo, but it's largely a social distancing request instead of enforcement as in parts of Europe, Koike said. Transportation will keep operating, while groceries, pharmacies, banks and other essential businesses will stay open.

Tokyo's new cases hit a new single-day record of 97 Thursday for a prefectural total of 684. NHK public television said 89 more cases were reported in Tokyo Friday. Nationwide, Japan has more than 3,300 cases including 712 from a cruise ship, with 74 deaths.

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BERLIN — The head of Germany's disease control agency says the number of people who die of COVID-19 is likely being undercounted.

Lothar Wieler of the Robert Koch Institute said Friday that he believes "we have more dead than are officially being reported."

It wasn't immediately clear whether Wieler was suggesting that deaths are being undercounted only in Germany, or worldwide, and reporters were unable to ask follow-up questions during his online news conference.

Germany's low death rate from coronavirus has drawn international attention. Experts say the difference compared to other countries is partly due to mass testing and well-equipped hospitals, but they caution that the number of deaths is likely to rise.

According to figures compiled by Johns Hopkins University, Germany had almost 85,000 confirmed cases and 1,107 deaths by Friday.

Wieler said one reason why deaths might be higher than thought is that by the time autopsies are performed the virus can't be detected anymore.

SINGAPORE — Singapore will close schools and most workplaces for a month, as it moves to curb the increase of COVID-19 transmissions in the country.

Most workplaces, except for essential services and key economic sectors, will be closed from next Tuesday, and schools will be closed from Wednesday. Essential services such as food establishments, markets and supermarkets, clinics, hospitals, utilities, transport and banking services will remain open.

"Looking at the trend, I am worried that unless we take further steps, things will gradually get worse, or another big cluster may push things over the edge," said Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong.

Lee urged residents to stay home and only leave to buy essential items.

The country has seen a spike in COVID-19 cases over the last two weeks, and has routinely reported more than 50 new cases daily. As of Thursday, Singapore had 1,049 cases and five deaths.

Singapore has also reversed its recommendations that people should wear masks only if they are feeling unwell.

"We will no longer discourage people from masks. Wearing a mask may help to protect others in case you have the virus but don't know it," said Lee.

The Singapore government will distribute reusable masks to all households from this Sunday for "some added protection", Lee said.

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

## Vendors return in Wuhan as China prepares virus memorial

WUHAN, China (AP) — Sidewalk vendors wearing face masks and gloves sold pork, tomatoes, carrots and other vegetables to shoppers Friday in the Chinese city where the coronavirus pandemic began, as workers prepared for a national memorial this weekend for health workers and others who died in the outbreak.

Authorities are easing controls that kept Wuhan's 11 million people at home for two months, but many shops are still closed. Shoppers and sellers in the Minyi neighborhood on the city's southwest side had to do their business over high yellow barriers, as access to the community is still controlled.

"I don't feel safe going to a supermarket," said Zhan Zhongwu, who wore two layers of masks and was buying pork for his wife and grandchild. "There are too many people," he said. "Many infections happened in the supermarket."

Residents have been relying on online groceries and government-organized food deliveries after most access to the city was suspended Jan. 23 and restaurants, shops and other businesses shut down.

Wuhan and the rest of China are preparing for a nationwide three minutes of silence on Saturday in honor of the 3,322 people who officially died of the virus, including doctors, nurses and other health workers

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who have been declared martyrs.

They include Li Wenliang, an eye doctor in Wuhan who was reprimanded in December for warning about the virus and later died of the disease. He became a symbol of public anger at the ruling Communist Party for suppressing information about the coronavirus, possibly worsening its spread, before it took action in late January.

The party rescinded Li's reprimand and declared him a hero as part of a propaganda effort aimed at deflecting criticism of the official response.

On Saturday, national flags will be lowered to half-staff at 10 a.m. while air raid sirens and the horns of cars, trains and ships will "wail in grief," the official Xinhua News Agency said.

People have been told to avoid cemeteries on Saturday, the start of a three-day holiday when families traditionally tend the graves of ancestors.

While the United States and other governments tighten controls and shut down businesses, Chinese leaders are trying to revive the world's second-largest economy after declaring victory over the outbreak.

Still, local authorities have orders to prevent new infections as millions of people stream back to work in factories, offices and shops. Passengers on planes, trains, subways and buses are checked for fever and employers have orders to disinfect workplaces regularly.

Vegetable vendor Xie Lianning said she picked up supplies at a wholesale market at 5 a.m. and drove to Minyi. She was checked for fever at the neighborhood entrance.

Xie set up shop on a sidewalk in front of closed shops that were covered by roll-down metal doors. The block was surrounded by the head-high yellow barriers installed to keep residents inside during the quarantine.

"Our business is not bad. Here is definitely better than indoors," said Xie. "Nobody wanted to go inside. People are willing to buy things outside."

Wuhan accounts for three-quarters of China's virus deaths but has reported no new cases for a week. Despite that, controls requiring official permission to enter or leave the city are to stay in place through Tuesday.

Xie said she still was worried about the virus but had to get back to work.

"We have no choice," she said. "There are old and young in my family living with us. We have a heavy financial burden."

AP producer Olivia Zhang contributed to this report.

## Jobs report Friday is expected to end record hiring streak

By CHRISTOPHER RUGABER AP Economics Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — After a record 113 straight months of hiring, the government's monthly jobs report Friday is expected to show that the American jobs machine came to a sudden halt in March as a result of the coronavirus.

Economists have forecast that the government will say employers shed about 150,000 jobs and that the unemployment rate rose from a half-century low of 3.5% to 3.9%, according to FactSet. But the jobs figure will vastly understate the magnitude of last month's losses because the government surveyed employers before the heaviest layoffs struck in the past two weeks. Nearly 10 million Americans have since applied for unemployment benefits, far more than for any corresponding period on record.

Still, some job cuts likely happened earlier in the month, when most economists think businesses began clamping down on hiring. The job loss for March will underscore the head-snapping speed with which the economy has unraveled after nearly a decade in which employers added nearly 23 million jobs. As recently as February, employers added 273,000 jobs.

Economists had welcomed February's job gain, though they wondered why hourly paychecks weren't rising more quickly. But any concerns over sluggish wage growth have now been put well off to the side.

"Four years of job gains have evaporated in the span of two weeks," said Daniel Zhao, an economist



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at the jobs website Glassdoor.

The layoffs will continue to mount. Some economists have forecast that 20 million jobs will be lost by the end of April, swelling the unemployment rate as high as 15% and wiping out the bulk of the past decade's gains. That unemployment rate would be the worst since the 1930s.

Roughly 90% of the U.S. population is living under some version of a shutdown order, which has forced the closure of bars, restaurants, movie theaters, factories, gyms and most other businesses. Some hotels are closed; others are largely empty. Fast-food chains are either closed or providing only drive-through service, costing thousands of jobs.

With business activity tightly restricted, analysts expect a stomach-churning recession. Economists at Goldman Sachs have forecast that the economy will shrink at an annual rate of 34% in the April-June quarter — the worse fall on records dating to World War II. Goldman expects the economy to rebound with 19% growth in the third quarter. But even by the end of next year, the economy will not have fully recovered from the damage, Goldman projects.

Robert Kaplan, president of the Federal Reserve Bank of Dallas, said Thursday on CNBC that he expects the unemployment rate to rise to the mid-teens soon, before falling to about 8% by year's end.

A key determinant of the economy's future will be whether businesses can survive the shutdown and rehire many of the workers they laid off. If so, that would help the economy snap back and avoid the type of weak recovery that followed the past three downturns.

So far, some large and small businesses are still paying for health care benefits and keeping in touch with their newly laid-off workers. But if the virus outbreak forces businesses to stay closed into the late summer, many may go bankrupt or won't have the money to rehire their old employees.

That would keep unemployment elevated, depriving potentially millions of people of a paycheck and slowing the recovery.

## Europe's hospitals bow under the weight of coronavirus crush

By JOHN LEICESTER and ARITZ PARRA Associated Press

MADRID (AP) — Setting up makeshift ICU wards in libraries and conference centers, embattled European medical workers strained Friday to save thousands of desperately ill coronavirus patients as stocks of medicine, protective equipment and breathing machines grew shorter by the hour.

A maelstrom of coronavirus deaths and job losses slammed the United States and Europe. Some 10 million Americans have been thrown out of work in just two weeks, the most stunning collapse the U.S. job market has ever witnessed. Global confirmed infections surged past 1 million and deaths hit 53,000, according to a tally by Johns Hopkins University.

Experts say both numbers are seriously under-counted, due to the lack of testing, mild cases that were missed and governments that are deliberately underplaying the impact of the pandemic.

Europe's three worst-hit countries — Italy, Spain and France — surpassed 30,000 dead, over 56% of the world's death toll. From those countries, the view remained almost unrelentingly grim, a frightening portent even for places like New York, the epicenter of the U.S. outbreak, where trucks have been forklifting bodies outside overflowing morgues.

One Spanish hospital turned its library into a makeshift intensive-care unit. In France, space was being set aside for bodies in a vast food market. The French prime minister said he is "fighting hour by hour" to ward off shortages of essential drugs used to keep COVID-19 patients alive in intensive care.

Philippe Montravers, an anesthesiologist in Paris, said medics are preparing to fall back on older drugs, such as the opiates fentanyl and morphine, that had fallen out of favor, as newer painkillers are now in short supply.

"The work is extremely tough and heavy," he said. "We've had doctors, nurses, caregivers who got sick, infected ... but who have come back after recovering. It's a bit like those World War I soldiers who were injured and came back to fight."

Some glimmers of hope emerged that Italy, with nearly 14,000 dead, Spain and France might be flat-

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tening their infection curves and nearing or even past their peaks in daily deaths.

Spain on Friday reported 932 new daily deaths, just slightly down from the record it hit a day earlier. The carnage most certainly included large numbers of elderly people who authorities admit are not getting access to the country's limited breathing machines, which are being used first on healthier, younger patients. More than half of Spain's 10,935 deaths have come in the last seven days alone.

Some European officials are tentatively talking about the future, how to lift the nationwide lockdowns that have staved off the total collapse of strained health systems. Still, the main message across the continent was "stay at home."

In France, the government warned Parisians not to even think about going anywhere for the Easter school vacation starting this weekend, setting up roadblocks out of the city to nab those with antsy children trying to escape lockdowns.

Beyond Europe, coronavirus deaths mounted with alarming speed in New York, the most lethal hot spot in the United States, which has seen at least 1,500 virus deaths. One New York funeral home had 185 bodies stacked up — more than triple its normal capacity.

"It's surreal," owner Pat Marmo said, adding that he's been begging families to insist hospitals hold their dead loved ones as long as possible. "We need help."

Roughly 90% of the U.S. population is under stay-at-home orders, and many factories, restaurants, stores and other businesses are closed or have seen sales shrivel. Economists warned that U.S. unemployment would almost certainly top that of the Great Recession a decade ago and could reach levels not seen since the Great Depression in the 1930s.

"My anxiety is through the roof right now, not knowing what's going to happen," said Laura Wieder, laid off from her job managing a sports bar in Bellefontaine, Ohio.

The pandemic will cost the world economy as much as \$4.1 trillion, or nearly 5% of all economic activity, the Asian Development Bank said Friday.

At least a million people in Europe are estimated to have lost their jobs over the past couple of weeks as well. Spain alone added more than 300,000 to its unemployment rolls in March. But the job losses in Europe appear to be far smaller than in the U.S. because of countries' greater social safety nets.

Estimates in China, the world's second-largest economy, of those who have lost jobs or are underemployed run as high as 200 million. The government said Friday it would provide an additional 1 trillion yuan (\$142 billion) to local banks to lend at preferential rates to small- and medium-sized businesses.

With more than 245,000 people infected in the U.S. and the death toll topping 6,000, sobering preparations were underway. The Federal Emergency Management Agency asked the Pentagon for 100,000 more body bags.

For most people, the coronavirus causes mild or moderate symptoms, such as fever and cough. But for others, especially older adults and people with health problems, it can cause pneumonia and lead to death. The World Health Organization said this week that 95% of the deaths in Europe were of people who were over 60 years old.

White House coronavirus task force coordinator Dr. Deborah Birx said U.S. infection data suggested that Americans need to emulate those European nations that have started to see the spread of the virus slowing through strict social distancing.

The Trump administration was getting ready to recommend that ordinary Americans wear non-medical masks or bandannas over their mouths and noses when out in public so stocks of medical-grade masks could be preserved for those on the front lines.

Shortages of critical equipment led to fierce competition between buyers from Europe, the U.S. and elsewhere. A regional leader in Paris described the scramble to source masks a "worldwide treasure hunt."

French Prime Minister Edouard Philippe said worldwide usage of essential drugs and disposable equipment, such as ventilator mouthpieces, used by intensive care units is "exploding in unimaginable proportions," with a "nearly 2,000 percent increase" in demand "because it is happening everywhere in the world and at the same time."

Gov. Andrew Cuomo warned that New York could run out of breathing machines in six days.

Leicester reported from Le Pecq, France. 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>.

## Navy fires captain who sought help for virus-stricken ship

By **LOLITA C. BALDOR** and **ROBERT BURNS** Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The captain of a U.S. Navy aircraft carrier facing a growing outbreak of the coronavirus on his ship was fired by Navy leaders who said he created a panic by sending his memo pleading for help to too many people.

Acting Navy Secretary Thomas Modly said the ship's commander, Capt. Brett Crozier, "demonstrated extremely poor judgment" in the middle of a crisis. He said the captain copied too many people on the memo, which was leaked to a California newspaper and quickly spread to many news outlets.

Modly's decision to remove Crozier as ship commander was immediately condemned by members of the House Armed Services Committee, who called it a "destabilizing move" that will "likely put our service members at greater risk and jeopardize our fleet's readiness."

Modly told Pentagon reporters during an abruptly called press conference Thursday that Crozier should have gone directly to his immediate commanders, who were already moving to help the ship. And he said Crozier created a panic by suggesting 50 sailors could die.

The USS Theodore Roosevelt, with a crew of nearly 5,000, is docked in Guam, and the Navy has said as many as 3,000 will be taken off the ship and quarantined by Friday. More than 100 sailors on the ship have tested positive for the virus, but none is hospitalized.

"What it does, it undermines our efforts and the chain of command's efforts to address this problem and creates a panic and creates the perception that the Navy is not on the job, the government is not on the job, and it's just not true," Modly said.

He complained that Crozier sent the memo to people outside his chain of command and in a non-secure, unclassified email. And, he said he concluded that the captain's ability to react professionally was overwhelmed by the virus challenge, "when acting professionally was what was needed most. We do, and we should, expect more from the commanding officers of our aircraft carriers."

Earlier this week, Modly told reporters that Crozier would not be relieved of duty for trying to protect his sailors, but he left the door open for punishment if the captain leaked the memo to the press. On Thursday, Modly said he has no information to suggest that Crozier leaked the memo to the press.

He said that if Crozier had communicated only with his leadership and not widely distributed the memo, he would likely still have a job. He took sole responsibility for the decision to fire Crozier and said he got no pressure from the White House to do so.

Democrats on the House committee issued a joint statement in support of Crozier. They said that while the captain went outside his chain of command, the pandemic presents a new set of challenges.

"Captain Crozier was justifiably concerned about the health and safety of his crew, but he did not handle the immense pressure appropriately," the lawmakers said. "However, relieving him of his command is an overreaction."

Sen. Jack Reed, top Democrat on the Senate Armed Services Committee, said he told Modly that Navy leaders must make it clear that the decision to fire Crozier doesn't inhibit others from taking steps to protect their sailors and Marines.

And he said the incident "raised critical questions" about the Navy's strategy to combat the virus across the fleet.

Crozier, in his memo, raised warnings the ship was facing a growing outbreak of the coronavirus and asked for permission to isolate the bulk of his crew members on shore, an extraordinary move to take a carrier out of duty in an effort to save lives.

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He said that removing all but 10% of the crew would be a "necessary risk" to stop the spread of the virus. "We are not at war. Sailors do not need to die. If we do not act now, we are failing to properly take care of our most trusted asset, our sailors," Crozier said.

As of Thursday, the Navy said 31% of the USS Theodore Roosevelt crew have been tested for the virus and 114 tested positive. The 180 sailors who tested negative will move into Guam hotels for quarantine. As testing continues, the ship will keep enough sailors on board to sustain essential services and sanitize the ship in port.

## In time of crisis, Trump-Pelosi relationship remains broken

By JONATHAN LEMIRE and LAURIE KELLMAN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Two of the most powerful people in Washington have not spoken in five months at a time when the nation is battling its worst health crisis in a century, one that has already killed more than 6,000 Americans and put 10 million others out of work.

President Donald Trump and House Speaker Nancy Pelosi last talked on Oct. 16, when Pelosi pointed her finger at the seated president during a heated exchange in a White House meeting that was captured in a widely shared photograph. Pelosi stormed out, and the two leaders' frayed relationship was soon severed by the House's impeachment of Trump months later.

Now, there are worries the broken relationship could hinder the federal government's ability to respond to the growing coronavirus crisis, the extent of the damage reflected in Thursday's report that a record 6.6 million people filed for unemployment, adding to more than 3 million from two weeks earlier.

"Relationships are the beginning of everything. Trust in one another is key to cooperation," said John M. Bridgeland, who held government posts under Presidents George W. Bush and Barack Obama.

The relationship between Trump and Pelosi, never warm, appears beyond repair after the Republican president's impeachment, according to allies of both leaders. Even the COVID-19 pandemic, which has rewritten the rules of daily American life and threatens people's health and employment, has done nothing to thaw the ice between the two.

Last month, as Washington crafted the most expensive stimulus package in U.S. history, Trump and Pelosi eyed each other warily from opposite ends of Pennsylvania Avenue, the president leaving it to others to negotiate a \$2.2 trillion economic relief package.

Trump and Pelosi communicated with — or at — each other via Twitter and television or through intermediaries the other side could tolerate. Chief among them has been Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin, who personally negotiated the three rescue bills passed so far. When Trump signed the package at the White House, he did not invite Pelosi or any other Democrats to join him.

The record-breaking jobless claims reported Thursday add new urgency to the matter of next steps for Congress, which had been moving, slowly, toward crafting another recovery bill that could equal or surpass the first stimulus' price tag.

Pelosi and Mnuchin worked out the stimulus by speaking dozens of times by phone and in the speaker's Capitol office overlooking the Mall. Going forward, new White House chief of staff Mark Meadows, a former congressman who has a relationship with Pelosi, is expected to be another leading conduit.

Pelosi said Thursday that she and Mnuchin had spoken the previous night about the next part of the package. She played down her lack of communication with Trump.

"Whatever communications we need to move forward, that will be happening whether I talk to the president or not," Pelosi said. "It's not casual. It isn't, 'Let's just chat.' It's about what is the purpose, what is the urgency, does it require the time of the speaker and the president, both of whom are very busy people."

The speaker also announced Thursday the formation of a House select committee on the coronavirus crisis, a bipartisan panel chaired by Majority Whip James Clyburn, D-S.C. Trump lashed out at the panel as a "witch hunt" and "ridiculous" and said it would ultimately help "build up his poll numbers."

"I want to remind everyone here in our nation's capital, especially in Congress, that this is not the time for politics, endless partisan investigations," Trump said during the White House coronavirus task force



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briefing.

The pandemic is a time when Americans may have less tolerance for the usual partisan bickering or brinkmanship.

"There's no space for politics," said Democratic Rep. Ben McAdams of Utah, who is recovering from the coronavirus and is one of several lawmakers who have isolated themselves to avoid spreading it. "Really, we have to come together and work together to save lives, and that is the only thing that matters right now."

According to a new poll by The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research, 44% of Americans approve of how Trump is handling the coronavirus outbreak, closely mirroring his overall approval rating.

