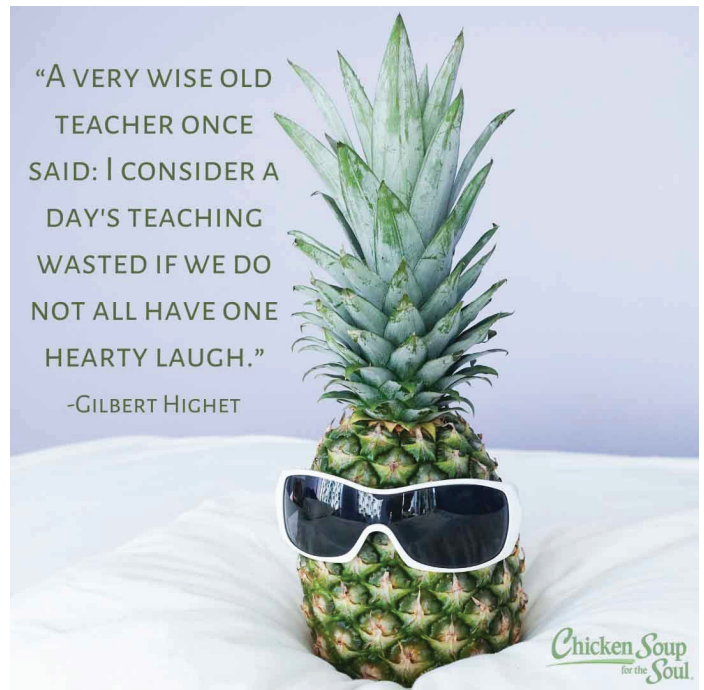


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World Wide COVID-19 Numbers

Yesterday



Today



OPEN: Recycling Trailer in Groton

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

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Covid-19 Update by Marie Miller

Not much news today, so we'll just run the numbers and call it a day.

We are up to 667,228 cases reported in the US to date. This represents a 5.4% increase; both raw number and percentage increase are slightly up today. This may be a function of collecting data an hour or so later than I did yesterday; within margins this small, it's difficult to say. I would call this more of a hitch than a reversal of the overall trend—unless it continues for a few days.

NY still leads with 222,284 cases, which is a decrease for both raw numbers and percentage of increase. Second consecutive day for that, so it's a good sign. NJ has 75,317, a slight increase here too, but slight. Overall percentage of cases in NY and NJ, as well as overall percentage of cases in the top 10 are holding steady. These are followed by MA – 32,181, MI 29,119, PA 28,314, CA 28,067, IL 25,734, FL – 23,332, LA – 22,532, and TX – 16,927. There are 4 more states over 10,000 cases, 7 more over 5000, 21 more + DC and PR over 1000, 8 + GU over 100, and VI and MP under 100.

There have been 30,659 deaths so far. The percentage increase here is down for the second consecutive day. Top numbers: NY - 12,192, NJ – 3518, MI – 2091, MA – 1245, LA – 1156, IL – 1081, CT – 971, CA – 968, and PA – 864. There are 3 more states above 500 deaths, 18 more above 100, 5 more + DC and PR over 50, 9 over 10, and 6 + GU, VI, and MP under 10.

And that's all there is for the day. My experiences in the past couple of days have me reflecting on the value of friendship and of reason. Opportunities abound to feel bigger by trying to make someone else small; but if it works at all, the feeling doesn't last and then you're smaller than ever. You can instead actually take the step of being a bigger person, one who both shows and earns respect. I am encouraging you to look for ways to be kind. These are difficult times for all of us. The fact that some are suffering more doesn't diminish anyone's pain. Let's give one another a break, and when you just can't, maybe step back and go do something else for a while. I still hold out hope that we can build something better than what we had, but it's going to take effort from all of us.

Have a good night, and stay healthy.

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Groton Area Third Quarter Honor Roll

Seniors

4.0 GPA: Kaycie Hawkins, Nicole Marzahn, Kayla Jensen, Indigo Rogers, Kaylin Kucker, KaSandra Pappas, Kya Jandel

3.99-3.50: Caitlynn Barse, Tadya Glover, Tashayla Fetherman, Payton Colestock, Noah Poor, Madeline Schuelke, Eliza Wanner

3.49-3.00: Cole Johnson, Benjamin Higgins, Jamesen Stange, Austin Jones, Rylee Rosenau, Kimberly Kohrs, Thomas Cranford, Ashley Fliehs

Juniors

4.0 GPA: Isaac Smith, Tanae Lipp, Erin Unzen, Grace Wambach, Sage Mortenson, Alexa Herr, Alexis Hanten, Regan Leicht

3.99-3.50 Alex Morris, Brooklyn Gilbert, Tessa Erdmann, Samantha Pappas, Trey Gengerke, Hailey Monson, Chandler Larson, Grace Wiedrick, Kannon Coats

3.49-3.00 Dragr Monson, Paxton Bonn, Jasmine Gengerke, Alyssa Fordham, Braden Freeman, Steven Paulson, Eh Tha You Say, Connor Lehman, Lucas Simon, Chloe Daly

Sophomores

4.0 GPA: Jordan Bjerke, Madeline Fliehs, Trista Keith, Travis Townsend

3.99-3.50: Seth Johnson, Allyssa Locke, Stella Meier, Hannah Gustafson, Kansas Kroll, Kennedy Anderson, Torrence Wiseman, Pierce Kettering, Jace Kroll, Julianna Kosel, Madisen Bjerke, Alyssa Thaler

3.49-3.00: Megan Fliehs, Lane Krueger, Ryder Daly, River Pardick

Freshmen

4.0 GPA: Ethan Clark, Jackson Dinger, Jacob Lewandowski

3.99-3.50: Cole Simon, Andrew Marzahn, Kaleb Antonsen, Elliana Weismantel, Caleb Hanten, Porter Johnson, Aspen Johnson, Gracie Traphagen, Cadance Tullis, Cole Bisbee, Jacelynn Gleason, Sierra Ehresmann

3.49-3.00: Brenna Carda, Isaac Higgins, Brooke Gengerke, KayLynn Overacker, Jackson Bahr, Carter Barse, James Brooks, Shallyn Foertsch, Hollie Frost, Ava Kramer, Marlee Tollifson, Kamryn Fliehs, Michael Aalseth, Dylan Anderson, Tate Larson Tyson Parrow

Eighth Graders

4.0 GPA: None

3.99-3.50: Emily Clark, Kyleigh Englund, Claire Heinrich, Camryn Kurtz, Hannah Monson, Holden Sippel, Jaycie Lier, Ashlyn Sperry, Anna Bisbee, Abigail Jensen, Cadence Feist, Lexi Osterman, Lydia Meier, Lane Tietz

3.49-3.00: Sydney Leicht, Anna Fjeldheim, Faith Fliehs, Karsyn Jangula, Sara Menzia, Dillon Abeln, Bradin Althoff, Jackson Garstecki

Seventh Graders

4.0 GPA: Payton Mitchell, Axel Warrington

3.99-3.50: Gretchen Dinger, Elizabeth Fliehs, Aiden Heathcote, Ashlyn Feser, Jeslyn Kosel

3.49-3.00: Rebecca Poor, Blake Pauli, Faith Traphagen, Laila Roberts, Emma Kutter, Kaden Kampa, Kellen Antonsen, Savannah Bible, Blake Dennert, Carter Simon, Turner Thompson

Sixth Graders

4.0 GPA: Nathan Unzen

3.99-3.50: Jaedyn Penning, Carly Gilbert, Jerica Locke, Lucas Carda, Mia Crank, Natalia Warrington, Talli Wright, Karter Moody, Benjamin Hoeft, Logan Warrington

3.49-3.00: Garrett Schultz, Gage Sippel, Karol Flores Torres, Raelee Lilly, Ryder Johnson, De Eh Tha Say, London Bahr, Rylee Dunker, Landon Smith, Olivia Stiegelmeier, Lincoln Krause, Karsten Fliehs, Jayden Schwan, Cali Tollifson, Keegen Tracy, Bradyn Wienk

THINKING ABOUT HEALTH

LOSING A JOB OFTEN MEANS ALSO LOSING INSURANCE

By Trudy Lieberman, Community Health News Service

The growing numbers of unemployed Americans – likely to hit 20 million or more thanks to the effects of the coronavirus – bring with them a loss of employer-provided health insurance coverage. The pandemic has laid bare the deficiencies in America's main vehicle for providing health insurance.

The system, which grew up after World War II as a way to attract workers, had already begun to decline. Over the past 20 years the share of non-elderly Americans covered by job-based insurance dropped from 68 percent to 57 percent. Significantly, that drop has been true for all income groups below \$104,800 for a family of four and about \$51,000 for a single person.

Those grim stats raise a crucial question: How will laid off middle-income workers be able to pay for insurance premiums on their own let alone the deductibles, coinsurance, and copays that come with policies these days? Many cannot.

Still if you are in this predicament or know someone who is, this column lays out the main options available. A warning: All have drawbacks.

As a general rule, the option that gives you the greatest coverage, for the lowest price, for the longest time is the best choice.

COBRA: The Consolidated Omnibus Budget Act passed in 1985 gives employees who have lost job-based coverage the right to remain on their employers' policies for at least 18 months, longer under some circumstances. COBRA applies to employers with 20 or more employees, and workers who've lost their jobs have to pay the entire premium plus a small administrative fee. The average annual family premium for employer-provided coverage last year was \$20,500 with the employee paying only \$6,000 of that amount. This isn't likely to be a great option for someone who was just laid-off.

AFFORDABLE CARE ACT policies are a better option for many workers who've lost their jobs. While they are a good solution for some people, they are problematic for others. Those with low and middling incomes below 250 percent of poverty, or a little more than \$64,000 for a family of four, should consider an ACA policy. You'll receive government help paying the premium and, most important, help paying the deductibles, coinsurance, and copays, which are increasingly pinching family budgets, making it hard for them to afford care.

Families with incomes between 250 percent and 400 percent of poverty (nearly \$105,000 for the family of four) do get some help paying the premiums, but the amount of help declines the higher the income. The biggest problem for families in this group is that there is no help from the Affordable Care Act with the cost-sharing expenses: deductibles, co-insurance, and co-pays. That makes these policies less attractive, especially when someone gets sick and finds that a deductible of \$8,000 means they won't get any help until they have paid at least that amount out of pocket.

If you don't qualify for cost-sharing subsidies, you'll have to make this choice: Go with a cheaper premium but higher cost sharing and be prepared to pay more if you get sick. Or pay more up front and have more protection when illness strikes.

Remember that having a preexisting health condition is not a barrier to obtaining an ACA policy. That is a huge help to anyone who is ill.

Since the president has said he will not open the federal ACA marketplaces now closed, you'll have to apply for a policy through a special provision that lets people enroll if they've lost employer coverage in the last 60 days or expect to lose it in the next 60 days. You can also qualify if you've lost coverage you had through a family member. Go to this website for more information: <https://www.healthcare.gov/glossary/special-enrollment-period/>

MEDICAID is a good option for people with very low incomes. It provides comprehensive coverage, but it's hard to get. In most states, an adult's income must be no greater than \$17,609 to qualify. Some states have even lower limits to receive benefits. Some have tried to impose work requirements as a condition for

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receiving benefits, but those are gone now. And the Families First Coronavirus Response Act that Congress passed on March 18 bans states from disenrolling anyone who was covered by Medicaid as of that date, making it easier to maintain coverage.

SHORT-TERM POLICIES are an alternative made available last year by the Trump administration. They offer coverage for up to three years and can cost as much as 50 percent less than more comprehensive policies. But they generally don't cover preexisting conditions and often don't cover maternity care, mental health, or prescription drugs. I call them the "buyer-beware" option because some consumers have purchased them only to be left with large bills when they got sick. If you're offered one of these, proceed with extreme caution.

Navigating this marketplace has never been easy.

Send your health policy questions and concerns to Trudy at trudy.lieberman@gmail.com.

American Legion South Dakota Girls State 2020 Canceled Due to COVID-19

VERMILLION, S.D. – The 74th annual American Legion Auxiliary South Dakota Girls State, scheduled for June 1-6, has been canceled due to continued efforts to slow the spread of COVID-19.

This year's delegates will receive a certificate of achievement and will be invited to a banquet in the fall of 2020 to celebrate their accomplishments. The girls will also have the option to enroll in and complete the State and Local Government course through remote learning.

"While no one wanted this cancellation, the health and safety of everyone, from delegates to counselors and speakers, must be our top priority," said David C. Earnest, chair of the University of South Dakota Department of Political Science and W.O. Farber Center. "Girls State is about leadership and service to community. This year, the best service we can provide our delegates and community is to avoid unnecessary risks."

The ALA South Dakota Girls States, co-hosted by USD and the W.O. Farber Center for Civic Leadership, is designed to teach female high school juniors about civic engagement. Approximately 440 girls from across South Dakota are selected based on scholastic achievement, leadership skills and interest in government.

ABOUT THE COLLEGE OF ARTS & SCIENCES

Potential COVID-19 Exposure at a Sioux Falls Business

PIERRE, S.D. – State Health officials announced Thursday, April 16, that an employee at Deuces Casino on 800 E. 8th St., in Sioux Falls has tested positive for COVID-19. The individual reported working while able to transmit the virus to others.

The employee reported working during these times while able to transmit the virus to others:

Friday, April 10 – 4 pm-2:00 am on Saturday, April 11

Saturday, April 11 – 4 pm-10:30 pm

Due to the risk of exposure, customers who visited this location during the specified dates should monitor for symptoms for 14 days after the date they visited.

A CDC screening tool is available at [COVID.SD.GOV](https://www.cdc.gov/covid19/screeningtool/), which can help recommend when to call your medical provider if you develop symptoms.

State Health officials remind all South Dakotans to:

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

If you develop symptoms:

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

For more information and updates related to COVID-19 visit the [COVID.SD.GOV](https://www.cdc.gov/covid19/) or [CDC.gov](https://www.cdc.gov/) or call 1-800-997-2880.

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Special Offer FREE Shipping!
Spring Basket Box



WOW! Handpicked fresh from the grove!
Perfect for Mother's Day! Mention Promo Code SPG20.

**Call 1-605-824-7535 to order item 836
or Visit HaleGroves.com/MB00133**

Order Item #836, mention Promo Code SPG20 for **FREE Shipping**.
Only \$29.99*, plus FREE Shipping. Satisfaction completely guaranteed.

Order by April 30th, 2020 for GUARANTEED Mother's Day delivery.



Since 1947.
Hale Groves, Vero
Beach, FL 32966

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Call now to receive
FREE Shipping!

Limited time offer, good while supplies last.
Not valid with any other offer or previous purchases.

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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 | Apr. 15 | Apr. 16 |
|---------------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| Minnesota | 1,154 | 1,242 | 1,336 | 1,427 | 1,621 | 1,650 | 1,695 | 1,809 | 1,912 |
| Nebraska | 523 | 577 | 648 | 704 | 814 | 871 | 901 | 952 | 1,066 |
| Montana | 332 | 354 | 377 | --- | 387 | 394 | 399 | 404 | 415 |
| Colorado | 5,655 | 6,202 | 6,510 | 6,893 | 7,303 | 7,691 | 7,941 | 8,280 | 8,675 |
| Wyoming | 230 | 239 | 253 | 261 | 270 | 275 | 282 | 288 | 296 |
| North Dakota | 251 | 269 | 278 | 293 | 308 | 331 | 341 | 365 | 393 |
| South Dakota | 393 | 447 | 536 | 626 | 730 | 868 | 988 | 1,168 | 1,311 |
| United States | 431,838 | 466,396 | 501,701 | 530,006 | 557,590 | 582,619 | 609,685 | 639,664 | 671,425 |
| US Deaths | 14,768 | 16,703 | 18,781 | 20,608 | 22,109 | 23,529 | 26,059 | 30,985 | 33,286 |

| | | | | | | | | | |
|---------------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| Minnesota | +85 | +88 | +94 | +91 | +194 | +29 | +45 | +114 | +103 |
| Nebraska | +45 | +54 | +71 | +56 | +110 | +57 | +30 | +51 | +114 |
| Montana | +13 | +22 | +23 | --- | +10 | +7 | +5 | +5 | +11 |
| Colorado | +226 | +547 | +308 | +383 | +410 | +388 | +250 | +339 | +395 |
| Wyoming | +9 | +9 | +14 | +8 | +9 | +5 | +7 | +6 | +8 |
| North Dakota | +14 | +18 | +9 | +15 | +15 | +23 | +10 | +24 | +28 |
| South Dakota | +73 | +54 | +89 | +90 | +104 | +138 | +120 | +180 | +143 |
| United States | +31,909 | +34,558 | +35,305 | +28,305 | +27,584 | +25,029 | +27,066 | +29,979 | +31,761 |
| US Deaths | +1,857 | +1,935 | +2,078 | 1,827 | +1,501 | +1,420 | +2,530 | +4,926 | +2,301 |

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Dakotas COVID-19 Update

South Dakota

Positive: +143 (80 from Smithfield Cluster) (1311 total) 598 from Smithfield cluster

Negative: +560 (9,239 total)

Hospitalized: +4 (55 total)

Deaths: +1 (Minnehaha County) (7 total)

Recovered: +44 (373 total)

No change on the community impact map

Hamlin +1 positive (2 total)

Jerauld +1 positive (4 total)

Lake: +1 positive (3 total)

Lincoln: +6 positive, +2 recovered (30 of 71 recovered)

Minnehaha: +131 positive, +42 recovered (221 of 1065 recovered)

Moody: First Positive Case

Pennington: +1 positive (10 total)

Turner: +1 recovered (2 of 5 recovered)

Yankton: +1 positive (23 total)

The N.D. DoH & private labs are reporting 387 total completed tests today for COVID-19, with 28 new positive cases, bringing the statewide total to 393.

State & private labs have conducted 11,704 total tests with 11,311 negative results.

163 ND patients are considered recovered.

| SOUTH DAKOTA CASE COUNTS | |
|--------------------------|------------|
| Test Results | # of Cases |
| Positive* | 1311 |
| Negative** | 9239 |
| Ever Hospitalized* | 55 |
| Deaths** | 7 |
| Recovered | 373 |

| AGE GROUP OF SOUTH DAKOTA COVID-19 CASES | | |
|--|------------|-------------|
| Age Range | # of Cases | # of Deaths |
| 0 to 19 years | 69 | 0 |
| 20 to 29 years | 249 | 0 |
| 30 to 39 years | 321 | 0 |
| 40 to 49 years | 266 | 0 |
| 50 to 59 years | 242 | 2 |
| 60 to 69 years | 130 | 2 |
| 70 to 79 years | 20 | 1 |
| 80+ years | 14 | 2 |

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| County | Total Positive Cases | # Recovered |
|-------------|----------------------|-------------|
| Aurora | 1 | 1 |
| Beadle | 21 | 19 |
| Bon Homme | 4 | 3 |
| Brookings | 9 | 6 |
| Brown | 15 | 10 |
| Charles Mix | 4 | 2 |
| Clark | 1 | 1 |
| Clay | 5 | 4 |
| Codington | 13 | 11 |
| Corson | 1 | 1 |
| Davison | 3 | 3 |
| Deuel | 1 | 1 |
| Fall River | 1 | 1 |
| Faulk | 1 | 1 |
| Hamlin | 2 | 1 |
| Hughes | 5 | 4 |
| Hutchinson | 2 | 2 |
| Hyde | 1 | 0 |
| Jerauld | 4 | 2 |
| Lake | 3 | 1 |

| | | |
|---------------|------|-----|
| Lawrence | 9 | 9 |
| Lincoln | 71 | 30 |
| Lyman | 2 | 2 |
| Marshall | 1 | 1 |
| McCook | 3 | 1 |
| Meade | 1 | 1 |
| Miner | 1 | 0 |
| Minnehaha | 1065 | 220 |
| Moody | 1 | 0 |
| Oglala Lakota | 1 | 1 |
| Pennington | 10 | 6 |
| Roberts | 4 | 3 |
| Sanborn | 3 | 0 |
| Spink | 3 | 2 |
| Sully | 1 | 0 |
| Todd | 1 | 1 |
| Turner | 5 | 2 |
| Union | 4 | 3 |
| Walworth | 5 | 0 |

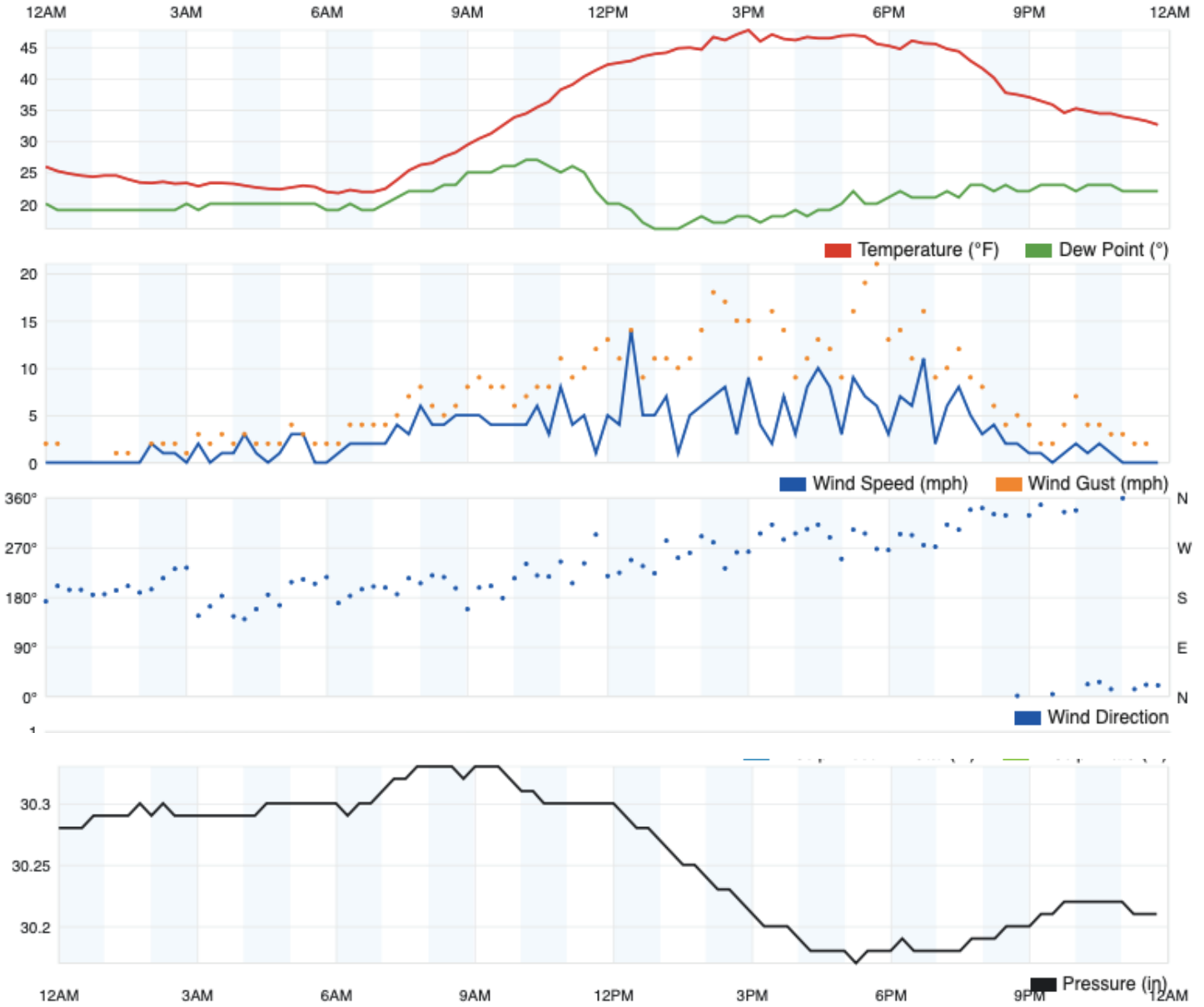
| SEX OF SOUTH DAKOTA COVID-19 CASES | | |
|------------------------------------|------------|-------------|
| Sex | # of Cases | # of Deaths |
| Male | 711 | 5 |
| Female | 600 | 2 |

| COVID-19 DEATHS IN SOUTH DAKOTA BY COUNTY | |
|---|-------------|
| County of Residence | # of Deaths |
| Beadle | 2 |
| McCook | 1 |
| Minnehaha | 3 |
| Pennington | 1 |

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Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs



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Today



Sunny

High: 53 °F

Tonight



Increasing
Clouds

Low: 34 °F

Saturday



Mostly Sunny

High: 59 °F

Saturday
Night



Partly Cloudy

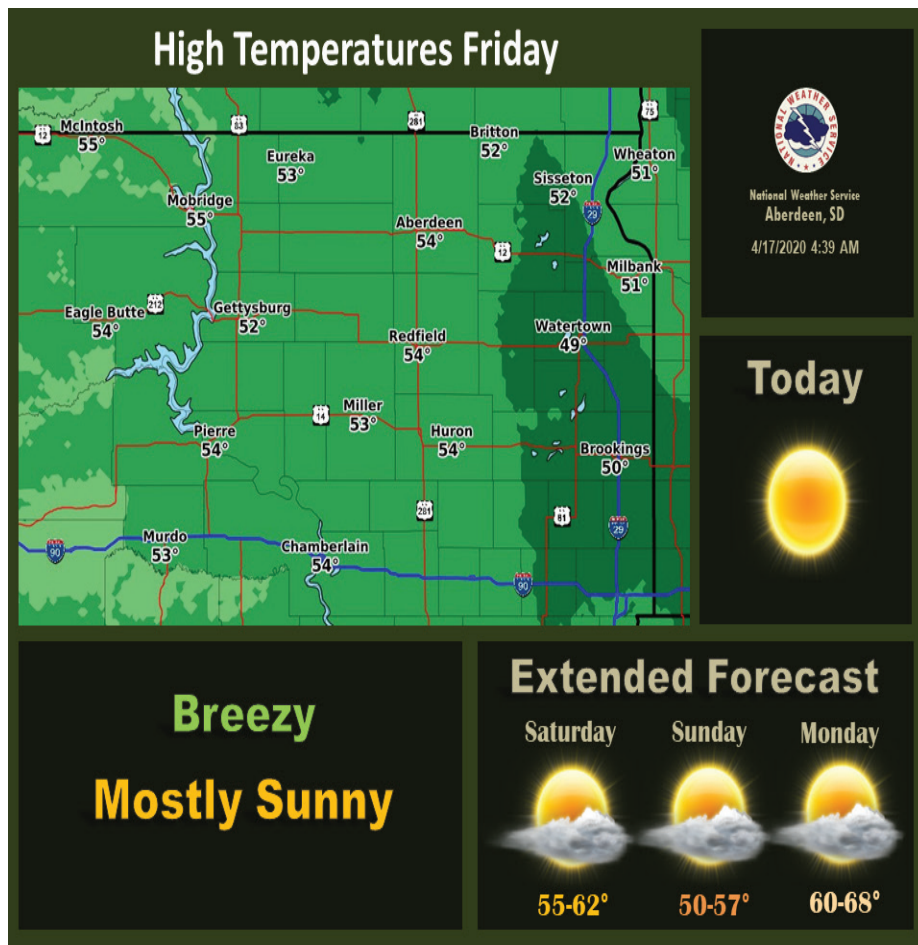
Low: 28 °F

Sunday



Sunny

High: 53 °F



Warmer temps and dry conditions highlight the weekend as we get back to near normal highs. Most areas can expect highs in the 50s all weekend, though some may reach into the low 60s, especially for Monday!

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Today in Weather History

April 17, 2006: A strong spring storm moved across the Northern and Central Plains, bringing precipitation and stiff northwest winds. Sustained winds of 30 to 50 mph, with gusts around 70 mph, were felt across a good portion of western South Dakota for more than 24 hours as the storm slowly crossed the region.

1922: Southern Illinois and Western Indiana saw two rounds of severe weather, including tornadoes. The first significant tornado occurred just before midnight on the 16 near Oakdale, Illinois. This tornado killed 4 and injured 22 others. Five additional tornadoes took place between midnight and 3 AM on the 17. During the mid-morning and early afternoon hours, two estimated F4 tornadoes caused devastation in Hedrick and near Orestes in Indiana. A postcard from one farm near Orestes was dropped near Mt. Cory, Ohio, 124 miles away.

1942: West Palm Beach, FL was soaked by 8.35 inches of rain in just two hours.

