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World Wide COVID-19 Numbers

Thursday

Friday

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

This is a happier day. The things I've been tracking and reporting that should be down are all down, some for two or three days now. Details follow.

We now have 699,448 cases reported in the US. This is a 4.8% increase, smaller than yesterday, as is the raw number increase. NY still leads with 229,642 cases, a 3.3% increase; both the percentage and raw number increase are on their third consecutive day of decline. NJ has 78,467 cases, a 4.2% increase; this and the raw number increase are both lower than yesterday. NY and NJ still clock in around 44% of cases. Following are these states: MA – 34,402, PA – 30,121, MI – 29,952, CA – 29,368, IL – 27,575, FL – 24,745, LA – 23,118, and TX – 18,049. The top 10 states still have around 75% of US cases. There are another 5 states over 10,000, another 6 over 5000, another 21 + DC and PR over 1000, 8 more + GU over 100, and VI and MP below 100.

Smithfield Foods in Sioux Falls, SD, has the largest case cluster with 733 cases. Next largest is the USS Theodore Roosevelt, currently on Guam, with 660, Parnall Correctional Facility in Jackson, MI, with 225.

The governor of NY has said he believes they're through the worst of this outbreak; I hope he is right because they have suffered there. San Francisco, an early hot spot has been pretty level since March 22, with only a few dozen new cases per day reported. King County, WA, where the first cases in the US were reported is leveling off too. Their new case totals have hovered between 100 and 270 for three weeks.

There have been 32,790 deaths, a 7% increase from yesterday. This is the third consecutive day that the percentage increase has declined; the raw number was also lower than yesterday. NY has had 12,822, NJ has had 3840, MI has had 2226, MA has had 1404, LA has had 1213, IL has had 1142, CA has had 1051, CT has had 1036, and PA has had 1012. There are 4 more states with over 500 deaths, 18 more over 100, 5 more + DC and PR over 50, 8 more over 10, and 6 + GU, VI, and MP under 10 deaths.

Some interesting data have been coming in. In Boston, testing in a homeless shelter where there was a small cluster of cases showed 146 of the 397 people tested were positive for SARS-CoV-2; that's a huge proportion, but this isn't even the most surprising news. What's really surprising is that none of those 146 positive cases were experiencing symptoms. None. No one's sure what to make of this other than, of course, we're getting clear how many asymptomatic people there might be walking around shedding virus for others to pick up. The plan is to proceed with testing as many other shelters as possible to see if the pattern holds throughout. This is very worrisome because it means we really will be in a world of hurt if we loosen restrictions before we're able to do massive numbers of tests—because we simply do not have a handle on where our sources are in the population.

Similar news emerged from the testing on the USS Theodore Roosevelt, where testing for all of the 4800 crew members is underway and about 94% complete. This has turned up around 600 positive tests, a percentage well below that in the homeless shelter above, but still a fair number. 60% of those positives were without symptoms. That's 360 sailors walking around that ship spreading this infection. Serious business, especially on a ship where spaces are tight, quarters are crowded, and healthy crew are essential.

Some interesting news has turned up on the treatment front as well. There is some speculation afoot about a drug called melatonin, currently available over the counter as a sleep aid. People generally take a few milligrams per night to help them sleep more soundly. Melatonin is a hormone (official name N-acetyl-5-methoxytryptamine), so it's a substance that is naturally-occurring in the body, generally in declining levels as we age. Children and teenagers have lots of it, but older adults have less and less of it as the years go on. It has been studied for its effects in a couple of related circumstances to Covid-19 as an anti-inflammatory and antioxidative substance, and there is speculation it may be protective against acute lung injury (ALI) and acute respiratory distress syndrome (ARDS), both of which are hallmarks of serious Covid-19 infection. Some effects which have been either observed in animal models with viral infections (not Covid-19) or predicted are that it would reduce inflammation, that it would improve immunomodulation, improving proliferation of natural killer cells (which we discussed a couple of days ago), reducing cytokine release (helpful for cytokine storms), and reducing oxidative stress.

We haven't talked about oxidative stress before, so I'll give you the ten-cent tour of that tonight. You

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may (or may not) remember from your school days that atoms have various parts, one of which is the electron. Electrons sort of float around the core of an atom (which is called its nucleus—see how this stuff comes back?), and they operate at various energy levels called shells. Atoms with a lot of electrons have several of these shells; picture them as layers of electrons starting close to the nucleus and moving to layers farther and farther out. These shells fill from the inside out, and atoms are most stable when all of their shells are filled; having an electron or two “missing” in that outer shell is tremendously destabilizing and causes the atom to be highly reactive—that is, it is very prone to stealing electrons from other atoms so it can fill its shells.

A good oxidizer is an atom which is good at this electron theft, and the molecule from which the electrons were stolen becomes—you guessed it!—reactive too, because now it’s missing electrons. We call these reactive molecules free radicals, and they’re highly damaging to living cells. The problem for humans is that oxygen (the stuff that floats around in the air and we absolutely require for life) is a great oxidizer (in fact, that’s where the name, oxidizer, comes from). Which means, for those keeping score, that oxygen, that vital substance we can’t survive without, is damaging to us. It would kill us if we didn’t stop it. The irony is that the reason we need oxygen is that it is a good oxidizer; the thing it does for us that we can’t live without is that it steals electrons. So we need it for the very property that will kill us if we’re not careful. This presents what you might call a design problem. If you were designing a cell, you probably would think this was a bad idea and try to come up with another plan; but since you weren’t in charge when our cells were designed, here we are.

Good thing, then, that we have natural anti-oxidation processes to neutralize all those free radicals and prevent them from destroying our cells (and thus us); but the damage-control is sort of an ongoing process throughout our lives, and it’s one more thing that slows down a bit as we age. One of the primary causes of aging is oxidative damage accumulated throughout a lifetime.

Another thing that can cause us trouble is when we have extra oxidation going on beyond the usual because, when that happens, our anti-oxidation forces can be overwhelmed. If the problem is significant, it can kill us. And it so happens that viral infections increase oxidative stress on our tissues by generating those pesky free radicals. Your natural antioxidant forces can’t keep up, and you get damaged tissue. If the damage is in important tissue, say, your lungs, and it’s bad enough, your lungs quit working. Enter ALI and ARDS. And sometimes death.

And this brings us to the Why-do-we-care? portion of our program: Turns out melatonin is a good little anti-oxidant. It has been used to treat respiratory distress in newborns with oxidative damage. So naturally, some folks are speculating about whether it might serve the same sort of purpose in folks with oxidative damage from Covid-19.

There is a tantalizing report from a physician in San Antonio, TX, who has been treating Covid-19 patients with 80 mg/day and reports good outcomes. Now, I have to caution everyone before we all go buy out all of the melatonin at local stores that this was 10 patients and not a controlled study; these results could be just a fluke—flukes are not rare. But it is interesting.

I have done some reading about dosage and toxicity because one concern with a substance like this that’s typically taken in dosages like 3 mg/day is side effects at this relatively large dosage. From what I’ve discovered, it appears in clinical trials people were given 1 g (that would be 1000 mg)/day for a month without adverse effects. There was a report of patients taking 75 mg/day for years without harm, and I saw one report of dosages of 6 g (6000 mg)/day. So it appears to be a fairly low-risk proposition.

One paper suggested a retrospective study (that is one that looks back in time) of patients who have been diagnosed with Covid-19 and had been, incidentally, taking melatonin for sleep problems compared with other patients who were not taking it. Because there is some speculation lower doses like those you’d take for sleep may be protective in advance of infection, this may be a useful thing. I’ll be watching for news on this front, and I’ll update as something becomes available.

And there’s brief news on that antiviral therapy developed for Ebola which is still an investigational new drug, remdesivir. This is the nucleotide analog (we talked about those a couple of weeks back) which in-

terferes with viral RNA replication in vitro (in the lab); it remains to be seen what it does in vivo (in the human body). But the preliminary results are looking most interesting.

There are two Phase 3 clinical trials (we talked about how those phases work a while back) of the drug underway in various institutions all over the world. The moderate study includes 1600 participants in 169 centers, and the severe study includes 2400 at 152 sites. They're testing 5-day vs. 10-day courses of treatment. There is no placebo group, that is, people who are not receiving the drug, but an inactive replacement, as a control. That is the gold standard for drug trials, so we're going to have to interpret these results with some caution for that reason.

However, there was a video discussion of what they're seeing the other day, and a recording of the discussion made its way to the press, so we have some preliminary information. The data for the first 400 patients was "locked" yesterday, so a report on those patients should surface very soon. What was said on the call is that in the 125 patients treated at a Chicago hospital, 113 of whom classified as severe, only two died and most were discharged. Most were leaving after six days; only three went out to the full ten days of treatment. Fevers and respiratory symptoms both rapidly improved; people were coming off mechanical ventilation after only a day. This could be something.

I did not see anything about side effects; that has been a concern with this drug. We'll have to wait for the report to discover whether that was an issue. But a potential bright spot seems like a good way to end the day's report.

Please continue to be careful. Please continue to be kind. Please continue to seek opportunities to ease someone's path. And please stay well.

We'll talk again.

Governor Noem Announces National Guard Site Locations to Fight COVID-19

PIERRE, S.D. – Today, Governor Kristi Noem announced that the South Dakota National Guard had selected locations in Sioux Falls and Rapid City to assist in the COVID-19 response.

"South Dakota is ready to respond to the future peak of COVID-19 cases," Noem said. "We're thankful for the National Guard's hard work to help us surge our medical bed space capacity, fight COVID-19, and keep South Dakotans safe."

The Sioux Falls Alternate Care Facility will be located at the South Dakota National Guard Regional Training Institute. This facility is located at 801 West National Guard Drive. The facility will provide an additional 100 medical bed capacity to the Sioux Falls area. The South Dakota National Guard will work in conjunction with Sioux Falls area healthcare organizations to provide medical care at the Alternate Care Facility.

The Rapid City Alternate Care Facility will be located at the South Dakota National Guard Headquarters at Camp Rapid. This facility is located at 2823 West Main St. in Rapid City. The facility will provide 100-200 additional medical bed capacity to Monument Health's ability to serve the Rapid City area. The South Dakota National Guard is working closely with Monument to provide medical care at the Alternate Care Facility.

To learn more South Dakota's fight against the COVID-19 pandemic, visit COVID.sd.gov.

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Her Vote. Her Voice. delegation encourages absentee voting

PIERRE, S.D. -- Absentee voting is now open for the June 2 election, and Her Vote. Her Voice. is providing support and resources to encourage South Dakota citizens to exercise their hard-fought-for voting rights.

"Social distancing may be changing a lot of how we go about our day, but it doesn't mean we don't have a way to connect or have our voices heard," said Patricia Miller, chair of Her Vote. Her Voice. "Election season is just around the corner, and it's more important now than ever to get out and vote and have your voice heard. It's critical that in the public health crisis we don't settle into silence – but rather rally together to have our voices heard through voting."

South Dakota's leadership has underscored the importance of still voting and will be giving each registered voter direct access to cast their ballot.

Secretary of State Steve Barnett said, "Ensuring every South Dakota voter has access to exercise their right to vote is the goal of all election officials in our state. In response to the current pandemic, we are encouraging all South Dakotans to utilize our state's absentee vote-by-mail option for our upcoming elections. Absentee ballot applications will be mailed to each registered voter at the mailing address listed on their voter registration form."

Applications should arrive between April 17 – 24. Anyone not receiving an application due to an undeliverable address may request an application from their county auditor or download the form on the Secretary of State's website at www.sdsos.gov.

Voting takes center stage in 2020 not just because of the national pandemic, but also with the 100th anniversary of women earning the right to vote in the United States. Governor Kristi Noem appointed a centennial delegation called Her Vote. Her Voice. to commemorate the anniversary. The organization is a women's history initiative of the South Dakota Historical Society Foundation, the nonprofit fundraising partner of the South Dakota State Historical Society, and is raising awareness about the story of women's suffrage in South Dakota and giving residents resources to exercise their voices in today's voting climate.

The delegation urges all South Dakotans of voting age to take advantage of this opportunity to vote by mail, so all voices can be heard. The delegates are organizing a communications center for the collection and dissemination of information about South Dakota events, plans, and resources for the centennial celebration of the passage of the 19th Amendment granting women the right to vote. This diverse group of nonpartisan professionals brings relevance to the historical topic while connecting people to the present issue: history is happening and still being made today.

For more information on elections and voting go to www.sdsos.gov. Her Vote. Her Voice. activities are found at www.hervotehervoice.org.

Her Vote. Her Voice. is a grassroots movement of the South Dakota Historical Society Foundation and the office of Governor Kristi Noem. Governor Noem appointed a group of 16 delegates to organize a communications center for the collection and dissemination of information about South Dakota events, plans, and resources for the centennial celebration of the passage of the 19th Amendment granting women the right to vote. This diverse group of nonpartisan professionals brings relevance to the historical topic while connecting people to the present issue: history is happening and still being made today. Funds raised by the Her Vote. Her Voice. campaign will support women's history preservation through projects defined by the South Dakota State Historical Society and Historical Society Foundation. For more information on how you can help, go to <https://www.hervotehervoice.org> or call 605-773-6003.

About the South Dakota State Historical Society The South Dakota State Historical Society is a division of the Department of Education. The State Historical Society, an Affiliate of the Smithsonian Institution, is headquartered at the South Dakota Cultural Heritage Center in Pierre. The center houses the society's world-class museum, the archives, and the historic preservation, publishing, and administrative/development offices. Call 605-773-3458 or visit www.history.sd.gov for more information. The society also has an archaeology office in Rapid City; call 605-394-1936 for more information.

The South Dakota Historical Society Foundation is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit corporation and serves as the fundraising partner of the South Dakota State Historical Society. The Foundation assists in securing funds to collect, preserve, research, exhibit, and interpret history for the lifelong education and enrichment of present and future generations. For more information go to www.sdhsf.org or call 605-773-6003.

South Dakota PUC reminds consumers to utilize available resources during pandemic

PIERRE, S.D. – As the coronavirus outbreak progresses, many South Dakotans may continue to find themselves in unexpected positions. The South Dakota Public Utilities Commission reminds consumers that utility providers are committed to providing quality services during this challenging time and may be willing to work on flexible payment plans with customers who are facing financial hardship as a result of the pandemic.

“Due to COVID-19, many South Dakotans now find themselves without a paycheck to cover the cost of essential services including utility bills. It’s important for consumers to know that there are resources available to help them through this,” stated PUC Chairman Gary Hanson. “Each consumer’s situation is unique and the best way to evaluate your options is to contact your utility providers directly. They do not want to disconnect you. They want to work with you to help find options for you. The worst thing you can do is to not speak with your utility,” Hanson advised.

In response to the pandemic, many of South Dakota’s utility providers have announced policy changes including some companies’ decisions to suspend disconnections for non-payment. The PUC stresses that customers should contact their specific utility regarding these policies and reminds consumers these decisions are made on a company level and don’t apply across the board.

“Our economy has taken a huge hit due to the coronavirus. Providers understand customers may not be in a position to pay their bill in full right now and while the last thing that utilities want to do is disconnect services, some may not be in a position to do away with disconnects entirely,” said PUC Vice Chairman Chris Nelson. “If you’re struggling to pay utility bills, reach out to your provider and explain your situation. Communication is key to keeping services on,” he elaborated.