And fewer Americans, 38%, approve of the federal government's job of handling the virus' spread throughout the country, compared with larger shares approving of how their state and local governments are doing (57% and 54%, respectively).

Just 31% of Americans approve of how leaders in Congress are addressing the coronavirus, while 41% disapprove.

It wasn't always this bitter between Trump and Pelosi.

After the Democrats captured the House in November 2018, Trump actively cheered for Pelosi to retake the speakership, telling aides that he respected the California Democrat's political survival skills and believed she was a transactional politician with whom he could deal.

Instead, Pelosi became his most visible antagonist, creating viral images when she mockingly clapped for him during his 2019 State of the Union address and when she strode out of the West Wing after another tense meeting clad in a designer coat and sunglasses. Their dispute over funding for Trump's border wall led to the longest government shutdown in history.

Their feud exploded last year when Pelosi overcame her initial reluctance and authorized an impeachment inquiry into Trump's attempts to pressure Ukraine into investigating the family of a Democratic political foe, former Vice President Joe Biden.

Trump has told aides and confidants that he feels as if Pelosi has tried to undermine and humiliate him at every turn and that he will never forgive her for impeachment, according to two White House aides and Republicans close to the West Wing who spoke on the condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to publicly discuss private conversations.

Days before Trump was acquitted by the Senate, the two leaders came face-to-face on camera before the president's State of the Union speech. Pelosi reached out her hand in a gesture that was more like a dare. Trump ignored the outreach and started his speech.

And then, before Trump had left the podium, Pelosi ripped up a copy of his address on camera. She held it up for her allies and her family to see and took a little bow.

The coronavirus has proved disproportionately deadly for older Americans; Pelosi turned 80 last week, while Trump is 73. But neither has slowed down their public schedule, and neither has stopped sniping at the other.

"I don't know what I would learn in a conversation with the president," Pelosi said this week.

The next day, Trump deemed Pelosi's criticism "a sad thing" during an interview on Fox News Channel's "Fox & Friends." He added: "She's a sick puppy, in my opinion."

Lemire reported from New York. Associated Press writer Emily Swanson contributed to this report.

## 10 Things to Know for Today

By The Associated Press

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

1. VIRUS DEATHS, UNEMPLOYMENT ACCELERATING Coronavirus deaths mount in Spain, Italy and New York, while the outbreak throws 10 million Americans out of work in just two weeks and sickens more than a million people.

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2. 'WE NEED HELP' Funeral directors in New York City are facing unprecedented demand due to the coronavirus pandemic with AP witnessing 185 bodies stacked up in one funeral home — triple the normal capacity.

3. UK HEALTH SERVICE GEARS UP FOR VIRUS PEAK Britain's National Health Service is facing the biggest test in its 72-year history as the government races to ensure medical facilities have the staffing and equipment they need.

4. WANTED: COVID-19 SURVIVOR'S BLOOD Without proof that it works, doctors want to use blood plasma from recovered coronavirus patients to treat the sick, giving them a dose of the immune system antibodies that fight the virus.

5. TRUMP-PELOSI RELATIONSHIP REMAINS BROKEN The president and House speaker have not spoken in five months and there are concerns that could hinder the U.S. government's ability to respond to the growing coronavirus pandemic.

6. ISRAELI ULTRA-ORTHODOX HIT HARD BY VIRUS After ignoring weeks of pleas to avoid large gatherings and to stay at home, the religious city of Bnei Brak in central Israel emerges as the worst hot spot of infections.

7. RECORD HIRING STREAK IN JEOPARDY The U.S. government's monthly jobs report is expected to show that the American jobs machine came to a sudden halt in March as a result of the coronavirus.

8. JUDGE WON'T DELAY WISCONSIN ELECTION A federal judge blasts state leaders' decision not to delay the election to protect people's health but refuses to postpone it himself, ordering an extension for absentee voting.

9. 'COFFEE & KAREEM' A LEWD BUDDY COP COMEDY A new Netflix film puts a daffy police officer together with a potty-mouthed pre-teen on a series of crazy hijinks in Detroit.

10. SPRINGFIELD MAY CALL RUDY T San Antonio Spurs coach Gregg Popovich says it's "long overdue" that former Houston Rockets coach Rudy Tomjanovich get the call from the Basketball Hall of Fame.

## Local newspapers are facing their own coronavirus crisis

By TALI ARBEL and DAVID BAUDER Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Just when Americans need it most, a U.S. newspaper industry already under stress is facing an unprecedented new challenge.

Readers desperate for information are more reliant than ever on local media as the coronavirus spreads across the U.S. They want to know about cases in their area, where testing centers are, what the economic impact is. Papers say online traffic and subscriptions have risen -- the latter even when they've lowered paywalls for pandemic-related stories.

But newspapers and other publications are under pressure as advertising craters. They are cutting jobs, staff hours and pay, dropping print editions -- and in some cases shutting down entirely.

Circulation and web traffic are up at the Sun Chronicle, a daily in Attleboro, Massachusetts, as it scrambles to cover the coronavirus pandemic. It's "all we do," said Craig Borges, executive editor and general manager. But with many local restaurants, gyms, colleges and other businesses closed, the paper has laid off a handful of sales and mailroom employees and a political reporter. It has about a dozen newsroom employees left.

"Hopefully we can work this out and make it through," Borges said.

Researchers have long worried that the next recession — which economists say is already upon us — "could be an extinction-level event for newspapers," said Penelope Abernathy, a University of North Carolina professor who studies the news industry.

More than 2,100 cities and towns have lost a paper in the past 15 years, mostly weeklies, and newsroom employment has shrunk by half since 2004. Many publications struggled as consumers turned to the internet for news, battered by the Great Recession of 2007-2009 and the rise of giants like Google and Facebook that dominated the market for digital ads.

More recently, big national newspapers like The New York Times, The Washington Post and The Wall

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Street Journal have diversified revenue by adding millions of digital subscribers. Many others, however, remain heavily dependent on advertising.

Twenty global news publishers recently surveyed by the International News Media Association expect a median 23% decline in 2020 ad sales. In the U.S., newspaper ad revenues have dropped 20% to 30% in the last few weeks compared with a year ago, FTI Consulting's Ken Harding wrote in another INMA report.

On Monday, the largest U.S. newspaper chain, Gannett, announced 15-day furloughs and pay cuts for many employees. On Tuesday, another major chain, Lee Enterprises, also announced salary reductions and furloughs. The Tampa Bay Times, owned by the nonprofit Poynter Institute, cut five days of its print edition and announced furloughs for non-newsroom staff.

Further down the food chain, many smaller publishers -- particularly local alt-weeklies with a heavy focus on dining, arts and entertainment -- are making even harder decisions.

In rural Nevada, Battle Born Media is scaling back or ceasing publication of six rural weekly newspapers. The Reno News & Review, an alternative weekly, suspended operations and laid off all staffers. C&G Newspapers, which publishes 19 weekly newspapers near Detroit, suspended print publication. Alternative paper Pittsburgh Current went online-only.

Report for America, which subsidizes journalists in local newsrooms and at The Associated Press, says some of its local-media partners report such deteriorating finances that they may not be able to pay their half of these reporters' salaries.

In suburban St. Louis last week, businesses were calling and cancelling ads as fast as editor Don Corrigan and his staff could write articles to fill the empty space left behind. A local hospital wanted to run a full-page ad offering tips to fight the virus in the three community weeklies he runs — but wanted it for free. A softhearted Corrigan agreed.

He announced this week that the Webster-Kirkwood Times, South County Time and West End World will stop publishing, although he's keeping the website running. "I don't think people realize how much it costs to put out a newspaper," he said, noting that some readers are belatedly suggesting a GoFundMe page or a paywall for the web site.

A \$2.2 trillion relief act signed Friday by President Donald Trump could provide loans or grants to smaller local publishers who maintain their payrolls. Industry executives are also discussing future government bailout requests that would preserve the independence of news organizations, two newspaper-industry trade groups wrote in a Monday letter to Trump and congressional leaders.

One proposal under discussion would recommend creating a federal fund to pay for government newspaper ads that offer health advice. Another possibility might be to offer people tax credits for subscriptions.

The Shepherd Express newspaper, which took its name from an Allen Ginsberg poem, has for 38 years told residents of Milwaukee, Wisconsin, about up-and-coming musicians, hot restaurants, crooked politicians and where to find hemp-related products. Last week, it suspended publication and laid off staff.

Editor, publisher and owner Louis Fortis is keeping the website operating and promises to resume printing at some point, in some form. Yet he's feeling the same uncertainty as millions of other Americans. "I'm very disappointed," he said. "On the other hand, you have to look at the big picture. People are dying."

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

By The Associated Press undefined

More than 6.6 million Americans applied for unemployment benefits last week — doubling a record high set just one week earlier — in a sign that layoffs are accelerating in the midst of the new coronavirus, which has now infected more than 1 million people worldwide.

Meanwhile, President Donald Trump is resisting calls to issue a national stay-at-home order to stem the spread of the coronavirus despite his administration's grim projections of tens of thousands dying. But the administration planned to recommend most Americans wear face coverings.

States are increasingly pushing shutdowns: Florida, Nevada and Pennsylvania have all added or expanded stay-at-home orders.

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

## WHAT'S HAPPENING TODAY:

— The number of confirmed coronavirus cases worldwide passed the 1 million threshold Thursday in the latest indication of the pandemic's growing foothold around the globe, according to a tally by Johns Hopkins University. The count represents confirmed cases, but the true numbers are believed to be much higher. White House coronavirus task force coordinator Dr. Deborah Birx said incoming infection data suggests not enough Americans are abiding by guidelines in the national "call to action" to stem the spread of the virus.

— The economic damage from the coronavirus crisis is piling up, with an unprecedented 6.6 million Americans filing for unemployment benefits in a single week. The Congressional Budget Office projected the U.S. economy could shrink by an annualized rate exceeding 28%. About half of all working Americans report some kind of income loss affecting themselves or a member of their household, with low-income residents and those without college degrees especially likely to have lost a job, according to a new poll from The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research.

— Calls amplified for people to cover their faces when they go outside. The Trump administration was formalizing new guidance to recommend that most Americans wear face coverings such as T-shirts or bandannas to cover their nose and mouth. Medical-grade masks would be reserved for those dealing directly with the sick. New York City Mayor Bill De Blasio also asked city residents to wear homemade face coverings when they leave their homes.

— Major construction projects moving forward along the U.S. borders with Canada and Mexico are raising fears the coronavirus could race through temporary work camps and spread to rural communities unable to handle an outbreak. Despite a clampdown on people's movements in much of the country, groups of workers travel every day from camps in New Mexico to build President Donald Trump's border wall.

— In the South American country of Ecuador, hospitals were turning away patients and bodies were being left on streets and in homes for days in Guayaquil, a normally bustling city that has become a hot spot in Latin America as the coronavirus pandemic spreads.

— Some Americans without direct deposit won't get their payments until mid-August or later from a U.S. economic stimulus package. The IRS will make about 60 million payments to Americans through direct deposit in mid-April, and then paper checks will start going out May 4 at a rate of about 5 million per week, according to a memo obtained Thursday by The Associated Press.

## 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:

— **ONE MILLION:** The New England Patriots' team plane is expected to return to Boston from China on Thursday carrying more than one million masks critical to health care providers fighting to control the



spread of the coronavirus.

## IN OTHER NEWS:

— **BOUNCY FAUCI:** The United States' top infectious disease specialist is getting his own bobblehead. The creation from the National Bobblehead Hall of Fame and Museum in Milwaukee features Dr. Anthony Fauci wearing a suit as he makes a motion showing how the nation needs to "flatten the curve" in the coronavirus pandemic.

— **MUSIC GOES ON:** Even with its members scattered far and wide by the coronavirus, an orchestra in France has managed to make sweet music in lockdown. Musicians with the National Orchestra of France filmed themselves playing "Bolero" alone at home.

— **AMAZING TECHNICOLOR AT HOME:** Composer Andrew Lloyd Webber is making some of his filmed musicals available for free on YouTube. On Friday, "Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat" will be streamable followed a week later by the rock classic "Jesus Christ Superstar."

— **TEDDY BEAR HUNT:** Teddy bears are popping up in the unlikeliest of places. New Zealanders are embracing an international movement in which people are placing the stuffed animals in their windows during coronavirus lockdowns to brighten the mood and give children a game to play by spotting the bears in their neighborhoods.

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

## **Crowded in camps, Rohingya refugees vulnerable to virus**

**By JULHAS ALAM Associated Press**

DHAKA, Bangladesh (AP) — Aid workers are bracing for a possible outbreak of the coronavirus in one of the world's largest refugee camps in Bangladesh, with officials warning that containing the disease among more than 1 million tightly packed Rohingya Muslims will be a daunting task.

With about 40,000 people per square kilometer (103,600 per square mile) living in plastic shacks side by side, which is more than 40 times the average density of Bangladesh, the refugees are dangerously exposed to the virus.

Each shack is barely 10 square meters (107 square feet) and many are overcrowded with up to 12 people.

There have been no reported cases of infection in the camps yet, but officials remain concerned. The U.N. is not doing any testing for the virus but sends any suspected cases to a government hospital.

"We are doing our best to protect them, but if the virus breaks out it will be a tough job for all of us," Mohammad Shamsuddoza, the additional refugee, relief and repatriation commissioner of Bangladesh, told The Associated Press by phone from Cox's Bazar on the border with Myanmar, from where the Rohingya have fled a government crackdown.

He said the 34 camps are a major challenge despite preparations to provide better health care services.

"It's overcrowded, every family has multiple members," he said. "So this is practically very difficult to keep them separated."

Rachel Wolff, senior director for the aid group World Vision in Cox's Bazar, said "social distancing is almost impossible for families."

Bangladesh has reported six deaths and 54 cases of COVID-19 amid concerns that the virus could spread in the South Asian country through Bangladeshis who have returned from Italy and other places struggling with the disease.

Many of those returning did not respect social distancing or stay in self-quarantine.

One reason for the low number of reported cases could be insufficient testing as health care facilities initially lacked testing kits. Bangladesh, a nation of 160 million, is currently under a lockdown until April 11 to help contain the virus, and troops are out to enforce the stay-at-home rules.

Mohammad Kamal Hossain, the top government administrator in Cox's Bazar, said foreigners have been

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banned from frequent visits to the camps unless they are "absolutely necessary."

"They have been instructed to carry on work in a limited scope," he said.

A 100-bed isolation ward was built inside the camps and another 200-bed hospital with modern facilities is being deployed in cooperation with the World Health Organization, he said.

The U.N. refugee agency said about 1,200 additional beds were being readied just outside the camps at Ukhiya and Teknaf.

Louise Donovan, UNHCR communications officer in Cox's Bazar, said planning was also underway for 1,700 more beds in cooperation with the International Organization for Migration, UNICEF and Save the Children International.

Donovan said water and soaps are being widely distributed, and thousands of community health workers including the refugees themselves were being trained.

Others working in the camps are told to spread awareness about the virus. Mosque imams and local leaders have also been engaged.

"Communications are ongoing through radio spots, video, posters, leaflets and messages in Rohingya, Burmese and Bengali languages, explaining how the virus spreads, how people can protect themselves and their families, symptoms and care-seeking," Donovan said.

Fear gripped the camps after a 75-year-old Bangladeshi woman in nearby Cox's Bazar town tested positive for the coronavirus. A Rohingya family of four who returned from India recently also was quarantined for 14 days in a U.N. transit camp.

The message is reaching the refugees.

"The organizations working here told us about cough, cold and soar throat being the symptoms of the coronavirus," Golforaj Begum, a 54-year-old refugee, told the AP at Kutupalong camp.

"They also told us how to maintain our safety. Such as not to go to other rooms, maintaining a 5-foot distance from one another, not to mix in a crowd, washing hands properly before cooking and eating. They also told us to keep our backyards clean," she said.

The Rohingya have fled Myanmar since August 2017, when Myanmar's military launched counterinsurgency operations in response to rebel attacks. Security forces have been accused of mass rapes, killings and burning thousands of homes.

Myanmar's government has long considered the Rohingya to be migrants from Bangladesh, even though their families have lived in the Buddhist-majority country for generations. Nearly all have been denied citizenship since 1982, effectively rendering them stateless. They are also denied freedom of movement and other basic rights including education.

## 'We need help': Economic, health crises grow as cases top 1M

By **MICHAEL R. SISK, LORI HINNANT and MARK SHERMAN** Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — The coronavirus outbreak has thrown 10 million Americans out of work in just two weeks in the swiftest, most stunning collapse the U.S. job market has ever witnessed, and the public health crisis deepened in New York City, where a funeral home in a hard-hit neighborhood had 185 bodies stacked up Thursday — more than triple normal capacity.

The dire news of a record-shattering 6.6 million new unemployment claims, on top of last week's unprecedented 3.3 million, came as economists warned unemployment could reach levels not seen since the Depression.

Competition for scarce ventilators, masks and other protective gear seemed to grow more desperate and deaths mounted with alarming speed in Italy, Spain and New York, the most lethal hot spot in the United States, with nearly 2,400 lives lost.

Worldwide the number of confirmed infections hit another gloomy milestone — 1 million, with more than 50,000 deaths, according to the tally kept by Johns Hopkins University. But the true numbers are believed to be much higher because of testing shortages, many mild cases that have gone unreported and suspicions that some countries are covering up the extent of their outbreaks.

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The mounting economic fallout almost certainly signals the onset of a global recession, with job losses that are likely to dwarf those of the Great Recession more than a decade ago.

"My anxiety is through the roof right now, not knowing what's going to happen," said Laura Wieder, laid off from her job managing a now-closed sports bar in Bellefontaine, Ohio.

About half of all working Americans report some kind of income loss affecting them or a member of their household because of the epidemic, and poor people and those without college degrees are especially likely to have lost a job, according to a poll from The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research.

With over 240,000 people infected in the U.S. and the death toll topping 5,800, sobering preparations were under way. The Federal Emergency Management Agency asked the Pentagon for 100,000 body bags because of the possibility funeral homes will be overwhelmed, the military said.

Corpses in white plastic were already overwhelming the Daniel J. Schaefer Funeral Home in Sunset Park, Brooklyn, on Thursday. Usually equipped to handle 40-60 bodies at a time, it was taking care of 185. Masked workers fielded phone calls and handled file folders labeled "COVID-19" in yellow highlighter.

Owner Pat Marmo said he's been begging families to insist hospitals hold their dead loved ones as long as possible: "This is a state of emergency," he said. "We need help."

The Democratic Party pushed its nominating convention back a month, to mid-August. Federal authorities proposed a \$611,000 fine against the Seattle-area nursing home connected to at least 40 coronavirus deaths, accusing it of infractions that included failure to report and rapidly manage the outbreak. And a days-long standoff in Florida was resolved when passengers aboard two cruise ships that have had several coronavirus cases and four deaths won permission to come ashore.

Elsewhere around the world, the number of people applying for welfare benefits in Britain increased nearly tenfold to almost 1 million in the past couple of weeks. At least a million in Europe are estimated to have lost their jobs over the same period, and the actual number is probably far higher. Spain alone added over 300,000 to its unemployment rolls in March.

But the job losses in Europe appear to be far smaller than in the U.S. because of countries' greater social safety nets.

With its health care system in dire shape, Spain reported a record one-day number of deaths, 950, bringing its overall toll to about 10,000, despite signs that the infection rate is slowing.

Italy recorded 760 more deaths, for a total of 13,900, the worst of any country, but new infections continued to level off.

France recorded a running total of about 4,500 deaths in hospitals, with 471 in the past day. But officials expect the overall toll to jump significantly because they are only now starting to count deaths in nursing homes and other facilities for older people.

White House coronavirus task force coordinator Dr. Deborah Birx said U.S. infection data suggest not enough Americans are heeding social distancing guidelines, and the country must do better in order to emulate those European nations that have begun "to bend their curves."

