

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, April 15, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 277 ~ 1 of 77

[1- Gov. Noem to Hold Live Townhall Tomorrow on South Dakota Public Broadcasting](#)

[2- Superintendent Schwan report to the board of education](#)

[4- HS/MS Principal Sombke report to the board of education](#)

[6- School Board Story](#)

[8- Inogen Ad](#)

[9- Covid-19 Update by Marie Miller](#)

[11- AREA COVID-19 CASES](#)

[12- Dakotas COVID-19 Update](#)

[14- Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs](#)

[15- Weather Pages](#)

[18- Daily Devotional](#)

[19- 2020 Groton Events](#)

[20- News from the Associated Press](#)



Governor Noem will give her daily briefing at 3 p.m. today

Gov. Noem to Hold Live Townhall Tomorrow on South Dakota Public Broadcasting

PIERRE, S.D. – Governor Kristi Noem will hold a live townhall with South Dakota Public Broadcasting on Wednesday, April 15, to discuss developments surrounding coronavirus in South Dakota. She will be joined by Secretary of Health Kim Malsam-Rysdon and Commissioner of the Governor's Council of Economic Development Steve Westra. If you have questions, please contact Ian Fury at Ian.Fury@state.sd.us.

Stephanie Rissler will host live on SDPB1-TV, SDPB Radio and on the SDNet App.

The public is invited to submit questions via email and text. Email questions to SDFocus@sdpb.org or text them to 605-956-7372.

The feed from the townhall will be available to all South Dakota TV stations via South Dakota Public Broadcasting. Please contact fritz.miller@sdpb.org with any questions about accessing the feed.

WHAT: Gov. Noem to Hold Live Townhall on South Dakota Public Broadcasting

WHEN: Wednesday, April 15, 2020 – 7:00 pm CT

FEED AVAILABLE VIA SOUTH DAKOTA PUBLIC BROADCASTING

OPEN: Recycling Trailer in Groton

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

© 2019 Groton Daily Independent

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, April 15, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 277 ~ 2 of 77

Groton Area Board of Education
Regular Meeting – April 14, 2020

COVID 19 Related Issues/Superintendent Report

Flexible Learning Plan. We have made very few changes to our flexible learning plan since implementation. We are currently in the fourth week of our new educational model and continue to deliver necessary academic materials and supplies at the beginning of each week. All things considered, I believe our plan is working as well as can be expected. Our teachers have done a masterful job of working into an entirely new system of content delivery. It has been advised that schools are prepared to begin the fall term under similar restrictions in the event that becomes necessary.

Student engagement is the biggest challenge to plan implementation. We estimate work completion and engagement to be somewhere between 70% and 80%.

2019-2020 School Calendar. It is my recommendation to follow our school calendar as amended by the Board on March 3, 2020. Under this calendar, our final official day of flexible learning would be Thursday, May 21. We would likely use most of the final week for the collection of school property including computers, textbooks, library books, sports uniforms, band instruments, etc.

During the final day of the legislative session, schools were relieved of the minimum instructional time requirement. To that regard, I don't believe there is a necessity to add additional days to the end of our calendar on account of our lost time on March 16, 17, 18, 23, and 24. The Department of Education has also consistently encouraged districts to maintain the integrity of their school calendars through the end of the year.

Class of 2020 Graduation. It is my recommendation to postpone graduation to 2:00 PM on Sunday, July 12, 2020. While we don't know what the situation will look like by then, this would provide the best opportunity to be able to host a "normal" graduation before our many of our graduates leave for college. If, at that time, we are still advised against holding group gatherings, we will have to consider other options (electronic, parades, etc.).

It is my recommendation that the final day for flexible learning for our seniors is Friday, May 8. During the week of May 18th materials would be collected, and any seniors that need to complete work to meet course requirements would be required to do that. In a normal year, we would dismiss student approximately 1 week early to allow for staff submission of final grades, final grade point calculations, and scholarship processes.

Food Service. The food service department continues to be very busy packing lunches for approximately 180 students/daily. We're delivering meals twice weekly. Mr. Clocksene is working on providing some different types of meals where possible but has had difficulty receiving supplies that are considered "special order."

Initially, we operated on a donations basis with no deliveries. When permitted by USDA, we were able to begin operating under a program called "Seamless Summer Option" or SSO. This option was extended to school districts as a way to provide nutrition to children during the unexpected school closures. We were required to submit an application to the South Dakota Child and Adult Nutrition (CANS) Office. Since the initial application, we've been granted two waivers. One waiver allows meals to be sent with a family member as opposed to requiring a child to be present to receive their meal. The second is an area eligibility waiver which allows us to deliver meals to all children regardless of income status. The area eligibility waiver also allows us to claim reimbursements for all meals for children aged 1 through 18 as opposed to enrolled students only.

We believe that if Governor Noem issues a shelter-in-place order statewide that the food service delivery will continue during that time. It is unclear at this point whether we will be asked to continue or if we'll have the option to continue the program beyond our school calendar.

CARES Act Funding. The CARES Act signed by President Trump on March 27 provides \$41M to South Dakota to be used for K-12 education. The Estimated allocation for the Groton Area School District based on the Title I allocation formula is \$65,057. USED must complete its application for the states by April 27 after which time SDDOE will have to complete

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, April 15, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 277 ~ 3 of 77

and submit its application for approval. Once the SDDOE application is approved, they will have to issue applications to districts. We have not yet received guidance on allowable costs for CARES Act funding.

Family First Coronavirus Relief Act (FFCRA). Part of the FFCRA includes expanded medical leave for employees impacted by COVID19. This federal legislation went into effect on April 1, 2020. In summary, the Act provides up to 80 hours of Emergency Paid Sick Leave (subject to statutory limits) if they are experiencing COVID-19 symptoms, have a COVID-19 diagnosis, are subject to a quarantine order related to COVID-19, or are caring for an individual subject to a quarantine order.

Additionally, employees who are caring for individuals subject to a quarantine order or caring for his/her child whose school or place of care is closed due to COVID-19 are eligible for up to 10 weeks of paid leave at a rate equal to 2/3 or an employee's regular salary subject to statutory limits (\$200/day).

1003 Grant. Additional flexibility has been offered to school districts so that we may utilize the remainder of our 1003 funds given that many training opportunities are either eliminated or substantially modified. We are now allowed to utilize these funds for the purchase of technology. We currently have just under \$13,000 in 1003 funds remaining for FY2020.

State Funding and Local Tax Levies. The South Dakota legislature passed (and the Governor signed) the general budget bill which includes a re-base of special education allocations based on disability category and a 2% increase to state aid for education. We anticipate the Governor calling a special legislative session to address the funding issues given updated revenue projections in light of the COVID-19 impact to spending. At our regular DOE conference call last week, Secretary Ben Jones indicated that education funding may be reduced for the next fiscal year due to lack of available resources. There seems to be some uncertainty at this point whether states will be permitted to use any federal aid as a replacement to normal revenues.

The chart below shows the difference in general fund tax levies at each level of state funding – 0% or 2% compared to what levies are for taxes payable in 2020. Even though our district does not receive state aid to education, the amount of sales tax revenue allocated to K-12 education impacts the general fund levies. A reduction in state aid results in a calendar year reduction of about \$55,000 in local property tax collections for our district.

Classification of Property	2019 Payable	2020 Payable	2020 Payable
	2020	2021 - 0%	2021 - 2%
Agricultural	\$1.473	\$1.416	\$1.443
Owner-Occupied	\$3.296	\$3.168	\$3.229
Non-Agricultural & Utilities	\$6.821	\$6.556	\$6.682

School Board Election. Absentee voting is taking place now through Election Day – June 2, 2020. Patrons may request an absentee ballot by mail.

Principal's Report

MS/HS Building

Mrs. Sombke

April 9, 2020

1) Quick Review of Flexible Learning Plan

- A) Prevent Academic Regression
- B) Completion of 3rd Nine Weeks Work/ Incompletes Finalized
- C) Begin to restore a sense of routine/normalcy for staff, students, and families
- D) Student k12 Email
 - This will continue to be the number one method that teachers are using in reaching out to students to answer questions and communicate with students and parents
 - Students need to be checking their school email every day for updates, assignments, and feedback from teachers.
 - Students are not allowed to use any other email for completion of work and submission of assignments
- E) Grades 6-12 Google Classrooms
 - Teachers communicate with their students through email, and Google Classroom
 - Students need to be logging into their Google Classrooms on a daily basis, just like checking their email
 - Students will hear from their teacher if there is missing work; just like during traditional "in building" learning times
 - Please email your teacher if you have questions, are having technical difficulties, or need assistance to complete an assignment
- F) Monday/Wednesday Distribution (Easter Week- Tuesday/Thursday)
 - Teachers will continue to email students when they have work that needs to be picked up, or delivered on the bus so that parents will know ahead of time and can make arrangements; again, please be checking student email
 - Meals for MS/HS will be picked up at the Elementary; please contact Mrs. Sombke, Mr. Clocksene, Mr. Brett Schwan or Mr. Joe Schwan if you'd like to be added to the meals list

2) SDCNA- South Dakota Comprehensive Needs Assessment

- A) MS/HS Team: Mrs. Sombke, Mrs. Compton, Ms. Erickson, Ms. Seeklander
- B) Final Meeting: Scheduled for April 15th via Zoom from 9:00-3:00pm
 - Final Meeting will include the writing of the "Action Plan"
 - Final Plan is due by May 1, 2020

3) Dual Credit Registration/Enrollment

- A) Please continue to email and reach out to Mrs. Schwan if you have Dual Credit Questions regarding your registration, enrollment criteria, or scheduling an Accuplacer Test
- B) All Registrations that have been received by Mrs. Madsen, Mrs. Schwan, or Myself have been verified and forwarded to the appropriate University or Technical School
- C) Students will be contacted by the University or Technical School and informed of their status, which could include:
 - More information is needed/or requested; such as ACT, Transcript, GPA verification, Smarter Balance Scores, ASVAB score, and Accuplacer Score
 - OR**
 - Student's registration and application were processed and there is no need for further documentation

4) E-Learning Class Registrations

- A) Students that signed up for E-Learning Spanish I or II have been registered to begin classes Fall 2020
- B) Priority Registration Opened on March 30, 2020 @ 8:00am
- C) Start Date for Fall 2020: August 24, 2020

5) Keep Going!

- A) Encouraging all staff, students, and families to keep going, what you are doing individually and collectively is making a difference to so many students and families!
- B) Thank you to all of our staff who have worked so hard to get this new Flexible Learning Plan up and working. And thank you to all of our families who are right there with us, meeting us on zoom and working together to teach these students!
- C) Continue to Work with the Goal in Sight! Graduation and the end of the Quarter is coming, keep your eye on the finish line!
- D) Take care of yourself, let us know if we can help!
- E) Be well, Stay Healthy!

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, April 15, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 277 ~ 6 of 77



The Groton Area Board of Education held its board meeting last night via zoom. This is also how students are connecting with their teachers and classmates for school instruction.

Graduation moved to July. Last day of school remains May 21.

Flex-learning could return in the fall. Vocal teacher position might be filled

That is a lot in a headline, but the Groton Area Board of Education had a lot of things to decided at its zoom meeting held Tuesday night.

The board voted to move the graduation ceremony to Sunday, July 12, 2020 at 2 p.m. Superintendent Joe Schwan said the district will re-evaluate the date the first part of July in case CDC gudielines have not changed.

Schwan also reported that the last day of school will remain May 21. The South Dakota legislature had voted on veto day to forgive any shortfalls; however, districts still have to complete their school years. One thing Schwan reported that there has been discussion that in-person school may not resume in the fall. Schwan had high praise for the staff in pulling everything off for the end of this school year. He did say it will be more challenging if school in the fall has to be done with flex-learning. "Be prepared in case the flexible learning plan has to be implemented in the fall," Schwan said.

Cody Swanson has resigned effective at the end of this school year as the district's vocal instructor. The board was split on whether to hire someone for that position. Some of the board members said they owe it to the students to fill that position as it will have a ripple effect if not filled. Instrumental directors Dez Yeigh and Austin Fordham were in on the zoom school board meeting. Both said not filling the positions will result in fewer lesson times and other programs no longer being offered. Fordham said 50 percent of the session slots would be lost for lessons and such things as show choir, all school play and the one act play would dissolve.

Board member Deb Gengerke said the district has 2.5 FTE (full time employees) to teach every kid in school English. She emphasized that with the upcoming budget short falls, which Schwan reported that the district is receiving \$500,000 from Captial Outlay to fund the General Fund, she could not, in the interests of the tax payers, support filling the position. "If you go by the numbers, she said, "we don't need two band directors. The financial situation is real. I can't justify that on behalf of the taxpayers."

Board member Tigh Fliehs asked if the district could consider a part-time person for vocal. Schwan said

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, April 15, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 277 ~ 7 of 77

they could advertise it as such and see what happens. On a 5-2 vote with Gengerke and Kara Pharis voting no, the district will advertise for a full-time or part-time position for vocal. Currently, Fordham and Yeigh are instrumental instructors for K-12. Swanson was the vocal director for K-12.

Business Manager Mike Weber reported that the fund balances for the district will be a little higher than normal with school not being in session. March 13 was the last day that the district had person-to-person school.

Schwan reported that the new bus is being manufactured now and should be deployed in the district by the start of the new school year.

Schwan reported that the lunch program is operating under three different waivers which allows the district to distribute free meals to all students in the district and that the student does not need to be present to pick up the meals. The waivers are the seamless summer option, area eligibility waiver and the child not present waiver. These waivers are good through the end of April. Schwan said he hopes the waivers will continue through the end of the school year. The district is serving 180 meals per day.

The district will receive \$65,000 through the CARES Act Funding act. With the state having a major shortfall in funding from a major drop in sales tax revenues, Schwan said do not expect the 2 percent increase in the general fund. That will result in a \$55,000 shortfall in the general fund if the funding gets put back to zero. There was also a \$20,000 increase in the district's general liability insurance premium.

Weber reported that he has had four unemployment claims. He said two were legitimate with the other two he is questioning.

The summer driver's ed program was discussed. It is more than likely that the classroom instruction would be done on-line with driving time starting in July. Student drivers would still need to have six hours of driving time behind the wheel. Letters will be mailed out today (Wednesday) to students who qualify for driver's ed. Students have to be 14 years of age by November 1 to qualify.

The board authorized membership to the South Dakota High School Activities Association for the 2020-21 school year.

Letters of resignation were accepted from Whitney Berner and Cody Swanson. Greg Kjellsen will come out of retirement and return to Groton Area to teach high school math.



One solution for oxygen at home, away, and for travel

Introducing the INOGEN ONE It's oxygen therapy on your terms

No more tanks to refill. No more deliveries.

No more hassles with travel. The INOGEN ONE portable oxygen concentrator is designed to provide unparalleled freedom for oxygen therapy users. It's small, lightweight, clinically proven for stationary and portable use, during the day and at night, and can **go virtually anywhere** — **even on most airlines.**

Inogen accepts Medicare and many private insurances!

Reclaim Your Freedom And Independence NOW!



Call Inogen Today To
Request Your FREE Info Kit

1-605-824-7698



Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, April 15, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 277 ~ 9 of 77

Covid-19 Update by Marie Miller

Things are holding at that leveling-off place. Some numbers are up by a bit, but I am not yet alarmed. I believe the overall downward trend is not reversing itself. Here's what I see:

There have been 606,800 cases reported in the US; this represents a 4.8% increase, a tick up from yesterday. By state, the top 10 are as follows: NY – 202,208, NJ – 68,824, MA – 28,163, MI – 26,844, CA – 25,703, PA – 25,396, IL – 23,247, FL – 21,620, LA – 21,518, TX – 15,258. 3 more states report over 10,000 cases, 7 more over 5000, 20 more + DC over 1000, and 10 more + PR and GU over 100. VI and MP remain below 100.

There have been 25,922 deaths in the US. This is a slight uptick as well, but again, I am not worried yet, although I could get worried. We'll see what tomorrow brings. There have been 10,834 deaths in NY, 2805 in NJ, 1766 in MI, 1013 in LA, 957 in MA, 878 in MA, and 778 in CA. 5 more states are above 500 deaths, 16 more above 100, 5 more + DC above 50, 12 more + PR above 10. 5 states + GU, VI, and MP are below 10 deaths.

Mixed picture today. Just as I was unwilling to commit to seeing a trend when things were moving downward, I am not yet willing to commit to seeing a trend when they go up a bit. But I will be watching tomorrow closely.

It looks like most states will see their apex sometime between now and early May. We will then have some weeks to a few months before we've wrestled this beast into at least temporary submission, supposing we ever have the testing capacity to enable the case and contact tracking we should have been doing for weeks now.

For those who have still been hanging their hats on the hope that this thing would subside when the warm weather comes, that's not looking good—not that it ever really did. Australia, who is experiencing late summer at the moment, is reporting 6415 cases today. Considering their first case report was on March 2, this doesn't bode well for the maybe-it's-seasonal argument.

I've been getting questions about reports out of South Korea of what appear to be reinfections—people who have recovered and shown a negative test, then tested positive for Covid-19 after that. There have been a handful of such cases. I did see some higher number in questionable sources, so while I am aware there have been some few cases, I can find no confirmation there are very many. There have been a few in China and Japan, as well as South Korea.

No one seriously thinks these folks are reinfected. We know people who are infected make antibodies, and those typically are protective. Even if it turns out immunity is very short-lasting (and we have no reason to think this is true), it wouldn't be this short, even in a worst-case sort of situation. While we do not have sufficient data yet to make any firm declarations about the duration of immunity, we do have experience with a closely-related virus, the one that causes SARS. What we saw there is that immunity after recovery lasts at least two years; it appears to be pretty much gone at six years, so somewhere between two and six years post-recovery, it wanes. The very most conservative estimates are that folks who recover this spring will be protected well into the fall. The only way we're going to be sure is to look at folks two to six years from now; but for now, the realistic estimates look like that. Additionally, it is quite likely that someone with waning immunity will experience a milder case upon reinfection than someone who is immunologically naïve, that is, totally unprotected.

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, April 15, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 277 ~ 10 of 77

With respect to these odd cases in Korea, there are two possibilities:

(1) We know the diagnostic tests aren't great yet—figure they're accurate in diagnosing a case only something like 70% of the time, which makes it fairly likely those folks had false negative tests as they recovered and the amount of virus in their samples dropped. And then when a later test picked up virus again—virus that was never really gone, they appeared to revert to positive.

(2) It may be they really were fully recovered, but there were still viral fragments the later specimen collection picked up. The polymerase chain reaction (PCR) test used to diagnose doesn't detect whether the virus is active, but just the presence of viral material, and it amplifies that material before testing for it; so a tiny fragment might well show up in that later test, even in someone who is no longer shedding active virus.

This is something to watch, but not with particular alarm.

No matter how much you feel as though you are not personally at risk, it's wise to recognize that young, healthy individuals with no risk factors are getting sick, very sick, and being hospitalized, even dying. The numbers of serious and fatal cases are greater in older people with chronic health conditions, but no one is invulnerable. It is also important to consider that you may be the person without symptoms who is shedding virus; you have a duty to others as well. It is best to proceed when you have to go out on the assumption that you are infected and shedding virus. That will protect the people around you. And you should proceed on the assumption that everyone you meet is infected and shedding virus. That will protect you.

I was sent a brilliant article explaining how layering the precautions you take add up to very good protection, indeed, even if you don't have medical grade masks (which you most definitely should not have). I haven't made it a habit to link a bunch of articles here because most of you don't want to have to chase information down; that's why you come here, I suspect. I am, however, going to make an exception for this one because it lays out commonsense steps you should take and explains in very accessible terms how those are protective of you and others. I encourage you to read this one: https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/saving-your-health-one-mask-time-peter-tippett-md-phd/?fbclid=IwAR1sA2OnwXxT8ndTp1PrsOX7e4uFz4qko_UjOX7744mckWl3XG3Y2PJEiyg

I hope all of this is helpful to you. We knew—or should have known—there would be days like this when the steady downward march would be interrupted; I hope that's all we're seeing, a glitch in the numbers. Time will tell.

We have to keep hanging on, practicing precautions, staying home as much as possible, staying away from other people. Wear some sort of mouth and nose covering when you leave the house--for others if not for yourself. Take care, be safe, and seek out one person who needs you. We can change the world, one square inch at a time if we just pay attention to the need.

We'll talk again.

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, April 15, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 277 ~ 11 of 77

AREA COVID-19 CASES

	Mar. 29	Mar. 30	Mar. 31	Apr. 1	Apr. 2	Apr. 3	Apr. 4	Apr. 5	Apr. 6	Apr. 7
Minnesota	503	576	629	689	742	789	865	935	986	1,069
Nebraska	120	153	177	214	255	285	323	367	412	478
Montana	161	177	198	217	241	263	281	298	319	319
Colorado	2,307	2,627	2,966	3,342	3,728	4,173	4,565	4,950	5,172	5,429
Wyoming	87	95	120	137	150	166	187	200	212	221
North Dakota	98	109	126	147	159	173	186	207	225	237
South Dakota	90	101	108	129	165	187	212	240	288	320
United States	143,055	164,610	189,633	216,722	245,573	278,458	312,245	337,933	368,079	399,929
US Deaths	2,513	3,170	4,081	5,137	6,058	7,159	8,503	9,653	10,923	12,911

Minnesota	+62	+73	+53	+60	+53	+47	+76	+70	+51	+83
Nebraska	+12	+33	+24	+37	+41	+30	+38	+44	+45	+66
Montana	+14	+16	+20	+19	+25	+22	+18	+17	+21	0
Colorado	+246	+320	+339	+376	+386	+445	+392	+385	+222	+257
Wyoming	+3	+8	+25	+17	+13	+16	+21	+13	+12	+9
North Dakota	+4	+11	+17	+21	+12	+14	+13	+21	+18	+12
South Dakota	+22	+11	+7	+21	+36	+12	+25	+28	+48	+32
United States	+18,369	+21,555	+25,023	+27,089	+28,851	+32,885	+33,787	+25,688	+30,146	+31,850
US Deaths	+322	+657	+911	+1,056	+921	+1,101	1,344	+1,150	+1,270	+1,988

	Apr. 8	Apr. 9	Apr. 10	Apr. 11	Apr. 12	Apr. 13	Apr. 14
Minnesota	1,154	1,242	1,336	1,427	1,621	1,650	1,695
Nebraska	523	577	648	704	814	871	901
Montana	332	354	377	---	387	394	399
Colorado	5,655	6202	6,510	6,893	7,303	7,691	7,941
Wyoming	230	239	253	261	270	275	282
North Dakota	251	269	278	293	308	331	341
South Dakota	393	447	536	626	730	868	988
United States	431,838	466,396	501,701	530,006	557,590	582,619	609,685
US Deaths	14,768	16,703	18,781	20,608	22,109	23,529	26,059

Minnesota	+85	+88	+94	+91	+194	+29	+45
Nebraska	+45	+54	+71	+56	+110	+57	+30
Montana	+13	+22	+23	---	+10	+7	+5
Colorado	+226	+547	+308	+383	+410	+388	+250
Wyoming	+9	+9	+14	+8	+9	+5	+7
North Dakota	+14	+18	+9	+15	+15	+23	+10
South Dakota	+73	+54	+89	+90	+104	+138	+120
United States	+31,909	+34,558	+35,305	+28,305	+27,584	+25,029	+27,066
US Deaths	+1,857	+1,935	+2,078	1,827	+1,501	+1,420	+2,530

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, April 15, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 277 ~ 12 of 77

Dakotas COVID-19 Update

South Dakota

121 New positive cases, 88 of which are from the Smithfield plant

1 new hospitalization (45 total)

No new deaths (6 total)

54 new recovered (261 total)

Total positives: 988 (438 from Smithfield facility)

New negatives: +174 (8,308 total)

Changes in County Totals:

Brown has not seen a positive case since April 9th.

Codington: +1 positive (14 total)

Lincoln: +5 positive, +6 recovered (27 of 55 recovered)

Minnehaha: +115 positive, +44 recovered (120 of 768 recovered)

Union: +1 recovered (3 of 5 recovered)

Yankton: +3 recovered (16 of 22 recovered)

The N.D. DoH & private labs are reporting 135 completed tests today for COVID-19, with 10 new positive cases, bringing the statewide total to 341. NDDoH reports 1 new death.

State & private labs have reported 10,916 total tests with 10,575 negatives.

