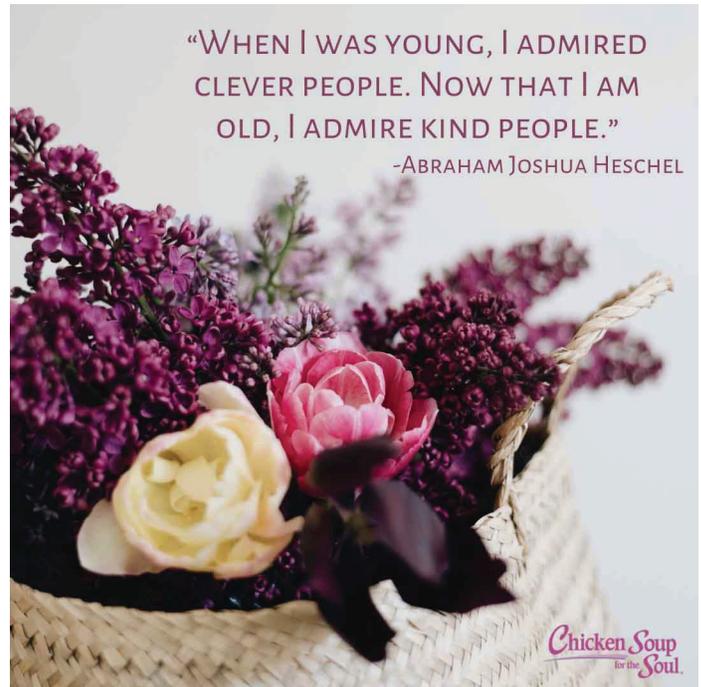


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- [18- Gov. Noem's Weekly Column](#)
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Church Services Today

St. John's Lutheran Church, Groton Christian & Missionary Alliance Church, Emmanuel Lutheran Church, St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Catholic Church and the United Methodist Church will not be having in-person services today. Those livestreaming their services are listed below with the link.

St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Catholic Church (<https://www.facebook.com/groups/215332349572015/>)

10:45 a.m.: Groton Christian & Missinary Alliance Church (<https://www.facebook.com/GrotonCMA/>)

9:00 a.m.: St. John's Lutheran Church (<https://www.facebook.com/stjohnsgroton/>)

9:00 a.m.: Emmanuel Lutheran Church:

(<https://www.facebook.com/Emmanuel-Lutheran-Church-GrotonSD-ELCA-636505039852208/>)

11:00 a.m.: United Methodist Church: (<https://www.facebook.com/grotonsdumc>)

Heaven Bound Ministries of Pierpont / Buffalo Lake Lutheran Church, rural Eden - will have a podcast posted. <https://anchor.fm/paul-irvin-kosel>

OPEN: Recycling Trailer in Groton

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

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Sunday Extras



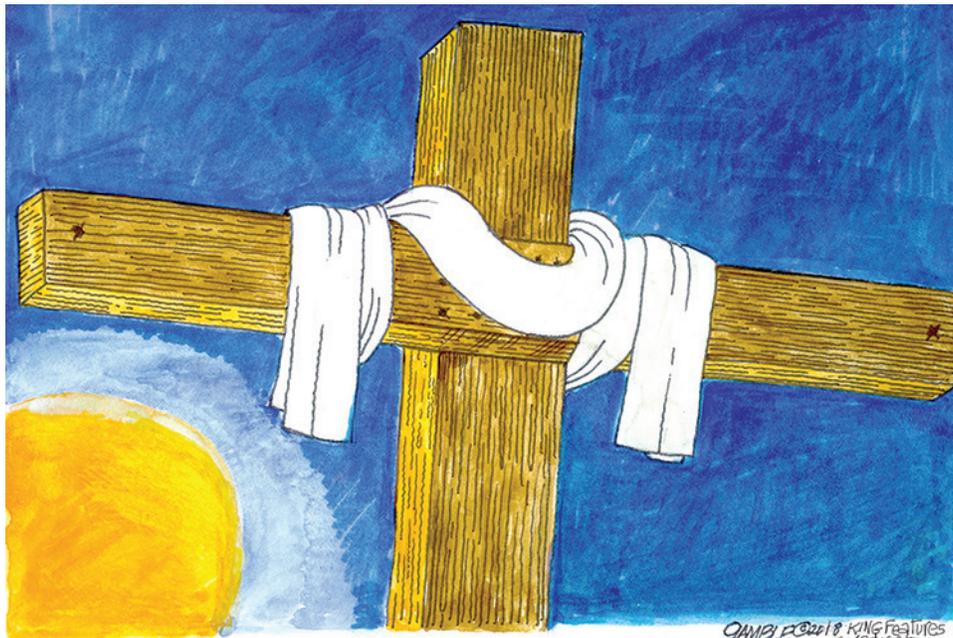
THE ILLUSTRATED BIBLE

Then Peter opened his mouth and said, In truth I perceive that God shows no partiality. But in every nation whoever fears Him and works righteousness is accepted by Him.

ACTS 10:34,35



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GAMBLE 2020 KING FEATURES SYNDICATE

BIBLE TRIVIA

by Wilson Casey

1. Is the book of Micah in the Old or New Testament or neither?

2. From Luke 15, the woman who searched her house with a lantern was looking for a lost ...? *Soul, Child, Bird, Coin*

3. In Judges 16, how many locks of hair did Delilah have cut from the mighty Samson's head? *1, 3, 5, 7*

4. Where were Peter, Andrew and Philip, the first of Jesus' disciples, from? *Zion, Bethel, Hebron, Bethsaida*

5. From Genesis 26, who planted crops that were reaped a hundredfold? *Adam, Isaac, Abraham, Cain*

6. How many psalms in the book of Psalms are attributed to Moses? *1, 5, 34, 74*

ANSWERS: 1) Old; 2) Coin; 3) 7; 4) Bethsaida; 5) Isaac; 6) 1 (Psalm 90)

Sharpen your understanding of scripture with Wilson's Casey's latest book, "Test Your Bible Knowledge," available in bookstores and online.

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Comfort foods

Made fast
and
healthy 

by Healthy Exchanges

Lunchtime Ham and Bean Soup

April might still give us a few cold, windy days, when a bowl of soup would be more than welcoming.

- 1 cup finely diced celery*
- 1 cup shredded carrots*
- 1/2 cup chopped onion*
- 1 (15-ounce) can diced tomatoes, undrained*
- 3/4 cup water*
- 1/2 cup reduced-sodium ketchup*
- 2 (15-ounce) cans Bush's great northern beans, rinsed and drained*
- 1 cup diced Dubuque 97% fat-free ham, or any extra-lean ham*
- 1 teaspoon dried parsley flakes*
- 1/8 teaspoon black pepper*

1. In a medium saucepan sprayed with butter-flavored cooking spray, saute celery, carrots and onion for 5 minutes. Stir in undrained tomatoes, water and ketchup. Add great northern beans, ham, parsley flakes and black pepper. Mix well to combine. Bring mixture to a boil, stirring occasionally.

2. Lower heat, cover and simmer for 30 minutes, stirring occasionally. Makes 6 (1 full cup) servings.

• Each serving equals: About 198 calories, 2g fat, 13g protein, 32g carbs, 344mg sodium, 74mg calcium, 10g fiber; Diabetic Exchanges: 2 Meat, 1 1/2 Vegetables, 1 Starch; Carb Choices: 2

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Character Profile:
Vultan



RULER OF THE
CITY IN THE CLOUDS

FLASH GORDON

3-29 BY JIM KEEFE
ART ASSIST - BRIAN BILTER

FLASH AND THE PEACE COUNCIL RETURN TO VULTAN'S PALACE.

THANKS TO YOU, FLASH, MY LITTLE GIRL IS RETURNED SAFE AND SOUND.



AFRAID YOU'VE GOT IT BACKWARD, VULTAN.

IF NOT FOR PRINCESS TYREE I WOULDN'T BE STANDING HERE.

IT WAS HER EFFORTS THAT SAVED US ALL.



AND TO THINK I HAD RESERVATIONS ABOUT EVEN SENDING YOU...



PREPARE THE DINING HALL--- WE SHALL HAVE A BANQUET IN HONOR OF MY DAUGHTER!

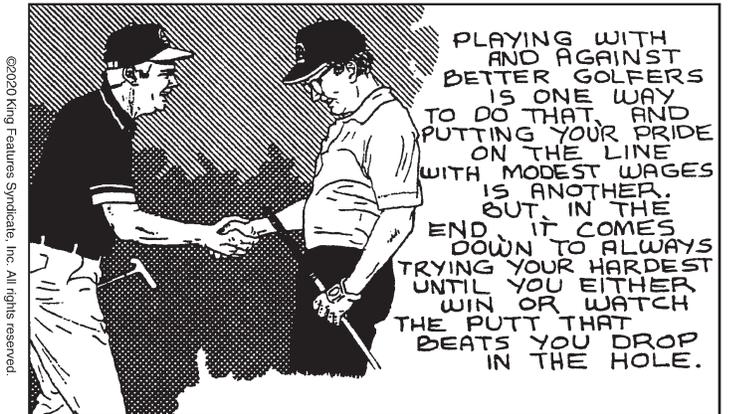
THANK YOU...

NEXT:
NEW ADVENTURE!

Play Better Golf with JACK NICKLAUS



TO PLAY GOLF UP TO YOUR MAXIMUM POTENTIAL, YOU NEED TO PLAY IT AS COMPETITIVELY AS YOU POSSIBLY CAN AS OFTEN AS YOU POSSIBLY CAN.



PLAYING WITH AND AGAINST BETTER GOLFERS IS ONE WAY TO DO THAT, AND PUTTING YOUR PRIDE ON THE LINE WITH MODEST WAGES IS ANOTHER. BUT, IN THE END, IT COMES DOWN TO ALWAYS TRYING YOUR HARDEST UNTIL YOU EITHER WIN OR WATCH THE PUTT THAT BEATS YOU DROP IN THE HOLE.

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Vitamin D Works Slowly

DEAR DR. ROACH: Is there any reason to start taking vitamin D at age 90? I'm in good health except for osteopenia and high blood pressure. How long does it take to have an effect? — P.S.

ANSWER: In your case, there are potentially two good reasons to start taking vitamin D — if your blood levels are low.

One is that with osteopenia (a condition of low bone mass, a precursor to osteoporosis, which increases risk for bone fractures), replacing low vitamin D can improve bone strength and reverse bone loss. This can keep people from needing other medications for osteoporosis, which are much more likely than vitamin D to have side effects.

Older people with vitamin D deficiency also often have some muscle weakness. If you can't get out of a chair without using your hands and you have a low vitamin D level, replacing vitamin D may help with the weakness. Of course, there are many causes for weakness in a person and there is no guarantee of effectiveness, but vitamin D is very safe in moderate doses, like 1,000 to 2,000 IU daily. Vitamin D also may reduce fall risk, probably by improving strength, especially in combination with exercise.

Vitamin D works slowly — weeks to months for muscle effects, and months to years for bone effects.

DEAR DR. ROACH: I was seeing my primary care physician every six months for about five years. We had mutual respect, and I enjoyed

seeing him. Then, I got diagnosed with breast cancer and had to see other doctors for a long time. Meanwhile, the spinal stenosis my primary care physician had diagnosed was becoming untenable and ruining my quality of life. Even though I am still seeing cancer doctors, I called my primary care physician to make an appointment to discuss the spinal stenosis situation with him.

After a long wait, I finally got someone in my primary care physician's office and, after another long wait, was informed that he could not see me for six months — there was not one opening until then. I was flabbergasted and asked to be put on a cancellation list. "We don't keep those," the lady responded. I reluctantly took the appointment and decided to wait it out.

Meanwhile, I saw one of my cancer doctors today, and after explaining this situation to him, he replied: "Doctors don't do that. He obviously doesn't want you as a patient anymore. I would find another primary care physician." What is your response to this? I am 71 years old, and other than spinal stenosis and breast cancer (which was caught early and treated with surgery and radiation a year ago), I enjoy reasonably good health. — J.E.Y.

ANSWER: I hope there is another side to this story, since I am horrified that a physician would make a long-standing patient with cancer and spinal stenosis wait six months for an appointment. That is not appropriate medical care.

While I fully understand the point of view of your cancer doctor — and would be tempted to find another doctor — it sounds like saving the relationship you had with your PCP might be worth another try. I think speaking directly with your primary care doctor might clear up any misunderstanding.

Dr. Roach regrets that he is unable to answer individual questions, but will incorporate them in the column whenever possible. Readers may email questions to ToYourGoodHealth@med.cornell.edu.

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1. Three singers recorded "Four Walls" in 1957: Jim Lowe and Michael Holliday were two. Who was the third?

2. Name the mega star whose album "Purple Rain" spent 24 weeks at the top of the charts.

3. Why did The Beatles originally call themselves Beatals?

4. What is the only album by Pat Benatar to go to No. 1?

5. Name the song that contains this lyric: "The stars won't come out if they know that you're about, 'Cause they couldn't match the glow of your eyes."

Answers

1. Jim Reeves. His version went to No. 1. The producer had tried to insist on giving it to a female singer.

2. Prince, born Prince Rogers Nelson. He'd won seven Grammy awards and had produced 30 albums before he died.

3. As a tribute to Buddy Holly and the Crickets. They changed that to The Silver Beetles, then Silver Beatles.

4. "Precious Time" in 1981.

5. "Candida," by Tony Orlando and Dawn, in 1970. Orlando hesitated to sing the song because he feared he'd lose his job working for another music house. He agreed because they told him it would be recorded under a band name, Dawn. Little did he know the song would go No. 1 all over the world.

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Just Like Cats & Dogs

by Dave T. Phipps



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GRIN and BEAR IT ^{by} Wagner

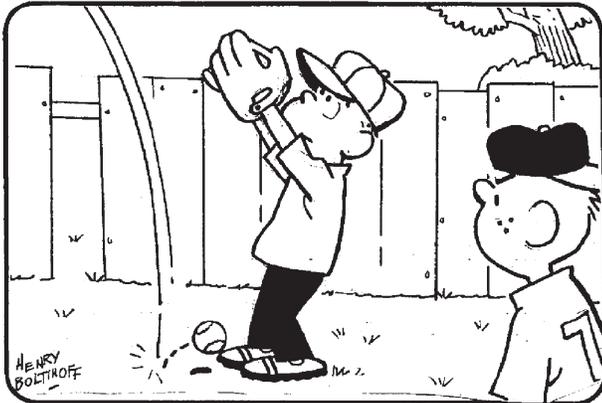


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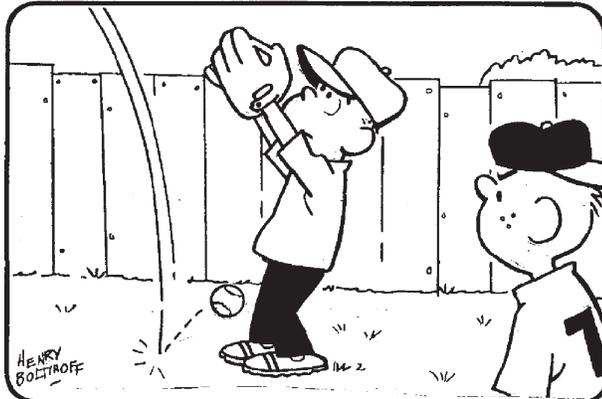
"Let's both push on the count of three."

HOCUS-FOCUS

BY HENRY BOLTINOFF



Find at least six differences in details between panels.



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Differences: 1. Fence is mended. 2. Ball is higher. 3. Hat is different. 4. Shoes are different. 5. Tree is gone. 6. Seven is black.



- Spice racks can pull double duty on the walls by your vanity. They are the perfect size for toiletries and makeup items. They also work very nicely for nail polish bottles.

- “To get the best reading on meat using a meat thermometer, try sticking it in from the side. It can go in further, and to me it feels like I get a better reading than poking it in all over a steak.” — *M.E. in Florida*

- Things you can freeze in small portions using an ice cube tray: tomato paste, coffee, coconut milk, broth or stock, wine, herbed butter or herbed olive oil.

- “If you have trouble holding your cat still to clip his claws, sneak up on him while he’s asleep. You might only get a couple done before he catches on and wriggles away, but you’ll get there.” — *P.L. in Oklahoma City (This great tip works for babies, too! — JoAnn)*

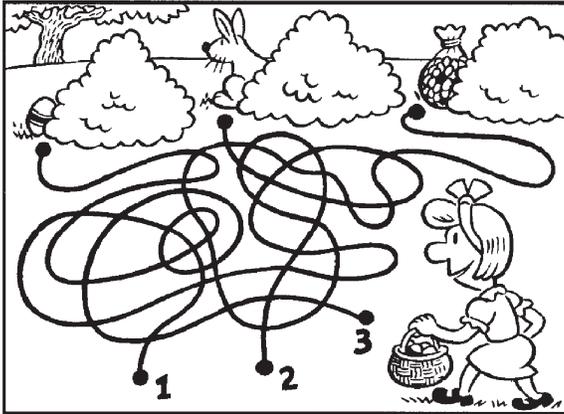
- If you fill a flowerpot with clean sand, you can use it to store your garden hand tools. It looks cute, and they are accessible, too!

- “To get the dog to stop eating his food so fast, my daughter puts dry food in a silverware sorter — the plastic insert that holds cutlery in a drawer. Their dogs have to work at it, and it has helped them slow down so they don’t get sick. She can just toss it in the dishwasher to clean, too!” — *U.E. in Ohio*

Send your tips to Now Here’s a Tip, 628 Virginia Drive, Orlando, FL 32803.

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HIDE AND SEEK! See if you can guess which path leads to the egg, to the rabbit, and to the bag of jelly beans.

Junior Whirl

by Charles Barry Townsend

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S	N	A	E	B	Y	L	L	E	J	S	F	S	S
E	T	A	L	O	C	O	H	C	E	K	D	P	B
G	N	I	R	O	L	O	C	D	X	C	R	I	U
Q	U	S	T	E	K	S	A	B	E	I	E	L	N
E	H	P	S	H	T	R	G	Z	N	H	S	U	N
G	G	B	F	E	A	S	T	G	S	C	S	T	Y
M	G	J	D	P	Q	Y	A	D	N	U	S	N	J
T	E	N	N	O	B	M	Z	E	Y	D	N	A	C



Illustrated by David Coulson

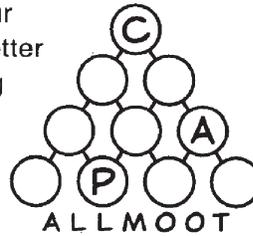
EASTER TIME!

Hidden in the diagram above are 16 words associated with Easter. They can be found by reading up or down, or side to side. You'll even find them diagonally going up or down. Letters can be used more than once. Listed below are the words you're looking for:

- Baskets
- Coloring
- Jelly beans
- Bonnet
- Dress
- Parades
- Bunny
- Easter
- Spring
- Candy
- Egg hunt
- Sunday
- Chicks
- Feast
- Tulips
- Chocolate

SPEED KING! What's the world's smallest eight-wheeled conveyance that can accommodate just one passenger at a time?
 Answer: A pair of roller skates.

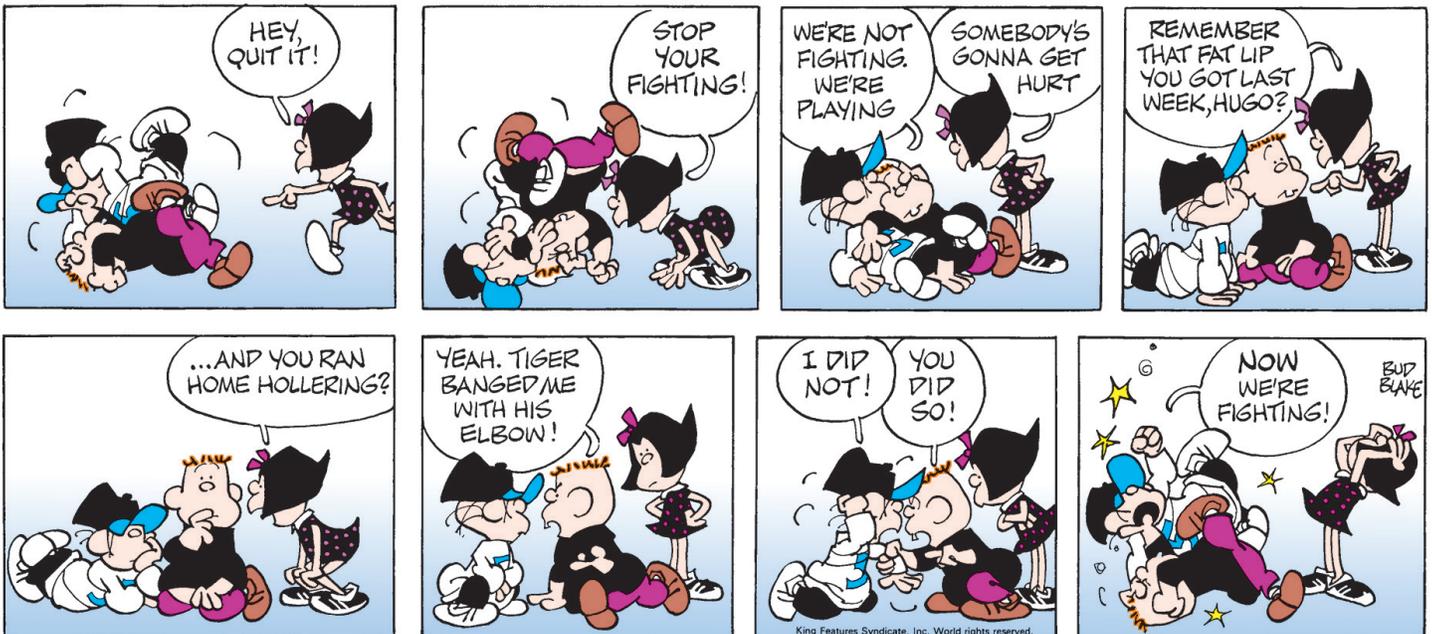
CHAIN REACTION! Take the 7 letters printed below our diagram and place them in the circles so that eight 4-letter words can be read, top to bottom, along the connecting lines. All the words will begin with the letter in the top circle.



Answer: The words are, top to bottom, left to right: Clam, clap, clop, clot, coop, coot, coat, coal.

TIGER

by BUD BLAKE



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King Crossword

ACROSS

- 1 Radius neighbor
- 5 Letterman's network
- 8 Atlantic food fish
- 12 Public disturbance
- 13 Have a bug
- 14 Dumbo's "wings"
- 15 Pace
- 16 Also
- 17 Greek vowels
- 18 Proofreader's finds
- 20 Lava rock
- 22 Army rank (Abbr.)
- 23 Cul-de- —
- 24 Make fun of

1	2	3	4		5	6	7		8	9	10	11
12					13				14			
15					16				17			
18				19			20	21				
			22					23				
24	25	26			27	28	29				30	31
32					33					34		
35			36	37					38			
		39					40	41				
42	43				44		45			46	47	48
49					50	51			52			
53					54				55			
56					57				58			

- 27 Small caterpillar
- 32 Literary collection
- 33 Actress Vardalos
- 34 Cattle call
- 35 Braised beef
- 38 Help in crime
- 39 Swiss river
- 40 Spring mo.
- 42 Walk quietly
- 45 Lengthy list
- 49 Defeat decisively
- 50 Bashful
- 52 Pelvic bones
- 53 " — do for now"
- 54 Not neg.
- 55 Punch
- 56 Partner
- 57 Nevertheless
- 58 Golf gadgets
- 7 Unkempt one
- 8 Playground favorite
- 9 Subterranean passage
- 10 Caspian feeder
- 11 "Hey, you!"
- 19 Gift-tag word
- 21 Baseball bat wood
- 24 Treasure hunter's aid
- 25 Yoko of music
- 26 Grenade hurler
- 28 Serbian city
- 29 Stimulus of a kind
- 30 Fish eggs
- 31 Witticism
- 36 Baby's toy
- 37 Acapulco gold
- 38 Sculptor, e.g.
- 41 "Life of —" (2012 movie)

DOWN

- 1 Incite
- 2 Taleteller
- 3 Bleak, in Hollywood
- 4 Assault
- 5 California island
- 6 Resume
- 22 Decorate
- 23 Tittle
- 24 Catch sight of
- 25 Lotion additive
- 26 Pleasing
- 27 Tibetan herd
- 28 Weeding tool

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— King Crossword —

Answers

Solution time: 25 mins.

U	L	N	A		C	B	S		S	C	U	P	
R	I	O	T		A	I	L		E	A	R	S	
G	A	I	T		T	O	O		E	T	A	S	
E	R	R	A	T	A		B	A	S	A	L	T	
			C	O	L			S	A	C			
M	O	C	K		I	N	C	H	W	O	R	M	
A	N	A			N	I	A			M	O	O	
P	O	T	R	O	A	S	T		A	B	E	T	
			A	A	R			A	P	R			
T	I	P	T	O	E			L	I	T	A	N	Y
R	O	U	T		S	H	Y		I	L	I	A	
I	T	L	L		P	O	S		S	O	C	K	
M	A	T	E		Y	E	T		T	E	E	S	

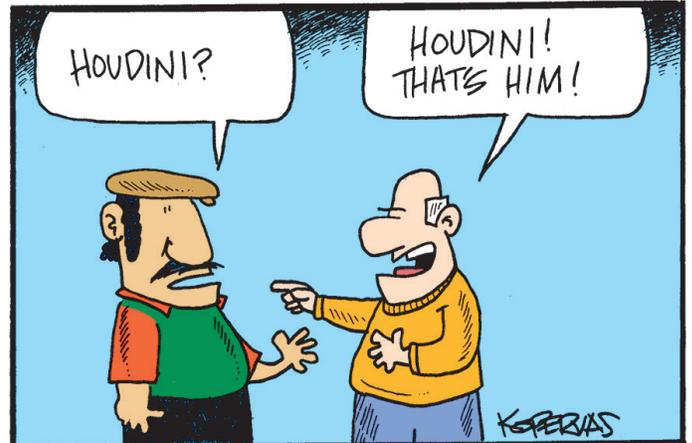
LAFF - A - DAY



"Whoever said there was nothing new under the sun never checked your deductions."