Gov. Andrew Cuomo warned that New York could run out of breathing machines in six days. He complained that states are competing against each other for protective gear and breathing machines, or are being outbid by the federal government, in a competition he likened to being on eBay.

In France, a top health official in the country's hard-hit eastern region said American officials swooped in at a Chinese airport to spirit away a planeload of masks that France had ordered.

Nine leading European university hospitals warned they will run out of essential medicines for COVID-19 patients in intensive care in less than two weeks.

A shipment of nearly 5,900 medical masks that Alabama's Montgomery County received from the U.S. government stockpile was unusable because of dry rot, the emergency management director said. The masks had a 2010 expiration date, according to the city of Montgomery.

The Trump administration was formalizing new guidance to recommend Americans wear coverings such as non-medical masks, T-shirts or bandannas over their mouths and noses when out in public, while reserving medical-grade masks, particularly the short-in-supply N95 variety, for those dealing directly with the sick.

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Trump invoked the Defense Production Act on Thursday in hopes of boosting production of medical-grade masks by Minnesota-based 3M to assist first responders.

Washington is also trying to crack down on a growing black market for protective medical supplies, Defense Production Act policy coordinator Peter Navarro said.

For most people, the coronavirus causes mild or moderate symptoms, such as fever and cough. But for others, especially older adults and people with health problems, it can cause severe symptoms like pneumonia. Over 200,000 people worldwide have recovered, by Johns Hopkins' count.

With large portions of America under lockdown, job losses for the world's biggest economy could double to 20 million and unemployment could spike to as high as 15% by the end of the month, many economists have said. Unemployment in the U.S. hasn't been that high since the tail end of the Depression, just before the U.S. entered World War II.

Roughly 90% of the U.S. population is now under stay-at-home orders, and many factories, restaurants, stores and other businesses are closed or have seen sales shrivel.

Laid-off workers can tap money made available in the \$2.2 trillion rescue measure passed by Congress. It adds \$600 a week to unemployment benefits, extends eligibility to 39 weeks and for the first time wraps in part-timers and workers in the so-called gig economy, such as Uber drivers.

Achsa Febrero, a Subway worker at a rest stop Fairfield, Conn., is among the millions laid off and now waiting for unemployment benefits to kick in, which could take weeks. She said she is on a payment plan to keep her phone connected and unsure how she'll pay for groceries — and deeply frustrated at the billions benefiting corporations in the federal bailout.

"These companies are getting government relief, government relief," Febrero said. "They could afford to pay us more than what we're getting. They could support us through this time, and they're not. We're human. What makes them better than us?"

Hinnant reported from Paris. Sherman reported from Washington. 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>.

## 'Surreal': NY funeral homes struggle as virus deaths surge

By JAKE SEINER and JOHN MINCHILLO Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Pat Marmo walked among 20 or so deceased in the basement of his Brooklyn funeral home, his protective mask pulled down so his pleas could be heard.

"Every person there, they're not a body," he said. "They're a father, they're a mother, they're a grandmother. They're not bodies. They're people."

Like many funeral homes in New York and around the globe, Marmo's business is in crisis as he tries to meet surging demand amid the coronavirus pandemic that has killed around 1,400 people in New York City alone, according to a tally from Johns Hopkins University. His two cellphones and the office line are ringing constantly. He's apologizing to families at the start of every conversation for being unusually terse, and begging them to insist hospitals hold their dead loved ones as long as possible.

His company is equipped to handle 40 to 60 cases at a time, no problem. On Thursday morning, it was taking care of 185.

"This is a state of emergency," he said. "We need help."

Funeral directors are being squeezed on one side by inundated hospitals trying to offload bodies, and on the other by the fact that cemeteries and crematoriums are booked for a week at least, sometimes two.

Marmo let The Associated Press into his Daniel J. Schaefer funeral home in the Sunset Park neighborhood of Brooklyn on Thursday to show how dire the situation has become.

He has about 20 embalmed bodies stored on gurneys and stacked on shelves in the basement and



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another dozen in his secondary chapel room, both chilled by air conditioners.

He estimated that more than 60% had died of the new coronavirus. For most people, the virus causes mild or moderate symptoms, but for some, especially older adults and people with existing health problems, it can cause more severe illness and lead to death.

"It's surreal," he said.

Hospitals in New York have been using refrigerated trucks to store the dead, and Marmo is trying to find his own. One company quoted him a price of \$6,000 per month, and others are refusing outright because they don't want their equipment used for bodies.

Even if he gets a truck, he has nowhere obvious to put it. He's wondering if the police station across the street might let him use its driveway.

He's also hoping the Environmental Protection Agency will lift regulations that limit the hours crematoriums can operate. That would ease some of the backlog.

"I need somebody to help me," he said. "Maybe if they send me refrigeration, or guide me in a way that I could set up a refrigerated trailer that I could keep, and I could supervise."

Patrick Kearns, a fourth-generation funeral director in Queens, said the industry has never experienced anything like this. His family was prepared on 9/11 for their business to be overrun, but with so many bodies lost amid the rubble, the rush never came.

He's seeing it now. The Kearns' business in Rego Park is just minutes from Elmhurst Hospital, a hot spot in the city, which itself has emerged as the epicenter of the U.S. outbreak. Through the first 15 days of March, the family's four funeral homes held 15 services. In the second half of the month, they had 40.

Like Marmo, Kearns has converted a small chapel into a makeshift refrigerator with an air conditioner. Other funeral directors told The Associated Press this week they were prepared to take similar measures.

The surge in deaths is coming at a time when there are tight restrictions on gatherings, making saying goodbye a lonely process.

A family at Green-Wood Cemetery in Brooklyn this week leaned over a yellow chain serving as a cordon and tossed roses at the casket of a loved one. Another in Queens offered final goodbyes through the windows of their cars. At one cemetery in the Bronx, where visitors were barred entirely, a funeral director stood over the grave and took photos to send to mourners.

"The whole process, including the experience for the family during the funeral, is one of sort of isolation rather than the support," said Bonnie Dixon, president of Maple Grove Cemetery in Queens.

Jackie McQuade, a funeral director at Schuyler Hill funeral home in the Bronx, has struggled to tell families no. But she has no choice, given rules limiting services to immediate family only, if that.

One cemetery she worked with has locked its gates to family and friends. Only she and a priest were allowed at the site of a burial. She photographed the casket being lowered, hoping it could bring some closure to the family.

"We would be going crazy if it were one of our loved ones," she said. "We're bearers of bad news on top of a sad situation."

Marmo said he's hardly sleeping from the stress, worried he'll forget a small but critical task, like removing someone's ring before they're sent for cremation.

He's set to host a funeral Friday for a 36-year-old New York City subway driver who died last week helping riders evacuate a burning train. There will be a limited service in his main chapel, where he has 10 chairs, lined in two rows with 6 feet (2 meters) between each. The best he can do while respecting "social distancing" guidelines.

"The guy deserves a funeral down the Canyon of Heroes," Marmo said, referring to a stretch of Broadway in lower Manhattan where ticker tape parades are traditionally held. "Is he going to get that? He's not going to get that. And it's horrible."

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This story has been updated to correct the name of one of the funeral homes to Daniel J. Schaefer funeral home, not David J. Schaefer funeral home.

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## Boost the schmooze? Trump wants tax dining deduction back

By MARCY GORDON AP Business Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — It may be an odd gesture at a time of social distancing, but President Donald Trump is leaning into his plea to Congress to restore full tax benefits prized by business for fine dining and schmoozing. Trump is seizing on the pandemic crisis to push for an item on his economic wish list: full tax deductions for business meals in restaurants and for other entertainment expenses.

Tax relief for fine dining and the like clashes with the reality of social separation urged by the government as a critical measure to contain the coronavirus. Restaurants and sports stadiums, with their corporate boxes, sit empty across the country.

But Trump argues that restoring the corporate tax deductions could help shore up the pulverized restaurant industry. It was Trump's own tax law in 2017, which sliced the tax rate for corporations from 35% to 21%, that reduced or eliminated those same deductions. It was a rare provision that wasn't business-friendly.

The deductions tend to favor higher-end restaurants, the part of the industry that's been hardest hit by the economic dislocation. Mass-market eateries and fast food and pizza chains have been more likely to hold things together with takeout and delivery business.

"This is a great time to bring it back," Trump said of the tax break during a White House briefing Wednesday. "Otherwise a lot of these restaurants are going to have a hard time reopening."

If the tax relief comes, the president said, it will "open up" the restaurant business, and, "in fact, I think the restaurant business will be actually bigger and better than it is right now." Trump has repeatedly predicted that the economy will rebound robustly, lifted by consumers' "great pent-up demand."

Restoring the dining deduction could help at least the tonier part of the restaurant industry — but down the road and depending on the strength of the recovery and consumer spending, some experts believe.

"Do I think it's a massive help? I don't," said Jonathan Maze, editor-in-chief of Restaurant Business magazine. "In theory, you could see it help as business travel picks backs up. Maybe it gets a few people into restaurants who might not have done so before."

By far the biggest factor, Maze noted, will be the money that goes into consumers' pockets, including from direct cash payments from the government. Whether they remain too frightened to go to restaurants is an uncomfortable question.

"While the restaurant industry sorely needs federal assistance, restoring deductibility is an action that should fall further down the priority list," said Kevin Schimpf, senior manager for industry research at Technomic. "With so many business people and office staff working remotely for the foreseeable future, it's unlikely this action would have much short-term benefit."

Congressional leaders haven't weighed in yet on Trump's proposal.

Trump's 2017 tax law, whisked through by the then-Republican majority in Congress, cut the 100% deduction for business meals in half and eliminated it entirely for most entertainment expenses at venues like sporting and cultural events.

From pricey corporate boxes at sports stadiums to Double-A baseball games in small towns, the entertainment deduction was a prized perk for companies. Some companies continued to spend without the tax incentive, seeing the benefits from entertaining as a payoff in future revenue. But the tax change had a bite.

There's also a psychological effect. When something's deductible, even in part, people think it's less expensive; the government, in effect, is picking up part of the cost.

## States demand ventilators as feds ration limited supply

By RICARDO ALONSO-ZALDIVAR, ROBERT BURNS and BEN FOX Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Two weeks ago, the Pentagon promised to make as many as 2,000 military ventilators available as the federal government strains to contend with the coronavirus pandemic. As of Wednesday, less than half had been allocated, despite a desperate need across the country.

At the Federal Emergency Management Agency, tasked with coordinating the federal response to the outbreak, about 9,000 additional ventilators are also on hold as officials seek to determine where they are needed most urgently.

The combination of scarce supply and high need has sent many states onto the open market, where they are bidding for ventilators from private manufacturers. Their competition in that bidding process: both the federal government and other states.

"It's like being on eBay with 50 other states bidding on a ventilator," said New York Gov. Andrew Cuomo, whose state is the epicenter of the pandemic in the United States. He urged FEMA to step in and act as a single purchaser of the vital machines.

The slow deployment of ventilators underscores the ways in which the sprawling federal bureaucracy has fallen short in the crisis. Demand for medical equipment far outpaces the current supply, and the stockpiles that do exist aren't enough for the hardest-hit areas. That undercuts the air of confidence projected by President Donald Trump at his daily briefings.

Cuomo, whose state has had more than 92,000 cases of COVID-19, warned Thursday that New York has only 2,200 ventilators in its own stockpile after shipping out 600 to New York City, Westchester and Long Island. He would run out in six days at this rate.

FEMA has sent 4,400 ventilators to New York, where officials have said they will likely need 20,000 to 40,000 during the crisis.

It's not just ventilators. FEMA has been able to fill only a fraction of the requests for protective equipment and medical supplies requested by the five Mid-Atlantic states and the District of Columbia, according to documents released by Rep. Carolyn B. Maloney, who chairs the Oversight and Reform committee.

The shortfalls include less than 10% of the requested number of N95 protective masks and none of 15,000 body bags requested.

But ventilators have emerged as crucial medical tools in treating patients. The machines pump air to a person's lungs through a tube inserted in the windpipe and can be lifesaving for severely ill patients.

The government had 9,961 ventilators as of Thursday, including 9,054 in the stockpile and 907 from the Department of Defense, according to FEMA.

The Health and Human Services Department, which manages the stockpile, said Thursday it has 2,109 ventilators that are undergoing required maintenance. Those are not included in the tally of machines that can be deployed. The goal is to complete all the maintenance by April 30.

In Louisiana, where coronavirus cases are skyrocketing, Gov. John Bel Edwards has requested 14,000 ventilators from the federal government and private companies. To date, the state has received just 442, including 150 that arrived Wednesday from the national stockpile.

"The 150 will only get us about a day or so, maybe two if we get really lucky before we've exceeded that capacity again," Edwards said.

FEMA is asking states to answer data-heavy questions to determine where the most urgent needs exist. Among them: How many usable ventilators, intensive care beds and machines that can be converted into ventilators are available within the state? How many anesthesia machines can be converted into ventilators in the state, and has that happened yet?

"People who have needed ventilators have been able to get on ventilators and I think that's our goal, with governors and with the mayors, to make sure that continues to happen," said Dr. Deborah Birx, the coordinator of the White House coronavirus task force.

FEMA spokeswoman Lizzie Litzow said states should not expect any shipments until they are within 72 hours of a crisis situation.

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Several states have hit that point. The federal government has deployed 2,400 ventilators to New York City, and an additional 2,000 for the rest of the state. FEMA said Wednesday that it was sending machines from the national stockpile to Michigan, New Jersey, Illinois, Connecticut and Louisiana.

Still, the numbers deployed to some of the states pale in comparison to what officials say they need. Michigan, which reported nearly 10,000 cases as of Wednesday, says it will need between 5,000-10,000 machines. It received 400 ventilators from FEMA on Tuesday.

Connecticut Governor Ned Lamont said Wednesday that his state has nearly 1,000 ventilators and requested an additional 1,500 from the national stockpile. It received 50.

Lawmakers have called repeatedly on the federal government to publicly account for how it is distributing ventilators and personal protective equipment but say they haven't received answers.

The Pentagon's announcement two weeks ago that it had 2,000 ventilators available appeared good news. But much of that stockpile is earmarked for a pair of hospital ships and military field hospitals being deployed to take some of the patient load off other facilities.

About 900 Pentagon ventilators are sitting idle, waiting for FEMA to ask for access.

FEMA officials say the Pentagon equipment requires additional training beyond what is typically required for hospital-grade equipment.

Rather than begin that training now, the agency says it is focusing on allocating conventional ventilators already in its stockpiles. FEMA said those are the types commonly used by U.S. hospitals and are "better suited for immediate use." It remains unclear how federal officials plan to address the issue of training civilians in local hospitals.

Trump has defended his administration's deployment of ventilators and said the federal government is doing all it can. He has taken steps to compel General Motors to make more of the machines, though the company was already moving in that direction before the president's order. He issued an order Thursday under the Defense Production Act aimed at ensuring manufacturers have the supplies to make the machines.

GM said in a statement with Ventec last week that they expect to deliver the first ventilators within weeks and will initially produce more than 10,000 per month.

Ford, in collaboration with GE Healthcare, said Tuesday it expects to produce 50,000 of the ventilators within the next 100 days.

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Associated Press writers Melinda Deslatte in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, David Eggert in Lansing, Michigan, Mike Catalini in Trenton, New Jersey, and Marina Villeneuve in New York contributed to this report.

## 'Surreal': NY funeral homes struggle as virus deaths surge

By JAKE SEINER and JOHN MINCHILLO Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Pat Marmo walked among 20 or so deceased in the basement of his Brooklyn funeral home, his protective mask pulled down so his pleas could be heard.

"Every person there, they're not a body," he said. "They're a father, they're a mother, they're a grandmother. They're not bodies. They're people."

Like many funeral homes in New York and around the globe, Marmo's business is in crisis as he tries to meet surging demand amid the coronavirus pandemic that has killed around 1,400 people in New York City alone, according to a tally from Johns Hopkins University. His two cellphones and the office line are ringing constantly. He's apologizing to families at the start of every conversation for being unusually terse, and begging them to insist hospitals hold their dead loved ones as long as possible.

His company is equipped to handle 40 to 60 cases at a time, no problem. On Thursday morning, it was taking care of 185.

"This is a state of emergency," he said. "We need help."

Funeral directors are being squeezed on one side by inundated hospitals trying to offload bodies, and on the other by the fact that cemeteries and crematoriums are booked for a week at least, sometimes two.

Marmo let The Associated Press into his Daniel J. Schaefer funeral home in the Sunset Park neighbor-



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hood of Brooklyn on Thursday to show how dire the situation has become.

He has about 20 embalmed bodies stored on gurneys and stacked on shelves in the basement and another dozen in his secondary chapel room, both chilled by air conditioners.

He estimated that more than 60% had died of the new coronavirus. For most people, the virus causes mild or moderate symptoms, but for some, especially older adults and people with existing health problems, it can cause more severe illness and lead to death.

"It's surreal," he said.

Hospitals in New York have been using refrigerated trucks to store the dead, and Marmo is trying to find his own. One company quoted him a price of \$6,000 per month, and others are refusing outright because they don't want their equipment used for bodies.

Even if he gets a truck, he has nowhere obvious to put it. He's wondering if the police station across the street might let him use its driveway.

He's also hoping the Environmental Protection Agency will lift regulations that limit the hours crematoriums can operate. That would ease some of the backlog.

"I need somebody to help me," he said. "Maybe if they send me refrigeration, or guide me in a way that I could set up a refrigerated trailer that I could keep, and I could supervise."

Patrick Kearns, a fourth-generation funeral director in Queens, said the industry has never experienced anything like this. His family was prepared on 9/11 for their business to be overrun, but with so many bodies lost amid the rubble, the rush never came.

He's seeing it now. The Kearns' business in Rego Park is just minutes from Elmhurst Hospital, a hot spot in the city, which itself has emerged as the epicenter of the U.S. outbreak. Through the first 15 days of March, the family's four funeral homes held 15 services. In the second half of the month, they had 40.

Like Marmo, Kearns has converted a small chapel into a makeshift refrigerator with an air conditioner. Other funeral directors told The Associated Press this week they were prepared to take similar measures.

The surge in deaths is coming at a time when there are tight restrictions on gatherings, making saying goodbye a lonely process.

A family at Green-Wood Cemetery in Brooklyn this week leaned over a yellow chain serving as a cordon and tossed roses at the casket of a loved one. Another in Queens offered final goodbyes through the windows of their cars. At one cemetery in the Bronx, where visitors were barred entirely, a funeral director stood over the grave and took photos to send to mourners.

"The whole process, including the experience for the family during the funeral, is one of sort of isolation rather than the support," said Bonnie Dixon, president of Maple Grove Cemetery in Queens.

Jackie McQuade, a funeral director at Schuyler Hill funeral home in the Bronx, has struggled to tell families no. But she has no choice, given rules limiting services to immediate family only, if that.

One cemetery she worked with has locked its gates to family and friends. Only she and a priest were allowed at the site of a burial. She photographed the casket being lowered, hoping it could bring some closure to the family.

"We would be going crazy if it were one of our loved ones," she said. "We're bearers of bad news on top of a sad situation."

Marmo said he's hardly sleeping from the stress, worried he'll forget a small but critical task, like removing someone's ring before they're sent for cremation.

He's set to host a funeral Friday for a 36-year-old New York City subway driver who died last week helping riders evacuate a burning train. There will be a limited service in his main chapel, where he has 10 chairs, lined in two rows with 6 feet (2 meters) between each. The best he can do while respecting "social distancing" guidelines.

"The guy deserves a funeral down the Canyon of Heroes," Marmo said, referring to a stretch of Broadway in lower Manhattan where ticker tape parades are traditionally held. "Is he going to get that? He's not going to get that. And it's horrible."

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This story has been updated to correct the name of one of the funeral homes to Daniel J. Schaefer funeral home, not David J. Schaefer funeral home.