138 ND patients are recovered.

SOUTH DAKOTA CASE COUNTS	
Test Results	# of Cases
Positive*	988
Negative**	8308
Ever Hospitalized*	45
Deaths**	6
Recovered	261

AGE GROUP OF SOUTH DAKOTA COVID-19 CASES		
Age Range	# of Cases	# of Deaths
0 to 19 years	44	0
20 to 29 years	187	0
30 to 39 years	246	0
40 to 49 years	187	0
50 to 59 years	182	2
60 to 69 years	110	1
70 to 79 years	18	1
80+ years	14	2

Broton Daily Independent

Wednesday, April 15, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 277 ~ 13 of 77

County	Total Positive Cases	# Recovered
Aurora	1	1
Beadle	21	19
Bon Homme	4	3
Brookings	9	6
Brown	14	10
Brule	1	0
Charles Mix	4	1
Clark	1	1
Clay	5	4
Codington	13	11
Corson	1	0
Davison	3	3
Deuel	1	1
Fall River	1	1
Faulk	1	1
Hamlin	1	1
Hughes	5	3
Hutchinson	2	2
Hyde	1	0
Jerauld	3	0
Lake	2	1

Lawrence	9	9
Lincoln	55	27
Lyman	2	2
Marshall	1	1
McCook	2	1
Meade	1	1
Miner	1	0
Minnehaha	768	120
Oglala Lakota	1	0
Pennington	9	5
Roberts	4	3
Sanborn	2	0
Spink	3	2
Sully	1	0
Todd	1	1
Turner	5	1
Union	5	3
Walworth	2	0
Yankton	22	16

SEX OF SOUTH DAKOTA COVID-19 CASES

Sex	# of Cases	# of Deaths
Male	534	4
Female	454	2

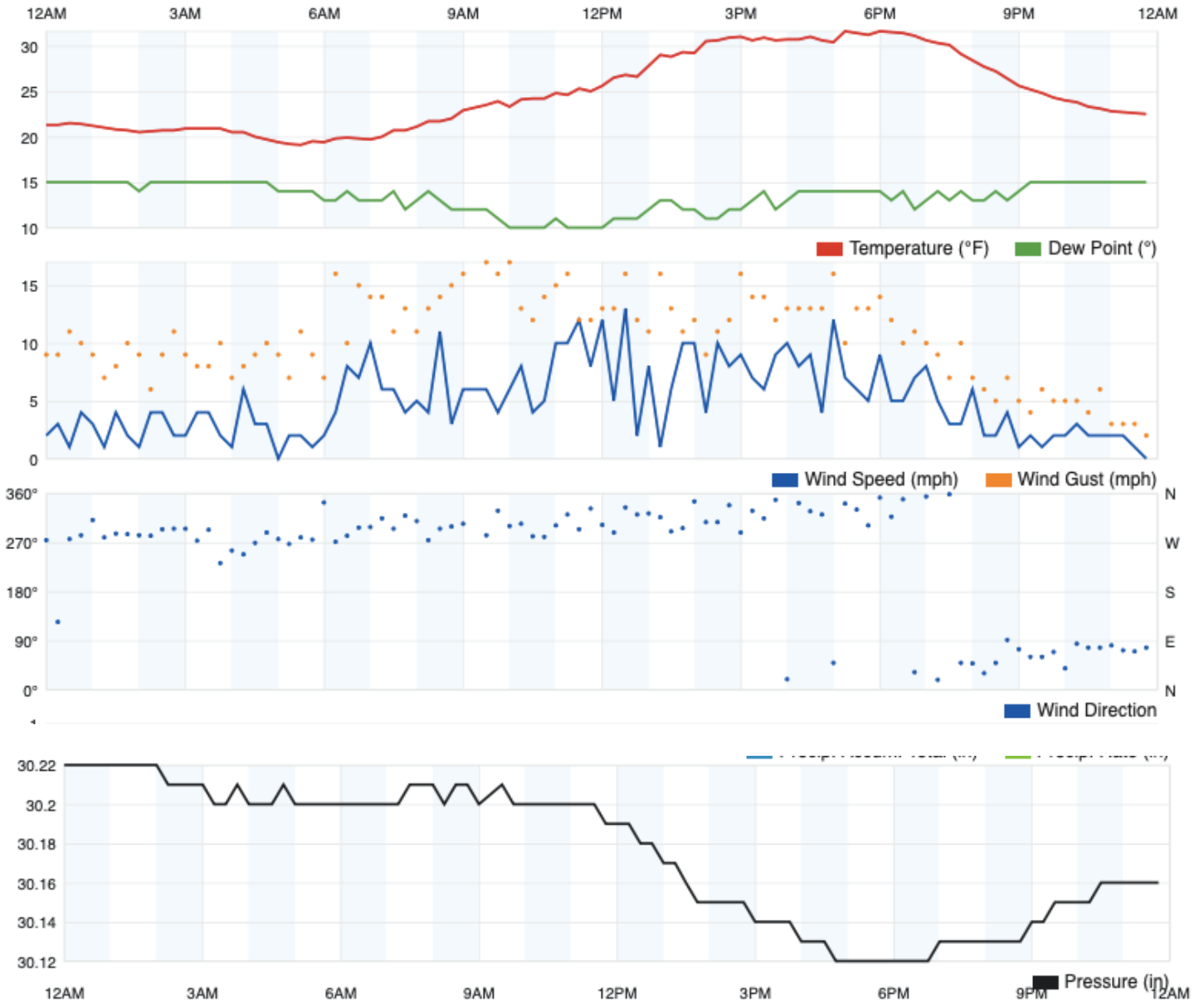
COVID-19 DEATHS IN SOUTH DAKOTA BY COUNTY

County of Residence	# of Deaths
Beadle	2
McCook	1
Minnehaha	2
Pennington	1

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, April 15, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 277 ~ 14 of 77

Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs



Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, April 15, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 277 ~ 15 of 77

Today



Sunny

High: 41 °F

Tonight



Decreasing
Clouds

Low: 20 °F

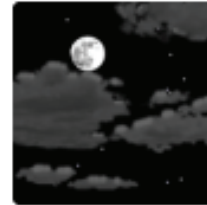
Thursday



Increasing
Clouds

High: 46 °F

Thursday
Night



Decreasing
Clouds

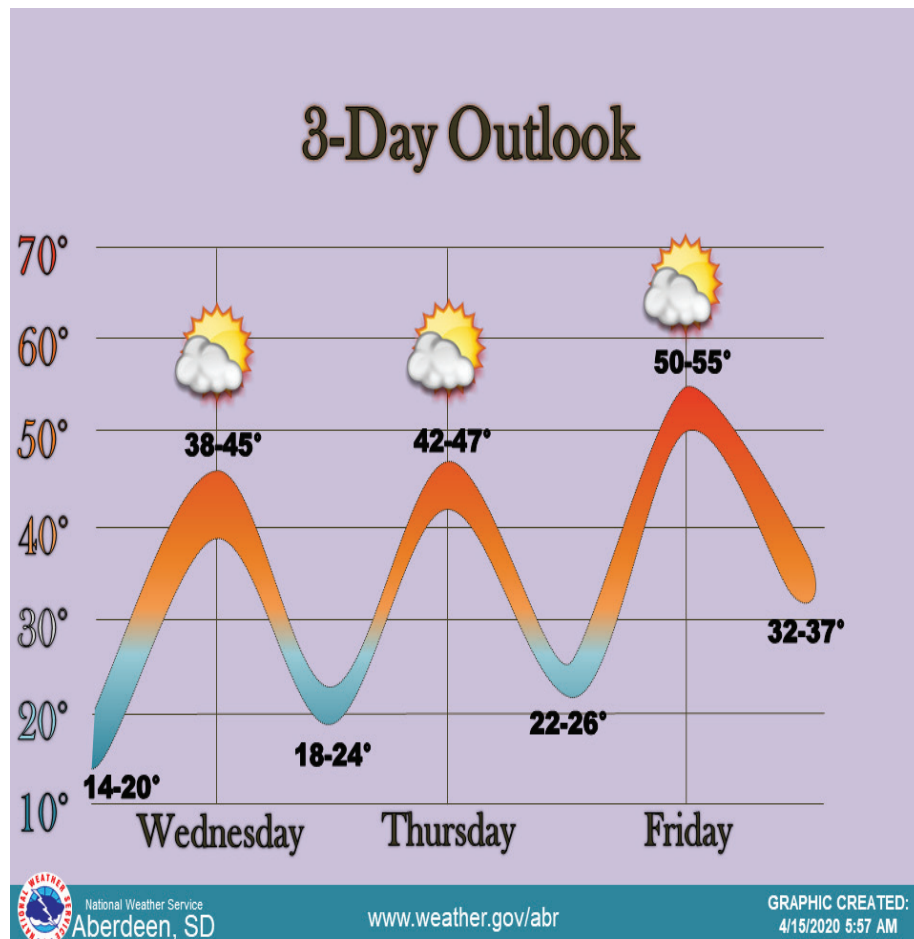
Low: 25 °F

Friday



Sunny

High: 53 °F



The latter half of the week we see a slow warming trend, spiking over the weekend where we will reach back into the 50s and 60s. Mostly dry conditions are expected through the rest of the week.

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, April 15, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 277 ~ 16 of 77

Today in Weather History

April 15, 1896: A tornado, possibly an F3, moved northeast from Burkmere, which is 10 miles west of Faulkton. About half dozen farms were torn apart. Two children were killed, and the rest of the family critically injured as a home was leveled. 6 miles northwest of Faulkton, near Millard.

April 15, 2011: A strong upper-level low-pressure area brought widespread heavy snowfall to central and parts of northeast South Dakota. This early spring storm brought 6 to 14 inches of heavy snow to the area. The heavy wet snow caused a lot of travel problems along with a few accidents. Locations with a foot or more of snowfall included 12 inches 12 SSW Harrold, 23 N Highmore, and Orient; 13 inches 14 NNE Isabel and Eureka with 14 inches at Eagle Butte.

1927: The Great Mississippi River Flood of 1927 continued to rage. Tremendous rains all over the Mississippi River Valley during the preceding autumn and winter sent floodwaters raging southward over a wide area. On this date, the government levee at Dorena, MO collapsed. The surge of floodwater continued pushing downriver toward the Mississippi Delta, bursting more dams as it went. Also on this day, New Orleans saw 15 inches of rain in 18 hours. More than 4 feet of water covered parts of the city.

1998: An F3 tornado hits downtown Nashville causing extensive damage but no loss of life. An additional 62 tornadoes touched down in Arkansas, Kentucky, and Tennessee. These tornadoes caused 12 fatalities and approximately 120 injuries.

2000: What a difference a day made (with the help of a strong cold front). Yesterday's 86 degrees in Goodland, Kansas, tied the record high for the date. Today's high of 29 degrees was also a date record high, but a record low high. It was a new record by 3 degrees.

1921 - Two mile high Silver Lake, CO, received 76 inches of snow in 24 hours, the heaviest 24 hour total of record for North America. The storm left a total of 87 inches in twenty-seven and a half hours. (David Ludlum)

1927 - New Orleans LA was drenched with 14.01 inches of rain, which established a 24 hour rainfall record for the state. (The Weather Channel)

1949 - A hailstone five inches by five and a half inches in size, and weighing four pounds, was measured at Troy NY. (The Weather Channel)

1958 - A tornado 300 yards in width skipped along a five mile path near Frostproof FL. A 2500 gallon water tank was found one mile from its original position (it is not known how much water was in the tank at the time). (The Weather Channel)

1987 - Thunderstorms developing along a cold front produced severe weather in the Southern Atlantic Coast Region. A tornado killed one person and injured seven others near Mount Dora FL. Drifts of hail up to two feet deep were reported in Davidson and Rowan counties in North Carolina. Myrtle Beach SC was deluged with seven inches of rain in three hours. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1988 - Death Valley, CA, was soaked with 1.53 inches of rain in 24 hours. Snow fell in the mountains of southern California. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1989 - Showers and thunderstorms soaked the eastern U.S. with heavy rain, pushing the rainfall total for the month at Cape Hatteras NC past their previous April record of 7.10 inches. (Storm Data) (The National Weather Summary)

1990 - Thunderstorms developing along a stationary front produced severe weather from west central Texas to west central Arkansas during the late afternoon and evening. Thunderstorms spawned a tornado which caused more than half a million dollars damage at Fort Stockton TX, produced wind gusts to 65 mph

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, April 15, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 277 ~ 17 of 77

Yesterday's Groton Weather Today's Info

High Temp: 32 °F at 5:24 PM

Low Temp: 19 °F at 5:11 AM

Wind: 17 mph at 7:34 AM

Snow

Record High: 91° in 1926

Record Low: 8° in 2014

Average High: 57°F

Average Low: 32°F

Average Precip in April.: 0.69

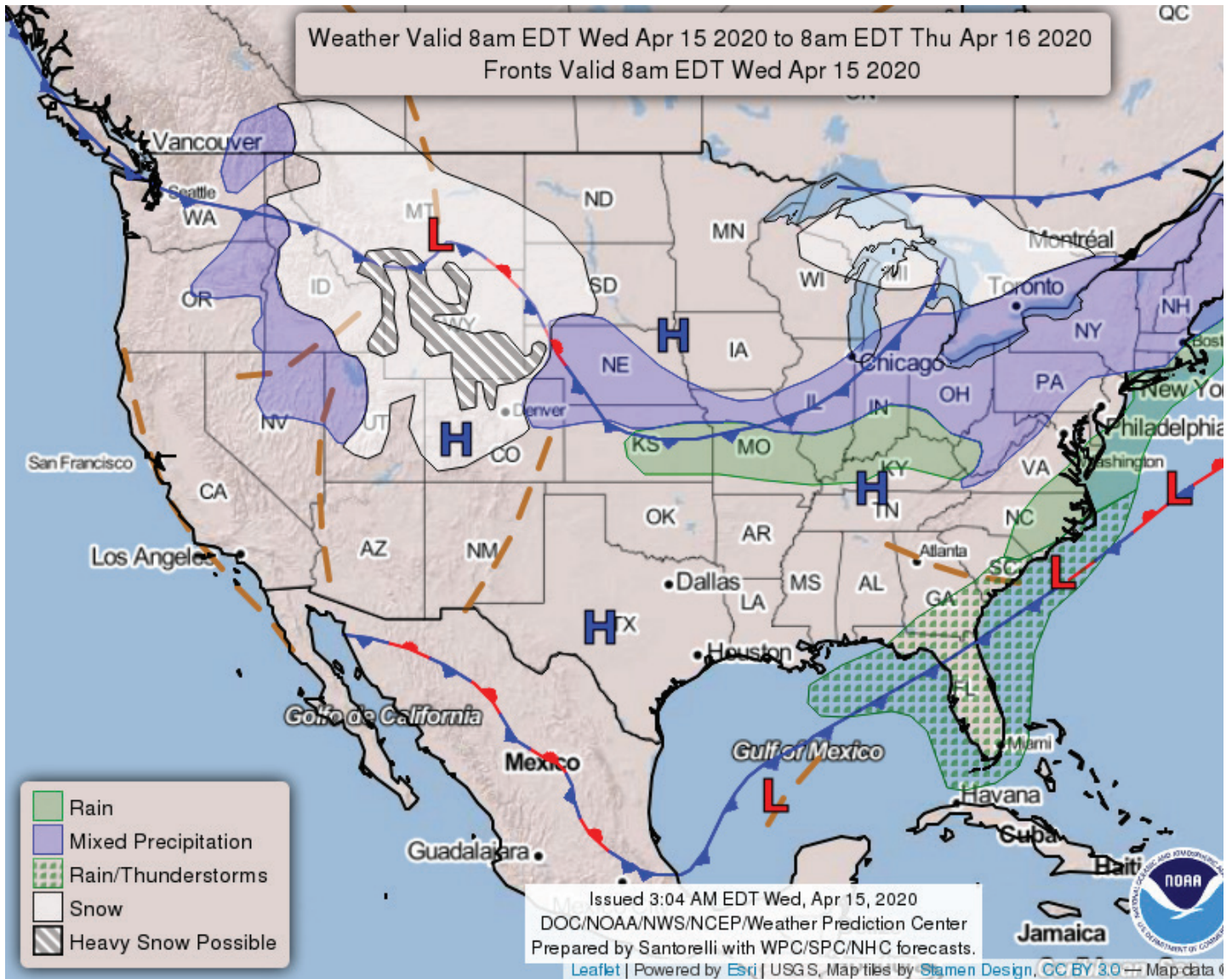
Precip to date in April.: 0.94

Average Precip to date: 2.87

Precip Year to Date: 1.29

Sunset Tonight: 8:21 p.m.

Sunrise Tomorrow: 6:46 a.m.





ROOM FULL OF LONELY

It seemed as though the night would never end. Little Luke tossed and turned trying to get comfortable and fall asleep. Finally, he gave up and came wandering out of his bedroom with his favorite blanket and teddy bear.

His father heard his footsteps and went upstairs. Picking him up he asked, "What's the matter? Why can't you sleep?"

"It's my room," he replied.

"Your room? What's wrong with your room?" asked his Dad.

"It's full of lonely," said Luke.

It is a well-known fact that loneliness is one of the biggest problems in society today. Though we are surrounded by family and friends, loneliness grips the hearts and minds of countless millions. Medications and endless activities do not seem to fill the vacuum.

God has promised in His Word that "He will never leave us nor forsake us." If that's true, then why do so many feel lonely?

Could it be that we have left God and He wants us to return to Him? Has He created those feelings of loneliness to get us to realize we have abandoned Him? Have we become so involved with so many "things" that we have crowded Him out of our days? Must He use the darkness of a lonely night to get our attention to return to Him? I promise He'll do what it takes!

Prayer: We ask You, Father, to do whatever it takes to draw us so close to You that we will feel Your presence and power wherever we are, night or day. Come close, now! In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: Hebrews 13:6 So we can say with confidence, "The Lord is my helper, so I will have no fear. What can mere people do to me?"

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, April 15, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 277 ~ 19 of 77

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)
 - **POSTPONED** Front Porch 605 Rural Route Road Trip
 - **CANCELLED** Father/Daughter dance.
 - **CANCELLED** Spring City-Wide Rummage Sales, (1st Saturday in May)
 - **CANCELLED** 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

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, April 15, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 277 ~ 20 of 77

News from the Associated Press

SD Lottery

By The Associated Press undefined

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

Mega Millions

29-47-65-69-70, Mega Ball: 7, Megaplier: 4

(twenty-nine, forty-seven, sixty-five, sixty-nine, seventy; Mega Ball: seven; Megaplier: four)

Estimated jackpot: \$145 million

Powerball

Estimated jackpot: \$22 million

South Dakota nears 1,000 COVID cases; no stay-at-home order

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — Gov. Kristi Noem reiterated Tuesday that she won't be ordering South Dakota residents to stay home amid the coronavirus pandemic, as another 121 confirmed cases were reported in the state.

The vast majority of South Dakota's 988 total cases — 768 — are in Minnehaha County, which includes the Smithfield Foods pork processing plant in Sioux Falls, the site of one of the largest known clusters of COVID-19 cases in the country. Noem said 70% of the county's cases could be traced to the plant: 438 employees and an additional 107 people who had contact with employees have tested positive for the coronavirus.

Despite the numbers, Noem said she would not issue a stay-at-home order for Minnehaha and nearby Lincoln Counties, as Sioux Falls Mayor Paul TenHaken requested. Noem said a stay-at-home order wouldn't have made a difference in Sioux Falls because the plant would have remained open as part of a critical infrastructure business. The company announced Sunday that it would close until future notice, and Noem said she's working with federal leaders and company officials to get it back up and running.

"This plant here is incredibly important, not just to Sioux Falls, not just to South Dakota, but to our nation. It provides our food for us," Noem said.

Noem also announced Monday that South Dakota will run a comprehensive trial to see if an anti-malarial drug pushed by President Donald Trump is effective in treating and preventing COVID-19. Her announcement came the same day scientists in Brazil said they stopped part of their own study, after heart rhythm problems developed in one-quarter of people who were given a higher dose of the drug.

There are several other trials being conducted elsewhere. Noem said Tuesday that the South Dakota trial, which will include 2,000 patients, has already begun after the state received 1.2 million doses of hydroxychloroquine from the federal government.

South Dakota's death toll remained at six on Tuesday, with no new deaths reported in the state. Reported hospitalizations from the disease increased to 45. Of all reported cases, 261 people have recovered.

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

2 South Dakota Army National Guard units deploying to Africa

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — Two South Dakota Army National Guard units have received a mobilization order for an eight-month deployment to Africa.

More than 190 soldiers with the 196th Maneuver Enhancement Brigade and nearly 40 Soldiers with the 115th Signal Company will deploy to Djibouti beginning in late August and early September.

The units will support U.S. Africa Command with regional security and stability goals.

The 196th will deploy in late August and will command and control units assigned to a designated region. The 115th will deploy in early September and provide operational support and management of communication and information systems.

The units will report to Fort Hood, Texas, to complete several weeks of training prior to deployment.

Death of woman found in Rapid City field investigated

RAPID CITY, S.D. (AP) — Police are investigating the death of a woman whose body was found in a field in Rapid City.

Someone called 911 about 7 a.m. Monday to report an unconscious person in the field near a dead end in an area with homes and a warehouse.

Officers found the woman dead and said there was no signs of trauma.

The Rapid City Journal reports an autopsy is scheduled to determine the cause of death. The woman has not been identified.

The Latest: Italy hospital says Fauci welcome with open arms

By The Associated Press undefined

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

TOP OF THE HOUR:

- China didn't warn public of likely pandemic for 6 key days.
- Amazon threatens to suspend activity in France over virus protection ruling.
- Health police in Italy say 15 nursing homes were closed because they posed a grave threat to the elderly.

ROME — The scientific director of Italy's leading infectious disease hospital has written to the Italian president formally suggesting that Dr. Anthony Fauci be invited to work here if U.S. President Donald Trump removes him from the White House coronavirus task force.

In the letter released Wednesday, Dr. Giuseppe Ippolito of Rome's Lazzaro Spallanzani hospital says removing Fauci from the task force "would be disastrous news not only for the United States, but for the whole international community."

Ippolito praised Fauci's expertise, experience, leadership and "generous and selfless help" to Spallanzani and other hospitals around the world.

Speculation about Fauci's fate swirled over the weekend after Fauci told CNN the U.S. would have "obviously" saved lives if virus mitigation efforts had begun earlier.

Trump responded by reposting a tweet that included the line, "Time to #FireFauci." But on Monday, Trump insisted Fauci's job was safe.

DUBAI — Emirates Air says it tested the blood of passengers for the virus on a flight to Tunisia before departing from Dubai, becoming the first airline to conduct on-site rapid tests for passengers.

The blood test was conducted by Dubai's health authority with results available within 10 minutes, according to the airline. Passengers were tested upon check-in at the gate in Dubai's international airport.

Passengers are required to wear their own masks when at the airport in Dubai. The emirate has imposed a 24-hour curfew on residents for at least two weeks to contain the virus.

There are multiple drive-through testing centers in Abu Dhabi and Dubai, where people are encouraged to get tested even if they do not have COVID-19 symptoms.

BERLIN — Germany is extending border checks until May 4 due to the coronavirus.

Interior Ministry spokesman Bjoern Gruenewald announced the temporary measures. The controls

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, April 15, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 277 ~ 22 of 77

were introduced a month ago to ensure only people with "good reason" entered Germany.

Normally, there are no border checks in Europe's passport-free Schengen travel area. The affected borders are those with Austria, Switzerland, France, Luxembourg and Denmark, as well as for airport arrivals from Italy and Spain.

Also, patrols have been stepped up in the frontier regions with Belgium and the Netherlands.

PARIS — Amazon threatened to suspend all activity in France after a French court found it wasn't doing enough to protect its workers.

The online giant also announced plans to appeal Tuesday's emergency ruling, which requires Amazon to stop selling nonessential goods for a month while it works out new worker safety measures.

Sales of food, medicine and hygiene supplies are still allowed under the ruling. However, Amazon France says the decision is so disruptive that it could prompt the company to suspend all activity at its six French warehouses.

The company stressed the importance of its services to the "thousands of French companies that sell on Amazon" and "millions of people around the country who want to have access to products they need during the crisis."

Amazon insisted it is providing adequate security measures for staff, noting the implementation of temperature checks and mask distribution.

But the court found Amazon didn't do enough to enforce social distancing, to ensure that turnstiles and locker rooms were virus-free or to increase cleaning of its warehouses. Unions say one worker infected with the virus is in intensive care.

ROME — Italy's health police say 100 of some 600 Italian nursing homes inspected since February aren't up to norm, amid reports of hundreds of elderly people dying in facilities across the country amid the coronavirus pandemic.

The carabinieri police's health squad issued a detailed rundown of their virus-related inspections on Wednesday. They reported that 15 facilities were closed outright because they posed such a grave threat to the elderly, and their residents moved elsewhere. It said 61 people were reported to judicial authorities, while another 157 were fined for infractions including lack of safety norms at the facility, and lack of protective equipment and training for staff.

Italian prosecutors have launched criminal investigations into at least a dozen nursing homes, following reports that elderly were abandoned or left unprotected from the virus.

In the biggest case, concerning the 1,000-bed Pio Albergho Trivulzio facility in Milan, staff complained that management prohibited doctors and nurses from wearing protective masks, for fear of alarming residents. The facility has insisted it followed all security protocols and says it is cooperating with the investigation.

NAIROBI, Kenya — The Inspector General says police will arrest those found not wearing masks in public places, vehicles and private cars.

Kenya's government had published the law last week which slaps a fine of \$200 for anyone found not wearing a mask in public as a preventative measure against the spread of the coronavirus.

Hillary Mutyambai says the grace period for people to acquire and get used to wearing masks is over and police will take action. He was speaking to journalists Wednesday.

CANBERRA, Australia — Several Australian police recruits face losing their jobs for holding a party in breach of social distancing rules.

Australian Federal Police Commissioner Reece Kershaw told reporters on Wednesday that "a number of officers" had been served with notices to explain why they should not be fired over the noisy party at a residential training college in Canberra on April 3.

Australian Broadcasting Corp. cited an unnamed police source saying 14 recruits could be fired.

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, April 15, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 277 ~ 23 of 77

Alcohol had been banned from the college since neighbors complained about the party noise, ABC reported.

Australian social distancing rules require people to keep 1.5 meters (5 feet) apart and to move in groups no larger than two unless in the company of direct family members.

MILAN — Italians are showing a growing awareness of longer-term changes that will be mandated by the virus, while concern grows over economic well-being as the nationwide lockdown continues, at least through May 4.

More than half of Italians are concerned that someone in their family will lose work because of the virus — a figure that has held steady for three straight weeks — with concern over the spread of the virus has dropped from 51% last week to 46% this week, according to the SWG polling agency.

The lessening of worry comes as the number of cases narrows, and pressure on hospitals eases.

At the same time, half of Italians say the virus crisis will last more than three months — a complete turnaround from March 11 when 72% were convinced the crisis would be over inside of 90 days.

Now two-thirds say that in six months, the virus will not be completely eradicated and “we will have to change our habits and behaviors in a definitive manner,” the survey found.

Eighty-five percent agree with the lockdown — a slight erosion from 91% a month ago.

The survey is based on a sample of 2,800 adults.

BRUSSELS — The European Union says US President Trump has “no reason” to freeze World Health Organization funding at this critical stage and called for measures to promote unity instead of division.

EU foreign policy chief Josep Borrell said that the 27-nation group “deeply” regrets the suspension of funds and the WHO is now “needed more than ever” to combat the pandemic.

Borrell said that “only by joining forces can we overcome this crisis that knows no borders.”

Even though the group has been traditional allies with the U.S. for decades, the EU has increasingly been critical of the Trump administration over the past years.

BEIJING — A Chinese foreign ministry spokesman says the country is “seriously concerned” about the U.S. government’s decision to suspend payment to the World Health Organization.

“As the most authoritative and professional international institution in the field of global public health security, the WHO plays an irreplaceable role in responding to the global public health crisis,” ministry spokesman Zhao Lijian told reporters at a daily briefing on Wednesday.

President Donald Trump said Tuesday that he was cutting off U.S. payments to the organization, accusing it of failing to do enough to stop the virus from spreading when it first surfaced in China.

“The WHO failed in its basic duty and must be held accountable,” Trump said at a briefing, adding that the U.S. would be reviewing the WHO’s actions to stop the virus before making any decision on resuming aid.

China wields major influence in the WHO, allowing it to elect its favored candidate Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus as director-general, blunt any criticism and block participation by rival Taiwan.

Zhao said the U.S. decision will “weaken the WHO’s capabilities and undermine international cooperation in fighting the epidemic. It will affect all countries in the world, including the US, especially those vulnerable to crisis.”

MADRID — Spain has recorded 523 new deaths attributed to the coronavirus in the past 24 hours while infections shot up again for the first time in five days.

Wednesday’s new 5,092 infections, or a 3% day-to-day increase, brought the total of confirmed cases to 177,633. The country’s overall death toll stood at 18,579, the world’s third-worst after the United States and Italy, Health Ministry data showed.

Spain has eased this week the conditions of Europe’s strictest lockdown, allowing manufacturing, construction and other nonessential activity in an attempt to cushion the economic impact of the pandemic.

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, April 15, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 277 ~ 24 of 77

The International Monetary Fund is forecasting a sharp recession for Spain this year, with its 1.2-trillion-euro (1.3-trillion-dollar) gross domestic product expected to shrink by 8% and unemployment to increase from 14% to 21% before a slow recovery in 2021.

Amid sharp criticism for its handling of the coronavirus crisis, Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez on Wednesday told lawmakers that the government's measures have worked in slowing down the spread of the virus and called for political unity to launch the country's "rebuilding."

WELLINGTON, New Zealand — New Zealand police have been working with some creative folks on a series of humorous videos about life in lockdown.

There's the one about those awkward Zoom meetings, complete with the person who can't figure out the sound, the one who turns into a donut thanks to a random screen filter and the one whose partner walks past in pajamas.

There is another video featuring a song about keeping a distance of two meters please because "I don't want your covid if you start to sneeze."

Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern's partner Clarke Gayford even appears on one of the videos, a little crazed after baking too much bread.

BEIJING — The U.S. ambassador to China says he doesn't believe Beijing is deliberately blocking exports of personal protective equipment and medical supplies, adding that the shipment of 1,200 tons of such products to the U.S. could not have been possible without Chinese support.

Terry Branstad also told a small group of reporters on Wednesday that the U.S. has concerns about how China initially handled the virus outbreak in the central city of Wuhan, but that such issues should be addressed after the worldwide pandemic has been brought under control.

"Let's focus now on saving lives and helping people," Branstad said.

Chinese officials are believed to have delayed reporting the outbreak for several crucial days in January due to political concerns, allowing the virus to spread much further than it potentially may have.

China has adamantly denied such actions, despite strong evidence to the contrary, saying it has all along been providing accurate, timely information.