Consumers receiving federal stimulus funds as a result of COVID-19 are reminded to prioritize these funds to cover expenses for their essentials, including utility bills, so they are not faced with insurmountable expenses or face disconnection of utilities for non-payment down the road. Delays in disconnections does not mean a consumer no longer owes for their utility expenses. Like consumers, utilities have bills to pay in order to keep the lights and the heat on.

“Utility providers are working hard to minimize the impact of COVID-19 on their employees and customers without sacrificing the reliability of essential services we all depend on. That means sending workers out into the field to fix issues and maintain infrastructure. If you see a utility worker outside, please exercise good social distancing practices and maintain a 6-foot safety zone. Along with maintaining these distancing guidelines, please remind your family members that utility scams are happening and review the many ways they can help protect their personal information and checkbook,” said Commissioner Kristie Fiegen.

For more information about the resources available to you, contact your utility provider or the PUC by calling (800) 332-1782 or emailing PUCConsumerInfo@state.sd.us. For information and tips about how to handle scam calls, visit the PUC website at www.puc.sd.gov/scamcalls.

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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	Apr. 17
Minnesota	1,154	1,242	1,336	1,427	1,621	1,650	1,695	1,809	1,912	2,071
Nebraska	523	577	648	704	814	871	901	952	1,066	1,138
Montana	332	354	377	---	387	394	399	404	415	422
Colorado	5,655	6202	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	439
South Dakota	393	447	536	626	730	868	988	1168	1,311	1,411
United States	431,838	466,396	501,701	530,006	557,590	582,619	609,685	639,664	671,425	706,779
US Deaths	14,768	16,703	18,781	20,608	22,109	23,529	26,059	30,985	33,286	37,079

Minnesota	+85	+88	+94	+91	+194	+29	+45	+114	+103	+159
Nebraska	+45	+54	+71	+56	+110	+57	+30	+51	+114	+72
Montana	+13	+22	+23	---	+10	+7	+5	+5	+11	+7
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	+46
South Dakota	+73	+54	+89	+90	+104	+138	+120	+180	+143	+100
United States	+31,909	+34,558	+35,305	+28,305	+27,584	+25,029	+27,066	+29,979	+31,761	+35,354
US Deaths	+1,857	+1,935	+2,078	1,827	+1,501	+1,420	+2,530	+4,926	+2,301	+3,793

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Brown, Codington and Pennington now categorized as Substantial Community Spread

Positive: +101 (1411 total)
 Negative: +412 (9,641 total)
 Hospitalized: +8 (63 total) 45 currently hospitalized.
 Deaths: No Change (7 total)
 Recovered: +84 (457 total)

Counties with no positive cases report the following negative tests: Bennett 9, Brule 34, Buffalo 7, Butte 12, Campbell 7, Custer 13, Day 38, Dewey 19, Douglas 19, Edmunds 17, Grant 30, Gregory 26, Haakon 10, Hand 16, Hanson 16, Harding 1, Jackson 3, Jones 4, Kingsburg 50, McPherson 11, Mellette 9, Perkins 0, Potter 24, Stanley 28, Tripp 46, Ziebach 2, unassigned 933.

Changes on the Community Impact Map
 Bon Homme is Minimal/Moderate Community Spread
 Brown Substantial Community Spread
 Charles Mix is Minimal/Moderate Community Spread
 Codington is Substantial Community Spread
 Corson is Minimal/Moderate Community Spread
 Jerauld is Minimal/Moderate Community Spread
 Pennington is Substantial Community Spread
 Sanborn is Minimal/Moderate Community Spread

Brookings: +1 recovered (7 of 9 recovered)
 Brown: +2 positive (17 total), 1 is a positive from the Demkota Beef Plant. 379 total negative tests.
 Charles Mix: +1 recovered (3 of 4 recovered)
 Lincoln: +6 positive, +6 recovered (36 of 77 recovered)
 Minnehaha: +92 positive, +73 recovered (293 of 1157 recovered)
 Turner: +1 recovered (3 of 5 recovered)
 Yankton: +2 recovered (19 of 23 recovered)

The N.D. DoH & private labs are reporting 46 new positive cases, bringing the statewide total to 439.

State & private labs have conducted 12,342 total tests with 11,903 negative results.

172 ND patients are considered recovered. 16 are currently hospitalized. There are a total of 9 deaths.

SOUTH DAKOTA CASE COUNTS	
Test Results	# of Cases
Positive*	1411
Negative**	9651
Ever Hospitalized*	63
Deaths**	7
Recovered	457

AGE GROUP OF SOUTH DAKOTA COVID-19 CASES		
Age Range	# of Cases	# of Deaths
0 to 19 years	74	0
20 to 29 years	271	0
30 to 39 years	344	0
40 to 49 years	286	0
50 to 59 years	259	2
60 to 69 years	134	2
70 to 79 years	22	1
80+ years	21	2

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County	Total Positive Cases	Total Negative Cases	Total Cases Recovered
Aurora	1	32	1
Beadle	21	154	19
Bennett	0	9	0
Bon Homme	4	79	3
Brookings	9	250	7
Brown	17	379	10
Brule	0	34	0
Buffalo	0	7	0
Butte	0	12	0
Campbell	0	7	0
Charles Mix	4	60	3
Clark	1	44	1
Clay	5	94	4
Codington	13	343	11
Corson	1	6	1
Custer	0	13	0
Davison	3	229	3
Day	0	38	0
Deuel	1	52	1
Dewey	0	19	0
Douglas	0	19	0
Edmunds	0	17	0
Fall River	1	9	1
Faulk	1	12	1
Grant	0	30	0
Gregory	0	26	0
Haakon	0	10	0
Hamlin	2	45	1
Hand	0	16	0
Hanson	0	16	0
Harding	0	1	0
Hughes	5	190	4
Hutchinson	2	67	2
Hyde	1	6	0

Jackson	0	3	0
Jerauld	4	23	2
Jones	0	4	0
Kingsbury	0	50	0
Lake	3	80	1
Lawrence	9	54	9
Lincoln	77	904	36
Lyman	2	15	2
Marshall	1	32	1
McCook	3	71	1
McPherson	0	11	0
Meade	1	49	1
Mellette	0	9	0
Miner	1	14	0
Minnehaha	1157	3822	293
Moody	1	65	0
Oglala Lakota	1	21	1
Pennington	10	294	6
Perkins	0	0	0
Potter	0	24	0
Roberts	4	68	3
Sanborn	3	31	0
Spink	3	73	2
Stanley	0	28	0
Sully	1	11	0
Todd	1	32	1
Tripp	0	46	0
Turner	5	96	3
Union	4	94	3
Walworth	5	23	0
Yankton	23	334	19
Ziebach	0	2	0
Unassigned*	0	933	0

SEX OF SOUTH DAKOTA COVID-19 CASES

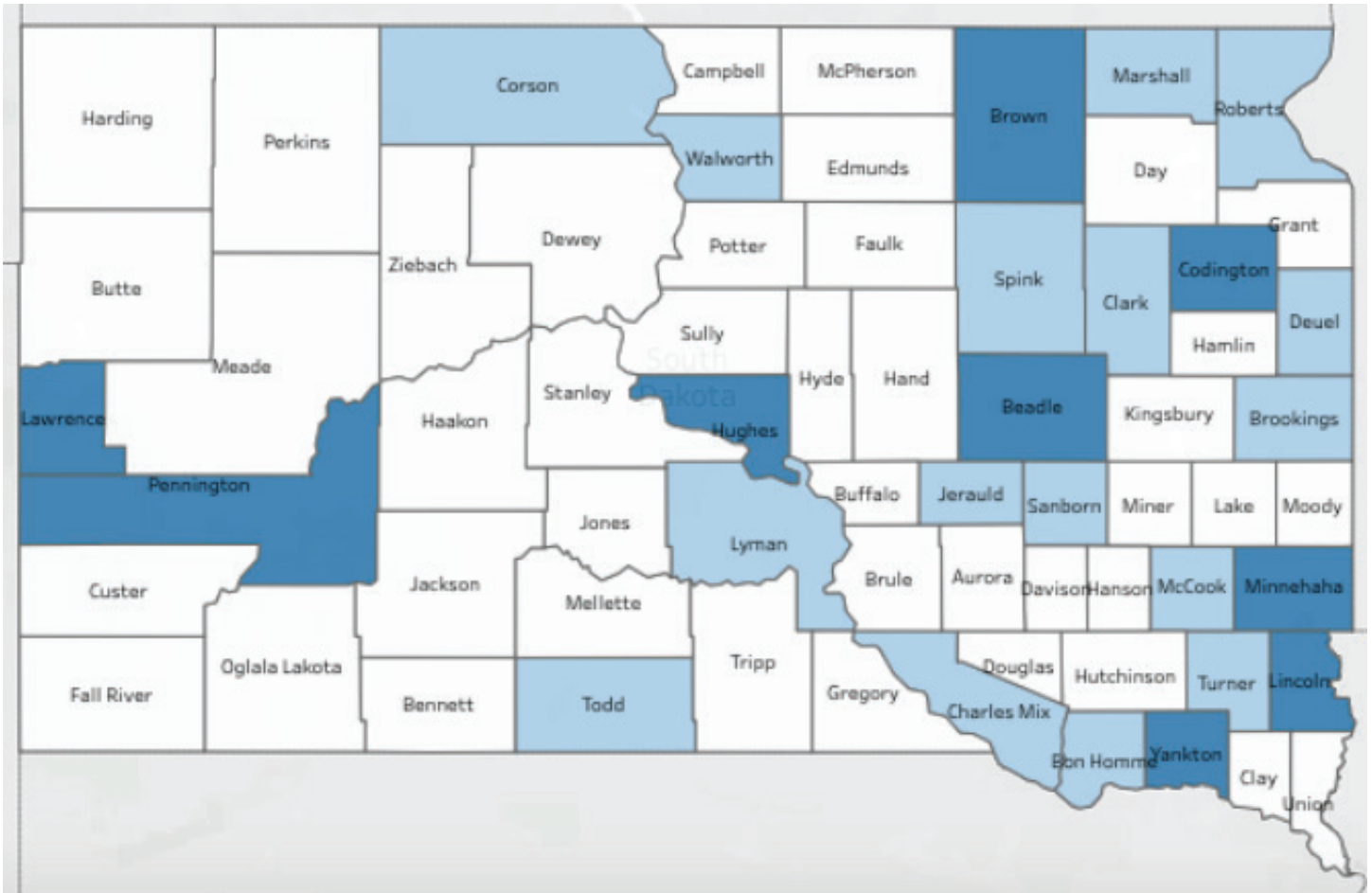
Sex	# of Cases	# of Deaths
Male	765	5
Female	646	2

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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Impact Level

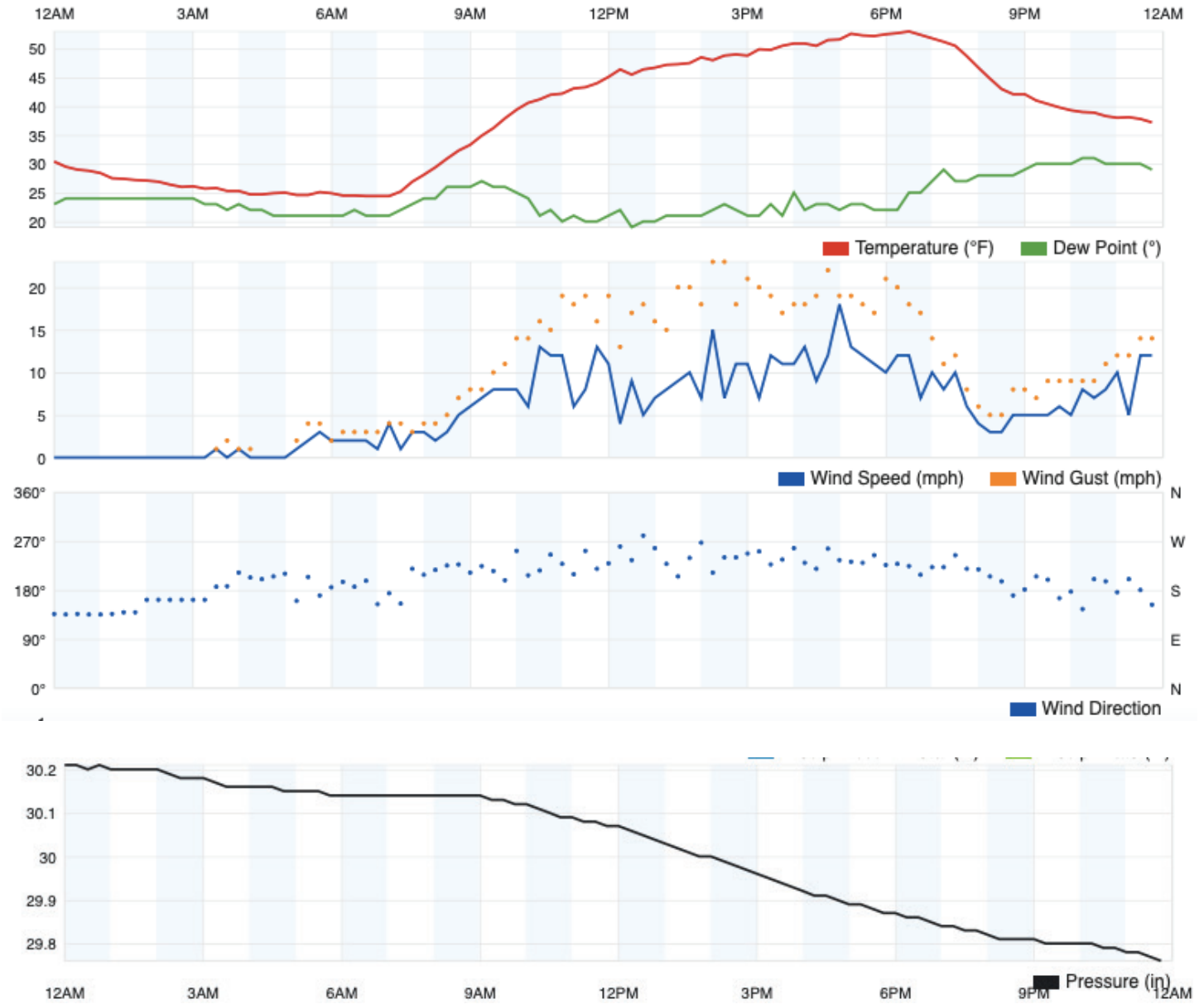
- No Community Spread
- Minimal/Moderate Community Spread
- Substantial Community Spread

None: COVID-19 cases may occur in the community, but there is NO community transmission.
Minimal to Moderate: There is a single case of community-acquired COVID-19 in a county.
Substantial: There are five or more cases of community-acquired COVID-19 in a county or a distinct group of cases in a single area (e.g., city or county).

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Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs



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Today



Mostly Sunny
then Slight
Chance
Showers

High: 59 °F

Tonight



Slight Chance
Showers

Low: 27 °F

Sunday



Sunny

High: 53 °F

Sunday
Night



Partly Cloudy

Low: 38 °F

Monday




Mostly Sunny
then Mostly
Sunny and
Breezy




High: 62 °F


Warmer Temps Continue Slight Chance For Rain Today

Today

60°  20%
NW 15 - 20 G30

Partly Cloudy, Breezy, Slight Chance Rain Showers today

Sun	Mon	Tue
		
54° 27° 0% 0%	63° 38° 1% 1%	68° 32° 0% 1%
W 10 - 15	NW 15 - 20 G35	SW 9 - 13

 NATIONAL WEATHER SERVICE
OCEANIC AND ATMOSPHERIC ADMINISTRATION

Updated: 4/18/2020 4:37 AM Central

Warmer but breezy today with a slight chance of rain this afternoon. As we look towards the start of next week temperatures climb with highs reaching into the 60s by Monday!