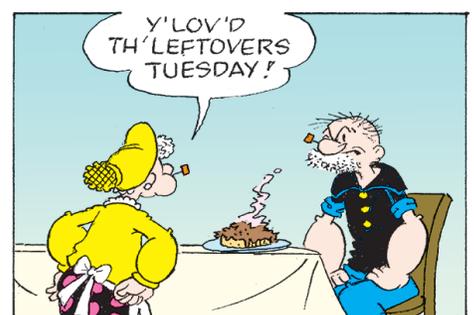
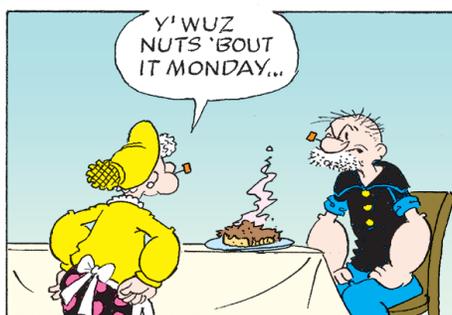
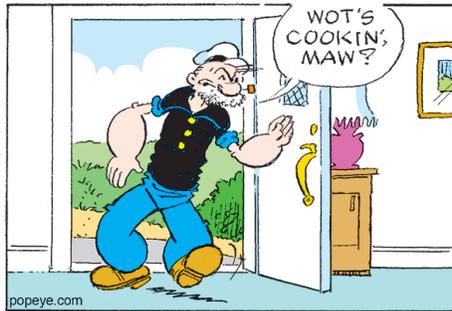
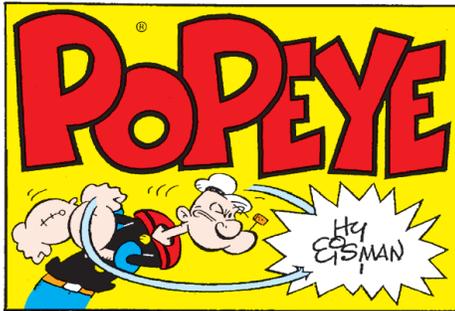
Out on a Limb

by Gary Kopervas



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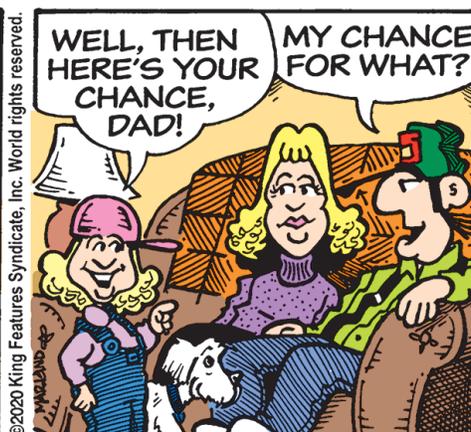
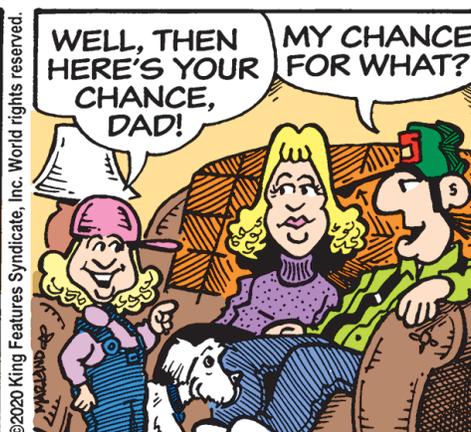
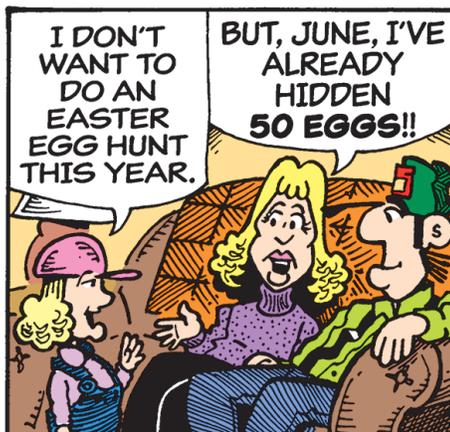
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R.F.D.

by Mike Marland



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Hal Foster's BY GIANNI AND SCHULTZ
Prince Valiant

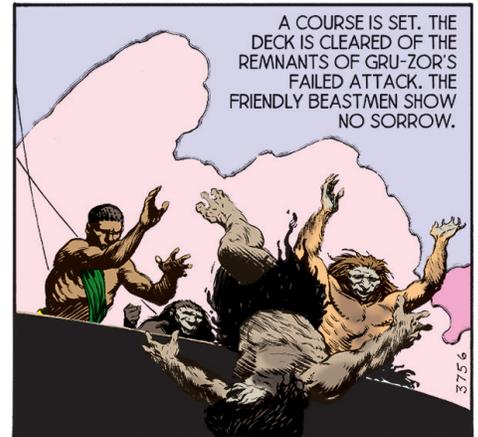


Our Story:

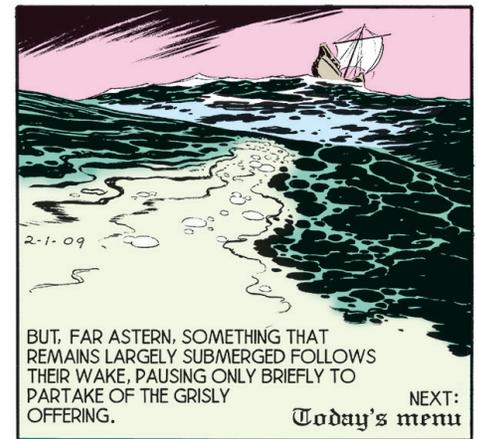
VAL AND HIS COMPANY ARE AT LAST FREE OF THE FOGGY WEED WASTE! AS DAWN CREEPS IN, THE NORSEMEN - WHO NAVIGATE THE OPEN WATERS - TAKE A QUICK READING OF THE FADING STARS. THE NIGHT SKY IS THEIR FRIEND - IT WILL GUIDE THEM ALL HOME.

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A COURSE IS SET. THE DECK IS CLEARED OF THE REMNANTS OF GRU-ZOR'S FAILED ATTACK. THE FRIENDLY BEASTMEN SHOW NO SORROW.



3756



2-1-09

BUT, FAR AFTERN, SOMETHING THAT REMAINS LARGELY SUBMERGED FOLLOWS THEIR WAKE, PAUSING ONLY BRIEFLY TO PARTAKE OF THE GRISLY OFFERING.

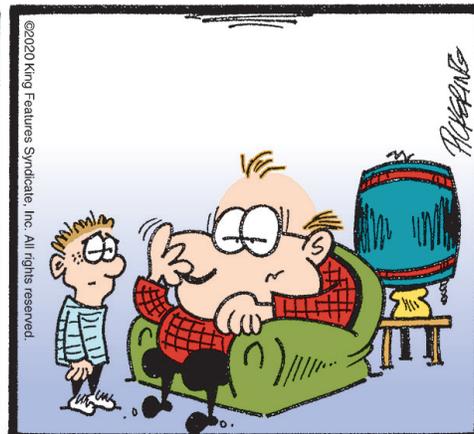
Today's menu **NEXT:**

The Spats

by Jeff Pickering



I STILL HAVE THE FIRST DOLLAR I EVER MADE.



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TOO BAD I DON'T HAVE ANY OF THE REST OF THEM.

SENIOR NEWS LINE

by Matilda Charles

Stay Fed, Stay Safe

Life has certainly changed recently. Depending on where you live, it might have changed a lot. Stay home if you're a senior. Stay home if you have a medical condition. That's what we've been told.

That's all well and good, but what if we really need to shop for food? What if we couldn't stock up last week because the Social Security benefit hadn't made it to our checking account yet?

If you're really in a jam for food, call the food bank. Of all the places, that one is most likely to still be open. They're trying to keep people fed, especially seniors, as well as children who don't get free meals because the schools are now closed. Ask if they have a drive-up pantry where you can be handed some bags of food through the car window. You might find that food is being distributed at places like the senior center or a school parking

lot or via Meals on Wheels, even if you aren't signed up as a participant.

If you do dare to enter a store, a number of grocery stores are designating the first hour or two in the morning for seniors only. Not all stores are doing this, so call first. If they don't do it, suggest it. You're more likely to find the things you need during this time as the shelves will (hopefully) be restocked overnight. And with fewer people in the store, you're less likely to run into someone with the virus, but stay away from other people anyway. If you go, be sure to take sanitizing wipes for the cart handles.

Remember, if you go out, you're really not safe from the virus. Do it as little as possible.

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1. What former U.S. Men's National Soccer Team goalkeeper plays for and partly owns the USL Championship league's Memphis 901 FC?

2. In 2004, then Major League Baseball Commissioner Bud Selig declared April 15 to be celebrated as what?

3. In 1980, Rosie Ruiz was stripped of her title eight days after it was discovered that she cheated at what event?

4. What former NFL player and TV sportscaster — announcer of 16 Super Bowls and 26 Masters golf tournaments — died on April 16, 2013, at the age of 82?

5. What basketball great became the first African-American head coach in the NBA when he took over the Boston Celtics in 1966?

6. The 2011 Animal Planet TV series "Taking on Tyson" was about boxing legend Mike Tyson's involvement in what sport?

7. Though he played his entire career with the New York Giants,



by Ryan A. Berenz

quarterback Eli Manning was selected No. 1 overall in the 2004 NFL Draft by what team?

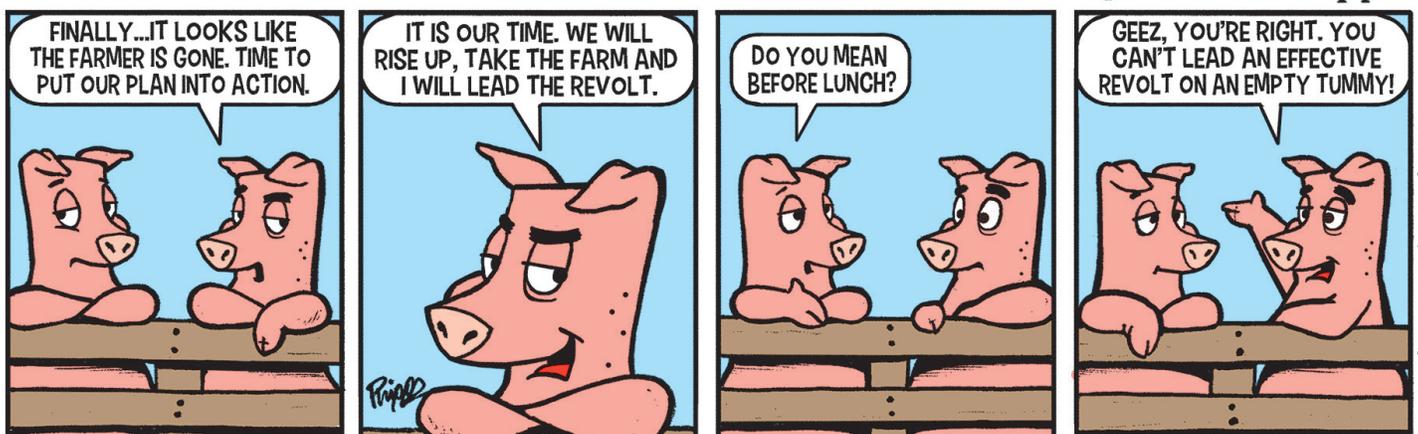
Answers

1. Tim Howard.
2. Jackie Robinson Day.
3. The Boston Marathon. Ruiz entered the race about a half-mile from the finish.
4. Pat Summerall.
5. Bill Russell, who won two NBA championships as player-coach from 1966-69.
6. Pigeon Racing.
7. The San Diego Chargers.

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Amber Waves

by Dave T. Phipps



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CONGRESSMAN
DUSTY JOHNSON
Representing **SOUTH DAKOTA** at large



Working Through COVID-19 Together

Like other businesses across the country, my office has had to dramatically shift how we operate as we fight COVID-19 as a nation. Congress began implementing teleworking procedures nearly a month ago and my office is following social distancing and work-from-home protocols that the CDC has recommended.

Thankfully, modern technology allows us to keep our phone lines on, our emails open, and our casework operations functioning. I've been able to host a tele-town hall focused on your questions about COVID-19 every single week since the CDC began implementing social distancing. I want to be clear – if you need assistance during COVID-19, we are up and running, and we can help you if you contact our office.

I recognize the ability to telework is not available to everyone, especially in states like South Dakota, where many of our businesses are in rural locations without access to quality internet. That's why I felt it was important to support the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act, which will provide relief to businesses facing hard times during this pandemic.

The CARES Act is geared toward American families and small businesses. During my recent tele-town hall, more than two hundred South Dakotans had a specific question about their job or business. The CARES Act was passed with the goal of ensuring small businesses, non-profits, tribal businesses, and veterans organizations keep folks on their payroll. If your business is struggling because of COVID-19's impact, you are likely eligible for a Small Business Administration (SBA) Paycheck Protection Program loan. If you use this "loan" to cover the cost of your payroll, rent, mortgage interest, or utilities for an eight-week period, the loan will be forgiven if you keep employees on payroll. During this time of economic uncertainty, it's crucial businesses utilize this program and keep folks on the payroll.

As of today, you can apply through any existing SBA 7(a) lender or through any federally insured depository institution, federally insured credit union, and Farm Credit System institution that is participating in the Paycheck Protection Program.

Small businesses aren't the only ones being impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. Our farmers and ranchers are feeling it too. I've taken this period of tele-working to host conference calls with our producer groups like the South Dakota Cattlemen, South Dakota Stockgrowers, and South Dakota Ag & Rural Leadership Alumni. They've all told me times are tough. Just like I'm fighting for South Dakota's small businesses, I'm fighting for our ag producers – that's why along with 140 Members of Congress, including Senator Thune and Senator Rounds, I led a letter to Secretary Perdue requesting swift assistance to cattle producers with resources we worked to get included in the CARES Act.

Most of us have never faced times like this before, but when times get tough, South Dakotans get tougher. We will get through this together, and if you need assistance please do not hesitate to contact one of my offices.

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How to Access COVID-19 Resources

COVID-19 is impacting every South Dakotan right now. On top of worrying about the health and safety of our loved ones and ourselves, many people in our state have been put in a difficult financial position due to the virus. We're facing a highly unusual situation where many businesses have had to close in order to protect the health of our citizens. To help keep our economy going, Congress passed—and the president signed into law—the CARES Act, a nearly \$2 trillion relief bill. It includes resources to help individuals, families, businesses and others weather this storm.

In the coming weeks, money will be distributed to Americans to help keep our economy going. Adults earning less than \$75,000 annually will receive \$1,200 from the U.S. Treasury, plus \$500 per child age 16 and under. Married couples filing jointly will receive \$2,400 if their combined income is less than \$150,000. Income amounts are calculated based on your most recent tax return. This payment will be disbursed as a direct deposit for taxpayers who have previously received tax refunds via direct deposit. Paper checks will be mailed to those without direct deposit information on file with the IRS. There is no requirement that citizens must earn an income to be eligible, meaning that even people who make \$0 in income will receive the money as long as they aren't the dependent of a taxpayer. Additionally seniors whose only income is from Social Security and veterans whose only income is a veterans' disability payment are eligible for these funds as long as they aren't the dependent of another taxpayer.

Businesses with 500 employees or fewer, as well as self-employed individuals, can participate in the Small Business Administration's (SBA) Paycheck Protection Program (PPP). The PPP will provide up to \$10 million in loans to businesses that can help them cover payroll costs for employees. The loans can also be used to make payments on interest on mortgages, and pay rent and utilities incurred starting Feb. 15, 2020. If small businesses that receive PPP loans keep their employees on their payroll, SBA will forgive most of the loans. This is an incentive for businesses to keep their workers employed. The SBA and Treasury Department recently issued interim guidance for local lenders. Banks and credit unions in South Dakota are reviewing this information and hope to be able to offer these loans. We understand that the SBA has been tasked with putting together a new, complex program in a short amount of time. Likewise, we understand the concerns of community banks, lenders and borrowers regarding the implementation of the PPP and the urgency of getting this program running to help businesses and employees. We are in discussions with both the SBA and South Dakota lenders and borrowers, around the clock, to relay information in order to make certain the program works as intended.

Employees who have already been let go due to COVID-19 may be rehired by their employer if the small business applies to the PPP. The intent of the PPP is to make sure workers continue to receive a paycheck and benefits until they can physically return to their workplace. We strongly urge employers to utilize the PPP during this time. In the meantime, individuals who are out of work can file for unemployment benefits. The CARES Act increases the amount of benefits unemployed beneficiaries receive during this time.

We know many people have questions about what benefits they are eligible for and how to receive them. While the CARES Act is now law, the executive branch of the government is continuing to work on implementing it. Families and businesses need relief, and they need it now. I am urging the different federal agencies to work as quickly as they can to implement the CARES Act. Because of the size of the relief legislation, implementation will unfortunately take some time. As new guidance and rules become available, we are sharing it on our COVID-19 webpage: www.rounds.senate.gov/covid19.

We want to make it as easy as possible for South Dakotans to access the resources they need. If you have questions that you haven't been able to get answered, please contact my offices in Pierre, Sioux Falls, Rapid City and Aberdeen. All our phone numbers are listed on my website, www.rounds.senate.gov. We are working every day to find solutions for South Dakotans during this uncertain time.

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John Thune
U.S. SENATOR - SOUTH DAKOTA



Professor John Thune: U.S. Government 101

Hey, parents. I know these are crazy times we're living in, and many of you have now unexpectedly added "teacher" to your long list of titles, which also likely includes "coach," "cook," and "hall monitor." Hopefully there haven't been too many visits to the principal's office. While I don't have a solution to everything you're facing right now, I've got something that I hope will at least help. More on that in a minute, though.

Throughout this coronavirus outbreak, Congress has been focused on providing support and relief to the American people. We've already passed, and the president has signed, three relief packages that are already helping families, workers, small businesses, and the country's health care community.

We've prioritized things like ensuring anyone who needs to get tested for the coronavirus can do so at no cost to themselves. We're making sure that no-strings-attached emergency cash payments make it into Americans' hands as soon as possible and that small businesses have the support they need to keep their operations open and employees on payroll. Importantly, doctors, nurses, and other health care professionals are getting additional and much-needed resources to both treat patients and help protect themselves on the front lines of this battle.

Everyone is feeling the effect of this ongoing pandemic, which is why we tried to make it a little easier for graduates to manage their student loan debt. I'm glad a bill I helped write was included in the last relief package the president signed. It will give employers the option to help graduates pay down student loan debt by up to \$5,250 per employee each year tax-free. The new law will also allow graduates to defer payments and interest for six months – penalty-free – on qualified federal student loans. And for those Americans who are out of work as a result of this crisis, we're strengthening states' unemployment benefit programs for those who need them the most.

Our recent efforts have also helped the farming and ranching community, which has faced hurdle after hurdle these last few years. At my urging, the latest bill replenished the critically important Commodity Credit Corporation and allocated nearly \$10 billion in emergency funding to help producers in South Dakota and around the country. There's so much support for this effort that I teamed up with U.S. Rep. Dusty Johnson to lead a bipartisan group of senators and members of the House – a group that represents more than 25 percent of the entire Congress – to urge the secretary of the U.S. Department of Agriculture to take immediate action using the resources we provided in the new law.

Everyone is still adjusting to this new lifestyle where social distancing and teleworking are now considered normal, especially parents who've now become at-home educators. Since many schools are closed for the foreseeable future – some for the remainder of the school year – I wanted to do my part to help those parents, students, and teachers who are adjusting to this new at-home learning environment on top of everything else they're facing these days.

That's why I decided to record a short video lesson about the basics of the federal government that parents can show to their at-home students or teachers can work into curriculums they might already be using for virtual learning experiences. I'm hoping it will help provide educators and students with a tiny bit of additional content that could help diversify virtual lesson plans during these unusual times.

If you're interested in using my video lesson, you can find it on my social media channels, including Facebook and Twitter (@SenJohnThune), or by visiting www.thune.senate.gov/COVID19. If you find it helpful and would be interested in additional lessons, please leave a comment and let me know. By visiting the same website, you can find additional coronavirus-related updates from me and my staff, plus a ton of helpful links and resources that will help South Dakotans better navigate this crisis. If you can't find what you're looking for, call, email, or write, and we'll get it to you as soon as possible.

We're learning more and more each day about what bonds us as Americans because we're all experiencing and coping with this crisis together. We're also learning about new ways to contribute to our communities and stay connected with friends and family even when we're afar. In these uncertain times, I urge you to embody the examples of kindness we're seeing in South Dakota and around the country and continue to share stories of hope, support, and generosity when you see them.

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SOUTH DAKOTA GOVERNOR
KRISTI NOEM



Together, We Can Do This

With the COVID-19 situation continuing to be very fluid in South Dakota, it is important for us to remember that this a marathon, not a sprint. In today's 24/7 news cycle, the information coming at us on TV or social media can easily overwhelm us.

By now, many of you have heard me say that I'm relying on the science, facts, and data to drive the state's response to the virus. Our team's decision-making is guided by the realities on the ground in South Dakota, rather than trying to apply a one-size-fits-all approach.

My role with respect to public safety is something I take very seriously. But it's also important for us to remember that it's the people themselves who are primarily responsible for their safety. Under our Constitutions at the state and federal levels, the people have expansive freedoms - they are free to exercise their rights to work, worship, and play - or to stay at home, or to conduct social distancing.

Since the middle of February, I have been very clear that our people need to take their responsibility for personal health and safety seriously - that they should be practicing good public hygiene and social distancing. And, with few exceptions, the people of South Dakota are doing a tremendous job. We have bent the curve a great deal. We have kept our hospital capacity at a manageable level. And we continue to push out our peak infection day far into the future.

This is great news, and we must stay the course.

We must remember that the objective here is not to stop the spread of COVID-19; the science tells us that is not possible. What we are trying to accomplish is to slow the spread, and flatten the curve, so that our people and our healthcare system are not overwhelmed. This will give us more time to develop successful treatments and, hopefully, an effective vaccine.

South Dakota is not New York City, and our sense of personal responsibility, our resiliency, and our already sparse population density put us in a great position to manage the spread of the virus without needing to resort to the kinds of draconian shutdowns adopted by big coastal cities or even other countries.

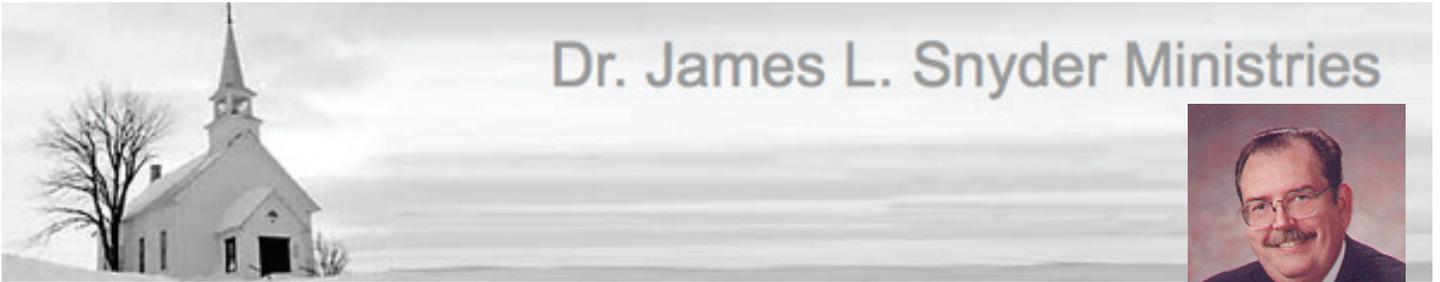
Jointly, with Department of Health officials as well as officials from each of the three hospital systems (Avera, Monument Health, and Sanford Health), our team has illustrated exactly what our projections look like for the next several months. Now, given the fluidity of the situation, our estimates are dynamic, not static. As the situation on the ground changes, we will continue to be flexible in our response to that new information.

My team has been thoughtful, strategic, and guided by the science, facts and data from what is happening on the ground here, in South Dakota, since January. These new estimates are a guide. We will continue to refine them as we learn more about this virus and it's impact on our state.

Again, I want to thank the people of South Dakota for doing everything they have thus far. Together, we will get through this.

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Dr. James L. Snyder Ministries



Every Dilemma Has a Silver Blessing

For the last several weeks, the Gracious Mistress of the Parsonage and myself have been enjoying some quiet time in our parsonage. I cannot remember the last time we had such quiet time all to ourselves.

One of the blessings of this time is the fact that telemarketers are not calling. In a way, I miss them because I used to harass them as much as they were harassing me. But we will come back to that in a few weeks or months.

I did not know what a wonderful time it was until yesterday as my wife and I were enjoying our supper together. Usually, throughout the week, we spend quite a bit of time at a restaurant because of our schedule. It is not often that we can spend a whole week having our meals together.

Enjoying home-cooked meals is one of the great pleasures of being married to someone who knows how to cook. If the cooking were left up to me, it would be a completely different story. The truth is, it is not up to me and I say a grateful, hallelujah!

Some family members think I am a little bit post-thin; at least that's what they say. I respond by saying I'm not as fat as I could be, but I'm not as skinny as I once was. I do not know what that means; I just want to say something to take the attention off me.

If I am "post-thin," I am not to blame. The blame goes squarely on the shoulders of the master cook in our domicile. If the meals were not as good as they are, I would not eat as much as I do.

Therefore, my condition is not my own doing. Do not ask my wife; she has a different perspective on this situation.

Experiencing this solitude has brought many blessings.

One blessing is the gas at the local gas station is \$1.65 per gallon. It has been a long time since the gas has been that low.

Even though it's a blessing from a certain point of view, there is a negative aspect. Why is it that the gas is so cheap, but there is no place I can go? Why can it be that cheap when I have to take a trip somewhere?

So that blessing doesn't really turn out to be a bona fide blessing, in my opinion.

I know there are some bargains at local stores that are open, like Publix, but I am not a shopper, and at this time, I would stay as far away from that place as possible. That may be a blessing, but there is a downside to it.

As I was enjoying the home cook supper the other night, I began to appreciate what a wonderful cook my wife is. For the last several days, she has cooked breakfast, lunch, and dinner. I have eaten her breakfast, lunch, and dinner with a great deal of delight.

Although I understand the consequences of eating as much as I have been eating, the blessing of eating it at the time far outweighs the future. At least that's what I'm saying now.

After supper that night, which was absolutely delicious, I had a very frightening thought. I am not sure I am over it yet.

The thought was that whenever we go out to eat at a local restaurant, I'm always the one who tips the waitress. I always make sure I am generous with my tip. My philosophy is simply this, the thing that stands between the kitchen and me is that waitress, and I better be able to trust her.

Now, the thought tumbling through my mind is, am I supposed to tip my wife for supper tonight?

It is not that I am not generous. It is that I do not know how to manage this tipping business at home.

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And the reason is, I made a slip of the tongue right after supper that night when I said to my wife, "This is a \$1 million meal for sure."

How in the world do you tip a \$1 million meal?

As I was ruminating this through my mind, my wife sat down in the living room with me and said, "Did you really mean it was a \$1 million meal?"

Throughout life, I have learned one basic fact. If I don't say what I think I can't get into trouble. Am I in trouble now?

If I would sell all my assets, I know I could not come anywhere near the tip due for a \$1 million meal.

Not knowing what to do, I said with the most gracious smile I could paint on my face, "Yes, my dear. It certainly was a \$1 million meal, in my opinion."

"Well," she said, "that complement is worth \$1 million to me."

I sighed a very deep sigh and realized I had actually tipped her more than I would tip the waitress at the restaurant. Life just can't get any better than that.

As we exchanged smiles, I couldn't help but think of something the apostle Paul said, "And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also ye are called in one body; and be ye thankful" (Colossians 3:15).

I believe it's true that you cannot put a price tag on a thankful spirit.

Attention: Groton Area School District Patrons

The election for the Groton Area Board of Education has been postponed to Tuesday, June 2, 2020. This is the corresponding date of the 2020 presidential primary election. Three candidates running for two open positions on the school board are Jason Bickel, Steven R. Smith and Grant Rix. In order to vote in this election, you must be a registered voter of the Groton Area School District. If you are in doubt about your registration status, contact your local county auditor. Voter registration ends May 18, 2020.

On election day, the school district will operate polling sites from 7:00 AM to 7:00 PM at Andover Other Place, Bristol Community Center, Columbia Legion and Groton Community Center. Please note that Andover and Bristol patrons will not cast a presidential primary vote at their location. Day County will hold primary voting in Webster only. With respect to COVID-19 issues, please make good health related decisions when voting on election day.

In-person absentee voting is available at the school business office located at 406 North 2nd Street in Groton from 9:00 AM to 4:00 PM Monday through Friday. Voters may vote in-person up until 5:00 PM on the day before the election.

Voters may also vote absentee by mail or absentee by messenger, in the event of confinement due to sickness or disability. To receive a South Dakota Absentee Ballot Application Form call Mike Weber, at 605-397-2351 extension 1008, or email mike.weber@k12.sd.us. Forms are also available on-line at www.grotonarea.com and www.sdsos.gov.

Mike Weber

Election Superintendent

Groton Area Schools

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Covid-19 Update by Marie Miller

The numbers continue to increase, but that lower rate of increase holds for yet another day. Still looking for it to drop further. We are now up to 311,148 cases in 50 states, DC, and 4 territories. This is a 14% increase over yesterday. NY still leads with 114,859 followed by NJ with 34,124, MI with 14,225, CA with 13,723, LA with 12,496, MA with 11,736, FL with 11,537, IL with 10,357, PA with 10,017, and WA (the only top-10 state under 10,000 cases) with 7498. Top 10 states together are holding at 77% of cases; NY and NJ together have fallen a bit off their previous 50% to 48%. We have 13 more states over 2000, 7 more over 1000, 10+DC over 500, and 10 + PR and GU over 100. Only VI and MP are holding out below 100.

There have been 8467 deaths in the US from this virus. NY has passed all of mainland China with 3565 deaths, NJ has 846, MI has 540, and LA has 412. 12 more states are over 100, 24 more + DC and PR are over 10, and 9 states + GU and MP are under 10.