Follow Jake Seiner on Twitter: [twitter.com/Jake\\_Seiner](https://twitter.com/Jake_Seiner)

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

## Coronavirus survivor: 'In my blood, there may be answers'

By LAURAN NEERGAARD and MARSHALL RITZEL Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Tiffany Pinckney remembers the fear when COVID-19 stole her breath. So when she recovered, the New York City mother became one of the country's first survivors to donate her blood to help treat other seriously ill patients.

"It is definitely overwhelming to know that in my blood, there may be answers," Pinckney told The Associated Press.

Doctors around the world are dusting off a century-old treatment for infections: Infusions of blood plasma teeming with immune molecules that helped survivors beat the new coronavirus. There's no proof it will work. But former patients in Houston and New York were early donors, and now hospitals and blood centers are getting ready for potentially hundreds of survivors to follow.

"There's a tremendous call to action," said Dr. David Reich, president of New York's Mount Sinai Hospital, which declared Pinckney recovered and raced to collect her blood. "People feel very helpless in the face of this disease. And this is one thing that people can do to help their fellow human beings."

As treatments get underway, "we just hope it works," he said.

What the history books call "convalescent serum" was most famously used during the 1918 flu pandemic, and also against measles, bacterial pneumonia and numerous other infections before modern medicine came along. Why? When infection strikes, the body starts making proteins called antibodies specially designed to target that germ. Those antibodies float in survivors' blood — specifically plasma, the yellowish liquid part of blood — for months, even years.

When new diseases erupt and scientists are scrambling for vaccines or drugs, it's "a stopgap measure that we can put into place quickly," said Dr. Jeffrey Henderson of Washington University School of Medicine in St. Louis, who is helping to develop a nationwide study.

This "is not a cure per se, but rather it is a way to reduce the severity of illness," Henderson said.

Doctors don't know how long survivors' antibodies against COVID-19 will persist.

But for now, "they're the safest ones on the street," said Dr. Rebecca Haley of Bloodworks Northwest in Seattle, which is working to identify donors. "We would not be making a dent in their antibody supply for themselves."

Last week, the Food and Drug Administration told hospitals how to seek case-by-case emergency permission to use convalescent plasma, and Houston Methodist Hospital and Mount Sinai jumped at the chance.

And a desperate public responded, with families taking to social media to plead on behalf of sick loved ones and people recovering asking how they could donate. According to Michigan State University, more than 1,000 people signed up with the National COVID-19 Convalescent Plasma Project alone. Dozens of hospitals formed that group to spur plasma donation and research.

Would-be donors can't just show up at a blood center. Those with a proven infection who've been symptom-free for several weeks must get tested to ensure the virus is gone. They also must be healthy enough to meet the other requirements for blood donation — plus get an additional test to see if their antibody level is high enough.

"You don't want to take plasma from someone who had a mediocre immune response. That wouldn't be helpful," said Dr. Julie Ledgerwood of the National Institutes of Health.

Chinese doctors last week reported that five patients given convalescent plasma all showed some im-

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provement about a week later. But they also received other therapies, and without a rigorous study, there's no way to know if the plasma made the difference.

Studies are being planned to test convalescent plasma against regular care in sick patients, and to prevent infections among people at high risk of exposure such as health care workers.

Another approach: Spain-based plasma manufacturer Grifols aims to concentrate donor plasma in a North Carolina factory, creating a high-dose version that also would need testing.

Separately, NIH researchers are measuring survivors' antibody levels to learn how strong the vaccines under development must be to protect. Other teams, including at Beijing's Tsinghua University, are hunting which antibodies are most potent, to copy in a lab and turn into drugs.

But donations from people like Pinckney could be used as fast as blood centers can process it. She got sick the first week of March. First came the fever and chills. She couldn't catch her breath, and deep breathing caused chest pains. The single mother worried about her sons, 9 and 16.

"I remember being on my bathroom floor crying and praying," the 39-year-old said.

So when Mount Sinai, which diagnosed her, called Pinckney to check on her recovery and ask if she'd consider donating, she didn't hesitate.

"It's humbling. And for me, it's also a beacon of hope for someone else," she said.

Neergaard reported from Washington. AP National Writer Allen G. Breed in North Carolina contributed to this report.

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

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

## The show can't go on: Virus halts circus in Netherlands

DRACHTEN, Netherlands (AP) — Circus Renz Berlin's fleet of blue, red and yellow trucks have had a fresh lick of paint over the winter. But now, as coronavirus measures shut down the entertainment industry across Europe, they have no place to go.

"It's catastrophic for everybody," said Sarina Renz, of the family circus that has been in existence since 1842.

For the foreseeable future, the circus is parked up behind an equestrian center in a northern Dutch town, waiting and hoping for an end to the crisis.

The German circus' animals, including eight Siberian steppe camels, 15 horses and a llama, are spending their time in sandy fields munching their way through the circus' supply of food and supplies donated by locals.

"We have food, but not for long. We're already nearly through our reserves. Now other people have helped by bringing things for the coming weeks. We've got supplies from people, that's really fantastic."

There are 18 members of the extended Renz family on hand to look after the animals, other performers have already been sent home, Sarina said.

Children from the family pass the time playing around the trucks and animals and get home schooling -- that's new for most children in the Netherlands but not for the Renz family, who usually are moving from one show location to the next too often to attend a regular school.

For now, the family has to get used to a more stationary way of life, but one without the lifeblood of the circus: The public.

"We're just used to performing our shows. That's our life," says Sarina. "We live to make other people happy with our shows, our attractions."

## After ignoring warnings, Israeli ultra-Orthodox hit by virus

By **ARIEL SCHALIT** and **ILAN BEN ZION** Associated Press

BNEI BRAK, Israel (AP) — Early this week, the streets of the central Israeli city of Bnei Brak were bustling with shoppers as ultra-Orthodox residents, obeying their religious leaders, ignored pleas to stay home in the face of the coronavirus threat.

By Friday, Bnei Brak had become the country's worst hot spot and now resembles a ghost town. One expert estimated that nearly 40% of the city's population might already have been infected.

The city has become a lightning rod for anger and frustration by some secular Israelis who allege insular Haredi communities — with disproportionately high numbers of confirmed cases — are undermining national efforts to contain the virus.

The pandemic also has threatened to upend deep-seated customs in the religious world, including blind obedience to religious leaders and the belief that religious studies and traditions take precedence over the rules of a modern state.

The crisis is rooted in a combination of factors. Israel's ultra-Orthodox tend to live in poor, crowded neighborhoods where sickness can quickly spread. Synagogues, the centerpiece of social life, bring men together to pray and socialize in small spaces.

"I am very, very concerned that we'll see a broader contagion in the ultra-Orthodox community and to the broader Israeli population," said Hagai Levine, a Hebrew University professor who chairs the Israeli Association of Public Health Physicians.

Since Israel's founding, secular and ultra-Orthodox Israelis have viewed each other with suspicion, and tensions have erupted repeatedly over hot button issues such as the military draft. Ultra-Orthodox leaders have used their considerable political leverage to help maintain the community's insular lifestyle with government grants, feeding secular complaints that the haredim are a burden to the collective.

A new debate erupted Thursday when Health Minister Yaakov Litzman, a powerful ultra-Orthodox politician meant to lead the battle against the virus, was confirmed to be infected.

This forced Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, the ministry's director general and reportedly the head of the Mossad spy agency, into quarantine because of exposure to Litzman. Netanyahu, who tested negative, went through an identical experience after a previous exposure to an infected ultra-Orthodox aide.

Channel 12 TV said ministry officials were furious with Litzman, who had resisted calls in recent weeks to impose restrictions on gatherings at religious institutions. The channel said Litzman had quietly been breaking the rules and attending prayer sessions at synagogues.

"An outbreak in Bnei Brak is the same as an outbreak in Tel Aviv. Litzman did not just betray his own voters. He betrayed all Israelis," Zehava Galon, a former leader of the secular Meretz party, wrote in the Haaretz daily.

When Israel began shutting down schools, workplaces and its international airport last month to slow the outbreak, Litzman was not the only religious leader to resist.

Influential Rabbi Chaim Kanievsky of Bnei Brak said closing religious seminaries is more harmful than the virus. "The Torah protects and saves," he said.

In recent weeks, attempts by police to enforce quarantine orders in Bnei Brak and religious neighborhoods of Jerusalem resulted in standoffs with angry crowds. Some shouted "Nazis" as police arrested or fined violators.

Police say officers have been assaulted multiple times and several paramedics have been injured by ultra-Orthodox crowds.

In recent days, defiance has subsided as the scale of the outbreak became clear. Kanievsky, 92, now urges followers to stay at home.

For most people, the virus 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 that can be fatal.

Israel has over 6,800 reported cases, with 36 deaths. Jerusalem and Bnei Brak, home to large ultra-



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Orthodox communities, have the largest concentrations.

Ran Saar, who runs the Maccabi Healthcare Services, a leading provider, told parliament he estimates some 75,000 people in Bnei Brak, or 38% of the population, could be infected. He said the city has many elderly residents and called for urgent action.

Saar said his estimates were based on test data. He told Channel 12 that he believes thousands of people are refusing to be tested because they don't want to disrupt next week's Passover holiday.

The government declared Bnei Brak a "restricted zone" Thursday, limiting movement in and out of the city. Earlier in the day, police patrols were already out in large numbers to make sure residents remained indoors.

Streets normally crowded with Passover shoppers were deserted. Police in white hazmat suits raided a synagogue, sending some 15 worshippers home with fines of over \$100 each. One police car broadcast stay-home appeals in Yiddish, a European language still common in ultra-Orthodox circles.

Anshel Pfeffer, a commentator at Haaretz, said the crisis presents a major challenge to the rabbis' traditional authority and the ultra-Orthodox way of life.

"The community was already facing challenges before the coronavirus crisis," he said. "But this is certainly bringing a lot of these challenges to a head."

## The daily terrors: Improvising in a makeshift ICU in Spain

By RENATA BRITO Associated Press

BADALONA, Spain (AP) — The tension is palpable. There is no non-essential talking. An orchestra of medical monitors marks the tempo with an endless series of soft, distinct beeps.

Never have so many people been inside the library of the Germans Trias i Pujol hospital in northeastern Spain. But the health care workers in improvised protective gear aren't consulting medical books. Instead, they're treating patients in critical condition suffering from pneumonia caused by the coronavirus.

From the outside, this makeshift intensive-care unit in Badalona, near Barcelona, looks nothing like a library. The bookshelves have been removed to make room for up to 20 hospital beds, breathing machines and an array of medical equipment after the longstanding ICU and other areas of the hospital flooded with COVID-19 patients.

With the scarcity of full-body protective suits across Spain, doctors and nurses are employing what they can find, reusing masks, layering oversized surgical gowns with plastic aprons and running through an infinite number of latex gloves.

Like scuba divers, they apply a small dose of detergent to their goggles just before stepping into the sweltering, virus-laden room in the hopes of mitigating the inevitable fogging of their eye protection caused by their own breathing.

They'll be at it for hours, racing from patient to patient, sweating under all the layers.

A team of Associated Press journalists enters the room to document the work, but their presence is barely noticed. Health workers remain focused on their essential tasks -- monitoring vitals, administering medication, manipulating the tubes and cords connecting the patients to a plethora of machines.

Most patients are intubated and hooked up to ventilators. About half have been flipped onto their stomachs to ease pressure on their lungs and help their breathing. Nurses acknowledge that this is not a hopeful sign.

As Spain sees the rate of infections slowly stabilize, it continues logging a daily record number of deaths -- Thursday set a record, with 950 deaths in 24 hours. More than 10,000 people have died in Spain thus far.

The patients in this alternate ICU will likely spend weeks in the hospital before their battle with the virus is won or lost. They fight for life without their loved ones, who are unable to visit them.

Nurses on the other side of the glass observe their movements, typing away on computers. Communicating on walkie-talkies, those inside give them the latest developments: "37.8C." One of the patients has a fever again. Medication is then injected into the IV bag.

Time floats, and not just because the nurses are unable to see their watches from behind their foggy goggles.

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As one person's shift ends, the laborious process of leaving the ICU begins. Nurses exit via a designated door and remove their now-contaminated armor, one piece at a time. Goggles go into one bucket, gowns in another. The outer layer of gloves and aprons are thrown into the trash.

A weight is lifted off their shoulders as they leave the ICU behind. But another weight takes its place in the form of a haunting question: Will the virus follow them home?

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

## **AP-NORC poll: About half of workers lose income due to virus**

**By JOSH BOAK and EMILY SWANSON The Associated Press**

WASHINGTON (AP) — About half of all working Americans report some kind of income loss affecting themselves or a member of their household due to the coronavirus pandemic, with low-income Americans and those without college degrees especially likely to have lost a job, according to a new poll from The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research.

Sixty percent of Americans now say the national economy is "poor," an alarmingly swift reversal from the 67% who called it "good" in January. The spike in pessimism has followed a stock market collapse and the closures of businesses around the country as regular economic activity has been halted in an attempt to limit the number of COVID-19 deaths to hundreds of thousands instead of millions.

The income losses include pay cuts, unpaid time off and reduced hours, as well as actual lost jobs, with 23% of adults who had work when the outbreak started saying they or a member of their household have since been laid off. A third of those in households making less than \$50,000 a year say they or a household member have lost their job.

"It's terrible and it's going to get worse," said Bill Ardren, 75, a retired community college vice president from Minnesota. "The stock market is down. Unemployment is up. Stores are shutting down. I don't see any bright lights in the economy right now."

The new AP-NORC survey results come as the Labor Department said Thursday a record 6.6 million Americans sought jobless benefits last week, a doubling of the previous record set just the prior week. Those figures suggest the United States lost about 6% of its 152 million jobs in half a month.

Samantha Lafitte, 30, of Moody, Texas, was furloughed from her job as a nurse at a gastro clinic. She will still draw some pay over the next two weeks, meaning that she and her husband have some time before any pressures build.

"But in three weeks, I won't be paid anything," said Lafitte, the mother of two children, 11 and 2. "It does put on a financial strain."

Despite COVID-19's pocketbook impact on millions of Americans, as well as their overall pessimism about the economy, the poll found majorities remain confident about their personal finances — as well as President Donald Trump's handling of the economy.

"We're at a bump in the road right now," said Chip McEwen, 64, who worked in financial services and drives a charter bus in his semi-retirement in Montgomery, Alabama. "If the COVID-19 weren't here, we would be rocking and rolling."

A solid 62% of Americans say their own financial situation is good, down only slightly from 67% in January. People are also more likely to believe their financial situation will get better than get worse, 39% to 19%. Still, the percentage expecting a worsening situation for their personal finances is up slightly from 12% in January.

Opinions about the economy are still shaped by political beliefs — a sign of the persistent divisions that have defined the Trump era. Negative views have increased among Republicans, from 10% who called the economy poor in January to 35% now. They are now the overwhelming views among Democrats, up from 47% in January to 81% now.

The outbreak cut short a cruise Ardren was taking with his wife, causing them to disembark early in

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Australia. A critic of the president, Ardren said his experience abroad led him to see Trump as putting the world at risk by not cracking down earlier on the outbreak.

"People in Australia ask what's going on in the U.S. and how come we're doing all this stupid stuff," he said. "If the U.S. is goofy, they're in trouble — they know that."

Yet most Americans still feel confident in Trump's economic leadership. The president received a 56% approval rating on the economy, significantly higher than his overall approval rating of 43%.

Ross Turner, a 75-year-old surveyor and engineer from Spanish Fork, Utah, thinks Trump has done "pretty well" in dealing with the economy and keeping the public informed. He's inclined to vote for the president in November, after having not backed him in 2016.

"The idea of having a daily briefing — they're trying to be transparent about things," Turner said.

Nick Macrina, 29, was let go last month from his job as a server at El Cortijo in Burlington, Vermont. He's been told the job should return in May. The added unemployment benefits should help as he continues to study to be an herbal clinician. But a lot will depend on how long the downturn lasts.

"It's helpful that we're at least getting something for support," he said. "But is it enough? It's hard to say."

The AP-NORC poll of 1,057 adults was conducted March 26-29 using a sample drawn from NORC's probability-based AmeriSpeak Panel, which is designed to be representative of the U.S. population. The margin of sampling error for all respondents is plus or minus 4.1 percentage points.

Online:

AP-NORC Center: <http://www.apnorc.org/>

## Democrats delay nominating convention amid virus concerns

By **BILL BARROW** Associated Press

Democrats announced Thursday that they were postponing their presidential nominating convention until August, an unprecedented move that shows how the coronavirus is reshaping the battle for the White House.

The party had hoped that a mid-July convention would give them more time to rally behind a nominee and unify against President Donald Trump. But concerns that large crowds will spread the virus prompted Democrats, including prospective nominee Joe Biden, to press for alternatives.

"In our current climate of uncertainty, we believe the smartest approach is to take additional time to monitor how this situation unfolds so we can best position our party for a safe and successful convention," said Democratic convention CEO Joe Solmonese.

Milwaukee will still host the convention, which is now scheduled for the week of Aug. 17. Republicans are sticking with their plan to meet in Charlotte, North Carolina, a week later to renominate Trump.

The social distancing required to combat the coronavirus has already prompted multiple states to delay their presidential primaries from April and May into June. But the postponement of the convention is the most significant change to the presidential selection process to date.

Outside circumstances have affected conventions in the past, including hurricanes that forced relatively minor scheduling changes to Republican gatherings in 2008 and 2012. Still, the major political parties have always pressed forward with their conventions, even during times of crisis as severe as the Civil War.

"Ultimately, the health and safety of our convention attendees and the people of Milwaukee is our top priority," Democratic National Committee Chairman Tom Perez said.

Biden began suggesting this week that changes were likely. Appearing on Jimmy Fallon's late-night NBC program on Wednesday, Biden said he doubted "whether the Democratic convention is going to be able to be held" on its original July 13-16 dates.

"I think it's going to have to move into August," Biden said.

The announcement on Thursday didn't specify whether the convention will remain a traditional four-night affair or whether all aspects will be held in-person. There has been discussion of holding parts of

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the convention virtually and allowing delegates to vote by proxy.

Still, the change presents massive logistical issues for the tens of thousands of delegates, activists, party leaders and media who planned to descend on Milwaukee in July. The party said the arena slated to host the convention along with hotels in the area are still available in August.

Neither Democratic nor Republican leaders want to sacrifice the boost that can result from an enthusiastic convention gathering.

Trump thrives on big rallies and has missed that part of his routine amid the coronavirus outbreak, reluctantly turning the Rose Garden and the White House briefing room into substitutes. A traditional convention, with a nationally televised nomination acceptance speech, could be even more critical for Biden, who has been relegated recently to remote television interviews from his Delaware home, unable to draw the kind of spotlight that a sitting president commands.

Biden has a commanding delegate lead, but Vermont Sen. Bernie Sanders remains in the race and could keep the former vice president from winning the nomination until late June. That requires Perez to tread gingerly around any discussions that party leaders have with Biden or his advisers — especially given the skepticism among Sanders' supporters of the party establishment.

Sanders' campaign didn't comment Thursday on the delay. Solmonese and Perez didn't explicitly mention Biden in their statement announcing the postponement.

The move could give Democratic officials more flexibility to deal with the changing primary calendar. More than a dozen states have delayed their primaries, some of them pushing beyond the party's existing June 9 deadline to hold contests and the June 20 deadline to name convention delegates. Violating those deadlines can cost a state up to half its convention delegates. The party's rules and bylaws chairman, Jim Roosevelt, said Thursday that his full committee will consider waivers to the existing deadlines as they are submitted by state Democratic parties.

The move also allows Democrats to avoid another potential conflict: rescheduled NBA playoffs. It's not clear whether playoffs will occur, but existing convention plans had called for the party not to have access to prepare the arena until the Milwaukee Bucks had concluded their season. The NBA's original schedule posed no real threat. But rescheduled playoffs for July could have forced a renegotiation.