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Today in Weather History

April 18, 1995: Eight inches to two feet of snow fell in central South Dakota in a two day period from the 17th to the 18th. Many businesses, schools, and roads closed on the 18th. Hundreds of power poles were downed due to the heavy snow and high winds in Faulk, Hughes, Sully, Hyde, Hand, Lyman, and Buffalo Counties leaving thousands of people without power. Some significant calf losses also occurred (around 10 to 20 percent in some areas), especially in Hand County. Snowfall amounts included 24.0 inches at Vivian, Ree Heights, and in the Murdo area; 23.0 inches at Kennebec, 18.0 inches at Highmore, 16.0 inches at Blunt, 15.0 inches at Miller and Faulkton, and 8.0 inches at Gettysburg.

1880: More than two dozen tornadoes were reported from Kansas and Arkansas to Wisconsin and Michigan. More than 150 persons were killed, including 99 people in Marshfield, Missouri.

1906: At 5:12 AM, a magnitude 7.8 earthquake hits San Francisco. A devastating fire soon broke out in the city and lasted for several days. About 3,000 people died, and over 80 percent of San Francisco was destroyed.

1944 - California experienced its worst hailstorm of record. Damage mounted to two million dollars as two consecutive storms devastated the Sacramento Valley destroying the fruit crop. (The Weather Channel)

1957 - A dust devil near Dracut MA lifted a small child three feet into the air, and rolled two other children on the ground. Fortunately none of the three were hurt. The dust devil was accompanied by a loud whistling sound as it moved westward. (The Weather Channel)

1970 - Rapid City, SD, received a record 22 inches of snow in 24 hours. (17th-18th) (The Weather Channel)

1987 - Thirty-one cities in the central U.S. reported record high temperatures for the date, including International Falls MN with a reading of 88 degrees, and Bismarck ND with a high of 92 degrees. A sharp cold front produced high winds in the western U.S. Winds in Utah gusted to 99 mph at the Park City Angle Station, and capsized a boat on Utah Lake drowning four persons. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1988 - Afternoon and evening thunderstorms produced large hail and damaging winds in the southeastern U.S. A strong (F-2) tornado severely damaged seventeen mobile homes near Bainbridge GA injuring three persons. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1989 - Thunderstorms produced large hail and damaging winds in Texas, Oklahoma and Arkansas. A thunderstorm in Pecos County of southwest Texas produced wind gusts to 90 mph at Imperial. (Storm Data) (The National Weather Summary)

1990 - Heavy snow blanketed the west central valleys and southwest mountains of Colorado with up to 18 inches of snow. Nine cities from the Mid Mississippi Valley to the Middle Atlantic Coast Region reported record low temperatures for the date, including Fort Wayne IND with a reading of 23 degrees. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

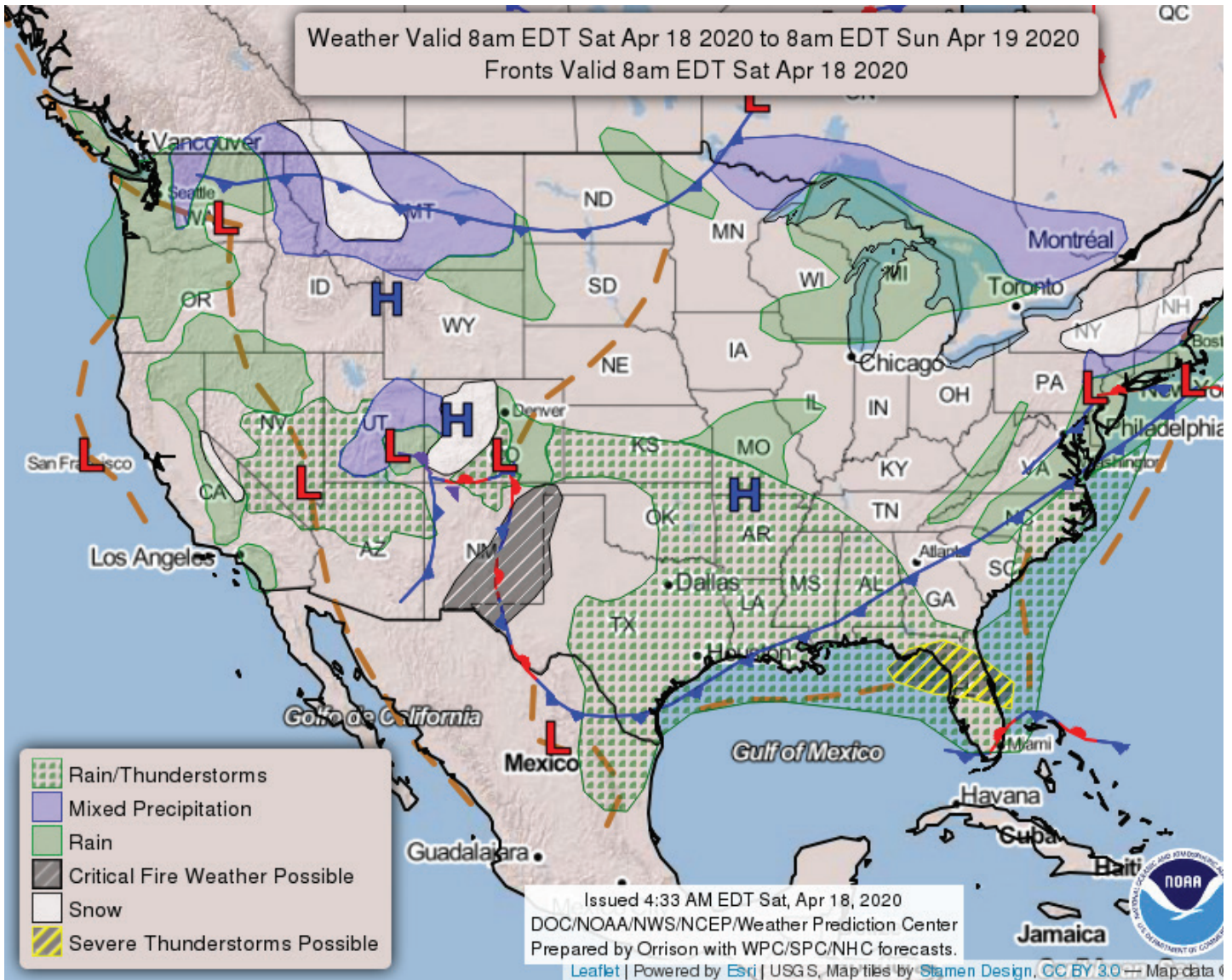
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Yesterday's Groton Weather Today's Info

High Temp: 53.0
Low Temp: 24.4
Wind: 23
Snow

Record High: 89° in 1985
Record Low: 13° in 1953
Average High: 59°F
Average Low: 33°F
Average Precip in April.: 0.86
Precip to date in April.: 0.94
Average Precip to date: 3.04
Precip Year to Date: 1.29
Sunset Tonight: 8:25 p.m.
Sunrise Tomorrow: 6:40 a.m.



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“ONE WHO SHINES WHEN IT’S DARK”

Mitch was afraid of being in the dark at night when the lights of his room were turned off. His father wanted to help him solve this problem of fear that gripped him when he was in the darkness. After thinking about it, he decided that if Mitch had a picture of the Lord in his room, he would not be afraid.

One Saturday morning he took Mitch to the Christian bookstore to purchase a picture of Jesus. They stood in front of the pictures of Jesus and looked at each one. None seemed to please him. Finally, in desperation, Mitch’s Dad asked, “We’ve looked at all of these pictures, Son, and you don’t want any of them. What kind of a picture of Jesus do you want?”

Looking at his Dad, Mitch smiled and said, “I want a Jesus that shines in the dark.”

That’s what we all need, isn’t it? We need a Savior Who will shine His light on our paths when they are uncertain, we need Him to illuminate the roads we have not traveled before, and we need His brightness to turn our darkest hours into the glory of the rising sun.

Jesus brings the presence, the protection, and the power of God into our lives. He is the Light of the world and from His light comes the Truth that all mankind seeks and needs. Without Him, we live in the darkness of doubt and despair. With Him, we live in the fullness of God’s love, mercy, grace, salvation, and hope.

Prayer: Lord, we need You to shine brightly as we face a world of darkness that is filled with temptation, trouble, tragedy, and tears. Be the lamp for our path and the light for our journey. In Jesus’ Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: John 8:12 Jesus spoke to the people once more and said, “I am the light of the world. If you follow me, you won’t have to walk in darkness, because you will have the light that leads to life.”

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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

Schools scramble to adjust to remote learning amid pandemic

By JIM HOLLAND Rapid City Journal

STURGIS, S.D. (AP) — Teacher Kelli Grubl had typewritten words of encouragement for her first-graders at Sturgis Elementary School, who have been away from school for more than two weeks.

"I want you to know how proud I am of you," Grubl wrote.

"You are adjusting to something totally different and new. Rockstar! I know you are going to do great! Please know that I miss you and can't wait to see you again.

"I am with you every step of the way. You are going to ROCK this adventure. Enjoy your day and keep READING!," she concluded.

Her message, typed in a happy font, was affixed to a manila envelope containing lesson plans for April, as teachers and students alike adjust to a new normal of learning away from the classroom.

Schools have been closed since mid-March by Gov. Kristi Noem, with students continuing their education remotely due to the continuing spread of COVID-19, the disease caused by the coronavirus. Noem has now closed schools through the end of the school year, which in South Dakota is the week of Memorial Day.

Sturgis elementary students and their parents picked up their lesson packets on a recent Tuesday, along with a plastic bags containing supplies from their school desks.

"This is all so different," Grubl said, as she handed out packets to her students from the school parking lot.

Most schools across the state and in the Black Hills have had to convert on the fly to a distance-learning format, either through printed lesson plans or online platforms, such as Schoology, Google Classroom and Blackboard.

Students, their parents, teachers and administrators are now finding out what works and what needs improvement in distance-learning plans that didn't exist a month ago.

"This is like building an airplane in the air," said Meade 46-1 superintendent Jeff Simmons. "We need to figure things out as we're moving.

"We know it's not perfect, but we're doing the best we can to adjust," Simmons told the Rapid City Journal.

Schools have not only responded with plans to continue the learning process remotely, but have also geared up through school kitchen services to provide grab-and-go meals, including a lunch for one day and breakfast for the next morning, distributed curbside.

Spearfish superintendent Kirk Easton said his staff has worked hard to chart a course through new waters.

"My teaching staff and even my paras (paraprofessionals) worked incredibly hard last week, the three days that we had off prior to spring break, to put all these wheels into motion and create things that they have never been asked to create before," Easton said.

Easton also knows there are frustrations with the new frontier of distance learning his district is going through and asked for patience.

"We're working though things each building, the principal and their staff are working through things to try make this experience the best we can under the current situation. Again, systems will improve, and the delivery of instruction will improve over time," he said.

Lead-Deadwood school superintendent Dan Leikvold said the district was aware of the potential spread of the coronavirus and told its staff to begin preparing accordingly.

On March 11, before the district's spring break, Leikvold sent a letter to his staff and parents that contained information on Centers for Disease Control and Prevention COVID-19 guidelines and personal hygiene.

"And we basically said to the teachers, you really need to start thinking about what remote learning looks like, because it looks like we're heading there," he said.

"We've got great teachers and I'm guessing a lot of them started planning right then," he said.

On Friday, March 20, students were given a specific half-hour window to come to the school to pick up personal items and school-issued laptops.

Leikvold said the district also sent guidelines for physical activity to go with the lesson plans.

"We don't just want them laying around," he said.

Belle Fourche school superintendent Steve Willard said students in grades 5-12 are receiving school assignments through online platforms.

"Teachers are sending them their assignments and then working with them to get them through the assignments, then evaluating them," he said.

Students in kindergarten through fourth grade have received printed lesson packets to get them through the next few weeks.

"It's going really well. I'm very happy with what our principals and teachers have come up with," Willard said.

"We'll just keep plugging away until we get to go back to school," he said.

South Dakota mom shares pregnancy, birth during pandemic

By **KELDA J.L. PHARRIS** Aberdeen American News

ABERDEEN, S.D. (AP) — Through limitations and restrictions unbeknownst to him, Knox Bachman entered the world on the last day of March.

He was delivered by Alex Bachman via caesarean section at Sanford Aberdeen amid the coronavirus pandemic.

"There were a lot more precautions than there was the first time," the new mother told the Aberdeen American News by phone recently.

Knox is her second child delivered at Sanford Aberdeen. Her 2-year-old, Wrigley, had visitors and a sibling to dote on him in-person after his birth. With Knox, it was just him, his mother and his father, Jamie, until they left the facility on April 2. Knox wouldn't get his "fresh 48" pictures taken by a local professional photographer within those first couple days. Through it all, Alex's experience was heavy on sweet with just a dash of bitter.

The Aberdeen mom wanted to open up about her family's personal story to reassure other women and families who are expecting that things will be OK. The experience in the obstetrics ward felt safe, Alex said. She just hopes they don't stop allowing that one support person as hospitals in other parts of the country have. A woman having to do that on her own is heartbreaking, she said.

"We couldn't have any visitors; parents and siblings couldn't come. My husband was there as the one support person. (The hospital) didn't discourage Jamie from leaving," but encouraged him to limit his coming and going, Alex said.

Jamie was designated as Alex's one support person allowed during her labor, delivery and immediate post care.

"For most women, birth brings extended family and friends together to meet the baby and support the new parents. COVID has changed that," said Andrea Peterson, manager of the Sanford Aberdeen Women's Center. "It's interesting, though: At Sanford we've noticed that the visitor policy has a bit of silver lining. Without the extra visitors, new moms are getting better bonding time with their baby, taking to breastfeeding better (if that's their chosen way to feed), and they're getting more one-on-one time with the OB nurses."

Prior to Knox's arrival, there were check-ups and ultrasounds. Alex had to go to those alone the past few weeks, following the hospital's protocol of no visitors or support people when patients are only there for check-ups. But the technician would send her home with photos for the rest of the family to fawn over. Although not ideal, and not the way the family envisioned welcoming their third child, they still had a very good experience.

"I never felt nervous entering the clinic or going up to the OB clinics. Dr. (Richard) Lewis and staff were very protective of patients," Alex said. "Once you got up in the ward you didn't feel anything different. Dr. Lewis was very open and honest about everything. He said, 'We're going to be prima donnas here. We need to be when dealing with pregnant women and babies.'"

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When first checking into the hospital, there were a few hurdles. Alex and Jamie were met right at the door with screenings, restrictions and identification of patient and support person. Alex said that part left a much more sterile than welcoming feeling.

For a caesarean birth, it's typically a three-night stay. Alex only wanted to stay two. "I just wanted to get home," she said, and the doctor was very accommodating. Knox has had a well-check, and because Alex couldn't drive yet due to the surgery, and only one person is allowed for those check-ups, Jamie took Knox to that appointment.

Coming home in a time of social distancing and self-isolation has altered what should be a very happy and busy time. There are a lot of video chats and photo messages to family and friends keeping them updated on Knox's growth and change. Diapers and baby wipes have sometimes been difficult to find, but they also had prepped well before his arrival.