Today's big news is that the CDC is now recommending you wear a mask covering your nose and mouth whenever you leave your house. This does not need to be and SHOULD NOT BE a medical mask—please leave those for the medical care providers who seriously need them much more than you do. It can be any piece of fabric that covers your nose and mouth. The purpose of the masks is to prevent you spreading the virus to others when you breathe or speak if you happen to be one of those people who are infected and without symptoms. Your mask will not prevent you from acquiring the virus; but if everyone wears one, we're all a whole lot less likely to pick up an infection. Some jurisdictions are requiring masks and fining people; most are simply issuing recommendations. But it's a good idea wherever you live. Here's an excellent example of how you can be a good citizen, and it requires almost no sacrifice or work at all, just wearing a silly-looking mask when you go out. How hard can that be, people?

You don't need to buy fabric and sew something, and you don't need to purchase something. I've seen folks wearing a stretchy piece of fabric that clings around their heads and provides sufficient covering, and I've seen photos of any number of jury-rigged masks that get the job done. That said, I've also seen photos of some pretty stylish masks with a favorite team logo or in colors to match the outfit, so if you're into that sort of thing, knock yourself out here. This could be a very useful step toward breaking transmission chains—and who doesn't want that?

None of this should mean you relax any of the other precautions you're already exercising; the idea here is to add to your safety, not to substitute one measure for another. And if you have any sort of respiratory symptoms or gastrointestinal symptoms (nausea, vomiting, or diarrhea), then stay home. Don't run to the store, don't go to the neighbors (which you're not supposed to be doing anyhow), don't go to the park or the playground or the farmers' market. Just don't.

Something concerning that is turning up in a study of a group of patients in Wuhan, China, is instances of cardiac injury in patients with Covid-19. This appears to be more prevalent in those with preexisting coronary heart disease or hypertension and more likely with serious infection, but is also occurring in those without preexisting heart disease. This cardiac damage does increase the risk of dying for affected patients.

There's an interesting development on the diagnostic side: A company has applied for FDA Emergency Use Authorization of a quick, at-home blood test for antibodies to SARS-CoV-2. You prick your own finger, apply the resulting drop of blood to a cassette, and then send an image of the result via smart phone. You receive your results within several hours. There is no need for a clinic visit or potential exposure of health care workers to the patient. It is important to realize that the presence of antibodies does not mean you are currently infected, but combined with symptoms, could be used to identify an infected individual. The company has the capacity to produce a half-million tests per day, which is a lot of production in a hurry. Validation testing is underway now, and the EUA, if it comes, is probably a couple of months off. This is another tool in the arsenal.

OK, one last thing tonight. I've been resisting doing this because I'm just sure someone who reads it is going to get this virus, conclude it came from their groceries, and try to sue me; but I can't take it anymore. PEOPLE, STOP SCRUBBING YOUR FOOD WITH SOAP!!! This is nuts!

I've been seeing all this advice about how to protect yourself from your dinner. I watched that doctor

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in his video scrub fruit with a brush in soapy water (not to mention exhibit the worst sterile technique I think I've seen anywhere but a playground). I watched someone else soak vegetables in bleach water. Just stop it! If you're that scared of raw foods, then cook everything; this virus is not heat resistant, so normal cooking takes care of it. If you exercise all of the precautions I've been pushing, wash your hands before preparing food, wash down the countertops, and wash your hands again before handling and eating, your cooked food will be fine.

If you're too scared of take-out food to eat it, but instead insist on microwaving it for 4 minutes (or whatever some dude on a video is telling you), then don't get take-out food. Why would you spend good money on good food, then ruin it before eating it? You can cook bad food yourself—and cheaper too, right?

If you do want to eat some foods raw—say, in a salad—calm down. Following all of the usual precautions, wash them in water—no soap, no bleach—and eat. Here is advice from a website I've relied on for a long time for all things food-related, sciencey and authoritative; all links to sources are reliable: <https://www.serious-eats.com/2020/03/food-safety-and-coronavirus-a-comprehensive-guide.html>.

And here's another good source of information: <https://www.sciencealert.com/food-safety-expert-explains-how-to-safely-deal-with-groceries-during-the-pandemic?fbclid=IwAR3TPumHx-KSDy1C3gS2Yje3pp1ZVaCjZa9Bgl18wf2WE9IGAVip4poV7s>

Here's my thinking on this subject: There've been a million cases worldwide by now, and many of these cases have had contacts traced. And not a single one of these has been linked to food. Not one. Wouldn't you think, if this thing was foodborne, that at least one grocery store worker or farmer's market person or someone would have had the infection and spread it to others, resulting in a cluster of cases? I would, and we haven't seen anything even suggestive of that. This would seem to indicate that, even if foodborne infection is theoretically possible, it can't be very likely. I'd guess you're more likely to get infected going to the grocery store than from eating the food you buy there. And you have to eat something.

So what do you do? Bring the food home. Take it out of the bags. Throw those out, wash your hands, and wash down the surface where they were sitting. Swab down the surface of packages you can wash with a cloth wrung out in hot soapy water. Don't try to wash paper boxes; leave them sitting for 24 hours, which is as long as virus persists on paper and cardboard. Don't soap down your vegetables. Don't bleach your fruit. Put everything away. Wash your hands. And go on with your life. It also helps to remember that, while this virus persists at detectable levels up to a few days on some surfaces, the diminution in numbers of infectious virus particles is exponential, meaning most of them are gone within a few hours, and it just gets better from here.

So exercise reasonable precautions, cook everything if you have to, but don't go out of your mind. And stop washing your apples with soap. Soap was not meant to be eaten. It's bad for you. Sheesh!

And so we wind up another week of this. I don't know how many more weeks we're talking about, but I think it's a lot. So hunker down, do your bit, exercise precautions, don't panic, and find a kind deed you can do for someone who needs one. Pick someone you're not related to; do the good thing just to be a good person and to help, not to get gratitude or collect favors. We all make ourselves into better people, we build a better America. We want that, right?

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	Apr. 3	Apr. 4
Minnesota	503	576	629	689	742	789	865
Nebraska	120	153	177	214	255	285	323
Montana	161	177	198	217	241	263	281
Colorado	2,307	2,627	2,966	3,342	3,728	4,173	4,565
Wyoming	87	95	120	137	150	166	187
North Dakota	98	109	126	147	159	173	186
South Dakota	90	101	108	129	165	187	212
United States	143,055	164,610	189,633	216,722	245,573	278,458	312,245
US Deaths	2,513	3,170	4,081	5,137	6,058	7,159	8,503
Minnesota	+62	+73	+53	+60	+53	+47	+76
Nebraska	+12	+33	+24	+37	+41	+30	+38
Montana	+14	+16	+20	+19	+25	+22	+18
Colorado	+246	+320	+339	+376	+386	+445	+392
Wyoming	+3	+8	+25	+17	+13	+16	+21
North Dakota	+4	+11	+17	+21	+12	+14	+13
South Dakota	+22	+11	+7	+21	+36	+12	+25
United States	+18,369	+21,555	+25,023	+27,089	+28,851	+32,885	+33,787
US Deaths	+322	+657	+911	+1,056	+921	+1,101	1,344

Confirmed Cases by Country/Region/Sovereignty
312,245 US
126,168 Spain
124,632 Italy
96,092 Germany
90,853 France
82,574 China

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Dakotas COVID-19 Update

South Dakota: 25 new positive cases (212 total)
 419 negative cases (5,102 total)
 7 more have fully recovered (76 total)
 2 more hospitalized (19 total)

Codington County added to the Minimal/Moderate Community Spread category.

Yankton County moved to Substantial Community Spread category

Changes in County:

Beadle: 1 more recovered, Brookings: 1 positive test, Brown: 2 more positive tests, 1 more recovered, Charles Mix: 1 more positive, Codington: 1 more positive, Lawrence: 1 more recovered, Lincoln: 2 more positive, 1 more recovered, Minnehaha: 13 more positive, Roberts: 1 more positive, Spink: 1 more positive, Turner: 1 recovered, Yankton: 3 more positive, 2 recovered

From North Dakota Dept. of Health:

The NDDoH & private labs are reporting 409 total completed tests today for COVID-19, with 13 new positive cases, bringing the statewide total to 186.

State & private labs have conducted 6,207 total tests with 6,021 negative results.

63 ND patients are considered recovered.

County	Total Positive Cases	# Recovered
Aurora	1	1
Beadle	21	18
Bon Homme	1	1
Brookings	3	2
Brown	9	5
Charles Mix	2	1
Clark	1	1
Clay	3	2
Codington	9	3
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	4
Lincoln	21	4
Lyman	1	1
Marshall	1	1
McCook	2	1
Meade	1	1
Minnehaha	81	15
Pennington	6	1
Roberts	4	0
Spink	2	0
Todd	1	0
Turner	3	1
Union	3	1
Yankton	14	4

SOUTH DAKOTA CASE COUNTS	
Test Results	# of Cases
Positive*	212
Negative**	5012
Pending***	1

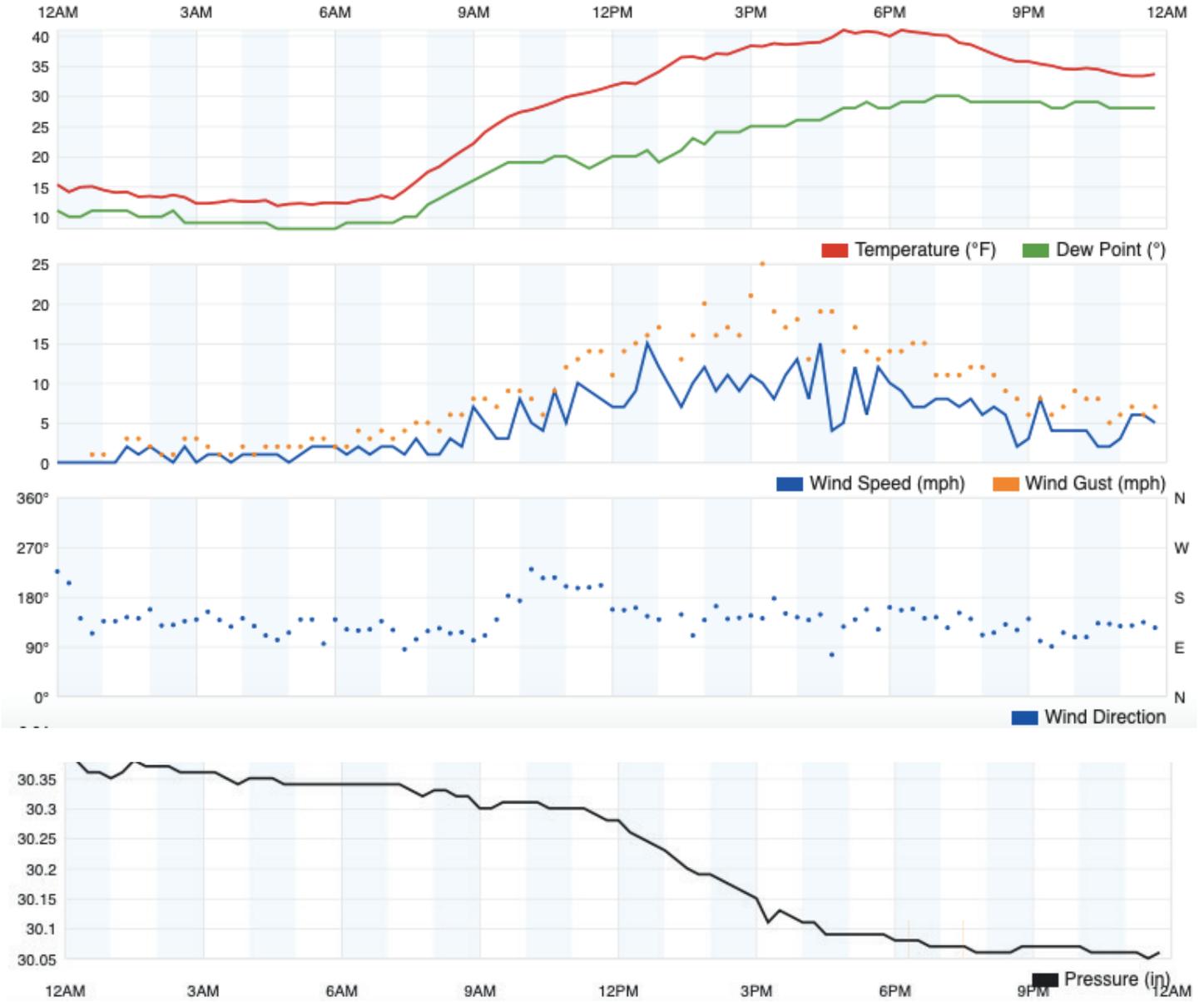
COVID-19 IN SOUTH DAKOTA	
Number of Cases	
Ever Hospitalized*	19
Deaths**	2
Recovered	76

Age Range	# of Cases
0 to 19 years	7
20 to 29 years	38
30 to 39 years	37
40 to 49 years	37
50 to 59 years	43
60 to 69 years	33
70 to 79 years	9
80+ years	8

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Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs



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Today

Tonight

Monday

Monday
Night

Tuesday



Sunny



Clear



Sunny



Chance Rain



Chance Rain
and Breezy

High: 57 °F

Low: 30 °F

High: 61 °F

Low: 39 °F

High: 58 °F

Today,
Sun Apr 5th
48-60°



Warmest across south central SD. Fog possible tonight.

3-Day Outlook

MON	TUE	WED
		
55-70°	60-70°	44-52°

Fog possible Monday AM. 20-30% chance for showers and t-storms Monday night across northeastern SD and west central MN.

Updated: 4/5/2020 5:16 AM Central



A warming trend will continue through Tuesday, when high temperatures will be in the 60s or even around 70 across south central South Dakota. Fog is possible tonight into Monday morning, mostly across portions of central South Dakota. The best chance for precipitation is Monday night across northeastern South Dakota and west central Minnesota when a low pressure system moves through the area - both showers and thunderstorms are possible.

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Today in Weather History

March 5, 1966: The historic blizzard of 1966, which started on March 2, comes to an end in the Dakotas. North Dakota saw severe livestock losses with an estimated 18,500 cattle, 7,500 sheep, and 600 hogs killed. On a farm in eastern North Dakota, 7,000 turkeys perished. The total damage to livestock was estimated at near \$4 million. In South Dakota, an estimated 50,000 cattle, 46,000 sheep, and 1,800 hogs were killed. Most of the deaths occurred in the central and northern central part of the state.

1894: The low temperature of 36 degrees at San Diego, California, on this day was their lowest on record for March.

1959: Near blizzard conditions occurred over northern and central Oklahoma. Up to seven inches of snow fell and winds up to 50 mph created snow drifts 4 to 8 feet deep. In Edmond, a bus slid off the road into a ditch and overturned, injuring 16 people.

1966: A plane crashes near Mount Fuji in Japan after encountering severe turbulence. The pilot veered a few miles off course to give the passengers a better view of Mount Fuji when it tremendous wind gusts. All 124 people on board the aircraft were killed.

1972: Palm Springs, California recorded a high of 100 degrees, the earliest the city has ever hit the century mark.

1989: A F2 tornado killed one person and injured six others in Heard County, Georgia. A stronger, F3 tornado injured 23 persons and caused more than 5 million dollars damage around Grantville, Georgia.

2007: The morning temperature dropped to 51 degrees below zero at Key Lake, Saskatchewan, Canada.

1945 - The temperature at Eagles Nest, NM, plunged to 45 degrees below zero to establish an April record for the United States. (Sandra and TI Richard Sanders - 1987)

1955 - The Northern Rockies and the Northern High Plains were in the midst of a four day storm which produced 52 inches of snow at Lead, located in the Black Hills of western South Dakota. (David Ludlum)

1972 - A tornado, 500 yards wide at times, touched down at a marina on the Oregon side of the Columbia River, and then tore through Vancouver WA killing six persons, injuring 300 others, and causing more than five million dollars damage. It was the deadliest tornado of the year, and the worst of record for Washington. (The Weather Channel)

1982 - An unprecedented April blizzard began in the northeastern U.S. One to two feet of snow fell across Massachusetts and Connecticut, and up to 26 inches was reported in Maine. New York City received a foot of snow. Winds reached 70 to 80 mph during the storm, and the storm also produced numerous thunderstorms, which contributed to the heavy snow. (Storm Data)

1987 - A storm produced unprecedented April snows in the central Appalachians. Mount Mitchell NC received 35 inches of snow, and up to 60 inches (six feet) of snow was reported in the mountains along the border of North Carolina and Tennessee. The total of 25 inches at Charleston WV easily surpassed their previous record for the entire month of April of 5.9 inches. The 20.6 inch total at Akron OH established an all-time record for that location. (Storm Data) (The National Weather Summary)

1988 - Thirty-nine cities across the eastern half of the country reported record high temperatures for the date, including Saint Louis MO with a reading of 91 degrees. Laredo TX was the hot spot in the nation with an afternoon high of 100 degrees. (The National Weather Summary)

1989 - Unseasonably hot weather prevailed in the southwestern U.S. Afternoon highs of 100 degrees at Santa Maria CA and 105 degrees in Downtown Los Angeles established records for the month of April. (The National Weather Summary)

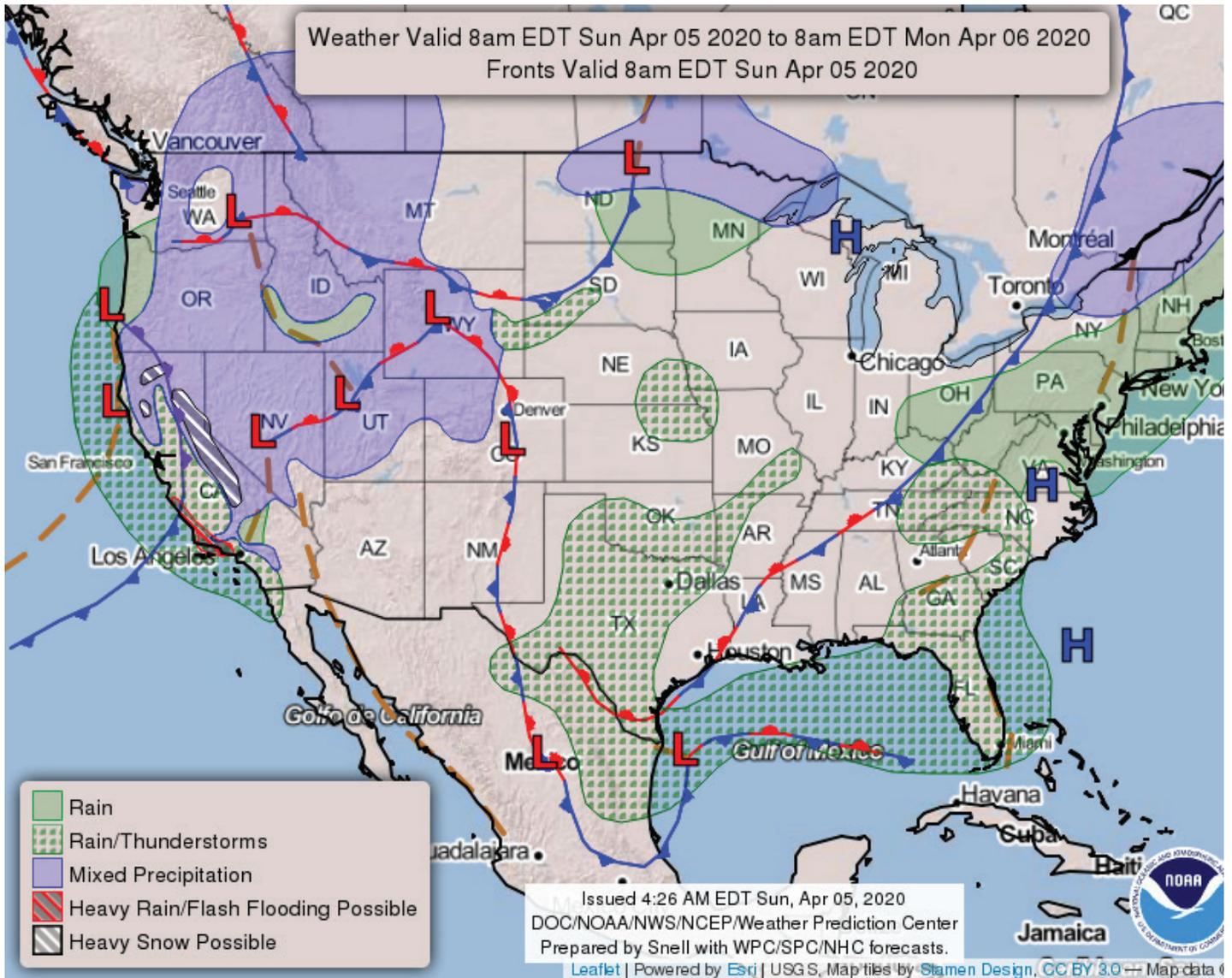
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Yesterday's Groton Weather Today's Info

High Temp: 41 °F at 5:38 PM
Low Temp: 12 °F at 4:48 AM
Wind: 25 mph at 3:12 PM
Snow

Record High: 86° in 1991
Record Low: 6° in 2007, 1968
Average High: 51°F
Average Low: 28°F
Average Precip in April.: 0.18
Precip to date in April.: 0.94
Average Precip to date: 2.36
Precip Year to Date: 1.29
Sunset Tonight: 8:08 p.m.
Sunrise Tomorrow: 7:04 a.m.



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WILLING AND ABLE

Little Anne was anxious for her birthday to arrive. It was a day of celebration filled with presents and a party with her best friends.

One morning before school she asked, "Mom, when's my birthday? How long before it's here? You know, how much time do I have to spend being good 'cause you know it's hard for me to be good."

How true of all of us!

If we truly want to be good and do good, however, we need to listen to the advice of Paul: "For God is working in you, giving you the power to do what pleases Him."

To do good we begin by first being willing "to please Him" - we must be willing to be willing. For the Christian, "doing good" is being Christ-like. For some of us, it takes time. We know that our goal is to have an attitude like Jesus and act as He did. But what do we do until that happens? Many of us have had that as a goal for years and still have not achieved the results we want: to think and act like Jesus. Perhaps our "want" does not match our "will."

Look at it this way: If we are will-ing – surrender our wills to the Lord - God will en-able – make us able - to do what He would have us to do. If we read the Gospel message, we can see what Jesus did and then go into His world and do whatever He did to honor His Father. Willingness always precedes ability. Ability will come from God when He knows we are willing.

Prayer: Lord, sometimes we really try to complicate things to get out of doing them. Truth is if we want to do good we can do good because You promised to help us. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: Philippians 2:13 For God is working in you, giving you the desire and the power to do what pleases him.

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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

News from the **AP** Associated Press

South Dakota lawmaker dies of coronavirus

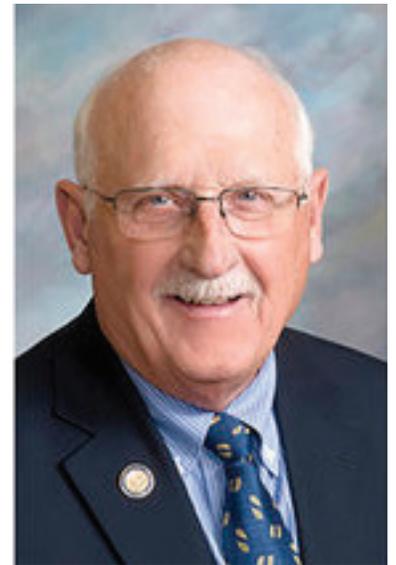
SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — A South Dakota state lawmaker who was among several family members to contract the coronavirus has died.

State Rep. Bob Glanzer died at about 8 p.m. Friday at Avera McKennan Hospital & University Health Center, his son Tom said in a Facebook post.

Tom Glanzer and Senate Majority Leader Lee Qualm both confirmed Bob Glanzer's death to The Associated Press.

The 74-year-old lawmaker had fallen ill almost two weeks ago, part of a cluster of COVID-19 cases around Huron, South Dakota. Glanzer's wife, brother-in-law and sister-in-law all had the virus, and Glanzer's 51-year-old niece, Mari Hofer, died of it, according to Hofer's husband, Quint Hofer.

Glanzer was a retired agriculture loan officer and a past manager of the South Dakota State Fair.



This April, 9, 2018 photo shows South Dakota State Rep. Bob Glanzer in Huron, S.D. After the South Dakota lawmaker 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 blunt the infection rate, but they couldn't stop the disease from spreading among his extended family. Within days of the 74-year-old Glanzer testing positive for the coronavirus, his wife, brother, and sister-in-law all had confirmed infections. Several other relatives have symptoms, according to Tom Glanzer, the lawmaker's son. (The Daily Plainsman via AP)

SD Lottery

By The Associated Press

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) — These South Dakota lotteries were drawn Saturday:

Dakota Cash

02-14-16-22-23

(two, fourteen, sixteen, twenty-two, twenty-three)

Estimated jackpot: \$20,000

Lotto America

18-21-30-35-47, Star Ball: 9, ASB: 3

(eighteen, twenty-one, thirty, thirty-five, forty-seven; Star Ball: nine; ASB: three)

Estimated jackpot: \$2 million

Mega Millions

Estimated jackpot: \$127 million

Powerball

08-31-39-40-43, Powerball: 4, Power Play: 3

(eight, thirty-one, thirty-nine, forty, forty-three; Powerball: four; Power Play: three)

Estimated jackpot: \$180 million

South Dakota tops 20 COVID-19 cases for 3rd straight day

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — South Dakota health officials on Saturday confirmed 25 new cases of the coronavirus, putting the state over the 200 mark in total cases.

The state Department of Health website shows that two people have died from COVID-19, although that does not include the death of a state lawmaker from Huron. Rep. Bob Glanzer died Friday night at a Sioux Falls hospital, his son Tom said in a Facebook post.

It was the third straight day that the state has recorded more than 20 positive tests.

Thirteen of the 25 cases reported Saturday were in Minnehaha County, which includes Sioux Falls. That raises the total number in the county to 81. There have been 21 cases confirmed in Beadle and Lincoln counties, according to the health department.

Nineteen of the 212 people with the coronavirus have been hospitalized. Older adults and people with existing health problems are more susceptible to severe illness or death from the virus, which generally causes mild or moderate symptoms for most people.

Sanford Health Plan waiving out-of-pocket costs for COVID-19

SIoux FALLS, S.D. (AP) — Officials with the Sanford Health Plan said Friday the insurance carrier is waiving all out-of-pocket costs for COVID-19 treatment through the end of May.

The health plan will cover all costs for testing and treatment for its members, including outpatient care and inpatient hospital stays, the company said in a release. It applies to all fully insured group and individual plans for its customers in North Dakota, South Dakota, Iowa and Minnesota.

Out-of-pocket costs include medical co-pays, deductibles and coinsurance charges related to treatment for COVID-19.

"This is about providing peace of mind to our members," John Snyder, president of the Sanford Health Plan, said in a statement. "This is an uncertain time for many families and we're doing our part to stand with them as we all navigate this pandemic."

The announcement follows a similar move earlier this week by the Blue Cross Blue Shield plans in those four states. During his Thursday briefing, North Dakota Gov. Doug Burgum lauded the decision by the Blues and said he hoped other insurance providers would do the same.

Minnesota governor worried about response from border states

MINNEAPOLIS (AP) — Minnesota Gov. Tim Walz said he's worried about neighboring states that have yet to issue stay-at-home orders to try and slow the spread of COVID-19.

North Dakota, South Dakota and Iowa were among a handful of states that did not have statewide orders in place as of Friday afternoon.

"I do worry about that," Walz said, adding that he has communicated with officials in the three states that border Minnesota to the west and south, the Pioneer Press reported. "It's probably only a matter of time before they issue those, too."

Iowa Gov. Kim Reynolds said at a press conference that the state has "taken significant and incremental steps" to limit the spread of the virus and a stay-at-home order is not needed yet. North Dakota Gov. Doug Burgum and South Dakota Gov. Kristi Noem echoed those thoughts.

"We're a low population state and a large low population state. I will use



FILE - In this Wednesday, March 18, 2020 file photo, Gov. Tim Walz speaks during news conference in St. Paul, Minn., where he gave an update on the state's effort to slow down the coronavirus. On Friday, April 3, 2020, Walz said he's worried about neighboring states that have yet to issue stay-at-home orders to try and slow the spread of COVID-19. (AP Photo/Jim Mone)

every tool at my disposal as governor to protect the lives and safety of North Dakotans," Burgum said Friday. "But I'm only going to use those tools if it makes sense and when it makes sense."