Milwaukee Mayor Tom Barrett said Thursday that he's "hopeful" about an overhauled convention, but he did not downplay the logistical challenges of putting on a convention. "I would love to say yes, and I hope it's yes and that we have tens of thousands of visitors, but we can see this is changing on an hourly basis," he said, "and so I think there's a lot of twists and turns between now and obviously the end of this month, not to mention the three months we have following that."

Republicans don't face the same internal party uncertainty as Democrats, though they still must weigh the same public health scenarios.

Republican National Committee Chairwoman Ronna McDaniel said she thinks "we should be out of this" by the end of August. In an interview, she said Republicans already have raised the money necessary for the convention and have the staff hired and in place.

"We're ready to go," she said. "This isn't something that's going to stop us."

Still, she added a caveat: "Obviously, science will dictate that."

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Associated Press writers Steve Peoples in New York, Jeff Baenen in Minneapolis and Gretchen Ehlke in Milwaukee contributed to this report.

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

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This story has been corrected to show Biden spoke to NBC's Jimmy Fallon, not ABC's Jimmy Kimmel.



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## VIRUS DIARY: Fantasy baseball, when real ball is the fantasy

By DAN SEWELL Associated Press

CINCINNATI (AP) — “People ask me what I do in winter when there is no baseball. I’ll tell you what I do. I stare out the window and wait for spring.” — Rogers Hornsby (1896-1963), baseball Hall of Famer

Updating my brackets, I looked forward to a dream second-round game: the 1919 Chicago White Sox against the 1976 Cincinnati Reds. The two greatest players ever banned because of betting scandals, Shoeless Joe Jackson and Pete Rose, on the same field!

The field is made of cardboard, a game played with dice and statistically accurate cards.

Instead of cleaning out the basement as planned two weeks ago in our self-isolating home, I returned upstairs carrying a box of Strat-O-Matic cards and drew up a March Madness baseball tournament with the best teams of all time.

“The only church that feeds the soul, day in, day out, is the church of baseball.” — Annie Savoy (Susan Sarandon) in “Bull Durham”

Opening Day is a big deal in Cincinnati: eclectic parade, office parties with hot dogs; block parties with live music. But the coronavirus outbreak forced baseball to postpone first games March 26 to no sooner than mid-May.

Right now, there’s no watching from lawn chairs the grandkids’ games of tee-ball, with kids piling on each other fighting for the ball while a coach windmills his arm to a confused runner. There’s no coach-pitch, where dads learn the shame of accidentally striking out their own child. No Little League, where you start seeing slick fielding and savvy batting.

“This field, this game, is a part of our past, Ray. It reminds us of all that once was good, and that could be again.” — Terence Mann (James Earl Jones) to Ray Kinsella (Kevin Costner) in “Field of Dreams”

We’re trying to get our baseball fixes.

A friend, media attorney Jack Greiner, has organized daily trivia and a Thursday night baseball conference chat among two dozen aficionados. Another baseball buddy, investment adviser Buck Newsome, brought smiles Tuesday night by sharing a photo of Rose wearing a self-made protective mask with the Reds’ wishbone “C” logo.

Robert Crotty, who has sold off his extensive baseball memorabilia collection, entertains Facebook friends by posting vintage baseball photos with captions such as umpire Jocko Conlan admonishing brawling players to “stay six feet apart!”

Fox Sports Ohio is replaying classic games. This week, it’s the four 1975 World Series games that the Reds won. Sorry, Red Sox fans, no dramatic Carlton Fisk Game Six-winning homer on here.

“Is this heaven?” — Shoeless Joe (Ray Liotta) in “Field of Dreams”

Baseball video games are fine, but this board game I first played at age 11 still spurs flights of imagination: Rose in his jut-jawed prime and a shyly smiling Shoeless Joe Jackson hanging around the batting cage on a sunny afternoon, talking hitting.

Jackson and pitcher Eddie Cicotte, also banned after the 1919 “Black Sox” scandal, starred in a play-in round win over the 1994 Montreal Expos. I’m hoping to get to the second round this weekend.

When this crisis has ended and baseball resumes, it will lift spirits that need it, as the 2001 Yankees did for New York after 9/11 with a thrilling postseason run that fell one game short. And we will feel comforted as fans did in 1946 when Ted Williams, Joe DiMaggio and Stan Musial returned to the field after World War II military service.

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“One guy died and he went to heaven, and he came back down and he told his buddy, ‘You know, I’ve got good news and bad news.’ ... ‘So what’s the good news?’ ‘Well, there’s baseball in heaven.’ ‘What’s the bad news?’ ‘You’re pitching next Thursday.’” — Rose, telling a favorite joke on ESPN.

“Virus Diary,” an occasional feature, will showcase the coronavirus saga through the eyes of Associated Press journalists around the world. Follow Dan Sewell, The AP’s Cincinnati correspondent, on Twitter at <https://twitter.com/dansewell>

## Stimulus aid for ‘small business’ will go to some big chains

By RYAN J. FOLEY Associated Press

IOWA CITY, Iowa (AP) — As the federal government prepares to launch a \$349 billion loan program meant to help small businesses survive the coronavirus pandemic, critics have growing concerns that some mom-and-pop shops might get squeezed out.

The Paycheck Protection Program — part of the \$2 trillion relief package signed into law last week — was billed as a way to help local businesses that often form the fabric of communities retain workers and pay bills. But an expansive definition of “small business” in the law means that it will be open to much more than just Main Street shops when lenders start processing applications Friday.

Operators of name-brand hotel, restaurant and service chains and franchises with thousands of employees at locations scattered across the U.S. are eligible. Lobbyists are also pushing the Small Business Administration to interpret the law generously to help sectors devastated by mandatory business closures and stay-at-home orders, possibly making the aid available to international fast food and lodging giants and allowing individual owners to get around a \$10 million cap on loans.

While Congress could approve more money later on, the program as it stands is expected to run out quickly. That could mean applicants who have the financial and legal expertise of a larger organization might be able to maximize their benefits, not leaving much for smaller businesses, especially those who wait or have problems applying.

“I’m certain that’s what’s going to happen,” said Lauren Friel, the owner of a wine bar in Somerville, Massachusetts, that has been closed for three weeks. “It makes me really angry. It’s outrageous. They are going to walk away with their pockets full of cash.”

Friel said she intends to apply Friday for around \$50,000 to help her pay rent and employees who have been furloughed, but she’s not expecting to be successful.

Independent contractors and the self-employed could be especially hurt since they will not be eligible to apply until April 10 under guidance from the Treasury Department. By then, banks could be overwhelmed with applications.

“It’s hard for me to say this: There is only \$350 billion in this fund. Every big restaurant and hotel chain is going to be going after this money. It’s not going to last,” said Ron Feldman, chief development officer at ApplePie Capital, which has been helping businesses get ready to apply.

“If you want to get this loan, speed is your friend,” Feldman told 2,000 franchise industry officials on a conference call this week.

Underscoring the need for help, the federal government reported Thursday that a record 10 million workers filed for unemployment in the two weeks ending March 28.

Jeff Brabant, manager of government relations for the National Federation of Independent Business, said he was still optimistic that the loan program would deliver for traditional small businesses.

“Our tone could change in a week if things don’t go well,” he said.

The program will give businesses low-interest loans of about 2.5 times their average monthly payroll. They will be fully or partially forgiven if businesses show that the money was used to retain or rehire employees and pay some overhead expenses through June 30.

The law specified that all food service and lodging businesses qualify as long as they do not have more

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than 500 employees at a single location. It also declared that thousands of franchises recognized by the SBA — like multilocation restaurants, hotels, gyms and hair salons — will qualify regardless of their revenue and ties to large corporate parents. Many nonprofits, which are normally ineligible for such aid, also qualify.

The law says the maximum loan will be \$10 million. But lobbyists representing chains are asking that the cap apply to each location — rather than each owner.

The International Franchise Association argued in a letter to the SBA that would allow the program “to achieve its intended outcome and have maximum impact.” The letter urged the agency to confirm that franchisors it recognizes — that are the parent companies of major chains from Burger King to Marriott — qualify as well.

The agency is expected to issue additional guidance on the program Thursday.

Greg Flynn, CEO of the Flynn Restaurant Group, which calls itself the largest restaurant franchisee in the U.S. and owns more than 1,200 Applebee’s, Arby’s, Taco Bell and Panera locations, said larger employers should get relief, too, so that they can quickly rehire workers.

Flynn said that he furloughed 30,000 of his 48,000 employees as his company’s revenue dropped by 60% in a matter of days. He is hoping to qualify for 2 1/2 times his \$60 million monthly payroll under the program.

“It is my 100% total focus just to survive and keep the infrastructure in place, so there is a home for our employees to come back to,” Flynn said. “With (the rescue), we can do it. Without it, I don’t think we can.”

Darryl DePriest, who was chief counsel for the SBA office that advocates for small business from 2015 to 2017, called the \$349 billion “almost like a first installment” and predicted Congress will eventually appropriate more money.

But for now, business owners who wait or have problems filing their applications might lose out to larger applicants, said Veronique de Rugy, a research fellow at George Mason University.

“When we look at back who were the beneficiaries of this, we’re probably going to see that it’s skewed toward the bigger of the so-called small businesses,” she said.

## **In Ecuador, families wait with their dead as bodies pile up**

**By CHRISTINE ARMARIO and GONZALO SOLANO Associated Press**

QUITO, Ecuador (AP) — Daniel Larrea died Monday after a week of high fever, struggling to breathe and steadily turning blue. Then a new nightmare began for his family. No one in their city on Ecuador’s Pacific coast would pick up his body.

“We wrapped him up in black plastic,” Larrea’s wife, Karina, said Wednesday. “He’s here in the living room.”

Hospitals are turning away patients and bodies are being left on streets and in homes for days in Guayaquil, a normally bustling city of 2.6 million that has become a hot spot in Latin America as the coronavirus pandemic spreads.

The small South American nation has recorded 120 coronavirus deaths, but officials say there could be dozens more who died without ever being officially diagnosed — people like Larrea, who had all the symptoms, but never got tested. Nationwide, there were 3,160 cases confirmed on Thursday, likely a vast underestimate.

Meanwhile, untold numbers of Ecuadorians are dying of unrelated diseases that can’t be treated because hospitals are overwhelmed.

It’s not just medical services at a breaking point. Morgues, funeral homes and all related services for the dead are over capacity.

In recent days, macabre images and pleas from families have appeared on social media showing dead loved ones wrapped in plastic or cloth, waiting for them to be taken away. Television crews have captured images of bodies and coffins left on sidewalks.

“It’s a desperate smell,” said Merwin Teran, 61, the owner of a Guayaquil funeral home, who said he saw 50 dead in one morgue alone.

Doctors say there aren’t enough tests in the country, making it harder to identify and isolate the sick

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to try to stop the spread of COVID-19, the disease the virus causes — as well as too few hospital beds and ventilators.

“We are seeing a situation quite similar to that of Italy,” said Dr. Mireya Rodas, a lung specialist at a Guayaquil hospital who has herself tested positive.

Ecuador identified its first case of COVID-19 on Feb. 29 — a 71-year-old woman who had traveled from Spain — making it one of the first Latin American countries to confirm the arrival of the disease.

Medical experts fear the disaster brewing in Guayaquil may offer a frightening glimpse of what awaits the region in coming weeks and months.

“More contagion, more mortality,” said Enrique Acosta, a researcher at the Max Planck Institute for Demographic research in Germany. “They are closely intertwined.”

Acosta is among a group of policy experts urging Latin American governments to quickly ramp up testing. They note that in countries like Singapore and South Korea, where the virus has been more quickly contained, testing was widespread. But that is not the case in Latin America and the Caribbean.

Medical professionals believe the true number of coronavirus cases in Ecuador could be five times the official count or higher.

Teran, the funeral home owner, said he went to a cemetery on Tuesday where workers usually inter about 30 people a day, but 149 bodies were awaiting burial or cremation.

He said many funeral homes are not operating, while those that are have to send workers to pick up bodies without adequate protection. By law, he said, funeral homes can’t pick up bodies until a doctor has signed off on a cause of death, but because so many physicians are treating patients, bodies are accumulating in morgues, creating a backlog.

Not all of the dead are dying from the coronavirus — which for most people, causes only mild to moderate symptoms, like a fever and cough. But for others, particularly older adults and those with other health problems, it can lead to pneumonia and death.

Carmen Suarez, 71, died at her home over the weekend in Guayaquil from what the family believes was kidney failure. Relatives tried to find a hospital that would accept her as her legs grew increasingly swollen, but were told no beds were available and that taking her to a hospital would be risky anyway because of the coronavirus spread.

By Tuesday, the family had spent three days waiting for her body to be taken away. They eventually called a funeral home worker who brought a coffin and embalmed her body, which was still waiting on the family’s patio.

“It’s catastrophic what is happening in Guayaquil,” said Byron Moreira, 36, her son-in-law. “I wouldn’t wish this on my worst enemy.”

Esteban Ortiz, a public health specialist, said that in the province of Guayas, which includes Guayaquil and where 70% of the country’s virus cases are located, only around 175 ventilators are likely available. On Thursday, 225 people were hospitalized, including 122 in serious condition nationwide, indicating a likely critical shortage of the life-saving equipment.

“We’re not giving them a chance to come and get medical attention,” he said.

The Ministry of Public Health did not respond to requests for comment. But at a news conference Wednesday, health authorities defended Ecuador’s response, saying that new technology would soon allow testing to increase to 1,400 a day.

Jorge Wated, the official tasked by the government with handling the death toll crisis, said authorities were preparing for many more fatalities and working to ensure all are buried appropriately. He said authorities usually pick up about 30 people who have died in their homes each day, but have been picking up around 150, not all of whom died of COVID-19.

“We ask for forgiveness for those who had to wait days for their loved ones to be picked up,” he said.

Gina Watson, representative for the Pan American Health Organization in Ecuador, said experts expect to see a similar uptick in cases elsewhere in the region.

“Guayaquil is experiencing what we expect to see in all countries,” she said. “A rising curve of cases along with the associated mortality.”



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Until he came down with a 102-degree fever a week ago, Larrea had no known health problems other than being overweight, his family said.

The family called doctors, who advised him to stay home and take an over-the-counter fever reducer. As he grew worse — struggling to breath and changing color — the family called for an ambulance, only to be told none were available to go to their poor neighborhood.

The family was dependent on the 42-year-old Uber driver and father of four for their economic livelihood and together with other relatives — eight people in total — live in a small home.

After he died, they wrapped the body in thick black plastic, called 911 and waited.

Aside from the emotional toll of seeing their loved one die, the family now fears that they have all been exposed to coronavirus.

“We’re afraid,” said Larrea’s wife, Karina, “that we’re all infected.”

Armario reported from Bogota, Colombia.

## **You’ve just lost your job? Here’s what you need to know**

**By CHRISTOPHER RUGABER and SARAH SKIDMORE SELL Associated Press Writers**

WASHINGTON (AP) — Nearly 10 million Americans have lost their jobs and applied for unemployment benefits in the past two weeks — a stunning record high that reflects the near-complete shutdown of the U.S. economy.

Job losses related to the coronavirus are sure to rise further in coming weeks, with economists saying the U.S. unemployment rate could reach as high as 15%, well above the 10% peak during the Great Recession. As recently as February, the unemployment rate was just 3.5%, a 50-year low.

For those who have suddenly lost jobs, it’s a frightening time. Bill need to be paid. Do they qualify for unemployment benefits? How fast will the money arrive?

Here are some questions and answers:

### **HOW CAN I GET UNEMPLOYMENT BENEFITS?**

Workers who have lost their jobs or income through no fault of their own should immediately file a claim for unemployment aid through their state labor departments. The benefit program is administered by state agencies. Most states are encouraging people to request benefits online or, if necessary, over the phone.

### **I’VE HEARD THE SYSTEM IS OVERWHELMED BY REQUESTS.**

Yes, some state websites have crashed. Phone lines have been jammed as the number of people seeking jobless aid has far surpassed all previous records. And the eligibility guidelines have changed. New York state, for example, received 8.2 million calls last week — more than 150 times the usual volume.

Still, people who have lost jobs or whose income has been hurt by coronavirus should keep trying. Many states are bringing on extra workers to handle the crush of applications and are expanding the hours when they accept calls. While it may take several weeks to process a claim, benefit payments will be retroactive: Eligible workers will receive benefits from the date they lost their jobs, regardless of when they file.

### **HOW CAN I MAKE THE PROCESS OPERATE MORE SMOOTHLY?**

Have all your information ready. This includes contact information for all your employers from the past 18 months, your Social Security number and documentation of your income, such as from tax forms or pay stubs.

### **HOW LARGE ARE THE UNEMPLOYMENT AID CHECKS?**

They vary sharply by state. Mississippi provides the lowest amount, \$235 a week. Massachusetts pays \$823 a week, the highest.

### **I HEARD THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT IS PROVING AN EXTRA \$600 A WEEK.**

Yes. But because that additional money is being paid by the federal government through a new program, rather than by the states’ regular benefits program, you may not receive it as quickly. And state unemployment offices may not be able to answer questions about it just yet.

### **I’M SELF-EMPLOYED. WILL I QUALIFY?**

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Yes, that is one of the changes made by the \$2.2 trillion economic rescue package signed into law by President Donald Trump last week. If you are self-employed, a contractor or a gig worker, you are now eligible to claim unemployment benefits. Still, some states, like New Mexico, are not yet set to process claims from groups of people who didn't qualify in the past.

**I WASN'T LAID OFF, BUT MY EMPLOYER CUT MY HOURS. WILL I QUALIFY FOR BENEFITS?**

Yes, you should apply. State rules differ, and it depends how large your income loss is. But in some states, workers whose hours have been sharply cut may be able to claim benefits that would make up for at least some of the lost income. Generally, if your lost pay exceeds what you would receive in unemployment benefits, you may be eligible for aid.

**I HAD TO LEAVE WORK BECAUSE OF THE CORONAVIRUS BUT WASN'T LAID OFF. WHAT ABOUT ME?**

You can potentially receive benefits, too. The U.S. Labor Department said states can make unemployment benefits available to people who are quarantined, who left work because of risk of exposure or to care for a family member.

That said, someone who receives paid sick leave or paid family leave is often still receiving full pay. So according to the Labor Department, that person is not "unemployed" and does not qualify for unemployment benefits.

**WHAT ABOUT THOSE \$1,200 CHECKS THE GOVERNMENT IS SENDING OUT? WHEN WILL I GET MINE?**

The federal rescue package provides a one-time payment of \$1,200 for all Americans earning less than \$75,000 a year. This money is totally separate from unemployment benefits — and for the jobless, will be in addition to unemployment aid. It will likely be a critical lifeline for many Americans.

The payments begin to phase out at above \$75,000 for individuals and \$150,000 for couples filing jointly and drop to zero for individuals above \$99,000 and couples earning \$198,000. For heads of household with one child, the benefit starts to decline at \$112,500 and falls to zero at \$146,500. Even those who just receive Social Security or other government benefit programs can receive a check.

A congressional memo obtained by the Associated Press said about 60 million Americans will receive the checks through direct deposit, starting the week of April 13. Those payments will go to households that have filed taxes in 2018 or 2019 and that provided the IRS with direct deposit information. For everyone else, checks will be mailed beginning May 4. The paper checks will be issued at a rate of about 5 million a week, which means it could take up to 20 weeks to distribute all the checks. That timeline would delay some checks until the week of Aug. 17.

**HOW LONG WILL UNEMPLOYMENT BENEFITS LAST?**

The duration varies by state. But the federal relief package adds 13 weeks of coverage for people who have exhausted their existing jobless benefits. Under the emergency legislation, people who exhaust both regular and extended benefits will become eligible for Pandemic Unemployment Assistance. People can receive a maximum of 39 weeks of benefits this year from all three sources combined.