"It's been really sad. You kind of feel a little bit cheated. You want to show him to all the people you love. Baptisms — you've got to put that on hold," Alex said. "I know it'll pass soon and we'll be able to celebrate that way then."

Welcome into this strange new world, Knox.

SD Lottery

By The Associated Press

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

Mega Millions

13-35-39-46-55, Mega Ball: 14, Megaplier: 4

(thirteen, thirty-five, thirty-nine, forty-six, fifty-five; Mega Ball: fourteen; Megaplier: four)

Estimated jackpot: \$159 million

Powerball

Estimated jackpot: \$24 million

Tribes sue over distribution of coronavirus relief funding

By FELICIA FONSECA Associated Press

FLAGSTAFF, Ariz. (AP) — Several Native American tribes sued the federal government Friday, seeking to keep any of the \$8 billion in federal coronavirus relief for tribes kept out of the hands of for-profit Alaska Native corporations.

The U.S. Treasury Department is tasked with doling out the money by April 26 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.

The Confederated Tribes of the Chehalis Reservation and the Tulalip Tribes in Washington state, the Houlton Band of Maliseet Indians in Maine, and the Akiak Native Community, Asa'carsarmiut Tribe and Aleut Community of St. Paul Island in Alaska filed the lawsuit in U.S. District Court in Washington, D.C.

The U.S. Treasury Department, named as the defendant, did not immediately return an email seeking comment.

Already, tribes had raised questions about the distribution of the funding.

"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.

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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.

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."

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.

The Navajo Nation has reported more coronavirus cases than any other Native American tribe. As of Friday, it had 1,127 cases among the 175,000 residents of the vast reservation that extends into New Mexico, Arizona and Utah. Deaths total 44.

___ Associated Press writer Stephen Groves in Sioux Falls, South Dakota, contributed to this story.

Company: 4 Georgia poultry workers dead from coronavirus

By RUSS BYNUM Associated Press

SAVANNAH, Ga. (AP) — Four employees of a major poultry producer's operations in rural southwest Georgia have died after becoming infected with the coronavirus, a company spokesman said Friday.

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Tyson Foods spokesman Gary Mickelson said three of the employees worked at the company's chicken processing plant in Camilla, while the fourth person worked in a supporting job outside the plant. He declined to say how many workers there have tested positive for COVID-19, the disease caused by the new virus.

American workers who process the nation's meat have proven especially susceptible to the new virus, as they work shoulder-to-shoulder on production lines. Several U.S. plants have closed because of outbreaks, including a large plant owned by Smithfield Foods in Sioux Falls, South Dakota, that produced roughly 5% of U.S. pork before it was shut down after more than 500 workers became infected.

Mickelson said two other Tyson Foods workers have died from the virus at its plant in Columbus Junction, Iowa.

"We realize everyone is anxious during this challenging time and believe information is the best tool for combating the virus," Hector Gonzalez, Tyson's senior vice president for human resources, said in a statement. "That's why we're encouraging our team members to share their concerns with us, so we can help address them."

Gonzalez said the company has improved safety measures at the Camilla plant by checking employees' temperatures, requiring workers to wear face coverings, installing dividers at work stations and providing more space in break rooms. He said the company in March had "relaxed our attendance policy to encourage workers to stay at home when they're sick."

The Retail, Wholesale and Department Store Union, which represents 2,000 workers at the Georgia chicken plant, identified the three plant employees who died as women who had worked there for 13 to 35 years. A statement from the union said many plant employees are "sick or in quarantine."

"It's too little too late here," Edgar Fields, president of the union's Southeast Council, said in a statement Friday.

The Georgia Department of Public Health reported Friday that at least 668 deaths statewide have been linked to the virus. Infections have been confirmed in more than 17,400 people. About 20% of them were hospitalized.

In Georgia's rural southwest corner, where the Camilla plant is located, the rate of coronavirus infections and deaths have outpaced far more densely populated regions of the state. The union said many plant employees live in neighboring Dougherty County, which leads Georgia with 91 coronavirus deaths.

For most people, the new coronavirus causes mild or moderate symptoms that usually clear up within weeks. For some, it can cause severe illness and be life-threatening.

The union has called on poultry processors to require employees to quarantine themselves for 14 days, and pay them sick leave, when they're exposed to co-workers testing positive for the virus. It also wants individual departments to be shut down for 72 hours and cleaned after a worker tests positive.

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

Noem says she'll stick to her timeline after Trump guidance

By **STEPHEN GROVES** Associated Press

SIoux FALLS, S.D. (AP) — Gov. Kristi Noem said Friday that she's anxious to see businesses up and running in South Dakota, but that it won't be on President Donald Trump's timeline.

The Republican governor called the White House's guidance on reopening "helpful," but she said she "will still make decisions in South Dakota that's best for our state." Trump is pushing states to quickly revive economic activity by following a roadmap he sent to governors.

Health officials expect infections in South Dakota to peak in mid-June. While Noem hasn't ordered businesses to close or issued a stay-at-home order like most other governors have, she stressed following precautions to slow the spread of the disease for "several more weeks." She said the state is already at Phase 1 of Trump's plan, which calls for limited business activity.

Noem's approach has been questioned since the outbreak at a Smithfield pork processing plant in Sioux

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Falls. She said she wants to see the plant reopen as soon as possible and that next week, she will release the findings and recommendations of a team from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention that toured the facility.

Noem said Smithfield was already implementing some of those precautions, calling the company's actions "proactive."

More than half of COVID-19 cases in the state are tied to the outbreak of the plant, with 634 employees and 143 of their close contacts testing positive.

Health officials announced 101 new South Dakota cases on Friday, bringing the state's total to 1,411. They announced no new deaths, but seven people have died so far from COVID-19.

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.

As Republican officials at the state and local level have scrambled to address increasing rates of infection this week, they have been accused of either doing too much or not enough.

The South Dakota Democratic Party criticized Noem for not issuing stronger orders to protect people vulnerable to the coronavirus. She has also faced online petitions and calls from the state's largest group of doctors to issue a stay-at-home order.

But Sioux Falls Mayor Paul TenHaken, a Republican, backed away from issuing a citywide stay-at-home on Friday after pushing for one earlier this week. His proposal drew a small protest outside of City Hall from conservative activists who felt stay-at-home orders were a violation of their civil rights and hurt business.

Check out more of the AP's coronavirus coverage at <https://apnews.com/VirusOutbreak> and <https://apnews.com/UnderstandingtheOutbreak>

The Latest: Gates Manufacturing closing in Brandon

BRANDON, S.D. (AP) — The Latest on the coronavirus outbreak in South Dakota (all times local): 8:15 a.m.

A farm equipment manufacturer near Sioux Falls is closing temporarily for health and economic reasons.

The Gates Manufacturing plant in Brandon will close for a week beginning Monday after nine employees tested positive for the coronavirus.

The company says there is also reduced demand for its products.

The employees who tested positive and those who were in close contact with them have been told to self-quarantine for 14 days.

The Argus Leader reports employees will still receive benefits and customers will still be serviced during the closure. About 270 employees work at the Brandon facility.

AP FACT CHECK: Trump isn't a king but claims expansive power

By HOPE YEN and CALVIN WOODWARD Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Over the past week, President Donald Trump was pretender to a throne that doesn't exist as he claimed king-like powers over the coronavirus pandemic response and Congress.

He also denied praising China's openness in the pandemic, when he's on record doing so repeatedly, and claimed far more Chinese than Americans are dying from COVID-19 when the numbers show the opposite.

A look at his recent rhetoric and its relationship with reality.

CHINA vs. US

TRUMP: "China has just announced a doubling in the number of their deaths from the Invisible Enemy. It is far higher than that and far higher than the U.S., not even close!" — tweet Friday.

THE FACTS: It's the reverse, more than 4,600 recorded deaths in China compared with more than 36,000 in the United States. And the notion that China can overtake the U.S. in a final accounting of the dead is a long shot right now.

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Even with the upward revision Friday of Chinese deaths — which was not a doubling, as Trump claimed — the recorded U.S. death toll is about seven times higher than China's, according to the count by Johns Hopkins University as of Friday night. And China has more than four times more people.

The full picture is not known in either country. Trump routinely manipulates information to make the U.S. response to the coronavirus pandemic look better than it is. China's secretive leadership obscured the severity of the crisis for crucial weeks, and its numbers remain in question.

As well, deaths from the virus have not been fully reported in either country because the pandemic is still raging in the U.S. and still being accounted for in China.

But for China to surpass the U.S. in this count, it would have to be underreporting deaths by the tens of thousands, and deaths in the U.S. would have to nosedive from the current trend and projections.

EXECUTIVE AUTHORITY

TRUMP: "Some in the Fake News Media are saying that it is the Governors decision to open up the states, not that of the President of the United States & the Federal Government. Let it be fully understood that this is incorrect ... It is the decision of the President." — tweets Monday.

TRUMP, asked about his level of authority to reopen the country: "I have the ultimate authority.... They can't do anything without the approval of the president of the United States." — news briefing Monday.

THE FACTS: The federal government did not close down the country and won't be reopening it. Restrictions on public gatherings, workplaces, mobility, store operations, schools and more were ordered by states and communities, not Washington. The federal government has imposed border controls; otherwise its social distancing actions are mostly recommendations, not mandates.

The Federal Emergency Management Agency, knocking down a series of false rumors about the coronavirus, makes clear that "states and cities are responsible for announcing curfews, shelters in place, or other restrictions and safety measures."

Trump has argued that states and communities imposed restrictions because he let them and that he can overrule their decisions. Constitutional experts disagree.

"The president can un-declare his national emergency declarations, which freed up federal funds and provided assistance to state and local governments," said Walter Dellinger, a former acting U.S. solicitor general. "But he has no federal statutory or constitutional power to override steps taken by governors and mayors under state law. He has never understood that he lacks a general power to rule by decree."

The federal government does have broad constitutional authority over states on things that cross state lines and involve the entire nation, such as regulating interstate commerce and immigration, levying taxes or declaring war. What Trump is proposing, however, is different. He is wading into states' sharply defined powers to protect public health.

Asked what authority he had to make such an assertion of presidential power, Trump promised earlier in the week that he would provide a legal memorandum supporting his view. By Thursday, he hadn't and he told governors that day they could reopen states when they deem appropriate.

TRUMP: "If the House will not agree to that adjournment, I will exercise my constitutional authority to adjourn both chambers of Congress." — news briefing Wednesday.

THE FACTS: His power to adjourn Congress is highly questionable.

The Constitution does not spell out a unilateral power for the president to adjourn Congress. It states only that he can decide on adjournment if there is a dispute over that matter between the House and Senate. Such a disagreement does not exist, nor is it likely to arise.

Constitutional scholar Jonathan Turley said on Twitter the Constitution gives a president authority in "extraordinary occasions" to convene or adjourn Congress. But, he said, "This power has never been used and should not be used now."

Trump is unhappy that Congress has refused to fully adjourn during most breaks. Because Congress is still formally in session, Trump can't circumvent Congress and unilaterally put his nominees for various

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positions to work in the jobs he wants them to have. Lawmakers also used the tactic of holding off on adjournment to thwart some of President Barack Obama's nominees.

Doug Andres, a spokesman for Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, R-Ky., said McConnell will find ways to confirm nominees essential to the pandemic response but Senate rules will require that the Democratic leader, Sen. Chuck Schumer of New York, give consent to move forward on them.

WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION

TRUMP, explaining in part why he is freezing money to the World Health Organization: "The WHO willingly took China's assurances to face value, and they took it just at face value and defended the actions of the Chinese government, even praising China for its so-called transparency. I don't think so." — news briefing Tuesday.

TRUMP, asked about his past praise of China: "I don't talk about China's transparency." — news briefing Tuesday.

THE FACTS: He did praise China's transparency as well as its overall performance in the pandemic.

While it's true that WHO Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus complimented China's response, Trump early on similarly took China's assurances at face value.

In a CNBC interview on Jan. 22, Trump was asked if he trusted information from China about the coronavirus. "I do," Trump said. "I have a great relationship with President Xi."

Two days later, he was even more effusive. "China has been working very hard to contain the Coronavirus," he tweeted. "The United States greatly appreciates their efforts and transparency. It will all work out well. ...I want to thank President Xi!"

Trump kept up the compliments when asked several times in February about whether data from China can be trusted. He called Xi "extremely capable" and said he's "doing a very good job with a very, very tough situation."

Such praise faded as the pandemic hit hard in the U.S. and the federal response stumbled. The time was ripe for scapegoats. It also became clearer that China had not been forthcoming at the start.

On March 21, Trump said of his earlier remarks: "China was transparent at that time, but when we saw what happened, they could have been transparent much earlier than they were." In any event, his denial that he ever praised China's openness is false.

TRADE

TRUMP: "China has paid us nothing in your last administration, nothing in any previous administration. They paid us tens of billions of dollars because of what we've done. And the trade deal we have, they have to give us \$250 billion in purchases. ...We're taking in billions of dollars for China — from China. They never paid us 10 cents." — news briefing Tuesday.

THE FACTS: A familiar assertion, false to the core.

It's false to say the U.S. never collected a dime in tariffs on Chinese goods before he took action. They are simply higher in some cases than they were before. It's also wrong to suggest that the tariffs are being paid by China. Tariff money coming into the treasury is mainly from U.S. businesses and consumers, not from China. Tariffs are primarily if not entirely a tax paid domestically.

TRUMP, on the World Trade Organization: "We're winning a lot of lawsuits right now that we never won before in the past. We're winning a lot of money that we never won in the past. That's with the World Trade." — news briefing Wednesday.

THE FACTS: He is wildly wrong to suggest that the U.S. was bound to lose disputes taken to the trade organization before him.

The U.S. has always had a high success rate when it pursues cases against other countries at the WTO. In 2017, trade analyst Daniel Ikenson of the libertarian Cato Institute found that the U.S. won 91% of the cases it took to the Geneva-based trade monitor.

As Ikenson noted, countries bringing complaints to the organization tend to win because they don't

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bother going to the WTO in the first place if they don't have a strong case.

DRUG TREATMENTS

TRUMP, on the malaria drug hydroxychloroquine: "We have millions of doses that we bought, and many people are using it all over the country. And just recently, a friend of mine told me he got better because of the use of that — that drug. So, who knows? ...It's a lot of good things that are happening with it." — news briefing Monday.

THE FACTS: He continues to make unverified claims about a drug that can have serious side effects and may not work. The drug has not been proven as a treatment for COVID-19, and Trump's own health experts say more studies are needed to know whether it's safe and effective to use.

The president has been talking up hydroxychloroquine, a drug long used to treat malaria, rheumatoid arthritis and lupus, after very small preliminary studies suggested it might help prevent coronavirus from entering cells and possibly help patients clear the virus sooner.

Doctors can already prescribe the malaria drug to patients with COVID-19, a practice known as off-label prescribing. The Food and Drug Administration has allowed the drugs into the national stockpile, but only for narrowly defined purposes as studies continue on whether they are effective and safe enough to be approved for wider use by people sick with the coronavirus.

The drug has major potential side effects, especially for the heart, and large studies are underway. The FDA says people should not take it without a prescription and emphasizes that the malaria drugs being explored "are not FDA-approved for treatment of COVID-19."

The American Medical Association, the American Pharmacists Association and the American Society of Health-System Pharmacists in a joint statement warned against "prophylactically prescribing medications currently identified as potential treatments for COVID-19." That means prescribing a medicine for the purpose of warding off a disease or preventing its spread.