2002: The heat wave continued across the east as high pressure off the Carolina blocked a frontal boundary across the Plains. Records for the date included:

Newark, New Jersey: 97

NYC Central Park: 96

Hartford, Connecticut: 95

Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: 95

Reagan National Airport, DC: 95 (Tied monthly high)

Lynchburg, Virginia: 94

Atlantic City, New Jersey: 94

Norfolk, Virginia: 93

Providence, Rhode Island: 93

Boston, Massachusetts: 93

Portland, Maine: 80

1922 - A family of at least six tornadoes caused death and destruction along parts of a 210 mile path from north of Ogden IL to Allen County OH, killing sixteen persons. A post card, picked up in Madison County IN, was found 124 miles away near Mount Cory OH. (The Weather Channel)

1953 - One of the few severe hailstorms accompanied by snow, sleet, glaze, and rain, pelted parts of Kay, Osage, Creek, Tulsa, Washington, and Rogers Counties in northeastern Oklahoma late in the day. Nearly 10,000 insurance claims were filed. (The Weather Channel)

1965 - The Mississippi River reached a flood crest at Saint Paul MN four feet higher than any previous mark. During the next two weeks record levels were reached along the Mississippi between Saint Paul and Hannibal MO. Flooding caused more than 100 million dollars damage, but timely warnings kept the death toll down to just twelve persons. (David Ludlum)

1987 - Twenty-two cities in the central U.S. reported new record high temperatures for the date. Temperatures warmed into the 70s and 80s from the High Plains Region to the Mississippi Valley, with readings in the low 90s reported in the Southern Plains Region. Tulsa OK hit 92 degrees. (The National Weather Summary)

1988 - Heavy snow blanketed northern Arizona. Snowfall totals ranged up to 16 inches at Pinetop, with 10 inches reported at Flagstaff. Afternoon thunderstorms spawned a couple of tornadoes in Idaho. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1989 - Arctic cold invaded the north central U.S. Missoula MT was blanketed with four inches of snow, and Glasgow MT reported a record cold morning low of 14 degrees above zero. (Storm Data) (The National Weather Summary)

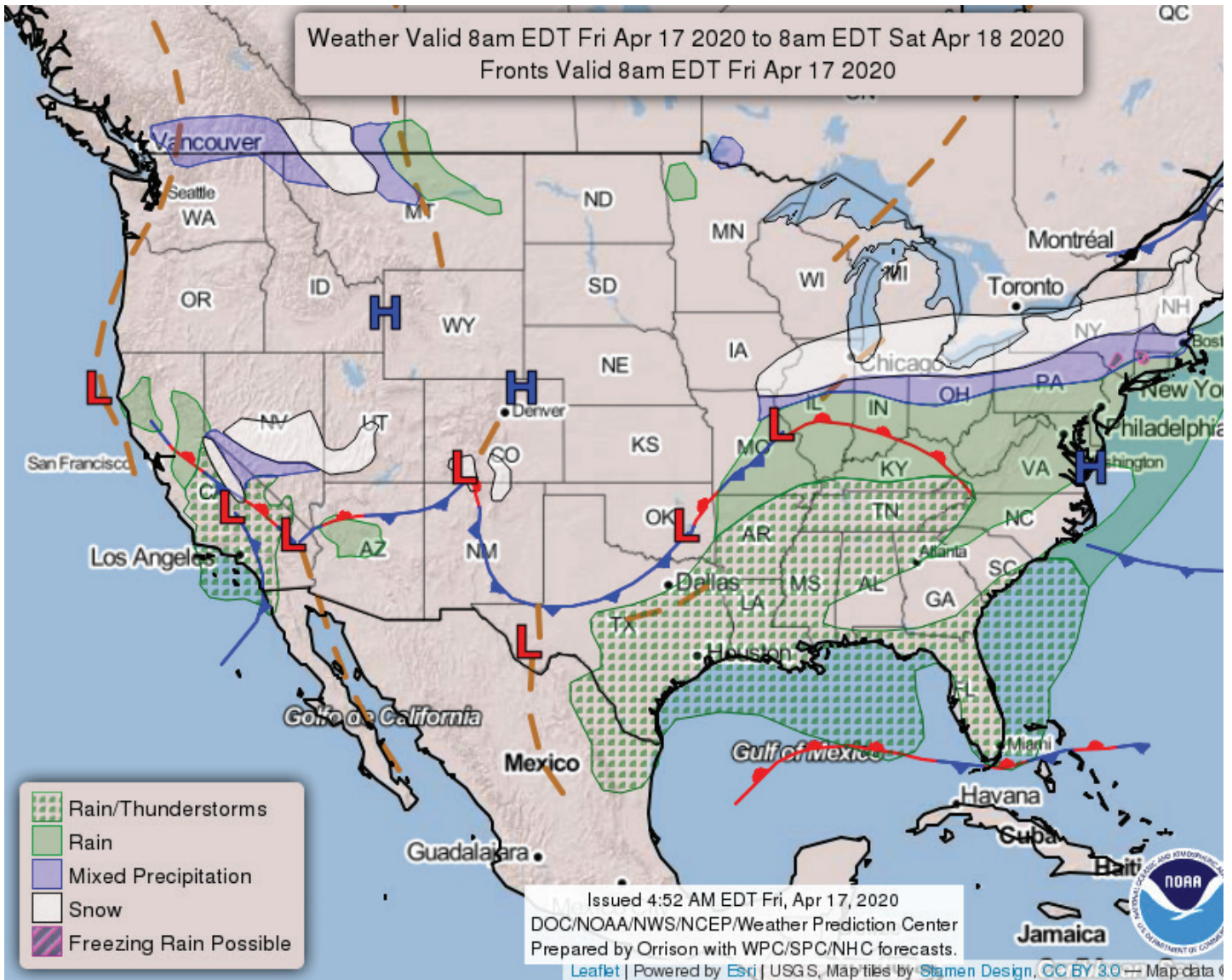
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Yesterday's Groton Weather Today's Info

High Temp: 47.7
Low Temp: 21.7
Wind: 21
Snow

Record High: 92° in 1913
Record Low: 10° in 1953
Average High: 58°F
Average Low: 32°F
Average Precip in April.: 0.80
Precip to date in April.: 0.94
Average Precip to date: 2.98
Precip Year to Date: 1.29
Sunset Tonight: 8:23 p.m.
Sunrise Tomorrow: 6:42 a.m.



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COMPLETELY COVERED

According to Greek legend, Achilles was the greatest warrior who ever lived. In Homer's Iliad, he was the hero of the Trojan Wars. When he was a baby, his mother wanted him to be invulnerable to injury. So, early in his life she took him to the River Styx, believing that it had miraculous powers, held him by his heels, and dipped him in the water. Only his heels were not covered by the water.

Eventually, he became a greatly respected and feared warrior! Unfortunately, he was killed in battle by an arrow that pierced his heel - the only spot that was not covered by the water from the River Styx. It is from this legend that we talk of "our Achilles heel."

Although it is only a legend, it teaches us a significant fact: Our surrender to Christ must be complete - it must include all of us: our hearts, minds, and bodies. Paul advises us that we are not "to let any part of our body become a tool of wickedness to be used for sinning...instead...let your whole body be as a tool to do what is right for the glory of God."

Surrender is often difficult for some of us for fear that we will fail our Lord. Does this come from the idea that we think we are responsible for the victory over sin? We are not! It is God working in us and through us and for us that gives us victory over sin through Christ. Whatever we do not surrender to God is our "Achilles heel" and will be targeted by Satan and bring about our death.

Prayer: Help us, Father, to remember that the battle and the victory are in Your hands. We know that if we surrender our "all" to You we will survive the attacks of Satan. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: Romans 6:12-14 Sin is no longer your master, for you no longer live under the requirements of the law. Instead, you live under the freedom of God's grace.

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2020 Groton SD Community Events

- **CANCELLED** Groton Lions Club Easter Egg Hunt - City Park (Saturday a week before Easter Weekend)
 - **CANCELLED** Dueling Piano's Baseball Fundraiser at the American Legion
 - **CANCELLED** Fireman's Fun Night (Same Saturday as GHS Prom)
 - **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

News from the Associated Press

Tribes question relief funds for Alaska Native corporations

By FELICIA FONSECA Associated Press

FLAGSTAFF, Ariz. (AP) — Native American leaders are raising questions about how \$8 billion in federal coronavirus relief for tribes will be distributed, with some arguing that for-profit Alaska Native corporations shouldn't get a share of the funding.

The U.S. Treasury Department is tasked with doling out the money by late April to help tribes nationwide stay afloat, respond to the virus and recover after having to shut down casinos, tourism operations and other businesses that serve as their main moneymakers.

"It is what Indian Country will rely on to start up again," said Cherokee Nation Principal Chief Chuck Hoskin Jr. "And Congress surely didn't intend to put tribal governments, which are providing health care, education, jobs, job training, and all sorts of programs, to compete against these Alaska corporate interests, which looks like a cash grab."

The Interior Department, which oversees the Bureau of Indian Affairs, said Alaska Native corporations are eligible for the funding, pointing to a definition that includes them as an "Indian Tribe" in the federal bill. The corporations are unique to Alaska and own most Native lands in the state under a 1971 settlement but are not tribal governments.

Tribes argue that the Interior Department has taken a limited view of the definition and that Congress intended for the money to go to the country's 574 federally recognized tribes that have a government-to-government relationship with the U.S.

The Treasury Department posted a form online Monday for tribes to submit information to get funding, including their land base, number of tribal citizens, corporate shareholders, employees and spending. The deadline to respond is Friday.

It's unclear how the agency will decide which tribe gets what. Emails sent to the Treasury Department went unanswered Thursday.

For some tribes, Monday was the first time they saw any mention that Alaska Native corporations would be eligible for tribal funding. They had to respond quickly because the deadline to weigh in on the funding formula was the same day.

Jonodev Chaudhuri, chairman of the Indian Law and Policy Group at the law firm Quarles and Brady LLP, said the timing is concerning.

"The federal government's responsibility to consult with tribal nations is based on not only longstanding policies, but it's also based on important standards of respect," said Chaudhuri, a former Interior Department official. "Consultation is to be meaningful and timely."

Federal officials held two talks with tribes by phone April 2 and April 9, drawing more than 3,000 participants, according to the Interior Department. Tara Sweeney, who oversees the Bureau of Indian Affairs, held a separate call with Alaska interests Monday.

Some tribes have suggested that Sweeney has personal motives in ensuring Alaska Native corporations receive funding. An Inupiaq Eskimo from Alaska's North Slope, she worked for nearly two decades for the Arctic Slope Regional Corp. — one of the largest and most profitable of the Native corporations in Alaska.

The Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe in South Dakota said it's prepared to file a court challenge to halt the distribution of funding, alleging Sweeney has recommended at least \$3 billion go to Alaska Native corporations.

The Interior Department said Sweeney has not made that recommendation and supports all indigenous people in the U.S.

"To suggest she has personal motives or that she is attempting to divert funds away from American Indians is completely false," the department said in a statement. "Her approach has always been focused on inclusiveness, transparency and partnerships."

U.S. Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer accused Sweeney in a tweet Thursday of diverting funds

for tribal governments to the corporations.

She responded with her own tweet: "Even for you, this is an ignorant and despicably low attack that could not be further from the truth. Perhaps you should read the law you negotiated and voted for as Alaska Natives are entitled to receive the funding from @USTreasury."

The Alaska Federation of Natives supported Sweeney, saying if the Interior Department was deviating from the law, the agency's solicitor would have taken action. Alaska has nearly 230 federally recognized tribal governments.

The Great Plains Tribal Chairmen's Association, the Inter-Tribal Council of Five Civilized Tribes, the National Congress of American Indians and the Navajo Nation also said Alaska Native corporations should not be on par with tribal governments.

___ Associated Press writer Stephen Groves in Rapid City, South Dakota, contributed to this story.

The Latest: Sioux Falls nursing home confirms COVID-19 cases **The Latest on coronavirus outbreak in South Dakota (all times local):**

6:15 p.m.

A Sioux Falls nursing home has confirmed eight cases of COVID-19 among residents and employees.

The Good Samaritan Village on Thursday said that five residents and two employees at its skilled nursing facility have tested positive for COVID-19 along with one employee in its assisted living facility. The Good Samaritan Society made the announcement after the Argus Leader received a tip about a possible confirmed case.

A spokesman for Sanford Health said the organization is working closely with the South Dakota Department of Health to ensure its response plan "meets the needs of this rapidly changing situation."

The Society has partnered with Sanford Health to test residents and staff who may have been exposed, and officials are taking extra precautions to monitor their health, Shawn Neisteadt said in an email.

"The health and safety of our residents, employees and the community we serve during this unprecedented pandemic remains our highest priority," Neisteadt said.

The Good Samaritan Village isn't the only assisted living facility that has had positive cases of the coronavirus in Sioux Falls.

The Prince of Peace Retirement Community, run by Avera Health, announced earlier this month that a resident had died after contracting the coronavirus. At the time the resident was one of three residents infected.

One new South Dakota COVID-19 death; 143 new cases confirmed

SIoux FALLS, S.D. (AP) — South Dakota health officials on Thursday announced one new death from the coronavirus, and the confirmed number of cases in the state rose to 1,311 — up 143 from the day before.

Over half of the total cases have been tied to an outbreak at a Smithfield pork processing plant in Sioux Falls. The plant is one of the largest known clusters of COVID-19 cases in the country. A total of 598 employees have confirmed infections, plus 135 of their close contacts.

One 64-year-old employee of the company died on Tuesday, according to his pastor. Health officials did not say if the death they reported Thursday was the Smithfield employee, but the death matches the age range and county of the employee.

Gov. Kristi Noem has said the plant is important to the nation's food supply and that getting it up and running is a "national security issue."

Officials from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention walked through the plant Thursday. Noem said she would release their findings in the coming days.

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

— This story has been corrected to show that 143 new coronavirus cases were confirmed, not 131.

Pandemic sends rural bankers survey index to all-time low

OMAHA, Neb. (AP) — An overwhelming majority of bankers in rural parts of 10 Plains and Western states expect the coronavirus outbreak to push their local areas into recession, according to a new survey released Thursday.

The overall index for the region plummeted from March's already anemic 35.5 to 12.1 in April — the lowest index recorded since the survey began in January 2006. Any score below 50 suggests a shrinking economy, while a score above 50 suggests a growing economy, survey organizers say.

Creighton University economist Ernie Goss, who oversees the survey, said more than nine in 10 bankers surveyed expect the measures being taken to fight the coronavirus to lead to a recession.

"This is up significantly from March when 61.3% of bankers anticipated such a recession," Goss said.

States and local leaders have issued stay-at-home orders or have limited the size of public gatherings to try to slow the spread of the virus, prompting some businesses to close. Many restaurants have been forced to close their dining rooms and only handle take-out or delivery orders.

About 94% of bankers surveyed this month reported a decline customer visits over the past two weeks, and nearly one-third surveyed said their bank had experienced higher loan delinquency rates as a result of the coronavirus threat, Goss said.

The survey's confidence index, which measures how bankers feel about the economy over the next six months, sank to 27.4 from March's 28.3.

The borrowing index rose to 75.8 from March's 66.1 as more farmers took out loans, and the employment index fell to a record-low 9.4, down from 48.3 in March.

Bankers from Colorado, Illinois, Iowa, Kansas, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, South Dakota and Wyoming were surveyed.

Flags lowered for Rep. Glanzer who died of the coronavirus

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) — Gov. Kristi Noem has ordered flags be flown at half-staff in honor of Rep. Bob Glanzer who died earlier this month from coronavirus complications.

The order was in effect Thursday until sundown on Monday, the day of his funeral.

Noem called Glanzer a man of true integrity and someone she greatly respected. The 74-year-old lawmaker had fallen ill almost two weeks ago before his death.

He was part of a cluster of COVID-19 cases around Huron. Glanzer's wife, brother-in-law and sister-in-law all had the virus, and Glanzer's 51-year-old niece, Mari Hofer, died of it, according to Hofer's husband, Quint Hofer.

Glanzer represented District 22, which is Beade and Kingsbury counties.

The Latest: Albania gets more masks, medical supplies

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:

- Trump gives governors options on how to reopen the economy.
- Spain is implementing new guidelines to count virus deaths.
- Community event that's expected to draw hundreds of thousands of people is scheduled in Belarus.

TIRANA, Albania — In a first visit since the monthlong virus lockdown, Hungarian Trade and Foreign Minister Peter Szijjarto went to Albania to offer medical assistance.

Albania's Foreign Ministry says the brief visit was held under tight security measures due to the COVID-19 situation.

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Szjijarto handed over to host Albanian acting Foreign Minister Gent Cakaj 100,000 masks and 5,000 medical suits and talked about Albania's path toward the European Union.

Last month, the European Union decided to launch full membership negotiations with Albania and North Macedonia.

Albania has been in a total lockdown due to the virus that has infected 539 people and killed 26.

NAIROBI, Kenya — Tanzania has started three days of national prayers, announced by the president, to seek divine intervention for the country to be spared from the deadly impact of the coronavirus

President John Magufuli previously said the government will not ban religious gatherings because the coronavirus will be combated by faith.

Four people have died and 88 have been confirmed infected by the virus in Tanzania.

TEHRN, Iran — Iran put the country's death toll from the coronavirus at 4,958 out of 79,494 confirmed cases.

Health Ministry Kianoush Jahanpour says 89 more people died from the virus since Thursday and 1,499 new cases were confirmed.

GENEVA — Organizers of the Montreux Jazz Festival have canceled the world-renowned event scheduled from July 3-18 because of the coronavirus outbreak, the first such cancellation in its 53-year history.

Organizers say the enhanced hygiene measures and physical distancing in Switzerland to fight COVID-19 mean it's not possible to hold the event that draws nearly 250,000 spectators each year.

Organizers are working to reschedule many of the planned performances to next year, including ones by Lionel Richie, Brittany Howard, Lenny Kravitz and Black Pumas.

MADRID — Spain says there are now 19,478 deaths of patients who tested positive for the new coronavirus, nearly 350 more than the number reported one day earlier, and 188,068 confirmed infections with over 5,000 new ones.

Health authorities are reshuffling the way to track the pandemic's impact in the country with new guidelines to count the dead, while an effort to make more tests is counting hundreds of patients cured or without symptoms that weren't recorded before.

The government says that it's following World Health Organization guidance and insists on counting only those who die having tested positive for the virus, whether they show symptoms or not and no matter where the death takes place.

The director of the health emergency coordination center, Fernando Simón, says that an effort to rein in a diversity of data from 17 Spanish regions is leading to corrections in past statistics.

"If the data is distorted it becomes difficult to take scientific decisions," Simón has said in a televised press conference.

Spain is mulling how to safely implement an incremental way out of one of Europe's strictest lockdown imposed in mid-March to spread the impact of the new virus.

MINSK, Belarus — The government of Belarus announced a mass community clean-up event next Saturday that will be attended by hundreds of thousands of state employees despite the growing coronavirus outbreak.

The announcement on Friday came as health officials reported the country's coronavirus caseload surpassing 4,200, which is twice more than a week ago.

Saturday community clean-ups are a Soviet tradition revived by the Belarus' leader Alexander Lukashenko. Every year, these events attract hundreds of thousands of government officials and employees of state-run companies.

Belarus remains one of the few countries affected by the coronavirus pandemic that hasn't gone into

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lockdown or imposed restrictions on public life in order to halt the spread of the virus.

Factories, stores and restaurants conduct business as usual in Belarus, stands at sports events are filled with spectators and masks are a rare sight in the capital of Minsk.

Lukashenko, who has ruled Belarus with an iron fist for more than two decades, dismissed concerns around the pandemic as "mass psychosis" and appeared more worried about the economic impact of a lockdown on the country's struggling economy.

MALE, Maldives — The Maldives authorities have extended a lockdown of its capital island and two other nearby islands by two more weeks after officials found four more COVID-19 patients with no trace of their possible sources of infection.

The extension comes in addition to a two-day lockdown announced on Thursday after three patients were found from the capital Male, showing signs of community spreading of the new coronavirus.

Maldives, an Indian Ocean archipelago is known for its luxury resort islands, had reported several patients from the resorts. However, a spillover into the society had been prevented by converting resorts into quarantine centers.

There were 23 COVID-19 patients found in resorts including 15 foreigners before the outbreak in the capital.

There are more than 100,000 people packed in Male island which is only one square mile (2.5 square kilometers) in extent.

BEIJING — China is accusing the U.S. administration of attempting to shift the focus from its own defects in dealing with coronavirus by talking-up a theory that the global pandemic was started by a pathogen that escaped from a Chinese laboratory.

"Anyone discerning can tell at a glance that the purpose of the U.S. is simply to confuse the public, divert attention, and shirk responsibility," Foreign Ministry spokesman Zhao Lijian told reporters at a daily briefing on Friday. "We have said many times that tracing of the virus' origin is a serious scientific issue and requires scientific and professional assessment."

Officials including President Donald Trump and Secretary of State Mike Pompeo have suggested the lab theory may be valid, with Pompeo saying, "The mere fact that we don't know the answers — that China hasn't shared the answers — I think is very, very telling."

Scientists say the virus arose naturally in bats. They say the leading theory is that infection among humans began at an animal market in Wuhan, China, probably from an animal that got the virus from a bat.

The Wuhan Institute of Virology specializes in research on animal-to-human transmission of such viruses but there is no evidence to backup the theory that the virus came from the lab.

PARIS — Two French women have been arrested in Israel in an investigation into alleged fraud over protective masks, now in demand in France and elsewhere due to the spread of the coronavirus.

The prosecutor's office in the French city of Rennes said in a statement Friday that fraudsters had used a counterfeit email address similar to that of the largest French maker of masks, Kolmi Hopen, near the city of Angers, to sell their apparently non-existent wares. An investigation showed that emails of other makers of protective equipment also were used.

The same alleged fraud team, posing as the French Treasury, also contacted individuals to collect unpaid taxes.

On Tuesday, Israeli police, working with French investigators, arrested two French women, aged 37 and 70 and from the same family, in Netanya. They are suspected of being at the center of the fake efforts to sell masks and hydroalcoholic gel in France, according to a statement from Philippe Astruc, prosecutor in the western city of Rennes.

Israeli police were questioning the two French women, and French judicial officials in Rennes formally opened an investigation into fraud and attempted fraud, money laundering and association with criminals.

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The fraud ploy came to light earlier this month after Kolmi Hopen, whose masks have been requisitioned by France, received numerous queries from France and overseas for prices of its masks.

LONDON — A leading public health expert says “system errors” have led to Britain having likely the highest coronavirus death rate in Europe, as the U.K. government comes under pressure over its record in fighting the pandemic.

Anthony Costello, a professor at the Institute for Global Health at University College London, said the U.K. “could see 40,000 deaths” by the time the first wave of the outbreak is over.

As of Thursday, 13,729 people had died in U.K. hospitals after testing positive for the coronavirus. The number does not include hundreds, and maybe thousands, of virus-related deaths in nursing homes and other settings.

Costello has been a prominent critic of the government’s strategy, saying it has not been testing enough people for the virus and has failed to trace and isolate people who have been in contact with the infected.

Britain was slower than many other European countries to impose mandatory restrictions on business and daily life to slow the spread of the coronavirus. A lockdown was imposed March 23 and on Thursday was extended for at least three more weeks.

LONDON — Prince William says the “most important thing” to do to deal with the mental stress of the coronavirus lockdown is to talk.

In an online video chat with the BBC with his wife Catherine, the Duchess of Cambridge, William said it’s “always underestimated” how much talking can help in maintaining mental health especially in an environment like this.

The royal couple have supported an initiative by Public Health England’s Every Mind Matters platform, by voicing a new film which signposts people to access tips and support for their mental health and well-being during the coronavirus pandemic. The film is set to be broadcast from April 20.

Catherine said “we mustn’t forget our mental well-being as well.”

William said members of the royal family have “really appreciated” being able to talk to each other online, though he conceded that the younger generation are a “little bit more tech-savvy.”

Williams also said he was initially “quite concerned” when he heard his father, Prince Charles, contracted the coronavirus given he is 71, and in the “fairly risky” category. Charles ended up having mild symptoms and came out of self-isolation on March 30.

William also laid out his hope that the world comes out of the pandemic in a better place, that it “recenters, refocuses and brings us all together.”

BELGRADE, Serbia — Serbs are set this weekend to celebrate Orthodox Christian Easter inside their homes because an 84-hour curfew will be in place as part of measures against the spread of the new coronavirus.

The government-imposed curfew will start at 5 p.m. on Friday and last until 5 a.m. on Tuesday. This means that only people with special permits will be allowed to go out of their homes.

The Serbian Orthodox Church has asked the authorities to revoke the curfew early on Sunday to allow for the believers to attend Easter liturgies, but this has been rejected from fear of the virus spreading through the crowds.

The Head of the church, Patriarch Irinej, then urged the flock to stay at home with their families and follow the advice of the epidemiologists. Patriarch Irinej says “this is an opportunity for us to think carefully about ourselves and the whole world.”

Nonetheless, dozens of citizens have visited churches in Serbia that are open before the start of the curfew.

Serbia has imposed some of the harshest measures in Europe to contain the outbreak. They include banning people over 65 years old from leaving their homes and a daily and weekend curfews.

Serbia has reported 103 deaths from the new coronavirus.

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

apnews.com/UnderstandingtheOutbreak

Poorer nations face bigger risk in easing virus restrictions

By ZEINA KARAM and BASSEM MROUE Associated Press

BEIRUT (AP) — As some wealthier Western nations begin easing coronavirus restrictions, many developing countries, particularly in the Middle East and Africa, want to do it too, but they cannot afford the luxury of any missteps.

They lack the key tools — a sturdy economy, well-equipped hospitals and large-scale testing — that are needed for finding their way out of the pandemic.

Even a spirited public debate about an exit strategy, common now in Europe, seems unthinkable in countries battered by conflict, corruption or poverty.

Consider Lebanon, a tiny country teetering on the abyss of bankruptcy with a fragile health system and a restless population. A monthlong lockdown has thrown tens of thousands more people into poverty, pressuring the government to loosen restrictions. But medical resources are limited, prompting doctors to call for continuing them, even at the risk of a social explosion.

It's the same in many developing countries: Easing lockdowns could increase infections and quickly overwhelm hospitals with limited beds and breathing machines. Keeping restrictions in place risks social upheaval and more economic losses.

At the same time, inadequate testing and a lack of transparency could lead to misguided decisions, said Rabah Arezki, chief economist for the Middle East and North Africa at the World Bank and a senior fellow at the Middle East Initiative.

"I worry that a disorderly release of the lockdown would be doing more harm than good in the context that we are navigating without statistics and relevant data," he said.

Even wealthy nations have little room to maneuver.

Germany, Europe's largest economy, announced a slight easing of restrictions, including reopening most shops next week. But Chancellor Angela Merkel cautioned that restarting the economy too quickly could rapidly overwhelm its comparatively robust health care system.

Western nations also face a severe economic downturn, but the impact is softened by massive government rescue programs for businesses and struggling families, including \$2.2 trillion in the United States. EU countries have agreed on a \$550 billion package and are working on tax breaks and other measures to cushion the impact.

The global community is offering help to poorer nations. The International Monetary Fund said it's prepared to commit its \$1 trillion in lending capacity to needy nations. The world's richest countries agreed to temporarily freeze poor nations' debt obligations, mainly in Africa.

Pakistan's prime minister has gone further, appealing to richer countries and international financial institutions to write off the debts of poorer countries. The IMF gave Pakistan \$1.5 billion in emergency financing to help absorb the impact of the pandemic.

In Egypt, the Arab world's most populous country where one in three people lives in poverty, the government has opted for a partial lockdown that includes a nighttime curfew, fearing a full closure would devastate a fragile economy.

Lebanon has been hesitant to apply for IMF assistance mainly due to reservations by the powerful Hezbollah group that it would come with conditions and encourage political interference.

Even before the pandemic, Lebanon was one of the world's most indebted countries and struggled to come up with a reform plan that would unlock billions in international aid.

In early March, the government defaulted on its sovereign debt. The currency has lost up to 60% of its value, inflation has soared, and banks have imposed capital controls on cash withdrawals and transfers, putting more strain on hospitals struggling to pay workers.

Firas Abiad, director of the Rafik Hariri University Hospital in Beirut, said the financial crisis also disrupted the import of medical supplies, leading to shortages of urgently needed protective equipment.

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Lebanon must expand testing, including in rural areas and refugee camps, and trace patients before restrictions can be eased, Abiad said.

In Yemen, Libya and Syria, where years of conflict have led to humanitarian disasters, there is fear that the scope of the outbreak is unknown due to a lack of testing, supplies and trained professionals.

In Africa, the virus has been confirmed in 52 of 54 countries, and lockdowns appear to be choking the continent's already vulnerable food supply.

South Africa, with the continent's most cases, has been able to slow the pace of infections with a strict lockdown that will last at least through April. But Africa's most industrialized economy was already in recession before the virus, and Finance Minister Tito Mboweni said restrictions must remain until the country can be sure to minimize the loss of life.

In Lebanon, there's no reliable social safety net. It announced plans to give about \$120 per needed family three weeks ago, but even that tiny aid has yet to materialize. Meanwhile, prices have more than doubled and its currency hit its highest pound-to-dollar exchange rate ever this week.

Lebanon was among the first countries in the Middle East to close schools in February, followed by restaurants, and a total lockdown on March 16. Those measures are in place until at least April 26. The country's prime minister on Thursday urged patience despite the "enormous economic price."

The IMF projected this week that Lebanon's economy will shrink by 12% in 2020 — the biggest contraction in the region.

There is concern that anti-corruption protests that began in October might re-ignite with more ferocity as conditions worsen. Small demonstrations already have broken out despite the lockdown. Last month, a Beirut taxi driver set his car ablaze after being fined for violating restrictions. In early April, a Syrian refugee died after setting himself on fire to protest his conditions.

Legislator Assem Araji, who heads parliament's health committee, urged patience, saying a continued lockdown "is better than an uncontrolled spread of the disease" in a country of 5 million that also hosts about 1 million Syrian refugees.

But Hassan Sharif, a 42-year-old minibus driver from the eastern city of Baalbek, said he lost his income and can barely feed his two children.

"We have reached a level of total despair and will return to the street (to protest), because dying of corona is easier than dying of hunger," he said.

Associated Press writers Kathy Gannon in Islamabad, Pakistan, Andrew Meldrum in Johannesburg, South Africa, and Samy Magdy in Cairo contributed.

Follow Zeina Karam at <https://twitter.com/zkaram>

Trump gives governors options on how to reopen the economy

By ZEKE MILLER, ALAN SUDERMAN and KEVIN FREKING Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump has given governors a road map for recovering from the economic pain of the coronavirus pandemic, laying out "a phased and deliberate approach" to restoring normal activity in places that have strong testing and are seeing a decrease in COVID-19 cases.

"We're starting our life again," Trump said during his daily press briefing. "We're starting rejuvenation of our economy again."

He added, "This is a gradual process."

The new guidelines are aimed at easing restrictions in areas with low transmission of the coronavirus, while holding the line in harder-hit locations. They make clear that the return to normalcy will be a far longer process than Trump initially envisioned, with federal officials warning that some social distancing measures may need to remain in place through the end of the year to prevent a new outbreak. And they largely reinforce plans already in the works by governors, who have primary responsibility for public health in their states.

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"You're going to call your own shots," Trump told the governors Thursday afternoon in a conference call, according to an audio recording obtained by The Associated Press. "We're going to be standing alongside of you."

Places with declining infections and strong testing would begin a three-phase gradual reopening of businesses and schools.

In phase one, for instance, the plan recommends strict social distancing for all people in public. Gatherings larger than 10 people are to be avoided, and nonessential travel is discouraged.

In phase two, people are encouraged to maximize social distancing and limit gatherings to no more than 50 people unless precautionary measures are taken. Travel could resume.

Phase three envisions a return to normalcy for most Americans, with a focus on identification and isolation of any new infections.

Trump said recent trends in some states were so positive that they could almost immediately begin taking the steps laid out in phase one.

"They will be able to go literally tomorrow," Trump said.

The guidelines recommend that states pass checkpoints that look at new cases, testing and surveillance data over the prior 14 days before advancing from one phase to another.