Despite working at half staff, U.S. diplomats and local staff in China have been able to facilitate 21 flights of supplies on behalf of the Federal Emergency Management Agency, along with the multiple private chartered flights, Branstad said. Despite reports of separate U.S. states and foreign governments competing for masks, gowns and other needed equipment, he said the Beijing embassy and various consulates have made strenuous efforts to fulfill all requests.

CANBERRA, Australia — The Australian prime minister says he sympathizes with President Donald Trump's criticisms of the World Health Organization, but Australia will not stop funding the United Nations' agency.

Trump has directed his administration to freeze WHO funding, claiming the agency didn't deliver adequate early reports on the coronavirus and cost the U.S. valuable response time.

Australian Prime Minister Scott Morrison told Perth Radio 6PR on Wednesday: "I sympathize with his criticisms and I've made a few of my own."

Australia had announced that COVID-19 had become a pandemic weeks before WHO did. Morrison says WHO's support for Chinese wet markets where the virus is thought to have transferred from an animal to humans is "completely mystifying."

"WHO is also as an organisation does a lot of important work, including here in our own region in the Pacific, and we work closely with them so that we're not going to throw the baby out with the bathwater here," Morrison said. "But they're also not immune from criticism and immune from doing things better."

WHO's special COVID-19 envoy David Nabarro has since toughened the organization's line on wet markets, telling the BBC "there are real dangers in these kinds of environments."

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, April 15, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 277 ~ 25 of 77

HELSINKI — The Finnish government says it will end the blockade of a key southern region that includes the Nordic nation's capital, Helsinki, in the first move of easing COVID-19 -related restrictions.

Justice Minister Anna-Maja Henriksson said Wednesday the government found no legal justification to further continue blocking movement of citizens into and out the Uusimaa region, a restriction which enter into force on March 28.

The Uusimaa region is home to some 1.7 million people, nearly of third of Finland's population, including Helsinki's 650,000 residents. The region has been the worst affected by the pandemic and the lockdown was meant to prevent the spreading of virus to rest of the nation.

Prime Minister Sanna Marin stressed that all other coronavirus-related restrictions would remain in place in Finland including a ban on gatherings and closure of schools. Finland has so far recorded 64 deaths and 3,237 confirmed COVID-19 cases.

LONDON — The British government is promising to test thousands of nursing home residents and staff for the new coronavirus, as it faces criticism for failing to count care-home deaths in its tally of victims.

The government says it will begin to routinely test care workers and will also test any residents who show symptoms. Currently only the first five symptomatic residents of a home are tested to determine whether there is an outbreak.

British officials are under fire for failing to conduct more tests for COVID-19. The government has promised to change that and has set a target of 100,000 tests a day by the end of April, a more than five-fold increase.

Charities have accused the government of treating elderly people like they don't matter, and social-care operators say the new coronavirus is causing "devastation" in the country's nursing homes.

Official statistics showed Tuesday that 15% more people with COVID-19 have died than were recorded in the U.K. government's daily tally of hospital deaths — including hundreds in care homes.

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

Global stocks, oil price sink on grim forecasts

By JOE McDONALD AP Business Writer

Global stocks and oil prices tumbled Wednesday after the International Monetary Fund said the world's economy will suffer its worst year since the Great Depression of the 1930s due to the coronavirus pandemic.

Indexes in London and Frankfurt were down about 2% and benchmarks in Shanghai, Tokyo, Hong Kong and Sydney closed lower. Wall Street futures were down by over 1.5%.

The price of oil hit a new 18-year low the International Energy Agency said demand will drop by 9.3 million barrels per day in 2020 overall. Demand in April will hit its lowest since 1995, it said.

The drop came despite an agreement over the weekend among OPEC and other oil producers to cut output to reflect collapsing demand.

Benchmark U.S. crude lost 40 cents to \$19.71 per barrel. Brent crude, the international standard, declined \$1.02 to \$28.58 per barrel in London.

The IMF said this year's global economic output will shrink by 3%, a bigger loss than 2009's 0.1% decline during the financial crisis. That was a sharp reverse from the Fund's January forecast of 3.3% growth before the virus prompted governments to shut down factories, travel and other industries.

"The IMF forecast a deep economic winter," said Hayaki Narita of Mizuho Bank in a report. Narita said.

The IMF's chief economist, Gita Gopinath, said the loss to global gross domestic product, the broadest gauge of economic output, could amount to \$9 trillion, or more than the economies of Germany and Japan combined.

In Europe, London's FTSE 100 lost 2.3% to 5,661 and the DAX in Frankfurt declined 2.1% to 10,473. The CAC 40 in France retreated 1.9% to 4,437.

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, April 15, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 277 ~ 26 of 77

On Wall Street, the future for both the benchmark S&P 500 and the Dow industrials sank 1.6%.

On Tuesday, the S&P climbed 3.1%. The index surged 12% last week but is about 16% below its February all-time high.

In Asia, the Shanghai Composite Index lost 0.6% to 2,811.17 and the Nikkei 225 in Tokyo declined 0.5% to 19,550.09. Hong Kong's Hang Seng was off 1.2% at 24,145.34.

The S&P-ASX 200 in Sydney lost 0.4% to 5,466.70 while India's Sensex added 0.9% to 30,982.37. New Zealand advanced 2.5% while Jakarta lost 1.7% and Singapore retreated 1.3%.

Investors are focusing on how and when authorities may begin to ease business shutdowns and limits on people's movements imposed to slow the spread of the coronavirus.

U.S. President Donald Trump has been discussing how to roll back federal social distancing recommendations. U.S. governors are collaborating on plans to reopen their economies in what is likely to be a gradual process to prevent the coronavirus from rebounding.

The discussions follow signs the outbreak may be leveling off in some of the hardest-hit areas, including New York City.

In Italy, Spain and other places around Europe where infections and deaths have begun stabilizing, the process of reopening economies is already underway. Some businesses and industries are being allowed to reopen in a calibrated effort to balance public health and their countries' economic well-being.

The IMF expects economic contractions this year of 5.9% in the United States, 7.5% in the 19 European countries that share the euro currency, 5.2% in Japan and 6.5% in the United Kingdom. The Fund said China, where the pandemic originated, should eke out 1.2% growth this year, better than some private sector forecasters who expect little to no growth in the world's second-biggest economy.

China has reopened factories, shops and other businesses after declaring victory over the outbreak but forecasters say it will take months for industries to return to normal output, while exporters will face depressed global demand.

Wall Street expects profits will fall for most companies in the S&P 500. The focus is on what management teams have to say about what profits look like for the rest of the year.

Analysts are forecasting a drop of roughly 10% in earnings per share for S&P 500 companies for the first quarter and 21% for the second quarter.

In currency markets, the dollar advanced to 107.39 yen from Tuesday's 107.17 yen. The euro retreated to \$1.0912 from \$1.0981.

EU blasts Trump's WHO funding cut, fears it worsens pandemic

By JAMEY KEATEN and MARIA CHENG undefined

GENEVA (AP) — Nations around the world reacted with alarm Wednesday after President Donald Trump announced a halt to the sizable funding the United States sends to the World Health Organization. Health experts warned the move could jeopardize global efforts to stop the coronavirus pandemic.

At a briefing in Washington, Trump said he was instructing his administration to halt funding for WHO pending a review of its role "in severely mismanaging and covering up the spread of the coronavirus." The United States is WHO's largest single donor, contributing between \$400 million and \$500 million annually to the Geneva-based agency in recent years.

Trump has repeatedly labelled COVID-19 the "Chinese virus" and criticized the U.N. health agency for being too lenient on China, where the novel virus first emerged late last year.

Outside experts have questioned China's reported infections and deaths from the virus, calling them way too low and unreliable. And an investigation by The Associated Press has found that six days of delays between when Chinese officials knew about the virus and when they warned the public allowed the pandemic to bloom into an enormous public health disaster.

The European Union on Wednesday said Trump has "no reason" to freeze WHO funding at this critical stage and called for measures to promote unity instead of division. EU foreign policy chief Josep Borrell said the 27-nation bloc "deeply" regrets the suspension of funds and added that the U.N. health agency

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, April 15, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 277 ~ 27 of 77

is now "needed more than ever" to combat the pandemic.

Borrell said "only by joining forces can we overcome this crisis that knows no borders."

Even though they have been traditional allies for decades, the EU has increasingly been critical of the Trump administration over the past years.

Worldwide, the pandemic has infected nearly 2 million people and killed over 127,000, according to a tally by Johns Hopkins University. The virus is spread by microscopic droplets expelled into the air or left on surfaces when people sneeze or cough.

Australian Prime Minister Scott Morrison said he sympathized with some of Trump's criticisms of WHO and China but that Australia would continue to fund the U.N. health agency.

"We work closely with them so that we're not going to throw the baby out with the bathwater here," Morrison told Perth Radio 6PR. "But they're also not immune from criticism."

Germany's foreign minister, Heiko Maas, pushed back at Trump's announcement.

"Placing blame doesn't help," he wrote on Twitter. "The virus knows no borders. We must work closely against COVID-19. Strengthening the U.N., in particular the underfunded WHO, is a better investment, for example, to develop and distribute tests and vaccines."

Devi Sridhar, chair of global public health at the University of Edinburgh, called Trump's decision "extremely problematic," noting that the chronically-underfunded WHO is leading efforts to help developing countries fight the spread of COVID-19.

"This is the agency that's looking out for other countries and leading efforts to stop the pandemic," Sridhar said. "This is exactly the time when they need more funding, not less."

Sridhar said Trump's move was a short-sighted political decision that would likely have lasting consequences.

"Trump is angry, but his anger is being directed in a way that is going to ultimately hurt U.S. interests," she said.

In Beijing, Chinese foreign ministry spokesman Zhao Lijian says the country is "seriously concerned" about the U.S. government's decision to suspend funding.

"As the most authoritative and professional international institution in the field of global public health security, the WHO plays an irreplaceable role in responding to the global public health crisis," he told reporters Wednesday.

The WHO did not respond to repeated requests from The Associated Press for comment, but its Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus and other top WHO officials were expected to attend a news conference on the pandemic later Wednesday.

Many analysts have praised the initial response to the pandemic by WHO, which is being challenged as national interests collide with the international cooperation that U.N. agencies must rely on.

But recently, many governments have split with its advice on issues of public health policy, notably on travel restrictions and whether the public should wear masks.

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

Military sees no quick exit from 'new world' of coronavirus

By ROBERT BURNS AP National Security Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — The U.S. military is bracing for a months-long struggle against the coronavirus, looking for novel ways to maintain a defensive crouch that sustains troops' health without breaking their morale — while still protecting the nation.

Unlike talk in the Trump administration of possibly reopening the country as early as May, military leaders are suggesting that this summer may be the best-case scenario of tiptoeing toward a return to normal activities. Even that is uncertain, and for now the focus is on adjusting as the pandemic's threat evolves.

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, April 15, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 277 ~ 28 of 77

"We are going to need to change and adapt, because even over the coming months the virus isn't going to go away. We're going to have to be able to operate in a COVID environment," Deputy Defense Secretary David Norquist said recently, referring to the disease caused by the novel coronavirus.

Officials have frozen most forces in place overseas, stopped troops and their families from moving to new assignments, and cut back access to the Pentagon. The military services have halted or restricted recruit training, canceled major exercises, and isolated troops in the most sensitive units. The new Space Force has delayed a satellite launch, and the Navy this week postponed the return of the USS Harry S. Truman, keeping the aircraft carrier at sea to shield its crew from virus exposure at home.

These steps to protect the force have parallels in civilian society, but a far-flung military can't function by staying at home.

"This will be a new way of doing business that we have to focus in on," says Air Force Gen. John Hyten, vice chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. "We're adjusting to that new world as we speak today."

The notion of "normal" in the military may never be the same.

"We've all deployed and fought enemies abroad, however, today's enemy is here in our communities," said Lt. Gen. Brad Webb, commander of the Air Force's training and education command. "We don't know what 'new normal' will look like until we get to the other side."

Defense Secretary Mark Esper has been consistent in saying it will take time to determine when to begin lifting restrictions on the military, and he has faced little public pressure — from military families or the White House — to rush things. In civilian society, there is an open split between those like President Donald Trump who want the country reopened soon to mitigate economic damage and those, including many state governors, who fear reopening prematurely will undermine progress against the virus.

Gen. Mark Milley, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, said the the pandemic has spread so far and wide, potentially creating instability in some countries, that the U.S. military cannot return to business as usual.

"We have got to take a hard look at how we as a military, we as a Department of Defense, conduct operations in the future," he said.

In a further sign of uncertainty, Esper said Tuesday that he will extend a "stop movement" order halting what are called permanent change-of-station moves by troops and their families. He did not say how long he will extend the order, aimed at protecting troops and originally set to expire May 11. If it continues into the summer, military members with children could face serious hardship, since they need time to settle and enroll their children in new schools.

Coronavirus has been less deadly in the military than in the rest of American society, but the number of confirmed cases is still rising. As of Tuesday the total exceeded 2,600, up from 1,521 a week earlier. Two troops have died of the disease — a National Guard member in March and a Navy sailor on Monday.

Even after the number of the military's coronavirus cases crests, a degree of uncertainty about restoring normalcy will linger. The Navy's top doctor, Rear Adm. Bruce Gillingham, says the virus wields a "secret power" that the military must take into account as it adjusts in the weeks and months ahead.

"What we've learned, certainly in the Navy with regard to COVID-19, (is) that stealth, in the form of asymptomatic transmission, is this adversary's secret power," he told reporters. "And so we recognize that despite really our best efforts, we're going to have to learn how to operate with the virus."

Webb, the Air Force training commander, said his service is doing about 99% of its recruiting online rather than with traditional in-person pitches. And while the way ahead isn't clear, he said, "I think we have the opportunity now to never go back to old ways."

For the Army, a major priority is keeping combat brigades healthy but also ready for war. Prior to the coronavirus crisis, more than half of the brigades were at high readiness levels, but in the past month training has significantly slowed down.

"We're in good shape but you've got to be able to turn it back on," said Army Secretary Ryan McCarthy. He says that increased coronavirus testing capabilities will allow the Army to test units and then send them out for large battalion and company-sized exercises where they can remain in a bubble.

"We're going to have to do that, and that's where you're going to have to manage the risk until there's

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, April 15, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 277 ~ 29 of 77

a vaccine," he said. "We're preparing ourselves to do just that."

Even as they take precautions, defense officials are eager to bat down any idea that they are so focused on protecting troops' health that the force has been weakened or is unable to fight if needed.

"I don't want anyone out there in the world to think that somehow the U.S. military's readiness is significantly degraded. It is not," Milley said last week.

Associated Press writer Lolita C. Baldor contributed to this report.

5 things to know today - that aren't about the virus

By The Associated Press undefined

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

1. SANDERS CALLS FOR PROGRESSIVES TO BACK BIDEN: Bernie Sanders, in an interview with the AP, says it would be "irresponsible" for his loyalists not to support Joe Biden for president, warning that progressives who "sit on their hands" in the months ahead will enable President Trump's reelection.

2. JUDGE OKS PAYMENT FOR UTILITY: Pacific Gas & Electric will siphon at least \$19 million from a fund for northern California wildfire victims to cover administrative costs. A bankruptcy judge said he would approve the plan after an accord was reached between the utility and victims.

3. CARDINAL: CORRUPTION FIGHT LINKED TO CHILD SEX ABUSE CHARGES: Cardinal George Pell has linked his fight against corruption in the Vatican with his prosecution in Australia for alleged child sex abuse. He served 13 months in prison before being acquitted of molesting two choirboys in the 1990s.

4. 'LOVE TRIANGLE GONE WRONG': Authorities say an Alabama police detective fatally shot a woman as part of a "love triangle" dispute with a colleague.

5. SUMMER ROLLOUT FOR STREAMING SERVICE: NBCUniversal says its video-streaming service Peacock will launch nationally in July, as planned, even though just a handful of its original series will be ready.

South Koreans vote in national election amid virus fears

By KIM TONG-HYUNG Associated Press

SEOUL, South Korea (AP) — In a surprisingly high turnout, millions of South Korean voters wore masks and moved slowly between lines of tape at polling stations on Wednesday to elect lawmakers in the shadows of the spreading coronavirus.

The government resisted calls to postpone the parliamentary elections billed as a midterm referendum on President Moon Jae-in, who enters the final two years of his single five-year term grappling with a historic public health crisis that is unleashing massive economic shock.

While South Korea's electorate is deeply divided along ideological and generational lines and regional loyalties, recent surveys showed growing support for Moon and his liberal party, reflecting the public's approval of an aggressive test-and-quarantine program so far credited for lower fatality rates for the coronavirus compared to China, Europe and North America.

Initial surveys of voters leaving the polls conducted by TV stations indicated that Moon's Democratic Party and a satellite party it created to win proportional representative seats would comfortably combine for a majority in the 300-seat National Assembly.

"We are going through difficult times, but the coronavirus and politics are two different things," said one voter, Lee Kum.

Another Seoul resident, Chung Eun-young, said she arrived at her polling station just after 6 a.m. to avoid crowds.

"I was worried about the coronavirus," she said. "They checked my temperature and handed me gloves, but it wasn't as bothersome as I thought it would be. ... I don't like what we are going through, but I cast my ballot to prevent the wrong candidates from getting elected."

The long lines that snaked around public offices and schools followed record-high participation in early voting held on Friday and Saturday, and defied expectations of low turnout to minimize social contact.

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, April 15, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 277 ~ 30 of 77

The National Election Commission said 15.6 million people had voted as of 5 p.m. When combined with the 11.8 million who cast their ballots during early voting or by mail, the overall turnout was at 62.6%, the highest since a 60.6% turnout in the 2004 general election.

Wednesday's voting, which comes amid a slowing virus caseload in South Korea, draws a contrast with an upended election cycle in the United States, where some states have pushed back presidential primaries or switched to voting by mail.

To hold the parliamentary elections as scheduled, South Korean officials and health authorities drew up a deliberate set of preventive measures to reduce risks of the virus being transmitted.

Duct tape or stickers marked a meter (3 feet) of social distancing space from nearby streets to ballot booths. Masked poll workers checked temperatures of arrivals and whisked anyone with a fever or not wearing a mask to separate areas to vote, sanitizing the facilities after they voted. Voters who passed the fever screening got sanitizing gel and disposable plastic gloves before entering booths.

The government also mapped out a voting process for those quarantined in their homes, a number that ballooned after the country began enforcing two-week quarantines on all arrivals from overseas on April 1.

Officials texted eligible voters in self-quarantine before the vote and about 13,000 affirmed they wanted to participate. Those without fever or respiratory symptoms were given permission to leave their homes from 5:20 p.m. to 7 p.m. so they could cast their ballots after 6 p.m., when polling stations close for other voters.

They were to be escorted or monitored through tracking apps and must maintain a 2-meter (6-foot) distance at polling places, while workers fully dressed in protective suits were to disinfect booths after each of them votes.

Hospitalized patients or those who were then under two-week quarantine were able to vote by mail if they had applied in late March. Around 400 of the mildly ill voted at temporary shelters during last week's early voting.

South Korea has confirmed more than 10,590 coronavirus cases, including 225 deaths, with the number of new infections decreasing in recent weeks. But there's concern about rising cases in the densely populated Seoul metropolitan area, and worries that crowds at parks and on mass transportation may be a sign of a relaxing of social distancing.

"Please do exercise your valuable rights by voting, but also refrain from other gatherings or activities that involve multiple people in confined spaces," Health Ministry official Yoon Tae-ho said.

The National Assembly is elected every four years. Voters directly elect 253 district seats, while the remaining 47 go to proportional representatives.

While dozens of parties registered candidates, the elections were seen largely as a two-way race between Moon's ruling Democratic Party and the main conservative opposition United Future Party. Both registered satellite parties in a bid to win more proportional representative seats.

Just three years ago, mass protests ousted Moon's corrupt predecessor, but public displays of South Korea's dynamic democracy were muted this year by the virus. Candidates, wearing masks and gloves, avoided large rallies and handshakes. Things were more heated on the internet, which overflowed with bitter exchanges between supporters of Moon and his conservative opponents, who accuse the government of economic and foreign policy failures and botching the financial response to the epidemic.

Before the virus began absorbing public attention, Moon saw his support falter over a decaying job market, corruption scandals surrounding key political allies and an ambitious but fragile diplomacy with rival North Korea that's falling apart.

Moon held three summits with North Korean leader Kim Jong Un in 2018, but the North in recent months severed virtually all cooperation with the South amid a stalemate in larger nuclear negotiations with the United States. The North has also been dialing up weapons tests and fired a barrage of missiles into the sea on Tuesday.

A ruling party victory will likely embolden Moon to drive his key domestic and foreign policies, including resuming inter-Korean cooperation and inducing U.S.-North Korea talks, said Duyeon Kim, a senior adviser

at the Brussels-based International Crisis Group.

"If the opposition wins, Moon will likely become a lame duck, and party politics will quickly pivot to preparing for the 2022 presidential elections," she said.

US ambassador: China not blocking medical supply exports

BEIJING (AP) — The U.S. ambassador to China said Wednesday that he doesn't believe Beijing is deliberately blocking exports of masks and other medical supplies to fight the coronavirus, and that the shipment of 1,200 tons of such products to the U.S. could not have been possible without Chinese support.

Ambassador Terry Branstad also said the U.S. has concerns about how China initially handled the virus outbreak in the central city of Wuhan, but that such issues should be addressed after the pandemic has been brought under control.

"Let's focus now on saving lives and helping people," Branstad told a small group of reporters.

Chinese officials are believed to have delayed reporting the outbreak for several crucial days in January due to political concerns, allowing the virus to spread further.

China has adamantly denied doing so, despite strong evidence, saying it has consistently provided accurate, timely information.

Despite working with half their normal staff, U.S. diplomats and local employees in China have been able to facilitate 21 flights of supplies on behalf of the U.S. Federal Emergency Management Agency, along with multiple private chartered flights, Branstad said.

He said there had been a slowdown in the provision of supplies, but that it appeared to be caused by China's implementation of stricter quality standards following complaints it was sending shoddy equipment abroad.

"We have been able to solve several problems. We're just trying to find a workable way to get it done," Branstad said, adding that a March 27 telephone conversation between President Donald Trump and his Chinese counterpart, Xi Jinping, had been "really helpful."

"We always remind them of the leaders' commitment to work together to address these issues," the ambassador said.

"I feel good about it and I feel that, yes, they want to enforce their laws and regulations ... we're trying to say let's use some common sense in doing this and if it's Food and Drug Administration approved and companies like 3M have already been shipping these things to the United States, it doesn't make sense to hold them up when we feel confident that it meets the quality requirements that we have."

Shipments to the U.S. began after China's own demand for such gear fell in recent weeks, alongside a sharp decline in its number of new cases and a gradual rise in people declared cured and released from hospitals.

China reported 46 new virus cases on Wednesday, 36 of them from overseas. Of the 10 domestic cases, eight were in the province of Heilongjiang that borders on Russia where authorities have been rushing to stem a new outbreak among those traveling back to China.

It said almost 1,100 people were also under quarantine as suspected cases or for having tested positive for the virus without showing symptoms. China says it has recorded a total of 3,342 deaths among 82,295 cases.

"Now with domestic Chinese demand for personal protective equipment receding to more normal levels, our mission's most urgent priority is to help get (personal protective equipment) and medical equipment to the United States as quickly as possible," Branstad said.

Earlier, American diplomats evacuated the consulate in Wuhan and organized charter flights to bring out U.S. citizens. Worldwide, the state department has organized the return of about 60,000 U.S. citizens from more than 100 countries.

Chinese cooperation both in providing antivirus supplies and implementing the first phase of a trade deal aimed at ending disputes over tariffs and intellectual property may actually help ease friction between the world's two largest economies, said Branstad, a former long-term governor of the important agricultural

state of Iowa.

"I am hopeful that because of the collaboration and work on fighting the virus, and also of course the phase one of the trade agreement, that there will be a better relationship going forward," Branstad said.

"We're two big countries, the two biggest economies in the world. Our systems are very different and there's always going to be certain areas of tension and conflict," he said.

While saying that the two sides should not engage in political sniping, Branstad criticized a tweet by Chinese foreign ministry spokesman Zhao Lijian on March 12 which said: "It might be US army who brought the epidemic to Wuhan. Be transparent! Make public your data! US owe us an explanation!"

Zhao provided no evidence and the comment prompted the State Department to summon China's ambassador to protest.

Branstad said Zhao's comment was "really outrageous and counterproductive from the Chinese perspective because there's no credibility with that and that was unfortunate."

China has said the tweet did not constitute an official statement.

"I think we've moved beyond that and are focusing on the future and on cooperation," Branstad said.

Virus challenges: How to protect elderly, educate young

By JAN OLSEN, NICOLE WINFIELD and MIKE CORDER Associated Press

COPENHAGEN, Denmark (AP) — The challenges of caring for the elderly and educating the young amid the devastating coronavirus pandemic were on full display Wednesday as Italian police investigated scores of deaths at the country's biggest nursing home and Denmark began reopening schools for its youngest students.

Alarming death tolls in nursing homes, often unreported in official coronavirus tallies because residents are not tested for the virus, are emerging around the world. In the United States, an Associated Press tally indicates at least 4,300 deaths have been linked to the virus in nursing homes and long-term care facilities nationwide.

The World Health Organization was on the hot seat as U.S. President Donald Trump announced a halt to American payments to the group, pending a review of its warnings about the coronavirus and China. Trump, whose own response to the virus has been called into question, criticized the U.N. health agency for not sounding the alarm over the coronavirus sooner.

An investigation by The Associated Press has found that six days of delays by China — from Jan. 14 to Jan. 20 — in alerting the public to the growing dangers of the virus set the stage for a pandemic that has upended the lives of millions, sideswiped the global economy and cost nearly 127,000 lives.

Police in Milan on Tuesday searched the 1,000-bed Pio Albergho Trivulzio facility, where 143 people have reportedly died in the past month. Prosecutors began a probe after staff complained that management prohibited doctors and nurses from wearing protective masks, for fear of alarming residents. The facility has insisted it followed all security protocols and says it is cooperating with the investigation.

Caroline Abrahams, director of the charity Age U.K., said the government's daily coronavirus death toll updates "are airbrushing older people out like they don't matter."

The situation in Italian nursing homes is so dire that the region of Lombardy launched an independent investigative commission. Lombardy, the epicenter of the Italian outbreak, is home to 28% of all Italian elderly care facilities.

Italy's National Institutes of Health has also launched a survey on nursing home deaths, which in its latest update found that 3,859 people had died in facilities nationwide through April 6, or 8.4% of the residents, though there's no indication how that compares to previous years.

Pope Francis dwelled on their plight Wednesday at his morning mass in the Santa Marta Residence where he lives.

"We pray today for the elderly, especially for those who are isolated in elderly homes," he said. "They are afraid, afraid of dying alone, they feel this pandemic as something aggressive. They are our roots, our history, they gave us faith, traditions, a sense of belonging to a nation."

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, April 15, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 277 ~ 33 of 77

While schools in many countries remain closed, Denmark on Wednesday allowed some of its youngest students, from preschool to fifth grade, to return to classrooms. Older students must still study online from home.

"I'm very impressed. The children are very happy to see their buddies again," Danish Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen told the TV2 channel as she attended the first school day in Valby, suburban Copenhagen.

"Many children feel just like cows going to grass. They feel like jumping and dancing and being with their pals, but there are some safety rules," said Claus Hjortdal, head of Denmark's school principals' association.

Signe Wilms Raun, whose son Hugo returned to preschool at the Langhoej school in Hvidovre, hoped that the school day is more than washing hands and social distancing.

"Can they play football in the schoolyard or will it all be about keeping their distances?" Wilms Raun asked.

In Australia, Prime Minister Scott Morrison urged teachers to keep schools open for the sake of children and their parents. His message came as Victoria state schools resumed after a break and other states considered how to reopen amid the pandemic.