The Federal Aviation Administration on Tuesday barred pilots from taking hydroxychloroquine and closely related chloroquine within 48 hours of flying. The safety agency cites the "wide variety of dosages" and lack of standards around using the drugs to treat the coronavirus in deciding that any pilots who take them must wait before flying.

TRAVEL RESTRICTIONS

TRUMP, on imposing restrictions on travel from China: "I saved tens of thousands, maybe hundreds of thousands of lives, by doing that." — news briefing Monday.

TRUMP: "And if we didn't close our border early — very early, long before the kind of dates you're talking about — we would have had thousands and probably hundreds of thousands more death." — news briefing Tuesday.

THE FACTS: Trump has no standing to boast about saving thousands, tens of thousands or hundreds of thousands of lives because he imposed travel restrictions on China when he did. The impact hasn't been quantified.

While Dr. Anthony Fauci of the National Institutes of Health has praised the travel restrictions on China for slowing the virus, public health officials don't know the effect of them. The move left plenty of gaps in containment.

Trump's order in late January did not fully "close" the U.S. off to China, as he asserts. It temporarily barred entry by foreign nationals who had traveled in China within the previous 14 days, with exceptions for the immediate family of U.S. citizens and permanent residents.

Americans returning from China were allowed back after enhanced screening at select ports of entry and for 14 days afterward. But screenings can miss people who don't yet show symptoms of COVID-19. While symptoms often appear within five days or six days of exposure, the incubation period is 14 days.

A recent study from the journal Science found China's internal crackdown modestly delayed the spread of the virus. It cast doubt that travel restrictions elsewhere will do much compared with other preventive

measures, citing in part the likelihood that a large number of people exposed to the virus had already been traveling internationally without being detected.

For weeks after the first U.S. case of the coronavirus was confirmed in January, government missteps caused a shortage of reliable laboratory tests, leading to delays in diagnoses.

EDITOR'S NOTE — A look at the veracity of claims by political figures.

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'Holy Fire' ceremony held in empty Jerusalem church

JERUSALEM (AP) — A small group of Christian clerics celebrated the Holy Fire ceremony at the Church of the Holy Sepulcher in Jerusalem on Saturday as the coronavirus pandemic prevented worshippers from taking part in the ancient ritual.

They entered the Edicule, a chamber built on the site where Christians believe Jesus was buried and rose from the dead after being crucified. They emerged with candles lit by a fire that the faithful view as a divine message. The source of the flame is a closely-guarded secret.

The clergymen, from different Orthodox denominations, then circled around inside the empty church, chanting prayers that echoed off the walls.

In previous years, the church would be packed with pilgrims, each holding candles and passing the light around until it illuminated the centuries-old walls. The ceremony, along with other events in the Holy Week leading up to Easter, was scaled back in line with a ban on public gatherings.

Israel has reported more than 13,000 coronavirus infections and 158 deaths. The virus causes mild to moderate symptoms in most patients, who recover within a few weeks. But it is highly contagious and can cause severe illness or death, particularly in older patients or those with underlying health problems.

Israel says it made special arrangements with church leaders to allow the holy flame to be carried abroad to other Orthodox communities. Because anyone entering Israel must go into quarantine, foreign dignitaries coming to pick up the flame will receive it in special containers on their planes and immediately return home.

The ritual dates back at least 1,200 years. Orthodox churches celebrate Easter this week.

The Latest: Queen Elizabeth aims for low-key birthday

By The Associated Press

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:

- Spain reaches 20,000 deaths from virus.
- Queen Elizabeth wants low-key birthday amid virus.
- Japan surpasses 10,000 virus cases; Abe stresses social distancing.

LONDON — Britain's Queen Elizabeth doesn't want a gun salute for her birthday because she doesn't think it's appropriate during the coronavirus pandemic.

The British monarch, who turns 94 on Tuesday, decided not to publicly mark the occasion in any special way, including the artillery salute she traditionally gets on her birthday.

"Her Majesty was keen that no special measures were put in place to allow gun salutes as she did not feel it appropriate in the current circumstances," Buckingham Palace said. She'll also be keeping private any phone and video calls with her family.

The queen has previously stressed the importance of lockdown measures, saying in her Easter message

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that "by keeping apart we keep others safe."

PARIS — The French military is dismantling a field hospital set up to relieve the pressure on overwhelmed medical centers.

The dismantling of the makeshift hospital in the eastern city of Mulhouse began Friday as the virus has receded in the region, a military official told The Associated Press.

The field hospital held 30 beds and treated dozens of patients that couldn't fit in Mulhouse hospitals. Hospitals in nearby Germany, Switzerland and Luxembourg also took in French patients from the area.

Lawmaker Olivier Bech told local broadcaster France Bleu Alsace that 15 of the field hospital's beds are now empty.

France has more than 18,000 confirmed deaths from the virus.

ATHENS, Greece — As Orthodox Easter approaches, the Greek government is concerned about keeping the faithful from flouting quarantine measures.

Authorities are worried people will show up at churches on Saturday night to celebrate at the stroke of midnight. They also will fine those leaving their homes to celebrate Easter Sunday in the countryside.

The government decided not to distribute the Holy Light to churches across the country, as is the custom. It arrives on the eve of Easter every year from Jerusalem, having been lit there at the Church of the Holy Sepulchre.

ANGON, Myanmar — Authorities in Myanmar's biggest city have ordered a six-hour curfew in a bid to prevent the spread of the COVID-19 virus.

The Yangon Region Government announced the 10 p.m. to 4 a.m. curfew will start Saturday night. Myanmar's eastern neighbor, Thailand, has a curfew covering the same hours.

Several of the city's neighborhoods were put under lockdown, with all people required to stay at home except for essential workers, and only one person per household allowed to buy necessary supplies. Myanmar announced Thursday a ban on gatherings of more than five people.

Public health authorities confirmed Saturday six new COVID-19 cases, bringing the total to 94 and five deaths.

Myanmar was among the last countries in Southeast Asia to confirm any COVID-19 cases, likely because of lack of testing. The public health infrastructure is considered one of the weakest in Asia.

MADRID — Spain has reached 20,000 deaths for the coronavirus pandemic and total infections increased to more than 190,000.

Spain's health authorities reported 565 deaths in the last 24 hours. Only the United States and Italy have more deaths.

New infections rose by nearly 4,500. More than 74,000 people in Spain have recovered.

This week, health authorities said there were discrepancies in the statistics of virus deaths and infections reported by regional administrations. The central government has ordered regions to give more precise data and use the same parameters.

As the outbreak's spread slows, pressure on hospitals has relaxed. Authorities have closed one part of a huge field hospital with thousands of beds set up by the military in a convention center in Madrid.

But strict confinement rules are expected to be extended beyond April 26.

ROME — Italy's commissioner for the coronavirus is cautioning against pitting health concerns versus economic worries when deciding to ease lockdown rules.

Domenico Arcuri says, "without health, the (economic) revival will disappear in the batting of an eyelash."

Health experts say easing must be gradual. Italy has nearly 23,000 deaths, the most in Europe, and more than 172,000 known cases.

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To put the COVID-19 pandemic in perspective, Arcuri noted during World War II in Milan, bombings killed some 2,000 civilians. In Lombardy, which has the largest share of Italy's COVID-19 cases and is a leader of the country's industrial production, more than 11,851 people have died.

"That's five times as many in only two months," says Arcuri.

Authorities in Lombardy and other northern regions, but also Sicily in the south, have been pressing the central government to quickly ease restrictions on factories and many other businesses. The government decree that shut down nonessential industries and businesses runs through May 3.

PARIS — French authorities have barred a cruise ship that's been at sea since early January from disembarking more than 1,000 passengers before its final destination in Italy.

The regional administration for the Bouches-du-Rhone in southern France cited a nationwide ban on allowing foreign cruise ships to dock, as part of France's virus-related confinement measures.

The French administration said that the Costa Deliziosa sought to make a stop in Marseille on Friday to disembark 1,400 passengers who wanted to get out before the final stop in Venice.

The administration granted exemptions to six other cruise ships in recent weeks to allow French passengers to get off, but refused this time.

The Costa Deliziosa left on an around-the-world cruise and is expected to reach Italy in the coming days.

PARIS — France's lower house of parliament approved an emergency budget overnight that takes into account the government's 110 billion euro (\$120 billion) plan to save the economy from virus-related collapse.

The budget includes bonuses for medical staff, funds to help struggling workers and families, and aid to businesses including strategic industries like aviation and car manufacturing.

The bill goes to the Senate on Tuesday. The government has warned that France's economy, one of the world's biggest, could shrink 8% this year and see its worst recession since World War II.

BERLIN — A group of thirteen countries including Britain, Brazil, Italy and Germany is calling for global cooperation to lessen the economic impact of the coronavirus pandemic.

In a joint statement the group said it is committed to "work with all countries to coordinate on public health, travel, trade, economic and financial measures in order to minimize disruptions and recover stronger."

The countries emphasized the need to maintain "air, land and marine transportation links" to ensure the continued flow of goods, including medical equipment and aid, and the return home of travelers.

They want key transport hubs around the world to remain open and for airlines to maintain major routes.

The group — also including Canada and France — stressed the critical role of the scientific community in providing guidance to governments.

SINGAPORE — Singapore has reported a daily record of 942 infections that saw its total surge to 5,992.

The sharp one-day spike in the tiny city-state of nearly six million people is the highest seen in South-east Asia.

The number of cases more than doubled this week amid an upsurge among foreign workers staying in crowded dormitories, who constitute 60 percent of Singapore's COVID-19 infections.

Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong wrote on Facebook that the vast majority of cases among migrant workers were mild as the workers are young.

Although cases in the dorms are expected to continue to rise, Lee said the government is increasing healthcare and isolation facilities to handle the load. More than 200,000 migrant workers from Bangladesh, India and other Asian countries live in dormitories housing up to 20 people a room with shared facilities.

JOHANNESBURG — Africa now has more than 1,000 deaths from COVID-19, according to the Africa Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

A total of 52 of the continent's 54 countries have reported the virus, with the overall number of cases

more than 19,800 as of Saturday morning.

The World Health Organization has noted a 51% increase in cases in Africa and a 60% jump in deaths. But the WHO chief has warned that because of a shortage of testing "it's likely the real numbers are higher than reported."

The Africa CDC has said more than 1 million test kits will be rolled out starting next week.

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

A global diaspora of medical workers now looks toward home

By CARA ANNA Associated Press

JOHANNESBURG (AP) — The medical supplies had been shipped. The planning began a year in advance. Then the coronavirus arrived, and Dr. Charmaine Emelife's heart sank.

The annual trip to Nigeria to provide free medical care — the flagship project of the Association of Nigerian Physicians in the Americas — had been set to start Sunday but can't go on. Now the 4,000-member organization, like diaspora medical groups around the world, is scrambling for other ways to help back home, where it might be more needed than ever before.

A global "brain drain" of medical professionals to richer countries has left developing nations in Africa, Southeast Asia, Latin America and elsewhere without tens of thousands of highly skilled workers. Some 30% of doctors in the U.S., and one-third of those in the UK, were foreign-born as of 2016, according to the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development.

At the same time, sub-Saharan Africa has a painful shortage of medical professionals, with access to just 3% of the world's health workers, according to the World Health Organization. Nigeria has four doctors per 10,000 people. Kenya has just two.

But even as some doctors, nurses and others overseas yearn to return to help with the coronavirus crisis, they face travel restrictions that have slammed shut borders and closed international airports.

"There are said to be no commercial passenger flights going into Nigeria from the U.S., and the U.S. is not receiving the same flights," Emelife, the Nigerian association's president, told The Associated Press. "The issue of going back to Nigeria at this point to help is not a conversation."

Instead, the association is raising money to buy and ship protective equipment for front-line workers, reaching far beyond its U.S. base for sources.

When the Ebola outbreak in West Africa in 2014-16 briefly spread to Nigeria, the association focused on sending "tons and tons" of protective gear, Emelife said.

But the task is far more difficult now as the rest of the world competes for the same supplies.

So the association is also exploring telemedicine, Emelife said, in which members can offer long-distance consultations for patients in Nigeria, where some private medical practices have shut down out of caution, further limiting options for care.

"If what is happening in the U.S. or Italy should dare happen in Nigeria, there would be complete, total disorder," said Dr. Biodun Ogunbo, who closed his private surgery facility in the capital, Abuja, for a month after the country's first cases were reported.

Currently, Nigeria's cases number nearly 500, but health experts say Africa is just weeks behind Europe and the U.S. in the pandemic and the worst is yet to come.

"It's the personnel that matter," Ogunbo said. "We don't have the numbers of trained medical doctors, nurses, pharmacists" for the 24-hour care that some virus patients need.

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.

The thousands of Nigerian medical workers in the diaspora, Ogunbo said, would "definitely, 100%" be welcome, along with insights into how virus cases are being treated overseas.

Emelife said even such items as soap and clean water are needed in parts of Nigeria. Africa's most popu-

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lous nation recently surpassed India with the world's largest number of people living in extreme poverty. "We need to help take care of the people at home and we are working on it with this COVID-19 pandemic," she said. "We love our country."

Some diaspora groups are appealing to shared culture in this time of isolation.

"Our Filipino values and traits ... will keep us strong and resilient in this trying time," the National Organization of Filipino American Physicians wrote in a statement on COVID-19. "We are a people that reaches out to and looks after each other." The group partners with the Manila-based Philippine Nurses Association for online seminars on the pandemic.

The Association of Pakistani Physicians and Surgeons of the UK asked members this month to consult patients in Pakistan via video conference. "Pakistan needs you more than ever before," it said.

This week, Dr. Sefa Ahiaku updated the website of the Ghanaian Doctors and Dentists Association UK with the obituary of a Ghana-based colleague — "Coronavirus is no respecter of who people are," she said — and a fundraising appeal to buy protective gear for others in the West African nation.

"For us, the death really brought it close to home," Ahiaku, the group's vice president, said. "We want to help out. That desire is more acute when there's a crisis."

Ghana, like Nigeria, has locked down certain high-population areas instead of the entire country. The diaspora group hopes to help rural communities "who don't have the luxury of shutting their doors" improve sanitation ahead of the virus' possible spread.

"I am really encouraged by the doctors I'm speaking to in Ghana who are keeping a level head," Ahiaku said, as the country's virus cases near 650.

Her Ghana-based colleague had been talking with the government on ways to streamline the process so medical professionals in the diaspora can come home and offer their services, she said.

She hopes this pandemic might lead governments to invest more in health systems, giving medical workers more incentive to stay at home — or return for good.

In Nigeria, where going overseas for medical treatment is a well-known practice among some government officials, Ogunbo wasn't so sure.

"I have to say 'Thank God' that we don't have a horrible pandemic" in the country, he said, but it means officials haven't received the kind of shock that might lead to change.

"They're not going to come tomorrow and say, 'We need 50,000 doctors, let's start creating spaces for them, look after them so they're so comfortable and happy in Nigeria they won't go anywhere else,'" Ogunbo said. "They won't do that."

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

Nations debate easing lockdown as economic hardship grows

By FRANK JORDANS and KEN MORITSUGU Associated Press

BERLIN (AP) — Facing rising unemployment and with many of their citizens struggling to make ends meet, governments around the world are wrestling with when and how to ease the restrictions designed to control the coronavirus pandemic.

Mandatory lockdowns to stop the spread of the new virus, which has so far infected more than 2.2 million people and for which there is no vaccine, have brought widespread hardship.