**WHAT ABOUT GOVERNMENT AID FOR COMPANIES? CAN THAT HELP ME?**

It might. Small businesses will be eligible for loans that will be forgiven if they keep or rehire people they have laid off. Those loans will be available starting Friday, according to the Treasury Department. Airlines should also receive financial aid that is intended to prevent layoffs.

— Sell reported from Portland, Oregon.

## Mexican economy may contract by 4 to 8% in 2020

MEXICO CITY (AP) — Mexico's Treasury predicted Thursday that the country's economy will contract by as much as 3.9% in 2020 the face of the spreading COVID-19 pandemic, but private analysts are making even more dire predictions: the country's worst economic downturn since the Great Depression.

That was underscored Thursday when Mexico's Tourism Department said it was working with hotel companies to ensure the "gradual closing" of hotels in the country.

The Bank of America predicted Thursday that Mexico's GDP could contract by 8%. That would be a big-

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ger downturn than the 2009 global recession — complicated in Mexico by a swine flu outbreak — when GDP contracted by 6.5%. It would also be worse than the December 1994 peso crisis, following which the country's GDP contracted by 6.2% in 1995.

Bank of America analyst Carlos Capistran said: "You would have to go back to the Great Depression or the war to find numbers like this."

The bank said Mexico will face the twin shocks of a predicted 6% economic contraction in the United States, its largest trading partner, and oil prices that have fallen to about \$10.60 per barrel for Mexican export crude.

The U.S. downturn "impacts Mexico negatively mostly through trade but also through lower remittances," the money that Mexican migrants send home, according to the report.

Mexican migrants sent home a record \$36 billion in remittances in 2019, making it a larger source of revenue than tourism or oil exports.

But the report also noted that the recovery could be strong after the pandemic eases, with a strong upturn possibly starting in the fourth quarter of 2020.

"We see a recovery to 4.5% GDP growth in 2021 in part due to a large US recovery but also as the depreciation of the peso is likely to help economic activity after the initial shock is over," according to the bank's report.

Mexico's Treasury Department said even the best-case scenario for 2020 would be no growth.

Mexico was already in a technical recession. "In a very short period the global economic panorama has deteriorated rapidly and significantly," the treasury said in its forecast to Mexico's lower legislative chamber Wednesday.

It said the high level of macroeconomic uncertainty provoked by the pandemic makes it difficult to predict economic growth.

Gabriela Siller, an analyst with Banco Base, said Thursday that the Treasury forecast appeared to be optimistic. She noted that the latest survey published by Mexico's central bank anticipated an average contraction of 3.99%

President Andrés Manuel López Obrador plans to lay out the government's economic recovery plan Sunday.

## The Cuomo show, Andrew and Chris, enliven coronavirus TV

By DAVID BAUDER AP Media Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — With all their familial love and drama, the Cuomo brothers — Andrew during the daytime, Chris at night — have become compelling figures in the plague-driven landscape of American television.

Andrew, New York's governor, holds a near daily televised briefing on the epidemic, a mixture of statistics, aphorisms and advice together with prodding and praise directed at a fellow Queens, N.Y., native, President Donald Trump. Women and Democrats swoon.

Chris has tested positive for coronavirus and done his prime-time CNN shows this week while quarantined in his basement, describing his fever, chills and worries that his wife and children will catch the virus.

Their worlds merged Thursday, when Andrew brought Chris into his midday briefing via remote link. Chris described a fever dream where his big brother, dressed in a ballet outfit, danced around him and waved a wand to make his sickness disappear.

"Thank you for sharing that with us," Andrew deadpanned.

Both men have inherited a trait from their father Mario, like Andrew, a three-term New York governor: Neither will say something in 5 minutes when 20 will do. Both Fox News Channel and MSNBC grew tired of their banter and cut away to something else.

Andrew, 62, has used his briefings to scold young New Yorkers about social distancing, closing playgrounds when basketball games didn't cease. He's talked expansively on people needing to keep their spirits up and is candid when he doesn't know something. He offered detailed statistics Thursday on hospital equipment, with the screen behind him flashing the cliché, "A chain is only as strong as its weakest link."

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He's never been an orator like his dad. Yet some of the characteristics that cause him trouble as governor — his micro-management, constant need to be in charge and, some have said, bullying — work well now, said Elizabeth Benjamin, host of the Albany, N.Y.-based show "Capital Tonight" before it ended last year.

"He is rising to the occasion for which he was made," Benjamin said. "This is the kind of thing that he really excels at. This is not surprising to people who have followed him for many years."

Cuomo's performance has some Democrats wishing he was a presidential candidate. He waves off such talk.

Attacks on him from Trump's most loyal ally in the media, Fox News' Sean Hannity, indicate Cuomo has made a mark. They were wrapped into the best wishes Hannity offered to Chris on Tuesday.

"My political differences with his brother and the fact that he's lacked total preparedness and is screaming at the president ... that's politics," Hannity said.

Chris Cuomo says he continues to appear on TV in order to put a human face on the story, so people understand his physical struggles. The dark circles under his bleary eyes Thursday made it obvious.

"Nobody can sit on the sidelines right now, least of all somebody who has been blessed with a platform to talk about it," he said Wednesday night.

Viewers are intrigued. His show was seen by 2.8 million people on Tuesday, the day it was announced he had tested positive. That compares to the 1.1 million viewers his show averaged in March 2019, the Nielsen company said.

"He's in a position where he doesn't have to describe it second-hand," said Mark Whitaker, a former Newsweek editor and executive at both CNN and NBC News. "He can describe what he's going through. I wouldn't call it reassuring, but I think it's something that people want to know and to see and to hear."

Before his diagnosis, Andrew appeared on Chris' show a handful of times during the coronavirus outbreak, most recently Monday. Brother-on-brother news interviews is the sort of thing that makes journalism ethics experts queasy.

In this case, it gives viewers sitting at home a glimpse at the dynamics of a family other than their own. They've talked publicly about where their 88-year-old mother, Matilda, should stay other than her New York apartment to ride out the epidemic.

Thirteen years separate the brothers. Andrew was Mario's right-hand man and enforcer during his father's election as governor in 1982 and first term. Chris was 12 that year and has talked about how Andrew "raised" him.

Even though statistics show Chris will recover from the virus, Andrew revealed how much the diagnosis scared him.

"We're talking about my little brother," he said. "This is my best friend. I talk to him several times a day. Basically, spend my whole life with him. It is frightening on a fundamental level. There's nothing I can do. It's out of my control."

Their byplay, which anyone with siblings can appreciate, approaches lounge act status.

During his briefing Wednesday, Andrew sat next to a picture of his brother taken from TV, mouth frozen mid-word.

"Kudos to him," he said. "My pop would be proud. I love you, little brother. Even though I did not pick this picture, with your mouth open, it is suitable in some ways."

Retorted Chris on CNN hours later: "He picked it."

"The irony of my brother joking about how I look is not lost on me, alright? Like he's some box of chocolates."

## Nursing home infections, deaths surge amid lockdown measures

By JIM MUSTIAN, BERNARD CONDON and CANDICE CHOI Associated Press

Nursing homes across the country have been in lockdown for weeks under federal orders to protect their frail, elderly residents from coronavirus, but a wave of deadly outbreaks nearly every day since suggests that the measures including a ban on visits and daily health screenings of staffers either came too late



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or were not rigorous enough.

Recent outbreaks in Tennessee, New Jersey, Ohio, West Virginia and Maryland have pushed the death toll at the nation's nursing homes to at least 450 and highlight the biggest gap: Screenings of doctors, nurses, aides and other workers do not involve actual testing but the taking of temperatures or asking health questions that still allow infected, asymptomatic people to slip through.

"It's still been like Swiss cheese with people coming in and out of there, and thus you've got these explosions in senior facilities," said John BaRoss of Long Valley, New Jersey, who recently pulled his 85-year-old mother out of an assisted-living center out of fear of infection.

After an outbreak of 100 infections and four deaths at the Gallatin Center for Rehabilitation and Healing outside Nashville, Tennessee, Sumner County Mayor Anthony Holt blamed staff members who came to work despite showing symptoms for COVID-19 and "exposed a lot of patients."

"Things got out of hand," Holt told the Associated Press. "Once employees became symptomatic, they should have asked them to go home immediately and called the health department. I don't think that occurred."

After an outbreak near Dayton, Ohio, killed eight people and infected about 50 at a pair of nursing homes less than 10 miles apart, health officials began scrutinizing medical specialists such as phlebotomists and respiratory therapists who work in multiple facilities a day. One such health worker who visited both homes tested positive for COVID-19.

In Maryland, Gov. Larry Hogan said an outbreak that spread like "wildfire" at a Mount Airy nursing home, killing five and infecting 77, apparently began with an asymptomatic health worker who made it past a temperature check screening and "infected the population."

Some relatives of those at the Sundale nursing home in Morgantown, West Virginia, where 29 residents and staff have tested positive, say more should have been done to keep coronavirus out before the federal restrictions took hold in mid-March.

"The day before the shutdown, we just walked in wherever. There was no sign-in. There was nothing," said Courtney Templeton about her last visit to her 69-year-old mother.

Templeton also faults the home for not testing residents fast enough and not keeping healthy ones separate from those just back from a nearby hospital showing COVID-19 symptoms, including her mother's roommate.

"She came back coughing and had a fever," Templeton said of a visit two weeks ago.

Last week, Templeton got word both the roommate and her mom had the disease.

Though the federal government has not been releasing a count of its own, an AP tally from media reports and state health departments indicate at least 450 deaths and nearly 2,300 infections have been linked to coronavirus outbreaks in nursing homes and long-term care facilities nationwide.

And for the nation's more than 15,000 such facilities and the 1 million people who live in them, experts say the situation could get worse before it gets better.

They say the crisis has only deepened a chronic staffing shortage at nursing homes because more workers are self-quarantining or staying home with their children. There is still not widespread testing of staff or patients, and shortages of masks and other protective gear persist.

"It's an emergency situation, and it's just been totally neglected in all the national policy," said Charlene Harrington, a professor emerita at the University of California San Francisco and former state health official.

And even more ominously, overcrowding in hospitals has some states seeking to force nursing homes to take patients who are recovering from COVID-19, raising fears they could spread it to residents inside.

New York issued a statewide advisory last week forbidding nursing homes from denying residents admission "solely based on a confirmed or suspected diagnosis of COVID-19." California told its nursing homes to make similar preparations. Massachusetts announced plans to designate specific nursing homes as care centers for COVID-19 patients — a move that has set it apart from other states

"Sending hospitalized patients who are likely harboring the virus to nursing homes that do not have the appropriate units, equipment and staff to accept COVID-19 patients is a recipe for disaster," said Mark Parkinson, president of the American Health Care Association.

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Federal directives on nursing home coronavirus prevention followed the nation's biggest outbreak in one place, the deaths of 40 at the Life Care Center nursing home near Seattle. A government inspection found infections at the home and others nearby were likely caused in part by employees working while sick.

A March 13 order from the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services says nursing homes should immediately halt visitors and nonessential workers, cancel communal dining and group activities, and actively screen residents and staff for fever and respiratory symptoms.

But the order did not mandate regular testing of staffers, which nursing home providers and advocates say is not possible or practical because of the limited availability of tests and delays in getting results.

"In an ideal world, would everyone have been screened with COVID tests? Of course. But this is all we could do," said Kathleen Hill O'Neill, a nursing home consultant and instructor at the University of Pennsylvania.

The restrictions have done little to slow the daily drumbeat of new infections.

In New Jersey, an entire nursing home relocated its residents after two dozen were confirmed infected and the rest were presumed to be. Sixteen died and more than 90 others were infected at a nursing home in suburban Richmond, Virginia. Two died and at least 57 were infected at a nursing home east of Los Angeles. And on New York's Long Island, a retirement community has so far suffered eight deaths in two weeks.

To be sure, infections of all kinds in nursing homes are a chronic problem, killing 380,000 every year. But an AP review of federal inspection records shows some facilities suffering outbreaks were given low "star" rankings for overall quality even before the coronavirus crisis. Three homes in Ohio and Illinois got two out of five stars, as did the one in Gallatin, Tennessee, where an inspector last year found an unsupervised cart in the hall where a resident scooped out ice with her bare hands.

For relatives of those in nursing homes, the visit ban has literally put them on the outside looking in, communicating with parents and grandparents through windows or by smartphones. Their greatest fear is that their loved ones will be left to die alone.

"When someone loses a loved one, you can't go and give them a hug," said 80-year-old Rosan Jordan, a resident of a retirement and nursing facility in New Orleans where her husband was among 13 to die of COVID-19 last month.

Even though she was in the same home, Jordan was kept apart from her husband and could only speak with him near the end on FaceTime.

"I should have known that was the last time I'd be talking to him," she said. "I hope it was some comfort to him to hear my voice."

## Central Park houses hospital ward as NY races to add beds

By JENNIFER PELTZ Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — There is a coronavirus ward in tents in Central Park. A makeshift hospital has been set up in a Manhattan convention center. Over the next few weeks, spaces including pro tennis courts, college dorms and a cruise ship terminal are supposed to start housing patients as New York state races to roughly triple its hospital capacity.

And still, officials worry whether the massive effort will be enough in the U.S. epicenter of the coronavirus pandemic.

A recent state chart tallying the planned hospital beds ended with question marks about how much space might be found in nursing homes. Some hospital and city leaders have questioned whether too much temporary hospital space is being reserved for patients who don't have the virus that causes COVID-19, though there are now plans to shift one big temporary site's focus to caring for them.

And officials underscore that beds alone can't solve a problem growing by more than 1,000 hospitalizations a day.

"Beds, we can find. Not easy, but we can find them. The harder components are the staff and the supplies," Gov. Andrew Cuomo said Thursday.

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As he spoke, over 13,300 coronavirus patients were hospitalized and more than 3,300 needed intensive care around the state, though mostly in New York City. The outbreak's expected peak was still seven to 30 days away, the Democrat said.

When that happens, New York expects to need 140,000 hospital beds — compared to the 53,000 it had when the crisis began. So many seriously ill patients are anticipated that New York City is preparing to turn all its 20,000 permanent hospital beds into intensive care ones, while trying to add 65,000 temporary beds for other patients.

For most people, the new virus causes mild or moderate symptoms, such as fever and cough. For some, especially older adults and people with chronic health problems, it can cause more severe illness, including pneumonia, and can be fatal. It has killed over 2,300 people in New York state so far, according to the governor.

The scramble for hospital space, staff and ventilators is intended to ward off a dire worst-case scenario: medical centers becoming so swamped that some people die whose lives could otherwise be saved.

Even though they are working to squeeze in thousands of extra beds, some New York City facilities have been overloaded at times, transferring patients around the city and sometimes as far away as the Albany area.

Emergency rooms at Mount Sinai Health System's Brooklyn and Queens hospitals started getting backed up over the weekend, emergency medicine chair Dr. Brendan Carr said.

Patient transfers to larger Mount Sinai hospitals ultimately eased the crunch. But if not for that, "two of our hospitals would be in terrible distress," he said Wednesday.

"That can't keep going. We're continuing to grow capacity at all these hospitals, but at some point, we run out of space," he said.

Some relief is now in sight, even from the windows of Mount Sinai's flagship hospital in Manhattan.

Across Fifth Avenue, white tents now cover much of Central Park's East Meadow. They form a 68-bed emergency field hospital for coronavirus patients that opened Wednesday.

Nine patients were being cared for Thursday, according to Samaritan's Purse, the evangelical Christian relief group running the operation.

The group's opposition to same-sex marriage sparked concern among some of New York's Democratic political leaders. The organization's CEO, the Rev. Franklin Graham, told Fox News on Monday that "we're going to give the best health care we can to all New Yorkers — it doesn't matter who they are or what they are."

State, city and federal officials say they have lined up — and in some cases, opened — dozens of additional spots for temporary hospitals around the metropolitan area.

A Navy hospital ship, the USNS Comfort, is docked in Manhattan with 750 beds, three of them occupied as of Thursday, commanding officer Capt. Patrick Amersbach said in a telephone news briefing. The Javits Center, a glassy convention facility where such events as New York Comic Con and the New York International Auto Show usually take place, now houses a federally-run hospital, with 2,500 beds as of Thursday, according to Cuomo.

Officials also are tapping colleges, the Aqueduct horse-racing track, a part of the tennis center that hosts the U.S. Open, a Brooklyn cruise terminal, and 20 hotels so far.

Decisions on routing patients to the temporary hospitals are made from a state-run operations hub set up in the Javits Center, according to city Emergency Management Office spokesman Omar Bourne. A similar system has been used before during such disasters as Superstorm Sandy.

Some facilities are intended for COVID-19 patients who need hospitalization, but not intensive care. Others, including the Comfort and the Javits Center, were designated for patients who don't have the virus but need care for other reasons — though President Donald Trump said Thursday evening that the Javits would switch to caring for coronavirus patients.

New York officials and hospital leaders had urged a change in focus.

"You're only going to help if you take the patients that we need help with, which is COVID patients," Michael Dowling, CEO of Northwell Health, said before Thursday's announcement. "If they don't relieve us

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of the pressure that we're under, then I'm not sure the utility."

While scouring for temporary hospital space, state and city officials are also sounding even more urgent calls for ventilators, medical personnel and protective gear for them.

Cuomo warned Thursday that the state's supply of breathing machines could be exhausted in six days if the current rate of critical COVID-19 illness continues. Democratic New York Mayor Bill de Blasio asked the federal government this week to supply 1,000 nurses, 150 doctors and 300 respiratory therapists by Sunday.

"The bed," he said, "is only as good as the supplies, the equipment, and especially the people that go with it."

Associated Press writers Michael R. Sisak in New York, Marina Villeneuve in Albany, New York, and Robert Burns in Washington contributed to this report.

## **Q&A: How to get aid for a small business hit by virus crisis**

**By JOYCE M. ROSENBERG AP Business Writer**

NEW YORK (AP) — Millions of small business owners will be turning to the government, seeking help for an individual and nationwide cataclysm, the economic devastation caused by the coronavirus outbreak.

The government says it will begin disbursing loan money to company owners and freelancers Friday under the Paycheck Protection Program, part of the \$2 trillion relief package signed into law last week. For many companies, it may be the quickest way to rebuild the lifeblood of any business: the cash flow that enables a company to pay its bills.

The program could be vital to the economy's recovery: Small businesses employ about half the workers in the private sector. By some estimates, as many as 20 million people will have lost their jobs by the end of April.

Here are questions and answers about financial help available through the government and other sources:

### **ARE THESE PAYCHECK PROTECTION LOANS FREE?**

They can be, if they're used to retain or hire workers. Starting Friday, the Small Business Administration is guaranteeing \$349 billion in potentially forgivable loans under the rescue package. A business with up to 500 employees, including owners who work solo and freelancers, can borrow up to \$10 million to be repaid over two years at an annual rate of 0.5%. The money that's used to pay salaries can be forgiven, and a portion of money used for rent, mortgage interest and/or utilities can be at least partially forgiven. Payments are deferred for six months.

You technically could get the full amount of the loan forgiven. But if you cut jobs — say you had 10 employees, let them go, and hired back only five — the amount of loan forgiveness will be reduced, and you'll have to repay some.

But a caveat from the government: Because so many owners are expected to take advantage of the loans, it's anticipated that no more than 25% of the forgiven amount may be for things other than payroll — rent, mortgage interest and utilities. So there's a good chance you will have some repayments ahead.

You can learn more about the loans at <https://www.sba.gov/funding-programs/loans/paycheck-protection-program-ppp>.

### **HOW DO I GET ONE?**

The government says this will be a fast, streamlined process — some companies could get money the same day, not like the weeks it takes when applying for a traditional SBA loan. You can apply through any federally insured bank, credit union or farm credit system institution, not just a traditional SBA lender. Most businesses are expected to apply online, through a financial institution's website.