But fears of the virus kept many students and their teachers at home. Australian Education Union Victoria President Meredith Peace said while schools in the state are open, most of the students and staff are staying home amid fears that teachers can't maintain social distancing in classrooms.

In Brussels, European Union's executive commission was meeting to tentatively plot an exit strategy rolling back economically damaging lockdowns and restrictions across the 27-nation bloc. The EU was seeking to create a roadmap for its members, based on scientific advice, so as to avoid the chaos of each nation creating its own patchwork of rules and reopenings.

A discussion paper for the the European Commission meeting said restrictions can only be eased once it becomes clear the spread of the virus has "significantly decreased for a sustained period of time" and pressure has eased on overstretched health services.

In Europe's economic powerhouse of Germany, Chancellor Angela Merkel was meeting with her "corona Cabinet" and then her country's 16 state governors to discuss their next steps. Germany has received high praise for its aggressive testing, which experts say is the reason the country's virus death toll of 3,495 is so low compared to its European neighbors.

In South Korea, a parliamentary election on Wednesday gave a glimpse of a possible post-lockdown future as voters cast ballots under the watchful eyes and supervision of masked poll workers armed with thermometers and sanitizing spray.

"I was worried about the coronavirus," Seoul resident Chung Eun-young said. "They checked my temperature and handed me gloves, but it wasn't as bothersome as I thought it would be."

The European Commission said exiting lockdowns would need to go hand in hand with expanded testing, "harmonized data" including from mobile phone apps and increased public health capacity to tackle virus flare-ups that emerge as people's lives return to a new normal.

The U.S. has by far been the hardest-hit country in the global pandemic, with more than 26,000 deaths and over 609,000 confirmed infections, according to Johns Hopkins University. Still, scenarios predicting a far greater number of deaths and hospitalizations have not come to pass, raising hopes from coast to coast.

Dr. Anthony Fauci, the U.S. government's top infectious-disease expert, told The Associated Press that the U.S. does not yet have the testing and tracing procedures needed to begin reopening the U.S. economy.

Worldwide, infections are approaching 2 million and virus deaths are close to 127,000, according to the Johns Hopkins University. The figures understate the true size of the pandemic, because of limited testing, uneven counting of the dead and concealment by some governments.

Winfield reported from Rome and Corder from The Hague, Netherlands. Associated Press journalists around the world contributed to this report.

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

Marine barbershops abuzz with demand for high-and-tight cuts

By LOLITA C. BALDOR Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Barbershops at some Marine Corps bases are abuzz with demand for high-and-tight haircuts.

Despite social distancing and other Defense Department policies on coronavirus prevention, Marines are still lining up for the trademark cuts, at times standing only a foot or two (0.3 or 0.6 meters) apart, with few masks in sight.

On Tuesday, Defense Secretary Mark Esper acknowledged it's tough to enforce new virus standards with a force of 2.2 million spread out all over the world.

"Our challenge is to get out there and educate the chain of command," Esper said during a Pentagon news conference.

Esper said he provided broad guidance about following Centers for Disease Control and Prevention guidelines and other health protections, but he added he doesn't wade into every detail, including whether or not Marines should get haircuts.

According to the Marine Corps, barbershops at many bases are closed, and the standards on hair length have been relaxed. But at other bases, such as the massive Camp Pendleton in California, the cuts continue.

A video put out by the base lays out all the precautions that barbers are taking, including sanitizing equipment, wearing masks and wiping down the chairs. And signs tell Marines to stay 6 feet (1.8 meters) apart as they wait for their flat top.

Esper joked that questions about the cuts will certainly get back to the commandant of the Marine Corps, Gen. David Berger, suggesting that the Joint Chiefs chairman would give Berger a call and say, "What is going on? What don't you guys understand? ... Suspend haircuts for whatever period of time."

Late last month, Berger told reporters that recruits were still getting their heads shaved "as long as the barbers come to work." But he said that if things got worse, that could change.

But, no haircut was a no go. Marines, he said, might have to cut other Marines' hair.

Esper's partner on the podium Tuesday was more in line with Berger's view.

Speaking from the required distance of six feet, Army Gen. Mark Milley, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, delivered a full-throated defense of the hair cut continuum and tossed in a "Semper Paratus," the Marines' motto, which means "always faithful."

Discipline, he said, is a fundamental function of the military, and short hair is part of that. Wartime victories by the Marine Corps, he said, are the "are result of incredible discipline of America's 911 force."

"It may seem superficial to some, but getting a haircut is part of that discipline," said Milley. "So, yes, I support the Marine Corps."

Asked how he is managing to maintain his well-coiffed soldier cut, he had a quick and blunt retort: "Do you really want to know? It's a mirror with a thing. One of those barber kit things."

Virus choking off supply of what Africa needs most: Food

By FARAI MUTSAKA Associated Press

HARARE, Zimbabwe (AP) — In a pre-dawn raid in food-starved Zimbabwe, police enforcing a coronavirus lockdown confiscated and destroyed 3 tons of fresh fruit and vegetables by setting fire to it. Wielding batons, they scattered a group of rural farmers who had traveled overnight, breaking restrictions on movement to bring the precious produce to one of the country's busiest markets.

The food burned as the farmers went home empty-handed, a stupefying moment for a country and a continent where food is in critically short supply.

It was an extreme example of how lockdowns to slow the spread of the coronavirus may be choking Africa's already-vulnerable food supply.

Lockdowns in at least 33 of Africa's 54 countries have blocked farmers from getting food to markets and threatened deliveries of food assistance to rural populations. Many informal markets where millions

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, April 15, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 277 ~ 35 of 77

buy their food are shut.

About one in every five people in Africa, nearly 250 million, already didn't have enough food before the virus outbreak, according to the Food and Agriculture Organization. A quarter of the population in sub-Saharan Africa is undernourished.

"This is double any other region," said Sean Granville-Ross, director for Africa at the aid agency Mercy Corps. "With lockdowns, border closures and the ability to access food curtailed, the impact of COVID-19 on Africa could be like nothing we have seen before."

Lockdowns without provisions to help the poor "may affect us very, very much," said Lola Castro, regional director in southern Africa for the U.N. World Food Program.

The Kibera slum in Kenya's capital, Nairobi, is at a breaking point already. Last week, thousands of desperate people scrambled for food aid at a distribution point, causing a stampede.

The World Food Program was already feeding millions in Africa, mainly rural people, due to a myriad of disasters: Floods, drought, armed conflict, government failures, even plagues of locusts. The pandemic has added another layer of hardship.

Take Sudan, where restrictions to combat the virus are hampering aid workers from reaching some of the 9.2 million people in need, according to the U.N.

The most severe drought in decades is already threatening about 45 million people with hunger across southern Africa, where farmers are still recovering from two devastating cyclones that battered Mozambique, Zimbabwe and Malawi last year.

Somalia, one of the world's most fragile countries, is struggling to get food to people living in extremist-controlled areas. Two months ago it declared a national emergency over an outbreak of desert locusts that devoured tens of thousands of hectares of crops and pastures. That left 20 million people with dire food shortages in East Africa. Now the locusts are back, more of them this time.

In West Africa's Sahel region, nearly 30 million are struggling to find food, said Granville-Ross of Mercy Corps.

On top of these problems, the World Bank said the virus could create "a severe food security crisis in Africa."

Among those at risk are millions of children normally fed through WFP's school meals program. A few weeks after the virus crept into Africa, so many schools have been closed that 65 million children are now missing out on meals, WFP told The Associated Press.

For many Africans, the immediate concern is not the virus — it's surviving the lockdowns.

"Most Africans work in the informal sector and need to go out every day," World Health Organization Africa regional chief Matshidiso Moeti said. "I think above all of access to food."

The virus has been slow to spread in Africa, which has not yet experienced the drastic number of cases and deaths witnessed in parts of Europe, Asia and the United States. The continent of nearly 1.3 billion people has reported just over 15,000 cases and 815 deaths, although those figures may be vastly underreported.

But while direct casualties are still relatively low, the "large majority" of economies at risk from the pandemic are in Africa, according to WFP.

"For many poor countries, the economic consequences will be more devastating than the disease itself," said WFP. British charity Oxfam warned that if Africa doesn't get help, the fight against poverty could be set back "by as much as 30 years."

Ordinary Africans can't expect much help from their governments, many of which are already laboring with huge debts and low foreign currency reserves. Falling global oil and mineral prices mean that Africa's exports are worth less now.

Some are making drastic decisions.

In a street in Zimbabwe's capital, Harare, Eugene Wadema trudges along, searching for transport to get back to her rural home 300 kilometers (186 miles) away.

In the days before the lockdown, food prices shot up at a rate many Zimbabweans, already hammered

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, April 15, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 277 ~ 36 of 77

by a ruined economy and the world's second-highest inflation rate, just couldn't handle.

"Here, the price of a pack of potatoes is now \$40. It was \$15 yesterday," the 23-year-old Wadema said. She said her rural homeland is one of the lucky ones still receiving food aid but she doesn't know how long it will last.

Behind her, her husband holds a small child. Two other young children — 5-year-old twins — try to keep up as they carry bags with clothes and blankets. But there's no food for the journey.

"If we had food we wouldn't be going," Wadema said.

Associated Press writer Tom Odula in Nairobi, Kenya contributed to this report.

A year after blaze, Notre Dame restoration halted by virus

By ELAINE GANLEY Associated Press

PARIS (AP) — The Cathedral of Notre Dame stands crippled and alone, locked in a dangerous web of twisted scaffolding one year after a cataclysmic fire gutted its interior, toppled its famous spire and horrified the world.

Some of the 40,000 prickly metal bars — erected for an earlier renovation project — melted in the intense blaze on April 15, 2019. The unstable scaffolding now endangers the Gothic jewel that for many embodies the soul of France.

The restoration of the landmark from the 12th and 13th centuries has been halted and the workers sent home because of France's coronavirus lockdown that began March 17, thwarting plans to start removing the 250 tons of metal scaffolding.

So even Notre Dame has been left in isolation by the pandemic that has affected so many people across France.

On Good Friday, Paris Archbishop Michel Aupetit led an exceptional but tiny gathering inside the church at the foot of the huge golden cross that remains intact.

"Today, we stand in this half-fallen cathedral to say that life is still here," Aupetit said in the televised ceremony.

The gathering in the fragile church that remains under lockdown was meant to raise the spirits of a nation in distress.

"The message of hope is especially important for our compatriots at a time when we are particularly affected by the coronavirus, which is sowing anguish and death," the archbishop told reporters.

There was no Easter service, and there are no plans to mark the anniversary of the devastating fire.

"As long as we have this scaffolding around, there's still sort of a 50% chance that more damage can be brought to the cathedral," said Notre Dame chaplain Brice de Malherbe, who last year was evacuated from his home next door as flames engulfed the roof.

He recalled his worst moment that night: "When one had the impression that the fire was coming down and suddenly it resumed in one of the towers."

Yet, Notre Dame de Paris remained standing, still grandly surveying the French capital from the island in the Seine, her two familiar bell towers partially eaten from within by flames but their heavy stones apparently only charred on the outside.

French President Emmanuel Macron wants the cathedral to reopen its giant doors in time for the 2024 Olympic Games in Paris. But progress has been delayed by setbacks, from the discovery of toxic dust from the melted lead roof and spire to the health and safety demands of the pandemic.

Officials hope the scaffolding can be removed by the fall. Then, stones must be analyzed to see which need to be replaced. Debris and huge ancient beams that burned like kindling must be cleared from the soaring vaults, Malherbe said. An umbrella structure will then be built to protect the site, which is now surrounded by high barricades.

For one fervent devotee of Notre Dame, the barricades, which replaced a smaller barrier, symbolize her loss, and the virus spreading across France and the world.

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, April 15, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 277 ~ 37 of 77

"Notre Dame is confined. I couldn't throw a bouquet of flowers over to her," said Cecile Deleville, who had tossed one over the lower fencing in December. "It's as though they took that away, too."

The 67-year-old retiree dared to take her first look at the cathedral a day after the fire, along with reporters from The Associated Press. She said at the time that she felt like an orphan.

Now, she fears she won't see Notre Dame reborn in her lifetime. Deleville worries that the reconstruction will fall by the wayside as France tries to rebuild its economy once the virus has been vanquished.

Donations large and small are helping to pay for the restoration, with 400 million euros (\$437 million) from three sources alone: the Total oil company and French tycoons Francois Pinault and Bernard Arnault of the luxury giant LVMH. Millions more have been pledged, but it was the modest donations, mainly from people in France and the United States, that covered the initial costs.

Those in charge of returning Notre Dame to its original splendor are still at work, despite being locked down.

The cathedral "has been gravely injured, undeniably so," Jean-Luis Georgelin, a retired general appointed by Macron to head the restoration project, said in an interview with the Catholic publication Le Pelerin.

But it has resisted thermal shocks from the fire, water from hoses that drenched it for days, the summer heat and high winds, he said, adding that sensors installed to read any movement of the structure have picked up nothing notable.

A timeline for the reconstruction may need to be redrawn to account for the virus lockdown. What also is unclear is what the new spire will look like. Will it be a copy of architect Eugene-Emmanuel Viollet-le-Duc's 19th century creation in lead that soared 96 meters (315 feet) high, or be a contemporary version?

With Notre Dame still in agony, Deleville, the believer who lost her church, cannot muster a vision of the future.

"It makes my heart cry," she said. "I return but she isn't there."

Oleg Cetinic in Paris contributed.

Would you give up health or location data to return to work?

By **CHRISTINA LARSON** and **MATT O'BRIEN** Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Cameron Karosis usually strives to protect his personal information. But a scary bout of COVID-19 that began last month with headaches and fevers, progressed to breathing problems and led to a hospital visit has now left him eager to disclose as much as possible to help halt the virus' spread.

Karosis has already shared personal details with Massachusetts health investigators. And if he was asked to comply with a disease-tracking phone app that monitored his whereabouts but didn't publicly reveal his name and Cambridge street address, he said he'd do that, too.

"I'm sick and I'm under a quarantine -- hold me accountable for it," the 27-year-old software salesman said. "You have the potential to kill other people."

As countries around the world edge toward ending lockdowns and restarting their economies and societies, citizens are being more closely monitored, in nations rich and poor, authoritarian and free.

New systems to track who is infected and who isn't, and where they've been, have been created or extended in China, South Korea and Singapore. And a range of other surveillance systems – some utilizing GPS location data, some gathering medical data – have been debated or piloted in Israel, Germany, the U.K., Italy and elsewhere.

The challenge: achieving the tricky balance between limiting the spread of disease and allowing people freedom to move outside their homes.

Whether the prospect on the table is "immunity passports" or cellphone-based tracking apps, the aim is to protect public health. But experts say it's also important to avoid a slippery-slope scenario where data collected to minimize the spread of disease is stored indefinitely, available without limits to law enforcement or susceptible to hackers.

"We need to build necessary guardrails for civil liberties," said Jake Laperruque, a lawyer at the nonprofit

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, April 15, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 277 ~ 38 of 77

Project on Government Oversight in Washington. "If new data is being collected for public health purposes, it should only be used for public health purposes."

Right now, there is no single official plan for reopening the United States, where the constitutional system gives states responsibility for maintaining public safety and where deaths from COVID-19 continue to rise steeply.

Scientists believe that the hundreds of thousands of people who already have recovered from the virus worldwide are likely to have some immunity to future infection, but they aren't sure for how long. To ensure new cases don't overwhelm hospital capacity, any plans to relax lockdowns will include provisions to track infections.

"The virus is not going away – if we all just come out on a certain date, it will spread widely again," said Dr. Tom Frieden, an infectious disease expert and former director of the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. "That means we need to think carefully about how and when we come out."

Dr. Anthony Fauci, the White House's top disease expert, said the administration has looked at the idea of issuing certificates of immunity to people whose blood tests reveal they have developed antibodies to fight the virus, among other possible plans. Yet they haven't concluded that approach would be effective, he told the Associated Press on Tuesday.

"I know people are anxious to say, 'Well, we'll give you a passport that says you're antibody-positive, you can go to work and you're protected.' The worst possibility that would happen is if we're actually wrong about that" and those people get infected.

Meanwhile, public health agencies from Massachusetts to the city of San Francisco have hired a surge of people to run "contact tracing" teams. Their mission is to identify anyone who has recently been in contact with someone who tests positive for COVID-19, then encourage those people to get tested and perhaps isolate themselves. These meetings can be sensitive and require training, and support, to pull off effectively.

Aiming to take the tracing approach to a new scale are tech giants Apple and Google, which are jointly working to build smartphone technology that alerts users if they shared a park bench or grocery store aisle with a stranger later found to be infected with the virus.

Unlike the more invasive location-tracking methods attempted by some governments, the Apple-Google approach uses Bluetooth beacons to detect physical proximity and encrypted keys to maintain people's anonymity. The companies say they're building the software for public health departments only, on the condition that they won't make use of them mandatory.

In addition to developing the technology, experts warn that the implications of deploying such devices need to be carefully considered. Who will collect and verify the data? How long will it be held? Will enough people use a voluntary app for it to be helpful?

"We know from history that 'emergency measures' too often last long beyond their initial expiry date," said Deborah Brown, a senior researcher at Human Rights Watch.

She also noted that systems that monitor cell-phone location or GPS data reveal more than just where someone has recently been. "Your contacts and associations can be gleaned, potentially your religious or political beliefs," she said -- for instance, if you've visited a church or mosque.

Susan Landau, a cybersecurity professor at Tufts University, said she has doubts about the effectiveness of relying on smartphone-based approaches, even if the apps are carefully designed to protect individual privacy.

"My real concern about the whole thing is I think it's being oversold," she said. "Does it reduce spread? I don't doubt that. Does it enable us to eliminate social distancing? No, not as long as there's a high portion of people who are asymptomatic."

Collecting data should complement, but not substitute for, well-managed public health interventions, said Deborah Seligsohn, a political scientist at Villanova University.

It's one thing to merely send a phone alert that someone exposed to a COVID-19 case should self-isolate for 14 days. It's another to have government workers bring them groceries or other essentials to make

that quarantine period possible if someone would otherwise have trouble complying, she said.

After the various lockdowns lift, it's not clear how readily Americans will submit to tracking efforts.

Cameron Karosis had his mind changed by contracting the virus, but many others are still wrestling with the prospect of how far they'd be willing to go.

"Personally, I would not be thrilled to be forced into downloading an app, mostly because I don't love the idea of Silicon Valley knowing even more about me than they already do," said Maura Cunningham, a writer in Ann Arbor, Michigan. "But I'd probably give in on that pretty quickly if it were made a widespread prerequisite for getting back to normal activity at some point in the future. I'd definitely resist a blood test — that just feels too intrusive."

O'Brien reported from Providence, Rhode Island. Associated Press health reporters Mike Stobbe and Lauran Neergaard contributed to this story.

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

US governors grapple with relaxing virus restrictions

By JULIE CARR SMYTH Associated Press

COLUMBUS, Ohio (AP) — After a month of draconian steps to minimize deaths and prevent hospital overload from the coronavirus pandemic, governors now face a new challenge: Deciding when and how to begin easing restrictions on businesses and social gatherings.

Many of the states' chief executives say they don't want to move too quickly and risk a public health crisis, despite pressure from Republican lawmakers, business leaders, professional sports leagues and some parents.

"We all want to open up tomorrow, but people will die if we do that without having things in place," Democratic Minnesota Gov. Tim Walz said Monday.

Governors have consistently said that before they can loosen social restrictions, they need to know where their states are in terms of infections. To do that, they need widespread testing and tracing procedures.

Dr. Anthony Fauci, the government's top infectious disease expert, said Tuesday that the country is "not there yet."

"Let's not make the mistake of pulling the plug too early, as much as we all want to," California Gov. Gavin Newsom said Tuesday as he announced a series of steps, including testing, needed to help the nation's most populous state "transition from surge to suppression."

No one is questioning the devastating effects the statewide shutdowns and business closures have had on the nation's economy. Nearly 17 million Americans filed for unemployment in three weeks' time, a record; state and local government tax revenue is plummeting, and businesses large and small are warning of imminent ruin.

"There's not a debate here about whether we need to get the economy open again," Walz said. "Of course we do."

California, Oregon and Washington have agreed to coordinate how the West Coast states will begin lifting their shelter-in-place restrictions. Seven states in the Northeast, including New York, New Jersey and Pennsylvania, have done the same — even as President Donald Trump asserted on Monday that he, not the governors, had the power to reopen the nation's economy.

Trump abruptly reversed course on Tuesday, saying he would leave it to governors to determine the right time and manner to reopen activity in their states.

Most have said it will be slow going. Besides testing and tracking, several have said they will consider the need to protect the people most at risk and ensure hospitals can handle a surge. They also have said they need to be able to reinstate stay-at-home orders if needed. A poorly planned rollback of restric-

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, April 15, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 277 ~ 40 of 77

tions would only deepen the economic pain, they said.

"We've got to make sure that we avoid a second wave at all costs," said Michigan Gov. Gretchen Whitmer, a Democrat and possible vice presidential contender. "That would be devastating for our economy. So we're going to make decisions based on science and having a real strategic phase-in of our economy when it's appropriate and safe to do so."

Whitmer's decision to maintain a statewide shutdown despite calls to reopen some rural areas and businesses has drawn the ire of Republicans, even those who backed her moves initially.

Senate Majority Leader Mike Shirkey took to Facebook to accuse Whitmer of "DESTROYING OUR HEALTH BY KILLING OUR LIVELIHOODS!"

The state Republican Party in New Mexico is pressuring Democratic Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham to ease up on her restrictions so small businesses can reopen.

In Ohio, the shouts of protesters punctuate Republican Gov. Mike DeWine's daily briefings, and lawmakers of his own party are beginning to criticize his once widely praised aggressive approach to containing the virus, decrying the effects on businesses and communities.

DeWine has been unfazed by the protests so far. He calls the COVID-19 disease a "monster" that is waiting to "pick members of our society off." On Tuesday, he gave a sobering assessment for those wanting a return to normal amid the pandemic.

"As we reopen Ohio, people will have to be very, very careful. ... You'll have to weigh benefit versus risk," he said. "You will have to make sure you're wearing a mask when you go out, continue social distancing, etc. COVID-19 is not going away until we get a vaccine."

Even Indiana Gov. Eric Holcomb, a Republican who was lieutenant governor under Vice President Mike Pence, has said he does not want the state to "relax at the wrong time" and see another wave of virus illnesses.

Holcomb issued a statewide stay-at-home order that took effect March 25. In addition to other concerns, Holcomb said he wanted to see the state build up its own stockpile of protective supplies and hospital equipment.

"Should there be a second wave come fall, like some suggest there could be, we need to be in a better position than when we first went into this storm," Holcomb said.

Republican Texas Gov. Greg Abbott says he won't reopen businesses all at once.

Abbott has issued what is effectively a stay-at-home order through the end of April in Texas, where officials in some of the state's largest cities say they don't expect the number of COVID-19 cases to peak until May.

"This isn't going to be a rushing the gates, everyone is able to suddenly reopen all at once," Abbott said Monday.

Associated Press writers Adam Beam in Sacramento, California; Tom Davies in Indianapolis; David Egert in Lansing, Michigan; Steve Karnowski in Minneapolis; Rachel La Corte in Olympia, Washington; Geoff Mulvihill in Cherry Hill, New Jersey; Paul Weber in Austin, Texas; and Andrew Welsh-Huggins in Columbus, Ohio, contributed to this report.

No hugs or handshakes: Pandemic complicates storm relief

By JAY REEVES Associated Press

BIRMINGHAM, Ala. (AP) — For people who lost homes to the deadly tornadoes that rampaged across the South, there are no comforting hugs from volunteers or handshakes from politicians. For homeless families, there are no Red Cross shelters, only hotel rooms.

These and other changes reflect how disaster response has been affected by the coronavirus pandemic: Workers are still trying to provide all the help they can, but from a distance.

Within hours of the tornado onslaught, which began Sunday and killed more than 30 people, church groups were out in damaged communities, and Southern Baptist volunteers were told to avoid holding

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, April 15, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 277 ~ 41 of 77

hands with people as they prayed, said Sam Porter, director of disaster relief for the nearly 15 million-member denomination. Hugs also are out.

"You're talking about a very hard change in procedures," Porter said Tuesday. "It's agonizing. Jesus touched people all through his ministry. He created us as emotional beings. But we are trying to comply with the guidelines."

About 550 people in four states were staying in hotel rooms funded by the Red Cross since mass shelters were not an option, said Brad Kieserman, a vice president of the organization.

People are being fed catered meals delivered to the hotels instead of through a large kitchen, he said, and workers are wearing masks, gloves and other gear when dealing with people affected by the storms. Other agencies are making similar provisions, he said.

"How ironic is it that the very thing that may unify people and unify communities is the condition in which we have to remain 6 feet apart," Kieserman said.

The death toll from the outbreak rose to at least 34 as officials said a 12th person had died in Mississippi. There, Gov. Tate Reeves, who toured damaged areas, said the pandemic was making a bad situation worse.

"The fact that the coronaviruses exist is complicating the recovery from the tornado, while the tornadoes are complicating our efforts to make sure that we do everything in our power to stop the spread of the virus," Reeves said during a stop in tiny Soso. "It is it is exceptionally complicated, and it's tough on all of us."

About 40 miles away in Prentiss, around 15 people wearing masks helped clean up amid the rubble of James Hill Church, which took a direct hit from a tornado. Pastor Sean Coney said breathing through cloth made the work more difficult, "but you can't be selfish" and risk spreading the virus.

"As difficult as it may be, you have to do it," Coney said.

A twister left shingles, insulation and other debris strewn across Chattanooga, Tennessee. Almost every official on a tour of storm damage wore a protective mask, and some wore gloves. Instead of hugs and handshakes, Gov. Bill Lee and Mayor Andy Berke offered elbow bumps while talking to affected residents.

"We need money! We need that stimulus check now!" a person in a passing pickup truck yelled out to Lee as he visited with people cleaning around their home.

The storms claimed lives in at least six states, and the National Weather Service said preliminary assessments found evidence of at least 27 twisters. The strongest confirmed so far was an EF-4 tornado that devastated southeastern Mississippi with winds as strong as 170 mph (273 kph).

Hundreds of homes and businesses were damaged or destroyed across the region, and heavy rains caused flooding in some areas. Nashville, Tennessee, received 2.23 inches (5.66 centimeters) of rain in a day, the weather service said. A day later, on Tuesday morning, the city saw snow flurries.

Damage occurred up the East Coast, with a flurry of tornado warnings issued in Delaware after storms left the Southeast.

With the economy already faltering because of business shutdowns and job losses linked to the pandemic, the storms hit the state's \$2.9 billion poultry industry. At least 90 poultry houses were damaged or destroyed, many near the city of Collins, the Mississippi State University Extension Service said.

"Although some houses were between flocks and empty, many of these houses had chickens in them," poultry specialist Tom Tabler said in a statement. "Some would have been chicks just a few days old, while others would have been flocks nearly ready for harvest."

This story has been corrected to remove reference to record one day flooding in Nashville.

Associated Press writers Emily Wagster Pettus in Jackson, Mississippi; Kimberlee Kruesi in Chattanooga, Tennessee; and video journalist Sarah Blake Morgan in Charlotte, North Carolina, contributed to this report.

California schools will look very different when they reopen

By JOCELYN GECKER Associated Press

SAN FRANCISCO (AP) — Staggered school start times. Class sizes cut in half. Social distancing in the hallways and cafeteria. These are a few of the possible scenarios for California schools that Gov. Gavin Newsom laid out as part of a roadmap for reopening the state amid the coronavirus.

The timeline for reopening schools remains unclear, as it does for reopening California society at large. But Newsom said Tuesday that when the state's 6 million students do return, things will look dramatically different.