In a joint statement Saturday, a group of 13 countries including Canada, Brazil, Italy and Germany called for global cooperation to lessen the economic impact of the pandemic.

"It is vital that we work together to save lives and livelihoods," they said.

The group, which also includes Britain, France, Indonesia, Mexico, Morocco, Peru, South Korea, Singapore and Turkey, said it was committed to "work with all countries to coordinate on public health, travel, trade, economic and financial measures in order to minimize disruptions and recover stronger."

This includes maintaining "air, land and marine transportation links" to ensure the continued flow of

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goods including medical equipment and aid, and the return home of travelers, they said.

In the United States, the debate has taken on partisan tones ahead of this fall's presidential elections. Republican President Donald Trump urged supporters to "liberate" three states led by Democratic governors, tweeting the kind of rhetoric some have used to demand an end to stay-at-home orders that have thrown millions out of work.

There have been tentative signs that measures to curb the outbreak are working, with the rate of new infections slowing across Europe in response to the lockdowns there.

In France and Spain, some field hospitals were starting to be dismantled, while Germany said the number of people infected by each person with COVID-19 fell below one for the first time this week.

Still, most governments and public health officials remain cautious about relaxing the shutdowns, despite the mounting economic toll.

"It's wrong, sensationally wrong to communicate that there is a kind of conflict with health and safety on one side and economic resumption," said Domenico Arcuri, Italy's extraordinary commissioner for the coronavirus emergency.

Arcuri told reporters Saturday that "without health, the (economic) revival will disappear in the batting of an eyelash."

The Italian government's decree, shutting down nonessential industries and businesses, runs through May 3. Health experts are advising that any easing must be gradual in the country that's seen the most deaths so far in Europe, with nearly 23,000 fatalities and over 172,000 known cases.

Some Asian nations that until recently appeared to have the outbreak under control, including Singapore and Japan, reported a fresh surge in cases Saturday.

Japan's total case number rose above 10,000 on Saturday. Prime Minister Shinzo Abe expressed concern Friday that people were not observing social distancing and announced a 100,000-yen (\$930) cash handout to each resident as an incentive to stay home.

Iran, hard hit by the virus and international sanctions, allowed some businesses in the capital and nearby towns to re-open Saturday after weeks of lockdown. Gyms, restaurants, shopping malls and Tehran's grand bazaar will remain closed.

In Africa, one of the world's poorest regions, the pandemic is only just getting underway. The continent has now recorded more than 1,000 coronavirus deaths, among them the Nigerian president's chief of staff.

Top leaders of China's ruling Communist Party called for deficit spending and a more flexible monetary policy after the economy shrank 6.8% in the first three months of the year.

France's lower house of parliament approved an emergency budget overnight that takes into account the government's 110 billion-euro (\$120 billion) plan to save the economy from virus-related collapse. The government has warned that France's economy, one of the world's biggest, could shrink 8% this year and see its worst recession since World War II.

South Korea's health minister, Kim Gang-lip, said Saturday that new guidelines could be issued soon that officials have said would allow people to engage in "certain levels of economic and social activity."

The East Asian country was among the 13 nations to issue the joint statement on protecting global trade. The declaration also stressed "the importance and critical role of the scientific community in providing guidance to governments."

While most of those sickened by the virus recover, the outbreak has killed at least 154,000 people worldwide, according to a Johns Hopkins University tally based on figures supplied by government health authorities around the globe.

The number all but certainly underestimates the actual toll. Authorities said that almost everywhere, thousands have died with COVID-19 symptoms — many in nursing homes — without being tested for the virus, and have thus gone uncounted. In Britain, with an official count of about 14,600 dead, the country's statistics agency said the actual number could be around 15% higher.

China on Saturday reported a nearly 40% increase in its death toll to 4,632 victims, reflecting a major upward revision made the previous day by authorities in Wuhan, the nation's hardest-hit city.

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An Associated Press tally from news media reports and state health departments indicates 6,912 U.S. deaths have been linked to coronavirus outbreaks in nursing homes and long-term care facilities. The U.S. government has not been releasing a count.

The official death toll in the U.S. has topped 35,000, with more than 700,000 confirmed infections.

Protesters fed up with the economy-strangling restrictions have taken to the streets in several U.S. states. In Idaho, where the governor is a Republican, scores of protesters not wearing masks stood shoulder-to-shoulder Friday. Some carried signs claiming the coronavirus is a hoax.

"LIBERATE MINNESOTA!" "LIBERATE MICHIGAN!" "LIBERATE VIRGINIA," Trump said in a tweet-storm in which he also lashed out at New York Gov. Andrew Cuomo, a Democrat, for criticizing the federal response. Cuomo "should spend more time 'doing' and less time 'complaining,'" the president said.

Texas and Florida, which both have Republican governors, took first steps toward easing restrictions.

Texas Gov. Greg Abbott said stores could begin selling curbside, nonessential surgery could resume and state parks could reopen. In Florida, Gov. Ron DeSantis said municipalities could reopen beaches and parks if they could do so safely.

Moritsugu reported from Beijing. Associated Press journalists from around the world contributed to this report.

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Reinstate? Reassign? Navy to decide fate of fired captain

By LOLITA C. BALDOR and ROBERT BURNS Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Navy's top admiral will soon decide the fate of the ship captain who was fired after pleading for commanders to move faster to safeguard his coronavirus-infected crew on the USS Theodore Roosevelt.

In the glare of a public spotlight, Adm. Mike Gilday will decide whether Navy Capt. Brett Crozier stepped out of line when he went around his chain of command and sent an email pushing for action to stem the outbreak. As of Friday, 660 sailors on the aircraft carrier, now docked at Guam, had tested positive for the virus and seven were hospitalized. One sailor has died, and more than 4,000 of the ship's 5,000 crew members have been moved onto the island for quarantine.

Gilday's review won't be limited to Crozier. It will also look at the command climate on the ship and higher up within the Pacific-based fleet, to determine if there are broader leadership problems in a region critical to America's national security interests.

Gilday has many options as he reviews what was an extraordinarily rapid investigation by Adm. Robert Burke, the vice chief of naval operations. Burke and his staff finished the review in about a week, conducting interviews almost entirely online and by phone between Washington and Guam.

A look at some of Gilday's options, and their benefits and pitfalls.

REINSTATEMENT:

Gilday could decide that Crozier acted in the best interests of his crew and was unfairly removed. He could reinstate him as captain of the Roosevelt.

That could generate a lot of support.

In a widely viewed video, Roosevelt crew members applauded and chanted Crozier's name as he walked off the ship after being fired. When Thomas Modly, the acting Navy secretary who fired Crozier, traveled to the ship and criticized him in a speech to the crew, he came under fire and had to resign.

President Donald Trump even suggested that while Crozier shouldn't have sent the memo, he shouldn't be destroyed for having a "bad day."

But reinstating Crozier has its problems.

It would put him back on a ship with Rear Adm. Stuart Baker, commander of the carrier strike group

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of which the Roosevelt is the lead ship. Officials say they did not have a good relationship and that was among the problems that triggered Crozier's memo. Gilday may worry that putting them back together would exacerbate the ship's toxic command climate.

FORGIVE AND MOVE ON:

Rather than return Crozier to the Roosevelt, Gilday could absolve him of wrongdoing and recommend he move on to another job. Crozier could retain his rank and standing and perhaps command another ship, leaving open the possibility that he could gain promotion and continue his Navy career.

This would avoid sending him back into the chain of command that likely felt betrayed by his memo. But it doesn't provide the emotional lift of seeing a popular captain stride back onto the ship for which he risked his career.

ADMINISTRATIVE ACTIONS:

Gilday could fault Crozier for doing the right thing the wrong way. He could determine that Crozier was unfairly fired, but that he acted rashly and went outside his chain of command and therefore did not exhibit good leadership.

He could put a letter in Crozier's personnel file, which usually is a career-ender. Crozier could stay in the Navy and might move on to other jobs, but would probably not be promoted.

FIRE ONE, FIRE ALL:

Gilday could determine that firing Crozier was appropriate. Unless that's overturned in an appeal process, that would end Crozier's Navy career. In most cases, senior officers simply retire after being relieved of command for cause.

But Gilday could also decide that the ship's problems extended beyond Crozier. He could recommend that Baker be fired or punished for not being receptive to Crozier's concerns.

Gilday's review could also dole out criticism for leaders who may have taken too long to recognize the Roosevelt's outbreak as the deadly problem it became. Those would include the 7th Fleet commander, Vice Adm. William R. Merz; the Pacific Fleet commander, Adm. John C. Aquilino, or the most senior admiral in the Pacific, Adm. Phil Davidson, head of Indo-Pacific Command.

William Fallon, a retired four-star admiral and former commander of U.S. Pacific Command, says Gilday's decision is important to American interests in the Asia-Pacific region, where an aircraft carrier presence is central to U.S. strategy.

"He's making an administrative decision back here, but it has profound operational implications," Fallon said.

AND THEN THERE'S THE POLITICS:

The backdrop to Gilday's decision is a fraught political environment in Washington that has taken a toll on the Navy.

Modly became acting secretary last November when his predecessor, Richard Spencer, was forced out in a clash with the White House over Trump's intervention in the war crimes case of former Navy SEAL Eddie Gallagher. And Gilday had abruptly become chief when Spencer pushed out the admiral who was in line for the job.

Gilday, known as an honest, straight shooter, is expected to make a decision based on the facts and his judgment of what is best for the ship's crew and the Navy. But the decision expected early next week can't be separated entirely from politics.

When Gilday reaches a decision, he will relay recommendations to acting Navy Secretary James McPherson. They will also go to Defense Secretary Mark Esper. More importantly, the Navy will alert members of Congress and the White House.

Any of those could weigh in on the matter. Or, in Trump's case, he could reverse it.

Trump has expressed seemingly contradictory views on Crozier.

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On April 4, he publicly blasted the captain, saying Crozier's letter pleading for more urgent action was "terrible." Trump also criticized Crozier for the ship's port visit in Vietnam, where crew members may have picked up the coronavirus, even though the Navy says that decision was made by Davidson.

Two days later, Trump took a more empathetic tack, saying, "I'm not looking to destroy a person's life, who's had an otherwise stellar career, as I understand it." Trump said that as far as he could tell, Crozier had simply "had a bad day."

Hong Kong police arrest democracy activists, media tycoon

By ZEN SOO Associated Press

HONG KONG (AP) — Hong Kong police arrested at least 14 veteran pro-democracy lawmakers, activists and a media tycoon on Saturday on charges of joining unlawful protests last year calling for reforms.

Among those arrested were 81-year-old activist and former lawmaker Martin Lee and democracy advocates Albert Ho, Lee Cheuk-yan and Au Nok-hin.

Police also arrested media tycoon Jimmy Lai, who founded the local newspaper Apple Daily.

Lai, Lee Cheuk-yan and Yeung Sum — a former lawmaker from the Democratic Party — were charged in February over their involvement in a mass anti-government demonstration on Aug. 31 last year. The protests in the semi-autonomous Chinese territory against proposed extradition legislation exposed deep divisions between democracy-minded Hong Kongers and the Communist Party-ruled central government in Beijing.

The bill — which would have allowed Hong Kong residents to be sent to mainland China to stand trial — has been withdrawn, but the protests continued for more than seven months, centered around demands for voting rights and an independent inquiry into police conduct.

While the protests began peacefully, they increasingly descended into violence after demonstrators became frustrated with the government's response. They feel that Hong Kong leader Carrie Lam has ignored their demands and used the police to suppress them.

The League of Social Democrats wrote in a Facebook post on Saturday that its leaders were among those arrested, including chairman Raphael Wong. They were accused of participating in two unauthorized protests on Aug. 18 and Oct. 1 last year.

White House moves to weaken EPA rule on toxic compounds

By ELLEN KNICKMEYER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Trump White House has intervened to weaken one of the few public health protections pursued by its own administration, a rule to limit the use of a toxic industrial compound in consumer products, according to communications between the White House and Environmental Protection Agency.

The documents show that the White House Office of Management and Budget formally notified the EPA by email last July that it was stepping into the crafting of the rule on the compound, perfluoroalkyl and polyfluoroalkyl substances, used in nonstick and stain-resistant frying pans, rugs, and countless other consumer products.

The White House repeatedly pressed the agency to agree to a major loophole that could allow substantial imports of the PFAS-tainted products to continue, greatly weakening the proposed rule. EPA pushed back on the White House demand for the loophole, known as a "safe harbor" provision for industry.

Pushed again in January, the agency responded, "EPA opposes proposing a safe harbor provision, but is open to a neutrally-worded request for comment from the public" on the White House request.

The rule is one of the few concrete steps that the Trump administration has taken to deal with growing contamination by PFAS industrial compounds. The EPA has declared dating back to 2018 that consumer exposure to the substances was a "national priority" that the agency was confronting "aggressively."

Delaware Sen. Tom Carper, the ranking Democrat on the Environment and Public Works Committee,

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who obtained the documents revealing the White House intervention, and public-health advocates say the White House action was led by Nancy Beck, a former chemical industry executive now detailed to President Donald Trump's Council of Economic Advisers.

In a letter sent Friday to the EPA, Carper charged the White House pressure amounts to unusual intervention in what had been the EPA's in-house efforts to regulate imports tainted with the compound. Trump has nominated Beck to lead the Consumer Product Safety Commission, a government panel charged with protecting Americans from harm by thousands of kinds of consumer goods.

Asked about the White House actions, EPA spokeswoman Corry Schiermeyer said in an email that "consulting with other federal agencies on actions is a normal process across government," and that "EPA is often required to engage in an interagency review process led by OMB."

"It is routine for the agency to receive input from all of our stakeholders, including our federal partners," Schiermeyer wrote.

The EPA did not respond to a question about whether Beck led the White House intervention. Emails sent for comment to the White House, the White House Office of Management and Budget and Beck were not immediately answered.

Carper obtained pages of back-and-forth proposed changes, redline drafts and other communications between the White House Office of Management and Budget, the EPA and others on the draft rule. No authors are listed in many of the final rounds of White House edits, drafts and proposals and EPA's responses.

Carper wrote to EPA Administrator Andrew Wheeler on Friday to object to the White House push for weakening of the rule, newly revealed in the documents. Carper said it appeared that Beck, who was moved to the White House from a top regulatory job at the Trump EPA, "sought to make it more difficult for EPA to use its authority ... to protect Americans from these harmful substances."

While thousands of kinds of PFAS compounds are still in use in the United States, the new EPA rule would set up agency oversight of imports of products that use a few kinds of the compounds that manufacturers agreed to phase out in this country starting in 2006. Those versions remain in production in some parts of the world.

In addition to the safe harbor loophole, another change sought by the White House would raise the technical bar for EPA to consider blocking any of the tainted products.

The agency agreed to rewrite the rule to include a third White House request, narrowing the range of imported products that would fall under the rule.

The official public comment period for the current form of the rule ends Friday, moving the proposal close to crafting of its final form. Congress, impatient for the Trump administration to start bringing the PFAS compounds under federal regulation, has ordered the administration to get a final rule out by mid-summer.

Even if the rule goes out in its current form, applying to fewer kinds of product imports, "it would certainly be better than where we are without it," although "scaled back significantly from what it was originally," said Richard Denison, lead senior scientist at the Environmental Defense Fund advocacy group, and a longtime monitor of the EPA's regulation of toxic substances.