Governors of both parties made clear they will move at their own pace.

Delaware Gov. John Carney, a Democrat, said the guidelines "seem to make sense."

"We're days, maybe weeks away from the starting line and then you have to have 14 days of declining cases, of declining symptoms and hospital capacity that exists in case you have a rebound," he said.

West Virginia Gov. Jim Justice, a Trump ally, cautiously floated the idea of reopening parts of the state, but said testing capacity and contact tracing would need to be considerably ramped up before restrictions could be safely lifted.

"All would be forgotten very quickly if we moved into a stage quicker than we should, and then we got into a situation where we had people dying like flies," Justice told reporters.

At the earliest, the guidelines suggest, some parts of the country could see a resumption in normal commerce and social gatherings after a month of evaluating whether easing up on restrictions has led to a resurgence in virus cases. In other parts of the country, or if virus cases pick up, it could be substantially longer.

In briefing governors on the plan, Trump said they were going to be responsible for deciding when it is safe to lift restrictions in their states. Just days before, he had drawn swift pushback for claiming he had absolute authority to determine how and when states reopen.

"We have a very large number of states that want to get going and they're in very good shape," Trump said. "That's good with us, frankly."

The guidelines also include general recommendations to businesses as they plan for potential reopenings, suggesting temperature-taking, rapid COVID-19 testing and widespread disinfection efforts in workplaces.

Those most susceptible to the respiratory disease are advised to remain sheltered in place until their area enters the final phase — and even then are encouraged to take precautions to avoid close contact with other people.

Governors, for their part, have been moving ahead with their own plans for how to safely revive normal activity. Seven Midwestern governors announced Thursday they will coordinate on reopening their economies. Similar pacts were announced earlier in the week in the West and Northeast.

Two in three Americans expressed concerns that restrictions meant to slow the spread of the virus would be eased too quickly, according to a Pew Research Center survey released Thursday. More than 30,000 people in the United States have died from the virus.

Trump on Thursday claimed the U.S. has "built the most advanced and robust testing anywhere in the world." But even people close to him warned more would be necessary.

"We are struggling with testing at a large scale," South Carolina Sen. Lindsey Graham told ABC's "The View." "You really can't go back to work until we have more tests."

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Former Vice President Joe Biden, Trump's likely opponent in November's presidential election, said Thursday evening that Trump "kind of punted."

"We're not going to be able to really make significant changes in the three phases the president's talking about until we're able to test much more broadly," Biden said on CNN.

Suderman reported from Richmond, Va. Associated Press writers Jill Colvin in Washington, Paul Weber in Austin, Texas, Anthony Izaguirre in Charleston, W.Va., Mike Stobbe in New York and Mike Catalini in Trenton, N.J., contributed to this report.

Pro-Trump protesters push back on stay-at-home orders

By SARA BURNETT and BRIAN SLODYKO Associated Press

While many Americans are filled with fear, Melissa Ackison says the coronavirus pandemic has filled her with anger. The stay-at-home orders are government overreach, the conservative Ohio state Senate candidate says, and the labeling of some workers as "essential" arbitrary.

"It enrages something inside of you," said Ackison, who was among those who protested Republican Gov. Mike DeWine's orders at the statehouse in Columbus with her 10-year-old son. She has "no fear whatsoever" of contracting the virus, she said Thursday, dismissing it as hype.

The Ohio protest was among a growing number staged outside governors' mansions and state Capitols across the country. In places like Oklahoma, Texas and Virginia, small-government groups, supporters of President Donald Trump, anti-vaccine advocates, gun rights backers and supporters of right-wing causes have united behind a deep suspicion of efforts to shut down daily life to slow the spread of the coronavirus. As their frustration with life under lockdown grows, they've started to openly defy the social distancing rules in an effort to put pressure on governors to ease them.

Some of the protests have been small events, promoted via Facebook groups that have popped up in recent days and whose organizers are sometimes difficult to identify. Others are backed by groups funded by prominent Republican donors, some with ties to Trump. The largest so far, a rally of thousands that jammed the streets of Lansing, Michigan, on Wednesday, looked much like one of the president's rallies — complete with MAGA hats or Trump flags — or one of the tea party rallies from a decade ago.

The signs of frustration come as Trump has pushed for easing stay-at-home orders and tried to look ahead to restarting the economy. He unveiled a framework for governors to follow on Thursday, but acknowledged the governors will have the final say on when their state is ready. Health experts have warned that lifting restrictions too quickly could result in a surge of new cases of the virus.

But the president and some of his supporters are impatient. Thousands of people in their cars packed the streets of Lansing to protest Democratic Gov. Gretchen Whitmer's stay-at-home order and other restrictions. Outside the Capitol, some chanted "Lock her up," a throwback to Trump's calls during the 2016 election about his rival Hillary Clinton. One woman held a sign reading "Heil Witmer."

Asked about the protesters, Trump on Thursday expressed sympathy with their frustration — "They're suffering ... they want to get back" — and dismissed concerns about the health risks of ignoring state orders and potentially exposing themselves to the virus.

"I think they're listening. I think they listen to me," he said. "They seem to be protesters that like me and respect this opinion, and my opinion's the same as just about all of the governors. Nobody wants to stay shut."

Polls show the protesters' views are not widely held. An AP-NORC survey earlier this month found large majorities of Americans support a long list of government restrictions, including closing schools, limiting gatherings and shuttering bars and restaurants. Three-quarters of Americans backed requiring people to stay in their homes. And majorities of both Democrats and Republicans gave high marks for the state and city governments.

But the protests expose resilient partisan divisions, particularly in battleground Michigan. The protest there was organized by the Michigan Conservative Coalition, a group founded by a pro-Trump state representa-

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tive and his wife, Meshawn Maddock, who is on the advisory board for an official Trump campaign group called "Women for Trump" and is also the co-founder of Michigan Trump Republicans. Their daughter is a field organizer for the Michigan Republican Party.

Another group that promoted the event, the Michigan Freedom Fund, is run by Greg McNeilly, a longtime political adviser to the DeVos family, who are prolific Republican donors and have funded conservative causes across the state for decades. McNeilly was campaign manager for Dick DeVos, the husband of current U.S. Education Secretary Betsy DeVos, during his failed bid for governor in 2006. The group, which does not have to disclose its donors, raised over \$4 million in 2018, according to its most recent tax statements.

Whitmer was among the governors who expressed concern about the gatherings, saying it put people at risk and could have prolonged the shutdown. Michigan had recorded over 2,000 deaths from COVID-19 as of Thursday, and close to 30,000 confirmed cases of people infected with the virus. Roughly one-quarter of the state's workforce has filed for unemployment.

But it's not just Democratic governors feeling the heat. A procession of cars swarmed around the Republican-dominated statehouse in Oklahoma City on Wednesday, with messages written on windows or signs that said "stop killing our economy," "we need our church" and "time 2 work."

Carol Hefner, who previously served as an Oklahoma co-chair of Trump's 2016 campaign, was a major organizer of the event. Hefner, whose husband is part of the Hefner Energy empire and currently operates a company that makes Argentinian meat sauce, differentiated it from many of the others, characterizing it as a "rally" rather than a protest.

"We're not New York. Their problems are not our problems," Hefner said. "We are rallying around our governor and our state to encourage the opening up of our businesses and the restoration of our state in a timely fashion."

Other gatherings have links to fringe groups. A protest Thursday in the Texas capital of Austin, where protesters chanted "Free Texas" and "Make America Free Again," was broadcast live by InfoWars TV, part of a company owned by conspiracy theorist and radio host Alex Jones.

The Ohio event earlier this week brought together a collection of anti-vaccine advocates, Second Amendment supporters, tea party activists and other anti-government activists. A Columbus Dispatch photo of Ackison and other protesters yelling through glass doors of the statehouse rocketed around the internet.

Ackison said that while she views DeWine's efforts as constitutional overreach, she would be fine if Trump were to act with similar authority to force governors to bring the states back on line.

"As patriots, we put President Trump in office for a reason," she said. "If he's not able to give a convincing enough argument to these governors that they need to open up, then he needs to do something to take action."

The protests were advertised on Facebook by groups such as Reopen Virginia and End the Lockdown PA. A protest in Richmond, Virginia, on Thursday grew out of a conversation in the Facebook group Virginians for Medical Freedom, organizer Gary Golden said. The group often turns out at the Capitol in Richmond to oppose vaccine-related measures.

Kelly Mullin, who stood near a "don't tread on me" flag spread on the grass near the governor's mansion, said she brought her sons to the event to teach them a lesson about liberty.

Mullin said that she thought the risk posed by the coronavirus depends on an individual's health and that people can take basic steps to protect themselves, including getting enough sleep, eating organic produce and getting outside.

"I mean, that's where our tax dollars should be going. Eat broccoli," she said.

Infectious-disease specialists say there is no evidence that eating specific foods can prevent or kill the virus. Most people with the coronavirus experience mild or moderate symptoms, and people with health issues such as asthma and older people are at greater risk of death from COVID-19.

Associated Press writers Sarah Rankin in Richmond, Va., Sean Murphy in Oklahoma City, Okla., David Eggert in Lansing, Mich., and Scott Bauer in Madison, Wis., contributed to this report.

Africa could see 300,000 coronavirus deaths this year

By CARA ANNA Associated Press

JOHANNESBURG (AP) — Africa could see 300,000 deaths from the coronavirus this year even under the best-case scenario, according to a new report released Friday that cites modeling from Imperial College London.

Under the worst-case scenario with no interventions against the virus, Africa could see 3.3 million deaths and 1.2 billion infections, the report by the U.N. Economic Commission for Africa said.

Even with "intense social distancing," under the best-case scenario the continent could see more than 122 million infections, the report said.

Any of the scenarios would overwhelm Africa's largely fragile and underfunded health systems, experts have warned. Under the best-case scenario, \$44 billion would be needed for testing, personal protective equipment and treatment, the report said, citing UNECA estimates. The worst-case scenario would cost \$446 billion.

The continent as of Friday had more than 18,000 confirmed virus cases, but experts have said Africa is weeks behind Europe in the pandemic and the rate of increase has looked alarmingly similar.

The new report is the most detailed public projection yet for coronavirus infections and deaths in Africa, where more than 1.3 billion people are bracing for the pandemic.

Poverty, crowded urban conditions and widespread health problems make Africa "particularly susceptible" to the virus, the U.N. report said. "Of all the continents Africa has the highest prevalence of certain underlying conditions, like tuberculosis and HIV/AIDS."

On Thursday, a World Health Organization official said one projection over the next six months shows more than 10 million severe cases of the virus.

"But these are still to be fine-tuned," said Michel Yao, the WHO's emergency operations manager in Africa, adding that public health measures could have an impact in limiting cases. He did not give the source of the projection.

The new report also warns of severe economic pain across Africa amid the pandemic, with growth contracting 2.6% in the worst-case scenario and an estimated 27 million people pushed into extreme poverty. The World Bank has said sub-Saharan Africa could fall into its first recession in a quarter-century.

"Collapsed businesses may never recover," the new report said. "Without a rapid response, governments risk losing control and facing unrest."

Nearly 20 European and African leaders called this week for an immediate moratorium on all African debt payments, public and private, until the pandemic is over, as well as at least \$100 billion in immediate financial help so countries can focus on fighting the virus.

The U.N. report said the continent has no fiscal space to deal with shocks from the pandemic and recommended a "complete temporary debt standstill for two years for all African countries, low and middle income included."

The report comes days before African officials launch a new initiative to dramatically accelerate testing for the new virus. More than 1 million coronavirus tests are being rolled out starting next week to address a major gap in assessing the true number of cases on the continent.

It's possible that 15 million tests will be required in Africa over the next three months, the head of the African Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, John Nkengasong, told reporters Thursday.

Africa has suffered in the global competition for badly needed medical equipment but in recent days created a continental platform so its 54 countries can team up to bulk-buy items at more reasonable prices.

One major shipment of equipment, including more than 400 ventilators, arrived this week for sharing among all 54 countries.

For most people, the coronavirus causes mild to moderate symptoms such as fever and cough. But for some, especially older adults and those with other health problems, it can cause pneumonia and death.

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

'Tip of the iceberg:' Virus death toll seriously incomplete

By ARITZ PARRA, MIKE CORDER and JOE McDONALD Associated Press

MADRID (AP) — China acknowledged Friday that the coronavirus death toll for epicenter of Wuhan was 50% higher than previously reported — a major revision that highlights just how seriously current numbers on infections and deaths around the globe may be understating the true toll of the pandemic.

Incomplete or unreliable figures about the pandemic take on an oversized influence during times of crisis, as medical staff struggle to figure out how to cope with surges of sick people and governments have to make crucial decisions about when and how they can begin easing lockdown restrictions to resuscitate their ailing economies.

As virus deaths mounted — with the United States reporting the nation's highest daily death toll yet at nearly 4,600 — the economic devastation from the lockdowns designed to curb the spread of the coronavirus is becoming even more shocking.

Unemployment in the United States rose by 5.2 million, bringing the four-week total to a staggering 22 million. China's economy shrank 6.8% in the quarter ending in March from the same period a year ago, its worst contraction since before market-style economic reforms began in 1979. And in Europe, car sales tanked 55% last month amid the lockdowns, a drop twice as steep as even took place during the 2008-09 global financial crisis.

Authorities and experts say both infections and virus deaths have been under-reported almost everywhere. Thousands of people have died with COVID-19 symptoms — many in nursing homes, which have been ravaged by a disease that hits the elderly the hardest — without ever being tested. Four months into the outbreak, nations are still struggling to lift their testing capacities — and many are still far from their announced goals.

Spain on Friday ordered the country's 17 autonomous regions to unify the criteria on counting the dead from the pandemic. Spain has counted more than 19,000 virus deaths out of more than 182,000 infections, but the system leaves out the patients who died with symptoms but were not tested.

"We are probably only seeing the tip of the iceberg, only a part of the cases that for sure are happening in Spain," Barcelona University epidemiologist Antoni Trilla, who heads the Spanish government's expert panel on the pandemic, told Cadena SER radio.

Britain's official death toll, which is approaching 14,000, has come under increasing scrutiny because it does not include any deaths at home or in nursing homes.

The country's statistics agency has indicated the actual number of deaths could be around 15% higher, though others think it will end up being a lot more than that amid growing reports of a sharp increase in coronavirus outbreaks in nursing homes.

Belgium's death toll jumped when it began including suspected COVID-19 victims in nursing homes. But the government insists its count injects much-needed transparency into the murky numbers.

"Accounting for suspicious cases is necessary. Especially in difficult situations where it is complicated to confirm cases," said Emmanuel Andre, a spokesman for Belgium's crisis center.

Worldwide, the outbreak has infected more than 2.1 million people and killed more than 145,000, according to a tally by Johns Hopkins University, though the true numbers are believed to be much higher. The death toll in the U.S. topped 33,000, with more than 670,000 confirmed infections.

China raised its overall death toll to over 4,600 after the city of Wuhan, where the outbreak first took hold, added nearly 1,300 deaths. Questions have long swirled around the accuracy of China's case reporting, with some saying officials sought to minimize the outbreak that began in December.

Africa could see 300,000 virus deaths even under the best-case scenario, according to a new report that cites modeling by Imperial College London. The continent as of Friday had more than 18,000 confirmed virus cases, but experts say Africa is weeks behind Europe in the pandemic and the rate of increase has

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looked alarmingly similar.

The spread of the virus is declining in such places as Italy, Spain and France, but rising or continuing at a high level in Britain, Russia and Turkey. Singapore reported a record daily high of 728 new cases as it ramped up testing at dormitories crammed with foreign workers.

Economists said U.S. unemployment could reach 20% in April, the highest since the Depression of the 1930s. Layoffs are spreading well beyond stores, restaurants and hotels to white-collar professionals such as software programmers and legal assistants.

President Donald Trump reacted to the pressure on the economy by outlining a phased approach to reopening parts of the country where the pandemic is being brought under control. He told the nation's governors that restrictions could be eased to allow businesses to reopen over the next several weeks in places that have extensive testing and a marked decrease in COVID-19 cases.

"We are not opening all at once, but one careful step at a time," Trump said.

New York, the deadliest virus hot spot in the U.S., reported more encouraging signs, with a drop in the daily number of deaths statewide and the overall count of people in the hospital.

"We've controlled the beast," Gov. Andrew Cuomo said. Still, New York state has over 40% of all U.S. deaths, and Cuomo extended the state's lockdown through at least May 15.

In New Jersey, police acting on an anonymous tip found at least 18 bodies over two days at a nursing home in Andover Township that were waiting to be picked up by a funeral home.

Like the U.S., many European countries have seen heavy job losses, but places like Germany and France are using government subsidies to keep millions of people on payrolls.

Not so in India, where 176 million people who live on under \$2 a day are getting more hungry and desperate by the hour as their incomes dry up under the government's strict coronavirus lockdown. Tens of thousands of newly jobless have walked miles to their ancestral villages in search of food and shelter, only to be shunned by locals who fear they are bringing the dreaded virus with them.

"These big leaders take decisions in their big houses!" said Rajesh Dhaikar, a balloon seller in Prayagraj in central India. "Did anyone ask the poor what they are eating?"

For many of the world's roughly 300 million Orthodox Christians, Friday was a shadow of Easter's past as virus restrictions shut down traditional celebrations of the most important religious holiday in their calendar.

In Greece, roadblocks were set up and fines doubled for anybody caught driving without justification during the long weekend that usually sees families return to their ancestral villages to roast lamb in their gardens.

"This Easter is different. We will not go to our villages, we will not roast in our yards, we will not go to our churches. And of course, we will not gather in the homes of relatives and friends," government spokesman Stelios Petsas said. "For us to continue being together, this year we stay apart."

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

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

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

By The Associated Press undefined

Your daily look at late-breaking news and stories that are being talked about:

1. ISS CREW LANDS IN KAZAKHSTAN

An International Space Station crew has landed safely in Kazakhstan after more than 200 days in space.

2. ANXIETY REMAINS HIGH 25 YEARS AFTER OKLAHOMA CITY BOMBING

Ordinarily, survivors and victims' families would gather Sunday at the memorial where the Alfred P. Murrah Building once stood to pay tribute to the lives that were lost in the Oklahoma City bombing 25 years

ago, but these are not ordinary times.

3. SKOREAN COURT TO RE-OPEN CASE ON ABUSIVE VAGRANT FACILITY

South Korea's Supreme Court says it will re-open a case related to the enslavement and abuse of thousands of people at a vagrants' facility in the 1970s and 1980s.

4. UKRAINE FORCES, RUSSIAN-BACKED REBELS EXCHANGE PRISONERS

The office of Ukraine's president says Ukrainian forces and Russia-backed rebels have exchanged 34 more prisoners.

China's virus death toll revised up sharply after review

By **KEN MORITSUGU Associated Press**

BEIJING (AP) — China's official death toll from the coronavirus pandemic jumped sharply Friday as the hardest-hit city of Wuhan announced a major revision that added nearly 1,300 fatalities.

The new figures resulted from an in-depth review of deaths during a response that was chaotic in the early days. They raised the official toll in Wuhan by 50% to 3,869 deaths. While China has yet to update its national totals, the revised numbers push up China's total to 4,632 deaths from a previously reported 3,342.

The higher numbers are not a surprise — it is virtually impossible to get an accurate count when health systems are overwhelmed at the height of a crisis — and they confirm suspicions that many more people died than the official figures had showed.

The undercount stemmed from several factors, according to a notification issued by Wuhan's coronavirus response headquarters and published by the official Xinhua News Agency.

The reasons included the deaths of people at home because overwhelmed hospitals had no room for them, mistaken reporting by medical staff focused on saving lives, and deaths at a few medical institutions that weren't linked to the epidemic information network, it said.

"As a result, belated, missed and mistaken reporting occurred," Xinhua quoted an unidentified official from the city's response headquarters as saying.

Deaths outside hospitals were not registered previously and some medical institutions reported cases late or not at all, the official said.

A group to review the numbers was established in late March. It looked at data from multiple sources including the city's hospital and funeral service systems and collected information from fever clinics, temporary hospitals, quarantine sites, prisons and elderly care centers.

The review found 1,454 additional deaths, as well as 164 that had been double-counted or misclassified as coronavirus cases, resulting in a net increase of 1,290. The number of confirmed cases in the city of 11 million people was revised up slightly to 50,333.

Questions have long swirled around the accuracy of China's case reporting, with Wuhan in particular going several days in January without reporting new cases or deaths. That has led to accusations that Chinese officials were seeking to minimize the impact of the outbreak and could have brought it under control sooner.

A group of eight medical workers, including a doctor who later died from the virus, were even reprimanded and threatened by police after they tried to alert others about the disease over social media.

Chinese officials have denied covering up cases, saying their reports were accurate and timely. However, the U.N.'s World Health Organization has come under criticism for defending China's handling of the outbreak and U.S. President Donald Trump has suspended funding to WHO over what he alleges is its pro-China bias.

Trump's blaming of China came after he initially showered praise on Chinese President Xi Jinping for the country's response, while largely dismissing the risk it posed to the U.S.

At the start of the outbreak, China proceeded cautiously and largely in secret, emphasizing political stability. Experts estimate more than 3,000 people were infected before China's government told the public about the gravity of the situation, which officials had concluded six days earlier.

The risk of sustained human-to-human transmission was also downplayed, even while infected people entered hospitals across the country and the first case outside China was found, in Thailand.

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As Trump and other U.S. officials and lawmakers started blaming China for the outbreak, Chinese officials sought to shift blame back to the U.S. "It might be US army who brought the epidemic to Wuhan," foreign ministry spokesman Zhao Lijian tweeted in March, picking up on an unsubstantiated conspiracy theory.

Coronavirus could complicate Trump's path to reelection

By **JONATHAN LEMIRE, NICHOLAS RICCARDI and THOMAS BEAUMONT** Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — The coronavirus is poised to reshape the political map, pummeling battleground states and alarming Republicans who see early signs of an election that could be a referendum on President Donald Trump's management of the crisis.

The pandemic, which has killed more than 30,000 Americans and left millions out of work, has eviscerated Trump's hope to run for reelection on a strong economy. A series of states he won in 2016 could tilt toward Democrats.

In Florida, a Republican governor closely aligned with Trump has come under scrutiny for being slow to close the state. In Wisconsin, the Democratic victor in last week's Supreme Court race captured 28 counties, up from the 12 that Hillary Clinton won four years ago. In Michigan, a Democratic governor has seen her approval rating rise against the backdrop of a fight with Trump. And in Arizona, low marks for Trump could be enough to turn the formerly Republican stronghold into a tossup.

"It makes me wonder if there's something brewing in the weaker elements of the Trump base," said Paul Maslin, a Wisconsin-based Democratic pollster. "Is the pandemic fight the final straw that's going to cause some of this small slice of votes he needs to win these states to back away?"

Trump's public approval rating has remained consistent nationally throughout his presidency, and some polls even suggested an uptick at the onset of the pandemic. And his unique brand of politics rooted in cultural grievances could once again overcome hurdles that would sink other presidents seeking reelection, especially if the pandemic wanes or the economy rebounds.

But Trump's campaign is concerned about losing support in several key swing states, particularly Florida and Wisconsin, according to five current and former campaign staffers who spoke to The Associated Press on the condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to speak publicly about internal strategy. There are also growing worries about Arizona and Pennsylvania.

There is no better example of the altered map confronting Trump than Michigan, which he captured in 2016 by fewer than 11,000 votes.

The mounting deaths in heavily African American Detroit and the politically dynamic suburban counties have been the backdrop for the tiff between Gov. Gretchen Whitmer and Trump. Though her handling of the virus outbreak has prompted some public protests, Whitmer's poll numbers have gone up and her criticism of the federal response prompted Trump to obliquely dismiss the governor, telling virus task force members "Don't call the woman in Michigan."

In a sign of enthusiasm, participation in Democrats' March primary was up 32% over 2016 as the party rallied around its likely nominee, former Vice President Joe Biden. The Trump campaign already had a light footprint in Michigan — it does not have a single field office — and advisers privately concede it could be the toughest battleground state to hold.

Many pollsters believe Wisconsin could be the tipping point this November for either candidate to reach the needed 270 electoral votes. The state has long been considered the Rust Belt prize Trump was likeliest to keep, but poignant images of mask-wearing voters lining up outside Milwaukee's few open polling places last week signaled Democratic enthusiasm.

"We are starting to see more evidence that suburban voters disapprove of the way Trump is handling the coronavirus pandemic," said Democratic strategist Adrienne Elrod, who notes that counties outside Philadelphia and Phoenix "have a similar electorate to the suburban areas that delivered a huge win for Democrats in Wisconsin."

Although the state Supreme Court race received national attention, Republicans were quick to dismiss it since only Democrats held a competitive presidential primary, boosting that party's turnout. Wisconsin's

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spring Supreme Court contests have been a shaky predictor of presidential elections, which usually feature twice as many voters.

"President Trump has been clear — through actions and words — that what matters most is the health and safety of every American. This crisis is hitting Americans — not Democrats or Republicans," said Trump campaign spokeswoman Erin Perrine. "To try and politicize this crisis in terms of the election is ludicrous."

Although Arizona hasn't yet seen a spike in infections, Biden's promise of pragmatic, experienced management may play well in a state that has turned purple. A Biden victory there would build pressure on Trump to hold two of the trio of Wisconsin, Michigan and Pennsylvania.

The pandemic has hamstrung the Trump campaign's effort to build momentum. Though its digital outreach has ramped up, the campaign has been unable to wield its financial advantage over Biden and can't hold its signature rallies to bolster enthusiasm and collect valuable voter data.

"We can't wait to get back out there and do things the old-fashioned way," said Lara Trump, a senior campaign official and the president's daughter-in-law.

Employment has cratered in many of the states key to Trump's reelection.

The economy shed 22 million jobs in the past four weeks, according to requests for unemployment benefits. And while some of those jobs will return as the lockdown gets lifted, it's unclear how quickly workers will be needed at hotels in Florida, auto plants in Michigan and stores and offices that fill Pennsylvania, Wisconsin and Arizona.

Both Michigan and Pennsylvania have lost more than 1 million jobs since the outbreak, which implies unemployment rates of more than 20% in both states, according to Labor Department figures. Unemployment filings suggest Florida employers have let go of roughly 6% of its jobs, but declines there could worsen as applicants have struggled to access unemployment benefits.

Without Florida, Trump's path to victory becomes nearly impossible. Its Trump-friendly governor, Ron DeSantis, took heat for allowing beaches to stay open despite the risk of spread to his state's massive population of vulnerable senior citizens.

"They thought they were going to be running for reelection with a very popular governor, but DeSantis has taken some real hits over his handling of this," said Republican strategist Alex Conant, who worked for Marco Rubio's presidential campaign. "The image of spring breakers spreading coronavirus is going to be replayed in October."

Riccardi reported from Denver and Beaumont reported from Des Moines, Iowa. Associated Press writers Zeke Miller and Jill Colvin in Washington, Josh Boak in Baltimore and Steve Peoples in Montclair, N.J. contributed to this report.

Lockdown weighs heavily on Orthodox Christians during Easter

By ELENA BECATOROS and DARIA LITVINOVA Associated Press

ATHENS, Greece (AP) — For Orthodox Christians, this is normally a time of reflection and mourning followed by joyful release, of centuries-old ceremonies steeped in symbolism and tradition.

But this year, Easter — by far the most significant religious holiday for the world's roughly 300 million Orthodox — has essentially been cancelled.

There will be no Good Friday processions behind the flower-bedecked symbolic bier of Christ, to the haunting hymn of the Virgin Mary's lament for the death of her son. No hugs and kisses, or joyous proclamations of "Christ is risen!" as church bells ring at midnight on Holy Saturday. No family gatherings over lamb roasted whole on a spit for an Easter lunch stretching into the soft spring evening.

As the coronavirus rampages across the globe, claiming tens of thousands of lives, governments have imposed lockdowns in a desperate bid to halt the pandemic. Businesses have been closed and church doors shut to prevent the virus's insidious spread.

For some, the restrictions during Easter are particularly tough.

"When there was freedom and you didn't go somewhere, it didn't bother you," said Christina Fenesaki

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while shopping in Athens' main meat market for lamb — to cook in the oven at home in the Greek capital instead of on a spit in her ancestral village. "But now that we have the restrictions, it bothers you a lot. It's heavy."

In Greece, where more than 90% of the population is baptized into the Orthodox Church, the government has been at pains to stress that this year's Easter cannot be normal.

It imposed a lockdown early on, and so far has managed to keep the number of deaths and critically ill people low — 105 and 69 respectively as of Thursday, among a population of nearly 11 million.

But officials fear any slippage in social distancing could have dire consequences, particularly during a holiday that normally sees people cram into churches and flock to the countryside. Roadblocks have been set up, and fines doubled to 300 euros (\$325), for anyone found driving without justification during the holiday.

"This Easter is different. We will not go to our villages, we will not roast in our yards, we will not go to our churches. And of course, we will not gather in the homes of relatives and friends," government spokesman Stelios Petsas said. "For us to continue being together, this year we stay apart."

Easter services will be held behind closed doors with only the priest and essential staff. They will be broadcast live on television and streamed on the internet.

One particularly complex issue is how to handle the "Holy Light," the flame distributed throughout the Orthodox world each year from the Church of the Holy Sepulcher in Jerusalem to mark the resurrection of Christ.

Greek and Russian authorities have arranged to pick the flame up from Israel, but will not distribute it. Cyprus won't even pick it up; there is "no need," the island nation's Archbishop Chrysostomos said.

"Today, faith is not at risk but the faithful are," said Cyprus President Nicos Anastasiades.

Patriarch Bartholomew I, spiritual leader of the world's Orthodox, has urged the faithful to adhere to government measures and World Health Organization guidelines. But keeping people out of churches has not proved easy.

In Serbia and North Macedonia, authorities imposed nationwide curfews from Good Friday through Easter Monday. Ethiopia, with the largest Orthodox population outside Europe, also restricted access to liturgies and deployed security outside churches. Liturgies are broadcast live, although several churches outside the capital, Addis Ababa, were violating restrictions, alarming authorities.

But in some Orthodox countries, such as Georgia and Bulgaria, limited church services will go ahead.