You don't need collateral or a personal guarantee. But you'll need to document your payroll, rent, mortgage interest and utilities expenses. The payroll portion of the loan is based on the monthly average of



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what a company paid employees during the year prior to the loan being granted.

## WHEN WILL MY LOAN BE FORGIVEN?

The government will calculate how much of a loan will be forgiven after June 30. The program covers the period from Feb. 15 through June 30 and owners will need to document how many workers they employed during that time and how much they were paid.

If you've laid off workers, you have until June 30 to rehire them — but the sooner you rehire and start paying them, the larger your loan forgiveness will be.

## CAN I GET A DISASTER LOAN TOO?

Yes, but ...

The SBA is giving out what are called economic injury disaster loans. These are intended to help companies whose revenue losses have left them without working capital, making it difficult or impossible to pay their operating expenses including payroll, fixed debt payments and accounts payable bills. But a company that gets a disaster loan cannot use the money for payroll purposes if it's also getting a paycheck protection loan.

The disaster loans give owners up to \$2 million at an annual rate of 3.75%. The loans can be taken out for as many as 30 years, but the terms of each loan will be determined on a case-by-case basis and will depend on each company's financial situation.

Companies can also apply for a \$10,000 loan advance that can be granted within three days, the SBA says. This does not have to be repaid.

Disaster loan applications are made directly through the SBA on its website <https://covid19relief.sba.gov/>

## WHAT OTHER MONEY IS AVAILABLE?

The Federal Reserve is working on a program to provide loans directly to small businesses. The details have not been announced yet.

Individual states, counties and cities may have loans or grants for small businesses. And those that have not yet announced any programs may yet create them — the outbreak has not yet reached its peak. Check online with your state or local agencies that support small businesses.

## CAN FREELANCERS GET UNEMPLOYMENT BENEFITS AND A LOAN TOO?

Yes. The rescue package provides for unemployment benefits for freelancers and independent contractors who haven't qualified for such help in the past. So millions of people, including wedding photographers, graphic artists and writers, who have lost gigs or projects can get unemployment benefits. They're also eligible for paycheck protection loans — but if they have both types of loans, they cannot use disaster loan money to cover payroll.

## WHAT ABOUT ONLINE LENDING?

Online lenders promise fast money — some turn loans around the same day — and even in the best of times, many companies with cash flow crunches turn to them. But in many cases the money carries a steep interest rate and/or big payments. And unlike traditional loans, the size of a payment may not be predictable — companies like PayPal, for example, will take a percentage of revenue that comes into a borrower's account.

Keep in mind that even if you end up paying back the full amount you borrow under the Paycheck Protection Program, you'll be paying just 0.5% over two years.

## HOW ABOUT CONCESSIONS FROM LANDLORDS AND OTHER BUSINESSES?

Many small business owners have been in touch with their landlords, bankers and suppliers, asking for more time to pay. And some have gotten concessions, especially when the business and its creditor or banker have a long-time relationship.

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Any concessions or grace periods you can get, especially if they're interest and penalty-free, may be a good route to go. Landlords and business associates who want to hold on to your business can be accommodating unless they're also struggling with cash flow problems. It's also true that some, perhaps many, are tough business people; some are already suggesting to their tenants and customers that they should seek government loans rather than help from them.

THERE'S ALWAYS FAMILY AND FRIENDS, RIGHT?

Absolutely. And the people close to you may be ready and willing to help — if they can right now. But, for the sake of keeping these relationships solid, if you get a loan from someone close, you need up-front and honest communication now and going forward about how the business is doing, and when you're likely to repay them.

Have an idea for a story about the coronavirus outbreak and business? Email Joyce Rosenberg at [jrosenberg@ap.org](mailto:jrosenberg@ap.org). Follow her at [www.twitter.com/JoyceMRosenberg](http://www.twitter.com/JoyceMRosenberg). Her work can be found here: <https://apnews.com>.

## Virus masks, apps: The race is on to avoid hidden carriers

By LORI HINNANT Associated Press

PARIS (AP) — The worldwide race to protect people against being infected by unwitting coronavirus carriers intensified Thursday, pitting governments against each other as they buy protective gear and prompting new questions about who should wear masks, get temperature checks or even be permitted to go outside.

In the Chinese city of Wuhan, where the pandemic began in December, a green symbol on residents' smartphones dictates their movements. Green is the "health code" that says a user is symptom-free. It's required to board a subway, check into a hotel or enter the central city of 11 million. Serious travel restrictions still exist for those who have yellow or red symbols.

In northern Italy, the country with the most virus deaths in the world at over 13,000, guards with thermometer guns decide who can enter supermarkets. In Los Angeles, the mayor has recommended that the city's 4 million people wear masks. They're mandatory for all Israelis who leave home, as well as customers of grocery stores in Austria and pharmacies in Pakistan.

A top official in France's hard-hit eastern region complained Thursday that American officials swooped in at a Chinese airport to spirit away a planeload of masks that France had ordered.

"On the tarmac, the Americans arrive, take out cash and pay three or four times more for our orders, so we really have to fight," Dr. Jean Rottner, president of the Grand Est regional council and an emergency room physician in Mulhouse, told RTL radio.

A study by researchers in Singapore on Wednesday estimated that around 10% of new infections may be sparked by people who carry the virus but have no symptoms yet or never do.

In Greece, authorities placed an entire refugee camp of 2,400 people under quarantine Thursday after discovering that a third of the 63 contacts of just one infected woman tested positive — and none had showed symptoms.

The top U.S. infectious disease official, Dr. Anthony Fauci, said medical experts are no closer to figuring out why some seemingly healthy people have only mild or no symptoms while others become catastrophically sick.

"I've been doing infectious diseases now for almost 50 years, and I can tell you I don't fully understand exactly what the mechanism of that is," he told NBC's "Today" show.

In response to the study, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention changed how it defined the risks of infection, saying essentially that anyone may be a carrier, whether they have symptoms or not. But neither it nor the World Health Organization changed their recommendations that not everyone need to wear a mask.

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Los Angeles Mayor Eric Garcetti said even a "tucked-in bandanna" could slow the spread of the virus and remind people to keep their distance from each other.

"We're going to have to get used to seeing each other like this," he said, donning a mask.

In Japan, where masks are a household staple, the government planned to mail two gauze masks each to the country's 50 million households.

Nine leading European university hospitals warned Thursday they will run out of essential medicines for COVID-19 patients in intensive care in less than two weeks. The European University Hospital Alliance said countries should cooperate, not compete and refuse to export drugs elsewhere, to ensure a steady supply of these drugs for critically ill virus patients.

They wrote that existing stocks of muscle relaxants, sedatives and painkillers were likely to run out in two days in the hardest-hit hospitals, and in two weeks in others. The group represented hospitals in Austria, Britain, France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Belgium, Sweden and Spain.

In the United States, from New York to Los Angeles, officials also warned that the worst is still ahead.

"How does it end?" New York Gov. Andrew Cuomo said. "The answer is nobody knows for sure."

New York state's coronavirus death toll doubled in 72 hours to more than 1,900. Cuomo has already complained that U.S. states are competing against each other for protective gear and breathing machines, or being outbid by the federal government.

President Donald Trump acknowledged that the federal stockpile is nearly depleted of the personal protective equipment needed to protect doctors and nurses on the front lines of the coronavirus fight. The Pentagon said Thursday that the Federal Emergency Management Agency had asked it to help by sending 100,000 body bags.

Altogether, more than 956,000 people around the world have contracted the virus, according to Johns Hopkins University. More than 48,000 have died from the virus and another 202,000 have recovered.

The real figures are believed to be much higher because of testing shortages, differences in counting the dead and mild cases that have gone unreported. The virus, which is spread by tiny droplets from sneezes or coughs, causes mild or moderate symptoms in most people but can cause severe illness and death for the elderly or the ill.

Many governments are modeling their response to the virus after China, which in January closed off an entire province of over 70 million. People in Wuhan, once the epicenter of the crisis, are starting to return to work, tracked by a smartphone app.

Walking into a subway station, Wu Shenghong, used her phone to scan a barcode on a poster that triggered her app. A green code and part of her identity card number appeared on the screen and a guard wearing a mask and goggles waved her through.

A red code could have told the guard that Wu was infected or had symptoms and was awaiting a diagnosis. A yellow code means she had contact with an infected person but hadn't finished a two-week quarantine.

People with red or yellow codes "are definitely not running around outside," said Wu, 51. "I feel safe."

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Associated Press writers around the world contributed to this report.

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

## Son: Jazz great Ellis Marsalis Jr. dead, 85; COVID involved

By JANET McCONNAUGHEY and REBECCA SANTANA undefined

NEW ORLEANS (AP) — Ellis Marsalis Jr., the jazz pianist, teacher and patriarch of a New Orleans musical clan, died late Wednesday from pneumonia brought on by the new coronavirus, leaving six sons and a deep legacy. He was 85.

"My dad was a giant of a musician and teacher, but an even greater father. He poured everything he had into making us the best of what we could be," Branford said.

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Four of the jazz patriarch's six sons are musicians: Wynton, a Pulitzer- and Grammy-winning trumpeter, is America's most prominent jazz spokesman as artistic director of jazz at New York's Lincoln Center. Branford, a saxophonist, has won three Grammys, led The Tonight Show band and toured with Sting. Delfeayo, a trombonist, is a prominent recording producer and performer. And Jason, a percussionist, has made a name for himself with his own band and as an accompanist. Ellis III, who decided music wasn't his gig, is a photographer-poet in Baltimore. Their brother Mboya has autism. Marsalis' wife, Dolores, died in 2017.

"Pneumonia was the actual thing that caused his demise. But it was pneumonia brought on by COVID-19," Ellis Marsalis III said in an Associated Press phone interview.

He said he drove Sunday from Baltimore to be with his father, who was hospitalized Saturday in Louisiana, which has been hit hard by the outbreak. Others in the family spent time with him, too.

"He went out the way he lived: embracing reality," Wynton tweeted, alongside pictures of his father.

Branford's statement included a text he said he got from Harvard Law Professor David Wilkins: "We can all marvel at the sheer audacity of a man who believed he could teach his black boys to be excellent in a world that denied that very possibility, and then watch them go on to redefine what excellence means for all time."

In a statement, Mayor LaToya Cantrell said of the man who continued to perform regularly until December: "Ellis Marsalis was a legend. He was the prototype of what we mean when we talk about New Orleans jazz. He was a teacher, a father, and an icon — and words aren't sufficient to describe the art, the joy and the wonder he showed the world."

Because Marsalis opted to stay in New Orleans for most of his career, his reputation was limited until his sons became famous — Wynton has won nine Grammys and been nominated 33 times — and brought him the spotlight, along with new recording contracts and headliner performances on television and tour.

"He was like the coach of jazz. He put on the sweatshirt, blew the whistle and made these guys work," said Nick Spitzer, host of public radio's American Routes and a Tulane University anthropology professor.

The Marsalis "family band" seldom played together when the boys were younger but went on tour in 2003 in a spinoff of a family celebration, which became a PBS special when the elder Marsalis retired from teaching at the University of New Orleans.

Harry Connick Jr., one of his students at the New Orleans Center for the Creative Arts, was a guest. He's one of many now-famous jazz musicians who passed through Marsalis' classrooms. Others include trumpeters Nicholas Payton and Terence Blanchard, saxophonists Donald Harrison and Victor Goines, and bassist Reginald Veal.

Marsalis was born in New Orleans, son of the operator of a hotel where he met touring black musicians who couldn't stay at the segregated downtown hotels where they performed. He played saxophone in high school; he also played piano by the time he went to Dillard University.

Although New Orleans was steeped in traditional jazz, and rock 'n' roll was the new sound in the 1950s, Marsalis preferred bebop and modern jazz.

Spitzer described Marsalis as a "modernist in a town of traditionalists."

"His great love was jazz a la bebop — he was a lover of Thelonious Monk and the idea that bebop was a music of freedom. But when he had to feed his family, he played R&B and soul and rock 'n' roll on Bourbon Street," Spitzer said.

The musician's college quartet included drummer Ed Blackwell, clarinetist Alvin Batiste and saxophonist Harold Battiste.

Ornette Coleman was in town at the time. In 1956, when Coleman headed to California, Marsalis and the others went along, but after a few months Marsalis returned home. He told the New Orleans Times-Picayune years later, when he and Coleman were old men, that he never figured out what a pianist could do behind the free form of Coleman's jazz.

Back in New Orleans, Marsalis joined the Marine Corps and was assigned to accompany soloists on the service's weekly TV programs on CBS in New York. There, he said, he learned to handle all kinds of music styles.



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Returning home, he worked at the Playboy Club and ventured into running his own club, which went bust. In 1967 trumpeter Al Hirt hired him. When not on Bourbon Street, Hirt's band appeared on national TV — headline shows on The Tonight Show and The Ed Sullivan Show, among others.

Marsalis got into education about the same time, teaching improvisation at Xavier University in New Orleans. In the mid-1970s, he joined the faculty at the New Orleans magnet high school and influenced a new generation of jazz musicians.

When asked how he could teach something as free-wheeling as jazz improvisation, Marsalis once said, "We don't teach jazz, we teach students."

In 1986 he moved to Virginia Commonwealth University in Richmond. In 1989, the University of New Orleans lured him back to set up a jazz studies program.

Marsalis retired from UNO in 2001 but continued performing, particularly at Snug Harbor, a small club that anchored the city's contemporary jazz scene — frequently backing young promising musicians.

His melodic style, with running improvisations in the right hand, has been described variously as romantic, contemporary, or simply "Louisiana jazz." He was always on acoustic piano, never electric, and even in interpreting old standards there's a clear link to the driving bebop chords and rhythms of his early years.

He founded a record company, ELM, but his recording was limited until his sons became famous. After that he joined them and others on mainstream labels and headlined his own releases, many full of his own compositions.

He often played at the New Orleans Jazz and Heritage Festival. And for more than three decades he played two 75-minute sets every Friday night at Snug Harbor until he decided it was exhausting. Even then, he still performed on occasion as a special guest.

Ellis III said his father taught him the meaning of integrity before he even knew the word.

He and Delfeayo, neither of them yet 10, had gone to hear their father play at a club. Only one man — sleeping and drunk — was in the audience for the second set. The boys asked why they couldn't leave.

"He looked at us and said, 'I can't leave. I have a gig.' While he's playing, he said, 'A gig is a deal. I'm paid to play this set. I'm going to play this set. It doesn't matter that nobody's here.'"

## Feds seek breakup of Altria-Juul deal on antitrust grounds

By **MATTHEW PERRONE AP Health Writer**

WASHINGTON (AP) — U.S. business regulators are suing to break up the multibillion-dollar deal between tobacco giant Altria and e-cigarette startup Juul Labs, saying their partnership amounted to an agreement not to compete in the U.S. vaping market.

The action announced late Wednesday by the Federal Trade Commission is the latest legal headwind against Altria's investment in the embattled vaping company. Juul sales have been sliding for months amid state and federal investigations, lawsuits and flavor restrictions aimed at curbing the recent explosion in teen vaping.

For years, Altria competed in the burgeoning e-cigarette space. But the Richmond, Virginia-based company was quickly overtaken by San Francisco-based Juul, which became the top U.S. vaping brand on the popularity of its small, high-nicotine and fruity flavored e-cigarettes. The company has since pulled all of its flavors except tobacco and menthol.

In late 2018 Altria discontinued its own e-cigarettes and took a 35% stake in Juul.

The complaint announced by the FTC alleges that Altria agreed not to compete against Juul in return for the \$13 billion stake in the company.

"Altria and Juul turned from competitors to collaborators by eliminating competition and sharing in Juul's profits," said Ian Conner, of the FTC's Bureau of Competition. It was not clear from the agency's initial statement whether Altria would be required to sell its stake in Juul. If the case goes to trial it would be heard by an administrative law judge in January 2021, the agency said.

Altria said in a statement that the FTC "misunderstood the facts" of its investment in Juul.

"We are disappointed with the FTC's decision, believe we have a strong defense and will vigorously

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defend our investment," said Altria General Counsel Murray Garnick.

Juul did not immediately respond to requests for comment Thursday.

Altria has slashed the value of its investment in Juul to roughly a third of what it initially paid, taking more than \$8.5 billion in write-downs since October.

## **Nissan recalls over 250K vehicles to replace Takata air bags**

DETROIT (AP) — Nissan is recalling more than a quarter-million SUVs, trucks and vans worldwide to replace potentially dangerous Takata air bag inflators.

The vehicles have air bags with volatile ammonium nitrate that can explode with too much force and hurl shrapnel. But they have a moisture-absorbing chemical that was supposed to make them safe. U.S. safety regulators are to determine whether all inflators with the drying agent have to be recalled.

The Nissan recall covers certain 2012 to 2017 Nissan NV Cargo and Passenger vans, the 2013 to 2015 Nissan Titan pickup and Armada large SUV, and the 2011 and 2012 Infiniti QX56 SUV.

Documents posted Thursday by the U.S. National Highway Traffic Safety Administration say Takata packed in too much ammonium nitrate propellant while manufacturing the inflators.

Nissan will notify owners later this month and dealers will replace the front driver air bag inflator with one made by a different company.

Takata had until the end of last year to prove that the inflators with the drying agent were safe, or NHTSA was to order them all to be recalled. NHTSA has not made a decision yet. A message was left Thursday seeking comment from a NHTSA spokesman.

So far, at least 25 people have died worldwide after being hit by shrapnel from Takata air bag inflators, and more than 300 have been injured.

## **A record 10 million sought US jobless aid in past 2 weeks**

**By CHRISTOPHER RUGABER AP Economics Writer**

WASHINGTON (AP) — More than 6.6 million Americans applied for unemployment benefits last week — doubling a record high set just one week earlier — a sign that layoffs are accelerating in the midst of the coronavirus outbreak.

Combined with last week's report that 3.3 million people sought unemployment aid two weeks ago, the U.S. economy has now suffered nearly 10 million layoffs in just the past few weeks — far exceeding the figure for any corresponding period on record.

The stunning report Thursday from the Labor Department showed that job cuts are mounting against the backdrop of economies in the United States and abroad that have almost certainly sunk into a severe recession as businesses have shut down across the world.

"This kind of upending of the labor market in such a short time is unheard of," said Heidi Shierholz, an economist at the Economic Policy Institute, a progressive think tank.

Further signs of a surging wave of layoffs are likely in the coming weeks. Seth Carpenter, an economist at Swiss bank UBS, estimates that about one-third of last week's claims had been delayed from the previous week, when state offices that handle unemployment benefits were overwhelmed by a surge of online and telephone claims. Yet many of those offices are still struggling to process all the claims they have received, suggesting more claims will be pushed into the following week.

The magnitude of the layoffs has led many economists to envision as many as 20 million lost jobs by the end of April. That would be more than double the 8.7 million jobs lost during the Great Recession. The unemployment rate could spike to as high as 15% this month, above the previous record of 10.8% set during a deep recession in 1982.

Employers are slashing their payrolls to try to stay afloat because their revenue has collapsed, especially at restaurants, hotels, gyms, movie theaters and other venues that depend on face-to-face interaction. Auto sales have sunk, and factories have closed.

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Roughly 90% of the U.S. population is now under stay-at-home orders, which have been imposed by most U.S. states. This trend has intensified pressure on businesses, most of which face rent, loans and other bills that must be paid.

The reversal in the job market has been dizzying. Four weeks ago, weekly unemployment claims amounted to only 211,000, near a 50-year low. Since then, they have jumped 30-fold.

"Four years of jobs gains have evaporated in the span of two weeks," said Daniel Zhao, an economist at the jobs website Glassdoor.

Requests for jobless aid soared in all 50 states last week. In California, nearly 900,000 people sought benefits, almost four times the previous week's figure, and equivalent to 5% of the state's workforce.