Noem said a statewide order wouldn't be worth the disruption it would cause even though she predicted that up to 70% of the state's population might get COVID-19.

Walz, who said it's likely that he will extent Minnesota's order to the end of April, said the state's residents are saving lives by following the rules set in place.

"We are trying to look and be thoughtful with the data," Walz said. "I think a lot of this depends on how well Minnesotans simply adhere to it without us telling them to so that they are not jeopardizing the gains that we are making."

The new 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.

U.S. 'wasted' months before preparing for virus pandemic

By MICHAEL BIESECKER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — As the first alarms sounded in early January that an outbreak of a novel coronavirus in China might ignite a global pandemic, the Trump administration squandered nearly two months that could have been used to bolster the federal stockpile of critically needed medical supplies and equipment.

A review of federal purchasing contracts by The Associated Press shows federal agencies waited until mid-March to begin placing bulk orders of N95 respirator masks, mechanical ventilators and other equipment needed by front-line health care workers.

By that time, hospitals in several states were treating thousands of infected patients without adequate equipment and were pleading for shipments from the Strategic National Stockpile. That federal cache of supplies was created more than 20 years ago to help bridge gaps in the medical and pharmaceutical supply chains during a national emergency.

Now, three months into the crisis, that stockpile is nearly drained just as the numbers of patients needing critical care is surging. Some state and local officials report receiving broken ventilators and decade-old dry-rotted masks.

"We basically wasted two months," Kathleen Sebelius, health and human services secretary during the Obama administration, told AP.

As early as mid-January, U.S. officials could see that hospitals in China's Hubei province were overwhelmed with infected patients, with many left dependent on ventilator machines to breathe. Italy soon followed,



FILE - In this March 24, 2020, file photo stacks of medical supplies are housed at the Jacob Javits Center that will become a temporary hospital in response to the COVID-19 outbreak in New York. A review of federal purchasing contracts by The Associated Press shows federal agencies waited until mid-March to begin placing bulk orders of N95 respirator masks, mechanical ventilators and other equipment needed by front-line health care workers. (AP

Photo/John Minchillo, File)

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with hospitals scrambling for doctors, beds and equipment.

HHS did not respond to questions about why federal officials waited to order medical supplies until stocks were running critically low. But President Donald Trump has asserted that the federal government should take a back seat to states when it comes to dealing with the pandemic.

Trump and his appointees have urged state and local governments, and hospitals, to buy their own masks and breathing machines, saying requests to the dwindling national stockpile should be a last resort.

"The notion of the federal stockpile was it's supposed to be our stockpile," Jared Kushner, the president's son-in-law and adviser, said at a White House briefing Thursday. "It's not supposed to be state stockpiles that they then use."

Experts in emergency preparedness and response have expressed dismay at such statements, saying the federal government must take the lead in ensuring medical supplies are available and distributed where they are needed most.

"States do not have the purchasing power of the federal government. They do not have the ability to run a deficit like the federal government. They do not have the logistical power of the federal government," said Sebelius, who served as governor of Kansas before running the nation's health care system.

Because of the fractured federal response to COVID-19, state governors say they're now bidding against federal agencies and each other for scarce supplies, driving up prices.

"You now literally will have a company call you up and say, 'Well, California just outbid you,'" Gov. Andrew M. Cuomo, D-N.Y., said Tuesday. "It's like being on eBay with 50 other states, bidding on a ventilator."

For nearly a month, Trump rebuffed calls from Cuomo and others to use his authority under the Defense Production Act to order companies to increase production of ventilators and personal protective equipment. He suggested the private sector was acting sufficiently on its own.

More than three months after China revealed the first COVID-19 cases, Trump finally relented last week, saying he will order companies to ramp up production of critical supplies. By then, confirmed cases of COVID-19 within the United States had surged to the highest in the world. Now, the number of people infected in the U.S. has climbed to more than 300,000 and deaths have topped 8,400.

Trump spent January and February playing down the threat from the new virus. He derided warnings of pandemic reaching the U.S. as a hoax perpetrated by Democrats and the media. As the World Health Organization declared the outbreak a global public health emergency on Jan. 30, Trump assured the American people that the virus was "very well under control" and he predicted "a very good ending."

His administration was so confident that Secretary of State Mike Pompeo announced on Feb. 7 that the government had airlifted nearly 18 tons of respirator masks, surgical masks, gowns and other medical supplies to China.

On Feb. 24, the White House sent Congress an initial \$2.5 billion funding request to address the coronavirus outbreak. The next day, federal health experts at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention warned that the virus was spreading quickly in the U.S. and predicted that disruptions to daily life could be "severe," including school and business closures.

Unfazed, HHS Secretary Alex Azar told lawmakers on Feb. 27 that "the immediate risk to the American public remains low."

During those crucial early weeks when the U.S. could have been tracking the spread of the disease and containing it, hardly anyone was being tested after a series of federal blunders led to a shortage of tests and testing capacity, as AP reported last month.

Without data showing how widespread the disease was, federal and state governments failed to prepare.

By the middle of March, hospitals in New York, Seattle and New Orleans were reporting a surge in sick patients. Doctors and nurses took to social media to express their alarm at dwindling supplies of such basic equipment as masks and gowns.

Trump accused some Democratic governors of exaggerating the need and derided those that criticized the federal response as complainers and snakes.

"I want them to be appreciative," Trump said on March 27.

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At the start of the crisis, an HHS spokeswoman said the Strategic National Stockpile had about 13 million N95 respirator masks, which filter out about 95% of all liquid or airborne particles and are critical to prevent health care workers from becoming infected. That's just a small fraction of what hospitals need to protect their workers, who normally would wear a new mask for each patient, but who now are often issued only one to last for days.

Trump during a White House briefing on March 26 claimed that he had inherited an "empty shelf" from the Obama administration, but added that "we're really filling it up, and we fill it up rapidly."

Federal purchasing records, however, show the Trump administration delayed ordering additional supplies until the virus had taken root and was spreading.

HHS first announced its intent to purchase 500 million N95 masks on March 4, with plans to distribute them over the next 18 months. The following day, Congress passed an \$8.3 billion coronavirus spending bill, more than three times what the White House had originally asked for.

Ten days later, on March 14, Trump declared the outbreak a national emergency. That was almost six weeks after the WHO's action. By then, thousands of U.S. schools had closed, the National Basketball Association had put its season on temporary hiatus and there were 1,700 confirmed cases of COVID-19 in the country.

The government had already sent tens of thousands of masks, gloves and gowns from the stockpile to Washington state, which was hit early with a coronavirus outbreak. But state officials even then said the supplies weren't enough.

Federal contracting records show that HHS had made an initial order March 12 for \$4.8 million of N95 masks from 3M, the largest U.S.-based manufacturer, which had ramped up production weeks earlier in response to the pandemic. HHS followed up with a larger \$173 million order on March 21, but those contracts don't require 3M to start making deliveries to the national stockpile until the end of April. That's after the White House has projected the pandemic will reach its peak.

On Thursday, Trump threatened in a Tweet to "hit 3M hard" through a Defense Production Act order, saying the company "will have a big price to pay!" He gave no specifics.

HHS declined this past week to say how many N95 masks it has on hand. But as of March 31, the White House said more than 11.6 million had been distributed to state and local governments from the national stockpile — about 90% of what was available at the start of the year.

Dr. Robert Kadlec, the assistant secretary for preparedness and response at HHS, testified before Congress last month that the country would need roughly 3.5 billion N-95 respirators to get through the pandemic, but the national supply chain then had just about 1% of that amount.

Greg Burel, director of the Strategic National Stockpile from 2007 until his retirement at the start of this year, said the cache was only ever intended to serve as a short-term "bridge-stock."

The stockpile was created in 1999 to prevent supply-chain disruptions for the predicted Y2K computer problems. It expanded after 9/11 to prepare for chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear attacks. Congress provided money in 2006 to prepare for a potential influenza pandemic, though Burel said much of that stock was used during the H1N1 flu outbreak three years later.

"There's never enough money to buy everything that we want to see on those shelves," said Burel, who stressed the stockpile uses its annual funding to prepare for a wide array of potential threats.

"Most of the time, commercially available products like masks can be bought in quantity at the time of an event."

This time, it hasn't worked out that way. As AP reported last month, much of the world's supply of N95 masks and other basic medical supplies is made in China, the first nation hit by COVID-19. As a result, the Chinese government required its producers to reserve N95 respirators for domestic use. China resumed exports of the precious masks only in recent days.

Experts are now worried the U.S. will also soon exhaust its supply of ventilators, which can cost upward of \$12,000 each.

The White House said Tuesday that it had already distributed nearly half the breathing machines in the

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stockpile, which at the beginning of March had 16,660; some of them dated back to the flurry of post-9/11 purchasing. An additional 2,425 were out for maintenance.

Cuomo said New York may need as many as 40,000 ventilators to deal with the outbreak that is already overwhelming hospitals there.

Throughout March, governors and mayors of big cities urged Trump to use his authority under the Defense Production Act to direct private companies to ramp up production of ventilators. It wasn't until last week that Trump finally said he would use that power to order General Motors to begin manufacturing ventilators — work the company had already announced was underway. But GM says its first ventilators won't be available before the summer.

The federal government had made an effort to prepare for a surge in the need for ventilators, but it was allowed to languish. Since 2014, HHS has paid a private company, Respironics Inc., \$13.8 million to develop a cheaper, less complicated ventilator that could be bought in bulk to replenish the national stockpile. In September, HHS placed a \$32.8 million order with the Dutch-owned company for 10,000 of the new model, set for delivery by 2022, federal contracts show.

Respironics' parent company, Royal Philips, said it's planning to double U.S. production of ventilators to 2,000 a week by the end of May.

Steve Klink, a spokesman for Royal Philips in Amsterdam, said the company is now focused on producing its other commercial models and will deliver the first ventilators to the national stockpile by August, long after the White House projects COVID-19 cases will peak.

Trump, who pledged on March 27 that his administration would ensure that 100,000 additional ventilators would be made available "within 100 days," said on Thursday that he'll use the Defense Production Act to order Respironics and other ventilator makers to step up production.

It's not clear that Trump's order would translate into the 100,000 new ventilators he promised. In a House Oversight and Reform Committee briefing last week, top Federal Emergency Management Agency officials hedged, saying 100,000 ventilators would be available by late June "at the earliest."

Cuomo predicted on Friday that New York would run out within days. With coronavirus deaths in his state surging, the governor vowed to use his authority to seize ventilators, masks and protective gear from private hospitals that aren't utilizing them.

Meantime, federal health authorities are lowering standards.

New guidance from the Food and Drug Administration allows hospitals to use emergency ventilators typically used in ambulances and anesthesia gas machines in place of standard ventilators. The agency also said nightstand CPAP machines used to treat sleep apnea and snoring could also be used to keep coronavirus patients breathing, as a last resort.

Meanwhile, the CDC advised health care workers last month to use homemade masks or bandanas if they run out of proper gear. Across the country, hospitals have issued urgent pleas for volunteers who know how to sew.

President Trump provided his own input, suggesting that Americans without access to factory-produced masks could cover their faces with scarves.

"A scarf is highly recommended by the professionals," Trump said during a White House briefing Wednesday. "And I think, in a certain way, depending on the fabric — I think, in a certain way, a scarf is better. It's actually better."

Associated Press writers John Hanna in Topeka, Kansas, and Ricardo Alonso-Zaldivar contributed to this report.

Follow AP Investigative Reporter Michael Biesecker at <http://twitter.com/mbieseck>

Contact AP's global investigative team at Investigative@ap.org.

Queen: History will remember your actions in virus crisis

By DANICA KIRKA Associated Press



FILE - In this Monday, March 9, 2020 file photo, Britain's Queen Elizabeth II arrives to attend the annual Commonwealth Day service at Westminster Abbey in London. In a rare address to the nation taking place Sunday, April 5, Queen Elizabeth II plans to exhort Britons to rise to the challenge of the coronavirus pandemic. The queen will be drawing on wisdom from her decades as Britain's head of state to urge discipline and resolve in a time of crisis. (AP

Photo/Kirsty Wigglesworth, file)

In a rare address to the nation, Queen Elizabeth II plans to exhort Britons to rise to the challenge of the coronavirus pandemic, drawing on wisdom from her decades as Britain's head of state to urge discipline and resolve in a time of crisis.

The 93-year-old monarch is expected to acknowledge the suffering that many families have experienced because of the COVID-19 crisis, which has infected over 42,000 citizens in the U.K. and killed at least 4,313 of them. She will seek to lift spirits and offer hope to the country in its hour of need.

"I am speaking to you at what I know is an increasingly challenging time," she said, according to excerpts released ahead of remarks that were being broadcast Sunday night. "A time of disruption in the life of our country; a disruption that has brought grief to some, financial difficulties to many and enormous changes to the daily lives of us all."

The queen gives yearly Christmas messages but has given an address like this on only three previous occasions.

She delivered speeches after the Queen Mother's death in 2002, before the funeral of Diana, Princess of Wales in 1997, and at the time of the first Gulf War in 1991.

The queen will laud Britain's beloved National Health Service and others in essential services, together with some 750,000 people who volunteered to help the vulnerable.

"I hope in the years to come everyone will be able to take pride in how they responded to this challenge," she said. "Those who come after us will say that the Britons of this generation were as strong as any."

"That the attributes of self-discipline, of quiet, good-humored resolve, and of fellow feeling still characterize this country," she said, according to excerpts.

The crisis has hit close to home for the queen. Her son and the heir to the throne, 71-year-old Prince Charles, had a mild case of the disease. She herself left London, the epicenter of Britain's outbreak, and took up residence at her home in Windsor with her husband, the Duke of Edinburgh.

Both the monarch and her 98-year-old husband are among those over 70 whom the British government have advised to stay home for 12 weeks.

The address was recorded at in the White Drawing Room at Windsor Castle. The location was chosen specifically because it allowed enough space between the monarch and the camera person, who wore personal protective equipment.

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France turns to speedy trains to catch up in virus response

By SYLVIE CORBET and ANGELA CHARLTON Associated Press

PARIS (AP) — The high-speed train whooshing past historic World War I battle zones and through the chateau-speckled Loire Valley carried a delicate cargo: 20 critically ill COVID-19 patients and the machines helping keep them alive.

The TGV-turned-mobile-intensive-care-unit is just one piece of France's nationwide mobilization of trains, helicopters, jets and even a warship, deployed to relieve congested hospitals and shuffle hundreds of patients and medical personnel in and out of coronavirus hotspots.

"We are at war," President Emmanuel Macron tells his compatriots, again and again.

But as the 42-year-old leader casts himself as a warrior and harnesses the might of the armed forces, critics charge that he waited far too long to act against this foe. France, one of the world's wealthiest countries with one of the best health care systems, they say, should never have found itself so deep in crisis.

Macron had just emerged from weeks of damaging retirement strikes and a year of violent "yellow vest" protests over economic injustice when the pandemic hit. Now he is struggling to keep the house running in one of the world's hardest-hit countries.

The Rungis food market south of Paris, Europe's biggest, is transforming into a morgue as France's death count races past 7,500. Nearly 7,000 patients are in intensive care, pushing French hospitals to their limit and beyond. Doctors are rationing painkillers and re-using masks.

France's centralized state and powerful presidency make it easier to coordinate the exceptional patient-moving efforts, which have crisscrossed the country and even extended to overseas territories.

But the pandemic has exposed weaknesses in the world-renowned state hospital system after decades of cost cuts. When the president visited a Paris hospital on the front lines of the virus battle, an angry neurologist challenged him to reinvest massively.

"When it was about saving Notre Dame, many were moved," Dr. Francois Salachas said, a reference to the Paris cathedral that was severely damaged by fire a year ago, prompting immediate, massive pledges of public and private funds for reconstruction. "This time it's about saving public hospitals, which are going up in smoke at the same speed as Notre Dame almost did."

Many think Macron did not anticipate the severity with which the virus could hit and set a bad personal example. Similar criticisms have been leveled at other world leaders including the presidents of Mexico, Brazil and the United States.



FILE - In this April 1, 2020 file photo, medical staff transfer a patient infected with the coronavirus to a train at the Gare d'Austerlitz train station in Paris. On high-speed trains fitted out like hospitals and military planes, France has moved hundreds of intensive care patients around the country in an exceptional effort to relieve congested hospitals and stay ahead of the fast-moving virus. The new 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. (Thomas Samson, Pool via AP, File)

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In February, Macron made a point of repeatedly kissing Italy's premier on a visit to Naples to show there was nothing to fear. At the time the virus was already spreading fast across France, but limited testing meant health authorities didn't yet know.

In early March, he toured a retirement home even as he announced that families should no longer visit elderly relatives. That same day he went with his wife to a Paris theater where the owner tweeted that the president wanted to show that "life goes on." By then the official virus infection numbers in France were doubling every two days.

In mid-March, as COVID-19 was ravaging neighboring Italy, France went ahead with the first round of nationwide municipal elections. First lady Brigitte Macron strolled the banks of the Seine, which were crowded with Parisians enjoying a sunny day despite recommendations of social distancing.

It wasn't until March 16 that Macron abruptly changed his tune, declaring war on the virus and announcing nationwide confinement measures. A week later he appeared wearing a face mask for the first time at a field hospital set up by troops outside Mulhouse, the eastern city that saw an eruption of cases stemming from a five-day evangelical gathering.

The armed forces took on a key role, as military and hospital authorities worked out the system to shuttle patients to less-strained hospitals and medics to virus zones in need.

The first "medicalized" TGV made its inaugural trip on March 26. Doctors in protective gear pushed gurneys along the nearly empty platform of the train station in the eastern city of Strasbourg as safety warnings echoed from loudspeakers. Inside the double-decker cars, patients and webs of tubes and wires were squeezed past luggage racks and rows of seats. Once they were secured, the train sped off toward less impacted hospitals in the west.

While the militarized mobilizations are popular, public debate has mushroomed over issues such as the relatively low numbers of people being tested for the virus in France and shortages of medical equipment. Macron ordered all face masks requisitioned for medical personnel after it became evident France entered the crisis well short of the necessary supply.

"The question of masks is now the priority question for the French," said Jean-Daniel Levy of polling agency Harris Interactive, adding that the public feels the government "didn't take enough responsibility" for it at the outset.

France has had to send some patients for treatment to tiny neighboring Luxembourg, Switzerland and Germany, which has conducted massive nationwide testing and confirmed more cases than France while recording a death toll about one-fifth as high so far.

Macron, a centrist, has taken fire from both ends of the political spectrum.

Far-right leader Marine Le Pen told France 2 television that "the government lied about the preparedness of the country," while far-left leader Jean-Luc Melenchon said Macron, a former investment banker, "used to think that the free market would meet the country's needs, so his mental framework collapsed."

Among the broader public, Macron "is seen as relatively authoritarian," Levy said. That hurt him during the protest movements but helps his popularity now because "we want to have a strong authority figure" to manage the crisis.

In the National Assembly, the lower house of parliament, a fact-finding mission is scrutinizing the government's handling of the emergency.

Macron, however, said while visiting a mask manufacturing company that it's not yet time to focus on what went wrong.

"When we're fighting a battle, we must all be united to win it," the president said. "And I think those who seek to send people to trial when we have not yet won the war are irresponsible."

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Palm Sunday: Pope celebrates without public in St. Peter's

By FRANCES D'EMILIO Associated Press

VATICAN CITY (AP) — Pope Francis celebrated Palm Sunday Mass without the public because of the coronavirus pandemic, which he said should focus people's attention on what's most important, despite heavy hearts — using one's life to serve others.

Looking pensive and sounding subdued, Francis led the first of several solemn Holy Week ceremonies that will shut out rank-and-file faithful from attending, as Italy's rigid lockdown measures forbid public gatherings.

Normally, tens of thousands of Romans, tourists and pilgrims, clutching olive tree branches or palm fronds would have flocked to an outdoor Mass led by the pontiff. Instead, Francis celebrated Mass inside St. Peter's Basilica, which seemed even more cavernous than usual because it was so empty.

Besides his aides, a few invited prelates, nuns and laypeople were present, sitting solo in the first pews and staggered far apart to reduce the risks of contagion. A male choir, also practicing social distancing, sang hymns, accompanied by an organist.

Wearing red robes to symbolize the blood shed by Jesus in the hours of his crucifix, Francis blessed braided palms.

"Today, in the tragedy of a pandemic, in the face of the many false securities that have now crumbled, in the face of so many hopes betrayed, in the sense of abandonment that weighs upon our hearts, Jesus says to each one of us: 'Courage, open your heart to my love,'" Francis said.

Francis urged people to hold fast to "what really matters in our lives."

"The tragedy we are experiencing summons us to take seriously the things that are serious, and not to be caught up in those that matter less, to rediscover that life is of no use if not used to serve others," the pontiff said in his homily.

In a remark directed to young people, Francis said: "Dear friends, look at the real heroes who come to light these days: they are not famous, rich and successful people."

Instead, he said, "they are those who are giving themselves in order to serve others. Feel called yourselves to put your lives on the line."

Earlier during the pandemic, Francis has praised medical staff, transport workers, supermarket clerks and others for their sacrifices to help lives.

"May we reach out to those who are suffering and those most in need," the pope said. "May we not be concerned with what we lack, but what good we can do for others."

Francis said that youth in Panama would have symbolically passed a cross on Sunday to others in Lisbon, Portugal, which will host the next Catholic world youth jamboree in 2022. Francis announced that the handover ceremony would take place instead on Nov. 22.

Noting that sports events are canceled, the pontiff said the "best fruits of sport" are evident these times:



Pope Francis holds a palm branch as he celebrates Palm Sunday Mass behind closed doors in St. Peter's Basilica, at the Vatican, Sunday, April 5, 2020, during the lockdown aimed at curbing the spread of the COVID-19 infection, caused by the novel coronavirus. (AP Photo/pool/Alberto Pizzoli)

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"resistance, team spirit, brotherhood, giving the best of oneself."

At the end of Mass, Francis called on faithful to spiritually draw close to the sick, their families and those treating them and to offer prayers for the deceased.

"May we reach out to those who are suffering and those most in need," the pope said. "May we not be concerned with what we lack, but what good we can do for others."

Palm Sunday opens Holy Week leading up to Easter, which this year falls on April 12. Among the usual events is the Good Friday Way of the Cross procession. This year, instead of the customary candlelit procession at Rome's Colosseum, the Way of the Cross will be presided over by Francis in St. Peter's Square without the public, in keeping with Italian and Vatican anti-contagion bans on gatherings.

The Vatican has said there are seven cases of COVID-19 among the residents or employees of the tiny independent city state. The virus causes mild to moderate symptoms in most people, but for some, especially older adults and the infirm, it can cause pneumonia and lead to death.

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Sunny weather tempts Europe; UK queen urges self-discipline

By **DANICA KIRKA** and **DAVID RISING** Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — As warm, sunny weather beckoned across Europe, Queen Elizabeth II appealed to Britons on Sunday to exercise self-discipline in "an increasingly challenging time" as the country saw a record 24-hour jump in coronavirus deaths that even outpaced the daily toll in hard-hit Italy.

Britain recorded 708 new coronavirus deaths, bringing its overall toll to 4,313 as infections rose past 42,000, while Italy reported 631 deaths. Those coming down with the virus in the U.K. include Prime Minister Boris Johnson, the health secretary, England's chief medical official and Prince Charles, heir to the British throne.

There are wide fears that Johnson's Conservative government did not take the virus seriously enough at first and that lovely weather will tempt Britons and others to break social distancing rules.

In an address to the nation to be televised later Sunday, the 93-year-old queen said the pandemic had caused enormous disruptions, bringing grief, financial difficulties and daunting challenges to everybody. It was only the fourth time since her reign began in 1953 that she has given such an address.

"I hope in the years to come everyone will be able to take pride in how they responded to this challenge," she said in pre-released remarks. "And those who come after us will say that the Britons of this generation were as strong as any."

The queen's son, Charles, on Friday remotely opened a vast temporary hospital for corona patients in a London convention center after completing a week of isolation. Johnson as of Friday still had a fever but his infected pregnant fiancée, Carrie Symonds, tweeted she is "on the mend" after a week in bed.

As the sun shone and the temperatures rose toward 20 degrees Celsius (68 degrees Fahrenheit), Health Secretary Matt Hancock said sunbathing in public places was not allowed and the U.K. might even ban outdoor exercise if people still "flout the rules."

"The vast majority of people are following the public health advice, which is absolutely critical, and staying at home," Hancock told Sky TV. "But there are a small minority of people who are still not doing that — it's quite unbelievable, frankly, to see that."

Restrictions vary from country to country. In Germany and Britain, residents can get out to exercise and walk their dogs, as well as go to the supermarket, the post office and other essential tasks. Yet in Serbia and South Africa, dog walking is not allowed.

In France, heat-seeking drones have been whizzing over Fontainebleau forest to identify rule-breakers after the former royal estate in the Paris suburbs was closed to the public. That high-tech measure has been coupled with more traditional police patrols on horseback and roadblocks that turn back the cars of those seeking to escape urban areas.

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In Sweden, authorities have advised the public to practice social distancing, but schools, bars and restaurants are still open.

At the Vatican, Pope Francis celebrated Mass and blessed palms for Palm Sunday in a near-empty St. Peter's Basilica. Usually tens of thousands of faithful would have crowded the square outside to attend a papal Mass.

Holy Thursday and Easter services will be held the same way. In the pope's native Argentina, the faithful were using plants at home for a "virtual" blessing during a livestream of the Palm Sunday service.

Italians have not been immune to the lure of the good weather either, even though the country has the world's highest coronavirus death toll at more than 15,000.

Top Italian officials took to national television after photos were published showing huge crowds out shopping in Naples, Rome, Genoa and even the hard-hit Veneto city of Padua. Lombardy vice governor Fabrizio Sala said cellphone data showed 38% of the region's people were out and about — the highest figure since March 20.

Health Minister Roberto Speranza told RAI state television that all the sacrifices Italians have made since the nationwide lockdown began on March 10 risked being reversed.

As deaths and infections soared across the United States, new infections were slowing in Italy and Spain. Rome's main hospital for coronavirus infections reported that, for the first time since Italy's outbreak began, more patients were discharged than admitted.

Spain announced 6,023 confirmed new infections Sunday, taking its national tally to 130,759 but down from an increase of 7,026 infections in the previous day. Spain's confirmed new virus deaths dropped for the third straight day, to 674 — the first time daily deaths have fallen below 800 in the past week.

"We are starting to see the light at the end of the tunnel," said Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez.

At the start of a week when millions of Spaniards typically go on holiday, data suggested most were following lockdown regulations. Transport authorities on Sunday reported an 85% decrease in long-distance public transport and an 80% drop in the use of private vehicles compared to a normal day.

Worldwide, more than 1.2 million people have been confirmed infected and more than 65,000 have died, according to Johns Hopkins University. The true numbers are certainly much higher, due to limited testing, different ways nations count the dead and deliberate under-reporting by some governments.

Almost 250,000 people have recovered from the virus, which is spread by microscopic droplets from coughs or sneezes. The virus causes mild to moderate symptoms in most but for some, especially older adults and the infirm, it can cause pneumonia and lead to death. The World Health Organization says



People observe social distancing as they pass by the locked gates to Brockwell Park in London, after it was closed overnight to help stop the spread of coronavirus, after the previous evening the local council announced via social media that the park would be shutting, after it said 3,000 people went there on Saturday many of them sunbathing and in large groups, Sunday, April 5, 2020. The new 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. (AP Photo/Matt Dunham)

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95% of the known coronavirus deaths in Europe have been in people over 60.

The rapid spread of the virus in the United States has prompted a chaotic scramble for desperately needed medical equipment and protective gear, prompting intense squabbling between the states and the federal government.

New York Gov. Andrew Cuomo praised China for sending 1,000 ventilators, while President Donald Trump claimed that states are making inflated requests for supplies. In mixed messages, Trump warned that the country could be headed into its toughest weeks and see many deaths but also said he's eager to get the country reopened and its stalled economy back on track.

The number of people infected in the U.S. has soared to more than 312,000 as the fatalities climbed past 8,500.