In Greece, after days of delicate diplomacy with the country's powerful Orthodox Church, the government banned the public from all services after the church's governing body imposed restrictions but not a full shutdown. Authorities also quickly scotched a Greek mayor's plans to distribute the "Holy Light" door-to-door throughout his municipality just after midnight on Saturday.

Some priests have defied the shutdown. One recently offered communion — where the faithful sip from the same spoon — through an Athens church's back door.

Russia's Orthodox Church initially seemed similarly reluctant to impose restrictions. When authorities in St. Petersburg, Russia's second-largest city, banned church visits on March 26, the Moscow Patriarchate condemned the move as an infringement on religious freedom. Only three days later did Patriarch Kirill publicly urge believers to "strictly obey the regulations imposed by the health authorities" and "refrain from church visits."

Closing churches during Easter has been hard on Russians used to attending services. Many have turned to the internet and video conference prayers.

"At first it was just a shock," said believer Andrei Vasenev. "How is that possible - not go to church? But then we realized it was a matter of finding a way."

Vasenev, two dozen others and a priest from his parish have started praying via Zoom and plan to do the same during Easter. For him, going to church is about community, and Zoom prayers keep this community together.

For Anna Sytina, another participant of the online prayers, the hardest part is being away from people and the warmth of human contact. "There's a moment in a liturgy when you kiss each other three times," Sytina said. "Now we see each other on monitors and displays."

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Both are prepared to pray at home for as long as it takes. "It is a sacrifice in the life of every believer, but it is necessary," Sytina said.

It is a sentiment echoed in Greece.

"Each person has the church inside of them," said Kleanthis Tsironis, who heads Athens' main meat market. He will spend Easter at home with his wife and two daughters, and will miss the resurrection liturgy. But churches will eventually open, he said, and Easter traditions will return.

"Souls are being lost," he said of the virus deaths across the world. "And we're going to sit and cry because we didn't roast on a spit? We'll do that later, when the measures are over."

Litvinova reported from Moscow. Theodora Tongas in Athens, Menelaos Hadjicostis in Nicosia, Cyprus, Konstantin Testorides in Skopje, North Macedonia, Elias Meseret in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia and Dusan Stojanovic in Belgrade, Serbia, contributed.

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

China's economy in worst downturn since '60s in virus battle

By JOE McDONALD AP Business Writer

BEIJING (AP) — China faces a drawn-out struggle to revive an economy that suffered its biggest contraction since possibly the mid-1960s after millions of people were told to stay home to fight the coronavirus.

The world's second-largest economy shrank by 6.8% from a year earlier in the quarter ending in March after factories, offices and shopping malls were closed to contain the outbreak, official data showed Friday. Consumer spending, which supplied 80% of last year's growth, and factory activity were weaker than expected.

China, where the pandemic began in December, is the first major economy to start to recover after the ruling Communist Party declared the virus under control. Factories were allowed to reopen last month, but cinemas and other businesses that employ millions of people still are closed.

There are signs that after an "initial bounce" as controls ended, "the recovery in activity has since slowed to a crawl," said Julian Evans-Pritchard of Capital Economics in a report.

"China is in for a drawn-out recovery," he said.

The last contraction this big was 5.8% in 1967 during the upheavals of the ultra-radical 1965-75 Cultural Revolution, according to Iris Pang of ING.

Forecasters earlier said China might rebound as early as this month. But they say a sharp, "V-shaped" recovery looks increasingly unlikely as negative export, retail sales and other data pile up.

Instead, they expect a gradual crawl back to growth in low single digits in the coming quarters. For the full year, forecasters including UBS, Nomura and Oxford Economics expect little to no growth.

In total, China has reported 4,632 deaths after the total for Wuhan, the city of 11 million people at the center of the outbreak, was revised upward Friday. The mainland has announced 82,367 cases.

Retail sales fell 19% from a year earlier in the first quarter. That improved in March, the final month of the quarter, to a decline of 15.8%. But consumers, jittery about possible job losses, are reluctant to spend despite government efforts to lure them back to shopping malls and auto showrooms.

That is a blow to automakers and other companies that hope China will power the world economy out of its most painful slump since the 1930s.

Job-hunter Ni Hong's challenge highlights the problem. Ni, 32, quit her job in Beijing in January to find a new one, but the virus disrupted those plans. Ni is paying her mortgage out of her savings and avoiding other spending while she looks in a market flooded with newly laid-off workers.

"In the past, there were maybe two or three candidates for a post," Ni said. "Now, I have eight to 10 competitors, so the chance for me to be eliminated is much higher."

That is a political challenge for the ruling party, which bases its claim to power on China's economic suc-

cess. The party appealed to companies to keep paying employees and avoid layoffs during the shutdown. But an unknown number have failed, adding to public anxiety.

The economy already was squeezed by a tariff war with President Donald Trump over Beijing's technology ambitions and trade surplus. Last year's growth sank to a multi-decade low of 6.1%.

Exports fell 6.6% in March from a year earlier, an improvement over the double-digit plunge in January and February. But forecasters say demand is bound to slump in America and Europe as anti-virus controls keep shoppers at home.

"Lingering consumption weakness and sliding foreign demand will weigh on the upturn," said Louis Kuijs of Oxford Economics in a report.

Growth was stronger than some forecasts that called for a contraction of up to 16% but this is the biggest contraction since market-style reforms started in 1979.

"The numbers were even uglier than most anticipated, which is good!" said Andy Rothman of Matthews Asia in a report. "These ugly numbers indicate that the leadership didn't fudge the data to hide the seriousness of the situation."

Investment in factories, real estate and other fixed assets, the other major growth driver, sank 16.1%.

Auto sales sank 48.4% from a year earlier in March. That was better than February's record 81.7% plunge but is on top of a 2-year-old decline that is squeezing global and Chinese automakers in the industry's biggest global market.

Asian stock markets rose following the announcement, which was in line with investor expectations. By mid-afternoon, Tokyo's benchmark Nikkei 225 index was up 3% and Hong Kong's Hang Seng was 2.4% higher.

The ruling party has yet to announce this year's official growth target. It has been at least 6% in previous years. Beijing looks likely to miss its target of doubling incomes from 2010 levels by this year.

Controls on Beijing, the capital, and some other cities have been tightened to prevent a resurgence of the disease. Most foreigners are barred from entering the country.

Beijing is boosting spending on a "New Infrastructure" Plan that includes next-generation telecom networks, artificial intelligence, electric vehicle charging and data centers. But leaders don't want to pump too much money into the economy with full fledged stimulus for fear of adding to debt or pushing up inflation that is near a seven-year high.

Carrying out that infrastructure investment "will take a much longer time than it would do without social distancing in place," said Pang of ING. "Recovery will be a long road."

AP video producer Wayne Zhang and researcher Yu Bing contributed.

Pro cyclist in Italy uses his bike to deliver medicine

By **LUCA BRUNO** and **ANDREW DAMPF** Associated Press

ROVATO, Italy (AP) — There are no fans lining the road. No teammates providing support. And there is no race to win.

Professional cyclist Davide Martinelli has achieved a moral victory, though, by using his bike to help deliver medicine to elderly residents and others in need during the coronavirus pandemic.

The service is of great use in Lodetto, Martinelli's hometown in the hard-hit Lombardy region of northern Italy. The village has neither a pharmacy nor a supermarket.

Martinelli makes a daily trip to Rovato, the next town over, to pick up supplies.

"I've got a bike and two legs in pretty good form, so riding 10 kilometers (6 miles) a day is no big deal," Martinelli said in an interview this week. "I wanted to help the people who always support me during the season. It's time to give back to them."

Martinelli joined up with a Facebook group called "Lodetto Solidale" (Supporting Lodetto) where those in need can place their requests online, by phone or message.

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Martinelli receives his orders each night and maps out a route for the following day.

"I go to the pharmacy and when I arrive outside I put on gloves and a mask," he said. "If I go for three or four people, there's less risk of contagion."

With a population of 1,500, everyone in Lodetto knows who Martinelli is. Or rather, they know who Martinelli's father is.

That's because Giuseppe Martinelli is one of the most successful team directors in cycling, having guided the likes of Marco Pantani and Vincenzo Nibali to Tour de France victories and a handful of riders to Giro d'Italia wins.

The elder Martinelli said that what his son is doing now is "a step above a victory for one of my athletes, because it's gratifying to him and to us because he's part of our family."

Davide Martinelli is also part of Giuseppe Martinelli's Astana team — the squad that Lance Armstrong rode for in 2009 when he came out of retirement.

Still, Giuseppe Martinelli said he had nothing to do with his son's initiative besides offering fatherly advice: "I just said, 'Be careful. Be safe. Don't touch anyone. Use a mask and gloves when you enter the pharmacy.'"

At 26, Davide Martinelli likely still has his best racing years ahead of him. So far in his career, he has won only two stages in minor races — both in 2016. This initiative has brought him more recognition than anything else he's done on his bike.

While professional athletes were at first allowed out to train during the nationwide lockdown in Italy, the government ordered them to remain home, too, after the Tokyo Olympics were postponed to 2021.

"But don't think for an instant that there's some sort of training strategy behind all of this," Giuseppe Martinelli said of his son's initiative. "Eight out of 10 times he goes out with normal running shoes and his mountain bike. ... So we're talking about 30-40 minutes twice a day and sometimes only once per day."

That's hardly even a warmup for pro cyclists, who often ride more than five hours per day.

"I won't deny that having the chance to be out in the fresh air helps me relax," Davide Martinelli said. "Sure, there's a risk of contagion when I enter the pharmacy, but you can't dwell on that. When you decide to do something you've got to do it without over-thinking it."

Dampf reported from Rome. Brian Hendrie in Rovato also contributed to this story.

While nonstop global news about the effects of the coronavirus have become commonplace, so, too, are the stories about the kindness of strangers and individuals who have sacrificed for others. "One Good Thing" is an AP continuing series reflecting these acts of kindness.

'I am so afraid': India's poor face world's largest lockdown

By **TIM SULLIVAN** and **SHEIKH SAALIQ** Associated Press

The street peddler watched the prime minister's speech on a battered TV, with her family of five crowded around her in a one-room house with no toilet and no running water. It's squeezed into a Mumbai shantytown controlled by an obscure Mumbai organized crime family.

Mina Jakhawadiya knew that outside, somewhere in India, the coronavirus had arrived, wending its way through this sprawling nation of 1.3 billion people. But the invisible danger seemed far away.

Then suddenly it wasn't.

"Every state, every district, every lane, every village will be under lockdown" for three weeks, Prime Minister Narendra Modi told the nation on March 24, giving India four hours' notice to prepare. "If you can't handle these 21 days, this country and your family will go back 21 years."

As governments around the world try to slow the spread of the coronavirus, India has launched one of the most draconian social experiments in human history, locking down its entire population -- including about 176 million people who struggle to survive on \$1.90 a day or less. Modi's order allows Indians out of their homes only to buy food, medicine or other essentials. No going to work. No school. No playgrounds.

India's handling of the lockdown and the ever-spreading virus is a test for the developing world, offer-

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ing clues to how countries from Bangladesh to Nigeria can fight COVID-19 without forcing their poorest citizens into even worse hunger and further destitution.

While India's economy has boomed over the past two decades, pulling vast numbers out of extreme poverty, inequality also has grown.

Those near the top can hunker down in gated apartment complexes, watching Bollywood movies on Netflix and ordering food deliveries online. But not Jakhawadiya, who makes a living selling cheap plastic buckets and baskets with her husband on the streets of Mumbai.

For her, the order means 21 days in a 6-by-9-foot room with five people, no work, a couple days of food and the equivalent of about \$13 in cash.

She looked at Modi speaking on their little television, spattered with stickers left over the years by one child or another.

"I am so afraid," she thought.

This story was produced with the support of the Pulitzer Center on Crisis Reporting.

March 27

Across India

The reasons for the lockdown are clear.

While India had only 536 confirmed coronavirus cases and 10 deaths when Modi gave his speech, it's also one of the most crowded places on Earth, a nation where social distancing is impossible for millions. The risk is that it could hopscotch from the Himalayas to South India, ravaging cities and villages. Mumbai, for instance, has a population density of 77,000 people per square mile — nearly three times higher than New York City, which crowding helped turn into one of the world's deadliest epicenters.

Then there's India's medical system. Except for private health care for those who can afford it, the medical system barely functions across wide swathes of the country. Public hospitals, especially outside major cities, often have limited supplies, questionable cleanliness and third-rate doctors.

Very few people have been tested, so the true scale of the outbreak is unknown. If India's hospital system were overrun by COVID-19 cases, it could collapse in days, leaving untold numbers to die.

As a result, many experts say Modi had to act as he did to buy time to prepare.

The lockdown means India has "probably pushed out the epidemic peak by three to eight weeks," said Ramanan Laxminarayan, an epidemiologist and economist who directs the Center for Disease Dynamics, Economics and Policy in Washington.

But that logic means little for Indians at the bottom of the economic ladder. For these people — for Jakhawadiya in Mumbai, for a maid walking to her home village in the north, for a watchman bicycling his way across the country — three weeks can be an eternity.

"If they stopped the lockdown for just a few days then I could go into town and earn some money," said Paresh Talukdar, a beggar who supports a family of five in India's far northeast state of Assam with food supplies down to almost nothing. "One or two days (of lockdown) would be OK, but 21 days is a very long time."

Now 60, Talukdar lost his left leg and hand more than 30 years ago in a fight over family land. In normal times, he rides a bus from his tiny village to the nearest city, where there are enough people to make a living begging. Most days bring him about \$2.50.

But now there's no bus to take, and few people out on the streets anyway.

Already, he says, the ever-growing hunger has made it hard to sleep. "Thoughts are always coming into my mind, like: What's going to happen tomorrow?"

March 29

Lucknow, north India

For five days after the lockdown began, in a city in the north Indian plains, the maid wondered what she should do.

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Ramshri Verma lives in a shantytown on the fringes of Lucknow, a noisy, chaotic city of nearly 4 million people. On the morning after Modi's speech, she went to the home where she has worked for the past two years.

"I didn't know what they meant by a 'lockdown,'" she said.

She knocked. Her employers shouted at her through the closed door.

"They told me to come back after 21 days," Verma said. They also told her she wouldn't be paid for those days.

She walked home, stopping at a few small stores. She bought rice, cooking oil, spices and lentils, basic staples for many Indians. That left her with 300 rupees — about \$4 — for her, her husband and their two children.

Then the family waited. They don't own a television, so the children bickered about who could watch videos on their only phone.

By March 29, the family was out of food and there was only one place to go: back to the ancestral village where she and her husband were raised. That morning, with bus and train networks shut down, they joined the swarms of migrants who spilled out of cities to walk, sometimes for hundreds of miles, to their home villages.

It was an epidemiologist's nightmare - and the last thing India needed as it struggled to stop the coronavirus from spreading. The numbers already were rising with worrying speed, reaching 1,024 cases and 27 deaths.

For Verma, home was some 90 kilometers (55 miles) away in Sanjrabad, a tiny grid of streets surrounded by lush fields of sugarcane.

"There were thousands of people who were walking," she said. "Along the way I met other people who came from my village and we started to walk together."

The children were tired. Their feet hurt. They cried.

But she and her husband pushed them on.

Late that night, they reached the edge of Sanjrabad and thought they would go home for dinner. But the village leader came out to stop them.

"You could be infected with the virus," he said, ordering them into quarantine in the village school.

There were no medical checks, and no police to enforce the order. But in the ways of rural India, it's hard to refuse a village head.

Minutes later, everyone was locked inside.

March 31

Prayagraj, central India

The balloon seller just couldn't get used to the lockdown.

"There is a strange stillness in our neighborhood since all this started," said Rajesh Dhaikar.

Normally, he has a small stall in a nearby market, selling plastic bursts of red and blue and yellow one at a time, and rarely earning more than \$2.50 a day. His wife, Suneeta, makes about \$20 a month cleaning homes.

They have two rooms with a thatch roof covered with a blue tarpaulin. In the rainy season, water seeps in. The single light dangles from a cord.

Suneeta sleeps on the only bed. The five kids sleep on the floor lined up under blankets. Rajesh sometimes sleeps on the sidewalk out front, stretched out on a cart handmade from wooden planks and bicycle tires.

They have a bank account — with about \$6.50 in it.

Nearly half the family's income comes from their 17-year-old son Deepak, a thin, wiry boy with carefully combed hair and a teenager's bored slouch. He dropped out of school after 7th grade and now makes about \$40 a month working in a neighborhood tea stall. One day, he says, he'll have his own stall.

When he can, Deepak slips outside to play cricket with friends. They scatter when the police come by, then return to their match a few minutes later.

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His mother doesn't like it. Suneeta doesn't completely understand coronavirus, but she knows getting near other people can kill you.

"What else do you expect from a 17-year-old? He doesn't listen to anyone and does whatever he wants," she said.

April 3

Along Highway 48, western India

The watchman confronted the lockdown by buying a bicycle.

A skinny, soft-spoken 30-year-old with a carefully trimmed beard, Mohammed Arif was working as a guard at a Mumbai apartment building when he got a call on April 1. His 60-year-old father had suffered a brain hemorrhage, and was battling for his life in a hospital in Rajouri, a small town in the Himalayan foothills of Kashmir.

By then the lockdown had begun. Buses and trains sat idle. Flights had been cancelled, though he couldn't have afforded a ticket anyway.

So Arif bought a Hero Ranger bicycle with fading purple paint from a fellow guard for about \$8, and set off the next morning with the equivalent of \$12 in his pocket and a small rucksack with clothes, a loaf of bread and a water bottle.

His destination was 1,300 miles (2,100 kilometers) away.

"What choice do I have?" Arif said in a phone call at the end of his first day, when he still had more than 2,000 kilometers to go. "He has no one else."

"Poor people suffer always and face tribulations. There's no escape," he said. "But at least my conscience is clear."

Repeatedly, Arif stumbled onto people who helped him. In one town, a man running a tiny tire-repair shop offered him chicken and rice. A couple days later, a truck driver shared his lunch.

One of the biggest surprises: the police. The Indian poor often fear the police, who regularly demand bribes and beat people with their bamboo staffs. But while police stopped Arif a few times, they always let him pass once he told his story.

He sleeps near gas stations, because they are well lit, or at closed roadside restaurants. Sometimes, he stops when he simply can go no further.

"I reached a highway village last night and wanted to rest there until dawn. But the villagers told me to go away," he said in one early morning phone call. "They said people might harm me, or even kill me."

He quickly left and kept pedaling until he reached a small forest.

"I stopped and I'm now waiting for sunrise," he said.

A few days later, luck won out. After 450 kilometers (300 miles) of cycling, India's paramilitary police picked him up and, in a public relations display, arranged trucks to take him to the hospital where they were transferring his father.

He brought the bicycle with him.

April 6

Sanjrabad, north India

For three days, Ramshri Verma and the other migrants remained locked in the school in her ancestral village. Local officials brought them nothing. The group begged passersby for food and water.

Finally, a team of doctors escorted by police opened the school's doors. The doctors stood well back, talking to the group from a distance.

For Verma and her family, quarantine was over.

The doctors didn't check anyone's temperatures or run any tests. "They only told us that we should wash our hands and then we were told to go home," she said.

The maid and her family moved into her father-in-law's house.

At first it felt like being released from prison, but it quickly became clear things wouldn't be much easier.

Because they weren't registered in the village, they were not eligible for the food rations that local of-

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ficials were occasionally distributing for the poor. They are surviving on handouts from family of flour and rice, and a few dollars her husband earned working as a laborer for a couple of days.

The neighbors avoid them, especially when they walk to the communal tap to get water, fearing they carry coronavirus.

She keeps her children at home. When they aren't watching phone videos, they join her on the roof.

"We can see a lot of things from the roof: cows, goats, buffaloes," said Verma.

The children also watch the village kids play. But they never join in.

April 10

Mumbai, western India

Things were growing tense in the Jakhawadiya house. So many days locked together in a tiny space. So little to do. They watched TV — state television was rebroadcasting *The Ramayana*, an iconic, 78-episode series based on the Hindu epic that was wildly popular in the 1980s — but that eats up only so much time.

The gangsters who run the neighborhood had come by a few times for their \$65 monthly rent, which was due on April 1. But the family didn't have the money.

Mina Jakhawadiya was worried. The family was hungry, though aid groups were distributing enough food every few days to keep the worst hunger at bay.

"I know we are facing bad days ahead," said Jakhawadiya, a fierce-eyed 47-year-old woman who, like many in India's vast slums, is a force of will. She knew how to arrange for a daughter's heart surgery and can feed her family on her minuscule profits. But she's never faced anything like this.

When things grew especially difficult, it was her quiet husband, Ramesh, who defused the tension, joking and roughhousing with the kids.

"I saw him laughing today," Mina said in early April, clearly surprised. "The kids were laughing too. I felt really good inside but I have this perpetual fear of what might happen next. Today we have a roof to sleep under, but what if tomorrow we're evicted? What if we have no food?"

She refuses to watch the news. By April 10, coronavirus cases had reached 7,598, with 226 deaths.

"There is no good news right now," she said. "All they talk about on the television is people dying."

April 12

Prayagraj, central India

The teenage tea-stall worker, Deepak Dhaikar, was increasingly unhappy.

"The lockdown was not the right decision," grumbled Deepak, whose friends no longer came out to play cricket. "The rich can survive even if the lockdown stretches for a year, but what will the poor do?"

Without even a television, he had started going to bed earlier, and waking up later. One day was blurring into the next.

But sometimes, a 17-year-old who knows the streets can be useful.

When a call came that his grandparents had run out of bread, his mother turned to Deepak.

His grandparents live a few miles (kilometers) away. She gave him a half-kilo (one pound) of flour and sent him out into the streets. He jogged through roads, alleys and fields, dodging police checkpoints or talking his way through them, until he reached his grandparents and delivered the food.

But like Deepak, many in India were growing frustrated as the lockdown stretched on.

On April 10, as cases kept climbing, hundreds of migrant workers desperate to return home took to the streets in the western city of Surat, burning cars. Police arrested at least 80 people.

Two days later, outside a wholesale vegetable market in the north Indian city of Patiala, police stopped a car of Sikh men, who carry swords as a declaration of their faith. When the police refused to let the men in without curfew passes, the Sikhs injured three policemen, chopping off the hand of one.

Across the country, small towns and villages had started closing themselves off, trying to keep the virus away.

"No outsiders allowed," said a sign on a makeshift barricade in a village north of New Delhi, where groups of men demanded identification from passersby.

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An hour's drive away, in the barricaded village of Siroli, squads of young people were patrolling in search of Muslims, who increasingly were being blamed for the virus after a large spike in cases from a New Delhi meeting of an Islamic group.

"No Muslim is allowed in our village," said Mohan Kumar, the leader of Siroli.

Such suspicions have threatened to widen religious fault lines that ripped New Delhi just weeks ago, when Hindu mobs attacked Muslims and dozens were killed.

In early April, the government tightened the lockdown in specific areas, using police to seal off neighborhoods with multiple infections, and ordering all stores closed and residents to remain at home. Government workers would deliver food and medicine.

In New Delhi alone, 23 such hot spots were ordered sealed on April 8. But in Deepak's neighborhood, social distancing still seemed impossible.

"Poor families like ours live in crowded neighborhoods," he said. "It's hard to stay away from each other."

April 14

Across India

In the tiny Mumbai house with plastic walls, Jakhawadiya's family again gathered around the battered television to watch the prime minister.

Three weeks had passed since the lockdown began, and the virus had spread exponentially, from 536 confirmed cases to 11,487. Deaths jumped from 10 to 339. Both numbers, which are widely seen as undercounts, continued to climb.

"You have endured immense suffering to save your country," Modi told the nation in his speech.

Then he announced the lockdown would continue for two more weeks, though some areas could be reopened next Monday. He gave few details. "It undoubtedly looks costly right now. But measured against the lives of Indian citizens, there is no comparison."

Modi pleaded for Indians to look out for their neighbors: "Take care of as many poor people as you can."

Mina Jakhawadiya and her family were stunned. That day, the rent collector had shouted at her and demanded payment. They still had received no government food handouts.

"We will die if people stop giving us food," she said.

For the poor, hunger had become a worse enemy than COVID-19. People feared the virus — but the larger fear was about simply getting through the next two weeks. And what if the lockdown was extended again?

Elsewhere in Mumbai, thousands of migrants and slum-dwellers, furious over the lockdown extension, charged a train station demanding to go home. Police beat them back with bamboo batons.

In Assam, Talukdar, the beggar, was terrified: "Every day we are eating less food," he said. His family was surviving on a monthly government food ration of 20 kilos (44 pounds) of rice, and meager handouts.

And in Prayagraj, the balloon seller was furious.

"These big leaders take decisions in their big houses!" said Rajesh Dhaikar.

"Did anyone ask the poor what they are eating?"

Associated Press writers Aijaz Hussain, Emily Schmall and Yirmiyan Arthur contributed to this report.

Lives Lost: Holocaust survivor was Israel's 1st virus victim

By ARON HELLER Associated Press

JERUSALEM (AP) — As a child in Hungary, Arie Even survived the Holocaust by taking shelter along with his mother and brother after his father was shipped to a notorious concentration camp.

Even's well-connected grandfather found them refuge in a Swiss-protected home in Budapest before they were rushed to another shelter, under the cover of night, thanks to the Swedish embassy and the efforts of famed diplomat Raoul Wallenberg, who saved tens of thousands of Jews before mysteriously disappearing. The next day, Even's grandfather was shot to death and his body was dumped in the Danube River.

Later in life, Even overcame multiple heart attacks, surgeries and even a brush with a cholera epidemic

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during a family visit to Spain. But he couldn't escape the wrath of the global coronavirus pandemic that has been plaguing the globe.

On March 20, the 88-year-old became Israel's first coronavirus fatality after he was infected by a visiting social worker at his Jerusalem assisted-living facility.

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

Despite building a thriving family of his own in Israel, with four children, 18 grandchildren and a great-grandchild, Even died alone. His loved ones were forced to keep their distance from his infectious virus and had to say goodbye over the phone.

In keeping with the Jewish practice of burying the dead quickly, his funeral was carried out the following day, at the end of the Sabbath. His youngest child, representing the family, was one of only a handful of people who were allowed to attend — from a distance — as he was lowered to the ground by Jewish religious authorities wearing biohazard suits.

With Israel in virtual lockdown, his family was also deprived of a proper sitting of shiva, the traditional Jewish week of mourning in which families typically host open houses for relatives and acquaintances who congregate to pay their condolences.

"He was a strong man and he overcame the hardships of the Holocaust," said his 57-year-old daughter Yael, expressing frustration at how he and others in the retirement home were exposed. "He lived a full life. It's just a shame he had to go this way."

He was born George Steiner, to a well-to-do Hungarian Jewish family from whom he inherited a life-long love of film, books and classical music. But their lives were turned upside down by Nazi rule. His father was sent to the Mauthausen concentration camp in 1941. When Germany occupied Hungary in 1944, Even, his mother and brother had to go into hiding for nearly a year, at times in bales of hay and in underground cellars.

After the war, at age 17, he immigrated to Israel, joined a kibbutz and then was drafted into the military as an aircraft technician. His parents, who also survived the war, fled Hungary after the Soviet invasion in 1956 and later joined him in Israel.

His wife Yona, a distant relative of Israeli President Reuven Rivlin, passed away in 2012. She was a career diplomat and he followed her to India, Japan, Germany, France and elsewhere while maintaining his own career as a customs officer.

Only much later in life did he start opening up about his wartime experiences, recording video testimony for the Yad Vashem Holocaust memorial at the behest of his children. He recalled the day Budapest was liberated by Russian troops who heaved loaves of bread from their trucks.

"Since then, I'm sympathetic to the Russians," he said with a smirk.

His daughter Ofra, 50, said he was a man of fine tastes who took pride in his Hungarian cooking, but was also a hard worker and modest humanist who had sympathy for society's weaker. His final years were spent socializing with fellow retirees and lounging in his private room reading World War II historical books and listening to his beloved classical music.

The eldest of his four children, 62-year-old Yaacov, described a "classy" gentleman who studied Latin and dreamed of becoming a doctor. He said his father was lucid until the end, sauntering around with a cane and telling his children to forgo a recent celebration of his birthday and instead plan on a bigger party when he turned 90.

"Who knows how long he had left? Another week? A year? Five years? Whatever it was, it feels like a waste to lose him now," he said. "It still feels like he died before his time."

Follow Aron Heller at www.twitter.com/aronhellerap

Virus pandemic collides with Trump's disdain for foreign aid

By MATTHEW LEE AP Diplomatic Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump's well-known disdain for foreign aid is colliding with the imperatives of fighting the coronavirus pandemic, as his administration boasts about America's generosity for countries in dire need while still generating confusion and anger on the global stage.

The U.S. has committed more than half a billion dollars in anti-virus aid for foreign countries since January — a sign that some administration officials recognize Trump's "America First" policy can't fully protect Americans from a highly infectious disease that knows no borders. And, they know that if the United States doesn't help, arch-rivals like China and Russia will gladly step in to fill void, in part to advance their narrative that the era of U.S.-led Western leadership is over.

For instance, two years after slashing virtually all U.S. aid to the Palestinians, the administration announced on Thursday it would provide \$5 million in assistance to Palestinian hospitals and households for "immediate, life-saving needs in combating COVID-19."

Yet, in just the past several weeks the administration has sent conflicting messages about its commitment to assist, suspending contributions to the very organization tasked with battling the global outbreak and reversing decisions to provide critical equipment like personal protective gear and ventilators to other countries in order to meet domestic needs. It has left aid recipients uncertain about whether grant money from the United States can be used to buy those same items, even if they weren't intended for distribution in the U.S.

The latest in the jarring moves came Tuesday when Trump announced the suspension of U.S. funding for the World Health Organization pending a review of whether the agency bowed to Chinese demands to downplay the threat of the pandemic in its early stages for political purposes.

Just two weeks earlier, the State Department had hailed both WHO and the support U.S. provides it. "WHO is coordinating the global response to the COVID-19 pandemic, and is on the ground in 149 countries around the world," it said in a March 31 fact sheet touting America's generosity. "This broad-based effort would not be possible without U.S. support."

An update to that fact sheet, released on Thursday, does not mention WHO.

The previous one, though, noted that the U.S. had provided WHO with more than \$400 million in 2019, which was more than twice the next largest state contributor and dwarfed the Chinese contribution of \$44 million.

Trump's funding suspension decision was widely denounced.