"We need to get our kids back to school," Newsom said. "And we need to do it in a safe way."

The outline he presented for what it will take to lift coronavirus restrictions in the nation's most populous state asked more questions than it answered. He sought to temper the expectations of a restless, isolated public.

For schools, the biggest challenge officials will face is how to continue physical distancing among children and adults to ensure that "kids aren't going to school, getting infected and then infecting grandma and grandpa," Newsom said.

That could mean requiring schools to stagger schedules, with some students arriving in the morning and the rest in the afternoon. In the coming weeks and months, officials along with educators and unions will be discussing that idea and other possibilities for keeping campuses safe, he said.

School assemblies, gym class, recess, lunchtime and all scenarios in which students gather in large groups will have to be rethought. School maintenance will need to be overhauled.

"We are entering a new era of education. And whether that's transitional or whether it portends a more permanent change in how we educate students is unclear," said Tony Flint, spokesman for the California School Boards Association.

Flint said the governor's idea of staggering class times would help guide the conversations school districts are having about how to safely reopen.

"Do you need to move to an expanded school day, or school week, or consider weekend classes? Do you need to look at a year-round model?" said Flint.

Education funding cutbacks have already led to teacher shortages and made campus nurses rare, raising questions about how officials might cope with extended days and ensure kids are healthy, said Tony Wold, associate superintendent of the West Contra Costa Unified School District, which includes 55 schools.

"We can't just build new schools overnight. Even if the state gives us more money, where will the teachers come from?" said Wold. "This is probably the most Herculean challenge I have ever seen in public education."

Newsom said he was having intensive conversations with state Superintendent of Public Instruction Tony Thurmond and other education leaders about how to reorganize schools. And any changes in school schedules would have to be negotiated with the powerful teachers' unions.

"(Teachers) are best equipped to drive those conversations and to be a part of that decision-making process and they will ensure whatever plans we end up with work best for their students," said Claudia Briggs, a spokeswoman for the California Teachers Association.

She said teachers have been working with Newsom and Thurmond to figure out how to educate online and they will continue to work with the officials on how to safely reopen schools.

Newsom's announcement came on the day the state reported its highest daily death count from coronavirus to date — 71 — though the trend lines are favorable for overall hospitalizations and intensive care admissions in California.

Newsom said deep sanitation and "massive deep cleaning" will be needed at schools and outside campuses at parks, playgrounds, benches and sidewalks.

"We talk about what the new normal looks like. Normal it will not be," said Newsom.

Newsom said he won't loosen the mandatory stay-at-home order put in place March 19 until hospitalizations, particularly those in intensive care units, "flatten and start to decline." And he says the state will

need more testing, treatments and the ability for businesses, schools and childcare facilities to continue the physical distancing that has come to dominate public life. He said he would revisit the question of easing restrictions in two weeks.

California had more than 24,500 confirmed virus cases and more than 780 deaths as of Tuesday, according to data compiled by Johns Hopkins University, a death count that remains far below New York's 11,000 victims and is even much lower than smaller states including Massachusetts and Louisiana.

Associated Press writers Adam Beam, Don Thompson, Kathleen Ronayne and Cuneyt Dil in Sacramento and Olga R. Rodriguez in San Francisco contributed to this report.

China didn't warn public of likely pandemic for 6 key days

By The Associated Press undefined

In the six days after top Chinese officials secretly determined they likely were facing a pandemic from a new coronavirus, the city of Wuhan at the epicenter of the disease hosted a mass banquet for tens of thousands of people; millions began traveling through for Lunar New Year celebrations.

President Xi Jinping warned the public on the seventh day, Jan. 20. But by that time, more than 3,000 people had been infected during almost a week of public silence, according to internal documents obtained by The Associated Press and expert estimates based on retrospective infection data.

Six days.

That delay from Jan. 14 to Jan. 20 was neither the first mistake made by Chinese officials at all levels in confronting the outbreak, nor the longest lag, as governments around the world have dragged their feet for weeks and even months in addressing the virus.

But the delay by the first country to face the new coronavirus came at a critical time — the beginning of the outbreak. China's attempt to walk a line between alerting the public and avoiding panic set the stage for a pandemic that has infected almost 2 million people and taken more than 126,000 lives.

"This is tremendous," said Zuo-Feng Zhang, an epidemiologist at the University of California, Los Angeles. "If they took action six days earlier, there would have been much fewer patients and medical facilities would have been sufficient. We might have avoided the collapse of Wuhan's medical system."

Other experts noted that the Chinese government may have waited on warning the public to stave off hysteria, and that it did act quickly in private during that time.

But the six-day delay by China's leaders in Beijing came on top of almost two weeks during which the national Center for Disease Control did not register any cases from local officials, internal bulletins obtained by the AP confirm. Yet during that time, from Jan. 5 to Jan. 17, hundreds of patients were appearing in hospitals not just in Wuhan but across the country.

It's uncertain whether it was local officials who failed to report cases or national officials who failed to record them. It's also not clear exactly what officials knew at the time in Wuhan, which only opened back up last week with restrictions after its quarantine.

But what is clear, experts say, is that China's rigid controls on information, bureaucratic hurdles and a reluctance to send bad news up the chain of command muffled early warnings. The punishment of eight doctors for "rumor-mongering," broadcast on national television on Jan. 2, sent a chill through the city's hospitals.

"Doctors in Wuhan were afraid," said Dali Yang, a professor of Chinese politics at the University of Chicago. "It was truly intimidation of an entire profession."

Without these internal reports, it took the first case outside China, in Thailand on Jan. 13, to galvanize leaders in Beijing into recognizing the possible pandemic before them. It was only then that they launched a nationwide plan to find cases — distributing CDC-sanctioned test kits, easing the criteria for confirming cases and ordering health officials to screen patients, all without telling the public.

The Chinese government has repeatedly denied suppressing information in the early days, saying it immediately reported the outbreak to the World Health Organization.

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, April 15, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 277 ~ 44 of 77

"Allegations of a cover-up or lack of transparency in China are groundless," said foreign ministry spokesman Zhao Lijian at a Thursday press conference.

The documents show that the head of China's National Health Commission, Ma Xiaowei, laid out a grim assessment of the situation on Jan. 14 in a confidential teleconference with provincial health officials. A memo states that the teleconference was held to convey instructions on the coronavirus from President Xi Jinping, Premier Li Keqiang and Vice Premier Sun Chunlan, but does not specify what those instructions were.

"The epidemic situation is still severe and complex, the most severe challenge since SARS in 2003, and is likely to develop into a major public health event," the memo cites Ma as saying.

The National Health Commission is the top medical agency in the country. In a faxed statement, the Commission said it had organized the teleconference because of the case reported in Thailand and the possibility of the virus spreading during New Year travel. It added that China had published information on the outbreak in an "open, transparent, responsible and timely manner," in accordance with "important instructions" repeatedly issued by President Xi.

The documents come from an anonymous source in the medical field who did not want to be named for fear of retribution. The AP confirmed the contents with two other sources in public health familiar with the teleconference. Some of the memo's contents also appeared in a public notice about the teleconference, stripped of key details and published in February.

Under a section titled "sober understanding of the situation," the memo said that "clustered cases suggest that human-to-human transmission is possible." It singled out the case in Thailand, saying that the situation had "changed significantly" because of the possible spread of the virus abroad.

"With the coming of the Spring Festival, many people will be traveling, and the risk of transmission and spread is high," the memo continued. "All localities must prepare for and respond to a pandemic."

In the memo, Ma demanded officials unite around Xi and made clear that political considerations and social stability were key priorities during the long lead-up to China's two biggest political meetings of the year in March. While the documents do not spell out why Chinese leaders waited six days to make their concerns public, the meetings may be one reason.

"The imperatives for social stability, for not rocking the boat before these important Party congresses is pretty strong," says Daniel Mattingly, a scholar of Chinese politics at Yale. "My guess is, they wanted to let it play out a little more and see what happened."

In response to the teleconference, the Center for Disease Control and Prevention in Beijing initiated the highest-level emergency response internally, level one, on Jan. 15. It assigned top CDC leaders to 14 working groups tasked with getting funds, training health workers, collecting data, doing field investigations and supervising laboratories, an internal CDC notice shows. The memo directed Hubei province, where Wuhan is located, to begin temperature checks at airports, bus and train stations, and cut down on large public gatherings.

The National Health Commission also distributed a 63-page set of instructions to provincial health officials, obtained by the AP. The instructions ordered health officials nationwide to identify suspected cases, hospitals to open fever clinics, and doctors and nurses to don protective gear. They were marked "internal" — "not to be spread on the internet," "not to be publicly disclosed."

In public, however, officials continued to downplay the threat, pointing to the 41 cases public at the time.

"We have reached the latest understanding that the risk of sustained human-to-human transmission is low," Li Qun, the head of the China CDC's emergency center, told Chinese state television on Jan. 15. That was the same day Li was appointed leader of a group preparing emergency plans for the level one response, a CDC notice shows.

On Jan. 20, President Xi issued his first public comments on the virus, saying the outbreak "must be taken seriously" and every possible measure pursued. A leading Chinese epidemiologist, Zhong Nanshan, announced for the first time that the virus was transmissible from person to person on national television.

If the public had been warned a week earlier to take actions such as social distancing, mask wearing

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, April 15, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 277 ~ 45 of 77

and travel restrictions, cases could have been cut by up to two-thirds, one paper later found. An earlier warning could have saved lives, said Zhang, the doctor in Los Angeles.

However, other health experts said the government took decisive action in private given the information available to them.

"They may not have said the right thing, but they were doing the right thing," said Ray Yip, the retired founding head of the U.S. Centers for Disease Control's office in China. "On the 20th, they sounded the alarm for the whole country, which is not an unreasonable delay."

If health officials raise the alarm prematurely, it can damage their credibility — "like crying wolf" — and cripple their ability to mobilize the public, said Benjamin Cowley, an epidemiologist at the University of Hong Kong.

The delay may support accusations by President Donald Trump that the Chinese government's secrecy held back the world's response to the virus. However, even the public announcement on Jan. 20 left the U.S. nearly two months to prepare for the pandemic.

During those months, Trump ignored the warnings of his own staff and dismissed the disease as nothing to worry about, while the government failed to bolster medical supplies and deployed flawed testing kits. Leaders across the world turned a blind eye to the outbreak, with British prime minister Boris Johnson calling for a strategy of "herd immunity" — before falling ill himself. Brazilian president Jair Bolsonaro sneered at what he called "a little cold."

The early story of the pandemic in China shows missed opportunities at every step, the documents and AP interviews reveal. Under Xi, China's most authoritarian leader in decades, increasing political repression has made officials more hesitant to report cases without a clear green light from the top.

"It really increased the stakes for officials, which made them reluctant to step out of line," said Mattingly, the Yale professor. "It made it harder for people at the local level to report bad information."

Doctors and nurses in Wuhan told Chinese media there were plenty of signs that the coronavirus could be transmitted between people as early as late December. Patients who had never been to the suspected source of the virus, the Huanan Seafood Market, were infected. Medical workers started falling ill.

But officials obstructed medical staff who tried to report such cases. They set tight criteria for confirming cases, where patients not only had to test positive, but samples had to be sent to Beijing and sequenced. They required staff to report to supervisors before sending information higher, Chinese media reports show. And they punished doctors for warning about the disease.

As a result, no new cases were reported for almost two weeks from Jan. 5, even as officials gathered in Wuhan for Hubei province's two biggest political meetings of the year, internal China CDC bulletins confirm.

During this period, teams of experts dispatched to Wuhan by Beijing said they failed to find clear signs of danger and human-to-human transmission.

"China has many years of disease control, there's absolutely no chance that this will spread widely because of Spring Festival travel," the head of the first expert team, Xu Jianguo, told Takungpao, a Hong Kong paper, on Jan. 6. He added there was "no evidence of human-to-human transmission" and that the threat from the virus was low.

The second expert team, dispatched on Jan. 8, similarly failed to unearth any clear signs of human-to-human transmission. Yet during their stay, more than half a dozen doctors and nurses had already fallen ill with the virus, a retrospective China CDC study published in the New England Journal of Medicine would later show.

The teams looked for patients with severe pneumonia, missing those with milder symptoms. They also narrowed the search to those who had visited the seafood market — which was in retrospect a mistake, said Cowling, the Hong Kong epidemiologist, who flew to Beijing to review the cases in late January.

In the weeks after the severity of the epidemic became clear, some experts accused Wuhan officials of intentionally hiding cases.

"I always suspected it was human-to-human transmissible," said Wang Guangfa, the leader of the second

expert team, in a Mar. 15 post on Weibo, the Chinese social media platform. He fell ill with the virus soon after returning to Beijing on Jan. 16.

Wuhan's then-mayor, Zhou Xianwang, blamed national regulations for the secrecy.

"As a local government official, I could disclose information only after being authorized," Zhou told state media in late January. "A lot of people didn't understand this."

As a result, top Chinese officials appear to have been left in the dark.

"The CDC acted sluggishly, assuming all was fine," said a state health expert, who declined to be named out of fear of retribution. "If we started to do something a week or two earlier, things could have been so much different."

It wasn't just Wuhan. In Shenzhen in southern China, hundreds of miles away, a team led by microbiologist Yuen Kwok-yung used their own test kits to confirm that six members of a family of seven had the virus on Jan. 12. In an interview with Caixin, a respected Chinese finance magazine, Yuen said he informed CDC branches "of all levels," including Beijing. But internal CDC numbers did not reflect Yuen's report, the bulletins show.

When the Thai case was reported, health authorities finally drew up an internal plan to systematically identify, isolate, test, and treat all cases of the new coronavirus nationwide.

Wuhan's case count began to climb immediately — four on Jan. 17, then 17 the next day and 136 the day after. Across the country, dozens of cases began to surface, in some cases among patients who were infected earlier but had not yet been tested. In Zhejiang, for example, a man hospitalized on Jan. 4 was only isolated on Jan. 17 and confirmed positive on Jan. 21. In Shenzhen, the patients Yuen discovered on Jan. 12 were finally recorded as confirmed cases on Jan. 19.

The elite Peking Union Medical College Hospital held an emergency meeting on Jan. 18, instructing staff to adopt stringent isolation — still before Xi's public warning. A health expert told AP that on Jan. 19, she toured a hospital built after the SARS outbreak, where medical workers had furiously prepared an entire building with hundreds of beds for pneumonia patients.

"Everybody in the country in the infectious disease field knew something was going on," she said, declining to be named to avoid disrupting sensitive government consultations. "They were anticipating it."

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

Lives Lost: Young Brazilian mom loved dance, jokes and work

By PETER PRENGAMAN Associated Press

From the time she was a young teenager, Rafaela de Jesus Silva had numerous jobs: selling fruit and clothes in the streets, pumping gas, working as a receptionist and walking the sands of Brazilian beaches in sweltering heat to sell homemade foods.

"She was always working somewhere, always looking for more jobs," said sister Luana de Jesus Silva. "One way or another, she always found a way" to achieve things.

That hustle was in part because of necessity: Silva had grown up poor, raised by an aunt when her parents couldn't provide for her. But friends and family say the passion for toil was more than just for material needs. The 28-year-old worked to be able to afford to attend university — she was just a year away from her teaching degree — and make sure her daughter, Alice, born on March 25, would have an easier upbringing than she did.

A week after giving birth, Silva died of complications related to the coronavirus.

"My heart is broken," said Antonia Souza, her aunt. "Her child will never even sit on her lap."

EDITOR'S NOTE: This is part of an ongoing series of stories remembering people who have died from coronavirus around the world.

Less than a year after Rafaela de Jesus Silva was born, her mom had to find her another home. It was the late 1990s in Brazil, a time when Latin America's most populous nation was experiencing rampant

inflation, stagnant growth and political instability.

Silva's father worked as a security guard for the postal company in Salvador, Bahia's capital city. With one young child already at home, Luana, Rafaela's parents sent her to Itaju do Colônia, a small city about 310 miles (500 kilometers) south.

There she grew up with "Tia Antonia," who said her niece liked to dance to forró, a genre of music that originated in the northeast and accompanies a couples' dance akin to the waltz, but with more exaggerated waist movements. She liked to laugh, make jokes and was always kind, drawing people in with a welcoming smile.

"Everybody loved her, everybody wanted to be around her," said Souza, 59.

After high school, Silva began studying at the university in Itaju do Colônia. But a need to work meant that she took some semesters off completely, or just took a few classes at a time.

About seven years ago, while working as a gas attendant in the coastal city of Porto Seguro, famous for being where Portuguese navigators came to land for the first time in 1500, she met Erisvaldo Lopes dos Santos.

It wasn't love at first sight; Dos Santos was nearly 20 years older and divorced with five children while Silva was just starting out. But Dos Santos was drawn to an easy-going, spontaneous way about Silva and convinced her to have lunch with him.

"You have to know how to woo a pretty girl, and she was a pretty girl," said Dos Santos, recalling their first interactions.

That lunch led to more dates. Within a year, they had moved in. While studying part-time, Silva helped Dos Santos with his business shuttling travelers from airports to hotels and to tourist excursions.

"Now comes our baby to fill us with happiness. Our love has blossomed," Silva wrote on Facebook Dec. 1, posting a photo of her and Dos Santos, both beaming, his hand touching her protruding stomach.

On March 25, Silva gave birth by caesarean. Mom and baby were released the next day. A few days later, Silva began vomiting, having fevers and struggling to breathe. She died a few days after being admitted.

Hugo Sousa, health secretary for the city of Itapetinga, where Silva gave birth, told Globo News that hospital workers immediately recognized Silva's symptoms as coronavirus and a test confirmed she had it. He said Silva appeared to have chronic asthma.

Where Silva contracted the virus is unknown. Dos Santos said one possibility was on March 14, when his company provided transportation for a wedding of 280 guests. While Silva didn't do any transfers that day, she did drive the vehicle Dos Santos had used.

"We were starting to accomplish things. Our business was growing, our daughter was born," said Dos Santos. "And now she is gone."

Peter Prengaman is a former AP Brazil bureau chief. He can be followed here: twitter.com/peterprengaman

Search for a COVID-19 vaccine heats up in China, US

By LAURAN NEERGAARD AP Medical Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — Three potential COVID-19 vaccines are making fast progress in early-stage testing in volunteers in China and the U.S., but it's still a long road to prove if they'll really work.

China's CanSino Biologics has begun the second phase of testing its vaccine candidate, China's Ministry of Science and Technology said Tuesday.

In the U.S., a shot made by the National Institutes of Health and Moderna Inc. isn't far behind. The first person to receive that experimental vaccine last month returned to a Seattle clinic Tuesday for a second dose.

NIH infectious disease chief Dr. Anthony Fauci told The Associated Press there are "no red flags" so far and he hoped the next, larger phase of testing could begin around June.

A third candidate, from Inovio Pharmaceuticals, began giving experimental shots for first-step safety testing last week in the U.S. and hopes to expand its studies to China.

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, April 15, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 277 ~ 48 of 77

Initial tests focus on safety, and researchers in both countries are trying out different doses of different types of shots.

But moving into the second phase is a critical step that allows vaccines to be tested in many more people to look for signs that they protect against infection.

Last week, CanSino filed a report showing it aimed to enroll 500 people in this next study, comparing two doses of the vaccine to dummy shots. As of Monday, 273 of the volunteers had been injected, state media said.

Looking ahead, Fauci said if the new coronavirus continues to circulate widely enough over the summer and fall, it might be possible to finish larger studies slightly sooner than the 12 to 18 months he'd originally predicted — maybe toward "mid to late winter of next season."

"Please let me say this caveat: That is assuming that it's effective. See, that's the big 'if,'" Fauci stressed. "It's got to be effective and it's got to be safe."

During a news conference in China, authorities also cautioned that the studies must be done properly.

"Although we are in an emergency, we cannot lower the standards of safety and effectiveness in the reviews of vaccines," said Wang Junzhi, a Chinese biopharmaceutical expert. "The public is paying huge attention."

The World Health Organization this week counted more than five dozen other vaccine candidates in earlier stages of development being pursued around the world. Many research groups are teaming up to speed the work; in an announcement Tuesday, vaccine giants Sanofi and GSK became the latest to partner on a candidate.

On the WHO's list are a wide variety of ways to make vaccines -- so if one approach doesn't pan out, hopefully another one will.

CanSino's vaccine is based on a genetically engineered shot it created to guard against Ebola. The leading U.S. candidates use a different approach, made from copies of a piece of the coronavirus' genetic code.

AP camera operator Borg Wong contributed to this report from Beijing.

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

States confront practical dilemmas on reopening economies

By ERIC TUCKER, LORI HINNANT and FRANK JORDANS Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Setting the stage for a possible power struggle with President Donald Trump, governors around the U.S. began sketching out plans Tuesday to reopen their economies in a slow and methodical process so as to prevent the coronavirus from rebounding with tragic consequences.

In Italy, Spain and other places around Europe where infections and deaths have begun stabilizing, the process is already underway, with certain businesses and industries allowed to start back up in a calibrated effort by politicians to balance public health against their countries' economic well-being.

Trump announced a halt to U.S. payments to the World Health Organization pending a review of its warnings about the coronavirus and China. Trump, whose own response to the virus has been called into question, criticized the WHO for not sounding the alarm sooner. He asserted that the virus could have been contained at its source and lives could have been spared had the U.N. health agency done a better job investigating reports coming out of China.

While the crisis is far from over in the U.S., with more than 25,000 dead and approximately 600,000 confirmed infections by Johns Hopkins University's count, the doomsday scenarios that were predicted just two weeks ago have not come to pass, raising hopes from coast to coast.

California Gov. Gavin Newsom, who has joined a coalition with his counterparts in Oregon and Washington on how to emerge from the crisis, outlined a set of conditions for lifting restrictions in America's most populous state. Among other things, he said hospitalizations will have to decline and more testing

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, April 15, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 277 ~ 49 of 77

will have to become available.

And when the state does reopen, he warned, things will not look the same. Waiters will probably be wearing masks and gloves, schools may stagger students' arrival times to reduce crowding, and large gatherings such as sporting events and concerts are "not in the cards," the Democrat said.

A similar coalition has taken shape in the Northeast, encompassing Connecticut, Delaware, Massachusetts, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania and Rhode Island.

"The house is still on fire," New Jersey Gov. Phil Murphy said. "We still have to put the fire out" but also "make sure this doesn't reignite."

Politicians and public health authorities alike warned that easing restrictions in the U.S. and Europe will have to be accompanied by widespread antibody testing to see who might be immune and ramped-up tracing of infected people's contacts with others. That could well entail the use of smartphone technology.

Trump has repeatedly expressed his desire to see the U.S. reopened for business quickly, and at one point wanted to see churches packed on Easter. On Tuesday he said he would soon speak with all 50 governors and provide guidance on how and when to reopen. The previous day he insisted he has "total" authority over the loosening of restrictions, even though the Constitution largely delegates such powers to the states.

Gov. Andrew Cuomo of New York, by far America's hardest-hit state, ridiculed that assertion, saying: "We don't have a king in this country."

While the president has issued national social-distancing guidelines advising people to stay home, it has been governors and local leaders who have instituted the tough, mandatory restrictions, such as lockdowns and the closing of schools and nonessential businesses.

The effects of such measures around the globe were made plain by the International Monetary Fund, which projected that the world economy will suffer its worst year since the Great Depression in the 1930s, shrinking by an estimated 3%.

Still, there were glimmers of hope, even in New York, where the death toll topped 10,800. Cuomo reported 778 deaths over the previous 24 hours but said fatalities were leveling off, and hospitalizations and the number of new patients put on ventilators were continuing to drop, showing that social distancing is working.

At the same time, he warned against complacency: "We could lose all the progress we made in one week if we do it wrong."

Governors across the country echoed that sentiment. Michigan's Gretchen Whitmer said, "We've got to make sure that we avoid a second wave at all costs."

"We're going to make decisions based on science and having a real strategic phase-in of our economy when it's appropriate and safe to do so," the Democrat said.

Adding a dose of caution from the White House, Dr. Anthony Fauci, the government's top infectious-disease expert, said in an interview with The Associated Press that the U.S. does not yet have the testing and tracing procedures needed to begin reopening the economy.

"We have to have something in place that is efficient and that we can rely on, and we're not there yet," Fauci said.

Any relaxation of social-distancing would have to occur on a "rolling" basis, not all at once, he said, reflecting the ways COVID-19 struck different areas at different times.

Fauci also said a vaccine might be possible by mid- to late winter, a slightly more optimistic outlook than his previous estimate of 12 to 18 months. "Please, let me say this caveat: That is assuming that it's effective. See, that's the big 'if,'" he said. "It's got to be effective and it's got to be safe."

Dr. Anne Schuchat who oversees coronavirus response at the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, said it has been working with federal officials to develop a detailed reopening plan, including determining what measures will need to be tracked and what conditions must be met. The plans, which remain under review, include separate steps for schools, businesses and other entities, Schuchat said.

In New York, Queens social worker Brandy Robinson said deaths would have to come down "for me to

feel safe to get back on the train or do anything.”

“It’s very hard to come out of the house at all,” said Robinson, 34. “I just try to keep the faith and hope that this will pass soon.”

Millions of South Koreans flocked to polling stations Wednesday for national parliamentary elections considered a referendum for President Moon Jae-in, who enters the final years of his term grappling with the historic public health crisis. Long, snaking lines appeared to defy expectations of a low turnout, and poll workers checked temperatures and whisked away people exhibiting fever or arriving without masks to separate areas to vote.

In Britain, with a death toll put at over 12,000, new data showed that the true number is hundreds higher. And China faced a new flare-up along its remote northern border with Russia.

In Italy, which has seen more than 21,000 deaths but on Tuesday reported the smallest number of new infections in a month, bookstores, stationery stores and shops selling baby supplies were allowed to open in many places. Forestry workers, needed to clear dead trees ahead of the summer fire season, also went back.

In Spain, with more than 18,000 dead, workers returned to some factory and construction jobs this week, while stores and offices remained closed. Hardware and gardening stores reopened in Austria, but Chancellor Sebastian Kurz said he stands ready to “pull the emergency brake” if there’s a resurgence.

Worldwide, about 2 million confirmed infections have been reported and over 120,000 people have died, according to Johns Hopkins. The figures understate the true size of the pandemic, because of limited testing, uneven counting of the dead and concealment by some governments.

Hinnant reported from Paris. Chris Blake contributed from Bangkok. Associated Press journalists around the world contributed to this report.

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

Trump reverses course on power to ‘reopen’ states amid virus

By JILL COLVIN and ZEKE MILLER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump said Tuesday he’s open to some states “reopening” before federal social distancing guidelines expire at the end of month, as he appeared to back off his claim of absolute authority to decide when the time was right to act.

Hours after suggesting that the bipartisan concerns of governors about his assertion of power would amount to an insurrection, Trump abruptly reversed course, saying he would leave it to governors to determine the right time and manner to revive activity in their states. Trump said he would be speaking with governors, probably on Thursday, to discuss his administration’s plans.

“The governors are responsible,” Trump said Tuesday. “They have to take charge.”

Still, he insisted, “The governors will be very, very respectful of the presidency.”

Meanwhile, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the Federal Emergency Management Agency have been preparing federal guidelines for states looking to resume normal operations. They were expected to be unveiled later this week.

Democratic and Republican governors had sounded the alarm after Trump asserted Monday that he and he alone would determine when and how to reopen the economy, despite clear constitutional limitations on federal powers.

Trump said Tuesday he would be authorizing governors “of each individual state to implement a reopening — and a very powerful reopening — plan of their state at a time and in a matter as most appropriate.” Trump added that he would support moves by states that haven’t been hit hard by the outbreak to ease restrictions even before federal guidelines on social distancing expire April 30.