In Michigan, jobless claims more than doubled last week to 311,000. In Florida, filings tripled to 227,000. In South Dakota, they quadrupled to 6,645.

How long the waves of layoffs last — an unknown — will be a key factor in determining the depth of the recession. Some companies are maintaining ties to laid-off workers, in hopes of rehiring them once the coronavirus outbreak passes. Relatively swift rehiring would help the economy rebound quickly. But if business shutdowns persist into the late summer or fall, many smaller businesses will likely go bankrupt. That would make it harder for workers to find jobs and would prolong the downturn.

The \$2.2 trillion rescue package that was signed into law last week includes \$350 billion in small business loans that can be forgiven if the companies use the money to retain or rehire workers. This provision could help limit future layoffs or lead some companies to recall employees back to work.

"The program is unprecedented, generous and ambitious and could be successful," said Luke Tilley, chief economist at Wilmington Trust. "That said, it is challenging to roll out quickly."

The economic rescue package also added \$600 a week in jobless aid, on top of what recipients receive from their states. This will enable many lower-income workers to manage their expenses and even increase their purchasing power and support the economy.

It also makes many more people eligible for jobless aid, including the self-employed, contractors, and so-called "gig economy" workers such as Uber and Lyft drivers.

Those reforms are crucial at a time when most economic activity has come to a standstill, advocates for low-income workers say.

"The huge volume of new claims suggests that at least some states are being as inclusive and expansive as possible in defining who qualifies," said Rebecca Dixon, executive director of the National Employment Law Project. "That's important."

Kathryn Lickteig, a cook in Kansas City, signed up for unemployment compensation last week after the city shut down dine-in restaurants. She is hopeful that the extra \$600 will help her ride out the shutdown instead of having to look for an interim job.

"It has eased my mind so much," she said. "I do not have to actively go out and expose myself to the public and possibly get sick. I can stay home now and do my part in social distancing."

The legislation will also help fund unemployment benefits for workers whose hours have been cut. That would enable these people to replace some of their lost income with unemployment aid even as they keep their jobs.

About 26 states allow workers with reduced hours to claim benefits. Most economists support doing so because it encourages companies to cut back on hours rather than lay off workers. Any program that encourages companies to maintain connections with their workers can help the economy rebound faster after the virus outbreak is contained.

Typically, people who receive jobless aid are required to actively look for a new job and to document their searches. But Congress has passed other legislation that encourages states to drop that requirement, given that so many businesses are closed, and most Americans have been ordered to stay mostly at home.

On Friday, the government will issue the March jobs report, which economists forecast will show a loss of 145,000 jobs. That report is based on data gathered mostly before the spike in layoffs began two weeks ago. Though relatively small, that loss would still end a record-long 113-month streak of job growth.

Numerous state unemployment agencies have struggled to keep up with the flood of applications for jobless benefits. New York's Labor Department, for example, asks people to file on different days depending on their last names. Monday, for example, is reserved for those last names that start with A through F.

## Can you fix ventilators? A fuel cell engineer figures it out

By ADAM BEAM Associated Press

SACRAMENTO, Calif. (AP) — It was late when engineer Joe Tavi's boss called with an odd question: Could their company, which makes fuel cells, learn how to fix a ventilator?

California had a bunch of broken ones, and the governor had asked if San Jose-based Bloom Energy could repair them so coronavirus patients could breathe.

Tavi, an engineer who grew up taking apart the family vacuum cleaner to see if he could put it back together, said he would sleep on it.

But he didn't sleep. Instead, he made a pot of coffee and downloaded the more than 300-page manual for the LTD 1200, the type of ventilator state officials said they needed repaired.

At 4:45 a.m. the next day, coffee still in hand, his boss called again.

"We can do this," Tavi told her. "We won't be able to do it if we don't try."

Since then, a company that knew nothing about ventilators has fixed more than 500 of them. It's a transformation akin to World War II, when manufacturing behemoths used their assembly line expertise to make airplanes and tanks. Now, some companies are tapping their storehouses of brainpower to do the same thing with medical equipment.

While most people with the coronavirus have only mild or moderate symptoms, it can cause more severe illness in some, including pneumonia — an infection that can cause the lungs to fill with fluid, making it difficult to breathe. That's where the ventilators come in.

The Society of Critical Care Medicine estimates about 960,000 COVID-19 patients in the U.S. might need a ventilator. But there are only about 200,000 machines available.

In California, the nation's most populous state with nearly 40 million people, Gov. Gavin Newsom is on the hunt for at least 10,000 ventilators. So far, he's found just over 4,000 of them — including 170 from the federal government's national stockpile that needed repairs.

Bloom Energy makes fuel cells, which combine air and hydrogen to create electricity through a chemical reaction. To get the air and the hydrogen in the right quantities, the fuel cell uses hoses and valves and fans — similar functions to a ventilator. Chief Operations Officer Susan Brennan says the company isn't profiting from the repairs; they hope to eventually recoup some of their expenses from the state.

Once he knew he could do it, Tavi gathered with other company engineers to come up with a plan, guided by lots of YouTube videos on ventilator settings and calibrations. The company's head of supply chain ordered the parts.

There were some anxious moments, especially during testing. As a kid, Tavi said, when he would take apart his family vacuum cleaner, sometimes he couldn't get it back together correctly. A ventilator isn't something you want to put together and find a few screws left over.

But once the team got the ventilators hooked up to balloons, hearing the soft "woosh" of air as they expanded and contracted, Tavi said it went from being a machine to something much more personal.

"I would think about my mom or my uncle or a family member of a friend or a co-worker needing one of those machines," he said. "We don't view it as a number of units we are turning over. We view it as the maximum number of people we could potentially positively impact by having an extra ventilator that works. Even if it's just one person."



## Africa faces an 'existential threat' as virus cases spread

By CARA ANNA Associated Press

JOHANNESBURG (AP) — Some African countries will have more than 10,000 coronavirus cases by the end of April, health officials projected Thursday, as the continent least equipped to treat serious infections has an "enormous gap" in the number of ventilators and other critical items.

While cases across Africa are now above 6,000 at what has been called the dawn of the outbreak, the continent is "very, very close" to where Europe was after a 40-day period, the head of the Africa Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Dr. John Nkengasong, told reporters.

The virus "is an existential threat to our continent," he said. All but four of Africa's 54 countries have cases after Malawi on Thursday reported its first, and local transmission has begun in many places.

Nkengasong said authorities are "aggressively" looking into procuring equipment such as ventilators that most African countries desperately need, and local manufacturing and repurposing are being explored.

"We've seen a lot of goodwill expressed to supporting Africa from bilateral and multilateral partners," but "we still have to see that translate into concrete action," he said.

The World Health Organization doesn't know how many ventilators are available across Africa to help those in respiratory distress, regional director Dr. Matshidiso Moeti told reporters. "We are trying to find out this information from country-based colleagues. ... What we can say without a doubt is there is an enormous gap."

Some countries have only a few ventilators. Central African Republic has just three.

A small percentage of people who are infected will need ventilators and about 15% may need intensive care, said WHO official Dr. Zabulon Yoti.

The health officials pleaded for global solidarity at a time when even some of the world's richest countries are scrambling for basic medical needs, including face masks.

"Countries like Cameroon just reached out yesterday, Ivory Coast, Burkina Faso, asking, 'Look, we need tents because we're running out of hospital beds already,'" Nkengasong said.

Even if equipment is obtained, getting them to countries is a growing challenge with Africa's widespread travel restrictions, though countries have made exceptions for cargo or emergency humanitarian flights.

Simply gauging the number of coronavirus cases in Africa is a challenge, even in South Africa, the most developed country on the continent, where authorities have acknowledged a testing backlog.

Other countries suffer from the widespread shortage of testing kits or swabs, though 43 countries in the WHO Africa sub-Saharan region now have testing capability, up from two in early February.

As more African countries impose lockdowns, both the WHO and Africa CDC expressed concern for the millions of low-income people who need to go out daily to earn their living. That's a "huge challenge," Moeti said, noting that hundreds of thousands of children are now out of school as well.

It is too soon to tell how the lockdown in places like South Africa has affected the number of cases, she added.

The lockdowns are causing unease. Police herded several hundred homeless people into a stadium in South Africa's capital, Pretoria, where tents were erected for shelter and methadone was provided for many. There were complaints about the lack of sanitizer or soap.

The first sub-Saharan African nation to impose a lockdown, Rwanda, has now extended it by two weeks, a sign of what might be to come for other nations. Botswana imposed its own, effective Friday.

"Don't lock down the whole country," Nkengasong said. "Lock down cities or communities where there's extensive community transmission so .. social harm is minimized. But if infection is spreading across the entire country, you have no choice."

Health experts in Africa are rushing to understand whether factors such as Africa's youthful population — some 70% of the continent's people are under age 30 — will be a benefit in fighting off the virus and how the widespread problems of malnutrition, HIV, tuberculosis and malaria might affect people's ability to fight off infection.

"Our greatest fear" is that programs tackling those perennial issues will be sapped by the current crisis,

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Nkengasong said. "The time to advocate for those programs is not when COVID is over. The time is now."

Dr. Meredith McMorrow, Medical Officer in the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's influenza division, acknowledged to reporters that the U.S. is "suffering right now" and that limits the U.S. ability to respond with overseas aid. But she said the U.S. is helping African nations procure overseas equipment "as rapidly as possible."

The latest African nation to report its first virus death was Zambia.

AP journalists Jerome Delay in Pretoria, South Africa; Gregory Gondwe in Blantyre, Malawi; Noel Sichalwe in Lusaka, Zambia; and Sello Motseta in Gaborone, Botswana, contributed.

## Agonizing decisions being made in Spain's virus hot spots

By **BERNAT ARMANGUE** and **JOSEPH WILSON** Associated Press

ZARZA DE TAJO, Spain (AP) — Raquel Fernández watched as cemetery workers lowered her grandmother's casket into the grave and placed it on top of the coffin of her grandfather, buried just three days earlier.

Eusebio Fernández and Rosalía Mascaraque, both 86, are two of Spain's more than 10,000 fatalities from the coronavirus pandemic.

Like thousands of other elderly victims in Spain, their deaths this week illustrate one of the darkest realities of the crisis: Doctors at overburdened hospitals in need of more resources are having to make increasingly tough decisions on who gets the best care, and age appears to matter more than ever.

"Due to a lack of resources in this country, they won't put an 86-year-old person on an assisted breathing machine. It's simply that cruel," said Fernández, a nurse. "My grandparents fought all their lives to be happy and build their strength so they could grow old with dignity, so of course this moment is very painful, and it is difficult for us to cope with."

Her grandparents fell ill with a fever and cough. After staying home for several days as health authorities recommended, their son rushed them to a hospital in Torrejón, east of Madrid, on March 25.

Two days later, Eusebio died of respiratory failure after testing positive for coronavirus. Rosalía died 48 hours later but her test was inconclusive. Neither was put in an intensive care unit or on a ventilator, Fernández said.

She said her grandmother had a heart condition, but that she believed her grandfather was in excellent health and should have been given more of a fighting chance.

"I understand that between someone who is 30 or 40 years old and my grandfather, they will not choose my grandfather, but if this had happened in another moment, in a health care system that claims to be among the best in the world, this would not have happened," she said.

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

Spain has recorded 110,238 infections, placing it just behind Italy's 115,242 cases, which is the most in Europe. The Spanish government said Thursday the country had over 6,000 patients in intensive care.

Agonizing life and death decisions are being made in Madrid and northeast Catalonia, the main hot spots for the outbreak.

Spain's Health Minister Salvador Illa said care is being given "based on each patient's case profile, not their age."

But two weeks ago, workers in Madrid's hardest hit hospitals told The Associated Press that patients over 80 were not given priority for ICU beds because of their lower chance of survival.

On Wednesday, guidelines of Catalonia's medical emergency response service distributed to hospitals and seen by the AP recommended that virus patients over 80 not be intubated. The document said staff should "offer resources to those patients who can most benefit from them as far as years of life to be saved (and) avoid hospitalizations of people with scarce chances of survival."

Dr. Xavier Jiménez Fàbregas, medical director of Catalonia's medical emergency system that distributed the guidelines, told AP that age is just one of many factors. He said the guidelines were accepted ethical

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practices being applied to this crisis, "given the elevated number of patients with respiratory failure."

The Italian Society of Anesthesiology, Analgesia, Resuscitation and Intensive Care issued 15 ethical recommendations in deciding ICU admissions if beds were in short supply. They called for wartime, triage-type decisions to benefit those with a better hope of survival, not on a first-come, first-served basis.

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 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 needs permanent intensive care to survive.

Experts also say hospitals must calculate how long a patient might need a hospital bed or ventilator and how many more lives the machine might otherwise save.

In hard-hit areas of France and Spain, patients "are hospitalized only when there is a chance to save them," said Marc Bourquin of the French Hospital Federation.

Spanish doctors and nurses say they do not dispute that they offer the best care possible to every patient, but they said lack of ventilators and ICU beds amid increased demand have forced them to raise the bar on who gets what treatment.

Dr. Olga Mediano of Spain's Society of Pulmonologists and Thoracic Surgeons said it is not just about saving the youngest.

"You always have to decide the ceiling of care for a patient. You don't want to put him or her through a treatment if it won't be good for them," Mediano told AP. "You would never intubate a patient who is 95 years old. They wouldn't be able to take it."

She described the current situation as unique, "with extremely limited resources and a certain number of ventilators, and intensive care units that are overwhelmed. You have to prioritize and see which patients will most benefit from certain treatments."

She said nearly every hospital in Spain is doing so, "and we are probably being more restrictive in giving access to the ICU than before because we lack beds."

At her hospital in Guadalajara, Mediano said they are making up for the lack of ventilators by using oxygen masks, and that some patients are responding better than expected. Other hospitals also are doing this, she said.

Spain's public health care system is known for its efficiency and universal care, but it has seen significant budget cuts in the past decade. In 2017, Spain had an average of 9.7 ICU beds per 100,000 inhabitants, compared with 33.9 for Germany in 2017, 25.8 for the U.S. in 2018 and 16.3 for France this year, according to the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development.

One sign of hope in Spain is that it has recorded the second highest number of patients who have recovered from the virus with over 26,000. Only China, with 76,000, has more.

Health officials also say Spain's outbreak appears to be "stabilizing," as indicated by the steady slow-down of the growth rate for new infections. This appears to be due to the stay-at-home rules Spain has employed for over two weeks as part of a national state of emergency.

Hospitals also have rushed to increase capacity, and the number of intensive care beds have tripled in Madrid and in Catalonia.

But Lidia Perera, a nurse at Madrid's Hospital de la Paz, said the situation is still critical.

"Normal wards are starting look like they are almost ICU," Perera said. "Now the ICU is only for people who are going to be intubated."

Wilson reported from Barcelona, Spain. Associated Press writers Nicole Winfeld in Rome and Kirsten Grieshaber in Berlin contributed.

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## Today in History By The Associated Press undefined

Today in History

Today is Friday, April 3, the 94th day of 2020. There are 272 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On April 3, 1996, Unabomber Theodore Kaczynski (kah-ZIHN'-skee) was arrested at his remote Montana cabin.

On this date:

In 1860, the legendary Pony Express began carrying mail between St. Joseph, Missouri, and Sacramento, California. (The delivery system lasted only 18 months before giving way to the transcontinental telegraph.)

In 1882, outlaw Jesse James was shot to death in St. Joseph, Missouri, by Robert Ford, a member of James' gang.

In 1936, Bruno Hauptmann was electrocuted in Trenton, New Jersey, for the kidnap-murder of Charles Lindbergh Jr.

In 1942, during World War II, Japanese forces began their final assault on Bataan against American and Filipino troops who surrendered six days later; the capitulation was followed by the notorious Bataan Death March.

In 1944, the U.S. Supreme Court, in *Smith v. Allwright*, struck down a Democratic Party of Texas rule that allowed only white voters to participate in Democratic primaries.

In 1948, President Harry S. Truman signed the Marshall Plan, designed to help European allies rebuild after World War II and resist communism.

In 1968, civil rights leader Martin Luther King Jr. delivered what turned out to be his final speech, telling a rally of striking sanitation workers in Memphis, Tennessee, that "I've been to the mountaintop" and "seen the Promised Land. I may not get there with you. But I want you to know tonight that we, as a people, will get to the Promised Land!" (About 20 hours later, King was felled by an assassin's bullet at the Lorraine Motel.)

In 1973, the first handheld portable telephone was demonstrated for reporters on a New York City street corner as Motorola executive Martin Cooper called Joel S. Engel of Bell Labs.

In 1990, jazz singer Sarah Vaughan died in suburban Los Angeles at age 66.

In 1991, English novelist Graham Greene died at age 86.

In 1996, an Air Force jetliner carrying Commerce Secretary Ron Brown and American business executives crashed in Croatia, killing all 35 people aboard.

In 2003, moving with a sense of wartime urgency, the House and Senate separately agreed to give President George W. Bush nearly \$80 billion to carry out the battle against Iraq and meet the threat of terrorism.

Ten years ago: The leader of the Anglican church, Archbishop of Canterbury Rowan Williams, said in remarks released by the BBC that the Roman Catholic church in Ireland had lost all credibility because of its mishandling of abuse by priests. White supremacist Eugene TerreBlanche, 68, was bludgeoned to death on his South African farm in a dispute with black farm workers over wages. Connecticut senior Tina Charles was the runaway choice as The Associated Press' women's college basketball player of the year. Nebraska's Connie Yori was named The Associated Press' women's college basketball coach of the year.

Five years ago: Information retrieved from the "black box" data recorder of a doomed German airliner showed its co-pilot repeatedly accelerated the plane before it slammed into a French mountainside, killing all 150 people on board. Pope Francis, presiding at the traditional Good Friday Colosseum procession,



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decried what he called the “complicit silence” about the killing of Christians. Sarah Brady, who became a gun control activist after her husband, James, was shot in the head in the attempt on President Ronald Reagan’s life, died in Alexandria, Virginia, at age 73, eight months after being widowed.

One year ago: Former Vice President Joe Biden acknowledged that his tendency toward physical displays of affection and encouragement had made some women uncomfortable; he promised to be “much more mindful” of respecting personal space. The House Judiciary Committee approved subpoenas for special counsel Robert Mueller’s full Russia report. British Prime Minister Theresa May and the country’s main opposition sought a compromise deal to prevent an abrupt British departure from the European Union.

Today’s Birthdays: Conservationist Dame Jane Goodall is 86. Actor William Gaunt is 83. Songwriter Jeff Barry is 82. Actor Eric Braeden is 79. Actress Marsha Mason is 78. Singer Wayne Newton is 78. Singer Tony Orlando is 76. Comedy writer Pat Proft is 73. Folk-rock singer Richard Thompson is 71. Country musician Curtis Stone (Highway 101) is 70. Blues singer-guitarist John Mooney is 65. Rock musician Mick Mars (Motley Crue) is 64. Actor Alec Baldwin is 62. Actor David Hyde Pierce is 61. Rock singer John Thomas Griffith (Cowboy Mouth) is 60. Comedian-actor Eddie Murphy is 59. Rock singer-musician Mike Ness (Social Distortion) is 58. Rock singer Sebastian Bach is 52. Rock musician James MacDonough is 50. Olympic gold medal ski racer Picabo Street is 49. Actress Jennie Garth is 48. Actor Jamie Bamber is 47. Actor Adam Scott is 47. Christian rock musician Drew Shirley (Switchfoot) is 46. Comedian Aries Spears is 45. Actor Matthew Goode is 42. Actress Cobie Smulders is 38. Rock-pop singer Leona Lewis is 35. Actress Amanda Bynes is 34. Actress-comedian Rachel Bloom is 33. Actress Hayley Kiyoko is 29. Rock musician Sam Kiszka (Greta Van Fleet) is 21.

Thought for Today: “I didn’t invent the world I write about — it’s all true.” — Graham Greene, British author (1904-1991).