"Abandoning this critical body will only put more lives at risk," said Michelle Nunn, head of the relief agency CARE USA, one of many humanitarian groups to condemn it. "The Trump administration's decision to halt funding to the WHO during a global pandemic is dangerous, self-defeating, and short-sighted."

Just six days before Trump's announcement, Secretary of State Mike Pompeo had announced the U.S. would almost double its overseas virus aid to nearly a half-billion dollars since January. He referred to the "unmatched generosity of the American people" and said "the United States has continued to lead the world's public health and humanitarian response to the COVID-19 pandemic."

"Pandemics do not respect national borders," he said on April 8. "Through decades of U.S. global leadership in health and humanitarian assistance, we know that smart and strategic investments have proven critical to protecting the homeland. As history proves, we can fight pandemics at home and help other nations contain their spread abroad."

Pompeo, however, also introduced a caveat to American aid: He said that assistance to the 64 nations identified as most at-risk would not include personal protective equipment and other essential supplies. "We will keep all critical medical items in the United States until the demand at home is met," he said.

That was a 180-degree shift from what the United States Agency for International Development said March 18 when it announced the release of some \$62 million in emergency anti-virus assistance. That aid, it said, would include "the provision of personal protective equipment and other critical commodities."

U.S. officials are now looking for alternative places to send the more than \$400 million in contributions

planned for WHO in 2020. But there's already uncertainty about what aid recipients can do with U.S. funds.

An April 10 directive from the Federal Emergency Management Agency barring the export of personal protective gear made in the U.S. or by U.S. companies abroad has left many in government and aid organizations confused about what American assistance can be used to buy once it arrives at its destination.

Some groups fear that the administration may use that directive or a corollary to ban them from using grant money to purchase certain types of gloves, facemasks and other respirators, according to relief agency officials.

One group, Partners in Health, a Massachusetts-based non-governmental group that runs medical facilities in Haiti, said it had been advised through "official channels" not to apply for funding that could be used to purchase equipment to battle COVID-19, because the funding could be delayed by confusion over whether the U.S. would finance such purchases.

"It remains unclear whether or not the U.S. government will be accepting applications for funding that includes commodities such as PPE or tests," spokeswoman Elizabeth Campa said. "The U.S. government seems to have a hold on anything being sent overseas out of the U.S. related to coronavirus," including money to buy equipment from producers in other countries.

Neither the State Department nor USAID would comment on the matter.

Associated Press writer Michael Weissenstein in Havana contributed to this report.

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Detained migrant with COVID-19 forced to call in to court

By NOMAAN MERCHANT Associated Press

HOUSTON (AP) — A detained immigrant who said he tested positive for COVID-19 was required to call in for a court hearing even after a guard said he was too weak to talk, his attorney said Thursday.

When the judge asked Salomon Diego Alonzo to say his name, the guard responded that Alonzo "does not have the lung capacity," said his lawyer, Veronica Semino, who was listening by phone. The call lasted about two hours, though Judge Mary Baumgarten eventually agreed to delay Alonzo's final asylum hearing, the attorney said.

Speaking to The Associated Press on Wednesday, the 26-year-old from Guatemala responded to most questions with one- or two-sentence answers, often interrupted by coughing. Alonzo says he has headaches, diarrhea and severe exhaustion that made it difficult for him to get out of bed. He's confined with

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one other person in a dorm at an immigration detention center in rural Louisiana, where medical staff check his vital signs twice a day.

"I can barely walk," Alonzo said. "I'm not safe here."

His case provides new insight into how U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement is dealing with a steadily rising number of coronavirus cases among its roughly 32,000 detainees. ICE said Thursday that 100 detainees are confirmed to have COVID-19.

Public health experts have warned that the virus could do particular harm in U.S. jails and prisons because there's little space for social distancing. Immigration detainees in several states have pleaded for masks and expressed fear of getting the virus, which causes mild or moderate symptoms for most people but can cause more severe illness for others, especially older adults and people with existing health problems.

To combat the pandemic, ICE has released about 700 detainees so far, primarily people with known medical conditions. But it has resisted large-scale releases of detainees. Alonzo's requests to be freed have been denied, said Semino, his attorney.

Alonzo said officials at Richwood Correctional Center in Monroe, Louisiana, where he's held, have told him that he tested positive for COVID-19. ICE would not confirm that to Semino, and spokesman Bryan Cox declined to comment.

Semino says Alonzo was one of nearly 700 people arrested in ICE raids last year on chicken plants in Mississippi, the largest immigration worksite enforcement operation in at least a decade. He has been in the U.S. since 2012, living in an apartment in a small Mississippi town with his wife, teenage brother and daughter, now 8.

Alonzo doesn't remember being around anyone who looked ill before he started to feel sick himself. He thinks he could have been exposed to the coronavirus in the jail yard, cafeteria or dormitory where he and dozens of others sleep.

Alonzo said he started feeling "very tired" on April 8, describing it as a pain in his bones. The next morning, he went to the nurse. He was found to have a fever, taken to a solitary confinement cell and given medicine to reduce his temperature.

After a few days, someone came to administer a test, he said. Jail officials told him this week that he had the virus and took him to a dormitory with one other person, a man from South Asia who Alonzo believes is also sick. They don't talk to each other because they don't speak English, he said.

ICE's website says Richwood Correctional Center has two confirmed coronavirus cases.

The jail started to detain immigrants last year as part of a broader trend among rural Louisiana prisons. A Cuban man killed himself last year in a Richwood solitary confinement cell, and an Associated Press investigation found jail guards had not checked on him as federal standards require and disregarded warning signs before his death.

On Thursday, Alonzo was scheduled for what's known as a "merits" hearing, typically an hourslong presentation to explain why he should get asylum. Semino, his attorney, said she requested Tuesday that the hearing be delayed and followed up with the court the next day. Only at the end of the hearing did the judge postpone until April 26.

"For somebody who is potentially dying to have to sit there for two hours, it's really cruel and inhumane," Semino said.

A staff member for the judge referred questions to the media relations office for the Executive Office for Immigration Review, which oversees U.S. immigration courts. A spokeswoman said she could not comment on Alonzo's medical status.

Amid the pandemic, the office has postponed all hearings for immigrants not in detention but is holding many hearings for detainees.

AP source: Ex-Trump lawyer Cohen being released from prison

By MICHAEL BALSAMO Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump's former lawyer and longtime fixer Michael Cohen will be released from federal prison to serve the remainder of his sentence in home confinement amid the coronavirus pandemic, a person familiar with the matter told The Associated Press.

Cohen is currently locked up at FCI Otisville in New York after pleading guilty to numerous charges, including campaign finance fraud and lying to Congress. He will remain under quarantine for 14 days before he is released. Federal statistics show 14 inmates and seven staff members at the prison have tested positive for coronavirus.

After he is released, Cohen will serve the remainder of his sentence at home, according to the person, who could not discuss the matter publicly and spoke to the AP on condition of anonymity.

Cohen's release comes as prison advocates and congressional leaders have been pressing the Justice Department for weeks to release at-risk inmates ahead of a potential outbreak, arguing that the public health guidance to stay 6 feet (1.8 meters) away from other people is nearly impossible behind bars.

Attorney General William Barr ordered the Bureau of Prisons earlier this month to increase the use of home confinement and expedite the release of eligible high-risk inmates, beginning at three prisons identified as coronavirus hot spots. Otisville is not one of those facilities.

As of Thursday, 473 federal inmates and 279 Bureau of Prisons staff members had tested positive for coronavirus at facilities across the U.S. Eighteen inmates have died since late March.

Many federal inmates have been seeking home confinement as the number of coronavirus cases grows in the federal prison system, but advocates have accused the Bureau of Prisons of moving too slowly to release inmates. The Bureau of Prisons said it had moved more than 1,000 inmates to home confinement since March 26, when Barr first issued a directive to increase its use in late March. The agency said it is a "tremendous logistical lift that was accomplished through the marshaling of all of BOP's resources."

A federal judge had denied Cohen's attempt for an early release to home confinement after serving 10 months in prison and said in a ruling earlier this month that it "appears to be just another effort to inject himself into the news cycle." But the Bureau of Prisons can take action to move him to home confinement without a judicial order.

Cohen began serving his sentence last May and was scheduled to be released from prison in November 2021.

Other high-profile inmates have also been released as the number of coronavirus cases soars. Last week, a judge ordered Michael Avenatti — the attorney who rose to fame representing porn star Stormy Daniels in lawsuits against Trump — to be temporarily freed from a federal jail in New York City and stay at a friend's house in Los Angeles. Avenatti had said he was at high risk of getting the coronavirus because he had a recent bout with pneumonia and his cellmate at the Metropolitan Correctional Center in Manhattan was removed due to flu-like symptoms.

Former New York state Senate leader Dean Skelos, 72, who was also serving a sentence at Otisville, is also expected to be released soon from prison to home confinement after testing positive for the coronavirus, prosecutors told a judge Wednesday.

CNN first reported Cohen was being released to home confinement.

A spokesman for the U.S. attorney's office in Manhattan declined to comment.

Associated Press writer Larry Neumeister in New York contributed to this report.

Some people turn to herbal medicine for virus without proof

By ANIRUDDHA GHOSAL and YANAN WANG Associated Press

NEW DELHI (AP) — With no approved drugs for the new coronavirus, some people are turning to alternative medicines, often with governments promoting them.

This is most evident in India and China, densely populated countries with a deep history and tradition of

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touting such treatments, and where there's sometimes limited access to conventional medicine.

In India, where a lockdown of its 1.3 billion residents is underway, the government faced criticism after claiming some treatments might help prevent infections. In China, where the pandemic began, officials made unsubstantiated claims that traditional medicine was key to fighting the virus. In Venezuela, where the health care system is severely crimped, President Nicolas Maduro pitched drinking an herbal tea.

The World Health Organization had advised against taking "traditional herbal remedies" on its website. It later acknowledged that some were turning to alternative medicine "to alleviate some of the milder symptoms of COVID-19," WHO spokesperson Tarik Jasarevic said.

Dr. Mike Ryan, WHO's emergencies chief, welcomed rigorous studies of alternative treatments "like we would of any drug." He said numerous studies are underway in China, many testing traditional therapies.

"It's up to the people who make the claim to provide the evidence," said Dr. Stephen Barrett, a retired psychiatrist who runs Quackwatch, a website about unproven medical therapies.

On Thursday, the U.S. National Institutes of Health warned against alternative medicine — including certain herbal therapies and teas — for treating or preventing COVID-19, saying there was no evidence they work and some may be unsafe.

Here's a closer look at the claims:

INDIA

India is steeped in Ayurveda, a Hindu system of medicine that revolves around herbal medicines and dietary restrictions.

As the outbreak spread outside China earlier this year, India's health arm that promotes alternative medicine pushed unproven remedies to "strengthen the immune system," according to an online post by the Ministry of AYUSH.

Criticism prompted the government to clarify that these remedies were not a cure. Earlier this week, Prime Minister Narendra Modi extended India's lockdown and asked citizens to "follow the instructions issued by AYUSH ministry to enhance immunity."

The government also recommended a single dose of a homeopathic drug, according to Anu Kapoor, who heads a government-run homeopathic hospital in New Delhi.

But that hasn't been shown to work, said Dr. Anant Bhan, a public health specialist. "The same standards should apply. Especially for times like this," he said.

The Indian government's push for alternative treatments for COVID-19, combined with bizarre claims by the elected representatives of the ruling Bhartiya Janta Party that cow urine or dung could offer cures, has also resulted in misinformation.

Last month, Modi spoke to alternative medical professionals on the need to counter unsubstantiated claims that they could cure COVID-19. The AYUSH ministry later issued orders to all states "to stop and prevent publicity and advertisement" of promised cures.

CHINA

The Chinese government has claimed that combining herbal medicine with conventional medicine has helped the country deal with the outbreak.

Last month, China's National Health Commission issued a document on treating COVID-19 patients that included several herbal medicines claiming to relieve symptoms like weakness and fever.

For infected patients, it prescribed, among other remedies, a "soup for clearing and detoxifying the lungs" and recommended a case-by-case evaluation.

Chinese officials and state-run media have touted treating patients with alternative medicine on health care workers exposed to the virus.

But some published reports in major medical journals of large numbers of patients treated in China make no mention of alternative medicine. Instead, they note that treatment revolved around established methods such as respiratory support, drugs to help prevent additional infections such as bacterial pneumonia, and other widely accepted therapies.

Zhong Nanshan, an epidemiologist who advised the government, said earlier this year that it's testing

Chinese herbal medicines.

Some of these practices have existed for centuries. But with little or no scientific evidence that they work against COVID-19, attempts have been made to frame it as a cultural issue and not a scientific one.

Promoting treatments "without an adequate scientific basis" was worrying, said Dr. Daniel Kuritzkes of Brigham and Women's Hospital in Boston.

Some of these preparations can be toxic, harm the liver or interfere with other drugs, and "you need to do the hard work" to prove them safe, he said.

Wang reported from Beijing. AP Chief Medical Writer Marilyn Marchione in Milwaukee and AP Correspondent Jamey Keaten in Geneva contributed to this report.

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

Bolsonaro fires popular Brazil health minister amid pandemic

By DAVID BILLER and MAURICIO SAVARESE Associated Press

RIO DE JANEIRO (AP) — Brazil's President Jair Bolsonaro, whose dismissive stance toward the COVID-19 pandemic has angered many health experts, fired his popular health minister following a series of disagreements over the proper response to contain the virus' spread in South America's most populous country.

Luiz Henrique Mandetta, an orthopedist, had garnered support for his handling of the pandemic that included promotion of broad isolation measures enacted by state governors, even drawing comparisons to Dr. Anthony Fauci, U.S. President Donald Trump's top virus expert.

His dismissal comes as experts say the peak of the new coronavirus outbreak in Brazil is expected in the coming weeks.

"You should have absolute certainty that we fought a good fight until here," Mandetta told fellow ministry workers in a televised press conference Thursday after announcing his departure. "But we're at the start of the battle."

Bolsonaro, for his part, has repeatedly characterized the virus as a "little flu," said shutting down the economy would cause more damage than confining only high-risk Brazilians, and touted the yet-unproven efficacy of an anti-malarial drug.

"Life is priceless, but the economy and employment need to return to normality," Bolsonaro said at a press conference on Thursday. He also said he would neither condemn nor criticize Mandetta. "It was a consensual divorce because more important than me and more important than him as a minister is the health of the Brazilian people."

For Mandetta's replacement, Bolsonaro named Nelson Teich, an oncologist and senior consultant at medical services company Teich Health Care. He also has a Master's in Business Administration, according to his LinkedIn page.

Speaking alongside Bolsonaro, Teich said he didn't want to announce any changes abruptly, as little is known about the virus. He added that he and the president are "completely aligned."

"Health and the economy are complementary," Teich said.

While Fauci isn't a politician like Mandetta, both have often made public statements about the virus that differed with those of their bosses. The White House has said this week that Fauci's job is secure. Still, Republicans close to the White House say Trump has complained about Fauci's positive media attention and sought to leave him out of task force briefings.

Bolsonaro, likewise, had convened doctors without inviting Mandetta and, in a televised interview earlier this month, said Mandetta had failed to show "humility." A few days later, on April 5, Bolsonaro told a group of supporters that he would act against officials in his government who "are full of themselves."

Those comments were widely understood as signaling an end to Mandetta's tenure, so much so that the minister said the next day his subordinates had cleaned out his desk.

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He survived, but questions swirled over whether Bolsonaro had indeed backed away from dismissing the man whose COVID-19 response was welcomed by many Brazilians, or if he were just biding his time while recruiting a replacement.

That uncertainty vanished on Thursday.

While rising quickly, the number of confirmed coronavirus cases in Brazil is still relatively low in relation to the country's massive population of 211 million, though it does have the most cases in Latin America. There have been almost 2,000 deaths. Its peak is expected in May.

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.

Following Mandetta's announcement of his firing, people in apartment buildings in Sao Paulo and Rio de Janeiro could be heard yelling insults at Bolsonaro from their windows. A survey earlier this month by pollster Datafolha showed three-quarters of Brazilians approved of the health ministry's handling of the crisis, versus just one-third for Bolsonaro.

At his press conference, Mandetta offered thanks to individuals with whom he had worked, and even to Bolsonaro.

"I leave the health ministry with a lot of gratitude to the president for having nominated me and allowing me to nominate each of you," Mandetta said. "I know I am leaving the best team. Work for the next minister like you worked for me. Don't spare any effort."

25 years after Oklahoma City bombing, anxiety remains high

By SEAN MURPHY Associated Press

OKLAHOMA CITY (AP) — In the 25 years since a truck bomb ripped through a federal building in downtown Oklahoma City and killed 168 people, the United States has suffered through foreign wars, a rise in mass shootings and a much deadlier act of terror, the Sept. 11 attacks.

But the April 19, 1995, assault on a sleepy city in the nation's heartland shocked many Americans out of their sense of security and awakened them to their own vulnerability. Terror wasn't just a foreign problem, it was here. Events since have only contributed to a shared anxiety.

Ordinarily, survivors and victims' families would gather Sunday at the memorial where the Alfred P. Murrah Building once stood to pay tribute to the lives that were lost and tragically altered, as they have every year since the bombing. But the 25th anniversary ceremony was canceled due to the coronavirus restrictions, denying the public the chance to collectively grieve a past tragedy because a current one is unfolding. Instead, the Oklahoma City National Memorial and Museum will offer a pre-recorded video that will air online and on TV and will include the reading of the names of everyone killed followed by 168 seconds of silence.

"There are a lot of things to grieve this spring, and the loss of the commemoration in person is one of them," Oklahoma City Mayor David Holt recently told The Associated Press. "But I think we've accepted that's clearly the right thing to do."

During last year's ceremony, Holt stressed the importance of educating new generations about the attack and the dangers of the violence and hatred that inspired it. Among those killed by the massive truck bomb that sheared off the building's front half were 19 children, most of whom were in a day care center in the basement.

"It was just so jarring that somebody would do this to innocent victims, especially children," said former Oklahoma Gov. Frank Keating, an ex-FBI agent who was just four months into his job as governor when the attack happened.

Law enforcement initially suspected foreign terrorists: The attack happened about two years after Islamic terrorists detonated a truck bomb inside a parking garage at the World Trade Center in New York. But prosecutors would soon learn the Oklahoma City attackers were U.S. citizens and that their bombing was inspired by a different 1993 event.

Hatred of the federal government motivated former Army soldier Timothy McVeigh and his co-conspirator,

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Terry Nichols, to commit what many experts still refer to as the deadliest act of domestic terrorism on U.S. soil. McVeigh was ultimately convicted, sentenced to death and executed by lethal injection in 2001. Nichols was sentenced to life in prison.

The day McVeigh selected — April 19 — was exactly two years after federal agents raided the compound of the Branch Davidian religious sect near Waco, Texas. At least 76 people, including about two dozen teens and children, died on the day of the raid, mostly from a fire that swept through the compound.

McVeigh had visited the compound during the 51-day standoff that preceded the raid, and prosecutors say that fueled his anger toward the federal government, culminating in the Oklahoma City attack. The Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives, which conducted the initial raid of the Waco compound, had offices inside the Murrah building.

Many acts of U.S. domestic terrorism in recent years have had a racial component that the Oklahoma City attack didn't, including the 2015 fatal shooting of nine black worshippers by a white supremacist in a South Carolina church and last year's anti-Mexican mass shooting at a Walmart in Texas that left 22 people dead.

"In the domestic terrorism space, we've seen some of the ongoing anti-government sort of stuff, but also the rise in the radical right, racially motivated ideologies that have actually led the FBI to raise the domestic-terrorist threat up to the same level as posed by foreign terrorist organizations," said Brian Jackson, an anti-terrorism researcher for the RAND Corporation. "That's actually a pretty big shift."

Politicians and law enforcement frequently use the phrase "domestic terrorism," but U.S. law defines terrorists as having ties to foreign entities. Homegrown extremist groups aren't labeled that way, even if they use violence and intimidation to try to achieve some ideological goal.

"Within the U.S., we have a problem with classifying a lot of terrorism by white people as hate crimes instead of terrorism," said Wesley McCann, a professor of criminology at the College of New Jersey who has studied and written extensively on terrorism in the U.S.

Acknowledging that the Oklahoma City bombing frequently is referred to as the worst act of domestic terrorism in U.S. history, McCann pointed to another atrocity in Oklahoma. White mobs attacking a section of Tulsa known as "Black Wall Street" in 1921 left as many as 300 people dead. That, McCann said, could be considered an act of domestic terrorism.

But newspapers at the time didn't say much about the Tulsa race massacre. And that was before cable news, much less social media.

"The original terrorists in this country have always been the white nationalists, the white supremacists," McCann said.

Follow Sean Murphy on Twitter: <https://twitter.com/apseanmurphy>

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By MICHAEL BALSAMO Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump's former lawyer and longtime fixer Michael Cohen will be released from federal prison to serve the remainder of his sentence in home confinement amid the coronavirus pandemic, a person familiar with the matter told The Associated Press.

Cohen is currently locked up at FCI Otisville in New York after pleading guilty to numerous charges, including campaign finance fraud and lying to Congress. He will remain under quarantine for 14 days before he is released. Federal statistics show 14 inmates and seven staff members at the prison have tested positive for coronavirus.

After he is released, Cohen will serve the remainder of his sentence at home, according to the person, who could not discuss the matter publicly and spoke to the AP on condition of anonymity.

Cohen's release comes as prison advocates and congressional leaders have been pressing the Justice Department for weeks to release at-risk inmates ahead of a potential outbreak, arguing that the public health guidance to stay 6 feet (1.8 meters) away from other people is nearly impossible behind bars.

Attorney General William Barr ordered the Bureau of Prisons earlier this month to increase the use of

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home confinement and expedite the release of eligible high-risk inmates, beginning at three prisons identified as coronavirus hot spots. Otisville is not one of those facilities.

As of Thursday, 473 federal inmates and 279 Bureau of Prisons staff members had tested positive for coronavirus at facilities across the U.S. Eighteen inmates have died since late March.

Many federal inmates have been seeking home confinement as the number of coronavirus cases grows in the federal prison system, but advocates have accused the Bureau of Prisons of moving too slowly to release inmates. The Bureau of Prisons said it had moved more than 1,000 inmates to home confinement since March 26, when Barr first issued a directive to increase its use in late March. The agency said it is a "tremendous logistical lift that was accomplished through the marshaling of all of BOP's resources."

A federal judge had denied Cohen's attempt for an early release to home confinement after serving 10 months in prison and said in a ruling earlier this month that it "appears to be just another effort to inject himself into the news cycle." But the Bureau of Prisons can take action to move him to home confinement without a judicial order.

Cohen began serving his sentence last May and was scheduled to be released from prison in November 2021.

Other high-profile inmates have also been released as the number of coronavirus cases soars. Last week, a judge ordered Michael Avenatti — the attorney who rose to fame representing porn star Stormy Daniels in lawsuits against Trump — to be temporarily freed from a federal jail in New York City and stay at a friend's house in Los Angeles. Avenatti had said he was at high risk of getting the coronavirus because he had a recent bout with pneumonia and his cellmate at the Metropolitan Correctional Center in Manhattan was removed due to flu-like symptoms.

Former New York state Senate leader Dean Skelos, 72, who was also serving a sentence at Otisville, is also expected to be released soon from prison to home confinement after testing positive for the coronavirus, prosecutors told a judge Wednesday.

CNN first reported Cohen was being released to home confinement.

A spokesman for the U.S. attorney's office in Manhattan declined to comment.

Associated Press writer Larry Neumeister in New York contributed to this report.

US job losses mount as Trump presses plan to reopen business

By CHRISTOPHER RUGABER and LORI HINNANT Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The ranks of America's unemployed swelled toward Great Depression-era levels Thursday, and President Donald Trump reacted to the pressure on the economy by outlining a phased approach to reopening parts of the country where the coronavirus is being brought under control.

Trump told the nation's governors that restrictions could be eased to allow businesses to reopen over the next several weeks in places that have extensive testing and a marked decrease in COVID-19 cases.

"We are not opening all at once, but one careful step at a time," Trump said, adding that his new guidelines give governors the freedom to act as they see fit.

His comments marked an abrupt change after a week in which he clashed with governors over his claim that he had "total" authority over how and when the country reopens.

Both Democratic and Republican governors welcomed the moderate White House approach, which calls for a gradual, three-phase reopening of businesses and schools.

In phase one, for example, theaters, sporting venues and churches would open "under strict physical distancing protocols," but bars would remain closed.

Trump said reopening could be imminent in some places, and he has remarked that data suggests coronavirus cases have peaked in the U.S. Scientists have said it's not clear that is the case, and they warned states to proceed with caution to prevent the virus from storming back.

The president unveiled his reopening plan the same day the government reported 5.2 million more Americans applied for unemployment benefits last week, bringing the four-week total to 22 million — easily the worst stretch of U.S. job losses on record. The losses translate to about 1 in 7 American workers.

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While many Americans have chafed at the damage to their livelihoods, business leaders and governors have warned that more testing and protective gear are needed before they can start lifting the lockdowns and other restrictions.

"My No. 1 focus is to keep my family safe, so I'm really not in a hurry to put an end to this," said Denise Stockwell, who is about to lose her job in marketing at Cornell University in Ithaca, New York.

But conservative economist Steven Moore, a Trump ally, said there will be 30 million people out of work in the country if the economy doesn't open back up soon. "And that is a catastrophic outcome for our country. Period," he said.

In China, official data released Friday showed GDP shrank 6.8% from a year ago in the quarter ending in March, its worst contraction since market-style economic reforms began in 1979. Consumer spending and manufacturing activity remain weak despite factories and offices reopening starting last month, suggesting recovery may be longer and harder than initially expected.

Some forecasters earlier said China might rebound as early as this month, but they have been cutting growth forecasts and pushing back recovery timelines as negative trade, retail sales and other data pile up.

Worldwide, the outbreak has infected more than 2.1 million people and killed more than 140,000, according to a tally by Johns Hopkins University, though the true numbers are believed to be much higher. The death toll in the U.S. reached about 31,000, with around 650,000 confirmed infections.

The spread of the virus is declining in such places as Italy, Spain and France, but rising or continuing at a high level in Britain, Russia and Turkey, authorities said.

In other developments:

— Vladimir Putin postponed Russia's grand Victory Day parade May 9 in Red Square marking the 75th anniversary of Nazi Germany's defeat in World War II. Since Soviet times, Victory Day has been the nation's most important holiday, reflecting wartime losses put at more than 27 million dead.

— New York, the most lethal hot spot in the U.S., reported more encouraging signs, with a drop in the daily number of deaths statewide and the overall count of people in the hospital. "We've controlled the beast," Gov. Andrew Cuomo said. Still, Cuomo extended the state's lockdown through at least May 15, and New York City is lining up 11,000 empty hotel rooms to quarantine people living in crowded apartment buildings.

— Police acting on an anonymous tip found at least 18 bodies over two days at a nursing home in Andover Township, New Jersey, that were waiting to be picked up by a funeral home.

Under the Trump administration road map, places that are turning the corner on the virus would begin a three-phase gradual reopening of businesses and schools, with each phase lasting at least 14 days, to ensure that the outbreak doesn't make a resurgence.

Many Americans, especially in rural areas and other parts of the country that have not seen major outbreaks, have urged governors to reopen their economies. More than 3,000 turned out this week to decry the Michigan governor's restrictions, police broke up a demonstration in North Carolina, and protests also took place in Oklahoma, Kentucky and Virginia.

"Those people that know they're vulnerable, self-quarantine. And everybody else, let them go back to work," Aaron Carver, a laid-off construction worker, said at a protest in Richmond, Virginia.

The decision of whether to relax the restrictions rests not with the White House but with the state and local leaders who imposed them in the first place. Seven Midwestern governors announced Thursday that they will coordinate on reopening their economies, after similar pacts among states in the Northeast and on the West Coast.

West Virginia Gov. Jim Justice, a Trump ally, said capacity and contact tracing would need to be considerably ramped up before restrictions could be safely lifted.

"All would be forgotten very quickly if we moved into a stage quicker than we should, and then we got into a situation where we had people dying like flies," Justice said.

Oregon Gov. Kate Brown said the White House guidance makes clear "the best path to reopening is still a cautious one that proceeds carefully and incrementally."

Two in three Americans expressed concerns that restrictions would be eased too quickly, according to a

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Pew Research Center survey released Thursday.

Economists said unemployment could reach 20% in April, the highest since the Depression of the 1930s. Layoffs are spreading well beyond stores, restaurants and hotels to white-collar professionals such as software programmers and legal assistants.

Lifting of restrictions, when it happens, won't be like flipping a switch. Restaurants and other businesses may be reopened in phases, with perhaps a limited number of entrances or reduced seating areas, while supermarkets may stick with one-way aisles and protective shields at the cash registers, experts say.

"It might be 'back to normal' for everyone else, but people still don't feel comfortable gathering at restaurants and bars," said Jeremiah Juncker, manager of the Rappourt pub in Ann Arbor, Michigan.

Many European countries, like the U.S., have seen heavy job losses, but places like Germany and France are using government subsidies to keep millions of people on payrolls.

Italy's hard-hit Lombardy region is pushing to restart manufacturing in early May, while Britain extended restrictions at least three more weeks. Switzerland announced staggered re-openings.

"The transition is beginning," Swiss Home and Health Minister Alain Berset said. "We want to go as fast as possible, and as slow as necessary."

Associated Press journalists around the world contributed.

This story has been edited to correct that Aaron Carver is a laid-off construction worker, not housing contractor.

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

What you need to know today about the virus outbreak

By The Associated Press undefined

U.S. states and regions with declining coronavirus infections and strong testing would be able to begin the gradual reopening of businesses and schools under new White House guidelines.

The approach was outlined by President Donald Trump on a call with the nation's governors as the extent and depth of the financial pain from the global pandemic became clearer with the ranks of America's unemployed swelling toward Great Depression-era levels.

But it doesn't look as if life will be returning to normal anytime soon. Some places could see at least some restrictions remain in place through the end of the year.

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

WHAT'S HAPPENING TODAY:

—Older Americans, the age group most at risk from the new coronavirus, are being invited to join a U.S. study of a potential COVID-19 vaccine.

—Guatemala has again suspended flights carrying people deported from the U.S. after 44 deportees arrived this week and tested positive for the coronavirus.