Trump said the country would open up “in beautiful little pieces,” adding that some states with low rates

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, April 15, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 277 ~ 51 of 77

of infection "have fewer people and they have lots of room."

It's unclear if any states are actively considering reopening their economies before May 1.

In a departure from recent tradition, Trump ended his daily briefing without turning the mic over to federal health experts, who have cautioned against moving too quickly to restart economic activity.

Dr. Anthony Fauci, the nation's top infectious diseases expert, told the AP earlier Tuesday that the country is "not there yet" when it comes to the kind of testing and contact tracing needed to begin reopening the economy. But Trump made clear Tuesday he is intent on proceeding with his plans.

Trump outlined a vision in which workers would be tested, perhaps on a weekly basis, and governors would test travelers arriving at their states' borders. But the U.S. is nowhere near having that kind of infrastructure, with testing still largely reserved for those with serious symptoms and results taking days to learn.

The CDC has been working with other federal officials to develop detailed plans for how reopening should occur, including determining what metrics will need to be tracked and what conditions met before such steps occur. The plans include separate steps for schools, businesses and other entities, the CDC's Dr. Anne Schuchat said. The proposals are currently under review "and being discussed every day," she added.

Schuchat said the agencies are trying to balance "the really, really dire situation of the economic impacts that we're seeing with the terrible loss of life and harm to individuals and their families that we've seen when this virus gets out of control."

House Speaker Nancy Pelosi criticized Trump for trying to lift social distancing without adequate testing. "The failure to test is dangerous and deadly, and without testing, we cannot resume our lives," she said in a letter to lawmakers.

In expressing an openness to states setting their own timelines, Trump was largely acknowledging the authority governors have already exercised.

While Trump has issued national recommendations advising people to stay home, it has been governors and local leaders who have instituted mandatory restrictions, including shuttering schools and closing nonessential businesses. Some of those orders carry fines or other penalties.

It was the latest twist in Trump's dispute with governors over who has primary responsibility for preserving public health in their jurisdictions. After weeks of saying he would leave major decisions about imposing restrictions in the hands of states, Trump claimed his power to ease them was absolute.

"When somebody is president of the United States, the authority is total," Trump said Monday at the White House. "The governors know that." He declined to offer specifics about the source of his asserted power, claiming he would provide a legal briefing at a later date.

But governors in both parties made clear they saw things differently, and said they would decide when it's safe to begin a return to normal operations, just as they were the ones who closed things down.

"The president's position is just absurd," New York Democratic Gov. Andrew Cuomo said Tuesday on "CBS This Morning." "It's not the law. It's not the Constitution. We don't have a king. We have a president."

Arkansas Gov. Asa Hutchinson, also a Republican, said he, too, expected the call to remain with the states.

"I welcome national guidance and assistance," he said. "But we will do what is needed in the best interest of Arkansans and I think that's what the people expect."

Anxious to put the crisis behind him, Trump launched a new advisory council that will hash out plans to reopen the American economy, which has dramatically contracted as businesses have shuttered, leaving millions of people out of work.

He also directed his administration to freeze funding to the World Health Organization, claiming the international body didn't deliver adequate early reports on the virus and cost the U.S. valuable response time.

"The WHO failed in this basic duty and must be held accountable," Trump said. He said the U.S. would review the organization's warning about the virus threat and China.

Earlier Tuesday, Trump initially indicated he was relishing the fight with state officials — particularly Democrats in hard-hit states — who have voiced fears that the president's ambitious timetable could lead to a resurgence of a virus that is still killing more than 1,000 Americans a day.

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, April 15, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 277 ~ 52 of 77

"A good old fashioned mutiny every now and then is an exciting and invigorating thing to watch, especially when the mutineers need so much from the Captain," Trump tweeted, adding, "Too easy!"

Trump began to soften his approach later in the day as he met with people who have recovered from COVID-19, including former pro football player Mark Campbell and Karen Whitsett, a member of the Michigan House.

"I'm going to be making a decision pretty quickly," he said, "and it's being done in conjunction with governors."

Still, Trump warned that he would be monitoring the performance of governors, and signaled he might blame them if he believes their actions slow the pace of what he hopes will be a robust economic recovery.

"If they don't do a good job we're going to come down on them hard," Trump said.

AP writer Mike Stobbe in New York contributed to this report.

Follow Colvin and Miller on Twitter at <https://twitter.com/colvinj> and <https://twitter.com/ZekeJMiller>

What you need to know today about the virus outbreak

By The Associated Press undefined

Setting the stage for a possible power struggle with President Donald Trump, governors around the U.S. began collaborating on plans Tuesday to reopen their economies in what is likely to be a drawn-out, step-by-step process to prevent the new coronavirus from rebounding with disastrous results.

Dr. Anthony Fauci, the government's top infectious disease expert, said the U.S. does not yet have the critical testing and tracing procedures needed to begin reopening the nation's economy, adding a dose of caution to increasingly optimistic projections from the White House.

"We have to have something in place that is efficient and that we can rely on, and we're not there yet," Fauci said in an interview with The Associated Press.

In parts of Europe where infections and deaths have begun stabilizing, the process of restarting the economy was already underway. Certain businesses and industries have been allowed to reopen in a calibrated effort by politicians to balance public health against their countries' economic well-being.

Meanwhile, Trump has directed a halt to U.S. payments to the World Health Organization pending a review of its warnings about the coronavirus and China.

Here are some of AP's top stories Tuesday on the world's coronavirus pandemic. Follow [APNews.com/VirusOutbreak](https://www.apnews.com/VirusOutbreak) for updates through the day and [APNews.com/UnderstandingtheOutbreak](https://www.apnews.com/UnderstandingtheOutbreak) for stories explaining some of its complexities.

WHAT'S HAPPENING TODAY:

— Three potential COVID-19 vaccines are making fast progress in early-stage testing in volunteers in China and the U.S., but it's still a long road to prove if they'll really work. Initial tests focus on safety, and researchers in both countries are trying out different doses of different types of shots.

— For people who lost homes to the deadly tornadoes that rampaged across the South, there are no comforting hugs from volunteers or handshakes from politicians. These and other changes reflect how disaster response has been affected by the coronavirus pandemic: Workers are still trying to provide all the help they can, but from a distance.

— Florida's governor has deemed pro wrestling an essential business amid the state's stay-at-home directive. Pro sports were added to a list of businesses allowed to stay open if the location is closed to the general public. The amendment allows Florida-based World Wrestling Entertainment, run by CEO Vince McMahon, to continue putting on shows — without fans.

— The \$2.2 trillion federal rescue package could fail to deliver badly needed financial aid to thousands of smaller cities and counties where a majority of Americans live, according to documents and interviews with local officials. The coronavirus outbreak has blown holes in the budgets of communities as the costs of battling the outbreak skyrocket and critical sources of revenue like sales and income taxes plummet.

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, April 15, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 277 ~ 53 of 77

— Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro and his health minister are in open conflict over the country's coronavirus response, leading many to worry that the far-right leader could soon fire the official who has played a major role in containing the outbreak.

— China has been criticized in the West for its early mishandling of the health crisis due to politically motivated foot-dragging. Now it is seeking to change perceptions through what has been dubbed "mask diplomacy." That's a combination of soft power policy, political messaging and aid shipments designed to portray Beijing as a generous and efficient ally. That message has found fertile ground in places like Serbia and Hungary.

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW:

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

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

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

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

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

ONE NUMBER:

— 3%: The International Monetary Fund said it expects the global economy to shrink 3% this year — far worse than its 0.1% dip in the Great Recession year of 2009 — before rebounding in 2021 with 5.8% growth. It acknowledges, though, that prospects for a rebound next year are clouded by uncertainty.

IN OTHER NEWS:

— **SMALL GESTURES:** In a time of anxiety and isolation, simple acts of kindness from medical workers are giving comfort and hope to patients and their families.

— **JACKALS EMERGE:** With Tel Aviv in lockdown due to the coronavirus crisis, a sprawling park in the heart of the city is all but empty. This has cleared the way for packs of jackals to take over the park.

— **LIFE WITHOUT MOVIE THEATERS:** For more than a century, movie theaters have been a refuge, a communal escape, a place transporting people away from everything else. What now as they close amid the pandemic?

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

Republicans decry Michigan governor's latest stay-home order

By DAVID EGGERT Associated Press

LANSING, Mich. (AP) — Michigan Gov. Gretchen Whitmer's decision to toughen rather than relax what already was one of the nation's strictest stay-home orders in response to the coronavirus is hitting opposition in her home state, where Republicans who backed her moves initially are now ratcheting up their criticism.

Senate Majority Leader Mike Shirkey took to Facebook to accuse the Democratic governor and vice presidential contender of "DESTROYING OUR HEALTH BY KILLING OUR LIVELIHOODS!" GOP lawmakers and allies in the business community say certain operations — golf courses, marinas, landscaping — can operate again if they adhere to social-distancing guidelines.

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, April 15, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 277 ~ 54 of 77

Others in rural areas say the restrictions should no longer be imposed statewide when the virus is far more concentrated in the Detroit area. Michigan has at least 27,000 confirmed cases of COVID-19 and 1,768 deaths — third-most in the U.S.

Whitmer, whose administration is working on a plan to gradually get people back to work, contends far-flung communities must be on guard and she is saving lives. She says reopening some businesses now, even those with small crews like lawn-service operations, would lead to more fill-ups at gas stations where the virus can last up to three days on steel pump handles.

"The fewer people that are out and about, the less likely it can continue to spread and threaten our lives and our economy," she said Monday.

Her latest stay-at-home order, issued last week, is scheduled to end April 30. An end-of-the-month showdown with the Republican-led Legislature is looming because her states of emergency and disaster — a basis for the shelter-in-place measure — are due to expire without a legislative extension.

GOP legislators are upset because she did not align Michigan with a federal agency's revised list of critical infrastructure, which would have allowed more people to return to work. The list is advisory and not a directive, but House Speaker Lee Chatfield says the state should transition to asking which activities are safe or unsafe rather than essential vs. nonessential.

Whitmer's newest order has resulted in anxiety and confusion in some quarters, for example, because big-box stores were told to close areas devoted to carpet, flooring, furniture, gardens and plants — though online sales and curbside pickup are still OK.

Four people, including the owner of a lawn-care company, sued Whitmer in federal court Tuesday, alleging a violation of their constitutional rights. Two are a married couple who said they cannot return home from their Thumb-area cabin to suburban Detroit due to travel restrictions.

At least two Walmart stores temporarily stopped selling car seats in person even though Whitmer's measure does not prohibit their sale. Conservatives shared customers' photos of the stores' signs on social media.

A Detroit TV station's decision to pair footage of Whitmer signing a measure in 2019 with a virus-related story on fines for violating social-distancing orders was used by critics to falsely accuse her of failing to comply herself.

"There's a lot of false information that is being disseminated," she said, stressing that people can buy car seats, bug spray and American flags. "I think you need to always discern if there is political posturing going on as opposed to sharing of facts."

Whitmer, in turn, angered Republicans on Monday by incorrectly accusing billionaire Education Secretary Betsy DeVos of funding a planned Wednesday protest outside the state Capitol. DeVos stopped her political spending when she joined President Donald Trump's Cabinet, though family members continue to donate.

Weeks after Trump personally attacked Whitmer's handling of the crisis following her criticism of his administration's poor planning, his campaign on Tuesday accused her of imposing "authoritarian rule" over Michigan residents. Senate Democratic Leader Jim Ananich defended Whitmer's "strong leadership. She's doing everything she can to keep us safe."

The Michigan Freedom Fund, a group with ties to the DeVos family, said it spent \$250 to promote the vehicle-based rally on Facebook.

Whitmer's remarks "were false — some would call it deliberate lies — and meant to distract from the real angst that her inconsistent, confusing and arbitrary commands have caused," said Tony Daunt, the fund's executive director.

Whitmer on Tuesday publicly thanked Amway, a company whose board include members of the DeVos family, for donating personal protective equipment to health care facilities in western Michigan.

The Michigan Conservative Coalition, which calls its pending demonstration "Operation Gridlock," is telling people to drive around the Capitol to show their displeasure with Whitmer.

"It's OK to be frustrated. It's OK to be angry," said the governor, whose moves have been supported by physicians and health experts. "If it makes you (feel) better to direct it at me, that's OK, too. I've got

thick skin.”

Follow Eggert on Twitter at <https://twitter.com/DavidEggert00>

Cats, dogs, Quillie the hedgehog source of comfort in crisis

By ALICIA RANCILIO Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) —

Lala, a 3-month-old black Lab, romped into Ufuoma George’s life a few weeks ago, just as she retreated into her New York apartment in the face of the coronavirus pandemic.

Lala, she thought, would be company. But she’s turned out to be so much more.

“Being alone at home kind of is hard,” says George, “but with a pet you have someone to take care of, someone to play with you, someone to greet you in the morning, so it’s kind of like really calming and comforting.”

Whether it’s a dog, a cat or, yes, a hedgehog named Quillie Nelson, pets are proving to be unexpected heroes in lockdown. They include the newly adopted and fostered like Lala; people have flooded shelters, looking for pets to fill their extra hours at home.

Laura Evans, her husband and their three kids brought 12-week-old Zoe to their Bethesda, Maryland, home after the pandemic hit. The squirmy Yorkshire terrier needs constant attention, and they’re happy to oblige.

“We wanted to bring a little light and life to our house,” Evans said. “She’s a cuddly work, homework sidekick. Everyone wants to hang with her.”

Nancy Karan said her pet Shadow gets her out of her New York apartment for quality time with her fellow dog walkers, at a safe distance. At night they sleep together, “because it’s very comforting just to have his body on my bed.”

In Houston, Quillie Nelson and other pets help maintain routines for Rachael Pavlik and two teens.

“I think having pets during a scary time like this is good for the whole family. It’s good for the kids to have a sense of normalcy and a sense of responsibility, like they have to get out of bed before noon to feed their animals,” she said.

Kitty Block, president and CEO of the Humane Society of the United States, urged more people to foster and adopt as the health crisis worsens.

“It frees up space in the shelter to take these animals in that may be displaced because their family member, their owner is ill or financially in a troubled situation,” she said.

While many people seek comfort, some frustrations have surfaced with all the togetherness. Professional dog trainer Nicole Ellis in Los Angeles, of the service Rover.com, said owners should make a conscious effort to tire out their animals before a Zoom meeting or important phone call.

“We can’t blame them if they’re like, ‘I’m bored! I’m bored!’ and they haven’t done anything all day. It’s not their fault,” she said.

That doesn’t seem to be a problem for Squiggles, a bearded dragon in South Orange, New Jersey. Dan Cohen’s 13-year-old daughter, Julia, has survived with help from her chill lizard, who has her own emotional support vest and tiny mask.

“We don’t want her catching coronavirus,” he joked.

Aubrey Fine, a licensed psychologist and professor emeritus at California State Polytechnic University, Pomona said the relationship is mutually beneficial between humans and animals.

“In a time of tremendous and unique life challenges, goodness is still around us. When you’re looking at souls, animals touch human souls and humans touch animal souls. And together serendipity can happen.”

Associated Press writers Leanne Italie, Ted Shaffrey and Brooke Lefferts in New York contributed to this story.

While nonstop global news about the effects of the coronavirus has become commonplace, so, too, are the stories about the kindness of strangers and individuals who have sacrificed for others. "One Good Thing" is an AP continuing series reflecting these acts of kindness.

Trump's 'I alone can fix it' view and state powers collide

By MICHAEL TACKETT Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump insists there are "numerous provisions" in the Constitution to support his view that he has "total authority" to order states to open their economies as the coronavirus pandemic roils.

He did not enumerate what they were. And the consensus among constitutional scholars is that's because they don't exist.

Trump's statement on Monday was another head-snapping turn in a presidency filled with them. In the days and weeks before, Trump had laid responsibility for the pandemic response at the feet of the nation's governors. Now, he says he has vast powers as president to compel states to action.

In doing so, he reignited a debate as old as the nation over the division of power and authority between the federal government and the states.

The United States was founded in the late 18th century in part on a profound skepticism of the dangers of power concentrated in a central government. The 10th Amendment of the Bill of Rights was designed to apportion authority. Thomas Jefferson called it "the foundation of the Constitution."

The amendment itself seems straightforward enough: "The powers not delegated to the United States by the Constitution, nor prohibited by it to the States, are reserved to the States respectively, or to the people."

But it's not so simple, according to Trump.

Asked what authority he had to make such an assertion of presidential power, Trump promised that he would provide a legal memorandum that supported his view. In adopting his position, he was offering a direct challenge both to the norms of constitutional authority and the orthodoxy of his Republican Party.

"When somebody's the president of the United States, the authority is total, And that's how it's got to be," Trump said.

Andrew Cuomo, the Democratic governor of New York, offered a blunt rejoinder that echoed the country's colonial-turned-separatist past. "We don't have a king in this country," Cuomo said in his daily news briefing Tuesday. "We didn't want a king. So we have a Constitution and we elect a president."

"The president is clearly spoiling for a fight on this issue," Cuomo said. "The worst thing we can do ... is start with political division."

Former Vice President Joe Biden, the presumed Democratic challenger to Trump, echoed that theme, tweeting: "I am not running for office to be King of America. I respect the Constitution. I've read the Constitution. I've sworn an oath to it many times. I respect the great job so many of this country's governors — Democratic and Republican — are doing under these horrific circumstances."

By Tuesday evening, Trump seemed to be placing responsibility back on the governors, even as he said that he might authorize some states to open before the end of the month.

"The governors are responsible," he said during a briefing. "They have to take charge." In particular, he said that governors would have to oversee testing for the virus. "The governors are supposed to do the testing," he said.

The federal government does have broad constitutional authority over states on things that cross state lines and involve the entire nation, like regulating interstate commerce and immigration, levying taxes or declaring war. Its powers are drawn from the Supremacy Clause of the Constitution, which establishes that federal laws in most cases supersede state laws. Congress can also pass laws giving the president additional authority.

What Trump is proposing, however, is different. He is wading into states' sharply defined powers to protect public health.

"The president can un-declare his national emergency declarations, which freed up federal funds and

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, April 15, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 277 ~ 57 of 77

provided assistance to state and local governments," said Walter Dellinger, a former acting U.S. solicitor general. "But he has no federal statutory or constitutional power to override steps taken by governors and mayors under state law. He has never understood that he lacks a general power to rule by decree."

David B. Rivkin Jr., who served in the Justice Department and White House Counsel's Office, said there are instances where Trump could override the states. "President Trump has authority under Defense Production Act to compel the reopening and continued operations of various industrial and agricultural facilities and enterprises," he said. "Therefore, as a practical matter, he can reopen a large portion of the American economy."

Still, Trump's position is also at odds with the philosophy of the Republican Party, which often leans in favor of states being able to make decisions, and at odds with some leading conservative legal thinkers, including the late Justice Antonin Scalia, whom Trump has hailed a judicial hero.

"The Federal Government may neither issue directives requiring the States to address particular problems, nor command the States' officers, or those of their political subdivisions, to administer or enforce a federal regulatory program," Scalia wrote in *Printz v. United States*, which in 1997 struck down part of a federal gun law on 10th Amendment grounds.

He added a sentence of emphasis: "Such commands are fundamentally incompatible with our constitutional system of dual sovereignty."

John Yoo, a law professor at the University of California and a former Justice Department counsel in the Bush administration, brought that view forward to today.

"The federal government does not have the power to reopen the economy," Yoo said in an email. "The Constitution's grant of limited, enumerated powers to the national government does not include the right to regulate either public health or all business in the land."

Congress, he said, "can bar those who might be infected from entering the United States or traveling across interstate borders, reduce air and road traffic, and even isolate whole states. But our federal system reserves the leading role over public health to state governors."

On Tuesday, three members of Congress, led by Rep. Tom Malinowski, D-N.J., offered a resolution that, while largely symbolic, carried an unmistakable rebuke for Trump.

"Resolved," it said, "that the House of Representatives affirms that when someone is the President of the United States, then authority is not total."

Michael Tackett is deputy Washington bureau chief for The Associated Press. Follow him on Twitter at <https://twitter.com/tackettdc>

Coronavirus relief checks won't have to be repaid, feds say

By **AMANDA SEITZ** The Associated Press

CHICAGO (AP) — Videos and online reports claiming that millions of Americans will have to repay the relief checks they receive from the federal government under the \$2.2 trillion coronavirus economic recovery bill are not true.

The government began issuing the one-time payments this week. Most adults who earned up to \$75,000 will see a \$1,200 payout, while married couples who made up to \$150,000 can expect to get \$2,400. Parents will get payments of \$500 per child. The checks will be directly deposited into bank accounts or mailed to households, depending on how you've filed your tax returns in the past.

In recent days, social media posts have falsely claimed there's one catch to this money -- that you'll eventually have to pay it back.

"Next year, you're automatically going to owe \$1,200 come tax season," one of the videos, viewed hundreds of thousands of times on YouTube, falsely claims. The video has also been shared widely on social media platforms including Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and TikTok.

The U.S. Treasury Department and Internal Revenue Service, which are working to deliver the money to people, confirmed to The Associated Press that households will not have to pay back the money in next

year's tax filing.

"This is not an advance and there is absolutely no obligation to pay it back," Treasury spokeswoman Patricia McLaughlin said in an email.

The federal government uses information from 2018 or 2019 tax returns -- whichever was filed most recently -- to determine eligibility for the payouts. Those payments begin to get smaller for adults making more than \$75,000 and phase out entirely for those earning more than \$99,000. For married couples, the payments get smaller for those earning more than \$150,000, falling to zero at \$198,000. For heads of household with one child, the benefit starts to decline at \$112,500 and falls to zero at \$136,500.

The confusion on social media appears to have stemmed from language in the economic rescue bill that refers to the checks as an "advance refund" because the money is being given out in the 2020 tax year, before Americans have even filed their tax returns for the year.

The 2020 tax form has not been printed but the relief checks will not have any bearing on your income deductions next year, said Eric Smith, a spokesman for the IRS.

Court throws out Trump rollback of school nutrition rules

By CANDICE CHOI AP Food & Health Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — After making a brief comeback on school lunch menus, white bread and other refined grains may be vanishing again when schools reopen after a federal court threw out the Trump administration's rollback of school nutrition standards.

The U.S. district court in Maryland this week said the administration did not give adequate public notice of the change, which had gone into effect for this past school year. The ruling was in response to a lawsuit brought by the Center for Science in the Public Interest and Healthy School Food Maryland.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture said it does not comment on ongoing litigation and it's unknown how the agency will proceed. The agency oversees the national school lunch and breakfast programs, which serve millions of free and reduced-price meals daily.

For now, closed schools that have continued distributing meals during the coronavirus pandemic are operating under different standards and have been able to request flexibility on nutrition standards.

"None of this applies under the current situation. This is for when we resume post-pandemic school operations," said Laura MacCleery, senior policy director for the Center for Science in the Public Interest.

But Diane Pratt-Heavner of the School Nutrition Association, which represents cafeteria operators and food suppliers, said tighter budgets and strained supply chains could make it even harder to meet stricter nutrition standards once schools resume.

"This is coming at a very difficult and uncertain time," she said.

It's the latest twist in the years-long clash over nutrition standards championed by former first lady Michelle Obama. The 2012 rules required schools to transition over time entirely to whole grain-rich options and gradually reduce sodium levels. But school lunch operators opposed the standards, saying new recipes were resulting in mushy pastas and cardboard-like pizzas, and that students were throwing away more food.

To allow cafeteria operators time to adapt, the USDA had been postponing compliance dates and granting waivers to temporarily let schools continue serving select refined grains.

Then in late 2018, the agency issued a rule saying it would give schools greater flexibility by reverting back to a previous standard that at least half of grains served to students be whole grain-rich. It also eliminated the final sodium target.

In the decision Monday, the Maryland court said the USDA had previously "spoke exclusively in terms of delaying compliance requirements, not abandoning the compliance requirements altogether."

Under the relaxed rule this school year, Pratt-Heavner said cafeteria operators had reported mostly sticking to the whole grain-rich foods they had already incorporated into their menus. But she said some took advantage of the option to serve some harder-to-replace refined grain items like biscuits and tortillas, without having to file paperwork.

The lawsuit by CSPI did not challenge the relaxed standard allowing low-fat chocolate milk. Previously, flavored milk had to be non-fat.

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

Democratic bills call for racial breakdown of COVID-19 cases

By AARON MORRISON Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Democratic lawmakers on Tuesday introduced legislation to compel federal health officials to post data daily that breaks down COVID-19 cases and deaths by race and ethnicity.

The lawmakers say the demographic data is needed to address any disparities in the national response to the coronavirus outbreak, which is taking a disproportionate toll on African Americans and other non-white populations.

"Because of government-sponsored discrimination and systemic racism, communities of color are on the frontlines of this pandemic," Massachusetts Sen. Elizabeth Warren, one of several sponsors of the legislation in the Senate, said in a statement. "To effectively slow the spread of the virus and ensure our response is robust and equitable, we need comprehensive national data on who is getting infected, who is getting treatment, and who is dying."

The latest Associated Press analysis of available state and local data shows that more than 30% of those who have died from COVID-19 are African American, although blacks make up roughly 13% of the population in the areas covered in the analysis.

The Democratic lawmakers sent a letter March 28 to Health and Human Services Secretary Alex Azar urging federal release of the demographic data. The data has not been released.

If passed, the legislation introduced in the House and Senate on Tuesday would require HHS to collect data on race, ethnicity, sex, age and socioeconomic status, among other demographic information on those tested and treated for COVID-19. The information would be posted to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention website.

The CDC so far has released racial and ethnicity data pertaining only to March hospitalizations in 14 states, which showed black Americans as roughly one-third of those patients.

The legislation also requires HHS to provide a summary of final COVID-19 statistics in a report to Congress, no more than 60 days after the public health emergency has ended.

"History has shown us that in the face of any public health crisis, communities of color disproportionately suffer," said Massachusetts Rep. Ayanna Pressley, who is black and among dozens of lawmakers spearheading the legislation in the House. "We are less likely to have access to quality and affordable health care and more likely to live with underlying conditions. The stark racial disparities in COVID-19 cases and deaths are a disturbing reminder of that reality."

The legislation has more than 80 Democratic sponsors, including those who represent New York City, the epicenter of the U.S. virus outbreak.

"Now is the time for our nation's leaders to use race-based data to finally address these disparities and save black lives," Rep. Karen Bass, the chair of the Congressional Black Caucus, said in a statement.

A spokesperson for HHS did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

The AP analysis, based on data through Monday, found that of the 11,400 COVID-19 victims whose demographic data was publicly shared by officials, more than 30% were black. African Americans account for 13.3% of the 246 million people who live in the areas covered by the analysis, which encompasses data from 20 states and the cities of Houston, Memphis, Philadelphia and Washington, D.C. There have been more than 25,000 deaths in the nation as of Tuesday afternoon.

The cities were included separately because they are in states that lack comprehensive statewide demographic COVID-19 death data. The AP's analysis was one of the first attempts to examine the racial disparities of COVID-19 cases and deaths nationwide.

Associated Press writer Kat Stafford and Data Editor Meghan Hoyer contributed to this report.

Aaron Morrison is a member of The Associated Press' Race and Ethnicity team. Follow him on Twitter at <https://twitter.com/aaronlmorrison>.

AP Interview: Sanders says opposing Biden is 'irresponsible'

By STEVE PEOPLES AP National Political Writer

Bernie Sanders said Tuesday that it would be "irresponsible" for his loyalists not to support Joe Biden, warning that progressives who "sit on their hands" in the months ahead would simply enable President Donald Trump's reelection.

And lest there be any question, the 78-year-old Vermont senator confirmed that "it's probably a very fair assumption" that he would not run for president again. He added, with a laugh: "One can't predict the future."