New York City is the epicenter of the U.S. outbreak but more than 400 people have also died in Louisiana, where state authorities have been rushing to find ventilators. Michigan has more than 14,000 infections and 500 deaths, mainly in Detroit.

Beijing authorities said Sunday about 78,000 people had visited cemeteries in the Chinese capital for annual "tomb-sweeping" ceremonies, down 90% over last year. Thousands of others paid their respects through an online portal that allowed them to light a candle, burn incense and offer wine and flowers, all virtually.

Rising reported from Berlin. Associated Press writers around the world contributed to this report.

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In years before outbreak, investment in public health fell

By SARA BURNETT Associated Press

In the decade before Michigan and its largest city became the latest hot spot for the deadly coronavirus, officials were steadily, and at times dramatically, cutting back on their first line of defense against pandemics and other public health emergencies.

Approaching bankruptcy, Detroit disbanded most of its public health department and handed its responsibilities to a private nonprofit. When the department reopened in 2014 in the back of the municipal parking office, its per capita budget was a fraction of other big cities', to serve a needier population.

In Ingham County, home to the capital city of Lansing, then-Public Health Director Renee Branch Canady sat down at budget time every year for seven straight years to figure out what more to cut.

"It was just chop, chop, chop," Canady said. By the time she left in 2014, all the health educators, who teach people how to prevent disease, were gone.

What happened in Michigan also played out across the country and at the federal level after the 2008 recession, which caused serious budget problems for governments. But as the economy recovered, public health funding did not, a review of budget figures and interviews with health experts and officials shows.

A shortfall persisted despite several alarming outbreaks, from H1N1 to Ebola, and has left the U.S. more vulnerable now to COVID-19, experts say. In normal times, public health workers are in the community, immunizing children, checking on newborns and performing other tasks. In a health emergency, they're tracing outbreaks, conducting testing and serving as "first responders" when people fall sick — efforts that are lagging in many states as the coronavirus spreads.

"Our funding decisions tied their hands," said Brian Castrucci, who worked with health departments in Philadelphia, Texas and Georgia and is now president of the de Beaumont Foundation, a health advocacy organization.

The cuts came under both Democratic and Republican administrations. While there is no single number that reflects all federal, state and local spending, the budget for the federal Centers for Disease Control, the core agency for public health, fell by 10 percent between fiscal year 2010 and 2019 after adjusting

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for inflation, according to an analysis by the Trust for America's Health, a public health research and advocacy organization. The group found that federal funding to help state and local officials prepare for emergencies such as the coronavirus outbreak has also fallen — from about \$1 billion after 9/11 to under \$650 million last year.

Between 2008 and 2017, state and local health departments lost more than 55,000 jobs — one-fifth of their workforce, a major factor as cities struggle to respond to COVID-19.

"It definitely has made a difference," said John Auerbach, Trust for America's Health CEO and a former public health director in Massachusetts.

New York has seen the most COVID-19 cases in the U.S., but numbers are surging in places such as Detroit, where those testing positive nearly tripled in the week between March 28 and Saturday, when officials said the city was approaching 4,000 cases, with 129 deaths. A more robust health system could have done more earlier to track down and isolate people who were exposed, said the city's former health director, Abdul El-Sayed.

State spending on public health in Michigan dropped 16% from an inflation-adjusted high point of \$300 million in 2004, according to a 2018 study.

Some of the funding problems, Canady and other public health advocates believe, stem from a fundamental belief in smaller government among Republican governors, including former Michigan Gov. Rick Snyder, who called for "shared sacrifice" after the state's auto-dependent economy was battered by the recession.

In Kansas, then-Gov. Sam Brownback ran what he called a "red-state experiment" to cut taxes. State spending on its Public Health Division, outside of federal funds, dropped 28% between 2008 and 2016.

The cuts meant a "shifting of responsibility for services from the state level to the county level," Democratic Gov. Laura Kelly said in an interview. "And we saw that in public health."

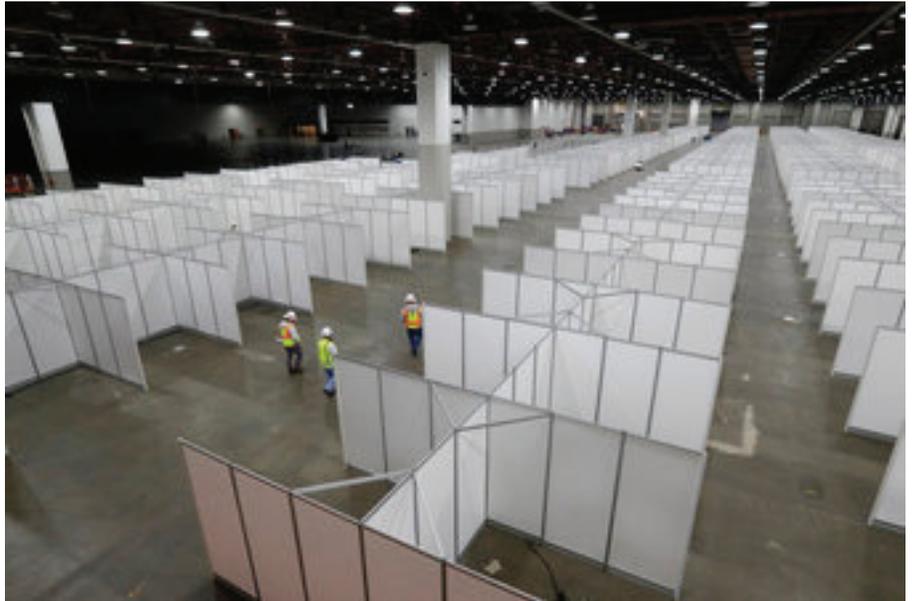
In Maine, then-Gov. Paul Le Page's administration stopped replacing public health nurses who were dealing with families in the opioid crisis. The number of nurses fell from around 60 to the low 20s before the Legislature tried to reverse the action.

Although agencies often receive emergency funding when a crisis strikes, the infusion is temporary.

"Decisions are made politically to support something when it becomes an epidemic," said Derrick Neal, a public health official in Abilene when Ebola surfaced in Texas. "And then as time passes, the funding shrinks."

In Oklahoma, state funding for the Department of Health still hasn't returned to its levels of 2014, when a combination of slumping oil prices, tax cuts and corporate breaks punched a giant hole in the state's budget. When state revenues later improved, the money went to other priorities.

"It's much easier to cut funding for public health than it is to start taking away benefits from people or



In this April 1, 2020, photo the interior of the TCF Center with temporary hospital rooms is seen inside the convention center in Detroit. In the decade before Michigan and its largest city became the latest hotspot for the deadly coronavirus, officials were steadily cutting back on their first line of defense against pandemics and other health emergencies. Approaching bankruptcy, Detroit disbanded most of its public health department and handed its responsibilities to a private nonprofit. (AP Photo/Carlos Osorio)

access to care for people," said former state Rep. Doug Cox, an emergency room doctor.

Castrucci said the problem with providing more money only at times of emergency is it doesn't allow time to recruit and train new workers.

"We waited until the house was on fire before we started interviewing firefighters," he said.

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

Associated Press reporters David Eggert in Lansing, Michigan, Paul Weber in Austin, Texas, John Hanna in Topeka, Kansas, and Sean Murphy in Oklahoma City contributed to this report.

The Latest: Putin still working remotely during pandemic

The Associated Press



Russian President Vladimir Putin attends a meeting on the situation of global energy markets via teleconference call at the Novo-Ogaryovo state residence outside Moscow, Russia, Friday, April 3, 2020. Vladimir Putin says he supports cutting oil production by about 10 million barrels a day to shore up falling oil prices. (Alexei Druzhinin, Sputnik, Kremlin Pool

Photo via AP)

than the previous day. There have been 45 deaths recorded.

ROME — Rome's main hospital for treating COVID-19 infections says more patients were discharged than admitted for the first time since Italy's outbreak began.

Spallanzani Hospital's daily bulletin on coronavirus cases was another positive sign that Italy's rigid lockdown measures have apparently slowed the contagion. The lockdown has been four weeks now.

Health authorities in Lombardy said last week overwhelmed hospitals were starting to feel some relief. The northern region has more than half of Italy's 15,000 deaths.

Spallanzani had treated the first known COVID-19 cases in Italy, which was a vacationing Chinese couple

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:

— Putin to continue working remotely during pandemic.

— Rome's main COVID-19 hospital sees more patients discharged than admitted for first time.

— Airbus plane brings 4 million face masks to France.

MOSCOW — The spokesman for Vladimir Putin says the Russian president will continue working remotely for at least another week amid the coronavirus pandemic.

Dmitry Peskov said on state television Putin and people who work with him are being tested regularly.

Russia's coronavirus task force says the number of infections in the country was 5,389, which is up almost 700

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who fell sick in late January. They were discharged last month.

PARIS — An Airbus plane has traveled from China to France and returned with a cargo of 4 million face masks.

The European multinational said in a statement that the flight landing in France on Sunday morning was its third such mission between China and France.

Airbus says it is continuing “to purchase and supply millions of face masks from China.”

It added the large majority of the masks will be donated to governments of the Airbus home countries, which are predominately France, Germany, Spain and the U.K.

COLOMBO, Sri Lanka — Sri Lanka’s military troops and police personnel are performing musical programs to boost the mental health of citizens under lockdown during coronavirus pandemic.

The programs cater to people living in apartments who can’t leave due to the curfew. Music bands go to each of the apartments and perform on a makeshift stage.

Sri Lanka has been under a countrywide curfew since March 20. Police are strictly imposing the curfew. There have been 13,716 people arrested for violating curfew and 3,423 vehicles seized.

Curfew will be lifted for eight hours in 19 districts on Monday to allow people to buy food and other essentials. The curfew in six other districts which have been identified as high-risk areas will continue indefinitely.

Five people have died due to the virus in Sri Lanka and the total number of confirmed cases are at 166.

JUBA, SOUTH SUDAN — Officials in South Sudan say the country has recorded its first case of COVID-19. It makes it the 51st of Africa’s 54 countries to have the disease.

First Vice President Riek Machar and the U.N. mission in South Sudan confirmed the positive case of a U.N. worker who arrived in the country from the Netherlands on Feb. 28.

Officials say the patient is a 29-year-old woman who is in quarantine and recovering.

South Sudan has 11 million people but Machar says the country currently has four ventilators. South Sudan has already imposed a night curfew and closed its borders to combat the spread of the coronavirus.

PRAGUE — More than 300 pilots in the Czech Republic have joined forces in a group of volunteers who use their private planes to distribute medical equipment all across the country.

The “Pilots to the People” project is meant to help the state authorities fighting the epidemic of the coronavirus “to deliver supplies to any place in the country as soon as possible.”

The service is offered free of charge and the pilots pay for the gas. There’s a network of some 200 airports in the country they can use, making it possible to efficiently serve the entire country.

The group says their goal is to transport the material to any hospital, clinic or any other place where it’s needed in within two hours.

Dan Stastny, one of the founders of the project told The Associated Press on Sunday. that besides the speed, they “can land at any sort of airstrip for ultralight planes which is a great advantage.”

The volunteers mostly include amateurs, sport and small planes pilots.

BANGKOK — A Muslim separatist group in Thailand has announced it is suspending guerrilla activity to facilitate humanitarian access during the COVID-19 crisis.

The Barisan Revolusi Nasional says in a statement posted Sunday on its Facebook page that it was acting “in order to create a safer and more suitable environment ... for health care agencies and other organizations tasked with preventing and containing the outbreak of Coronavirus.”

It says its suspension will remain in effect as long as the group is not attacked by government forces.

The group, generally known as the BRN, has been leading a loose alliance fighting for autonomy for Thailand’s three southernmost provinces, the only ones with Muslim majorities in the predominantly Bud-

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dhist nation. About 7,000 people have been killed since the conflict flared up in 2004.

U.N. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said Friday that warring parties in 11 countries had responded positively to his appeal for a global cease-fire to tackle the coronavirus pandemic.

ATHENS, Greece — Greece has put a migrant facility outside Athens on lockdown for 14 days after a 53-year-old Afghan developed coronavirus symptoms Saturday afternoon.

Authorities say the man has been taken to an Athens hospital and is under “full medical evaluation.” They have not specified the seriousness of his condition.

The lockdown began Sunday morning. The facility is called an “open” one in official parlance, meaning the migrants there could leave and enter as they wished.

There are about 2,500 migrants living there, not all of whom are registered, according to Mihalis Hassiotis, a municipal councillor of Oropos, a town north of Athens where the facility is located.

The migrants stay in containers in crowded conditions. Hassiotis says the facility was designed initially for 500 and expanded over the years.

MADRID — The rate of the coronavirus outbreak continues to slow in Spain, the country with the second most infections behind the United States.

Spain recorded 6,023 confirmed new infections on Sunday, taking the national tally to 130,759. That is down from an increase of 7,026 infections in the previous 24-hour period, confirming the downward tendency of the past week.

Confirmed new deaths also dropped to 674 fatalities, taking the national tally to 12,418. That is the first time new deaths have fallen below 800 new fatalities in the past week.

As its outbreak loses steam, Spain’s government has started to cautiously consider when it can start to reactivate an economy that has been shut down and put hundreds of thousands out of work.

“We are starting to see the light at the end of the tunnel,” Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez told the nation Saturday.

But to get there, Sánchez announced that he would ask the Parliament to extend the state of emergency by two more weeks, taking the lockdown on mobility until April 26. He added that a team of experts is also studying how to plan for a gradual loosening of restrictions to reactive the country’s dormant economy and social life.

THE HAGUE, Netherlands — A Dutch military transport plane carrying a mobile field hospital made up of six intensive care beds is on its way to the Caribbean nation of Sint Maarten to help fight the coronavirus.

The Dutch government says the C-17 plane that left a military airbase in Eindhoven early Sunday morning was also carrying equipment to set up a further six IC beds in the semi-autonomous nation’s hospital, along with protective gear and medicines.

Dutch State Secretary for Health Paul Blokhuis says the country is closely cooperating with Sint Maarten and other Caribbean islands that make up part of the Kingdom of the Netherlands “to rein in the spread of corona as much as possible and at the same time provide the best care possible for corona patients.”

According to figures released April 2 by the government of Sint Maarten, 23 people have tested positive and two people have died in the outbreak. The half-island nation has a population of some 41,000.

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

Amid coronavirus pandemic, black mistrust of medicine looms

By AARON MORRISON and JAY REEVES Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Just as the new coronavirus was declared a global pandemic, gym members in New York City frantically called the fitness center where Rahmell Peebles worked, asking him to freeze their memberships.

Peebles, a 30-year-old black man who's skeptical of what he hears from the news media and government, didn't see the need for alarm over the virus.

"I felt it was a complete hoax," Peebles said. "This thing happens every two or four years. We have an outbreak of a disease that seems to put everybody in a panic."

Peebles is among roughly 40 million black Americans deciding minute by minute whether to put their faith in government and the medical community during the coronavirus pandemic. Historic failures in government responses to disasters and emergencies, medical abuse, neglect and exploitation have jaded generations of black people into a distrust of public institutions.

"I've just been conditioned not to trust," said Peebles, who is now obeying the state's stay home order and keeping his distance from others when he goes out.

Some call such skepticism the "Tuskegee effect" — distrust linked to the U.S. government's once-secret study of black men in Alabama who were left untreated for syphilis. Black people already suffer disproportionately from chronic conditions like diabetes and heart disease and are far more likely to be uninsured.

How the government and medical community responds to the crisis will be especially crucial for outcomes among black Americans, civil rights advocates and medical experts say.

"We are right to be paranoid and to ask tough questions," said U.S. Rep. Ayanna Pressley of Massachusetts who joined other congressional leaders in asking the government to collect and release information about the race and ethnicity of people who are tested or treated for the virus that causes COVID-19.

"History has shown us, when we do not" ask questions, said Pressley, who is black, "the consequences are grave, and in fact life and death."

NAACP President Derrick Johnson, who hosted a coronavirus tele-town hall with U.S. Surgeon General Jerome Adams last month, said black and brown communities need reliable information about the crisis.

"Now that this has been deemed a pandemic, I am most concerned with inequities in who's provided tests, who's provided treatment and how those tests and the treatments are administered, in a way that is open, transparent, and equitable," Johnson said.

For most people, the virus causes mild or moderate symptoms, such as fever and cough. But for some, especially older adults and people with existing health problems, it can cause more severe illness, includ-



In this March 26, 2020, photo, Rahmell Peebles walks in his neighborhood during an interview in the Brooklyn borough of New York. Peebles, who is skeptical of what he hears from white-run media and government, didn't see the need for alarm over the new coronavirus. Peebles is one of roughly 40 million black Americans deciding minute by minute whether to put their faith in the government and medicine during the coronavirus pandemic. "I've just been conditioned not to trust," Peebles said. (AP Photo/Bebeto Matthews)

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ing pneumonia and death.

Cities with large black populations like New York, Chicago, Detroit, Milwaukee and New Orleans have emerged as hot spots for the coronavirus. Figures released by Michigan's Department of Health and Human Services show 40% of those who have died from COVID-19 are black in a state where African-Americans are just 14 percent of the population.

And many Southern states with large black populations have been slow to mandate statewide restrictions shown to slow virus spread.

According to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, black adults are 60% more likely than non-Hispanic white adults to be diagnosed with diabetes, 40% more likely to have high blood pressure and are less likely to have those conditions under control. Additionally, in 2015, black women were 20% more likely to have asthma than non-Hispanic whites.

Those disparities make the availability of a treatment or vaccine urgent, even as the virus is currently projected to claim tens of thousands of lives. But given history, Peebles said he wouldn't rush to accept a remedy.

"If we got to a place where the government says, 'Okay, now it's time to take a vaccine,' then I'm definitely going to be skeptical of their intentions," he said.

Launched in 1932 by the U.S. Public Health Service, the Tuskegee study involved roughly 600 poor black men in Alabama who weren't treated for the sexually transmitted disease so researchers could track its progress. The program was exposed and ended in 1972, and then-President Bill Clinton formally apologized in 1997.

The Tuskegee legacy has helped pollute the black community's relationship with American medical science. A 2016 paper found the fallout included mistrust of medicine among black men, along with fewer interactions with doctors and higher mortality rates.

In Tuskegee, where many families include descendants of victims, many residents don't trust government health information, said Lucenia Dunn, a former Tuskegee mayor. So volunteers trying to get the word out about coronavirus have gone door-to-door distributing fliers with cartoon-like illustrations that don't look "too official," she said.

"We have a general distrust in this community," Dunn said. "I call it 'subconscious rejection.' The attitude is, 'I'm going to rebel against this. You people have been telling us lies for years. Why should I believe you now?'"

In Los Angeles, Jahmil Lacey helped found a public health group for black men and boys, TRAPMedicine, that educates black barbers and organizes workshops to address health disparities among their customers.

"People will quote the Tuskegee experiment as the reason why black people don't trust health care, but there's so much more than just that one example," Lacey said. "We don't trust systems that are connected to white supremacy. So, we have to do the work to repair it."

Indeed, Tuskegee didn't happen in a vacuum. In the 1950s, doctors at the John Hopkins Hospital used cervical cancer cells from Henrietta Lacks, a black mother of five, to pioneer medical advances and research that continue globally today. Lacks, who died in 1951, never gave her consent and her family has never been compensated.

One way to begin healing the mistrust is to increase black representation in the medical field, said Dr. Nicollette Louissaint, executive director of the Washington-based emergency response advocacy group Healthcare Ready.

"We have to make sure that ... the message itself and the messengers are being adapted to the appropriate audience," said Louissaint, who is black. "It's going to be really important that we get that right."

Reeves reported from Birmingham, Alabama. Both are members of the AP's Race and Ethnicity team. Follow Morrison on Twitter at <http://twitter.com/aaronlmorrison>. Follow Reeves on Twitter at https://twitter.com/Jay_Reeves

'Complete collapse of economies' ahead as Africa faces virus

By RODNEY MUHUMUZA Associated Press

KAMPALA, Uganda (AP) — Some of Uganda's poorest people used to work here, on the streets of Kampala, as fruit sellers sitting on the pavement or as peddlers of everything from handkerchiefs to roasted peanuts.

Now they're gone and no one knows when they will return, victims of a global economic crisis linked to the coronavirus that could wipe out jobs for millions across the African continent, many who live hand-to-mouth with zero savings.

"We've been through a lot on the continent. Ebola, yes, African governments took a hit, but we have not seen anything like this before," Ahunna Eziakonwa, the United Nations Development Program regional director for Africa, told The Associated Press. "The African labor market is driven by imports and exports and with the lockdown everywhere in the world, it means basically that the economy is frozen in place.

"And with that, of course, all the jobs are gone."

More than half of Africa's 54 countries have imposed lockdowns, curfews, travel bans or other measures in a bid to prevent local transmission of the virus. They range from South Africa, where inequality and crime plague Africa's most developed country, to places like Uganda, where the informal sector accounts for more than 50% of the country's gross domestic product.

The deserted streets in downtown Kampala, Uganda's capital, underscore the challenge facing authorities across the world's poorest continent, home to 1.3 billion people: how to look after millions of people stuck at home for weeks or even months of lockdown.

With some governments saying they're unable to offer direct support, the fate of Africa's large informal sector could be a powerful example of what experts predict will be unprecedented damage to economies in the developing world. Among the millions made jobless are casual laborers, petty traders, street vendors, mechanics, taxi operators and conductors, housekeepers and waitresses, and dealers in everything from used clothes to construction hardware.

Unless the virus' spread can be controlled, up to 50% of all projected job growth in Africa will be lost as aviation, services, exports, mining, agriculture and the informal sector all take a hit, Eziakonwa said.

"We will see a complete collapse of economies and livelihoods. Livelihoods will be wiped out in a way we have never seen before," she warned.

The U.N. Economic Commission for Africa has said the pandemic could seriously dent already stagnant growth in many countries, with oil-exporting nations like Nigeria and Angola losing up to \$65 billion in revenue as prices fall.



A man pushing a shopping cart with food on the street as South African National Defence Forces drive through a densely populated Alexandra township east of Johannesburg, South Africa, Saturday, March 28, 2020. South Africa went into a nationwide lockdown for 21 days in an effort to control the spread of the COVID-19 coronavirus. The new 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. (AP Photo/Themba Hadebe)

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Economies in sub-Saharan Africa are seen as especially vulnerable because many are heavily indebted and some struggle just to implement their budgets under less stressful circumstances.

Now the continent might need up to \$10.6 billion in unanticipated increases in health spending, and revenue losses could lead to debt becoming unsustainable, UNECA chief Vera Songwe said in March.

Urgent calls for an economic stimulus package have followed.

Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed has spoken of an "existential threat" to Africa's economies while seeking up to \$150 billion from G20 nations. A meeting of African finance ministers agreed that the continent needs a stimulus package of up to \$100 billion, including a waiver of up to \$44 billion in interest payments.

South African President Cyril Ramaphosa backed the calls for a stimulus package, saying in a recent speech that the pandemic "will reverse the gains that many countries have made in recent years." Several African nations have been among the fastest-growing in the world.

The International Monetary Fund on March 25 said it had received requests for emergency financing from close to 20 African countries, with requests from another 10 or more likely to follow. The IMF has since approved credit facilities for at least two West African nations — Guinea and Senegal — facing virus-related economic disruption.

Further challenges exist. Rampant corruption in many African countries feeds inequality, and poor or non-existent public services stoke public anger that sometimes escalates into street protests and deadly violence.

Measures to control the spread of COVID-19 could make that worse as people trapped at home go hungry.

UNECA has called for emergency actions to protect 30 million jobs immediately at risk across Africa, particularly in the tourism and airline sectors, saying the continent will be hit harder than others with an economic toll that will exacerbate "current fragilities."

After Ugandan President Yoweri Museveni announced that food markets could remain open under orders to decongest crowded areas, some fruit vendors were assaulted by armed men and had goods confiscated, drawing an apology from the army commander. Museveni later announced an effective lockdown, closing public transport and all but essential businesses.

"What am I going to eat if he stops us from working? Museveni cannot do that," said Marius Kamusiime, who operates a passenger motorcycle. "We may have to go back to the village if this corona becomes serious."

On a continent where extended families are common, some say, one job loss can spell doom for up to a dozen or more people.

"Sitting down is not an option because they don't have money locked away," said Eziakonwa, the UNDP official in charge of Africa.

Some governments such as Rwanda are distributing food to those who need it, but there are questions about sustainability.

"We do know what to do to bring the economy back to life. What we don't know is how to bring back people to life," said Ghanaian President Nana Akufo-Addo. He has created a virus alleviation fund to look after the neediest and has donated the equivalent of his salary for three months.

But many want to see more support, including tax relief that benefits a wider section of the urban poor.

In Kenya, President Uhuru Kenyatta has announced temporary tax relief to people described as low-income earners — those earning up to \$240 in monthly wages — as well a reduction in the maximum income tax rate from 30% to 25%. He also gave \$94 million to "vulnerable members of our society" to protect them from economic damage.

But other leaders say they cannot afford such benefits.

Noting that "the rich countries are unlocking staggering sums" to stimulate their economies, Benin's President Patrice Talon said that his West African country, "like most African countries, does not have these means."

Francis Kokutse in Accra, Ghana; Elias Meseret in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia; and Virgile Ahissou in Cotonou, Benin contributed.

Trump says 'toughest' weeks ahead as coronavirus spreads

By KEVIN FREKING and COLLEEN LONG Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump is warning that the country could be headed into its "toughest" weeks yet as the coronavirus death toll mounts, but at the same time he expressed growing impatience with social distancing guidelines and said he's eager to get the country reopened and its stalled economy back on track.

"There will be a lot of death, unfortunately," Trump said Saturday in a somber start to his daily briefing on the pandemic, "There will be death."

Joining Trump were Vice President Mike Pence, virus task force coordinator Dr. Deborah Birx, and Dr. Anthony Fauci, the U.S. government's foremost infection disease expert. Each stood far apart from one another on the small stage.

Trump added a twist on his familiar push for a drug that hasn't been clearly shown to work to stop the virus — he said he may start taking it as a preventative measure after consulting with his doctor, even though there's no evidence to show it works for that, either.

The president initially had suggested the country could reopen by Easter but pulled back seeing projections of a staggering death toll even if restrictive measures remain in place. But just days after extending tough national guidelines through the end of April, staring down historic levels of unemployment and economic standstill, he was talking about reopening as soon as possible, and speaking Saturday with leaders of professional sports leagues about filling arenas again.

"This country was not designed to be closed," he said. "The cure cannot be worse than the problem."

The number of people infected in the U.S. has exceeded 300,000, with the death toll climbing past 8,400; more than 3,500 of those deaths are in the state of New York. For most people, the virus 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.

Much of the country is under orders to stay home, including professional sports leagues that were among the first to clamp down in the pandemic. Trump spoke by phone with top leaders including Roger Goodell of the National Football League and the NBA's Adam Silver, telling them he hoped to get people back in seats as soon as possible.

"I want fans back in the arenas," he said. "Whenever we're ready, as soon as we can."

The virus has decimated the sports world with the National Basketball Association and the National Hockey League suspending their seasons indefinitely and Major League Baseball postponing the start of its season. The NCAA basketball tournament was also canceled; so were college spring sports.



President Donald Trump speaks during a coronavirus task force briefing at the White House, Saturday, April 4, 2020, in Washington. From left, Dr. Anthony Fauci, director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, Trump, Vice President Mike Pence and Dr. Deborah Birx, White House coronavirus response coordinator. (AP Photo/Patrick Semansky)

Semansky)

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A person with knowledge of the call said some of the commissioners weren't quite as optimistic as Trump because of the concerns raised by public health officials but appreciated the president's desire to give people hope and fans a reason to be optimistic. The person requested anonymity to discuss the private call.

California's Gov. Gavin Newsom, who has three NFL teams in his state, was asked if he thought the NFL season would start on time in September. "I'm not anticipating that happening in this state," he said.

Hard-hit states were seeing cases rise. Trump suggested that some states were asking for more medical supplies than they really needed. He said the goal was to stay several days ahead of critical medical needs in each state.

"The fears of the shortages have led to inflated requests," he said.

Louisiana officials have said New Orleans is on track to run out of ventilators by next week. New York Gov. Andrew Cuomo, whose state is at the epicenter of the national pandemic with over 113,700 confirmed cases as of Saturday morning, has pleaded for ventilators for days. New York is poised to get more than 1,100 ventilators from China and Oregon.