—Only one person is overseeing the spending of the \$2 trillion that Congress unleashed to deal with the coronavirus crisis.

— With arthouses closed and film festivals cancelled, movies are finding a new venue in a relatively new streaming service, The Criterion Channel.

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.

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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:

— 22 million: Roughly 22 million have sought jobless benefits in the past month — easily the worst stretch of U.S. job losses on record.

IN OTHER NEWS:

— LOVERS' GAZE: A co-worker snapped a photo of two nurses, a husband and wife, in an eye-to-eye embrace despite layers of protective gear. The image is inspiring people around the globe.

— HELPING CONNECTIONS: A 19-year-old Rhode Island man has set up a program to help coronavirus patients who aren't allowed to receive visitors while in the hospital stay connected to their loved ones.

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

Trump gives governors 3-phase plan to reopen economy

By ZEKE MILLER, ALAN SUDERMAN and KEVIN FREKING Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump gave governors a road map Thursday for recovering from the economic pain of the coronavirus pandemic, laying out "a phased and deliberate approach" to restoring normal activity in places that have strong testing and are seeing a decrease in COVID-19 cases.

"We're starting our life again," Trump said during his daily press briefing. "We're starting rejuvenation of our economy again."

He added, "This is a gradual process."

The new guidelines are aimed at easing restrictions in areas with low transmission of the coronavirus, while holding the line in harder-hit locations. They make clear that the return to normalcy will be a far longer process than Trump initially envisioned, with federal officials warning that some social distancing measures may need to remain in place through the end of the year to prevent a new outbreak. And they largely reinforce plans already in the works by governors, who have primary responsibility for public health in their states.

"You're going to call your own shots," Trump told the governors Thursday afternoon in a conference call, according to an audio recording obtained by The Associated Press. "We're going to be standing alongside of you."

Places with declining infections and strong testing would begin a three-phase gradual reopening of businesses and schools.

In phase one, for instance, the plan recommends strict social distancing for all people in public. Gatherings larger than 10 people are to be avoided and nonessential travel is discouraged.

In phase two, people are encouraged to maximize social distancing and limit gatherings to no more than 50 people unless precautionary measures are taken. Travel could resume.

Phase three envisions a return to normalcy for most Americans, with a focus on identification and isolation of any new infections.

Trump said recent trends in some states were so positive that they could almost immediately begin taking the steps laid out in phase one.

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"They will be able to go literally tomorrow," Trump said.

The guidelines recommend that states pass checkpoints that look at new cases, testing and surveillance data over the prior 14 days before advancing from one phase to another.

Governors of both parties made clear they will move at their own pace.

Delaware Gov. John Carney, a Democrat, said the guidelines "seem to make sense."

"We're days, maybe weeks away from the starting line and then you have to have 14 days of declining cases, of declining symptoms and hospital capacity that exists in case you have a rebound," he said.

West Virginia Gov. Jim Justice, a Trump ally, cautiously floated the idea of reopening parts of the state, but said testing capacity and contact tracing would need to be considerably ramped up before restrictions could be safely lifted.

"All would be forgotten very quickly if we moved into a stage quicker than we should, and then we got into a situation where we had people dying like flies," Justice told reporters.

At the earliest, the guidelines suggest, some parts of the country could see a resumption in normal commerce and social gatherings after a month of evaluating whether easing up on restrictions has led to a resurgence in virus cases. In other parts of the country, or if virus cases pick up, it could be substantially longer.

In briefing governors on the plan, Trump said they were going to be responsible for deciding when it is safe to lift restrictions in their states. Just days before, he had drawn swift pushback for claiming he had absolute authority to determine how and when states reopen.

"We have a very large number of states that want to get going and they're in very good shape," Trump said. "That's good with us, frankly."

The guidelines also include general recommendations to businesses as they plan for potential reopenings, suggesting temperature-taking, rapid COVID-19 testing and widespread disinfection efforts in workplaces.

Those most susceptible to the respiratory disease are advised to remain sheltered in place until their area enters the final phase — and even then are encouraged to take precautions to avoid close contact with other people.

Governors, for their part, have been moving ahead with their own plans for how to safely revive normal activity. Seven Midwestern governors announced Thursday they will coordinate on reopening their economies. Similar pacts were announced earlier in the week in the West and Northeast.

Two in three Americans expressed concerns that restrictions meant to slow the spread of the virus would be eased too quickly, according to a Pew Research Center survey released Thursday. More than 30,000 people in the United States have died from the virus.

Trump also held conference calls Thursday with lawmakers he named to a new congressional advisory task force on reviving the economy. The economic costs were clear in new federal data showing that at least 22 million Americans have been thrown out of work in the last month. But the legislators repeatedly urged the president not to sacrifice public health by moving too quickly.

"My highest priority on this task force will be to ensure the federal government's efforts to reopen our economy are bipartisan, data-driven, and based on the expertise of public health professionals," said Democratic Sen. Mark Warner of Virginia.

The federal government envisions a gradual recovery from the virus, in which disruptive mitigation measures may be needed in some places at least until a vaccine is available — a milestone unlikely to be reached until sometime next year.

"It's not going to immediately be a situation where we have stadiums full of people," said Housing and Urban Development Secretary Ben Carson on Thursday. "We're Americans. We will adapt," he added.

Trump on Thursday claimed the U.S. has "built the most advanced and robust testing anywhere in the world." But even people close to him warned more would be necessary.

"We are struggling with testing at a large scale," South Carolina Sen. Lindsey Graham told ABC's "The View." "You really can't go back to work until we have more tests."

Former Vice President Joe Biden, Trump's likely opponent in November's presidential election, said Thurs-

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day evening that Trump “kind of punted.”

“We’re not going to be able to really make significant changes in the three phases the president’s talking about until we’re able to test much more broadly,” Biden said on CNN.

There was also concern that the White House was taking too rosy a view on trends in the U.S.

“I would not declare a peak almost anywhere in the U.S. yet,” said Marc Lipsitch, a Harvard epidemiology professor who is director of the university’s Center for Communicable Disease Dynamics. He recommended “working to enhance surveillance and testing so if we do hit a peak, it will be possible to identify it with greater certainty.”

But some of Trump’s conservative allies, like economist Stephen Moore, have encouraged him to act swiftly, warning of “a mini Great Depression if we keep the economy shut down.”

“That is a catastrophic outcome for our country. Period,” Moore said he advised the president.

A big testing ground for Trump’s road map could be Texas, where Republican Gov. Greg Abbott, who has stuck close to federal guidance throughout the crisis, will lay out his reopening plan Friday. Abbott has said the process will be gradual, but he is facing pressure from conservative lawmakers to get Texas back to work.

The White House proposal presented Thursday is different from what the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommended last week, according to a draft of the recommendation obtained by The Associated Press. The CDC talked about using more specific criteria and in many cases looking for improvement over longer periods of time before easing restrictions in high-transmission areas. Examples include wanting to see sustained reductions over 30 days in positive tests for coronavirus, and sustained reductions over 15 days in numbers of coronavirus deaths.

Suderman reported from Richmond, Va. Associated Press writers Jill Colvin in Washington, Paul Weber in Austin, Texas, Anthony Izaguirre in Charleston, W.Va., Mike Stobbe in New York and Mike Catalini in Trenton, N.J., contributed to this report.

Facebook to warn users who ‘liked’ coronavirus hoaxes

By **BARBARA ORTUTAY** and **AMANDA SEITZ** Associated Press

Facebook will soon let you know if you shared or interacted with dangerous coronavirus misinformation on the site, the latest in a string of aggressive efforts the social media giant is taking to contain an outbreak of viral falsehoods.

The new notice will be sent to users who have clicked on, reacted to, or commented on posts featuring harmful or false claims about COVID-19 after they have been removed by moderators. The alert, which will start appearing on Facebook in the coming weeks, will direct users to a site where the World Health Organization lists and debunks virus myths and rumors.

Facebook, Google and Twitter are introducing stricter rules, altered algorithms and thousands of fact checks to stop the spread of bad misinformation online about the virus.

Challenges remain. Tech platforms have sent home human moderators who police the platforms, forcing them to rely on automated systems to take down harmful content. They are also up against people’s mistrust of authoritative sources for information, such as the WHO.

“Through this crisis, one of my top priorities is making sure that you see accurate and authoritative information across all of our apps,” Facebook CEO Mark Zuckerberg wrote on his Facebook page Thursday.

The company disclosed Thursday that it put more than 40 million warning labels in March over videos, posts or articles about the coronavirus that fact-checking organizations have determined are false or misleading. The number includes duplicate claims — the labels were based on 4,000 fact checks.

Facebook says those warning labels have stopped 95% of users from clicking on the false information.

“It’s a big indicator that people are trusting the fact checkers,” said Baybars Orsek, the director of the International Fact-Checking Network. “The label has an impact on people’s information consumption.”

But Orsek cautioned that the data Facebook provided should be reviewed by outside editors or experts,

and called on the historically secretive company to release regular updates about the impact of its fact-checking initiative.

Orsek's organization is a nonprofit that certifies news organizations as fact checkers, a requirement to produce fact-checking articles for Facebook. Facebook has recruited dozens of news organizations around the globe to fact check bad information on its site. The Associated Press is part of that program.

Facebook will also begin promoting the articles that debunk COVID-19 misinformation, of which there are thousands, on a new information center called "Get The Facts." Putting trustworthy information in front of people can be just as useful, if not more, than simply debunking falsehoods.

Still, conspiracy theories, claims about unverified treatments, and misinformation about coronavirus vaccines continue to pop up on the site daily— sometimes circumventing the safeguards Facebook has implemented.

The new notification feature also only applies to posts on users' main news feed — not in groups, where misinformation often spreads unchecked, and not on WhatsApp or Instagram, though Facebook has put some other protections in place on those platforms.

That means a lot of users won't get the new alert from Facebook, said Stephanie Edgerly, an associate professor at Northwestern University who researches audience engagement. She said many users might simply see a false claim in their Facebook feed but not share, like or comment on it.

"A lot of what we know about how people scroll through their news feed not clicking on things, they still reading posts or headlines, without clicking on the link," Edgerly said.

Facebook users, for example, viewed a false claim that the virus is destroyed by chlorine dioxide nearly 200,000 times, estimates a new study out today from Avaaz, a left-leaning advocacy group that tracks and researches online misinformation.

The group found more than 100 pieces of misinformation about the coronavirus on Facebook, viewed millions of times even after the claims had been marked as false or misleading by fact checkers. Other false claims were not labeled as misinformation, despite being declared by fact-checkers as false.

"Coronavirus misinformation content mutates and spreads faster than Facebook's current system can track it," Avaaz said in its report.

This is especially problematic for Italian and Spanish misinformation, the report said, because Facebook has been slower to issue warning labels on posts that aren't in English. Avaaz also noted that it can take as long as 22 days for Facebook to label misinformation as such — giving it plenty of time to spread.

False claims about coronavirus treatments have had deadly consequences.

Last month, Iranian media reported more than 300 people had died and 1,000 were sickened in the country after ingesting methanol, a toxic alcohol rumored to be a remedy through private social media messages.

AP Technology Writer Matt O'Brien in Providence, Rhode Island, contributed to this story.

Nurses push back on pressure to work without right equipment

By MARTHA MENDOZA and KIMBERLEE KRUESI Associated Press

Nurse Mike Gulick was meticulous about not bringing the coronavirus home to his wife and their 2-year-old daughter. He'd stop at a hotel after work just to take a shower. He'd wash his clothes in Lysol disinfectant. They did a tremendous amount of hand-washing.

But at Providence Saint John's Health Center in Santa Monica, California, Gulick and his colleagues worried that caring for infected patients without first being able to don an N95 respirator mask was risky. The N95 mask filters out 95% of all airborne particles, including ones too tiny to be blocked by regular masks. But hospital administrators said they weren't necessary and didn't provide them, he said.

Then, last week, a nurse on Gulick's ward tested positive for the coronavirus, which causes COVID-19. The next day, doctors doing rounds on their ward asked the nurses why they weren't wearing N95 masks, Gulick said, and told them they should have better protection.

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For Gulick, that was it. He and a handful of nurses told their managers they wouldn't enter COVID-19 patient rooms without N95 masks.

"I went into nursing with a passion for helping those who are most vulnerable and being an advocate for those who couldn't have a voice for themselves, but not under the conditions we're currently under," Gulick said.

The hospital suspended him and nine colleagues, according to the National Nurses United, which represents them. Ten nurses are now being paid but are not allowed to return to work pending an investigation from human resources, the union said.

They are among hundreds of doctors, nurses and other health care workers across the country who say they've been asked to work without adequate protection. Some have taken part in protests or lodged formal complaints. Others are buying or even making their own supplies.

One nurse was fired after refusing to remove her own N95 mask and sterile gloves and instead wear a "tissue-paper thin" surgical mask while on duty except for when caring for a known COVID-19 patient.

Dawn Kulach was fired on April 10 by Virtua Health's hospital in Voorhees, New Jersey, shortly after she recovered from pneumonia caused by the virus and returned to work. Kulach said in an interview that it was unsafe to work without the N95 mask because the virus is circulating in hospital air ducts and there's no way to know which patients have the virus. She also insisted on wearing sterile gloves to use a computer and other shared items at the nursing station.

Virtua's chief clinical officer, Dr. Reginald Blaber, said in a statement that the hospital now provides N95 masks to staff caring for patients with the virus or awaiting test results, and to staff in high-risk areas like the ICU and ER. Staff in other areas are issued one surgical mask daily.

Guidelines from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention don't require N95 masks for COVID-19 caregivers, but many hospitals are opting for the added protection because the infection is extremely contagious. The CDC said Wednesday at least 9,200 health care workers have been infected.

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.

Saint John's said that, as of Tuesday, it was providing N95 masks to all nurses caring for COVID-19 patients and those awaiting test results. Its statement said the hospital had increased its supply and was disinfecting masks daily.

"It's no secret there is a national shortage," said the statement. The hospital would not comment on the suspended nurses.

Angela Gatdula, a Saint John's nurse who fell ill with COVID-19, said she asked hospital managers why doctors were wearing N95s but nurses weren't. She says they told her the CDC said surgical masks were enough to keep her safe.

Then she was hit with a dry cough, severe body aches and joint pain.

"When I got the phone call that I was positive, I got really scared," she said.

She's recovering and plans to return to work next week.

"The next nurse that gets this might not be lucky. They might require hospitalization. They might die," she said.

As COVID-19 cases soared in March, the U.S. was hit with a critical shortage of medical supplies including N95s, which are mostly made in China. In response, the CDC lowered its standard for health care workers' protective gear, recommending they use bandannas if they run out of the masks.

Some exasperated health care workers have complained to the Occupational Safety and Health Administration.

"I ... fear retribution for being a whistleblower and plead to please keep me anonymous," wrote a Tennessee medical worker, who complained staffers were not allowed to wear their own masks if they weren't directly treating COVID-19 patients.

In Oregon, a March 26 complaint warned that masks were not being provided to nurses working with suspected COVID-19 patients. Another Oregon complaint alleged nurses "are told that wearing a mask

will result in disciplinary action.”

Some are taking to the streets.

On Wednesday, nurse unions in New York, Massachusetts, Michigan, Illinois, California and Pennsylvania scheduled actions at their hospitals and posted on social media using the hashtag PPEoverProfit. PPE, or personal protective equipment, refers to items such as masks and gowns.

Nurses at Kaiser Permanente’s Fresno Medical Center in California demanded more protective supplies at a protest during their shift change Tuesday. The hospital, like many in the U.S., requires nurses to use one N95 mask per day, which has raised concerns about carrying the infection from patient to patient.

Ten nurses from the facility have tested positive, Kaiser said. Three have been admitted to the hospital, and one is in critical care, protest organizers said.

Wade Nogy, a Kaiser senior vice president, denied union claims that nurses have been unnecessarily exposed.

“Kaiser Permanente has years of experience managing highly infectious diseases, and we are safely treating patients who have been infected with this virus, while protecting other patients, members and employees,” Nogy said.

Amy Arlund, a critical care nurse at the facility, said that before the pandemic, following infection control protocols they’re currently using would have been grounds for disciplinary action.

“And now it’s like they’ve thrown all those standards out the window as if they never existed,” Arlund said. “It’s beyond me.”

AP Medical Writer Linda A. Johnson contributed to this report from Trenton, N.J.

This story has been corrected to reflect that the name of the organization that represents nurses is National Nurses United, not National Nurses Union.

Amid talk of restarting economy, virus keeps killing in NYC

By DAVID B. CARUSO, MICHAEL HILL and MICHAEL R. SISAK Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Hopeful talk about getting people out of their homes and back to work in some parts of the country seems a far cry from the harsh reality in New York and its suburbs: Thousands of people infected with the coronavirus are still streaming into hospitals every day. Hundreds are still dying.

New York Gov. Andrew Cuomo noted the lack of major improvement Thursday as he announced another 606 deaths in the state and said current social isolation rules will stay in place through at least May 15. The number dying was down from a day earlier, but remains alarmingly high.

New York hospitals are still jammed with nearly 18,000 coronavirus patients, fewer than the crushing numbers authorities once feared but still at crisis levels that have barely budged for more than a week. Nearly 4,400 of those patients were on ventilators, the majority of whom, if past trends hold, are unlikely to survive.

The virus has also continued to rage through the metro area. In New Jersey, deaths have more than doubled in a week, to more than 3,500 as of Thursday. In Connecticut, fatalities rose 40% in the last week to over 970 overall. Most of the deaths in both states have been in the greater New York City area.

Conditions inside hospitals have stabilized as help has poured in. At Jacobi Hospital in the Bronx, the emergency room is less crushed, but demands remain heavy in the intensive care unit, said nurse Sean Petty.

Rachel Platten’s “Fight Song,” now played every time someone comes off a ventilator, resounds several times a day, giving staffers a morale boost. But colleagues told Petty they were busy with cardiac arrest calls all night Wednesday.

“It’s still very high-stakes, very intense situations for many people in the hospital,” Petty said Thursday.

Other medical professionals warned they could be overwhelmed again if restrictions ease too soon.

“We will end up where we started, an influx of people and struggling to save them all,” said Diana Torres,

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a nurse at Mount Sinai West in Manhattan. "If we reopen now, we just wasted our time."

Talk of "reopening" the country baffled people this week in Queens, where the virus has killed at least 2,800 people.

"Everybody coming back to work at once — what does that mean?" said Julio Alvia, a 27-year-old video editor. "Do we go back to gridlock and crowded sidewalks, lines and handshakes? Can that happen? I don't think that it can."

After a week of talking optimistically of getting the country moving again quickly, President Donald Trump told the nation's governors in a conference call Thursday that he would leave decisions up to them. The administration unveiled guidelines suggesting a gradual easing of restrictions in areas with low transmission of the virus and the capability of doing robust testing to find infected people.

New York City Mayor Bill de Blasio said in his Thursday briefing with reporters that he told Trump and Vice President Mike Pence in a conversation the previous day that it would be "madness" to rush the restart.

"I said, 'You know, I know you want to restart the economy. So do we. But the worst possible scenario is take your foot off the gas prematurely, the disease has a resurgence. Then everything you're doing to try and restart, you have to stop, you have to go backwards, you have to add more restrictions you have to slow down the timeline further and you're gonna end up waiting a long, long time before you can get people back to normal,'" de Blasio said.

While Wednesday was the second day in a row that the number of deaths in New York has ticked downward, it is too soon to call it a trend. Fatalities have dipped before, only to rocket back.

The virus continues to hit nursing homes especially hard. A home in northern New Jersey was besieged by reporters Thursday after more than a dozen bodies were found by police crammed into its overwhelmed morgue.

Cuomo has outlined some basic philosophies for how to restart economic activity, but he insists it's unrealistic to bring the state's 9 million workers back to the job without mass testing, isolation of infected people and tracing of people who had contact with them.

And the state, he said, is still far off from being able to do any of that effectively.

Restarting New York City also represents an unprecedented logistical challenge, involving countless bars, Broadway shows, shops, restaurants and other businesses.

Many New Yorkers are looking for assurances that returning to public transit, crowded workplaces and packed sidewalks won't lead to a new surge in deaths.

Manolo Morales, a 28-year-old retail worker, said he can understand why some people may want to get back to work.

"But we have to take things slow," Morales said. "The slower we take it, the more time we have to go back to work in a safe environment."

Hill reported from Albany. Associated Press writer Jennifer Peltz contributed to this report.

Brian Dennehy, Tony-winning stage, screen actor, dies at 81

By MARK KENNEDY AP Entertainment Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Brian Dennehy, the burly actor who started in films as a macho heavy and later in his career won plaudits for his stage work in plays by William Shakespeare, Anton Chekhov, Eugene O'Neill and Arthur Miller, has died. He was 81.

Dennehy died Wednesday night of natural causes in New Haven, Connecticut, according to Kate Cafaro of ICM Partners, the actor's representatives.

Known for his broad frame, booming voice and ability to play good guys and bad guys with equal aplomb, Dennehy won two Tony Awards, a Golden Globe, a Laurence Olivier Award and was nominated for six Emmys. He was inducted into the American Theater Hall of Fame in 2010.

Tributes came from Hollywood and Broadway, including from Lin-Manuel Miranda, who said he saw Dennehy twice onstage and called the actor "a colossus." Actor Michael McKean said Dennehy was "brilliant

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and versatile, a powerhouse actor and a very nice man as well." Dana Delany, who appeared in a movie with Dennehy, said: "They don't make his kind anymore."

Among his 40-odd films, he played a sheriff who jailed Rambo in "First Blood," a serial killer in "To Catch a Killer," and a corrupt sheriff gunned down by Kevin Kline in "Silverado." He also had some benign roles: the bartender who consoles Dudley Moore in "10" and the levelheaded leader of aliens in "Cocoon" and its sequel.

"The world has lost a great artist," Sylvester Stallone wrote in tribute on Twitter, saying Dennehy helped him build the character of Rambo.

Eventually Dennehy wearied of the studio life. "Movies used to be fun," he observed in an interview. "They took care of you, first-class. Those days are gone."

Dennehy had a long connection with Chicago's Goodman Theater, which had a reputation for heavy drama. He appeared in Bertolt Brecht's "Galileo" in 1986 and later Chekhov's "Cherry Orchard" at far lower salaries than he earned in Hollywood. In 1990 he played the role of Hickey in Eugene O'Neill's "The Iceman Cometh," a play he reprised at the Goodman with Nathan Lane in 2012 and in Brooklyn in 2015.

In 1998, Dennehy appeared on Broadway in the classic role of Willy Loman, the worn-out hustler in Miller's "Death of a Salesman" and won the Tony for his performance.

"What this actor goes for is close to an everyman quality, with a grand emotional expansiveness that matches his monumental physique," wrote Ben Brantley in his review of the play for The New York Times. "Yet these emotions ring so unerringly true that Mr. Dennehy seems to kidnap you by force, trapping you inside Willy's psyche."

He was awarded another Tony in 2003 for his role in O'Neill's "Long Day's Journey into Night," opposite Vanessa Redgrave, Phillip Seymour Hoffman and Robert Sean Leonard.

At the podium, after thanking his family, co-stars and producers and complementing his competitors, he said: "The words of Eugene O'Neill — they've got to be heard. They've got to be heard, and heard and heard. And thank you so much for giving us the chance to enunciate them."

Dennehy was born July 9, 1938, in Bridgeport, Connecticut, the first of three sons. His venture into acting began when he was 14 in New York City and a student at a Brooklyn high school. He acted the title role in "Macbeth." He played football on a scholarship at Columbia University, and he served five years in the U.S. Marines.

Back in New York City in 1965, he pursued acting while working at side jobs. "I learned first-hand how a truck driver lives, what a bartender does, how a salesman thinks," he told The New York Times in 1989. "I had to make a life inside those jobs, not just pretend."

His parents — Ed Dennehy, an editor for The Associated Press in New York, and Hannah Dennehy, a nurse — could never understand why their son chose to act. "Anyone raised in a first or second generation immigrant family knows that you are expected to advance the ball down the field," Dennehy told Columbia College Today in 1999. "Acting didn't qualify in any way."

The 6-foot-3-inch Dennehy went to Hollywood for his first movie, "Semi-Tough" starring Burt Reynolds and Kris Kristofferson. Dennehy was paid \$10,000 a week for 10 week's work, which he thought "looked like it was all the money in the world." He became a professional actor at the age of 38.

Among his films: "Looking for Mr. Goodbar," "Foul Play," "Little Miss Marker," "Split Image," "Gorky Park," "Legal Eagles," "Miles from Home," "Return to Snowy River," "Presumed Innocent," "Romeo and Juliet" and "Assault on Precinct 13." He played the father of Chris Farley's titular character in the 1995 comedy "Tommy Boy."

He played serial murderer John Wayne Gacy in the 1991 TV movie "To Catch a Killer" and union leader Jackie Presser in the HBO special "Teamster Boss" a year later. "I try to play villains as if they're good guys and good guys as if they're villains," he said in 1992.

He worked deep into his 70s, in such projects as SundanceTV's "Hap and Leonard," the film "The Seagull" with Elisabeth Moss and Annette Bening and the play "Endgame" by Samuel Beckett at the Long Wharf Theatre. His last foray on Broadway was in "Love Letters" opposite Mia Farrow in 2014.

"Just devastated to learn that the magnificent Brian Dennehy has died. There is no one I enjoyed work-

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ing with more. And there are few friends as valued in my life," Farrow wrote Thursday.

Other tributes came from Treat Williams, who wrote: "A great great actor has passed" and Josh Gad, who said Dennehy's performance in "Death of a Salesman" will go down as one of the crowning performances ever delivered on stage.

He is survived by his second wife, costume designer Jennifer Arnott and their two children, Cormac and Sarah. He also is survived by three daughters — Elizabeth, Kathleen and Deirdre — from a previous marriage to Judith Scheff.

Mark Kennedy is at <http://twitter.com/KennedyTwits>

EPA guts rule credited with cleaning up coal-plant toxic air

By ELLEN KNICKMEYER Associated Press Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Trump administration on Thursday gutted an Obama-era rule that compelled the country's coal plants to cut back emissions of mercury and other human health hazards, a move designed to limit future regulation of air pollutants from coal- and oil-fired power plants.

Environmental Protection Agency chief Andrew Wheeler said the rollback was reversing what he depicted as regulatory overreach by the Obama administration. "We have put in place an honest accounting method that balances" the cost to utilities with public safety, he said.

Wheeler is a former coal lobbyist whose previous clients have gotten many of the regulatory rollbacks they sought from the Trump administration.

Environmental and public health groups and Democratic lawmakers faulted the administration for pressing forward with a series of rollbacks easing pollution rules for industry — in the final six months of President Donald Trump's current term — while the coronavirus pandemic rivets the world's attention.

With rollbacks on air pollution protections, the "EPA is all but ensuring that higher levels of harmful air pollution will make it harder for people to recover in the long run" from the disease caused by the coronavirus, given the lasting harm the illness does to victims hearts and lungs, said Delaware Sen. Tom Carper, the senior Democrat on the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee.

The EPA move leaves in place standards for emissions of mercury, which damages the developing brains of children and has been linked to a series of other ailments. But the changes greatly reduce the health benefits that regulators can consider in crafting futures rules for power plant emissions. That undermines the 2011 mercury rule and limits regulators' ability to tackle the range of soot, heavy metals, toxic gases and other hazards from fossil fuel power plants.

The Trump administration contends the mercury cleanup was not "appropriate and necessary," a legal benchmark under the country's landmark Clean Air Act.

The Obama rule led to what electric utilities say was an \$18 billion cleanup of mercury and other toxins from the smokestacks of coal-fired power plants. EPA staffers' own analysis said the rule curbed mercury's devastating neurological damage to children and prevented thousands of premature deaths annually, among other public health benefits.

Most coal-fired power plants have already made the technological upgrades required by the 2011 mercury rule. Many utilities have urged the Trump administration not to go ahead with Thursday's rollbacks, fearing expensive legal battles will result.

Fred Krupp, president of the Environmental Defense Fund advocacy group, said the Obama-era mercury standards already had proved to be "a resounding success," reducing mercury pollution from coal plants by more than 80 percent. "Thanks to these vital clean air protections, we all have less poison in the air we breathe and the food we eat," Krupp said in a statement.

Coal power plants in this country are the largest single manmade source of mercury pollutants, which enter the food chain through fish and other items that people consume.

In 2017, Wheeler, while still a lobbyist, accompanied coal magnate Robert Murray on some of Murray's calls to new Trump Cabinet members. Murray was pushing a list of desired rollbacks of regulations on coal,

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as well as asking for major staffing cuts at the EPA and other changes at government boards.

Trump and his administration have granted several of Murray's requests, including scrapping an Obama-era climate change effort that would have encouraged utilities to move to cleaner forms of energy than coal.

Falling, and now plummeting, prices for natural gas and cheaper costs for solar and wind power have made it tough for coal-fired power plants in the U.S. marketplace, leading to drops in coal production and coal energy in the country despite Trump's rescue efforts.

Backup of bodies overwhelms nursing home amid outbreak

By DAVID PORTER Associated Press

An extraordinary number of coronavirus-related deaths overwhelmed a nursing home in northern New Jersey where police found 18 bodies in what the governor called a "makeshift morgue" on two consecutive days earlier this week.

Police got an anonymous tip Monday that a body was being stored outside the home, Andover Township Police Chief Eric Danielson said Thursday.

When police arrived, he said, the body wasn't where the tipster had said it was — but they found 13 bodies inside. They were removed Monday night and taken to a hospital in a refrigerated truck.

The New Jersey Herald first reported the finding of the bodies, which followed the discovery of five bodies at the home Sunday after complaints from staff and family members to law enforcement.

Nineteen of the home's 35 residents who have died since March 30 had the coronavirus that causes COVID-19, Health Commissioner Judy Persichilli said. Of more than 500 residents listed as of April 15, 103 had tested positive, and more than 100 more had symptoms. Fifty-two staff members also showed symptoms.

Local health officials visited early Sunday after the state health department received word the facility needed body bags, Persichilli said. On Tuesday, they reported that the facility was understaffed.

In an email Thursday, co-owner Chaim Scheinbaum argued that staffing was adequate but that an extraordinary number of deaths over the weekend had overwhelmed the facility's resources.