But if the final rule includes the other two key changes being pushed by the White House "it could even do more damage than good," Denison said.

Industries also would be likely to push for those two exceptions in regulations of future substances, Denison said. "Those two provisions would establish precedence that the EPA has never used for 40 years.."

Industries produce thousands of versions of the man-made compounds. They are used in countless products, including nonstick cookware, water-repellent sports gear, cosmetics, and grease-resistant food packaging, along with firefighting foams.

Public health studies on exposed populations have associated them with an array of health problems, including some cancers, and weakened immunity. The advent of widespread testing for the contaminant over the past few years found it in high levels in many public water systems around the country. The administration initially sought in 2018 to suppress a federal toxicology warning on the danger of the compounds, then publicly vowed action.

Analysis: With new virus plan, Trump passes buck to states

By AAMER MADHANI Associated Press

CHICAGO (AP) — President Donald Trump's guidelines for states to reopen their economies had the hallmarks of a permission structure. But what he really created was a blame structure.

On Friday, he emphatically embraced protesters who defied the orders of their states' governors to restrict movement and large gatherings to combat the coronavirus pandemic.

Less than 24 hours before, he had given governors a metrics-driven guide to make their own decisions. But he did it in a way that also pushes responsibility to the states, giving him a way to shift the blame if things go badly. And he pushed to dump the ongoing problem of a shortage of testing for the virus in the governors' laps as well.

It fits a familiar pattern for Trump: claim credit for what's going well, find a fall guy for what's not.

In making the case that large swaths of the country can safely ease restrictions under the new guidelines, Trump also found a way out of his constitutionally questionable assertions that he had "total authority" to decide how the states return to a semblance of normalcy.

He couldn't have been more explicit in casting the need for expanded screening for the virus — something that public health experts say is necessary before Americans can get back to normal life -- as the governors' problem.

"The States have to step up their TESTING!" Trump declared on Twitter on Friday.

New York Gov. Andrew Cuomo, a Democrat, was having none of that.

He said Trump had passed the buck to the governors "without passing the bucks" for states to do what's needed. His state has been the hardest hit in the nation, with more than 14,000 virus-related deaths.

"We cannot do this without the federal government," Cuomo said.

If there was any doubt about how quickly Trump wants the economy firing on all cylinders, he dispelled it with a trio of tweets saying to "LIBERATE" Michigan, Minnesota and Virginia — all states with Democratic governors. In effect, he was egging on protesters resisting the governors' stay-at-home restrictions.

He was liberal in identifying foes. He slammed presumptive Democratic presidential nominee Joe Biden over the Obama administration's handling of the H1N1 flu outbreak. And he jabbed at Cuomo, whom he's alternately praised and lambasted throughout the crisis.

"Governor Cuomo should spend more time 'doing' and less time 'complaining'. Get out there and get the job done," Trump tweeted.

Trump's eagerness to revive the economy — a key part of his reelection strategy — was evident in the evolution of the guidelines issued by the White House.

The final guidance doesn't go as far as what the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention had recommended to the White House last week.

The CDC, according to a draft of the recommendations obtained by the AP, 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. Under Trump's guidelines, a state would have to see a decline in documented COVID-19 cases over 14 days.

The dilemma for states is clear.

Dr. Tom Frieden, the former CDC director, said testing needs "to increase by a factor of three to as much as a factor of 20" from the current rate of about 150,000 tests being conducted each day. Even without adequate testing, though, Trump in part justified his road map for relaxing social distancing by arguing that cases have peaked in the United States.

Some experts say available data seems to suggest that a national peak has been reached, but the situation differs from city to city and state to state. Others say it's not yet clear there's been a peak anywhere.

"From the places I know about, the data are not definitive that we are peaking," said Marc Lipsitch, a Harvard University epidemiologist.

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Trump's push to deflect the crisis to the doorstep of governors comes as the weight of a sinking economy has begun to complicate his reelection effort. A new Pew Research Center survey found that 65% of respondents believed Trump responded too slowly to address the threat of the coronavirus outbreak in the U.S.

The lack of a national testing strategy will increase the chances for prolonged deadly waves of the disease to emerge in the months ahead, said Lawrence Gostin, a public health expert at Georgetown University.

"It's impossible to get to the place where we want to be without a national testing strategy," Gostin said. "With a state-by-state approach, it can't possibly work."

Trump boasts that his administration has paved the way for 3.5 million tests nationwide — more than any other nation. But the U.S. lags several nations in testing on a per capita basis, including Germany and South Korea. The president counters that "areas of our country that have been hotspots have done much more."

Indeed, in New York, more than 550,000 tests have been administered.

But Cuomo said in a state of 19 million residents and 9 million working people, getting people back to work safely will require far more testing. Complicating matters, Cuomo said, is that states, the federal government and private sector are competing against one another to acquire testing.

"The federal government cannot wipe their hands of this and say, 'Oh the states are responsible for testing,'" Cuomo said.

But that's exactly what Trump has in mind.

Drs. Deborah Birx and Anthony Fauci, the top medical experts on the White House coronavirus task force, say the "new normal" in American life will look much different for some time. But Trump scoffs at the idea of an America where restaurants aren't packed with diners or big stadium events are left half empty in the name of social distancing.

"Our normal is if you have 100,000 people in an Alabama football game — or 110,000, to be exact — we want 110,000 people there," Trump said. "We want every seat occupied."

But Gostin, the Georgetown expert, said it's not realistic that the country will return to such normalcy soon.

"The president's guidance is not entirely irresponsible," Gostin said. "It's also not a national plan."

AP Medical Writer Mike Stobbe contributed from New York.

EDITOR'S NOTE — Madhani covers the White House for The Associated Press.

Experts worry politics will guide voters' virus precautions

By **ALAN FRAM** and **JOHN FLESHER** Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Laura Herd says she sleeps better because her state's governor, Michigan Democrat Gretchen Whitmer, imposed one of the nation's strictest stay-at-home orders to combat the coronavirus pandemic. President Donald Trump's actions are another story.

"His goal is to get the economy back up so he stands a chance in November," said Herd, 36, of Traverse City, Michigan, who works for an environmental news service. "But he's not willing to listen to the experts about what that really means."

Herd's skepticism about Trump's desire to push the country back toward normal isn't uncommon, especially among her fellow Democrats and many independents. That's prompting concern by public health professionals that voters will use a partisan lens to decide which policymakers they heed as communities consider easing restrictions that have smothered normal life — a potentially dangerous dynamic.

"I'm not sure if it's partisan or ideological, but there's clearly a divide," said Mike Leavitt, a Republican former Utah governor and secretary of health under President George W. Bush. "I think it will clearly be a filter through which people read" officials' guidance.

Trump has wanted states to relax restrictions by May 1 and has inaccurately claimed "total" authority to

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decree how that happens. He retreated Thursday as the White House issued vague guidelines for gradually returning to normal activities that left final decisions to the states.

Many governors, mostly Democrats, have long made clear they'll move at their own pace to ease restrictions on families, business and travel. Should differences between Trump and state and local officials persist and people base their actions on their political leanings, that would dangerously complicate the pathway to recovery, officials say.

"You'll get more people sick and run the risk of more people dying, because you'll have such confusion because people won't know what to do," said Georges Benjamin, executive director of the American Public Health Association, which represents professionals and organizations in the field. "They'll selectively pick the advice that aligns with their ideology."

AP interviews around the country found voters navigating the pandemic on their own and dubious about advice from the other party's leaders. Many expressed confidence in top public health officials like Dr. Anthony Fauci and Dr. Deborah Birx, fixtures at Trump's press briefings.

Fauci is the government's top infectious disease expert and Birx is the White House coronavirus task force coordinator.

Ted Hill of Asheville, N.C., a Republican and retired accountant, praised Trump and said local officials' restrictions have gone too far.

"Good Lord, if you go into a supermarket without a mask, they look at you like you have two heads," he said. Hill said Trump "surrounds himself with good people" and gets good results.

Niki Waldron of Vallejo, Calif., said she's glad Democratic Gov. Gavin Newsom imposed an early stay-at-home order. But she worries about friends and family living in Trump-friendly areas and thinks advisers like Fauci and Birx must guard against angering Trump.

"I don't feel like the rest of our federal government is necessarily basing their judgments on sound science," Waldron said.

David Barr, 53, who said he usually votes Republican, said Whitmer's restrictions were hurting businesses like golf courses that he said could operate safely.

"We don't need a month to start reopening the economy," said Barr, who works for a group of radio stations in northern Michigan. He said Whitmer's "credibility is questionable."

Underscoring that people's political views are already guiding opinions on state-imposed restrictions, MAGA hat-wearing Trump supporters, gun rights advocates and backers of right-wing causes have demonstrated outside governors' mansions and state Capitols in several states.

At the largest, thousands rallied Wednesday in Michigan's capital of Lansing after Whitmer extended her state's stay-at-home order through April.

With November's presidential and congressional elections on the horizon, the question of whose advice voters follow — and whether it proves wise or disastrous — carries major political stakes.

Trump's reelection prospects could be badly damaged if today's Depression-era levels of unemployment and failed businesses don't improve. He invited numerous congressional Republicans and Democrats to join a White House task force on rebooting the country, which he could use to argue he is relying on bipartisan advice.

Trump fired out three tweets Friday urging his followers to "LIBERATE" Michigan, Minnesota and Virginia, each with Democratic governors who have imposed social distancing orders. The tweets seemed aimed at encouraging conservatives in those states opposing restrictions, a striking action by a president.

A fresh push by Trump to loosen restrictions would be especially potent in GOP-leaning states, where "there'll be a lot of pressure on those states' politicians to lighten up," said Joseph Antos, a health policy expert at the conservative American Enterprise Institute.

Fact-checkers have documented thousands of falsehoods by Trump since he became president. Since the pandemic began, polls have underscored how poorly he's trusted to handle the disease and how views of his competency are divided along party lines.

In a late March survey by The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research, 44 percent overall approved of Trump's handling of the outbreak. Those high marks came from around 8-in-10 Re-

publicans, but less than 2-in-10 Democrats and about 4-in-10 independents.

Federal public health authorities and state and local officials are more trusted than Trump for handling the outbreak, polls show.

"If there's a big fight with the governors versus Trump, it would be really bad for public health," said Drew Altman, president of the nonpartisan Kaiser Family Foundation. "The public won't know what to believe."

Looking to maximize public faith as the economy reopens, business groups have urged the White House to make clear that its guidelines are endorsed by trusted authorities, not just Trump.

"People will be more comfortable if they see the advice is from public health officials," said Neil Bradley, the U.S. Chamber of Commerce's chief policy officer.

"People will have to figure out who they trust," said Lanhee Chen, a fellow who studies health care at the conservative Hoover Institute.

Flesher reported from Traverse City, Michigan. AP reporter Andrew Seligman in Chicago also contributed.

Racial toll of virus grows even starker as more data emerges

By KAT STAFFORD, MEGHAN HOYER and AARON MORRISON Associated Press

As a clearer picture emerges of COVID-19's decidedly deadly toll on black Americans, leaders are demanding a reckoning of the systemic policies they say have made many African Americans far more vulnerable to the virus, including inequity in access to health care and economic opportunity.

A growing chorus of medical professionals, activists and political figures are pressuring the federal government to not just release comprehensive racial demographic data of the country's coronavirus victims, but also to outline clear strategies to blunt the devastation on African Americans and other communities of color.

On Friday, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention released its first breakdown of COVID-19 case data by race, showing that 30% of patients whose race was known were black. The federal data was missing racial information for 75% of all cases, however, and did not include any demographic breakdown of deaths.

The latest Associated Press analysis of available state and local data shows that nearly one-third of those who have died are African American, with black people representing about 14% of the population in the areas covered in the analysis.

Roughly half the states, representing less than a fifth of the nation's COVID-19 deaths, have yet to release demographic data on fatalities. In states that have, about a quarter of the death records are missing racial details.

Health conditions that exist at higher rates in the black community -- obesity, diabetes and asthma -- make African Americans more susceptible to the virus. They also are more likely to be uninsured, and often report that medical professionals take their ailments less seriously when they seek treatment.

"It's America's unfinished business -- we're free, but not equal," civil rights leader Rev. Jesse Jackson told the AP. "There's a reality check that has been brought by the coronavirus, that exposes the weakness and the opportunity."

This week, Jackson's Rainbow PUSH Coalition and the National Medical Association, a group representing African American physicians and patients, released a joint public health strategy calling for better COVID-19 testing and treatment data. The groups also urged officials to provide better protections for incarcerated populations and to recruit more African Americans to the medical field.

Jackson also expressed support for a national commission to study the black COVID-19 toll modeled after the Kerner Commission, which studied the root causes of race riots in African American communities in the 1960s and made policy recommendations to prevent future unrest.

Daniel Dawes, director of Morehouse College's School of Medicine's Satcher Health Leadership Institute, said America's history of segregation and policies led to the racial health disparities that exist today.

"If we do not take an appreciation for the historical context and the political determinants, then we're

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only merely going to nibble around the edges of the problem of inequities," he said.

The release of demographic data for the country's coronavirus victims remains a priority for many civil rights and public health advocates, who say the numbers are needed to address disparities in the national response to the pandemic.

The AP analysis, based on data through Thursday, found that of the more than 21,500 victims whose demographic data was known and disclosed by officials, more than 6,350 were black, a rate of nearly 30%. African Americans account for 14.2% of the 241 million people who live in the areas covered by the analysis, which encompasses 24 states and the cities of Washington D.C., Houston, Memphis, Pittsburgh and Philadelphia — places where statewide data was unavailable.

The nation had recorded more than 33,000 deaths as of Thursday.

In some areas, Native American communities also have been hit hard. In New Mexico, Native Americans account for nearly 37% of the state's 1,484 cases and about 11% of the state's population. Of the 112 deaths where race is known in Arizona, 30 were Native Americans.

After Democratic lawmakers introduced legislation this week to try to compel federal health officials to post daily data breaking down cases and deaths by race, ethnicity and other demographics, the CDC released only caseload data that — similar to the AP's analysis of deaths — show 30 percent of 111,633 infected patients whose race is known were black. African American patients in the 45-to-64 and 65-to-74 age groups represented an even larger share of the national caseload.

The lawmakers sent a letter last month to Health and Human Services Secretary Alex Azar urging federal release of the demographic data. And Joe Biden, the former vice president and presumptive Democratic presidential nominee, also called for its release.

Meanwhile, some black leaders have described the Trump administration's response to COVID-19 as inadequate, after what they said was a hastily organized call with Vice President Mike Pence and CDC Director Robert Redfield last week.

According to a recording of the call obtained by the AP, Redfield said the CDC has been collecting demographic data from death certificates but that the comprehensiveness of the data depends on state and local health departments, many of which are overburdened by virus response. No plan was offered to help health officials in hard-hit communities collect the data, leaders who were on the call said.

Kristen Clarke, president of the Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under Law, which took part in the call, said African Americans "have every reason to be alarmed at the administration's anemic response to the disproportionate impact that this crisis is having on communities of color."

Mistrust runs deep among residents in many communities.

St. Louis resident Randy Barnes is grappling not just with the emotional toll of losing his brother to the coronavirus, but also with the feeling that his brother's case was not taken seriously.

Barnes said the hospital where his brother sought treatment initially sent him home without testing him and suggested he self-quarantine for 14 days. Five days later, his brother was back in hospital, where he was placed on a ventilator for two weeks. He died April 13. Barnes' brother and his wife also were caring for an 88-year-old man in the same apartment, who died from the virus around the same time.