Health officials did offer some hope that social distance measures were working. Fauci said he saw the efforts in action as he went out for a walk in Washington, D.C., and noticed people waiting six feet apart for restaurant take out.

"As sobering and a difficult as this is, what we are doing is making a difference," Fauci said.

But even as Fauci urged Americans to be patient and let mitigation efforts work, Trump said: "Mitigation does work. But again, we're not going to destroy our country."

The previously booming economy had been among Trump's biggest talking points as he heads into the 2020 presidential election, but the past few weeks have seen precipitous drops as the U.S. deals with the fallout from the virus that has shuttered businesses, gutted airlines and forced people into their homes.

The president also continued to tout hydroxychloroquine, a drug long used to treat malaria, rheumatoid arthritis and lupus, after very small preliminary studies suggested it might help prevent the coronavirus from entering cells and possibly help patients clear the virus sooner. But the drug has major potential side effects, especially for the heart, and large studies are underway to see if it is safe and effective for treating COVID-19.

Trump suggested he may consider whether he should start taking the drug, though he also said he'd ask his doctor first. Some studies are testing whether hydroxychloroquine can help prevent infections in health care workers, but none has suggested that others, such as the president, should take it to prevent infection.

With Congress away, House Speaker Nancy Pelosi pressed for the next aid package to be ready for an April vote in a letter to House Democrats.

"We must double down on the down-payment we made in the CARES Act by passing a CARES 2 package," she wrote about the just-passed \$2.2 trillion bill, pushing for another additional unemployment benefits, small business loans and direct payments to Americans.

AP Pro Football Writer Rob Maaddi in Indian Shores, Florida, contributed to this report.

Coronavirus pandemic disrupts Appalachian Trail dreams

By SARAH BLAKE MORGAN Associated Press

COSBY, Tenn. (AP) — When Alexandra Eagle first mentioned plans to hike the entire Appalachian Trail alongside her new husband, her sister told her they'd either be divorced in five months or married forever.

Eagle, 33, and Jonathan Hall, 36, had just moved out of their Brooklyn apartment when they married on March 2, the third anniversary of the blind date that brought them together. They had talked about the Appalachian Trail in their first conversation and, when it came time to plan a honeymoon, they decided to make the hike.

"This was going to be an epic adventure," Eagle told The Associated Press.

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In this March 30, 2020, photo, Alexandra Eagle, left, and Jonathan Hall soak up their last moments hiking the Appalachian Trail in Cosby, Tenn. The couple is postponing the 2,190-mile hike until the coronavirus pandemic ends.

(AP Photo/Sarah Blake Morgan)

The couple spent a year researching, training and saving before setting off on the 2,190-mile (3,525-kilometer) journey seven days after their wedding. They knew about the new coronavirus spreading across the globe but considered themselves lucky to be trading Brooklyn for a tent on the trail, especially as New York fell under restrictions to prevent the virus's spread.

"We always figured that being out on the trail and seeing a dozen people a day was a fine position to be in," Hall said.

As the pandemic grows, hikers face the difficult decision to postpone their dreams or ignore warnings and forge ahead. Like virtually every other entity in the U.S., the Appalachian Trail Conservancy began issuing COVID-19 safety guidance in March. But social distancing and hand-washing suggestions soon shifted to urging all hikers

to leave the trail immediately. Shelters and privies were shut down, and volunteer programs were halted. On Wednesday, the conservancy and 29 other trail-maintaining clubs asked federal officials to close the trail until the end of the month.

Though more than 3,000 "thru-hikers" set out to traverse the length of the trail each year, only about 25% successfully make the hike from Georgia to Maine, which typically takes about six months.

Eagle and Hall never considered any scenario but finishing.

They picked up speed as they moved into the Great Smoky Mountains along the Tennessee-North Carolina border. They woke to sunrise on Clingmans Dome — the trail's highest point — a view that seemed to sum up exactly what they'd hoped for from their newlywed adventure.

At the same time, families across the U.S. braced for lockdowns as COVID-19 spread through cities and towns claiming more lives. Days would pass before Eagle and Hall had enough cellphone service to see just how dire the crisis had become.

Fellow thru-hiker Kimberly Selvage was 30 minutes from Hot Springs, North Carolina, when she called a local hostel to confirm her reservation.

"He was like, 'Ma'am, I think you've been in the woods too long; the whole world is shutting down,'" she said.

That wasn't exactly the type of solitude Selvage had in mind when she quit her job, rented out her house in Las Vegas and started her hike on Feb. 26.

Selvage, 51, said she thrives by herself and set out to hike the trail alone, so when whispers of closures and restrictions started to spread, she wasn't too concerned and pressed on.

With her two kids in college and her parents gone, the Appalachian Trail was home for the time being, and it's where she believed she was safest. Leaving it would mean a cross-country drive exposing her to far more people than she encounters while hiking, she said.

But as more trails closed and communities issued shelter-in-place orders, Selvage decided to throw in the towel for the time being after hiking 470 miles (755 kilometers).

"The closures and general virus fear was changing the vibe of my hike," said Selvage, who started the

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hike, in part, to experience the culture of trail towns. "I chose to pause to get the full experience when it was less controversial."

Selvage rented an SUV and drove back home to Las Vegas. She slept in the back of the car. Now, she's renting out a room in a friend's house until the all-clear is given to hike again. "I still think I was safer on the trail," Selvage said.

For Eagle and Hall, deciding to stay or go was brutal. The couple debated day after day as they hiked over rocks and waterfalls. They hadn't yet come to terms with their choice when they loaded their backpacks into the trunk of a rental car in Tennessee.

"Even right now, I don't know if we're doing the right thing," Eagle said through tears.

Their decision came down to the small chance that they might catch and spread the virus, something Eagle said she couldn't live with. Most people with COVID-19 experience mild to moderate symptoms, but for others it can cause more severe illness or death.

For now, they'll stay with her parents in Louisiana, which has more than 12,000 confirmed cases.

"Is that better? That's hard to say," she said.

They'll try to stay in shape while they wait for the all-clear. Hall joked about looking into a treadmill sale he saw online. But as the timeline becomes grimmer with each passing day, he thinks they might be saying goodbye to the AT for good.

His wife disagrees and sees them starting again in a few months. Until then, she's trying to keep her disappointment in perspective.

"I'm just trying to focus in on the fact that we are in such a better position than most of the world," she said.

Follow Sarah Blake Morgan at www.twitter.com/StorytellerSBM

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

Trump suggests firing watchdog was payback for impeachment

By MARY CLARE JALONICK, KEVIN FREKING and DEB RIECHMANN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump suggested that he fired the inspector general for the intelligence community in retaliation for impeachment, saying the official was wrong to provide an anonymous whistleblower complaint to Congress as the law requires.

Trump called Michael Atkinson a "disgrace" after informing Congress late Friday night that he intended to fire him. In letters to the House and Senate intelligence committees, Trump wrote that he had lost confidence in Atkinson but gave little detail.

A day later, Trump was more blunt, telling reporters at the White House: "I thought he did a terrible job, absolutely terrible." The president added: "He took a fake report and he took it to Congress with an emergency, OK? Not a big Trump fan, that I can tell you."

The whistleblower report was not fake, but a detailed complaint written by an anonymous intelligence official who described Trump's pressure on Ukraine to investigate Democrat Joe Biden and his son. Atkinson determined the complaint was urgent and credible and therefore was required by law to disclose it to Congress, but he was overruled for weeks by the acting director of national intelligence, Joseph Maguire.

After a firestorm sparked by media reports of the complaint, it was turned over and made public. A congressional inquiry led to Trump's impeachment by the House in December. The GOP-led Senate acquitted Trump in February.

On Saturday, Trump questioned why Atkinson didn't speak to him about the complaint, though Atkinson's role is to provide independent oversight.

"Never came in to see me, never requested to see me," Trump said. He added: "That man is a disgrace to IGs."

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Atkinson's removal is part of a larger shakeup of the intelligence community under Trump, who has always viewed intelligence professionals with skepticism. His ouster came under immediate fire from Democrats and a handful of Republicans.

Sen. Chuck Grassley, the Iowa Republican who leads the Finance Committee, said that Congress has been "crystal clear" that written reasons must be given when inspectors general are removed for a lack of confidence.

"More details are needed from the administration," Grassley said.

Maine Sen. Susan Collins, a GOP member of the Senate Intelligence Committee, said she didn't find Trump's reasoning in his Friday letter to be persuasive, and said Atkinson's removal "was not warranted." Senate Intelligence Committee Chairman Richard Burr, R-N.C., said an inspector general "must be allowed to conduct his or her work independent of internal or external pressure."

Trump's criticism Saturday came after Atkinson's peers had rushed to his defense. Michael Horowitz, the inspector general at the Justice Department, said Atkinson was known for his "integrity, professionalism, and commitment to the rule of law and independent oversight." He said that included Atkinson's actions in handling the Ukraine whistleblower complaint.

Asked during his daily coronavirus briefing about firing Atkinson, Trump returned to his attacks on the Democratic-led impeachment investigation and trial and his defense that his phone call with Ukraine's president was "perfect" but had been inaccurately described in the whistleblower's account. In fact, the partial transcript later released by the president largely supported the whistleblower's account.

Atkinson is at least the seventh intelligence official to be fired, ousted or moved aside since last summer. In his letters to the intelligence committees informing them of the firing, which were obtained by The Associated Press, Trump said that it is "vital" that he has confidence in the appointees serving as inspectors general, and "that is no longer the case with regard to this inspector general."

Trump said Atkinson would be removed from office in 30 days, the required amount of time he must wait after informing Congress. He wrote that he would nominate an individual "who has my full confidence" at a later date.

According to two congressional officials, Atkinson has been placed on administrative leave, meaning he will not serve out the 30 days. One of the officials said Atkinson was only informed of his removal on Friday night. The officials spoke on condition of anonymity because Atkinson's administrative leave had not been announced.

Atkinson's firing thrusts the president's impeachment back into the spotlight as his administration deals with the deadly spread of the coronavirus. As Trump was removing Atkinson, the number of U.S. deaths



FILE - In this Oct. 4, 2019, file photo, Michael Atkinson, the inspector general of the intelligence community, arrives at the Capitol in Washington for closed-door questioning about a whistleblower complaint that triggered President Donald Trump's impeachment. Trump has fired Atkinson. Trump informed the Senate intelligence committee Friday, April 3, 2020, of his decision to fire Atkinson, according to a letter obtained by The Associated Press. (AP Photo/J. Scott

Applewhite, File)

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due to the virus topped 7,000. By the time of his remarks Saturday, it was over 8,100.

The top Democrat on the Senate intelligence panel, Virginia Sen. Mark Warner, said it was unconscionable that Trump would fire Atkinson in the midst of the coronavirus pandemic.

"We should all be deeply disturbed by ongoing attempts to politicize the nation's intelligence agencies," Warner said.

House Intelligence Committee Chairman Adam Schiff, D-Calif., who led the House impeachment inquiry, said "the president's dead of night decision puts our country and national security at even greater risk." House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, D-Calif., said the firing "threatens to have a chilling effect against all willing to speak truth to power." And Senate Democratic leader Chuck Schumer, D-N.Y., said Trump "fires people for telling the truth."

Tom Monheim, a career intelligence professional, will become the acting inspector general for the intelligence community, according to an intelligence official who was not authorized to discuss personnel changes and spoke only on condition of anonymity. Monheim is currently the general counsel of the National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency.

Atkinson had hinted of frustration on the job in a March letter to Schumer, in which he said "the past six months have been a searing time for whistleblowers." Atkinson was responding to a letter Schumer had sent to agency inspectors general asking them to document and investigate any instances of retaliation after Trump had threatened the anonymous whistleblower.

In the letter to Schumer, obtained by the AP, Atkinson said support for whistleblowers would be rendered meaningless if "whistleblowers actually come forward in good faith with information concerning an extraordinary matter and are allowed to be vilified, threatened, publicly ridiculed, or — perhaps even worse, utterly abandoned by fair weather whistleblower champions."

Late Saturday, Schumer tweeted that he had spoken to Atkinson and thanked him for his service. Schumer said he told Atkinson that "history will remember him as a hero and those who retaliated against him as scoundrels."

States lack key data on virus cases among medical workers

By MARTHA BELLISLE Associated Press

SEATTLE (AP) — Experts and health officials who are trying to plan a response to the coronavirus outbreak are missing a critical piece of information — the number of health care workers who have tested positive for the disease.

Washington state faced the first major outbreak of COVID-19 in the nation, but health officials have not kept track of how many doctors and nurses have the disease. New York, the epicenter of the coronavirus outbreak, also lacks infection figures for medical staff, according to Jill Montag, spokeswoman with the New York State Department of Health.

That information can help save lives, said Dr. Grete Porteous, an anesthesiologist in Seattle who has worked on health care emergency preparedness and crisis management. It previously helped reduce risks to medical personnel during the much smaller SARS outbreak of 2003-04, she said.

With the medical profession facing shortages of basic protective gear, "the question should be asked: are there ways that we can improve what we do to make care safer for everyone?" Porteous said. "Without regional and national public health data on COVID-19 infections in health care personnel, it is difficult to envision how to start answering this question."

During the SARS outbreak, Porteous said, data about "an alarmingly high rate of infection and death" in medical staff led to improved rules around infection protocol and use of personal protective equipment.

Ruth Schubert, spokeswoman for the Washington Nurses Association, said that same data are needed for COVID-19.

"We are urging the (Department of Health) and the emergency operations team at the state level to begin collecting and reporting this information," she said.

Experts who create models for how the coronavirus will impact the country's health care system say

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they also want the data to better determine how severely hospitals will be impacted.

While health officials count ICU beds and calculate hospital capacity to plan for a surge in cases, Christopher Murray, director of the Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation at the University of Washington, has created a model for predicting COVID-19 deaths. It also predicts the number of hospital beds, ICU beds and ventilators each state will need.

Murray is also trying to include things like how many workers are needed to care for patients. But without access to the number of infected health care workers, he's unable to make that determination.

Murray hopes that will change.

"That's a really important piece of information to know," he said. "I'll add that to the data that we'll ask for from governments."

As of Saturday, Washington state had more than 7,500 cases and New York had counted more than 110,000.

Neither state knows how many of those cases are health care workers.

Ohio, on the other hand, reported at least 16% of its cases involved health care workers, while in Minnesota, it was 28% on Wednesday.

Other countries are reporting COVID-19's impact on their health care community. Spain has said at least 12,298 health care workers have tested positive for the disease – 14.4% of the total reported cases. More than 60 doctors have died in Italy.

Johns Hopkins University's online map tracking the spread of the virus doesn't include a subset of data on how many health care workers have become sick. The platform wasn't built to collect data on workers, said university spokesman Douglas Donovan. CDC charts also don't break it out.

The Johns Hopkins Center for Health Security has recommended hospitals keep a log of staff with COVID-19. Those who have recovered could work on units devoted to COVID-19. But data on infected staff may not be available because hospitals want to protect that information, fearing it may appear they have unsafe conditions, said Dr. Angela Gardner, an emergency physician and professor at the University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center.

Having data on how many health care workers are sick would help with planning, she said.

Hospitals also need better parameters for how long a worker should stay away from patients if exposed to COVID-19, she said. CDC recommendations say a doctor or nurse can return three days after they are asymptomatic. But if a worker was exposed and didn't have symptoms or even tested negative, they're required to be quarantined 14 days.

Although the Washington state health department isn't collecting the data, some counties are. At least 88 health care workers in Snohomish County have tested positive for the coronavirus, out of 1,300 total cases. In Yakima County, it's more like 30%.



FILE - In this March 17, 2020, file photo, medical personnel wait for a driver to pull up at a drive-thru COVID-19 testing station for University of Washington Medicine patients in Seattle. Experts and health officials who are trying to plan a response to the coronavirus outbreak are missing a critical piece of information – the number of health care workers who have tested positive for the disease. (AP Photo/Elaine Thompson, File)

However, officials in King County, home to the highest concentration of cases, don't know how many health care workers have the disease.

University of Washington Medicine began testing employees with symptoms on March 5, said spokeswoman Susan Gregg.

"Since that time, we have tested approximately 1,304 UW Medicine health care workers in our drive-through clinics," she said. About 95.6% tested negative and 4.4 percent tested positive, she said. Many have already recovered.

Colorado health officials also want to find out who's infected by implementing a testing program for all health care workers, said Micki Trost, a spokesperson for the Colorado Division of Homeland Security and Emergency Management.

"This testing strategy helps strengthen our medical capacity," she said.

Trump talks with US pro sports leaders to discuss virus

By TIM REYNOLDS AP Basketball Writer



President Donald Trump speaks during a coronavirus task force briefing at the White House, Saturday, April 4, 2020, in Washington. (AP Photo/Patrick Semansky)

President Donald Trump talked to many U.S. pro sports leaders about the impact of the coronavirus pandemic, saying he was looking forward to the resumption of competitions "as soon as we can."

"I want fans back in the arenas," Trump said later in a briefing at the White House. "I think it's ... whenever we're ready. As soon as we can, obviously. And the fans want to be back, too. They want to see basketball and baseball and football and hockey. They want to see their sports. They want to go out onto the golf courses and breathe nice, clean, beautiful fresh air."

A person with direct knowledge of the call said Trump believes the NFL season — scheduled to begin Sept. 10 — will start on time with fans in seats. But that seemed too optimistic for California Gov. Gavin Newsom, who

was asked if he thought the NFL season would start on time.

"I'm not anticipating that happening in this state," Newsom said.

The NBA, NHL, NFL and Major League Baseball were all represented by their commissioners — Adam Silver, Gary Bettman, Roger Goodell and Rob Manfred, respectively. None of those leagues released public comment.

A second person with knowledge of the call said some commissioners, Silver included, stressed to Trump that they are working on multiple season-resumption plans but cautioned nothing can move forward without clearance from public health officials. The people spoke to AP on condition of anonymity because no discussion from the call was to be revealed publicly.

Others on the call included PGA Tour Commissioner Jay Monahan, LPGA Tour Commissioner Mike Whan, Indianapolis Motor Speedway owner Roger Penske, UFC President Dana White, World Wrestling Entertainment owner Vince McMahon, MLS Commissioner Don Garber, WNBA Commissioner Cathy Englebert and

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Breeders' Cup President Drew Fleming.

National Women's Soccer League Commissioner Lisa Baird was not included in the call, and that league was not pleased. "As a leader in women's professional sports, the NWSL would welcome the chance to participate in any future discussions between the top sports leagues in the U.S. and the White House," the league said.

Trump addressed Little League players on Saturday, tweeting to tell them, "hang in there! We will get you back out on the fields, and know that you will be playing baseball soon. We will get through this together, and bats will be swinging before you know it."

Trump said the need for social distancing is affecting his 14-year-old son, Barron. The president described his son as a good athlete and soccer fan.

"We have to get back," Trump said. "We have to get back. Remember that. We have to get back and we have to get back soon."

AP Auto Racing Writer Jenna Fryer, AP Pro Football Writer Rob Maaddi, AP Golf Writer Doug Ferguson and AP Baseball Writers Ronald Blum and Stephen Hawkins contributed to this report.

More AP sports: <https://apnews.com/apf-Sports> and https://twitter.com/AP_Sports

Mormons unveil new official logo at crowd-less conference

By BRADY McCOMBS Associated Press

SALT LAKE CITY (AP) — Leaders from The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints sat 6 feet apart inside an empty room as the faith carried out its signature conference Saturday by adhering to social distancing guidelines that offered a stark reminder of how the global coronavirus pandemic is affecting religious practices.

Their livestreamed speeches didn't dwell heavily on the pandemic as they instead stuck to plans made last year to make the conference a commemoration of the 200th anniversary of events that led to the creation of the church by founder Joseph Smith. Speakers spoke at length about the tenets he established, including why men have priesthood powers but not women.

Church President Russell M. Nelson also unveiled a new church logo that continued his push to rebrand how the faith is known and recognized around the world. The new symbol features a drawing of Thorvaldsen's marble Christus statue under an arch and on top of the church name with the words "Jesus Christ" larger than the rest.

Nelson, who took the helm in 2018, has made a concerted effort to get the world to use the full church name rather than shorthand monikers such as "Mormon church" and "LDS church" that previous presidents embraced and promoted. He has renamed the choir and changed names of websites and social media accounts to show he's serious.

"When we remove the Lord's name from the name of his church, we inadvertently remove him as the central focus of our worship and our lives," said Nelson, explaining the logo.

The conference that will continue Sunday is the faith's first without a crowd in attendance since World War II, when wartime travel restrictions were in place.

Church leaders gave their speeches from inside a small auditorium in Salt Lake City with fewer than 10 people in the room. Normally, top leaders sit side-by-side on stage with the religion's well-known choir behind them and about 20,000 people attending each of the five sessions over two days in a cavernous conference center. There is no choir this weekend.

Nelson acknowledged the unusual circumstances and the impact COVID-19 is having on the world during his opening speech. In his second speech that capped off the night session, he called for church members to fast and pray on April 10, or Good Friday, so that pandemic can be controlled and the economy strengthened.

Like other religions, the pandemic has brought regular worship practices to a halt. The faith has closed

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In this photograph provided by The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints shows, far left to right, Neil L. Andersen, M. Russell Ballard, both members of a top governing board called the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, sit next to each other during The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints' twice-annual church conference Saturday, April 4, 2020, in Salt Lake City. The conference kicked off Saturday without anyone attending in person and top leaders sitting some 6 feet apart inside an empty room as the faith takes precautions to avoid the spread of the coronavirus. A livestream of the conference showed a few of the faith's top leaders sitting alone inside a small auditorium in Salt Lake City, Normally, top leaders sit side-by-side on stage with the religion's well-known choir behind them and some 20,000 people watching. (The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints via AP)

Touching on the conference theme, church leader M. Russell Ballard spoke about why Smith went to the woods of upstate New York in 1820 as a teenager where Smith says he had a vision of God and Jesus Christ.

"Joseph came to realize that the Bible did not contain all the answers to life's questions; rather, it taught men and women how they could find answers to their questions by communicating directly with God through prayer," said Ballard, a member of a top governing panel called the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles.

Ballard told members watching in 33 languages that Smith emerged from the woods ready to begin his preparation to become a prophet of God. The church teaches its members that Smith received help from God to translate gold plates engraved with writing in ancient Egyptian to create the religion's signature scripture, the Book of Mormon. The faith believes church presidents are prophets, as Abraham, Moses and Isaiah were, and receive continuing revelation from God.

Eyring referenced the special place Smith holds in the religion by saying: "He asked in childlike faith what the Lord would have him do. His answer changed the history of the world."

Critics have long questioned Smith's accounts of his visions and his story of the gold plates. Leader Neil

its temples and churches and brought home thousands of missionaries.

Nelson said the pandemic is one of life's trials along with accidents, natural disasters and unexpected personal heartaches.

"How can we endure such trials? The Lord has told us that 'if ye are prepared ye shall not fear,'" Nelson said. "Of course, we can store our own reserves of food, water, and savings. But equally crucial is our need to fill our personal spiritual storehouses with faith, truth and testimony."

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.

Nelson is 95 years old, his first counselor Dallin H. Oaks is 87 and his second counselor Henry B. Eyring is 86.

New church figures unveiled Saturday show membership grew to nearly 16.6 million worldwide in 2019, a 1.5% increase from 2018 and the first time membership had increased since 2012,

The number of new births among church families continued to decline, however, for the fifth consecutive year as Latter-day Saint parents have smaller families like others in society.

L. Andersen addressed those critiques when he told members that Smith never wavered despite facing "opposition, persecution, harassment, threats, and brutal attacks" before eventually being killed in 1844 along with his brother in Carthage, Illinois.

Several speakers talked about how women play an important role in the faith even as the religion sticks to Smith's rule that allows only men to be lay priests, which allows them to lead congregations and give certain blessings. Though women hold many leadership positions in the faith, there has long been a portion of church members who have advocated for women to be allowed to be priests.

Jean Bingham, the faith's highest-ranking female leader as president the women's council called the Relief Society, said men and women accomplish more working together and called their roles "complementary rather than competitive."

"Seeing women as vital participants is not about creating 'parity' but about understanding doctrinal truth," Bingham said. "Rather than establishing a program to bring that about, we can actively work to value women as God does: as essential partners in the work of salvation and exaltation."

In his own speech explaining the priesthood, Oaks said "Satan is anxious to confuse our thinking or to lead us astray on important matters like the operations of the priesthood of God."

He said the best response to critics of church policy and doctrine is to point to the "fruits" of the church's efforts in growing from a faith concentrated in the the intermountain region of the American West to one that has more than half of its members outside the U.S.

New York gets Chinese ventilators; Trump wants more thanks

By JENNIFER PELTZ, AMY FORLITI and DAVID RISING Associated Press



A medic of the Elmhurst Hospital Center medical team reacts after stepping outside of the emergency room, Saturday, April 4, 2020, in the Queens borough of New York. The new 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. (AP Photo/Mary Altaffer)

NEW YORK (AP) — The New York governor said Saturday the Chinese government was facilitating a shipment of 1,000 donated ventilators to his state, highlighting the extreme measures leaders are taking in what has become a cutthroat scramble to independently secure enough lifesaving devices during the coronavirus pandemic.

In a sign of the disorganized response to the global crisis, Gov. Andrew Cuomo praised the Chinese government for its help in securing the shipment of the breathing machines that was scheduled to arrive at Kennedy Airport on Saturday, while acknowledging that the U.S. government's stockpile of medical supplies would fall drastically short.

"We're all in the same battle here," Cuomo said, noting that the state of Oregon also volunteered to send 140 ventilators to New York. "And the battle is stopping the spread of the virus."

The rush to secure supplies has prompted intense squabbling between the states and federal government at a moment the nation is fac-

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ing one of its gravest emergencies. Leaders like Cuomo have been forced to go outside normal channels and work with authoritarian governments and private companies.

Trump said states are making inflated requests for medical supplies when the need isn't there and suggested he had a hand in the ventilator shipment arriving from China to New York. Trump also said he'd like to hear a more resounding "thank you" from Cuomo for providing medical supplies and helping quickly to add hospital capacity. Cuomo acknowledged he asked the White House and others for help negotiating the ventilators.

"We have given the governor of New York more than anybody has ever been given in a long time," Trump told reporters in Washington.

While the state of Massachusetts used the New England Patriots' team plane to pick up over a million masks from China, Russia has also sent medical equipment to the U.S. Meanwhile, Trump has said he'd prevent the export of N95 protective masks to Canada and other nations, prompting a rebuke from Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, who said his country won't bring retaliatory measures as it continues to ship gloves and testing kits to the U.S.

The number of people infected in the U.S. has exceeded 300,000, with the death toll climbing past 8,400; more than 3,500 of those deaths are in New York state, including more than 1,900 in New York City. In addition to getting ventilators from China and Oregon, Cuomo ordered private hospitals in the state to redistribute breathing machines to those most in need.

"I want this all to be over," Cuomo said, noting that while it's been roughly 30 days since the state's first case, "it feels like an entire lifetime."

Trump said the federal government is setting up a 2,500-bed field hospital at New York's Javits Convention Center that will be staffed by the military. He said similar hospital projects are being built in Louisiana and Dallas.

"There will be a lot of death, unfortunately, but a lot less death than if this wasn't done," Trump said. He later added that the federal government is "a backup ... the greatest backup that ever existed for the states."

As the number of people infected has grown to more than 1.1 million worldwide, health care systems are straining under the surge of patients. In China, air raid sirens sounded across the country Saturday and flags flew at half staff in tribute to victims of the coronavirus pandemic, including the health care "martyrs" who have died fighting to save others.

With the highest number of infections in Europe and their hospitals overwhelmed, Spain and Italy struggled to protect medical staff on the front lines, while 17 medics in Egypt's main cancer hospital tested positive for the virus.

Italy and Spain, with combined deaths of more than 25,000 and nearly a quarter-million infections, have reported a high percentage of infections among health care workers.

Carlo Palermo, head of Italy's hospital doctors' union, fought tears as he told reporters in Rome of the physical risks and psychological trauma the outbreak is causing, noting reports that two nurses had killed themselves.

"It's an indescribable condition of stress. Unbearable," he said.