Sanders, who suspended his presidential bid last week, spoke at length about his decision to endorse Biden, his political future and the urgent need to unify the Democratic Party during an interview with The Associated Press. He railed against the Republican president but also offered pointed criticism at his own supporters who have so far resisted his vow to do whatever it takes to help Biden win the presidency.

He seemed to distance himself from his campaign's former national press secretary, Briahna Joy Gray, when asked about her recent statement on social media refusing to endorse Biden.

"She is my former press secretary — not on the payroll," Sanders noted. A spokesman later clarified that all campaign staffers were no longer on the payroll as of Tuesday, though they will get a severance check in May.

Sanders said his supporters have a simple choice now that Biden has emerged as the presumptive nominee: "Do we be as active as we can in electing Joe Biden and doing everything we can to move Joe and his campaign in a more progressive direction? Or do we choose to sit it out and allow the most dangerous president in modern American history to get reelected?"

He continued: "I believe that it's irresponsible for anybody to say, 'Well, I disagree with Joe Biden -- I disagree with Joe Biden! -- and therefore I'm not going to be involved.'"

Sanders said he would not actively campaign or spend money on advertising in the primary contests that are still on the calendar in the coming months. But he still encouraged Democrats in those states to vote for him, hoping to amass as many delegates as possible for leverage to shape the party platform and the direction of Biden's campaign.

He also vowed to continue fighting for progressive priorities such as his signature "Medicare for All" as a senator, even though Biden has refused to embrace the government-backed single-payer health care system.

"If people want to vote for me, we'd appreciate it," Sanders said of the roughly 20 primary contests that remain where his name will appear on the ballot. He later added, "I think you're going to see significant movement on the part of the Biden campaign into a more progressive direction on a whole lot of issues."

Sanders did not outline any specific plans to begin helping Biden in earnest, though he noted that he held dozens of rallies for former Democratic nominee Hillary Clinton four years ago and would be at least as active for Biden. In the short term, he said he's essentially "incarcerated in his home" because of coronavirus social distancing guidelines and did not know when he would return to the campaign trail.

Sanders brushed away questions about why he was willing to back Biden so much sooner than he did Clinton, whom he waited until June to endorse. He said recent conversations with former President Barack Obama did not influence his decision. It came down to simple math, he said.

In 2016, Sanders said he had a mathematical path to the nomination all the way until the California primary, which was held on the last day of voting in June. That simply wasn't the case this year.

"What would be the sense of staying in, of spending a whole lot of money, of attacking the vice president, giving fodder for Trump -- what's the sense of doing that when you can't win?" he asked.

"I will do everything I can to help elect Joe," Sanders continued. "We had a contentious campaign. We disagree on issues. But my job now is to not only rally my supporters, but to do everything I can to bring the party together to see that (Trump) is not elected president."

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

Liberty University sued for not refunding student fees

By DENISE LAVOIE Associated Press

RICHMOND, Va. (AP) — Liberty University has profited from the COVID-19 pandemic by refusing to refund thousands of dollars in room and board and other fees owed to students after the school moved classes online last month, a federal lawsuit filed Tuesday alleges.

The lawsuit filed in U.S. District Court in Lynchburg accuses the university — one of the nation's largest and most prominent evangelical institutions — of purporting to remain open so it could refuse to return fees paid by students and their parents for the remainder of the spring semester.

The lawsuit also accuses Liberty and its president, Jerry Falwell Jr., of putting students at risk by telling students they were welcome to return to campus following spring break in March.

The suit cites comments and tweets made by Falwell in which he downplayed the seriousness of the pandemic and implied that the government shutdowns were an attempt to hurt President Donald Trump politically.

The lawsuit said that despite efforts to downplay the pandemic, the university stopped providing services and activities by moving classes online, closing its campus to visitors, prohibiting gatherings of 10 or more people and closing indoor recreation and fitness centers.

"In other words, the University's statement that it is 'open' is an illusion being put forth to try to keep money that should be returned to students and their families," the lawsuit said.

In a statement, Liberty said it has "tirelessly attempted to balance the needs of students, employees, and the community as it has navigated through the unprecedented health challenges presented by COVID-19."

"Each of Liberty's changes in operations and modes of delivery has been required by governmental officials, a fact the complaint omits. That fact legally excuses Liberty's adjustments and leaves the plaintiffs without a legal case," the statement said.

The lawsuit focuses on the week of March 16, when students were on spring break. While many colleges around the country were announcing campus closures, Liberty initially planned to continue on-campus instruction. But after Virginia Gov. Ralph Northam restricted gatherings of more than 100, Liberty announced it would transition most classes to online beginning on March 23.

Liberty officials told residential students in a March 20 email that they were "welcome" to either stay in place or return to campus, where it said various safety measures had been put in place to avoid concentrations of people. That message contradicted actions by many other colleges and universities urging students to stay home.

Officials in Lynchburg, where Liberty's campus is located, said they fielded complaints about hundreds of students who returned to the campus after spring break.

The lawsuit filed Tuesday has just one plaintiff — identified only as Student A — but seeks certification as a class-action suit on behalf of other students who want the university to refund the unused portion of fees they paid for room and board and other on-campus services, said attorney Adam Levitt.

"We filed this lawsuit because we believe that Liberty's effort to profit from the COVID-19 pandemic is wrong. It's particularly hypocritical in light of the values upon which the university says that it's based," Levitt said.

Levitt said he hasn't yet calculated how much money each student is owed, but he said it would be "in the thousands" for each student. Liberty said it has offered a \$1,000 credit to students who opted to move out of residence halls.

"Liberty's less populated and more frequently sanitized campus living environment will be maintained for

those students who chose it as their safest option," the statement said.

As colleges and universities around the country have moved classes online because of the coronavirus, they've had varied responses to requests for fee refunds. Some announced prorated room and board refunds quickly, including Harvard and Smith College.

Levitt's firm filed a lawsuit last month against the Arizona Board of Regents for refusing to refund fees paid by students at the University of Arizona, Arizona State University and Northern Arizona University.

UN chief: world faces misinformation epidemic about virus

By EDITH M. LEDERER Associated Press

UNITED NATIONS (AP) — U.N. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres warned Tuesday that the world is facing "a dangerous epidemic of misinformation" about COVID-19 and announced a U.N. campaign to flood the internet with facts and science to counter what he called "a poison" that is putting lives at risk.

The U.N. chief decried what he described as a global "misinfo-demic" that is spreading harmful health advice, "snake-oil solutions," falsehoods, and wild conspiracy theories.

Guterres urged social media organizations to do more to counter the misinformation and to "root out hate and harmful assertions about COVID-19."

"Hatred is going viral, stigmatizing and vilifying people and groups," he said in a video statement. "Mutual respect and upholding human rights must be our compass in navigating this crisis."

The U.N. chief said people around the world "are scared" and want to know what to do and where to turn for advice, and they need science.

U.N. spokesman Stephane Dujarric stressed the importance of accurate information,

He said the United Nations "will be in touch with various social media companies," adding that quite a few of them are actively trying to root out disinformation and suspending accounts of people pushing out information "that is plain wrong and dangerous."

Dujarric said the U.N. recognizes the delicate balance between free speech and misinformation, saying "that's a balancing act that is played out every day around the world even in the most free democracies."

"The secretary-general is not going to be the one to decide," Dujarric said.

"What we are doing is we will push out scientifically based information, information that will help us as a global community fight the virus," he said. "Social media companies, news organizations are making those decisions all the time, but I think it is important that we all do what we can to fight the spread of dangerous misinformation on fighting the virus."

The secretary-general saluted "journalists and others fact-checking the mountain of misleading stories and social media posts."

He called for trust in science and in institutions "grounded in responsive, responsible, evidence-based governance and leadership."

"Together, let's reject the lies and nonsense out there," Guterres said. "With common cause for common sense and facts, we can defeat COVID-19 -- and build a healthier, more equitable, just and resilient world."

Detained immigrants plead for masks, protection from virus

By NOMAAN MERCHANT Associated Press

HOUSTON (AP) — Elsy was on the phone in an immigration detention center when guards showed up with face masks and forms to sign.

The asylum-seeker from El Salvador and others had resorted to tearing their T-shirts into face coverings after a woman in their unit tested positive for COVID-19. But the guards would not give out the masks until the detainees signed the forms, which said they could not hold the private prison company running the detention center in San Diego liable if they got the coronavirus, according to Elsy and two other detainees, including one who read the form to The Associated Press over the phone.

When they refused Friday, the guards took away the masks, said Elsy, who spoke on condition that her

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, April 15, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 277 ~ 63 of 77

last name be withheld for fear of retribution.

While U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement has started to lower the number of detainees to reduce the risk of people getting sick, those held in immigration jails and their advocates say there's not enough protective gear, cleaning supplies or space to allow for social distancing. They fear the number of coronavirus cases will sharply rise in the coming weeks as it has in jails and prisons nationwide.

The Otay Mesa Detention Center, where Elsy is held, jumped from one confirmed case last week to 15 on Tuesday. ICE reported 77 detainees in 13 states have tested positive and hundreds of others are quarantined.

Detainees in at least four states say they have been denied masks, even as the White House has urged face coverings in public.

Private prison company CoreCivic, which operates Otay Mesa, denied masks were withheld unless detainees signed waivers. Spokeswoman Amanda Gilchrist said they were given an "acknowledgment form" that a mask alone could not protect them from the virus.

"It was not the intent of the previous form to require detainees to relinquish all rights related to COVID-19," Gilchrist said Monday, adding that the company has stopped using it. "Detainees are only required to initial documentation evidencing they were issued a mask."

As jails and prisons free some non-violent offenders, ICE has released 693 people considered medically vulnerable and not a security or flight risk, Ken Cuccinelli, acting deputy secretary of the Department of Homeland Security, said Tuesday.

The number of people in ICE detention now totals 33,800, down from about 37,000 a few weeks ago. Though the Trump administration has effectively shut down new asylum claims during the pandemic, it's still holding people who were apprehended months or years earlier for civil violations, including over 5,800 people who passed government asylum screenings.

Opponents argue that ICE could release thousands of people who aren't accused of a crime, have cleared asylum screenings or won their cases but are being detained while the government appeals.

"Immigrant detainees do not need to be in a detention center in order to be monitored by ICE," said Margaret Cargioli, managing attorney at the Immigrant Defenders Law Center. "This pandemic can only be adequately managed if everyone is healthy and everyone is in a safe environment."

Andrew Arthur of the Center for Immigration Studies, which favors restricting immigration, argued that detainees have constant access to medical care and that ICE and prison companies have an interest in limiting the spread of the virus because "they want to continue that business of detention."

A central problem is access to protective equipment, which even medical workers have struggled to get. ICE did not respond to questions about masks.

"The officers have masks and we don't," a woman detained at the Montgomery Processing Center north of Houston said in a video posted by the advocacy group RAICES Action. Another woman in the video holds a sign in Spanish saying she's pregnant and fears for her baby's life.

In Louisiana, which has become a hot spot for cases and where more than 6,000 immigration detainees are held mostly in rural jails, an asylum-seeker said he and others confined to their unit in the Pine Prairie jail pleaded for masks and more cleaning supplies. More than 50 men sleep on bunk beds.

"We don't have any social distance within us," said the detainee from Cameroon who spoke on condition of anonymity for fear of retribution. "We are just living by the grace of God."

Four immigration jails in Louisiana, including Pine Prairie, have confirmed cases of COVID-19.

In Florida, some detainees said in a complaint filed by immigrant rights groups that they had been denied masks and gloves, even when they tried to buy them in the commissary.

"I sleep on a bunk bed and am surrounded by multiple other bunk beds, all occupied by inmates. It is not possible to stay six feet away from cellmates," Juan Carlos Alfaro Garcia, 39, said in the complaint.

At Otay Mesa in San Diego, a detainee from El Salvador who asked to be identified only by his first name, Jose, for fear of retribution, said jail guards had searched his cell and touched his belongings without wearing masks or gloves.

"They put the virus in here," Jose said. "The only way we can get the virus is because they brought the

virus.”

Elsy, who is seeking asylum because she said she was persecuted for her sexual orientation in El Salvador, still doesn't have a jail-issued mask. Meanwhile, she says a guard threatened to write up her and others for tearing T-shirts to use as face coverings.

“The fear of all this makes me think that we won't be out of here alive, but dead,” she said.

Associated Press reporters Ben Fox in Washington and Adriana Gomez Licon in Miami contributed.

NASCAR's Larson fired after sponsors walk over N-word slur

By JENNA FRYER AP Auto Racing Writer

CHARLOTTE, N.C. (AP) — As sponsor after sponsor dropped Kyle Larson after he used a racial slur during a live-streamed virtual race, his NASCAR team owner was backed into a corner.

Chip Ganassi could let McDonald's and Credit One Bank and Chevrolet pull their funding and bankrupt his team or he could cut ties with the driver he had plucked from sprint car racing and groomed into an elite stock car driver.

It was essentially out of Ganassi's hands.

He fired the 27-year-old Larson on Tuesday in what he described as “an emotional call” — the only move possible to stabilize his organization.

“I told Kyle he can come back from this; he can even come back from this with our team,” Ganassi told The Associated Press. “But there really wasn't any choice.”

Larson's stunning downfall took less than 48 hours, unusual in its details and coming with sports everywhere basically shutdown during the coronavirus pandemic. The most coveted upcoming free agent in NASCAR lost almost every sponsor he had in what could ultimately be an eight-figure blunder.

Larson loses his 2020 salary plus the massive payday expected from his next contract. If he eventually lands with another team, it will surely be at a far discounted rate than the value he had built since moving full-time to NASCAR in 2013.

The unraveling began Sunday night when Larson appeared to lose communication on his headset with his spotter while competing in one of the iRacing virtual events that have grown in popularity during the sports hiatus.

During a check of his microphone, he asked his spotter, “You can't hear me?” That was followed by the N-word. The slur was directed at his spotter, who is white.

He was suspended without pay by Ganassi Monday, then suspended indefinitely by NASCAR and Larson, who is half Japanese, was ordered to complete sensitivity training, but primary sponsors McDonald's and Credit One Bank pulled their support within hours. Chevrolet suspended its relationship with Larson, and all but one commercial partner indicated they were walking away.

Without funding on the No. 42 Chevrolet as long as Larson was in the car, Ganassi had to act. Ross Chastain, under contract as a development driver for Ganassi, will likely replace Larson whenever racing resumes.

“After much consideration, Chip Ganassi Racing has determined that it will end its relationship with driver Kyle Larson,” Ganassi said in a statement. “As we said before, the comments that Kyle made were both offensive and unacceptable especially given the values of our organization. As we continued to evaluate the situation with all the relevant parties, it became obvious that this was the only appropriate course of action to take.”

Larson's famed sprint car career could also be in jeopardy: Kyle Larson Racing fields a Chevrolet in the World of Outlaws Series that is sponsored in part by Lucas Oil, which also ended its partnership with Larson.

Larson also late last year added a midget car to his team and drove it to seven wins in eight races to close 2019, then opened 2020 with a victory at the prestigious Chili Bowl in his 13th try.

Larson had been prepping to test free agency for the first time in his short career and Ganassi was expected to find himself in a bidding war for his franchise NASCAR driver.

Larson was thought to be deciding between Ganassi or a move to Tony Stewart's NASCAR team. He also might have been a long-shot candidate to replace seven-time NASCAR champion Jimmie Johnson at Hendrick Motorsports, although Rick Hendrick isn't as generous in allowing his drivers to compete in other series and giving up sprint cars was a deal-breaker for Larson.

But his career imploded when his slur went viral in part because viewers can follow the virtual races on the gaming app Twitch and eavesdrop on the drivers' typical lighthearted banter. Larson apologized in a video posted on his social media accounts.

"I made a mistake, said the word that should never, ever be said," Larson said. "There is no excuse for that. I wasn't raised that way. It is just an awful thing to say. I feel very sorry for my family, my friends, my partners, the NASCAR community and especially the African-American community.

"I understand the damage is probably unrepairable and I own up to that."

He reached out to many sponsors and friends to apologize. Brent Powell, president of Plan B Sales and Marketing, was the only sponsor to remain behind Larson. He said the driver called him personally to "express his regret about what transpired."

"We know he is an awesome young man that made a mistake and we are going to stand behind him 100% and help any way we can," Powell said.

Larson, whose grandparents spent time in an internment camp in California during World War II, climbed from short-track racing into NASCAR through its "Drive for Diversity" program. He is the only driver of Japanese descent to win a major NASCAR race.

More AP auto racing: <https://apnews.com/apf-AutoRacing> and https://twitter.com/AP_Sports

Deaths hit 45 at Virginia care home called 'virus's dream'

By SARAH RANKIN and BERNARD CONDON Associated Press

RICHMOND, Va. (AP) — Ronald Mitchell worried about his mother's care at a suburban Richmond nursing home long before she was swept up in one of the nation's deadliest coronavirus outbreaks.

She's bedbound and susceptible to seizures. A sore on her foot went unnoticed for so long, he said, that it led to the amputation of her leg. When he called her last month after she tested positive for COVID-19, she sounded disoriented, and he stayed on the line as she pressed a call button and waited an hour and a half for a nurse who never came.

Mitchell then called Canterbury Rehabilitation & Healthcare Center directly and was told that they were doing the best they could with just two nurses looking after 40 patients at a time in the coronavirus quarantine wing.

With the death toll from the Canterbury outbreak rising to 45, Mitchell can only hope that his 62-year-old mother now on a ventilator in a hospital won't be next.

"It's the worst feeling in the world," he said.

Canterbury, which has surpassed the death toll of 43 in the outbreak at the Life Care Center in suburban Seattle, is the kind of facility that's particularly vulnerable to a coronavirus wildfire that has raged through the nation's frail, elderly long-term care populations, claiming more than 4,300 lives.

Nearly all of Canterbury's residents rely on Medicaid funding for care of health problems that in many cases were the product of a lifetime of poverty. It lacks the amenities and space to keep people apart. And it lacks the pay to hire and keep enough staff.

"A publicly funded nursing home is a virus's dream," said Dr. Jim Wright, Canterbury's medical director. "It is the best place for a virus to be. People are close together. Their immune systems are compromised. It is just a tinderbox for that match."

Studies have shown nursing homes heavily dependent on Medicaid for revenue have fewer nurses and other staff per patient than average and lower quality of care overall. And some of the biggest outbreaks so far have been at homes tied closely to the government payment program, including ones in Wayne, West Virginia, and the Crown Heights section of New York City's Brooklyn borough.

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, April 15, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 277 ~ 66 of 77

Canterbury, which had about 160 residents before its outbreak, was thrown into turmoil from the first COVID-19 diagnosis on March 18. Many of the staff who work at multiple facilities — Wright couldn't say exactly how many — quit because they otherwise wouldn't have been able to continue at their other jobs. Other workers began to get sick themselves.

Around the same time, the second doctor who typically saw patients just stopped showing up, which Wright said had a severe impact on the ability to monitor patients. His wife, a palliative care physician, started volunteering. Everyone at Canterbury had no choice but to take on unfamiliar tasks.

"I was changing patients, cleaning beds. My administrator was delivering meal trays," Wright said.

"You pick any element, or any arena in our facility that needed to be up and running at its best and nothing was," he said.

Exactly how the coronavirus got into Canterbury was not clear, though health officials suspect either an infected worker or someone else who came in before visitations and get-togethers were halted in mid-March.

COVID-19 tests were available but scarce at the beginning of the outbreak, but Canterbury was not initially able to test all of its residents and staff because of guidance from state and national officials at the time. Virginia's rules said even long-term care residents had to first be tested to rule out the flu and other respiratory pathogens, something Wright and other medical directors asked the health department to change because of the delay it created.

By the time tests were finally conducted on everyone at Canterbury about two weeks after the first confirmed case, more than half the residents infected with coronavirus — 53 out of 92 — showed no symptoms of the disease.

"It's impossible to build walls around something that spreads so insidiously," said Dr. Danny Avula, the state health department's area director who has noted that Canterbury has been doing its best.

Even in normal times, Canterbury merited just one out of five stars in Medicare's rating system, with inspection records showing the facility had such poor staffing levels that it impacted patient care.

One nurse told an inspector last year "residents would stay in bed because it is almost impossible for two people to assist 62 or 63 residents." Previous inspections also found infection-control problems and failure to report an attempted rape of a patient.

Relatives of Canterbury residents described a facility with long-running quality-of-care problems and said they thought more could have been done to prevent the spread. They also said they had not received adequate communication during the crisis.

Kim Thompson's phone rang before 6 a.m. Thursday, and when Wright told her that her 72-year-old mother, Minnie Brown, had died, she thought it had to be a mistake.

Thompson had spoken with her mother over FaceTime two days earlier and she seemed in good health and spirits. Since that phone call, the family had received no updates from Canterbury letting them know her condition had deteriorated.

"It's neglect. It's negligence," Thompson said in an interview.

Thompson said as Canterbury's death toll began to climb, she started researching the response at the Life Care Center outbreak near Seattle, where a special federal group of doctors and nurses was sent to help.

Since then, several governors have used their emergency power to do the same for their homes. The National Guard was called in to evacuate a home in Tennessee, take over another one in Massachusetts and run tests at a third in Wisconsin. And special "strike teams" have been tapped to run tests and ferry supplies to homes in Ohio, Indiana and Maryland.

"Where is the state in some of this? Why wasn't more done on a state level as well to come in and take over the situation?" Thompson asked, noting that at one point the victims from Canterbury accounted for about a third of the state's dead. "There's lots of blame to go around."

Virginia Gov. Ralph Northam recently proposed a budget amendment that increases the rates paid to nursing homes and long-term care facilities by an additional \$20 for Medicaid recipients per day. He's also announced the creation of a task force that is working with such facilities to try and cut the infection rates and deaths.

"This boost in funding will help these facilities address staffing issues during this epidemic," Northam said.

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, April 15, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 277 ~ 67 of 77

Wright, who continues to care for the Canterbury patients who remain, was asked in a news conference last week if he would have done anything differently.

"I would have a nursing home that had enough staff around-the-clock, around all the time. I would have a nursing home where everyone had private rooms. I would have a nursing home where there was greater access to the outdoors," he said.

"In other words, I would have a nursing home funded by a society that puts more emphasis on treating our elders the way they should be treated."

Condon reported from New York. News researchers Randy Herschaft and Rhonda Shafner in New York contributed to this report.

Starting a vegetable garden: the basics

By LEE REICH Associated Press

Lots of people sheltering at home now because of the coronavirus pandemic are thinking about planting a vegetable garden. It offers more than food: Growing vegetables is a family activity, gives everyone a reason to get out in the fresh air, provides exercise and saves money.

Home-grown vegetables are delicious not only for their freshness, but also because you can choose what to grow based on flavor, rather than commercial qualities.

And growing vegetables is easy to do organically, without pesticides or even chemical fertilizers.

Some basics for getting started:

WHERE TO PLANT

The first considerations are sun and soil. Most vegetables require six or more hours daily of sunlight. Lettuce, arugula, spinach and other leafy vegetables can get by with a little less. (Other vegetables can too, but with some sacrifice of yield.)

As for soil, water drainage is the most important consideration. Don't plant where water sits for long periods after rains. Your vegetables will thrive wherever lawn grass or most garden flowers grew well.

You don't need a small farm to grow your own vegetables. A plot 15 feet on each side will yield an amazing amount of fresh vegetables (and perhaps spur you to plant more next year).

Whatever size your garden, the closer it is to your home, the more care it will receive.

No yard space in which to plant vegetables? No problem. Grow them in tubs, flowerpots or other containers. Again, drainage is important. Containers should have drainage holes in their bottoms. Fill them with potting soil, not garden soil, because it doesn't drain well within the confines of a container, even if it does so in open ground.

READYING THE GROUND

As an alternative to the traditional digging or rototilling, here's a way of clearing existing vegetation from your proposed garden site: Just cover the whole area with newspaper, four sheets thick and overlapped, or "landscape paper." Wet the paper in either case to prevent blowing. Then mark out areas with string for 3-foot-wide beds separated by 18- to 24-inch-wide paths.

Now check with local stores or online for "compost." If your garden is going to be small, bagged compost from a garden center might be enough. Otherwise, have it delivered in bulk. What you need is enough compost to spread an inch or more deep in each designated bed, over the paper.

For the paths, all you need is any weed-free, organic material such as wood chips, wood shavings, sawdust, straw or pine needles. Lay down just enough to hide the paper.

The advantage of this nontraditional method of preparing the soil is that it's quicker, less disruptive to soil life, and results in fewer weeds in the weeks to come.

TIMING IS IMPORTANT

Planting time depends on where you live. Find out the average date of the last killing frost in your area; you can call your county Cooperative Extension office for the date. Since we can't predict weather, we go by averages.

Vegetables can be divided into those that thrive in cooler weather and those that thrive in warmer weather. Cool-weather vegetables can be planted outdoors a few weeks before the average date of the last killing frost. Warm-weather vegetables can be planted outdoors about a week after that last frost date.

Not to muddy the waters, but within each of these categories are vegetables whose seeds you plant directly in the garden, and those that require so long a growing season that you need to purchase transplants (seedlings) for planting. Putting all this together for some common vegetables breaks down this way:

- Cool-weather vegetables for seeding directly in the garden: lettuce, spinach, kale, arugula, peas.
- Cool-weather vegetables planted as transplants: broccoli, cabbage, Brussels sprouts.
- Warm-weather vegetables for seeding directly in the garden: beans, corn, cucumber, okra, squash.
- Warm-weather vegetables planted as transplants: eggplant, pepper, tomato.

Now you're on your way to great-tasting vegetables, plus the other benefits afforded by a backyard vegetable garden.

Lee Reich writes regularly about food for The Associated Press. He has authored books including "Weedless Gardening" and "The Pruning Book." He blogs at <http://www.leereich.com/blog>. He can be reached at garden@leereich.com.

<http://www.leereich.com/blog>
<http://leereich.com>

Hank Steinbrenner, Yankees co-owner, dies at 63

By RONALD BLUM AP Baseball Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Hank Steinbrenner, the oldest son of George Steinbrenner and one of the four siblings who own the controlling shares of the New York Yankees, died Tuesday at age 63.

The team said he died at home in Clearwater, Florida, due to a long-standing health issue.

A chain smoker and miniature drag racer, Hank hoped to succeed as father as the team's controlling owner. Between the 2007 and 2008 seasons, he became the public voice of the Yankees' ownership.

"We're keepers of the flame, I guess," he said then. "I don't particularly necessarily enjoy it. It was kind of thrust upon me. At some point, if you're going to be a leader, you've got to step up and you can't hide in the office."

But brother Hal, 11 years younger, was put in charge in November 2008. While Hank was in his 13th season as a general partner and 11th as co-chair, he did not appear to have much involvement in the team's operations in recent years. Still, Hal said he consulted Hank and sisters Jessica and Jennifer on all major decisions.

George Steinbrenner died in July 2010 and wife Joan died in December 2018.

A rock fan, Hank Steinbrenner kept a Fender Stratocaster guitar on the floor near the door of his office at the Yankees' spring training ballpark.

"Hank was a genuine and gentle spirit who treasured the deep relationships he formed with those closest to him," the Steinbrenner family said in a statement. "He was introduced to the Yankees organization at a very young age, and his love for sports and competition continued to burn brightly throughout his life."

"Hank could be direct and outspoken, but in the very same conversation show great tenderness and lightheartedness. More than anything, he set an example for all of us in how comfortably he lived enjoying his personal passions and pursuits," the team said.

Henry G. Steinbrenner was born April 2, 1957, in Cleveland and attended Culver Military Academy, like his father. He then went to Central Methodist College in Missouri.