"The back up and after hours holiday weekend issues, plus more than average deaths, contributed to the presence of more deceased than normal in the facility holding room," nursing home co-owner Chaim Scheinbaum wrote.

The area used to house deceased residents until they can be picked up by a funeral home has a normal capacity of four, "with a maximum of 12," Scheinbaum wrote.

Staffing at the facility is "solid" with 12 nurses, one more than normal, and 39 nursing assistants, one fewer than normal, Scheinbaum wrote.

Police released a photo of a box truck parked outside the home that was being used to store the bodies after a hazmat team removed them.

U.S. Rep. Josh Gottheimer, a Democrat whose district covers Andover Township, said he was notified over the weekend that the facility was "desperate for body bags." He said he had received calls and emails from concerned relatives.

"One of my concerns is that these facilities are not communicating in real time," he said. "That's what I've been hearing from families. That's outrageous, it's completely unacceptable that they have to call me for updates."

Gov. Phil Murphy said at a news briefing Thursday that "several individuals" had died at the Andover nursing home and that he has asked the state attorney general to look into what happened there, as well as at any other nursing homes that have had many deaths.

The Democratic governor said he was "outraged that bodies of the dead were allowed to pile up in a makeshift morgue at the facility. New Jerseyans living in our long-term care facilities deserve to be cared for with respect, compassion and dignity."

The coronavirus has spread quickly through nursing homes around the country, leading to pressure on federal health officials to publicly track COVID-19 infections and deaths. In New Jersey, 471 residents of long-term care facilities had died through Wednesday, and 358 of the state's 375 facilities have reported positive cases, according to state health officials.

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Since last month, the state has banned visitation, ordered universal masking and required that all facilities notify residents, family and staff of any outbreaks.

Persichilli said this week that 123 long-term care facilities have been prohibited from admitting patients because they haven't demonstrated they can effectively segregate COVID-19-infected residents from those who aren't infected.

In the past week, Persichilli said, the state had distributed more than 100,000 N95 masks, nearly 700,000 surgical masks, 7,000 face shields and more than 700,000 gloves to long-term facilities.

Associated Press writer Mike Catalini contributed to this report.

In Soweto, a South African who celebrated history is mourned

By JEROME DELAY Associated Press

JOHANNESBURG (AP) — Benedict Somi Vilakazi had been surrounded by history.

His grandfather was South Africa's first black lecturer at Witswatersrand University and produced an English/Zulu dictionary, enormous achievements in a country then divided sharply by race. The most famous street in Soweto shares his name, and two Nobel Peace Prize winners — Nelson Mandela and Desmond Tutu — lived along it.

Vilakazi was proud of that past and put a mural about his grandfather in his coffee shop that was popular with tourists and locals alike.

Some of them gathered, carefully, keeping a distance and many wearing facemasks, on Thursday to mourn the 57-year-old Vilakazi, who died of COVID-19. The pallbearers wore full protective suits.

"Somi knew how to welcome people, serve them a nice coffee and make them laugh," said his cousin, Siphon Vilakazi, who has a gift shop next door. "So many people will miss him. Our family, our neighbors and many others."

The coffee shop is located by the Hector Pieterse Memorial, a landmark of South Africa's struggle against apartheid, the previous regime of racial oppression.

"Somi took great pride in telling people about the history of the family and Soweto," his cousin said.

Vilakazi had taken the coronavirus threat seriously, observed precautions while serving customers and closed the shop well before South Africa went into lockdown on March 27, family members said.

He died on April 11, leaving a wife and two children.

South Africa has confirmed more than 2,500 cases of COVID-19, and more than 30 deaths. Its nationwide lockdown was imposed relatively early and is credited with helping to control the spread of the disease, bringing the daily average increase in cases down from 42% to 4%.

Health experts warn, however, that the disease is expected to continue to spread in the country of 57 million, especially in the crowded, often low-income townships surrounding Johannesburg, Cape Town, Durban and Pretoria.

Those townships include Soweto, the most famous of them all.

"We pray that we will all stay safe and healthy," Vilakazi's cousin said.

Study: Warming makes US West megadrought worst in modern age

By SETH BORENSTEIN AP Science Writer

KENSINGTON, Maryland (AP) — A two-decade-long dry spell that has parched much of the western United States is turning into one of the deepest megadroughts in the region in more than 1,200 years, a new study found.

And about half of this historic drought can be blamed on man-made global warming, according to a study in Thursday's journal *Science*.

Scientists looked at a nine-state area from Oregon and Wyoming down through California and New

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Mexico, plus a sliver of southwestern Montana and parts of northern Mexico. They used thousands of tree rings to compare a drought that started in 2000 and is still going — despite a wet 2019 — to four past megadroughts since the year 800.

With soil moisture as the key measurement, they found only one other drought that was as big and was likely slightly bigger. That one started in 1575, just 10 years after St. Augustine, the first European city in the United States, was founded, and that drought ended before the Pilgrims landed on Plymouth Rock in 1620.

What's happening now is "a drought bigger than what modern society has seen," said study lead author A. Park Williams, a bioclimatologist at Columbia University.

Daniel Swain, a UCLA climate scientist who wasn't part of the study, called the research important because it provides evidence "that human-caused climate change transformed what might have otherwise been a moderate long-term drought into a severe event comparable to the 'megadroughts' of centuries past."

What's happening is that a natural but moderate drought is being worsened by temperatures that are 2.9 degrees Fahrenheit (1.6 degrees Celsius) hotter than the past and that suck moisture out of the ground, Williams said. It's much like how clothes and plants dry faster in the warmth of indoors than they do outside, he said.

To quantify the role of global warming, researchers used 31 computer models to compare what's happening now to what would happen in a mythical world without the burning of fossil fuels that spews billions of tons of heat-trapping gases. They found on average that 47% of the drought could be blamed on human-caused climate change.

"We've been increasingly drifting into a world that's getting dryer," Williams said.

There's debate among scientists over whether this current drought warrants the title "megadrought" because so far it has only lasted two decades and others are at least 28 years long.

Climate scientist Clara Deser at the National Center for Atmospheric Research, who wasn't part of the study, said while the research is good, she thinks the deep drought has to last another decade or so to qualify as a "megadrought."

Williams said he understands the concern and that's why the study calls it "an emerging megadrought."

"It's still going on and it's 21 years long," Williams said. "This drought looks like one of the worst ones of the last millennium except for the fact that it hasn't lasted as long."

University of Michigan environment dean Jonathan Overpeck, who studies southwestern climate and was not part of the study, calls it "the first observed multidecadal megadrought in recorded U.S. history."

Although last year was wet, past megadroughts have had wet years and the recent rain and snow was not nearly enough to make up for the deep drought years before, Williams said.

The U.S. drought monitor puts much of Oregon, California, Colorado, Utah and Nevada and good chunks of New Mexico, Arizona and Idaho in abnormally dry, moderate or severe drought conditions. Wyoming is the only state Williams studied that doesn't have large areas of drought.

This week, water managers warned that the Rio Grande is forecast to have water flows less than half of normal, while New Mexico's largest reservoir is expected to top out at about one-third of its 30-year average.

This is "what we can expect going forward in a world with continued global warming," said Stanford University climate scientist Noah Diffenbaugh, who wasn't part of the study.

Read more stories on climate issues by The Associated Press at <https://www.apnews.com/Climate>

Follow Seth Borenstein on Twitter at @borenbears .

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.

'Am I going now to my execution?' One doctor's very long day

By DOMENICO STINELLIS and FRANCES D'EMILIO Associated Press

PARMA, Italy (AP) — It was March 7, in the afternoon. Dr. Giovanni Passeri had just returned home from Maggiore Hospital, where he is an internist, when he was urgently called back to work. His ward at the hospital was about to admit its first COVID-19 case.

Driving back to the hospital, down the tree-lined streets of Parma, Passeri, 56, recalled thinking: "Am I going now to my execution?"

Italy's more than 21,000 coronavirus dead have included scores of doctors, including a colleague of Passeri's at Maggiore, a hospital in one of Italy's hardest-hit northern provinces.

Since that afternoon more than a month ago, Passeri has worked every day. From the evening of April 7 until the morning of April 9, Associated Press photographer Domenico Stinellis documented his night and day, from a tense, 12-hour overnight shift to his drastically altered routine at home with his wife and 10-year-old son.

In his apartment, he sleeps alone in a garret room hastily converted into a bedroom to prevent any chance of transmitting the virus to his wife. The first time his son, Francesco, leaped up to hug him when Passeri came home after tending to coronavirus patients, the physician stiffened. That's no longer safe, the physician had to say.

Now, when Passeri senses that the emotional pressure on Francesco is building too much, they play cards together. Each wears a mask.

At work, colorful drawings are affixed to the front door of his hospital pavilion to boost morale. Reads one: "To all you warriors, thanks."

Morale, though, can be a precious commodity. Passeri cannot forget the looks in his patients' eyes when they gasp for air.

COVID-19, as the world now knows, can be devastating; it causes mild to moderate symptoms in many of those infected, but pneumonia and other life-threatening complications can ensue. Over 137,000 people with the virus have died worldwide, according to a tally by Johns Hopkins University that experts say is almost certainly too low.

On this day, Passeri's ward has 32 of the hospital's 450 COVID-19 patients. With a gloved hand, he touches the bare hand of a patient in his 80s. The hiss of oxygen makes it impossible for another elderly patient to hear what Passeri is saying, so the doctor writes out an update on the man's condition and hands it to him to read.

On a desk, cardboard boxes hold envelopes that contain medical charts. Two boxes are marked "discharged." The third is marked "deceased."

Mask, goggles, several pairs of gloves, three layers of protective gown, foot covers: At the end of his shift, Passeri removes all in a deliberate, practiced ballet to ensure that nothing contaminated by the virus will touch his skin. The shower he will take at home will be welcome relief.

On this night, he stretches out in his "isolation" bedroom with a book, then gets some sleep before heading back to the hospital and joining his fellow medical warriors once more.

D'Emilio reported from Rome.

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

Muslims grapple with Ramadan rituals in coronavirus era

By MARIAM FAM Associated Press

WINTER PARK, Fla. (AP) — Seattle resident Maggie Mohamed was looking forward to spending the Islamic holy month of Ramadan in her native Egypt.

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Now, with the spread of the new coronavirus, flying is off the table. So is having friends and relatives over for a potluck iftar, the breaking of the fast. Mohamed is older than 65 and says she cannot risk it.

"It's very sad. We were very excited," she said. But, "I don't take it as a punishment. I take it as a wake-up (call)."

Ramadan, which starts later this month, unites Muslims the world over in fasting and worship. This year, it follows a string of religious holidays that have also unified the faithful from different religions in grappling with how to observe familiar rituals and celebrations in a time of unfamiliarity.

Mohamed is contemplating workarounds. She always looks forward to the special Ramadan prayers, known as "taraweeh," at the mosque. She will now pray at home with her daughter. But what about the dua, or supplication? The imam moves her to tears. As he prays for dead loved ones or those suffering in faraway lands in his "miraculous" voice, sobs rise from the faithful and intermingle with chants of "Amen" recited in unison.

Mohamed wonders: Can he make dua over Zoom video conferencing?

"That would help us a lot," she said, even as she noted it wouldn't be the same. At her mosque, female worshippers hug and chat after the prayers as children scurry around and dates and chocolate are passed from hand to hand.

During Ramadan, the faithful abstain from food and drink from sunrise to sunset as they strive for self-purification and empathy. It's a time for prayers, introspection and charity. Normally, it's also a time for family, friends and festive feasting.

This year, there are indications the outbreak will cast a pall over many beloved rituals.

Many Muslims have been praying for the coronavirus cloud, which has already disrupted Islamic worship the world over, to lift before Ramadan. Mosque closures and modified calls for prayers urging the devout to pray at home have left many feeling emotional. They are relying on worship at home and online religious classes. This year, some are planning virtual interfaith iftars.

Texas-based imam Omar Suleiman said empty mosques are reason for reflection.

"How do we build ourselves to where we are more connected to Him?" asked Suleiman, who has been streaming virtual sermons and nightly reflections to more than 1.4 million Facebook followers.

"Now we have a chance to develop empathy with those that have not had access to their religious spaces due to oppressive circumstances."

Malaysia, Brunei and Singapore have banned popular Ramadan bazaars where hawkers sell food and drinks in congested open-air markets or roadside stalls. In predominantly Muslim Malaysia, vendors are now planning to bring their businesses online through mobile apps or digital platforms provided by local authorities during the fasting month.

Mohamad Fadhil, a trader in Malaysia's southern Johor state, said he was resigned to not being able to do business at the Ramadan bazaar or perform the taraweeh prayers at the mosque. "We just have to be patient and follow orders," he said.

In Iran, which is suffering one of the world's worst outbreaks, Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei suggested that mass gatherings may be barred through the holy month. "Remember to heed your prayers and devotions in your lonesomeness," he said.

The Islamic Waqf, which administers the Al-Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem, Islam's third-holiest site, announced today that the mosque will continue to be closed to worshippers for Ramadan.

It's difficult, Sheikh Azzam Khateeb, the director general of the Waqf, said before the latest announcement, but "the health of the worshippers comes before anything else."

Zuher Dubie, a 71-year-old mosque preacher in the West Bank city of Nablus, has been observing Ramadan and praying in mosques since he was 10. For the first time since, Dubie said, he wouldn't be able to practice some of the month's rituals.

"There will be no social gatherings, no Ramadan aroma in the markets, no collective prayers ... in mosques," he lamented.

In Egypt, the Ministry of Religious Endowments decided to suspend communal Ramadan activities, includ-

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ing mass charity iftars around mosques. Mosques have already closed for prayers there and the country is under a night-time curfew.

Ramadan is normally lively in the country of more than 100 million -- and steeped in tradition.

Ordinarily, worshippers fill mosques and shoppers swarm markets. Loved ones gather over scrumptious iftars. Strangers break bread together in street banquets that feed the needy. Cafes teem with patrons chatting over a cacophony of gurgling water pipes and blaring music. And Ramadan lanterns cast a colorful glow over bustling streets.

In some areas, a "mesaharati," bangs on a drum as he wakes up residents for "suhoor," the pre-dawn meal that will sustain them through another day of fasting.

Souad Selim, an Egyptian, has been wondering what all the changes this year would mean for a cherished Ramadan ritual.

Before, she would slip early to bed as many binge watch television shows produced for Ramadan entertainment. At around 3:00 a.m., she would wake up to have "suhoor" and cook up a storm. Using groceries that she and co-workers had pitched in to buy, she would prepare dozens of meals before she left for work. Before iftar, Selim and other volunteers would go outside to distribute boxes neatly packed with salad, rice, chicken or meatballs.

Now, she likely won't be able to hand out meals on the street but she's determined to send iftars to the homes of those she knows need them.

"It's hard to describe how much goodness and blessings Ramadan brings," she said.

Associated Press writers Mohammed Daraghmeh in Ramallah, West Bank, Josef Federman in Jerusalem, and Eileen Ng in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia contributed to this report.

Associated Press religion coverage receives support from the Lilly Endowment through the Religion News Foundation. The AP is solely responsible for this content.

Putin postpones World War II victory parade due to virus

By VLADIMIR ISACHENKOV Associated Press

MOSCOW (AP) — Russian President Vladimir Putin on Thursday postponed next month's Victory Day celebrations marking the 75th anniversary of the defeat of Nazi Germany in World War II, citing the worsening coronavirus pandemic for putting off the lavish festivities that have dominated the Kremlin's political agenda.

In televised remarks, a grim-faced Putin said the virus makes public gatherings such as the huge parade through Red Square on May 9 too dangerous.

"The risks linked to the epidemic that hasn't yet reached its peak are extremely high, and that doesn't give me the right to start preparations for the parade and other festivities," he said, adding that the celebration will be held later this year.

The postponement followed an earlier decision by Putin to put off a vote originally scheduled for April 22 on constitutional changes that would allow him to stay in office until 2036, if he desired.

The plebiscite and the Victory Day celebrations had topped Russia's political calendar for months, and the decision to delay both was clearly a painful and difficult one that followed weeks of procrastination by the Kremlin.

"The May 9 date is sacred for us, but every life is priceless too," Putin said.

All Victory Day celebrations across Russia will also be postponed, he added. The festivities include gatherings of veterans and massive demonstrations dubbed the "Immortal Regiment" in which relatives of those who fought in the war carry their photos.

Putin himself took part in those marches, carrying a picture of his father.

The president has ordered a partial economic shutdown until April 30 and recently warned officials to prepare for the "most extraordinary" scenarios of the outbreak, because the number of infections in Russia has grown exponentially.

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The country has registered 27,938 coronavirus cases and 232 deaths. Officials have scrambled to secure breathing machines and other essential supplies as the outbreak has worsened.

Since the Soviet era, Victory Day has been the nation's most revered holiday, reflecting the country's enormous suffering during World War II. Russian officials have put the nation's death toll at 27 million in the war, and some historians think it could be higher.

"On Victory Day, we honor the heroes who defended the country and the rest of the world and sacrificed their lives to protect others," Putin said, adding that Russians still will mark the day despite the need to delay the public ceremonies. "Every family will remember and honor its heroes."

Chinese President Xi Jinping, French President Emmanuel Macron and other foreign dignitaries had promised to attend this year's parade, which was to involve 14,000 troops and 300 tanks and other vehicles in a massive display of military might.

Russian troops already had started rehearsing for the parade, drilling at a range outside Moscow that was configured to resemble Red Square.

The Kremlin saw Victory Day as an opportunity to underline Russia's vital role in history and showcase its international leverage. It would have been an important political coup for Russia, which has been under U.S. and European sanctions since Moscow's 2014 annexation of Ukraine's Crimean Peninsula.

While a quick rollback of sanctions never seemed plausible, the Kremlin hoped that the presence of Macron and possibly other Western leaders at the parade might provide momentum for normalizing ties.

Putin vowed to organize a parade later in 2020 without setting the date. Russian media reported that festivities could be held in June to coincide with the date in 1945 when the Soviet Union staged a massive parade through Red Square to mark the victory, or on the anniversary of Japan's emperor signing surrender documents on Sept. 2, 1945.

"We will face down the threat we are confronting now," Putin said. "And then we will embrace our veterans."

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

Takeaways from internal documents on China's virus response

By The Associated Press undefined

On Jan. 14, China's top health agency told provincial officials that they were facing a likely pandemic from a new coronavirus — but didn't alert the public for six key days.

President Xi Jinping warned the public on the seventh day, Jan. 20. By then, more than 3,000 people had been infected, according to retrospective infection data.

The week of silence came at a critical time — the beginning of the outbreak. Internal documents obtained by The Associated Press show the National Health Commission ordered secret pandemic preparations, even as it downplayed the outbreak on national television.

Takeaways from the internal documents:

"THE MOST SEVERE CHALLENGE SINCE SARS"

The documents include a memo about a secret teleconference on Jan. 14 held by China's top health official, Ma Xiaowei. Ma called the situation "severe and complex, the most severe challenge since SARS in 2003," and predicted that it is "likely to develop into a major public health event."

"All localities must prepare for and respond to a pandemic," the memo said.

The memo stated that the teleconference was held to convey instructions on the coronavirus from President Xi Jinping, Premier Li Keqiang and Vice Premier Sun Chunlan, but did not specify what those instructions were.

A CRITICAL TIME

During the week of public silence, tens of thousands of people dined at a mass Lunar New Year banquet. Millions also traveled through Wuhan for Lunar New Year festivities.

The early delay set the stage for a pandemic that has infected more than 2 million people and taken

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more than 133,000 lives.

THAILAND JOLTS CHINA AWAKE

From Jan. 5 through Jan. 17, China's Center for Disease Control did not register any cases from local officials, internal bulletins obtained by the AP confirm — even though hundreds of patients were appearing in hospitals across the country.

Doctors and nurses in Wuhan said there were many signs the coronavirus could be transmitted between people by late December. But officials set stringent criteria for confirming cases. And they punished doctors who warned about the disease.

It took the first confirmed case outside China, in Thailand on Jan. 13, to jolt leaders in Beijing into recognizing the possible pandemic before them.

PANDEMIC PREPARATIONS

Health authorities prepared for the pandemic in private.

After the Jan. 14 teleconference, they distributed test kits and told health officials across the country to screen patients. They ordered hospitals to open fever clinics, and doctors and nurses to don protective gear. They instructed officials in Hubei province, where Wuhan is located, to begin temperature checks at transportation hubs and cut down on large public gatherings.

They did it all without telling the public.

"EMPHASIZE POLITICS"

The documents show how political considerations may have shaped China's response to the outbreak.

In the memo, Ma demanded officials unite around Xi, and prioritize social stability during the long lead-up to China's two biggest political meetings of the year in March.

"Emphasize politics, emphasize discipline, emphasize science," the memo cites Ma as saying.

The meetings may be one reason for the six-day wait to make concerns public. They were later canceled.

Is it safe to open mail and packages during the pandemic?

By The Associated Press undefined

Is it safe to open mail and packages during the pandemic?

There is no evidence that COVID-19 is spreading through mail or parcels, according to the World Health Organization and U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Most of it is spread from droplets produced when an infected person coughs or sneezes, which are inhaled by people nearby.

Health experts say the risks are very low that COVID-19 will remain on envelopes or packages and infect anyone who handles them.

It's still a good idea to wash your hands thoroughly and regularly — and avoid touching your face — after handling deliveries.

Like many businesses, the U.S. Postal Service has limited visitors to its facilities and asks that anyone who comes to the post office to stand at least 6 feet away from another person.

The AP is answering your questions about the coronavirus pandemic in this new series. Submit them at: FactCheck@AP.org.

Pandemic provokes spike in demand for food pantries in US

By TERESA M. WALKER and ELANA SCHOR Associated Press

FRANKLIN, Tenn. (AP) — Brooklyn Dotson needed food. Her first unemployment check had yet to arrive after she was let go by the warehouse where she used to work.

So the 25-year-old Nashville woman scrounged up some gas money and drove 30 miles (48 kilometers) to the GraceWorks Ministries food pantry in Franklin. There, at the pantry's new drive-thru, workers wearing masks and gloves loaded her van with about \$350 worth of groceries.

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"I don't have any income coming in, I don't get any food stamps, so it's just hard to get any help right now," Dotson said while waiting in line at GraceWorks.

Food pantries stay busy even in the best of economic times; the coronavirus pandemic has prompted a spike in demand as millions of people like Dotson find themselves furloughed, laid off or with businesses that have suffered huge financial blows.

"About 50% of the people coming through our lines have never been here before," said GraceWorks President and CEO Valencia A. Breckenridge.

Just as demand is skyrocketing, however, many of the food banks' sources are drying up. Restaurants, hotels and resorts — many of which are shuttered or sharply limiting their operations — are no longer supplying them with food, while other suppliers are busy restocking grocery shelves. Farmers have switched from shipping vegetables and meats in bulk to individual packaging for grocery stores.

"It is a perfect storm scenario," said Katie Fitzgerald, chief operating officer for Feeding America, a nationwide association of 200 food banks and 60,000 food pantries.

Feeding America has seen an increase in demand from 98% of its member banks, according to a recent survey. The average increase for a member was 63%, while 95% of the association's food banks reported an increase in operating expenses, the organization said.

Congress included a significant boost for emergency food assistance in its coronavirus relief legislation, but Fitzgerald warned that funding may take months to reach localities while food banks contend with a flood of need in the near term. The \$100 million that billionaire Jeff Bezos pledged to the association on April 2 was already being deployed last week, she said.

"When people say what do you need the most, we need food and money," said Nancy Keil, president and CEO of Second Harvest Food Bank of Middle Tennessee.

In addition to finding ways to meet the spike in demand, food banks have had to devise creative new ways to distribute ever greater amounts of food while keeping both recipients and their staff safe from exposure to the coronavirus.

The San Francisco-Marin Food Bank in California has built "pop-up" pantries after some of its previous 275 or so sites had to stop operating during the pandemic, spokeswoman Keely Hopkins said. The new sites, many of which are serving hundreds of people per day, stay open for longer hours and use open spaces such as parking lots to facilitate social distancing, she added.

Paid staffers are diving in at many food banks to stock, sort and bag food for either delivery or drive-thru pickups, a measure they realized was necessary to protect volunteers, many of whom are older and particularly at risk for complications from the virus. Second Harvest Food Bank of Middle Tennessee limits volunteers to 10 per room to fill boxes.

The board of the East Nashville Cooperative Ministry has proposed closing because so many of its volunteers are elderly, including Judy Wahlstrom, who runs the program.

Wahlstrom, 70, has refused, but she said she is taking precautions, allowing only one person inside at a time to select food off the shelves while she wears a mask and gloves.

"I said, 'If I get it, I get it,'" Wahlstrom said. "I don't have anybody at home dependent on me. I said, 'I got to keep it open.' And I gave the volunteers all the options."

At the Regional Food Bank of Oklahoma, spokeswoman Cathy Nestlen said nearly 45,000 volunteers helped out last year. This year, in order to adopt best practices for social distancing to combat the virus, staffers have stepped up to help.

Nestlen said the bank, which acts as a food distribution center for hundreds of member agencies, moved to a six-day work week this month and would consider moving to seven days a week if demand called for it.

Oklahoma had ranked among the hungriest states in the nation before the coronavirus, Nestlen noted. "This pandemic on top of it just shines a light on how so many households, not just in Oklahoma but around the country, live paycheck to paycheck," she said. "When a household becomes economically insecure, they almost immediately become food-insecure."

Food banks like Nestlen's are realizing the sharp increase in demand could continue for months, which

she said makes donations even more crucial.

For now, one thing is certain: Whatever food they do acquire is flying off the shelves just as fast as it arrives.

"The food's coming in the back door, and it's going right out the front to the customers," said Courtney Vrablik, executive director of The Store, a supermarket founded by singer Brad Paisley and his wife last month in Nashville to provide free food for those in need.

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

The story has corrected the spelling of the Second Harvest Food Bank president's last name. She is Nancy Keil, not Kiel.

Women's sports likely to bear brunt of coronavirus fallout

By ANNE M. PETERSON AP Sports Writer

Linked to the rising call for gender equity worldwide, women's sports were enjoying unprecedented attention and support before the coronavirus pandemic.

The World Cup in France put a spotlight on women's soccer, culminating with the United States lifting the trophy to chants of "Equal Pay!" -- a nod to the team's gender discrimination lawsuit against U.S. Soccer -- and the sport remained in the public eye to open the year. The professional National Women's Soccer League, home to many of the U.S. national team's players, was expecting to open its eighth season with a new television contract.

Women's pro softball was looking toward the sport's return to the Olympics for the first time since 2008. Professional volleyball, which enjoys popularity in Europe, Russia and Brazil, similarly draws peak interest in an Olympic year.

Any momentum these leagues, and women's sports in general, had worldwide has seemingly been halted by the pandemic. Now the question is whether women will lose the gains they had made when life returns to normal.

"If the seas get choppy and rough and you're out there in a yacht, you can go downstairs and live it up and ride it out. You can eat good, drink good and all that. Men's sports are the ones with the yacht," said Cheri Kempf, commissioner of the National Pro Fastpitch softball league. "But if you're out there in a canoe, and seas get choppy, you're in big trouble. And that's women's sports. You know, we're riding around out there in a canoe."

Among the signs women's sports could suffer more was the recent decision by Independiente Santa Fe in Colombia to suspend all player contracts for its women's soccer team while saying the men's team would only see pay cuts.

The impact of COVID-19 and the resulting hit to the economy could resemble the 2008 recession. The Houston Comets of the WNBA could not find a buyer and the league contracted back then. Whirlpool, meanwhile, pulled out of its planned sponsorship of Women's Professional Soccer, which had the unfortunate timing of launching in 2009 and lasted just three seasons.

The WNBA is in better shape today than many women's sports because of its affiliation with the NBA. The league has put off the start of the season, set for May 15, but Commissioner Cathy Engelbert recently suggested it might be able to return sooner rather than later.

"We might be able to tip this season off before some other leagues since we only have 12 teams and 144 players," she told The Associated Press.

But there are concerns among those who aren't similarly positioned.

Volleyball player Kelsey Robinson, who is on the U.S. team that was bound for the Tokyo Olympics this summer before the games were postponed, can usually make a living playing overseas, like many national team players. She was just heading into the playoffs with her club in Turkey, which has a thriving profes-

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sional volleyball league, when play was suspended. Now she worries about her opportunities in a post-pandemic world.

"It's hard to say what will happen in Turkey or China, where there are pretty strong economies for sport. But for sure, Italy I know will have to decrease salaries, maybe not at the top team, but I'm sure it'll affect lower teams and clubs," Robinson said. "We're not finishing the season right now or playing, so that's a hard financial burden for our club because a lot of the salaries for the coming season depends on how we finish in the playoffs."

NWSL Players Association executive director Yael Averbuch West said current fears about losses are legitimate.

"I think that everybody is afraid of that. And especially right now, looking at women's soccer and coming off of what we feel is a huge positive momentum after the World Cup, and the NWSL doing really well and continuing to grow, it's obviously a concern. This is tough for everyone, including the ownership groups, the fans, the players, the league office," Averbuch West said.

The international soccer players' union, FIFPro, issued a report Thursday warning of the impact the coronavirus could have on women's soccer worldwide and recommended mitigation measures, including continued investment.

"Who knows what the future will bring?" said forward Jodie Taylor, who plays for the NWSL's Reign and England's national team and sits on the FIFPro player council. "It's a reality, it's a stressful reality, and one that the world's kind of sitting back and waiting for."

Athletes in individual sports could be hit hardest. Tennis, golf and track athletes are largely dependent on competing to earn a paycheck, and that's currently impossible. The athletes face uncertainties going forward: When the events do return, will the sponsors remain? Will younger prospects fall away from those sports out of economic necessity?

The WTA said last week that its planned start date is now July 13. Wimbledon has been canceled for this year.

"Health and safety remains the top priority as we navigate the challenges ahead in these unprecedented times, and we will do everything we can for the tour to resume at the earliest opportunity once it is safe to do so," ATP Chairman Andrea Gaudenzi said.

The National Pro Fastpitch softball league was hit particularly hard. The 17-year-old league included national teams from Australia, Canada and China this season in preparation for the Olympics. Australia and Canada have already said that even if the league gets off the ground this season, they won't participate.

"I don't want to say that I'm worried that we won't survive," Kempf said. "But I think that common sense would dictate and tell you that it's a hit for everyone."