Overall, new infections continued to slow their once-exponential pace in Italy, with 4,805 new cases registered Saturday that brought the country's official count to 124,632. The death toll continued to mount, with 681 new victims bringing the world's highest toll to 15,362.

In France, 7,560 people have died of coronavirus-related issues including at least 2,028 in nursing homes, health director Jerome Salomon said. More than 440 of the overall deaths happened in the last 24 hours.

In the U.S., the outbreak is deepening in other areas beyond New York. More than 400 people have died in Louisiana, and state authorities have been sprinting to find ventilators similar to New York. Michigan has more than 14,000 infections and 500 deaths, with Detroit being the state's epicenter.

With the arrival of the weekend and spring weather, many Americans struggled to adhere to social distancing and stay-at-home orders that cover most of the country. The sheriff in San Diego issued about

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two dozen citations to people, saying violators were breaking the rules by having picnics near the beach. And officials from the major sports leagues had a phone call with Trump about resuming competition. Asked if he thought the NFL season would start on time in September with fans in the stands, California Gov. Gavin Newsom, said: "I'm not anticipating that happening in this state."

In China, where the coronavirus was first detected in December, authorities have cautiously lifted restrictions amid dropping numbers of infections. On Sunday the government reported just 30 new coronavirus cases, including 25 people who had arrived from overseas. The other five were in the southern province of Guangdong, which borders Hong Kong. There were three new deaths for an official total of 3,329.

Spain's Health Ministry reported 18,324 infected health workers as of Saturday, representing 15% of the total number of infections in the country.

As Spain completes its third week in a state of emergency, there were signs the number of new infections were slowing. But they were still high, with 7,026 new cases reported overnight Saturday and 809 deaths.

Worldwide, confirmed infections rose past 1.1 million and deaths exceeded 63,000, according to a tally by Johns Hopkins University. Experts say both greatly under-count the true number of victims because of lack of testing, mild cases that were missed and governments that are underplaying the crisis.

At the same time, more than 233,000 people have recovered from the virus, which causes mild to moderate symptoms such as fever and cough in most patients, who recover within a few weeks. But for some, especially older adults and people with existing health problems, it can cause more severe illness, including pneumonia, and death.

Forliti reported from St. Paul, Minnesota. Rising reported from Berlin. Associated Press writers around the world contributed to this report.

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

What you need to know today about the virus outbreak

By The Associated Press undefined

As the number of infections from the new coronavirus has grown to more than 1.1 million worldwide, health care systems are straining under the surge of patients and lack of medical equipment like ventilators, protective masks and gloves. The New York governor said the Chinese government was facilitating a shipment of 1,000 donated ventilators to his state.

In the U.S., governors are describing in stark terms the dog-eat-dog global marketplace they must navigate for the protective gear doctors, nurses and other front-line medical workers need as they brace for an expected wave of patients afflicted with severe cases of COVID-19, the disease caused by the virus.

U.S. medical experts estimate the death toll from the coronavirus pandemic could reach 240,000 nationwide. The question of where to put the bodies is worrying just about everyone as cities, hospitals and private medical groups clamor to secure additional storage.

Here are some of AP's top stories Saturday on the 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:

— President Donald Trump returned to the idea of opening up the country's economy as soon as possible, even as he said the United States was heading into what could be its "toughest" weeks as coronavirus cases swell nationwide.

— Trump and Democrats are bickering over how to provide voters with safe and secure access to a ballot as the coronavirus pandemic rages and threatens to extend into the fall, affecting the general election. Democrats favor expansion of voting by mail, which Trump opposes, arguing it would encourage fraud and lead to so many people voting that his party could not win.

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— Another cruise ship with coronavirus victims on board, including two fatalities, is docking in Florida.

— The coronavirus pandemic could narrow one gaping inequality in Africa, where some heads of state and other elites jet off to Europe or Asia for health care unavailable in their nations. As countries including their own impose dramatic travel restrictions, they might have to take their chances at home.

— Despite the growing infection rate and death toll, some hospitals are laying off medical workers because of sharp reductions in elective procedures and other treatment not related to battling the new coronavirus.

— Funeral homes across the U.S. are restricting the number of mourners at services. Many families are finding it hard to choose which loved ones will be invited to an in-person gathering and which will be relegated to watch via livestream, if at all.

— Bans on group gatherings are creating tension between government and houses of worship whose leaders bristle at the prospect of online religious services.



Colorado Governor Jared Polis dons a mask to encourage state residents to wear them while in public as a statewide stay-at-home order remains in effect in an effort to reduce the spread of the new coronavirus Friday, April 3, 2020, in Centennial, Colo. The new 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. (AP Photo/David Zalubowski)

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW:

For most people, the coronavirus causes mild or moderate symptoms, such as a 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:

— 4,000: Britain is temporarily releasing about 4,000 inmates to ease crowding and try to slow the spread of the coronavirus in prisons.

IN OTHER NEWS:

— PETS FINDING HOMES: Shelters from California to New York have put out calls for people to temporarily foster pets. Thanks to an overwhelming response, shelters say they have placed record numbers of

dogs, cats and other animals in new homes.

— OUT-OF-THE-BALLPARK DONATION: Houston Astros ace Justin Verlander says he will donate his weekly paycheck during the coronavirus shutdown to organizations that are helping with relief efforts. Verlander's salary this year is \$33 million, but over the next 60 days he is among a group of major leaguers getting \$4,775 a day for 60 days, a total of \$286,500.

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

New coronavirus limits bring new religious freedom tension

By ELANA SCHOR Associated Press



FILE - This Monday, March 30, 2020 file photo shows The River Church in Tampa, Fla. Pastor Rodney Howard-Browne was arrested Monday, March 30, 2020, for violating a county order by hosting a large number of congregants at the church. (AP Photo/Chris O'Meara)

NEW YORK (AP) — Despite state and local limits on public gatherings, some faith leaders have persisted in holding in-person services -- a matter of religious freedom, they say, as the nation approached its fourth Sunday battling the coronavirus pandemic.

The most high-profile clash over in-person worship – and crowd limits designed to stop the virus' spread -- came in Florida, where Pastor Rodney Howard-Browne was arrested Monday for violating a county order by hosting a large number of congregants at his Tampa church.

Howard-Browne said after his release he would move future worship online, but the county later ended its effort to apply limits on large gatherings to religious services after a statewide order described religious gatherings as essential.

Law enforcement officials in Louisiana and Maryland took separate action this week against pastors who

continue to hold in-person services in the face of stay-home orders in most states.

But more than a half-dozen of those state orders provide a degree of exemption for religious activity, underscoring the political sensitivity of the decisions being made by states and localities. Vice President Mike Pence said this week that churches should not host groups bigger than 10 people.

President Donald Trump said Saturday that he would be watching Palm Sunday services broadcast from Riverside, Calif., from a laptop. "People are watching on computers and laptops," Trump said. "It's sad."

Trump said he asked about endorsing the idea of people being able to gather outside for services on Easter Sunday if they practice social distancing, but recalled being told "Do we want to take a chance on doing that when we have been doing so well?" Trump earlier said that "my biggest disappointment is that churches can't meet in a time of need."

The application of guidance on the ground has raised questions for some faith leaders.

Pastor Alvin Gwynn Sr., of Baltimore's Friendship Baptist Church, said that police tried to halt services at his church on Sunday even though he had limited in-person attendance to 10 people.

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Gwynn said in an interview that he still plans to hold in-person Easter services, citing the First Amendment's protections for freedom of worship and assembly. Baltimore has "been through a lot" in recent years, said Gwynn, who leads a local ministers' group that criticized the city's police department leadership in 2015 following the death of 25-year-old Freddie Gray.

"Which is safer, in the church with potential virus, or go out the door and catch a bullet?" Gwynn said.

Instructions for church gatherings in Maryland have been issued piecemeal. State guidance dated Monday described houses of worship as non-essential under a stay-home order issued by Maryland GOP Gov. Larry Hogan that allowing them only to conduct "minimal operations." But follow-up guidance dated Wednesday states that "in-person services" can be held with 10 or fewer people.

In Florida, attorneys at the Christian legal nonprofit representing Howard-Browne tabled their plans to file a federal lawsuit challenging the constitutionality of the county order used against him after the county reversed course.

"Instead of using a scalpel to address this, they're using a chainsaw," said Liberty Counsel founder Mathew Staver, who added that executive orders designed to limit gatherings during the pandemic were "flying off printers and being signed by government officials with no constitutional readiness."

On Wednesday, Florida Republican Gov. Ron DeSantis issued a stay-home order describing religious services as essential, followed by a second order that overrides any localities' conflicting guidelines — an edict that could impede local attempts to shut down future large worship services.

Elsewhere, Texas GOP Gov. Greg Abbott also described religious services as essential in his order to limit gatherings during the pandemic. In Georgia, where some of the state's worst virus outbreaks have been linked to large religious services, GOP Gov. Brian Kemp on Thursday issued a stay-home order that states no faith-based gathering can occur with more than 10 people unless they keep a six-foot distance.

While some faith leaders who continue to hold in-person services have pointed to their First Amendment rights, including Ohio's Solid Rock megachurch, it's not clear that their activity during the pandemic would be legally protected.

State or local governments would be "constitutionally justified" in including houses of worship in their closure orders during a public health emergency as long as those orders are "generally applicable," said John Inazu, a law professor at Washington University in St. Louis who studies the First Amendment.

But the burden shifts if a government attempts to stop a church from holding services with less than 10 people while allowing secular businesses to operate under the same conditions, Inazu added: "There, I think there's a very plausible religious freedom claim."

Before issuing his order, Kemp held two calls with hundreds of clergy from across Georgia, urging houses of worship to stream services online or implement other social distancing measures, like holding drive-up services where people listen from their cars.

Most religious services across the country have already moved online.

"We're making the best of a bad situation. It's going to be devastating in the short term," said Todd Gaddis, senior pastor of the First Baptist Church in Dallas, Georgia, referring to the loss of donations from in-person services. "But I'm confident there will be spiritual dividends in the long run."

And the Trump administration's entreaties for churches to stop meeting in person extended beyond the White House. Sam Brownback, the president's special envoy for religious freedom, said Thursday that "religious groups should practice social distancing."

Brownback, a Catholic, said that he's skipped Mass for "several weeks, and it's the longest period I've gone without going to Mass. And I think people should be doing this to stop the spread of the virus."

Associated Press writers Ben Nadler in Atlanta and Matthew Lee in Washington contributed to this report.

Hidden suffering of coronavirus: Stigma, blaming, shaming

By CHRISTINE ARMARIO Associated Press

BOGOTA, Colombia (AP) — No one should have known Bella Lamilla's name.

But within hours of her diagnosis as Ecuador's first coronavirus case, it was circulating on social media along with photos showing the retired schoolteacher unconscious and intubated in a hospital bed. Her large, close-knit family watched in horror as a dual tragedy began to unfold: While Lamilla fought for her life in intensive care, strangers began tearing apart her reputation online.

"Knowing she had it, the old lady didn't care and went all around," one person commented on Facebook.

"It was ugly," said Pedro Valenzuela, 22, Lamilla's great-nephew. "It hurt a lot."

The spreading global pandemic has tested the competing interests of public health and privacy, with thousands of individuals experiencing both physical illness and the less-visible stigma that can come with it. While there are many stories about good deeds and people coming together, the coronavirus is also bringing out another, darker side of some people: Fear, anger, resentment and shaming.

In India, doctors have reported being evicted by landlords worried they'll spread coronavirus to other tenants. In the town of St. Michel in Haiti, people stoned an orphanage after a Belgian volunteer was diagnosed. In Indonesia, an early coronavirus patient was subjected to cruel innuendo suggesting she contracted it through sex work.

Psychologists say the desire to identify and castigate those who are ill harkens to an age-old instinct to protect oneself and relatives from catching a potentially fatal disease — and a belief, however unfounded, that those who get it bear some responsibility.

"Illness is one of the fundamental fears humans have been dealing with their entire evolution," said Jeff Sherman, a psychology professor at the University of California, Davis. "It's not really surprising they would be hostile toward someone they believe is responsible for bringing illness into their community."

Located along a sage-colored river about an hour from Ecuador's Pacific coast, Babahoyo has a small-town feel despite its population of 95,000. The extended Lamilla family is well-known there and prominent, including doctors, engineers and schoolteachers.

Bella Lamilla, one of six sisters, lost her husband to leukemia and raised their four children on her own. Three years ago she followed a daughter to Spain to enjoy retirement with three grandchildren in a sleepy Madrid suburb.



In this March 26, 2020, photo, relatives of Bella Lamilla the first person to be diagnosed with coronavirus in Ecuador, maintain quarantine in their home in Babahoyo, Ecuador. The spreading global pandemic has tested the competing interests of public health and privacy, with thousands of individuals and families experiencing both physical illness and the less-discussed stigma that can come with it. While there are many stories about good deeds and people coming together, the coronavirus is also bringing out another, darker side of some people: Fear, anger, resentment and shaming. (AP Photo/Mariuxi Orellana)

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At least once a year, she flew back to Ecuador, where a flock of relatives would greet her at the airport. On Feb. 14 she boarded a 12-hour Iberia flight to Guayaquil. She noticed people coughing on the plane and tried to protect herself somewhat by covering up in a blanket. Arriving in Ecuador, Lamilla sailed through immigration with no questions asked, even though she'd started feeling feverish.

"I thought she was just unwell and tired from the trip," said her daughter, who asked not to be identified for fear of repercussion from authorities.

The next day Lamilla's head was pounding. About two dozen relatives feted her at a welcome-home barbecue, where she didn't seem her usual energetic self.

She went to two different local doctors, who dismissed her ailments as side effects of a urinary infection or a possible muscular problem. When she began having difficulty breathing a week later, relatives took her to a private hospital in the nearby city of Guayaquil.

The Alcivar Hospital said it alerted the Ministry of Public Health about her case Feb. 22, two days after Lamilla arrived, but got no response. Only the National Institute for Public Health Investigation could do the test, the clinic said, and it wasn't until Feb. 27 that authorities agreed to analyze a specimen for coronavirus.

Finally a doctor pulled Lamilla's children aside and delivered the news: She was Ecuador's "patient zero." Relatives woke each other up by phone. One, a doctor, told everyone not to leave home — they'd all potentially been exposed, and some had already begun experiencing symptoms.

The next day, the family watched from their self-imposed quarantine as then-Health Minister Catalina Andramuño announced Ecuador's first case in a live news conference.

Almost immediately the rumors and fury began swirling on social media.

On Facebook and WhatsApp, a medical document with Lamilla's name began circulating. Photos and videos showing the petite woman with short blonde hair being transported in a hospital bed appeared online. Later, a map with addresses of the family's homes in Babahoyo began making the rounds as well.

Facebook users dredged up old photographs of the family at a soccer game to imply they'd exposed thousands.

"How irresponsible," one man remarked on pictures of relatives celebrating Lamilla's recent return, before her diagnosis.

"Everyone was on high alert," said Pedro Orellana, the ex-husband of one of Lamilla's sisters. "We didn't know what people were capable of doing in their desperation."

A few family members defended Lamilla online, while others, too distressed by the vitriol, avoided social media entirely. They knew Lamilla would have been mortified to discover she'd potentially spread coronavirus to relatives. At that point, she was already on a ventilator and under sedation.

"I couldn't look at anything," Lamilla's daughter said. "I didn't want to hurt my heart."

Patients elsewhere whose identities became public have endured similar attacks.

Minutes after Indonesia announced its first two cases, the names of Sita Tyasutami and her mother leaked online with their phone numbers and home address. Hundreds of WhatsApp messages flooded in.

People shared photos of Tyasutami, a 31-year-old professional dancer, shimmying in a feathered Brazilian samba bikini, and spread baseless speculation that she contracted the virus after being "rented" by a foreign male client.

"My face is everywhere now, I can't hide it," she said.

Studies show that when people link disease to behavior, they are more likely to blame the sick and ostracize them. Researchers have found people harbor negative attitudes towards individuals with a wide range of illnesses, with HIV/AIDS often at the top. But even those with seemingly lesser conditions can experience stigma.

A survey in Hong Kong several years after the 2003 SARS outbreak, another coronavirus that killed nearly 800, found a small portion of the population still stigmatized those who had contracted the illness.

"Generally speaking, stigma of infectious diseases can be as devastating to the infected individuals as the diseases themselves," the authors wrote.

"Blame is a natural response to this," said Patrick Corrigan, a psychology professor at the Illinois Institute

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of Technology. "That's what's feeding this."

For most people the coronavirus causes mild or moderate symptoms like a fever and cough. But for others, especially older adults and people with existing health problems, it can cause more severe illness, including pneumonia, and lead to death.

Mental health experts say that as more celebrities and politicians announce they have the virus, the rebuke many coronavirus patients have felt could ease. Actors Tom Hanks and Rita Wilson won plaudits for publicly discussing their cases, putting a pair of well-liked faces to COVID-19.

But for less famous patients whose names have been involuntarily shared, the experience has been far more isolating.

On Feb. 13, Lamilla's heartbeat began to slow. Not allowed to visit, family members waited by their cell-phones for updates. Around noon the hospital director called to say Lamilla had just taken her final breaths.

By that time, about a dozen relatives had tested positive. One of the most seriously ill was Lamilla's youngest sister, Charito Lamilla, 61. Upon hearing the news, she began struggling to breathe. Relatives tried for two hours to get an ambulance — but none arrived.

Provincial Gov. Camilo Salinas said later that an ambulance that should have been available was transporting a different coronavirus patient but got blocked by people who did not want it to reach the medical center, fearful of contagion.

Anxious to get her help, a relative drove Charito Lamilla to the hospital, exposing himself to possible contagion. A day later she became Ecuador's second coronavirus fatality.

The country has since become an epicenter of the outbreak in Latin America. Overwhelmed hospitals in Guayaquil are turning patients away, and some are dying in their homes without ever being treated or even diagnosed.

Lamilla's relatives, still in quarantine, are trying to recover from both the loss of Bella and Charito and the psychological torment COVID-19 left behind.

"Patient zero didn't create the virus," Orellana said. "She never knew she had it."

Associated Press journalists Victoria Milko and Edna Tarigan in Jakarta and Michael Weissenstein in Havana contributed to this report.

Trump, Dems clash on boosting mail-in voting during pandemic

By **KEVIN FREKING, COLLEEN LONG and NICHOLAS RICCARDI** Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — While Wisconsin struggles to hold its primary on Tuesday, President Donald Trump and Democrats are bickering over how to provide voters with safe and secure access to a ballot as the coronavirus pandemic rages in the U.S. and threatens to extend into the fall, affecting the general election.

With another economic rescue package in the works, House Speaker Nancy Pelosi says she wants money to give more voters the chance to cast their ballot by mail, an option that would allow people to vote without the concern over the safety of polling places.

But Trump opposes voting by mail and is leading Republicans in a battle to limit its use, arguing that it would encourage fraud and lead to so many people voting that his party could not win.

But the 2020 presidential election is creeping ever closer, and there are no signs yet of the pandemic abating, nor any word on when Americans on orders to stay home can resume normal life, so lawmakers are trying to figure out how to allow for voting in a world where face-to-face contact causes anxiety at the least and possibly sickness and death.

The debate is playing out now in Wisconsin. It stands apart from other states that have delayed primaries because of the virus, though Democratic Gov. Tony Evers has issued a statewide stay-at-home order.

Evers initially joined Republican leaders in seeking to hold the primary as planned on Tuesday, but he now favors an all-mail election with absentee voting well into May. Republicans maintain that in-person voting should go on as planned and have asked the U.S. Supreme Court to block extended absentee voting.

The election features the Democratic presidential primary between Joe Biden and Bernie Sanders, but

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FILE - In this March 10, 2020, file photo wearing gloves, a King County Election worker collect ballots from a drop box in the Washington State primary, in Seattle. But the 2020 presidential election is creeping ever closer, and there are no signs yet of pandemic abating, nor any word on when Americans on orders to stay home can resume normal life, and so lawmakers are trying to figure how to allow for voting in a world where face-to-face contact causes anxiety at the least, and sickness and death at the most. (AP Photo/John Froschauer, File)

ington already provide registered voters with a ballot in the mail for all their elections, according to a Congressional Research Service report. California and Utah are among the states that give counties the option of mail-in voting.

Proponents say it can improve participation, particularly with voters who have to work on election day, go to school or have mobility issues, such as the elderly or the sick. It could reduce the number of poll workers needed, as well as the long lines that often arise during a presidential election.

"It just makes us more democratic," Pelosi told reporters this week. "It just gives more people the opportunity to vote. So that is something we would like to see."

Trump contends fraud would increase with more mail-in voting, declaring, "I think a lot of people cheat." A North Carolina congressional election had to be rerun last year because the Republican candidate's campaign had engaged in widespread fraud through mail ballots.

But some Republicans have come to embrace the format, arguing it can be done securely and is cheaper and fairer than in-person elections. Utah, a GOP stronghold, is a recent convert to mail-in voting.

Evidence shows it is Republicans, rather than Democrats, who are most likely to vote by mail, said Michael McDonald, a University of Florida professor who tracks balloting.

State and local governments are responsible for determining whether or how to offer mail-in voting. A few bills introduced during the current session of Congress would require states to allow for early or mail-in voting for federal elections. Others would require states to allow mail-in voting during national emergencies

a bigger concern for Republicans is a state Supreme Court race that pits a conservative incumbent against a liberal challenger.

In recent weeks, as Democrats nationwide have argued the country must prepare for voting largely by mail, Republicans have objected to or blocked expansions of such voting in Arizona, Georgia and Pennsylvania.

"It shouldn't be mail-in voting. It should be you go to a booth and you proudly display yourself," Trump told reporters Friday evening. Earlier this week on Fox News Channel's "Fox & Friends," he claimed the Democrats had a plan "that if you ever agreed to it you'd never have a Republican elected in this country again."

More than 290,000 people in the United States have tested positive for the virus so far, prompting more than a dozen states to delay their presidential primaries. Health officials are warning that the virus has the potential to return with a second wave during the next flu season, putting voters and poll workers in a dilemma where fulfilling a civic duty means putting their health at greater risk.

Colorado, Hawaii, Oregon and Wash-

and authorize the funds to help defray the costs.

The \$2.2 trillion rescue package that Congress passed included \$400 million for states to invest in the next election so they could expand early voting, move to mail-in voting, or increase safety measures at polling sites.

That's a meager investment compared with the \$2 billion that the Brennan Center for Justice recently said is needed to ensure the pandemic does not jeopardize a free and fair election.

Riccardi reported from Denver.

Knifeman in France kills 2 in attack, terror inquiry opened

By THOMAS ADAMSON Associated Press

PARIS (AP) — A man wielding a knife attacked residents of a French town while they ventured out to shop amid a nationwide coronavirus lockdown Saturday, killing two people and wounding five others in an act that led authorities to open a terrorism inquiry.

France's counter-terrorism prosecutor's office said the assailant was arrested near the scene of the attack in the town of Romans-sur-Isere, south of Lyon, as he was kneeling on the sidewalk praying in Arabic. It said one of his acquaintances also was detained.

Prosecutors did not identify the suspect. They said he had no identifying documents but claimed to be Sudanese and to have been born in 1987.

During a subsequent search of his home, authorities found handwritten documents that included arguments about religion and a complaint about living in a "country of unbelievers," officials said.

The prosecutor's office did not confirm reports that the man shouted "Allahu akbar" (God is great) as he stabbed and slashed people.

Like the entire population of France, Romans-sur-Isere's residents have been ordered to stay home except for a few exceptions. The victims were doing their food shopping, one of the permitted outside activities, on the street that has bakeries and grocery stores, the prosecutor's office said.

French media reported that the knifeman first attacked a man who had just left home for a daily walk — slitting his throat in front of the victim's girlfriend and son.

Next, the assailant went into a tobacco shop, stabbed the tobacconist and two customers, and then went into the local butcher's shop, according to French news reports.. He grabbed another knife and attacked a customer with the blunt end before entering a supermarket, the media said..

Some shoppers took refuge in a nearby bakery.

French Interior Minister Christophe Castaner arrived at the scene in the town south of Lyon within hours and thanked shopkeepers for their help.



Police officers investigate after a man wielding a knife attacked residents venturing out to shop in the town under lockdown, Saturday April 4, 2020 in Romans-sur-Isere, southern France. The alleged attacker was arrested by police nearby, shortly after the attack. Prosecutors did not identify him. They said he had no documents but claimed to be Sudanese and to have been born in 1987. (AP Photo)

Some 100 police and 45 firefighters were involved in the operation and securing the area, authorities said. There have been a number of knife attacks in France in recent months. In January, French police shot and injured a man in Metz who was waving a knife and shouting "Allahu akbar."

Two days earlier, another man was shot dead by police after he stabbed one person fatally and wounded two others in a Paris suburb.

It is unclear whether the suspect in Saturday's attack had psychological problems or any links to extremism. Analysts say some extremist groups see the upheaval from the virus pandemic as an opportunity to win over more supporters.

Angela Charlton in Paris contributed.

Hunt for medical supplies creates marketplace of desperation

By BRIAN WITTE Associated Press



In this Thursday, April 2, 2020, photo Dr. Daniel Durand, Chief Innovation Officer at Lifebridge Health, right, and Pothik Chatterjee, Executive Director of Innovation and Research at Lifebridge Health, left, pose for a portrait in Randallstown, Md. (AP Photo/Susan Walsh)

ANNAPOLIS, Md. (AP) — Shady middlemen, phantom shipments, prices soaring by the hour, goods flown in on a private plane.

What sounds like an organized-crime thriller is now the new reality for governors desperately trying to find the medical equipment their states need in the throes of a pandemic. With the federal stockpile dwindling fast, and the Trump administration limiting access to what's left, state leaders are going to extraordinary measures on their own to secure faces masks, ventilators, gloves and other equipment essential to fighting the outbreak.

They've ventured into a global market-place one governor described as the "wild, wild, West," only to compete against each other and their own federal government. They've watched the price of a ventilators double and masks go for 10 times their original

price. They've turned to rich friends and businesses for help. Massachusetts Gov. Charlie Baker enlisted NFL owner Robert Kraft to send the Patriots team plane to China to retrieve over a million masks.

In New York, an epicenter of the outbreak in the U.S., Gov. Andrew Cuomo has looked closer to home to secure ventilators, issuing an order that forces even private hospitals to redistribute ventilators to the hospitals most in need.

"Let them sue me," Cuomo said.

All this has led many governors to call on the federal government to centralize purchases. But President Donald Trump has not appeared inclined to intervene in the private market. And the White House made clear this week that Trump views the federal stockpile as a "backup" for the states.

"It is the greatest frustration," said Maryland Gov. Larry Hogan, a Republican who heads the National Governors Association. "We have states out competing on the open markets with totally uneven distribution of these things, and now the federal government competing with us — and other countries competing

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against us — and then a very limited supply of all of these things and no real coordination of where it's going."

Hogan said there has been progress from the Federal Emergency Management Agency distributing supplies from the nation's dwindling stockpile, but he described it as a "tiny percentage" of what is needed."

"We've been buying up everything that we can possibly get our hands on in the open market all over — not just domestically, but all over the world, from places like Korea and China and other places," he said.

It's not just governments competing with each other for the precious and ever-pricier supplies. States also sometimes compete with their own hospital systems, which are trying to get direct shipments so they can quickly resupply their medical workers.

Hospital employees like Dr. Daniel Durand, a physician and chief innovation officer for a hospital system in Maryland, now have a role they never imagined trying to find personal protection equipment in a market gone haywire.

As just one example, Durand said coveted N95 face masks that used to cost less than a dollar each can't be found for less than \$3.70. And that's a bargain: Plenty of buyers are willing to pay much more — up to \$10 apiece.

He said some middlemen threaten to take their products to another hospital when he starts asking basic questions.

"And then what I'm hearing is that people are paying millions for shipments and nothing's showing up," said Durand, who is the chairman of radiology for LifeBridge Health's five hospitals. "So, there are just totally people scamming hospitals."

Virginia Secretary of Finance Aubrey Layne vets suppliers for that state's medical gear and said they have to deal with people with questionable qualifications, and with little time to determine whether they are qualified or trustworthy.

"Everybody knows somebody who knows somebody in China," he said.