He played soccer at Central Methodist and coached at Ocala Vanguard High. He was 15 when his father led a group that bought the Yankees from CBS in 1973. Hank traveled with the team for parts of the 1985 and 1986 seasons, learning under Lou Piniella, Woody Woodward and Clyde King, before getting out of baseball and concentrating on the Steinbrenner thoroughbred stable in Ocala, Florida. He was a vice

president and director of Bay Farms Corp. since 1985 and a member of the board of the Ocala Breeders Sales Co.

Steinbrenner also served as chairman of Minch Transit Co. and vice president of Mid-Florida Hotels Corp. He coordinated a partnership with Gwynn Racing in 2000 to field a Gwynn/Steinbrenner Yankees dragster on the National Hot Rod Association tour and with son George Michael Steinbrenner IV formed Steinbrenner Racing in 2016.

The group competed on the Indy Lights developmental circuit in 2017-18, then partnered to form Harding Steinbrenner Racing which started on the IndyCar circuit in 2019. Another merger led to Andretti Harding Steinbrenner Autosport this year.

He is survived by daughters Jacqueline and Julia, sons George Michael IV and John, granddaughter Anabel, and his three siblings.

More AP MLB: <https://apnews.com/MLB> and https://twitter.com/AP_Sports

Fauci: 'We're not there yet' on key steps to reopen economy

By LAURAN NEERGAARD and JULIE PACE Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Dr. Anthony Fauci, the government's top infectious disease expert, said Tuesday the U.S. does not yet have the critical testing and tracing procedures needed to begin reopening the nation's economy, adding a dose of caution to increasingly optimistic projections from the White House.

"We have to have something in place that is efficient and that we can rely on, and we're not there yet," Fauci said in an interview with The Associated Press.

Fauci's comments come as President Donald Trump and others in the administration weigh how quickly businesses can reopen and Americans can get back to work weeks after the fast-spreading coronavirus essentially halted the U.S. economy. Trump has floated the possibility of reopening some areas by May 1 and said he could announce recommendations as soon as this week.

Fauci said a May 1 target is "a bit overly optimistic" for many areas of the country. Any easing off the strict social-distancing rules in place in much of the country would have to occur on a "rolling" basis, not all at once, he said, reflecting the ways COVID-19 struck different parts of the country at different times.

Among Fauci's top concerns: that there will be new outbreaks in locations where social distancing has eased, but public health officials don't yet have the capabilities to rapidly test for the virus, isolate any new cases and track down everyone that an infected person came into contact with.

"I'll guarantee you, once you start pulling back there will be infections. It's how you deal with the infections that's going count," Fauci told the AP.

Key is "getting people out of circulation if they get infected, because once you start getting clusters, then you're really in trouble," he added.

At the same time Fauci is directing critical government research, he's also one of the administration's leading spokespeople on the virus, spending hours each week by Trump's side during his lengthy, daily White House briefings.

Fauci said his public role is important but conceded that the duration of those briefings — Monday's ran for nearly two-and-a-half hours — was "really draining" and that doesn't even count preparation and waiting for it to start.

"If I had been able to just make a few comments and then go to work, that would have really been much better," he said. "It isn't the idea of being there and answering questions, which I really think is important for the American public. It's the amount of time."

Much of Fauci's time outside of the White House briefing room is focused on analyzing progress on blood tests that aim to tell who was exposed to the coronavirus -- whether they knew they were sick or not -- by spotting antibodies their immune system formed to fight back. Those tests will be crucial in determining when and how people can go back to work.

The problem: Most of the tests have not yet been proven to work well, Fauci cautioned. He noted that

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, April 15, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 277 ~ 70 of 77

some countries bought millions of antibody tests only to learn they didn't work.

Fauci, infectious disease chief at the National Institutes of Health, said his staff is working with the Food and Drug Administration to validate those tests. That means proving what level of antibodies it takes to really be immune; if particular types of antibodies are key rather than an overall level; and how long that protection lasts.

"We're going to have to find out the answer to all of those questions," Fauci stressed. "I know people are anxious to say, 'Well, we'll give you a passport that says you're antibody-positive, you can go to work and you're protected.' The worst possibility that would happen is if we're actually wrong about that" and those people get infected.

Another complication is that scientists still don't have a solid understanding of how often people who show either no obvious symptoms or very few symptoms are spreading the virus. It's "purely a guesstimate" but no less than 25% and no more than half of overall cases may be from the relatively asymptomatic, he said.

Looking ahead, Fauci said a second wave of infection isn't inevitable. But he added: "if you mean it goes way down and then come September, October, November, we have another peak, I have to say I would not be surprised. I would hope that if and when that occurs, that we jump all over it in a much, much more effective way than we have in these past few months."

Americans stuck in Africa trying to bring adopted kids home

By DAVID CRARY AP National Writer

Stranded in Nigeria for months, a Colorado couple had a rare chance to catch an evacuation flight to the U.S. recently during the coronavirus outbreak. But they refused because they would have had to leave behind their adopted daughter, who has yet to get a U.S. visa.

"After we found our daughter and our daughter found us, it was out of the question to leave her," Robin Gallite said.

Gallite and her husband, Adebambo Alli, who live in Denver, are among several American families facing similar predicaments as the pandemic disrupts travel and slows the final steps needed to bring home children who were adopted abroad.

The Virginia-based National Council for Adoption says it is following dozens of cases where the foreign adoption is complete and American parents are waiting for their child to receive a visa from the State Department.

"We need to do the right thing and prioritize the health and safety of these families," council vice president Ryan Hanlon said.

The State Department says foreign adoptions remain a priority but has told families that with routine visa services suspended during the pandemic, their requests for emergency visas may not be granted swiftly, if at all.

The adoption council says nearly all of the cases it's tracking are from Africa — where many countries, including Nigeria, are not part of the main international convention on adoption and investigations can take longer even under normal circumstances.

Gallite, 41, and Alli, 42, have been in Nigeria since last August, when they arrived to complete the adoption of a baby girl. A Nigerian judge signed off in November, but obtaining a U.S. visa has moved slowly and is now in deeper limbo because of virus-related shutdowns.

While the couple delight in their daughter's love for dancing and jumping, they ache to return to Denver with 17-month-old Adenike-Rae — nicknamed Nike — and are frustrated by the uncertainty of when that might be possible.

"We're resilient people — we have to be strong and tough for Nike," Gallite said. "The stress comes from trying to figure out how to get home."

In the meantime, they're staying with Adebambo Alli's sister. Alli, who was born in the U.S. to a Nigerian family, has worked in Colorado's energy industry but now has no job and is trying to line one up from Lagos. Gallite is supporting the family by working remotely as deputy director of an arts center in Denver.

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, April 15, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 277 ~ 71 of 77

Also stranded in Lagos — with her nearly 9-month-old adopted daughter Zoe — is Ufuoma Sada of Columbus, Ohio.

Sada has been in Nigeria since September while her husband, Ebenezer, works as an engineer in Ohio to keep the family afloat. Nigerian authorities approved the adoption in December, but Sada says she has faced delays and communication gaps as she tries to get the U.S. Consulate to make progress on a visa for Zoe.

"We're now into the fourth month, and nothing has been done," said Sada, who worries increasingly about the COVID-19 outbreak in Nigeria and wants U.S. authorities to expedite their return.

About 800 miles (more than 1,200 kilometers) east of Lagos, another American family is stranded in Yaounde, the capital of Cameroon, waiting for the U.S. Embassy to issue visas for 2-year-old twin girls they adopted in Chad in 2018.

David Parker, 29, a former youth pastor at a church in Denver, North Carolina, and his wife, Michaela, 24, moved to Chad two years ago to serve as Christian missionaries.

In January, the couple were told to come to Cameroon to complete the U.S. portion of the adoption process and get U.S. immigration visas for the girls, which the embassy in Chad does not handle.

Because of the pandemic, Parker says it has been difficult to gather all the evidence that U.S. officials requested as part of their investigation. He's increasingly worried the delays will endanger the health and safety of his family, which includes a 6-month-old son, Philip, as well as twins Ariella and Clair.

"Everything's basically shut down," Parker said by phone. "We don't know when or if we're going to be able to complete this."

Like Gallite and Alli, the Parkers were told they could board a U.S.-bound evacuation flight with their biological son but would have to leave their daughters behind.

"For us, that's not an option," said Parker, whose family is now restricted to a missionary compound in Yaounde.

The parents are hoping the U.S. government will issue them emergency visas. There's also a rarely used process called "humanitarian parole," which allowed some Haitian orphans to come to the U.S. in 2010 after Haiti's devastating earthquake.

Gallite has asked the State Department to work with U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services to obtain humanitarian parole for Nike.

"We are stuck abroad and our health and safety is extremely vulnerable here in Nigeria during a pandemic," she wrote to the State Department last week. "Please bring your U.S. citizens home and our legally adopted daughter."

In a memo sent to The Associated Press on Monday, the State Department said humanitarian parole is granted "only in rare circumstances where no other immigration avenue exists." It said families should contact USCIS directly with questions and that requests "generally take several weeks or longer to process."

The State Department's Office of Children's Issues said it had received many inquiries about emergency visas, which can be sought from embassies or consulates where the adoptions took place.

"Because routine visa services have been suspended, parents should be prepared to explain how their circumstances constitute an emergency," the office said.

Crary reported from New York.

A phone call, a song: Small gestures soothe COVID-19 stress

By LINDSEY TANNER AP Medical Writer

A phone call sounds like such a small thing. But the sedated man in a Missouri hospital room was gravely ill with COVID-19, and nurses arranged for his family to wish him well, perhaps for the last time.

In another hospital, a guitar-playing nurse sings "Amazing Grace" outside patients' rooms. And in another, doctors show smiling photos of themselves so COVID-19 patients can see the faces behind the masks.

In a time of anxiety and isolation, simple acts of kindness from medical workers are giving comfort and

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, April 15, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 277 ~ 72 of 77

hope to patients and their families.

That phone call arranged by a nurse at a St. Louis-area hospital let Erin Muth talk to her dad, Steve Blaha, for the first time in six days and just hours after doctors revived him when his heart stopped beating.

"Dad had basically died and we hadn't had a chance to say anything to him," said Muth, a nurse herself in Iowa. She tearfully told her dad, "Thanks for everything you've done for me, rooting for me and cheering me on. I'm cheering you on now, Dad."

Blaha, a machinist, turned 65 the next day, March 28, and though he remained sedated, Erin and her mom wished him happy birthday in a nurse-arranged video call.

Muth is convinced those calls gave Blaha strength. Days later doctors removed the ventilator and let Blaha breathe on his own. He's weak, but recovering.

Most people do recover from the new coronavirus. But it can be life-threatening for older adults and people with existing health problems. Many hospitals treating COVID-19 patients have adopted strict no-visitor policies and patients' only human contact is with masked and gloved medical workers.

"I'm afraid it might feel a little bit dehumanizing," said Dr. Elizabeth Paulk, an attending physician at Parkland Memorial Hospital in Dallas. "So much of our interaction with patients is nonverbal, and I think a lot of the warmth and humanity of the interaction is lost when you can't see someone's smile or their face."

That's why Paulk decided to have her team make personal introductions, in simple paper printouts showing their names, color photos, and greetings in English and Spanish. Paulk's photo shows her with her two kids.

The message: "We are complete people and we see them as complete people," she said.

At Saline Memorial Hospital in Benton, Arkansas, Katie Lea, chief nursing officer, knew the staff and patients needed to ease their stress. She recalled that one nurse plays guitar and sings at a local church.

Michael Stramiello gladly obliged. On work breaks, wearing a blue surgical mask, he strums and sings at the nursing station and in the corridor, loud enough for patients to hear in their rooms.

Religious songs are his favorites, but at a patient's request he played "You are My Sunshine."

Stramiello said everyone is feeling "a bit more anxiety" because of the pandemic.

"Music has always been my personal therapy relief," he said. "It's a different approach to being a nurse, for sure. It makes me thankful to be able to do it."

While nonstop global news about the effects of the coronavirus has become commonplace, so, too, are the stories about the kindness of strangers and individuals who have sacrificed for others. "One Good Thing" is an AP continuing series reflecting these acts of kindness. _____

Follow AP Medical Writer Lindsey Tanner at @LindseyTanner.

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

China's 'mask diplomacy' wins support in Eastern Europe

By **DUSAN STOJANOVIC** Associated Press

BELGRADE, Serbia (AP) — When China's first shipment of coronavirus medical aid landed in Belgrade, the president of Serbia was there to kiss the Chinese flag. In Hungary, officials have played down assistance from the European Union and praised Beijing's help. In the Czech Republic, its president says that only China was there during the virus spread.

While elsewhere China tries to polish an image tarnished by its initial handling of the coronavirus outbreak, Beijing has no problem maintaining its hard-won influence in parts of Eastern Europe, where it battles for clout with the EU as well as with Russia.

China was criticized in the West for its early mishandling of the crisis due to politically motivated foot-dragging while the virus raced through a province and its capital, Wuhan. Now it is seeking to change perceptions through "mask diplomacy" — a mix of soft power policy, political messaging and aid shipments

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, April 15, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 277 ~ 73 of 77

— to portray Beijing as a generous and efficient ally.

China for years has been increasing its political and economic influence in southeastern Europe through its Belt and Road global investment projects. Its image-polishing after the outbreak found fertile ground in places like Serbia and Hungary, whose populist leaders nurture close ties with Beijing or Moscow.

The aid shipments also drew praise in Italy, Spain, the Netherlands, Slovakia and the Czech Republic, although some virus test kits and face masks bought from Chinese companies didn't meet local standards.

"We must be aware there is a geopolitical component, including a struggle for influence, through spinning and the politics of generosity," EU's top foreign policy official Josep Borrell recently wrote in a blog, referring to China. "Armed with facts, we need to defend Europe against its detractors."

Chinese officials have repeatedly rejected claims that Beijing seeks political gains by giving the aid, saying the allegations result from deep-rooted misperceptions of China's goals in the West.

Chinese Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Hua Chunying said Beijing is doing what it can "to help those countries and people affected ... to save and safeguard people's lives and health to the greatest extent across the world."

In Serbia, a candidate for EU membership, officials and state-controlled media have played down the millions of euros in grants and loans from Brussels while praising Chinese deliveries, donations and sales of supplies. Opposition groups have demanded the Chinese aid be disclosed and stacked up against the EU's apparently much larger assistance, but those calls have been ignored.

The pro-China narrative included billboards supporting Chinese President Xi Jinping, whom Serbian President Aleksandar Vucic routinely describes as his "brother," as well as suggestions that a monument be erected to honor Belgrade's friendship with Beijing.

"European solidarity does not exist. Only China can help," Vucic said last month while announcing a nationwide state of emergency that gave him expanded powers in the health crisis.

The EU's executive arm, the European Commission, has pledged 15 million euros in immediate support for Serbia's health sector, plus 78.4 million euros for its social and economic recovery. The EU also has given 2 million euros to help pay for shipping more than 280 tons of emergency medical supplies that Serbia bought.

Responding to criticism from some European officials that he praised China while ignoring the EU aid, Vucic insisted in a state TV interview last week that the bloc was not willing to sell or provide breathing machines to cope with the medical crisis.

Vucic thanked the EU for the money, but insisted China gave more, without providing details.

On Tuesday, Vucic's office said he had a phone conversation with the Chinese leader during which he praised Beijing for "the brotherly care for the citizens of Serbia."

"When the first plane landed at Belgrade airport on March 21 with the great Chinese help in medical equipment and material, accompanied by Chinese experts, the Serbs were awakened with the new optimism as they knew that in this fight they will not be alone," the statement said.

Serbia and Hungary have been important gateways to Europe for China through its infrastructure and investment projects.

China's investments in Serbia include an estimated \$6 billion in loans for highways, railroads and power plants as well as contracts for a 5-G network and facial recognition surveillance equipment. U.S. officials warned of Beijing's "debt trap" diplomacy that could cost them their sovereignty if they fail to service the loans.

Government officials in Hungary repeatedly praised China and other Asian countries, thanking them for supplying masks, breathing machines and other needed equipment. At the same time, Prime Minister Viktor Orban and other ministers have played down EU assistance and have belittled those critical of the extraordinary powers given to Hungary's leadership during the state of emergency amid the pandemic.

"All of Europe, including western Europe, is always extraordinarily critical and often ready to educate and lecture about the essence of democracy, (but) everyone is standing in line in China for the products needed for health protection," Foreign Minister Peter Szijarto said last week in Parliament. "So, it's pos-

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, April 15, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 277 ~ 74 of 77

sible that after the end of the coronavirus, European policies regarding Eastern relations may have to be slightly reassessed."

On Tuesday, a cargo plane with 80 tons of protective gear bought from China landed in Warsaw. Prime Minister Mateusz Morawiecki greeted the flight, which followed a donation to Poland from China of masks and equipment last month.

CHOICE, a group of experts monitoring Beijing's presence in southeastern Europe, warned in a report this month that "China has been increasingly active in political, economic and societal domains" in the region.

Czech President Milos Zeman, known for his pro-Russian and pro-Chinese views, said in a speech March 19 that "China was the only country that helped us have the (protective) gear delivered."

China expert Martin Hala countered by criticizing what he called a "huge propaganda campaign that accompanies the so-called aid" from Beijing. He told Czech public TV it was "a normal commercial delivery," not aid.

Associated Press writers Jovana Gec in Belgrade; Pablo Gorondi in Budapest, Hungary; Vanessa Gera in Warsaw; Karel Janicek in Prague; Ken Moritsugu in Beijing; and Lorne Cook in Brussels contributed.

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

No bread flour? No problem

By **MATT KEMP Associated Press**

LONDON (AP) — Are you struggling to find bread flour and fresh yeast at the moment? If so, you're not alone.

With millions of people across the globe stuck at home due to lockdown measures imposed during the coronavirus pandemic, many people are choosing to make their own bread, rather than venturing to the local store to buy their weekly fix.

But how does one make a loaf a bakery when yeast and bread flour seem as precious and rare as gold dust?

The first option to consider, if you have a stash of bread flour but only a small amount of yeast, is a slow-rise loaf. This needs less than quarter of a teaspoon of instant dried yeast to make a stunning offering.

Ken Forkish's white bread with 80% biga recipe, from his 2012 book "Flour, Water, Salt, Yeast," is perfect for these testing times. It uses a mixture of flour, warm water and a tiny sprinkling of dried yeast as a 14-hour pre-fermented base for a larger loaf, which is bound to impress your family.

It's worth noting that Forkish's recipes use all-purpose flour, rather than bread flour, meaning that — hopefully — you might be able to locate supplies online or in grocery stores.

If your search for both bread and all-purpose flour proves fruitless but you have yeast at hand, Chris Young — the co-ordinator of England's Real Bread Campaign, which champions independent bakeries across the United Kingdom — has posted a recipe online which uses plain flour — roughly equivalent to pastry flour in the United States.

"It has less protein than bread flour, but a combination of more water and a longer rising time than home bakers might be used to makes the most of it for great results," says Young, adding: "Even if your first loaves aren't pretty, they'll still taste delicious and, like everything, you'll get better with experience."

Rather than kneading the dough, Young promotes the "stretch and fold" technique, whereby flour, water and a small amount of yeast are mixed together in a bowl and then, once every hour, the home baker lifts one section of the dough at a time and folds it over to the opposite side. This is a more delicate technique than pounding the mixture on a kitchen surface and allows the carbon dioxide created by the yeast to remain in the loaf, creating more air bubbles and making the final product less dense.

Finally, if you're out of both instant dry yeast and all-purpose flour, French baker Richard Bertinet has some handy hints about sourdough — a method which dispenses with shop-bought yeast entirely in favor

of a natural fermenting “starter” — made solely of flour and water.

While whole-wheat or rye flour are preferable to create a starter, Bertinet says that you can use anything you have in your cupboard — just mix equal quantities of flour and warm water in a container, store in a warm place and repeat the process every day for around five days, until the mixture is bubbling and full of life.

The main point? Don't be intimidated by people who try to complicate the process.

“Sourdough is not a bread, it's a way of using a different type of yeast. It's a slow process — that's all it is. It's become a fashion thing, which I despise. It's not. It's a way of baking. You need to simplify it in your head a bit more,” explains the baker.

Instead of constructing the loaf using the stretch-and-fold technique, Bertinet recommends his own “slap and fold” method, where the dough is lifted into the air, slammed down onto the workbench, then folded over itself — strengthening gluten bonds in the flour and increasing air in the finished loaf. The secret, again, is plenty of water and a long, slow fermentation.

All three bakers encourage people to continue supporting and ordering from their local bakeries during the pandemic. But in the meantime, Bertinet says, “If you've got some flour — you can do something with it.”

IMF: Global economy will suffer worst year since Depression

By PAUL WISEMAN and MARTIN CRUTSINGER AP Economics Writers

WASHINGTON (AP) — Beaten down by the coronavirus outbreak, the world economy in 2020 will suffer its worst year since the Great Depression of the 1930s, the International Monetary Fund says in its latest forecast.

The IMF said Tuesday that it expects the global economy to shrink 3% this year — far worse than its 0.1% dip in the Great Recession year of 2009 — before rebounding in 2021 with 5.8% growth. It acknowledges, though, that prospects for a rebound next year are clouded by uncertainty.

The bleak assessment represents a breathtaking downgrade by the IMF. In its previous forecast in January, before COVID-19 emerged as a grave threat to public health and economic growth worldwide, the international lending organization had forecast moderate global growth of 3.3% this year. But far-reaching measures to contain the pandemic — lockdowns, business shutdowns, social distancing and travel restrictions — have suddenly brought economic activity to a near-standstill across much of the world.

“The world has been put in a great lockdown,” the IMF's chief economist, Gita Gopinath, told reporters. “This is a crisis like no other.”

Gopinath said the cumulative loss to the global gross domestic product, the broadest gauge of economic output, could amount to \$9 trillion — more than the economies of Germany and Japan combined.

The IMF's twice-yearly World Economic Outlook was prepared for this week's spring meetings of the 189-nation IMF and its sister lending organization, the World Bank. Those meetings, along with a gathering of finance ministers and central bankers of the world's 20 biggest economies, will be held virtually for the first time in light of the coronavirus outbreak.

In its latest outlook, the IMF expects economic contractions this year of 5.9% in the United States, 7.5% in the 19 European countries that share the euro currency, 5.2% in Japan and 6.5% in the United Kingdom. China, where the pandemic originated, is expected to eke out 1.2% growth this year. The world's second-biggest economy, which had gone into lockdown, has begun to open up well before other countries.

Worldwide trade will plummet 11% this year, the IMF predicts, and then grow 8.4% in 2021.

Last week, the IMF's managing director, Kristalina Georgieva, warned that the world was facing “the worst economic fallout since the Great Depression.” She said that emerging markets and low-income nations across Africa, Latin America and much of Asia were at especially high risk. And on Monday, the IMF approved \$500 million to cancel six months of debt payments for 25 impoverished countries.

The IMF cautioned that its forecast is shrouded by unknowns. They include the path that the virus will take; the effectiveness of policies meant to contain the outbreak and minimize the economic damage; and uncertainty over whether, even many months from now, people will continue to isolate themselves and

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, April 15, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 277 ~ 76 of 77

depress spending as a precaution against a potential resurgence of the virus.

On a hopeful note, the IMF noted that policymakers in many countries have engineered what it calls a "swift and sizable" response to the economic crisis. In the United States, for instance, the Federal Reserve has intervened aggressively to smooth lending markets. And Congress has enacted three separate rescue measures, including a \$2.2 trillion aid package — the largest in history — that is meant to sustain households and businesses until the outbreak recedes and economic life begins to return to normal.

That package includes direct payments to individuals, business loans, grants to companies that agree not to lay off workers and expanded unemployment benefits. And Congress is moving toward approving a possible fourth economic aid measure.

Gathering at their own virtual meeting, finance officials of the Group of Seven major industrial countries, including U.S. Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin and Fed Chairman Jerome Powell, pledged to "use all available policy tools" to achieve a strong recovery.

Meghan Clem, CEO of the wedding and party-planning company Intertwined Events, says she is hoping that some government loans come through so she can continue to pay her staff. The next two to three months will likely be the worst of the crisis for Intertwined Events.

"All events have been canceled or postponed to the fourth quarter, so we are seeing a full stop of revenue for May, June and likely July," said Clem, whose company is based in Irvine, California.

In Europe, the sudden downturn has spotlighted the vulnerabilities of the shared euro currency. The 19-country bloc lacks a powerful central treasury. And it's struggled to settle on a unified fiscal response, with northern European countries like the Netherlands and Germany blocking proposals for shared borrowing backed by all countries. The member countries did agree on what could amount to a half-trillion euros in stimulus. But conditions on part of the package mean that some of the money may never be tapped.

Italy, which has been deeply hurt by the crisis, is expected to suffer a 9% drop this year in its gross domestic product, and its debt load could soar from an already high 135% of GDP. Fears have arisen of a renewed debt crisis, though for now stimulus from the European Central Bank has calmed lending markets.

European governments are deploying plans that subsidize worker pay at companies that have had to put employees on shorter hours or send them home. The idea is that companies keep workers on board so that they can quickly resume without having to recruit and train new staffers later. Their workers' spending also helps support other businesses. The system represents a sharp contrast to practices in the United States, where applications for unemployment benefits have skyrocketed.

In Germany, 2.35 million workers are expected to take part in the program. They will receive at least 60% of net pay.

Some countries can't afford sufficiently aggressive rescue plans, the IMF said, and "may require external support." Georgieva has said that the IMF is prepared to commit its \$1 trillion in lending capacity to support nations that need help in dealing with the pandemic.

AP Business Writers David McHugh in Frankfurt, Germany, and Joyce M. Rosenberg in New York contributed to this report.

Singer Jon Bon Jovi asks kindergartners to 'Do What You Can'

Associated Press undefined

PALM BEACH GARDENS, Fla. (AP) — A Florida kindergarten teacher took his virtual classroom to new levels on Monday when rock icon Jon Bon Jovi popped in on a writing lesson about life in the coronavirus quarantine.

Last month, the Grammy award-winning 80s rocker released an incomplete version of "Do What You Can," which is a ballad about the nation's battle to contain the virus, and asked fans to submit verses to help complete it, the Palm Beach Post reported.

Michael Bonick, a teacher at Marsh Pointe Elementary School in Palm Beach Gardens and life-long Bon Jovi fan, saw the singer's invitation and found contact information online for a member of Bon Jovi's staff.

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, April 15, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 277 ~ 77 of 77

He sent along his students' writings about being stuck at home in quarantine.

A staffer replied that Bon Jovi wanted to meet the kids, and he popped onto their laptop screens at 10 a.m. Monday.

"Mr. B got you guys writing and I was very excited to hear that," the former Bon Jovi frontman told the students, "because if you get to put your feelings down on paper sometimes they'll turn into songs, sometimes they'll turn into stories and you never know where it might lead you."

So far, the singer has received thousands of proposals online, some of which he works into performances of the song that he broadcasts online from his home in New Jersey.

As the 20 kindergartners — and their parents — watched, Bon Jovi strummed an acoustic guitar and sang out three kindergartners' writing prompts about life in quarantine, each one touching on themes of idleness and isolation.

After singing eight lines ending with, "My parents try their best/But I can tell that they're stressed," he congratulated the author, a boy named A.J.

"You're a rock and roll star," he said. "We wrote this one together, me and you buddy."

Bonick made the homework assignment last week and encouraged the young children to write about where they are and who they are with. He said the recurring theme was being stuck at home, which is fine because he wants the young writers to document their lives in such an extraordinary time.

"Once we get out of this — because we will get out of this — it's history," he said.

A lifelong Bon Jovi fan, Bonick had seen the singer's invitation to fans to propose their own lyrics for "Do What You Can."

"They were blown away," Bonick said. "They loved every minute of it."

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