AP Sports Writer Doug Feinberg contributed to this report.

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

Singing Surgeon: Dr. Elvis cuts EP to aid COVID-19 fund

By MESFIN FEKADU AP Music Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Elvis Francois, the orthopedic surgery resident who has gone viral with his top-notch live performances at hospitals, knew from adolescence he wanted to help heal the world through medicine. But through music? Not so much.

Two years after becoming an unlikely singing sensation, the 34-year-old doctor with a golden voice is releasing his first-ever EP on Friday and all the proceeds will be donated to The Center of Disaster Philanthropy COVID-19 Response Fund.

"It's been such a unique time in all of our lives. I'm just honored to be able to share a bit of music with people, especially during these trying times," Francois said in an interview with The Associated Press on Wednesday. "What we do as surgeons, what we do as physicians goes a very long way, but music moves

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people in a way that medicine can't."

Francois has appeared on "The Ellen DeGeneres Show," CNN, "Good Morning America" and more programs after becoming popular for singing booming covers of John Lennon's "Imagine" and Bill Withers' "Lean On Me," but just weeks ago he got a call from two executives from the Nashville-based Big Machine Label Group, asking how they could help him spread his message of hope and joy through music.

Jake Basden and Allison Jones pulled their resources together, helping Francois get into a recording studio to record the four-song EP called "Music Is Medicine," which is being independently released on the newly formed Doctor Elvis Records. Fellow resident William Robinson, who usually accompanies Francois on piano during his performances, joined in for the recording sessions of "Imagine," "Lean on Me," Andra Day's "Rise Up" and Mike Yung's "Alright."

"It's just been a group of people trying to use music to help people," Francois said of all the help he's received to make the EP. "I think that's probably the most special thing about it."

Francois also knew the EP could be a good way to help raise funds to fight the spreading coronavirus and honor the health care workers on the frontlines.

"We see health care providers who are getting impacted. We see our colleagues who are in the ICUs. We see our colleagues who are in the emergency department. We see how much need there is on the side of patients and on the side of providers. ... I felt like the one thing we could do, if anything, was to use this momentum and use this energy to give," he said.

Francois, who is in his last year of residency at the Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minnesota, began singing in high school and in church but he never took it seriously. Medicine, however, was always on his mind.

He grew up in Miami and New York and said trips to Haiti, where his family is from, really helped him find his life goal.

"I just always remember seeing long lines of people and how grateful they were to get Tylenol for free, or how grateful they were being able to just literally speak to a doctor and get their advice," he recalled. "Since then, maybe when I was like 7 or 8, I've always looked at that as being something that I'd want to give the rest of my life to."

But singing has helped him to connect to patients, and fans around the world, in a different way. He remembers going viral after posting a cover of "Imagine," surprised that people outside of the U.S. saw and enjoyed the clip.

"My dad got a phone call from a relative in France who came across the video and that's when I was like, 'Oh wow!' It hadn't even been 24 hours," he recalled. "I'll get messages from nurses in Italy or messages from other residents and other health care providers or patients ... A little bit of good can literally cross oceans and move people across the world."

Once Francois finishes his residency, he's heading to Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center in Boston, the teaching hospital of Harvard Medical School, to complete a fellowship in spine surgery.

Still, it feels surreal that he will have an album out on digital platforms next to releases from pop, rap and rock stars.

"Spotify, iTunes, Amazon? That's just crazy. Literally if you asked me a month ago, I would probably laugh at you. Like, I've never even recorded a song," Francois said.

"I've had to pinch myself, 'Is this actually real?' Seeing it all come together, it just feels like a dream," he added. "I think the coolest thing about it is it's a dream where we are all able to give our small parts to make the world better."

Reopening could require thousands more public health workers

By CARLA K. JOHNSON and MIKE STOBBE Associated Press

SEATTLE (AP) — Before stay-at-home orders are lifted, the nation's public health agencies want to be ready to douse any new sparks of coronavirus infection — a task they say could require tens of thousands more investigators to call people who test positive, track down their contacts and get them into quarantine.

Without the extra help, officials insist, states cannot possibly be ready to resume normal everyday ac-

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tivities, and some agencies are so desperate they are considering recruiting librarians and Peace Corps volunteers to join the effort.

"We are trying to build these teams and processes in the midst of a crisis," said Sharon Bogan, a public health spokeswoman for Seattle and King County, which are seeking at least 20 more investigators.

As federal officials weigh how and when to reopen the country, experts worry that the United States does not have enough public health workers to suppress another outbreak, especially those qualified to do contact tracing, the critically important search for people who may have been exposed to the virus.

While the exact number of workers needed is a subject of debate, a top federal health official this week acknowledged the mandate to find many more.

"Everybody agrees that our public health capacity at the local and state level is not ready to take this on at a very large scale without reinforcements," said Dr. Anne Schuchat of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, who oversees the agency's coronavirus response work.

The work could require as many as 300,000 public health workers — a daunting number given that the combined federal, state, and local public health workforce has been shrinking and is now probably less than 280,000, according to some estimates.

To address the shortage of help, governments are weighing whether to enlist people with little to no experience in public health, including the Peace Corps volunteers, furloughed social workers and public health students. San Francisco is training librarians, medical students and people who work for the city attorney's office.

The extra workers would help conduct testing, isolate sick cases and trace everyone those sick people had contact with.

It's crucial that such a system be in place before government officials ease social-distancing guidelines, reopen schools or lift stay-at-home orders, said Dr. Tom Frieden, a former CDC director.

"If we have explosive spread when we reopen, we'll have to close again. That will be very damaging, not just economically but from a health standpoint," Frieden said.

The U.S. government has funneled about \$800 million to states for coronavirus response work that can include contact tracing. On top of hundreds of staff sent to states to help with coronavirus work, the CDC has already assembled "community protection teams" of six to 12 people each to do contact tracing and investigate tools that could help with it. Some have already been deployed to states where spread of the virus has been relatively low.

Tiny Rhode Island has nearly 100 people "focused on nothing but contact tracing," reaching out to hundreds of contacts of infected people each day, Gov. Gina Raimondo told reporters. She has urged all residents to take a minute each evening to write down who they physically encountered that day and where those encounters took place.

"If I'm going out to the store, I'll put the date, what store I went to, and then the time I was there," said Drew Grande, 40, of Cranston, Rhode Island. He started a contacts diary on a note-taking app on his phone after he heard the governor's request.

Contact tracing has changed over the last few months in the U.S. When the first handful of infections were being identified, teams of 20 or more might be assigned to each confirmed case. Investigations would often start with a staffer or two doing an in-person interview at a hospital bedside. Disease trackers might spend hours asking a sick person and that person's relatives who they had been in contact with since symptoms surfaced.

In-person interviews are often better, said Isaac Ghinai, a CDC disease tracker assigned to Chicago to work with that city's health department.

"There's a value to looking someone in the eye. You can build a relationship face to face that you can't always do by phone," he said. Some people are comfortable sharing personal details over the phone but others "require more cajoling."

With hundreds of new cases emerging each day in Chicago, that kind of attention to individual infections has largely stopped. Instead, the priority is large groups of people who are particularly vulnerable, like

those at nursing homes or homeless shelters. Many new confirmed cases are not being investigated, and when they are, the interviews may be done by only two or three people, and over the phone, Ghinai said.

Could there be a digital solution? Apple and Google are teaming up on a contact-tracing app, and other efforts use Bluetooth to gather data from phones that came close to an infected person. Seattle scientist Trevor Bedford has developed a digital interview that public health departments can use if they don't have enough people trained in contact tracing.

Whatever the solution, it will take a while.

People have to be tested and diagnosed before contact tracing kicks into gear, and testing remains limited in many parts of the country. This week, the Association of American Medical Colleges sent a letter to the White House Coronavirus Task Force saying that testing materials and machines remain in short supply.

President Donald Trump has floated the idea of easing at least some restrictions as early as May 1.

Some observers believe restrictions could be eased first in places where the spread is low, if rigorous testing and contact tracing could prevent a sudden explosion in infections.

But Schuchat warned that "there is no way the entire country could relax mitigation on May 1 and the country not experience a major resurgence."

Stobbe reported from New York. Associated Press writer Michelle R. Smith in Providence contributed to this report.

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

Pledge brings Ohio neighborhood together -- at a distance

By MITCH STACY Associated Press

KETTERING, Ohio (AP) —

The idea came about because Jennifer Stamper was trying to make her family's "new normal" feel a little bit more like their old one.

Now, just before 9 a.m. on school days she and her children join others on their street who come to the end of their driveways -- no closer because of social-distancing guidelines -- and together, hands over hearts, recite the Pledge of Allegiance.

That's how 9-year-old son Zach and 7-year-old daughter Juliette would start the day if they were in the classroom, but schools were ordered closed March 12 to try to stop the spread of COVID-19. Now the siblings take turns holding the flag at the end of the driveway.

The kids usually are out on the porch at 8:45, to see who's joining them that day. Most days there are at least a couple dozen people.

"My kids, when this first started, they were having trouble sleeping at night," said Stamper, 49. "The whole purpose of this fleeting thought of mine was let's just have something that we do every morning at 9 o'clock that'll be normal. And it wasn't in any way going to be a platform, nothing political, nothing else. It was just, we love our kids and we want them to have some sense of normal."

When schools first closed last month, Stamper floated the Pledge proposal via text to neighbors who also were establishing new routines and looking for ways to cope.

"I think it brings the neighborhood together when we're supposed to be apart," said Julie Ryan, a second-grade teacher who lives next door to the Stampers. This is, after all, a neighborhood where folks haven't missed a block party in decades.

"It brings us together safely, from a distance. It promotes unity, and for the kids I think it's good to have some sort of structure to their day."

On a recent sunny but chilly morning, families from about a dozen houses emerged beneath flowering pear and magnolia trees. Neighbor Ann Painter brought her 15-year-old golden retriever, Kirby, her leg bandaged from an overnight visit to the emergency vet. Juliette held the flag, which usually is displayed

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on the Stamper's front porch.

"Have a good morning everybody!" Stamper called to her neighbors, some of whom lingered outside afterward to catch up on each other's lives.

After the Pledge each morning, Zach and Juliette go inside and begin two or three hours of online lessons, and their mother goes upstairs to her home office and her job as a project coordinator for a medical education consortium. Their father, Tim, a surveyor, has already gone to work by then.

"We're in this together, we're all here in unspoken support that we're going to get through this," Stamper said. "And this is OK. This is what we're doing for now. This isn't forever, this is what we're doing right now, and it's OK. That was what it was all about."

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.

Need for seed: Gardeners flock to stores, overwhelm websites

By JOHN RABY Associated Press

NITRO, W.Va. (AP) — The sweet peppers were picked over, the tomatoes were taken and the flowers were fixing to be next. The empty spots on the store's display were starting to outnumber the full ones.

Gardeners are feeling the need for seed, grabbing packets off shelves at an accelerated rate. Those still looking for certain varieties of vegetables, or who can't go to stores because of social distancing and retail closures, are overwhelming websites, creating a huge backlog of orders.

Sowing seeds and stockpiling soil and containers are a rite of spring. That pursuit isn't going to be stopped by the coronavirus pandemic. But many seed varieties are sold out on websites, so finding them could involve some detective work.

Seeds companies are "seeing unprecedented levels of customer interest," said Kelly Funk, president of Park Seed parent J&P Park Acquisitions.

Park Seeds' normal shipping window is two to three business days. Now it's up to two weeks.

Burpee Seeds chairman George Ball said this year's buying spree is "so different that it's unrecognizable in terms of just the sheer demand.

"I would say we've been flooded, but not drowned," he said.

Johnny's Selected Seeds stopped taking orders from home gardeners a few weeks back and is only accepting commercial farm orders through April 28.

"We had to prioritize to make sure they had their orders filled," co-CEO Gretchen Kruysman said.

Home garden orders "wiped out our shelf stock of packets of seeds," she said. More seeds are readily available, but it takes time to assemble new packets. Social distancing forced the company to cut its labor productivity by about a third.

Normally, home gardener Abby Obenchain wouldn't be in a rush to buy seeds. She doesn't plant her vegetable garden in Sault Ste. Marie, Ontario, until early June.

When the pandemic hit, "almost immediately, I discovered that buying seeds has become problematic," she said.

Obenchain, who has an asthma-like condition, didn't want to risk her health or others by going to a store. And individual orders at seed websites in Canada is discouraged due to high demand, she said. Eventually she was able to obtain some from a friend who is a master gardener.

"If it hadn't been for her, I would have had to keep on trying to place an online order with a local store, which is a big challenge," Obenchain said. "It's hard to get through!"

Another local master gardener, Suzanne Hanna, who is part of a 200-member horticultural society, participated in a seed swap in February before social distancing started. But the shutdown includes the community garden at the end of her street, deemed a nonessential service.

Lately, Hanna has been like the Easter Bunny, only with seeds. She's been conducting what she calls "drive-

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by dropoffs, where we throw out plastic bags full of seeds and encourage people to do what they can.” Like many feed stores, Town & Country Supply in Nitro, West Virginia, saw customers quickly wipe out the inventory of seed potatoes.

“They’re just completely gone,” employee Patricia Barbour said.

The store has some empty spots on the seed display. But if anything sells out, Barbour doesn’t anticipate a problem ordering more.

“We didn’t buy them to keep them,” she said.

The hunt goes beyond seeds. Bonnie Plants, the largest producer of vegetable and herb plants for the home gardener in North America, launched online sales last month. The company was bombarded with orders and most everything on its website went out of stock.

“We got so inundated, we shut down” the site temporarily, spokeswoman Joan Casanova said.

She said the company is trying to get virus-related restrictions reversed on plant purchases at large stores in some states.

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

Amid coronavirus outbreak, Florida county pulls welcome mat

By **BOBBY CAINA CALVAN** Associated Press

BRISTOL, Fla. (AP) — As Jessica Cherry watched traffic from her porch, she wondered with each passing vehicle if the coronavirus had made its way into her rural Florida Panhandle community.

For weeks, residents of Liberty County watched as infections spread, reaching into all of Florida’s 67 counties but their own — the state’s least populous — and worried about the devastating effect the coronavirus could have on their 8,300 people.

“When you see somebody drive by, your anxiety level goes up with each passing car because you think: They’re going somewhere and get contaminated and they’ll be bringing it to us,” Cherry said.

Cherry, a kindergarten teacher, has been working from home for nearly a month while schools are closed in an effort to limit the virus’s spread. Like her neighbors, she has grown wary of outsiders, especially those who could be harboring an invisible enemy.

“At least with a hurricane, you know it’s coming,” she said.

It’s not that folks in Liberty County aren’t welcoming. In fact, the sign on the edge of Bristol — population not quite 1,000 — seems hospitable enough: “Welcome to our friendly city.”

Locals used to be glad for out-of-town traffic to stray off the road for provisions at the local market, or gas on the way to the beach or the state capital an hour away.

Townfolk acknowledge there’s really not much to see or do here, unless you like roaming pine-scented country roads, listening to birds chirp and watching traffic go by.

But the encroaching pandemic has strained their welcoming nature.

Some thought it odd when strangers began invading the local market to fill carts with toilet paper and other necessities. Who knew where they were from and what they could be spreading?

And history offered other reasons to be leery of outsiders. When Hurricane Michael devastated the region two years ago, Liberty County, like so many rural enclaves across the Florida Panhandle, was desperate for help. Outsiders came pouring in, including some that took advantage of the community’s trust and desperation.

One by one, nearby counties joined the list of confirmed cases. As of Thursday, the state reported more than 22,500 infected Floridians, and the number of deaths surpassed 610.

Leon County to the east, home to the state capital, had at least 150 cases. Gadsden to the north counted nearly 40, and Franklin to the south recorded its first case two weeks ago. Neighboring Calhoun County, just on the other side of the Apalachicola River, had five recorded cases.

“I thought that when Calhoun County got it, that was going to be it,” said Matthias Schmarje, who lives

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in Liberty County but runs a restaurant in Blountstown, Calhoun County's biggest community.

But as the days passed, Liberty County remained without a confirmed infection, and residents prayed it could extend its luck — just maybe it could elude the global pandemic.

Liberty seemed a safe distance from the epicenter of the state's COVID-19 infections — about 500 miles from Broward and Miami-Dade, the counties with the bulk of the state's cases.

As cases spread, residents watched the number of virus-free counties on Florida's outbreak map dwindle. "We had a running joke that we were in the state playoffs," he said. "Who's going to be the last man standing in the state of Florida? ... We never win anything."

In a bit of gallows humor, townsfolk gloated when Liberty County achieved that distinction.

Then worry crept back in.

"I don't know how long it will be before we get a case, but I know it's inevitable. Everybody's going to have it everywhere," Schmarje said. "That's kind of how a pandemic works, right?"

To help keep their streak alive, the local sewing club decided to swing into action.

Club membership swelled. Some of its newest members could barely thread a needle, but they lent a hand by bending pipe cleaners for nose clips on face masks. The group made scores of masks for friends and neighbors and hopes to produce hundreds more to donate to a hospital in Tallahassee.

Schmarje's mother, Cathia, said she joined the effort "to keep your family safe, to keep your children safe, to keep your elderly safe."

Some sewing club members anointed themselves the community mask police, turning a stern eye on those without masks and offering a covering to anyone who wanted one.

Cathia Schmarje said they'd been praying the virus would skip their county but acknowledged the inevitable.

"You can't be so naive to think that we're not ever going to see this in this community. Because it's coming," she said.

Their time ran out on Good Friday, of all days.

News spread quickly of the county's first coronavirus infection: a 56-year-old man who had been in contact with an infected person from across the river.

Then on Tuesday, the Liberty County Sheriff's Office said another county resident, a 29-year-old man, had come down with COVID-19.

For Cherry, the schoolteacher, concern shifted to what lies ahead.

"Of course, it makes us worry that there's more — that there's going to be more coming," she said. "And who's next?"

Follow Bobby Caina Calvin on Twitter at <https://twitter.com/BobbyCalvan>

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

Belgian bluebells are too beautiful to see during pandemic

By RAF CASERT Associated Press

HALLE, Belgium (AP) — When nature is at its brightest this year, it needs to be hidden from sight.

Parks and woods in Belgium, like in much of Europe, are a riot of color and scents in springtime, many so magnificent they would draw far too thick a crowd in the times of a pandemic.

So some are closed, or parking areas are off limits and non-locals are banned from visiting. Many tourists are sent back and some are even fined if they won't take no for an answer.

The extraordinary measures are felt deeply as bluebells are in bloom in the Hallerbos forest, some 15 kilometers (10 miles) south of Brussels. In a good year, up to 100,000 tourists come to gaze in wonder at its vast purple carpet under the beech trees.

"This pains the heart badly," Halle mayor Marc Snoeck told the Associated Press. "This goes against

anything that we normally work for.”

During the annual April Bluebell Festival, the throngs on weekends or sunny days are so big that social distancing would become impossible along the walking paths. During their three-week stretch of flowering, the bluebells attract tourists from as far as China and the United States.

Now, a local can walk there, soaking in the morning scents almost alone at dawn, while in normal years photography fans would already be blocking the best views and cyclists whizzing by.

Paradoxically, Snoeck appreciates the lack of crowds.

“Up to now, it has been pretty well respected,” he said of the measures, insisting the medical needs trump any other consideration.

The bad news for visitors is good news for the bluebells themselves. Ever more, they get trampled by tourists during the season, and many of them don’t recover for the next year. Now, the fragile flowers stay intact.

For Halle, the town of 30,000, though, it makes the coronavirus crisis even more painful as it is one of those festivals impossible to postpone. To rub it in, the weather has been unusually warm. The economic cost especially hits bars and restaurants, Snoeck said.

In town, the chocolatier Marleen Van Volsem of Praleen usually makes a popular line of bluebell chocolates with purple berry fillings.

“There usually is a dip after Easter, so the festival was great timing. Now, we can’t do it,” van Volsem said.

There is one solace though, Snoeck said.

“We are 100 percent sure that the flowers will be back next year.”

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

Coronavirus could erode global fight against other diseases

By ANIRUDDHA GHOSAL and VICTORIA MILKO Associated Press

NEW DELHI (AP) — Lavina D’Souza hasn’t been able to collect her government-supplied anti-HIV medication since the abrupt lockdown of India’s 1.3 billion people last month during the coronavirus outbreak.

Marooned in a small city away from her home in Mumbai, the medicine she needs to manage her disease has run out. The 43-year-old is afraid that her immune system will crash: “Any disease, the coronavirus or something else, I’ll fall sick faster.”

D’Souza said others also must be “suffering because of the coronavirus without getting infected by it.”

As the world focuses on the pandemic, experts fear losing ground in the long fight against other infectious diseases like AIDS, tuberculosis and cholera that kill millions every year. Also at risk are decadeslong efforts that allowed the World Health Organization to set target dates for eradicating malaria, polio and other illnesses.

With the coronavirus overwhelming hospitals, redirecting medical staff, causing supply shortages and suspending health services, “our greatest fear” is resources for other diseases being diverted and depleted, said Dr. John Nkengasong, head of the Africa Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

That is compounded in countries with already overburdened health care systems, like Sudan. Doctors at Al-Ribat National Hospital in Sudan’s capital, Khartoum, shared a document detailing nationwide measures: fewer patients admitted to emergency rooms, elective surgeries indefinitely postponed, primary care eliminated for non-critical cases, and skilled doctors transferred to COVID-19 patients.

Similar scenes are unfolding worldwide. Even in countries with highly developed health care systems, such as South Korea, patients seeking treatment for diseases like TB had to be turned away, said Hojoon Sohn, of Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health, who is based in South Korea.

About 30% of global TB cases — out of 10 million each year — are never diagnosed, and the gaps in care are concentrated in 10 countries with the most infections, Sohn said.

“These are people likely not seeking care even in normal circumstances,” he said. “So with the COVID-19

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pandemic resulting in health systems overload, and governments issuing stay-at-home orders, it is highly likely that the number of TB patients who remain undetected will increase.”

In Congo, already overwhelmed by the latest outbreak of Ebola and years of violent conflict, the coronavirus comes as a measles outbreak has killed over 6,000 people, said Anne-Marie Connor, national director for World Vision, a humanitarian aid organization.

“It’s likely we’ll see a lot of ‘indirect’ deaths from other diseases,” she said.

The cascading impact of the pandemic isn’t limited to treatment. Other factors, like access to transportation during a lockdown, are threatening India’s progress on TB. Patients and doctors can’t get to clinics, and it’s difficult to send samples for testing.

India has nearly a third of the world’s TB cases, and diagnosing patients has been delayed in many areas. Dr. Yogesh Jain in Chhattisgarh — one of India’s poorest states — and other doctors fear that means “TB cases would certainly increase.”

Coronavirus-related lockdowns also have interrupted the flow of supplies, including critical medicine, protective gear and oxygen, said Dr. Marc Biot, director of operations for international aid group Doctors Without Borders.

“These are difficult to find now because everybody is rushing for them in the same moment,” Biot said.

The fear of some diseases resurging is further aggravated by delays in immunization efforts for more than 13.5 million people, according to the vaccine alliance GAVI. The international organization said 21 countries are reporting vaccine shortages following border closures and disruptions to air travel — mostly in Africa — and 14 vaccination campaigns for diseases like polio and measles have been postponed.

The Measles & Rubella Initiative said measles immunization campaigns in 24 countries already are delayed, and it fears that more than 117 million children in 37 countries may miss out.

Dr. Jay Wenger, who heads polio eradication efforts for the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, said recommending the suspension of door-to-door polio vaccinations was difficult, and while it could lead to a spurt in cases, “it is a necessary move to reduce the risk of increasing transmission of COVID-19.”

Programs to prevent mosquito-borne diseases also have been hampered. In Sri Lanka, where cases of dengue nearly doubled in 2019 over the previous year, health inspectors are tasked with tracing suspected COVID-19 patients, disrupting their “routine work” of destroying mosquito breeding sites at homes, said Dr. Anura Jayasekara, director of Sri Lanka’s National Dengue Control Unit.

During a pandemic, history shows that other diseases can make a major comeback. Amid the Ebola outbreak in Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone in 2014-16, almost as many people died of HIV, tuberculosis and malaria because of reduced access to health care.

Rashid Ansumana, a community health expert in Sierra Leone who studied the Ebola outbreak, said the coronavirus’s “impact will definitely be higher.”

Health providers are trying to ease the crisis by giving months of supplies to people with hepatitis C, HIV and TB, said Biot of Doctors Without Borders.

As countries face difficult health care choices amid the pandemic, Nkengasong of the Africa CDC warns that efforts to tackle other diseases can’t fall by the wayside.

“The time to advocate for those programs is not when COVID is over. The time is now,” he said.

Milko reported from Jakarta. Associated Press journalists Cara Anna in Johannesburg, Bharatha Mallawarachi in Colombo, Sri Lanka, Isabel DeBre in Cairo, and Maria Cheng in London contributed to this report.

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

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Today in History By The Associated Press undefined

Today in History

Today is Friday, April 17, the 108th day of 2020. There are 258 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On April 17, 1961, some 1,500 CIA-trained Cuban exiles launched the disastrous Bay of Pigs invasion of Cuba in an attempt to topple Fidel Castro, whose forces crushed the incursion by the third day.

On this date:

In 1492, a contract was signed by Christopher Columbus and a representative of Spain's King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella, giving Columbus a commission to seek a westward ocean passage to Asia.

In 1521, Martin Luther went before the Diet of Worms (vohrms) to face charges stemming from his religious writings. (Luther was later declared an outlaw by Holy Roman Emperor Charles V.)

In 1524, Giovanni da Verrazano reached present-day New York Harbor.

In 1969, a jury in Los Angeles convicted Sirhan Sirhan of assassinating Sen. Robert F. Kennedy.

In 1970, Apollo 13 astronauts James A. Lovell, Fred W. Haise and Jack Swigert splashed down safely in the Pacific, four days after a ruptured oxygen tank crippled their spacecraft while en route to the moon.

In 1972, the Boston Marathon allowed women to compete for the first time; Nina Kuscsik was the first officially recognized women's champion, with a time of 3:10:26.

In 1973, Federal Express (later FedEx) began operations as 14 planes carrying 186 packages took off from Memphis International Airport, bound for 25 U.S. cities.

In 1975, Cambodia's five-year war ended as the capital Phnom Penh fell to the Khmer Rouge, which instituted brutal, radical policies that claimed an estimated 1.7 million lives until the regime was overthrown in 1979.

In 1986, at London's Heathrow Airport, a bomb was discovered in the bag of Anne-Marie Murphy, a pregnant Irishwoman about to board an El Al jetliner to Israel; she'd been tricked into carrying the bomb by her Jordanian fiance, Nezar Hindawi. The bodies of kidnapped American Peter Kilburn and Britons Philip Padfield and Leigh Douglas were found near Beirut; they had been slain in apparent retaliation for the U.S. raid on Libya.

In 1991, the Dow Jones industrial average closed above 3,000 for the first time, ending the day at 3,004.46, up 17.58.

In 1993, a federal jury in Los Angeles convicted two former police officers of violating the civil rights of beaten motorist Rodney King; two other officers were acquitted. Turkish President Turgut Ozal died at age 66.

In 2007, a day after the Virginia Tech massacre, President George W. Bush visited the campus, where he told students and teachers at a somber convocation that the nation was praying for them and "there's a power in these prayers."

Ten years ago: Some 100,000 Poles filled Warsaw's biggest public square, joining together for a memorial and funeral Mass for the 96 people killed in a plane crash a week earlier. (A thickening cloud of volcanic ash over Europe caused some world leaders — including President Barack Obama — to cancel plans to attend a state funeral the next day.) Pope Benedict XVI began a pilgrimage in Malta, a Catholic nation buffeted by the worldwide clerical sex abuse scandal.

Five years ago: President Barack Obama left open the door to "creative negotiations" in response to Iran's demand that punishing sanctions be immediately lifted as part of a nuclear deal (the president spoke at a White House news conference with Italian Prime Minister Matteo Renzi). Financial officials from the world's major economies, meeting in Washington, issued a communique welcoming modest improvements in the global economy while side-stepping fears rattling global financial markets that Greece would default on its bailout loans. Cardinal Francis George, the retired archbishop of Chicago, died at age 78.

One year ago: Just days after Notre Dame Cathedral in Paris was ravaged by a fire, police in New York said they had arrested a college philosophy teacher who they said had entered St. Patrick's Cathedral

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carrying two cans of gasoline, lighter fluid and butane lighters; they said he had also booked a flight to Rome the following day. (A judge later decided to commit the man to a mental health facility.) The Trump administration intensified its crackdown on Cuba, Nicaragua and Venezuela, rolling back Obama administration policy and announcing new restrictions and sanctions against the three countries. A Florida 18-year-old who authorities said was obsessed with the Columbine school shooting and may have been planning her own attack in Colorado ahead of the 20th anniversary of that shooting was found dead in the mountains outside Denver after a nearly 24-hour manhunt; authorities said Sol Pais had apparently taken her own life.

Today's Birthdays: Actor David Bradley is 78. Composer-musician Jan Hammer (yahn HAH'-mur) is 72. Actress Olivia Hussey is 69. Actor Clarke Peters is 68. Rapper Afrika Bambaataa is 63. Actor Sean Bean is 61. Former NFL quarterback Boomer Esiason (eh-SY'-uh-suhn) is 59. Actor Joel Murray is 58. Rock singer Maynard James Keenan is 56. Actress Lela Rochon (LEE'-lah rohn-SHAHN') is 56. Actor William Mapother is 55. Actress Leslie Bega is 53. Actor Henry Ian Cusick is 53. Actress Kimberly Elise is 53. Singer Liz Phair is 53. Director/producer Adam McKay is 52. Rapper-actor Redman is 50. Actress Jennifer Garner is 48. Country musician Craig Anderson is 47. Singer Victoria Adams Beckham is 46. Actress-singer Lindsay Korman is 42. Actor Tate Ellington is 41. Actor Nicholas D'Agosto is 40. Actor Charlie Hofheimer is 39. Actress Rooney Mara is 35. Actress Jacqueline MacInnes Wood is 33. Actor Paulie Litt is 25. Actress Dee Dee Davis is 24.

Thought for Today: "A cynic is not merely one who reads bitter lessons from the past; he is one who is prematurely disappointed in the future." — Sydney J. Harris, American journalist (1917-1986).