Earlier this week, Trump acknowledged that the federal stockpile is nearly depleted, signaling that states will remain largely on their own just as the death toll begins to spike. Many governors have been complaining for weeks that they have not received the shipments they requested from the nation's supply.

Middlemen and suppliers are taking advantage of the desperation: Smaller ventilators that had been selling for \$11,000 to \$14,000 are now going for \$20,000 to \$30,000, said Christian Mitchell, deputy governor in Democratic Illinois Gov. J.B. Pritzker's administration. More deluxe models that had topped out at \$45,000 now cost \$20,000 more.

"Your choices are between, 'Do I get enough of the stuff that I need to protect my front-line health care workers, do I get enough ventilators to make sure that more people get to stay alive. Or do people die?'" he said.

Big states like California have an advantage because their sheer size gives them massive purchasing power that others lack. California Gov. Gavin Newsom says he doesn't want that leverage to hurt smaller states and has reached out to Washington, Illinois, New Jersey and others about creating a partnership to centralize their purchases.

"Much of what you're hearing is true in terms of it being the wild wild West out there," Newsom said.

Small states, like New Hampshire, are at a disadvantage.

"I'm sorry, New Hampshire does not have the scale to compete with the state of New York, with the state of Illinois," said Brendan Williams, president of the New Hampshire Health Care Association, which represents the state's nursing homes.

"If it's just going to be this sort of Darwinian free-for-all, like 'Lord of the Flies' ... I don't know what to say. It's absolutely unconscionable. It's unimaginable that this is where we are at right now."

Some states are working with private manufacturers to convert buildings so they can produce their own medical equipment.

LifeBridge Health is among those taking matters into its own hands.

It converted a building in the Baltimore suburbs into a factory to produce masks. LifeBridge's head of oncology, who sews, trained 40 staff members how to make the masks, said Durand, the radiologist.

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"It's like a half sewing factory, half surgery suite," he said.

Associated Press writers John Hanna in Topeka, Kansas; John O'Connor in Springfield, Illinois; Kathleen Ronayne in Sacramento, California; Holly Ramer in Concord, New Hampshire, and Alan Suderman in Richmond, Virginia, contributed to this report.

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

The week that was: Stories from the coronavirus saga

By The Associated Press undefined

This past week, New York got worse — far worse. In New York City, as morgue space ran out, people started wondering where the bodies will go and the funeral industry struggled to keep up. On the streets of a city accustomed to the exact opposite of social distancing, New Yorkers found a new, gentler reality.

The American president's virus briefings emerged as a strange kind of must-see TV, whether you loved them or hated them, and two Cuomo siblings — a beleaguered governor and his anchorman younger brother — became daily fixtures as well.

From France to Peru to Greece to an Ecuadorean city where bodies were piling up beyond, the effects of the virus — and the efforts to fight it — were evident all over the planet. The spaces we filled were now filled with space — even as Wuhan, China, site of the earliest known outbreak, started to reopen stores and restaurants.

Germany was scoring early wins because of more testing and intensive-care units; in Spain, where even makeshift ICUs were full, doctors were still making agonizing decisions about who to treat.

Associated Press journalists across the planet chronicled it all — in a week when they lost one of their longtime colleagues to COVID-19. This guide to some of their words and images is a diary of a world at once on pause and in the middle of the biggest fight of its generation.

HEALTH: HOSPITALS OVERWHELMED

The government passed a massive \$2.2 trillion relief package to help ease the pain from the pandemic. But the money won't solve one of the most pressing problems facing those on the front lines of fighting the virus — the lack of adequate medical equipment to care for patients and protect health care workers.

For medical supplies, the marketplace is cutthroat: States and hospital systems are competing against each other, foreign countries and even the U.S. government for medical protective gear and ventilators.

How would overwhelmed hospitals decide who to treat first? Doctors and hospitals are grappling with what happens when they are overwhelmed and can't offer the most aggressive care to their patients simply for lack of space and equipment. They're turning to old emergency response plans and medical ethicists to figure out who will get care, and who won't, when the time comes to choose.

While health care workers are in huge demand in some corners, others are seeing their jobs disappear as hospitals, clinics and doctor practices cancel routine appointments and elective surgeries and procedures during the pandemic.

Coronavirus survivors are lining up to donate blood in hopes of helping others, while pregnant women are dealing with having birth plans disrupted along with so much else. And some potentially relieving news: There's no evidence the coronavirus spreads through food.

Finally, some reporting around an enduring question: Why do outbreaks keep happening at nursing homes despite federal lockdown orders imposed last month?

WATCHING GOVERNMENTS

The scramble for virus supplies around the world is testing global solidarity in the battle against the coronavirus. National and corporate self-interest are trumping all as governments, individuals and businesses race to get what they need.

Where are all the ventilators? The slow deployment of ventilators underscores the ways in which the sprawl-

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ing 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. The Pentagon has promised to supply ventilators, but the supply crunch has turned critical.

In Ecuador, one of the first Latin American countries to confirm the arrival of the disease, 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. Medical experts fear the disaster brewing in Guayaquil may offer a frightening glimpse of what awaits the region in coming weeks and months.

Steps taken to slow the spread of the coronavirus have forced state legislatures to meet remotely and greatly limit public access to their deliberations and decisions. And one of the key provisions of the congressional stimulus bill, the \$349 billion loan program for small businesses, is likely to benefit businesses that are quite large — potentially

A member from a local veterinary service wearing protective suit sprays disinfectant on a platform of the railway station in Ladozhskoye Ozero village outside St. Petersburg, Russia, Saturday, April 4, 2020. The new 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. (AP Photo/Dmitri Lovetsky)

leaving little money for the true mom-and-pop operations.

FOLLOWING THE MONEY

The scope of the economic damage from the virus came into clearer focus this week, with a series of bleak job reports issued by U.S. and European countries.

Here's what you need to know if you're one of the millions of Americans who have lost their jobs in the past two weeks. And here's what you need to know about your government stimulus check, which the IRS and Treasury Department said they'll start sending in the next three weeks as part of a \$2.2 trillion rescue package designed to blunt some of the damage.

In Wuhan, China, people were eager to get back to work after a two-month lockdown, but local officials were enforcing disease checks and other controls that sometimes made that difficult. To board a subway, check into a hotel or just enter Wuhan, where the pandemic began in December, residents must show a green symbol on their smartphone that verifies they are symptom-free.

Workers still on the job in America worried about their health as cases jumped. As people tried to avoid leaving their houses, prompting a surge in delivery orders, some Amazon and Instacart workers walked off the job, demanding better health protections.

INEQUALITY: ECONOMIC AND HEALTH CHALLENGES

This was the week the rent came due for the first time since the economic crisis hit, and people across America struggled with how to pay. "The way I see it, the whole world is on pause," one Brooklyn resident who couldn't pay rent said. "I'd rather allocate my money towards my actual survival, which would be food."

Across the world, people in some of the poorest countries struggled with how to protect themselves from an enemy they couldn't see and were unsure they could avoid. In crowded cities from Gaza to Bangladesh, residents questioned how they could possibly socially distance themselves, a question even more urgent for political prisoners crammed into cells across the Middle East. In Latin America, the disease, imported in many cases by the wealthy returning from European vacations, now threatens the poor. In Africa, Zim-

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babweans faced a stark choice: survive the day or protect yourself from the virus.

Other vulnerable populations struggled as well. Recovering addicts had to deal with this new pressure without face-to-face group sessions, those without reliable internet worked to find ways to study and stay connected with the suddenly distant world and rural communities already suffering under hospital closures wondered how they'd cope if and when the virus comes.

And in the United States, many Asian Americans are using social media to mobilize against some of the racism that has surfaced related to the virus and its origins.

THE RIPPLE EFFECT: LIFE, STILL CHANGING

Among those struggling with the new way of life are allergy sufferers, who wonder about every cough as never before, and both introverts and extroverts, who are reacting differently to isolation and quarantine. But even as many face similar struggles, is there — at least in the United States — a shared experience to be found in all of this?

The waters deep beneath the sea may contain some of the few humans who don't realize how the world is changing: submariners. And in one area — the world of pet fostering — the virus may actually be helping things.

Finally, while many associate Hollywood with its A-list stars and glitzy gatherings, the abrupt shutdown of productions has had a profound effect on the front-line workers who cut stars' hair, organize premieres and edit everything from short videos to feature films. Six front-line workers described how the pandemic has upended their lives, and the hope that when things return to normal, everyone's going to need "a big global exhale and celebration that it's over."

'ONE GOOD THING'

AP's new daily series "One Good Thing" is in its third week of telling multimedia stories about individuals fulfilling critical needs in desperate times. This week's unintended theme: food and music, which nourish the vulnerable as well as those working hardest to keep others alive.

Two brothers with a New Jersey pizzeria wanted to ensure they could continue paying their 20 employees, so they took out a loan. Once the news spread about the bosses doing what they could to keep their employees whole, the customers' donations started rolling in.

A text message between an entrepreneur and a San Francisco emergency room nurse resulted in medical staff receiving donated meals from some of the finest restaurants, several known for their 10-course tasting menus. Said one nurse about a particularly memorable sea salt caramel bread pudding, "It was possibly the best thing I have ever eaten."

The National Orchestra of France used technology to weave together the sight and sounds of its musicians, who filmed themselves playing alone in their homes into a seamless, rousing whole. Listen to Ravel's Boléro.

VIRUS DIARY

AP correspondents around the world are sharing their vantage points in the coronavirus saga, from Beirut to Cincinnati. Find out more here.

GROUND GAME: INSIDE THE OUTBREAK

Tune in daily to the virus edition of AP's "Ground Game" podcast, where host Ralph Russo taps the expertise of AP's global team covering the coronavirus story.

Find AP's top virus coverage for the week of March 22-28 here. Follow overall AP coverage of the virus outbreak at <https://apnews.com/VirusOutbreak> and <https://apnews.com/UnderstandingtheOutbreak>

Kobe, Duncan, Garnett headline Basketball Hall of Fame class

By TIM REYNOLDS AP Basketball Writer

Kobe Bryant's resume has yet another entry to validate his greatness: He's now, officially, a Hall of Famer.

And he's got plenty of elite company in the 2020 class, one that may be as glitzy as any.

Bryant, who died in a helicopter crash on Jan. 26, and fellow NBA greats Tim Duncan and Kevin Garnett headlined a nine-person group announced Saturday as this year's class of enshrinees into the Naismith Memorial Basketball Hall of Fame.

"An amazing class," Duncan said.

They all got into the Hall in their first year as finalists, as did WNBA great Tamika Catchings. Others had to wait a bit longer for the good news: Two-time NBA champion coach Rudy Tomjanovich finally got his call, as did longtime Baylor women's coach Kim Mulkey, 1,000-game winner Barbara Stevens of Bentley and three-time Final Four coach Eddie Sutton.

They were the eight finalists who were announced in February, and the panel of 24 voters who were tasked to decide who merited selection wound up choosing them all. Also headed to the Hall this year: former FIBA Secretary General Patrick Baumann, selected as a direct-elect by the international committee.

"He was the head of FIBA and this was a way to honor him," Hall of Fame Chairman and enshrinee Jerry Colangelo said. "It was a special thing done through that committee."

Bryant died about three weeks before the Hall of Fame said — as if there was going to be any doubt — that he was a finalist. Duncan and Garnett were also widely perceived to be locks to be part of this class; they were both 15-time NBA All-Stars, and Bryant was an 18-time selection.

Bryant's death has been part of a jarring start of the year for basketball: Commissioner Emeritus David Stern died on Jan. 1, Bryant and his daughter Gianna were among nine who died in the crash in late January, and the NBA shut down March 11 as the coronavirus pandemic began to grip the U.S.

"Obviously, we wish that he was here with us to celebrate," Vanessa Bryant, Kobe's wife, said on the ESPN broadcast of the class announcement. "But it's definitely the peak of his NBA career and every accomplishment that he had as an athlete was a steppingstone to be here. So we're incredibly proud of him."

Bryant was also a five-time champion with the Los Angeles Lakers, just as Duncan was with the San Antonio Spurs.

"This is an incredibly special class, for many reasons," Colangelo said.



FILE - In this Dec. 18, 2017 file photo, former Los Angeles Laker Kobe Bryant talks during a news conference in Los Angeles. Bryant and fellow NBA greats Tim Duncan and Kevin Garnett headlined a nine-person group announced Saturday, April 4, 2020, as this year's class of enshrinees into the Naismith Memorial Basketball Hall of Fame. They all got into the Hall in their first year of eligibility, as did WNBA great Tamika Catchings. Two-time NBA champion coach Rudy Tomjanovich, longtime Baylor women's coach Kim Mulkey, 1,000-game winner Barbara Stevens of Bentley and three-time Final Four coach Eddie Sutton were selected. So was former FIBA Secretary General Patrick Baumann. (AP Photo/Chris Carlson, File)

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Garnett is the only player in NBA history with at least 25,000 points, 10,000 rebounds, 5,000 assists, 1,500 blocks and 1,500 steals. He also was part of Boston's 2008 NBA title.

"This is the culmination," Garnett said. "All those hours ... this is what you do it for, right here. To be able to be called 'Hall of Famer' is everything."

Duncan spent the entirety of his career with the Spurs, and is now back with the team as an assistant coach under Gregg Popovich.

"It's kind of the end of the journey here," Duncan, on the broadcast, said of his enshrinement. "It was an incredible career that I enjoyed so much. To call it a dream come true isn't even doing any justice to it. I never dreamt I'd be at this point."

Duncan, Garnett and Bryant were similar in many ways as players: The longevity of their careers, the eye-popping numbers, almost perennial inclusion on award lists. They also shared a dislike for touting personal accomplishments.

But even the Hall would have touched Bryant, those closest to him said.

"No one deserves it more," Lakers Governor Jeanie Buss said.

Added Lakers general manager Rob Pelinka, Bryant's former agent: "All of us can trust that this Basketball Hall of Fame honor is one Kobe would, and will, deeply appreciate."

Catchings was a 10-time WNBA All-Star and four-time Olympic gold medalist. Tomjanovich, who had overwhelming support from NBA peers who couldn't understand why it took so long for his selection, was a five-time All-Star as a player, guided Houston to back-to-back titles and took the 2000 U.S. Olympic team to a gold medal.

"It's a scary time and families are being shattered by this pandemic. To get something positive right now is so wonderful," Tomjanovich said.

Mulkey has three NCAA titles as a coach, won two others as a player and had Baylor in position to vie for another championship this season had the global coronavirus pandemic not forced the shutdown of virtually every sport around the globe. Stevens has coached for 43 years and is a five-time Division II coach of the year. Sutton won more than 800 games in nearly four decades, and Baumann was one of the most powerful voices in international basketball until his death in 2018.

"The incredible emotions that I felt after receiving the call from the Hall of Fame Friday afternoon, I can't even put into words," Stevens said.

The enshrinement ceremony in Springfield, Massachusetts, is scheduled for Aug. 29. Should the pandemic force a delay, there is a tentative plan for an October ceremony as well.

For this year, largely because of the star power of this class, the Hall chose to enact a one-year suspension of direct elections from the Veteran's, Women's Veteran's, Early African-American Pioneers and Contributors categories.

With Bryant, Duncan and Garnett as perhaps the top NBA trio to ever enter simultaneously, the Hall wanted to make sure that no enshrinee would be overlooked.

"We didn't need to water it down," Colangelo said. "Next year is another year for many."

More AP sports: <https://apnews.com/apf-sports> and https://twitter.com/AP_Sports

Where will the bodies go? Morgues plan as virus grows

CLAUDIA LAUER and JESSICA GRESKO undefined

PHILADELPHIA (AP) — There are the new dead. And then there are the bodies waiting in overcrowded mortuaries to be buried as cities struggle to meet demand and families wrestle with rules on social distancing that make the usual funeral rituals impossible.

Med Alliance Group, a medical distributor in Illinois, is besieged by calls and emails from cities around the country. Each asks the same thing: Send more refrigerated trailers so that we can handle a situation we never could have imagined.

"They're coming from all over: From hospitals, health systems, coroner's offices, VA facilities, county

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and state health departments, state emergency departments and funeral homes," said Christie Penzol, a spokeswoman for Med Alliance. "It's heart-wrenching."

The company has rented all its trailers and there's an 18-week wait for new materials to build more, she said.

With U.S. medical experts and even President Donald Trump now estimating the death toll from the coronavirus pandemic could reach 240,000 nationwide, the sheer practicalities of death — where to put the bodies — are worrying just about everyone as cities, hospitals and private medical groups clamor to secure additional storage.

The need is compounded by private mortuary space that is occupied longer than usual as people wait to bury their loved ones— regardless of how they died— because rules on social distancing make planning funerals difficult.

It's a crisis being repeated worldwide.

In Spain, where the death toll has climbed to nearly 12,000, an ice rink in Madrid was turned into a makeshift morgue after the city's municipal funeral service said it could no longer take coronavirus bodies until it was restocked with protective equipment. In Italy, embalmed bodies in caskets are being sent to church halls and warehouses while they await cremation or burial.

And in the coastal Ecuadorian city of Guayaquil, macabre images and pleas from families on social media show dead loved ones wrapped in plastic or cloth, waiting for days to be taken away by overwhelmed morgue workers.

In the U.S. epicenter of New York City, where the death toll was more than 1,900 on Saturday, authorities brought in refrigerated trucks to store bodies. At Brooklyn Hospital Center, a worker wheeled out a body covered in white plastic on a gurney and a forklift operator carefully raised it into a refrigerated trailer.

Cities and states that haven't been hard-hit yet are trying to prepare for the worst.

It's hard to say exactly how much morgue space is available nationwide. Many cities and counties submit emergency preparedness plans for review by state and federal officials, but tallies aren't always complete and private mortuaries aren't always included. Trade groups like the National Association of Medical Examiners don't track those capacities either.

But, in general, few morgues in the country can hold even 200 to 300 bodies.

In Washington, D.C., which has a morgue that can hold about 270 bodies, officials said they would seek help from federal partners if needed. Dallas has a plan for refrigerated space as part of its emergency preparedness efforts. And Chicago is already using a trailer outside the medical examiner's office for the bodies of coronavirus victims, and may use a refrigerated warehouse if needed.

Meanwhile, the Federal Emergency Management Agency has asked the Defense Department for 100,000 body bags, Pentagon spokesman Air Force Lt. Col. Michael Andrews said Thursday.

On a daily basis, the system works at essentially full capacity in most jurisdictions, said Robert A. Jensen,



A body wrapped in plastic is prepared to be loaded onto a refrigerated container truck used as a temporary morgue by medical workers due to COVID-19 concerns, Tuesday, March 31, 2020, at Brooklyn Hospital Center in the Brooklyn borough of New York. The new 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.

(AP Photo/John Minchillo)

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co-owner of Kenyon International Emergency Services, a private disaster response company based in Texas. "They're not made for surge. They're made to handle the daily numbers," said Jensen, whose company has helped with mass fatality incidents from 9/11 to Hurricane Katrina to the 2004 tsunami in Thailand, all of which involved using refrigerated trucks to store bodies.

In Pennsylvania, the state coroner's association is working to figure out resources and help with what will likely be regional planning.

Brian Abernathy, Philadelphia's Managing Director, said the city had secured refrigerated trucks to help with any overflow storage needed for bodies. The city had reported 26 deaths as of Friday.

"This isn't because we expect a large influx of people succumbing to the illness, but rather it's likely that there will be fewer funerals, which will cause backups in both our city morgues as well as the hospital morgues," Abernathy said.

Brian Murphy, the CEO of Arctic Industries, which manufactures walk-in coolers and quick-assemble modular structures in Miami and Los Angeles, said he is getting calls seeking help. In the past, most clients were from the food industry, but with restaurants shuttered, calls about mortuary needs have risen.

He says his company is prioritizing work related to COVID-19 and is considering working more hours to meet needs.

"Everything is very much in flux," Murphy said.

The families of the dead, meanwhile, are making do.

Rosina Argondizzo of Glenview, Illinois, was buried in March with just a priest and four people present: her husband of 58 years, her son Peter, his wife and their son. Another son who lives in Italy didn't travel. Peter Argondizzo said his 79-year-old mother, who died after contracting pneumonia and the flu, would have had a very different funeral in normal times.

"We're Italian so it would have been a lot of people. ... It would have been big," he said, adding they would have hosted a meal in her honor, something they now hope to do at a later date. "She would have wanted everyone to have been well-fed."

David Dittman said he inquired about waiting to hold a funeral for his 94-year-old mother, Ruth, who died after battling cancer, so more family could attend.

But the funeral home handling arrangements in Connecticut didn't want to hold the body for more than two weeks.

He said he understood: "Especially with this rush of people that may be coming at them. They may be overwhelmed, you know."

Gresko reported from Arlington, Virginia. Associated Press writers Colleen Long and Robert Burns in Washington and Jennifer Peltz in New York contributed to this report.

Lives Lost: Detroit woman, mother of 4, loved ballroom dance

By KAT STAFFORD ASSOCIATED PRESS

DETROIT (AP) — When Laneeka Barksdale got so sick from the coronavirus that she had to be hospitalized, she tried to keep family from driving her there so as not to put them in danger.

The 47-year-old mother of four began feeling sick in early March, initially thinking it was just a cold. A slight cough progressed to a fever that ticked up to nearly 102 degrees. Then it stole her breath.

"She didn't even want my other sister to drive her to the hospital," her brother Omari Barksdale recalled. "She was in really bad shape and was barely able to breathe, but she didn't want anyone else exposed."

A known figure in Detroit's vibrant ballroom dance and social scene, Laneeka was hospitalized around March 14. She died a little over a week later.

EDITOR'S NOTE: This is part of an ongoing series of stories remembering people who have died from coronavirus around the world.

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Detroit is emerging as a national hot spot of coronavirus cases. While the city had made some strides toward recovering since the Great Recession and filing for municipal bankruptcy in 2013, it was still struggling with chronic poverty when the coronavirus hit.

Hundreds of people have reached out to the family to offer condolences and to share memories of Laneeka. Described by family as a free spirit, videos of her spinning around and pulling people onto dance floors have been widely shared across social media.

With long, flowing hair and a smile that could light up a room, some friends called Laneeka "the queen" of Detroit-style ballroom dancing, which is a soulful dance popular in the African-American community.

Laneeka knew every variation, from a basic two-step to more sophisticated moves that had her gliding elegantly across the floor with a contemporary twist on the tango and waltz.

"She was that shining star in the room," Barksdale said. "She had an infectious laugh and made people feel great."

Laneeka, who for years worked at a casino, suffered from severe asthma and the family believes it may have increased the severity of the disease in her lungs.

For Barksdale, the worst part is that his sister died alone.

"She was on a respirator and heavily sedated so for the last days we didn't even get to talk to her," he said. "Nobody could see her."

Laneeka's family is raising funds for her burial and to help take care of her youngest child, who is 7. Her other children are 17, 25 and 26.

"It's hard. It's really hard grieving in isolation," Barksdale said. "We're going to have to continue care for her children, especially the 7-year-old, so we want to prepare and get a cushion for her."

The family wants Laneeka to be remembered as more than someone who died of COVID-19 complications.

In an impassioned message posted on Facebook hours after her death, Barksdale made a plea for people to take precautions.

"She would want everybody to take this seriously," Barksdale said with tears in his eyes. "This allows us to tell her story and turn her death into a message to people to hopefully help, as they say, flatten the curve."



This photo, date and location not known, provided by the Barksdale family shows Laneeka Barksdale, right, with her brother, Omari Barksdale. The siblings were close, according to her brother, who said his 47-year-old sister was a fierce protector of her family. She died March 23, 2020, of COVID-19 complications. (Barksdale Family via AP)

Today in History By The Associated Press

Today in History

Today is Sunday, April 5, the 96th day of 2020. There are 270 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On April 5, 1991, former Sen. John Tower, R-Texas, his daughter Marian and 21 other people were killed

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in a commuter plane crash near Brunswick, Georgia.

On this date:

In 1621, the Mayflower sailed from Plymouth Colony in present-day Massachusetts on a monthlong return trip to England.

In 1887, in Tuscumbia, Alabama, teacher Anne Sullivan achieved a breakthrough as her 6-year-old deaf-blind pupil, Helen Keller, learned the meaning of the word "water" as spelled out in the Manual Alphabet.

In 1915, Jess Willard knocked out Jack Johnson in the 26th round of their fight in Havana, Cuba, to claim boxing's world heavyweight title.

In 1951, Julius and Ethel Rosenberg were sentenced to death following their conviction in New York on charges of conspiring to commit espionage for the Soviet Union.

In 1955, British Prime Minister Winston Churchill resigned his office for health reasons. Democrat Richard J. Daley was first elected mayor of Chicago, defeating Republican Robert E. Merriam.

In 1964, Army Gen. Douglas MacArthur died in Washington, D.C., at age 84.

In 1974, Stephen King's first published novel, "Carrie," was released by Doubleday.

In 1975, nationalist Chinese leader Chiang Kai-shek died in Taipei at age 87.

In 1976, reclusive billionaire Howard Hughes died in Houston at age 70.

In 1986, two American servicemen and a Turkish woman were killed in the bombing of a West Berlin discotheque, an incident which prompted a U.S. air raid on Libya more than a week later.

In 1988, a 15-day hijacking ordeal began as gunmen forced a Kuwait Airways jumbo jet to land in Iran.

In 2001, Wang Zhizhi became the first Chinese player to play in the NBA when he took the court for Dallas against Atlanta. (Wang scored six points and grabbed three rebounds as the Mavericks beat the Hawks 108-94.)

Ten years ago: An explosion at the Upper Big Branch mine near Charleston, West Virginia, killed 29 workers. In a televised rescue, 115 Chinese coal miners were freed after spending eight days trapped in a flooded mine, surviving an accident that had killed 38. The WikiLeaks website posted classified video of Apache helicopters gunning down at least nine men in Iraq on July 12, 2007, including a Reuters photographer and his driver. The Duke Blue Devils defeated the Butler Bulldogs 61-59, capturing a fourth NCAA men's basketball title. The Naismith Memorial Basketball Hall of Fame announced inductees that included NBA stars Karl Malone, Scottie Pippen, Dennis Johnson and Gus Johnson.

Five years ago: In an Easter Sunday peace wish, Pope Francis praised a framework nuclear agreement with Iran as an opportunity to make the world safer, while expressing deep worry about bloodshed in Libya, Yemen, Syria, Iraq, Nigeria and elsewhere in Africa. Rolling Stone magazine apologized and officially retracted its discredited article about an alleged gang rape at the University of Virginia. Actor Richard Dysart, 86, died in Santa Monica, California.

One year ago: Inspecting a refurbished section of fencing at the Mexican border in California, President Donald Trump declared that "our country is full," and that illegal crossings must be stopped. In a speech to union activists, former Vice President Joe Biden signaled that he was ready to run for president as a moderate Democrat in a party that had been drifting left; Biden also made light of his recent controversy about crossing physical boundaries with women. Former congressman Anthony Weiner, nearing the end of a 21-month prison sentence for having illicit online contact with a 15-year-old girl, was ordered to register as a sex offender.

Today's Birthdays: Movie producer Roger Corman is 94. Former U.S. Secretary of State and former Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Colin Powell is 83. Country singer Tommy Cash is 80. Actor Michael Moriarty is 79. Pop singer Allan Clarke (The Hollies) is 78. Writer-director Peter Greenaway is 78. Actor Max Gail is 77. Actress Jane Asher is 74. Singer Agnetha (ag-NEE'-tah) Faltskog (ABBA) is 70. Actor Mitch Pileggi is 68. Singer-songwriter Peter Case is 66. Hip-hop artist/actor Christopher "Kid" Reid is 56. Rock musician Mike McCready (Pearl Jam) is 54. Singer Paula Cole is 52. Actress Krista Allen is 49. Actress Victoria Hamilton is 49. Country singer Pat Green is 48. Rapper-producer Pharrell (fa-REHL') Williams is 47. Rapper/producer Juicy J is 45. Actor Sterling K. Brown is 44. Country singer-musician Mike Eli (The Eli

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Young Band) is 39. Actress Hayley Atwell is 38. Actress Lily James is 31.

Thought for Today: "Power tends to corrupt, and absolute power corrupts absolutely. Great men are almost always bad men, even when they exercise influence and not authority, still more when you super-add the tendency or the certainty of corruption by authority." — Lord Acton, British historian (1834-1902), in a letter written on this date in 1887.

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