"Those people are not being tested. They're not being cared for," Barnes said.

Eugene Rush lives in one of the areas outside large urban cities that have been hit hard with coronavirus cases. He is a sergeant for the sheriff's department in Michigan's Washtenaw County, west of Detroit, where black residents account for 46% of the COVID-19 cases but represent only 12% of the county's population.

Rush, whose job includes community engagement, was diagnosed with COVID-19 near the end of March after what he initially thought was just a sinus infection. He had to be hospitalized twice, but is now on the mend at home, along with his 16-year-old son, who also was diagnosed with COVID-19.

"I had a former lieutenant for the city of Ypsilanti who passed while I was in the hospital and I had some fraternity brothers who caught the virus and were sick at the hospital," Rush said. "At that point, I said, 'Well, this is really, really affecting a lot of people' and they were mostly African American. That's how I knew that it was really taking a toll a little bit deeper in the African American community than I realized."

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Stafford and Morrison are members of the AP's Race and Ethnicity team. Stafford reported from Detroit, Morrison from New York and Hoyer from Washington. Associated Press writers Noreen Nasir in Chicago, Claudia Lauer in Philadelphia, Regina Garcia Cano in Washington, Chris Grygiel in Seattle and Kimberlee Kruesi in Nashville, Tennessee, contributed.

No plan in sight: Test troubles cloud Trump recovery effort

By **MATTHEW PERRONE** and **MICHELLE R. SMITH** Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The United States is struggling to test enough people to track and control the spread of the novel coronavirus, a crucial first step to reopening parts of the economy, which President Donald Trump is pushing to do by May 1.

Trump on Thursday released a plan to ease business restrictions that hinges on a downward trajectory of positive tests.

But more than a month after he declared, "Anybody who wants a test, can get a test," the reality has been much different. People report being unable to get tested. Labs and public officials say critical supply shortages are making it impossible to increase testing to the levels experts say is necessary to keep the virus in check.

"There are places that have enough test swabs, but not enough workers to administer them. There are places that are limiting tests because of the CDC criteria on who should get tested," said Dr. Megan Ranney, an emergency physician and associate professor at Brown University. "There's just so many inefficiencies and problems with the way that testing currently happens across this country."

Trump's plan envisions setting up "sentinel surveillance sites" that would screen people without symptoms in locations that serve older people or minority populations. Experts say testing would have to increase as much as threefold to be effective.

The plan pushes responsibility for testing onto states.

"The governors are responsible for testing," Trump told reporters at his daily briefing Friday. He said the federal government would ship 5.5 million nasal swabs to states in the "next few weeks" to help address shortages.

"Swabs can be done easily by the governors themselves," Trump said. "Mostly it's cotton, it's not a big deal."

But state and local officials as well as lab managers say they cannot expand testing until there are more supplies.

This week governors, physician groups and laboratory directors called on the Trump administration to address shortages of swabs, protective gear and highly specialized laboratory chemicals needed to analyze the virus' genetic material. Hospitals and state health departments report scouring the globe to secure orders, competing against each other and their peers abroad in a system that Gov. Andrew Cuomo, D-N.Y., described as "mayhem."

"The federal government cannot wipe their hands of this and say, 'Oh, the states are responsible for testing,'" Cuomo said Friday as he complained of a shortage of chemicals manufactured in China. "I don't do China relations. I don't do international supply chain."

Trump has denied that the U.S. has fallen short, asserting that the nation has the "most expansive and accurate testing system anywhere in the world." Only in recent days has the U.S. surpassed the testing rate in South Korea, which has conducted about one test for every 100 people. Vice President Mike Pence boasted Thursday that the U.S. had completed more than 3 million tests, but in March he promised 5 million would be distributed by the middle of that month. Pence told reporters Monday that if governors "would simply activate" underused high-capacity testing machines, "we could double the amount of testing in the U.S. literally overnight."

"That is not the experience in Rhode Island," said Gov. Gina Raimondo, D-R.I.

Democratic Gov. Laura Kelly of Kansas, whose state has one of the lowest per capita testing rates in the country, told CNN it has been difficult to get testing supplies. Gov. Jim Justice, R-W.Va., a Trump ally,

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said testing needs to be stepped up before he can lift restrictions.

Jennifer Rodriguez, a pharmacy technician at a major retail chain in California, said she was sent home by her employer last week after coming down with symptoms. Her company would not test her, and she spent hours on the phone trying to find a place that would, she said.

The San Luis Obispo County health department can only test 50 samples per day, and a spokeswoman said those tests are reserved for people who are hospitalized, first responders and those who have had contact with people who tested positive. Rodriguez didn't qualify. Another clinic told her she might have to pay \$150 if it determined she did not fit its test criteria.

"I just feel like medical workers, or even people on the front line, they should have some kind of priority," said Rodriguez.

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

Lab officials and health experts told The Associated Press that supply shortages have prompted them to limit who can be tested. That can leave out people who have symptoms but aren't sick enough to be hospitalized, or people who have no symptoms and might unwittingly spread the virus. Experts say it will be crucial to test those people if the economy is to reopen.

Ed Thornborrow, medical director of the University of California at San Francisco Clinical Microbiology Laboratory, said he wants to run 3,000 tests per day, but he can only do 100 to 250 now because he lacks enough nasal swabs. He works constantly to find more.

"That's what I spend most of my time on these days," he said.

Meghan Delaney, chief of pathology and lab medicine at Children's National Hospital in Washington, says shortages of chemicals known as reagents are constraining how many tests her lab can perform.

Vendors, in response, are restricting what hospitals can buy, said Dr. Robin Patel of the Mayo Clinic's infectious disease laboratory.

"It's a little bit like rationing," Patel said.

In early March, Trump announced a plan for nationwide testing via drive-thru sites at chains such as Walmart and Target, linked by a Google-affiliated website. Six weeks later, the website is a pilot program available in just four California counties. Few of the retailers' sites have opened, and executives from companies including Walgreens have said they are waiting for more direction from the federal government.

Trump's "testing czar," Dr. Brett Giroir, said Friday the U.S. would need to process 4.5 million tests per month to enter the first phase of easing social distancing guidelines, under the White House's reopening plan. Currently the U.S. is conducting about 1 million tests per week, Giroir said.

"We're going to continue to push that further and further as we open up the laboratories and are able to open all the supplies we need," Giroir said.

Trump and his deputies have promoted a 15-minute test developed by Abbott Laboratories as a "game changer." Federal officials initially distributed 15 machines to each of nearly all the public health labs in U.S. states and territories, along with 250 to the Indian Health Service. Alaska received 50.

But governors say they didn't get enough cartridges needed to run large numbers of the tests.

Rhode Island received only 120, much fewer than they were promised. Raimondo said when the state tried to get more, Abbott and others that make the test cartridges directed her to the federal government, which in turn told her to go directly to the companies. The state has now received 850 tests, far fewer than it requested, Raimondo said Friday.

Federal health officials declined to say how many cartridges were initially sent to states, but said more will be available as Abbott increases production. The company says it is currently producing 50,000 cartridges daily and has shipped more than 600,000 to hospitals, emergency care clinics and other health care facilities nationwide.

The U.S. bungled its initial testing rollout due to flaws with the test kits developed by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Precious time was wasted in February as the test was corrected and

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redistributed. Private labs at hospitals, universities and commercial companies weren't fully enlisted in the effort until March.

The U.S. is currently testing roughly 145,000 people daily, for a total of 3.5 million results reported, according to state data compiled by the COVID Tracking Project. Public health experts say capacity needs to be much higher, in part to repeatedly test essential workers and to isolate those who test positive and to track down their close contacts to prevent new outbreaks.

"We still probably need to be doing three times more testing than we're doing now," said Dr. Ashish K. Jha, director of the Global Health Institute at Harvard. "I don't see America getting by anytime soon with 100,000 to 150,000 tests."

Smith reported from Providence, Rhode Island.

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.

'LIBERATE!': Trump pushes states to lift virus restrictions

By ZEKE MILLER and MATT SEDENSKY Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump urged supporters to "LIBERATE" three states led by Democratic governors Friday, apparently encouraging protests against stay-at-home mandates aimed at stopping the coronavirus. At least two states under Republican leadership took their first steps toward easing restrictions.

A day after laying out a road map to gradually reopen the crippled economy, Trump tweeted the kind of rhetoric some of his supporters have used to demand the lifting of the orders that have thrown millions of Americans out of work.

"LIBERATE MINNESOTA!" "LIBERATE MICHIGAN!" "LIBERATE VIRGINIA," he said in a tweet-storm in which he also lashed out at New York Gov. Andrew Cuomo for criticizing the federal response. Cuomo "should spend more time 'doing' and less time 'complaining,'" the president said.

Responding to pleas from governors for help from Washington in ramping up testing for the virus, Trump put the burden back on them: "The States have to step up their TESTING!"

Trump claimed Friday that "very partisan voices" had spread "false and misleading information" about the nation's testing capacity. But he said "we'll help New York and all of the other states get even better on their testing."

At the same time, at least two states took their first steps toward easing the restrictions.

In Florida, GOP Gov. Ron DeSantis said municipalities could reopen beaches and parks if they could do so safely. In Texas, Republican Gov. Greg Abbott said stores could begin selling curbside, nonessential surgery could resume and state parks could reopen.

Sensitive about persistent questions about the capacity for testing, Trump had his health team lead an extensive briefing Friday outlining that adequate capacity exists to get states through the first phase of the White House guidelines for how they should reopen.

Trump has repeatedly expressed his desire to see businesses reopen quickly and claimed earlier this week that he had total authority over the matter, even though the lockdowns and other social-distancing measures have been imposed by state and local leaders, not Washington.

"We may be opening but we're putting safety first," Trump said.

On Thursday, he outlined a three-step set of guidelines for easing restrictions over a span of several weeks in places that have robust testing and are seeing a decrease in COVID-19 cases, assuring the nation's governors: "You're going to call your own shots."

But governors of both parties suggested Friday that they would be cautious in returning to normal, with some warning that they can't do it without help from Washington to expand testing.

"The federal government cannot wipe its hands of this and say, 'Oh, the states are responsible for test-

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ing," said Cuomo, a Democrat. "We cannot do it without federal help."

West Virginia Gov. Jim Justice, a Republican ally of Trump's, said he would listen to medical experts in deciding how to move forward.

"I am not going to do something that I feel in my heart is the wrong thing that's going to endanger our people," he said.

Washington Gov. Jay Inslee, a Democrat, said Trump's tweets about "liberating" states put millions of Americans at risk of contracting COVID-19.

"The president is fomenting domestic rebellion and spreading lies even while his own administration says the virus is real and is deadly," Inslee said.

Democratic Virginia Gov. Ralph Northam said he and his staff are focused on fighting a "biological war."

"I do not have time to involve myself in Twitter wars," said Northam, a medical doctor.

Even in largely rural states with small populations, such as Wyoming, Maine and South Dakota, governors said they were not anxious to quickly resume business as usual.

"Until we've got the testing up to speed — which has got to be part of the federal government stepping in and helping — we're just not going to be there," said Wyoming Gov. Mark Gordon, a Republican.

The University of Washington, whose computer models have frequently been cited by health officials at White House briefings, released projections on Friday that Vermont, West Virginia, Montana and Hawaii could open as early as May 4 if they restrict large gatherings, test widely and quarantine the contacts of people who test positive.

Iowa, North and South Dakota, Nebraska, Utah, Arkansas and Oklahoma, however, are among states that would need to wait until mid-June or early July. About half the states should wait until at least early June to reopen, and all should gauge the capacity of their public health systems to handle outbreaks, the institute said.

Worldwide, the outbreak has infected more than 2.2 million people and killed over 150,000, according to a Johns Hopkins University tally based on figures supplied by government health authorities around the globe, though it has becoming increasingly clear that the true numbers are much higher.

The official death toll in the U.S. neared 35,000, with about 685,000 confirmed infections.

The shutdowns have inflicted heavy damage on economies around the world. In the U.S., the crisis has cost at least 22 millions Americans their jobs, pushing the unemployment rate toward levels not seen since the Great Depression.

California lost nearly 100,000 jobs in March, state officials announced Friday, signaling a sudden end to a record 10-year streak of job growth. "We are now in a pandemic-induced recession here in the state of California," Gov. Gavin Newsom said.

Protesters fed up with the economy-strangling restrictions have taken to the streets in Ohio, Texas, North Carolina, Kentucky, Virginia, and Michigan.

Demonstrations continued Friday, including one outside the home of Democratic Gov. Tim Walz of Minnesota and the Capitol in Oregon. In Idaho, where the governor is a Republican, scores of protesters not wearing face masks stood shoulder-to-shoulder. Some carried signs claiming the coronavirus is a hoax.

Public health experts have warned that easing the shutdowns must be accompanied by wider testing and tracing of infected people to keep the virus from coming back with a vengeance.

Questions regarding the accuracy of reported infection and death rates were raising alarms as many countries, including China, sharply raised their death tolls.

Authorities said that almost everywhere, thousands have died with COVID-19 symptoms — many in nursing homes — without being tested for the virus, and have thus gone uncounted. Though the federal government has not been releasing a count of its own, an Associated Press tally from news media reports and state health departments indicates 6,912 deaths have been linked to coronavirus outbreaks in nursing homes and long-term care facilities nationwide.

In Italy, where the official death toll has climbed past 22,700, a government survey released Friday of about one-third of the country's nursing homes found more than 6,000 residents have died since Feb. 1.

It was unclear how many were a result of COVID-19.

In Britain, with an official count of about 14,600 dead, the country's statistics agency said the actual number could be around 15% higher. Others think it will be far more.

The official death toll in New York City soared by more than half earlier this week when health authorities began including people who probably had COVID-19 but died without being tested. Nearly 3,800 deaths were added to the city's count, which stood at more than 12,000 Friday.

Sedensky reported from Philadelphia. 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>

New wave of infections threatens to collapse Japan hospitals

By MARI YAMAGUCHI and YURI KAGEYAMA Associated Press

TOKYO (AP) — Hospitals in Japan are increasingly turning away sick people as the country struggles with surging coronavirus infections and its emergency medical system collapses.

In one recent case, an ambulance carrying a man with a fever and difficulty breathing was rejected by 80 hospitals and forced to search for hours for a hospital in downtown Tokyo that would treat him. Another feverish man finally reached a hospital after paramedics unsuccessfully contacted 40 clinics.

The Japanese Association for Acute Medicine and the Japanese Society for Emergency Medicine say many hospital emergency rooms are refusing to treat people including those suffering strokes, heart attacks and external injuries.

Japan initially seemed to have controlled the outbreak by going after clusters of infections in specific places, usually enclosed spaces such as clubs, gyms and meeting venues. But the spread of virus outpaced this approach and most new cases are untraceable.

The outbreak has highlighted underlying weaknesses in medical care in Japan, which has long been praised for its high quality insurance system and reasonable costs. Apart from a general unwillingness to embrace social distancing, experts fault government incompetence and a widespread shortage of the protective gear and equipment medical workers need to do their jobs.

Japan lacks enough hospital beds, medical workers or equipment. Forcing hospitalization of anyone with the virus, even those with mild symptoms, has left hospitals overcrowded and understaffed.

The "collapse of emergency medicine" has already happened, a precursor to the overall collapse of medicine, the Japanese Association for Acute Medicine and the Japanese Society for Emergency Medicine said in a joint statement. By turning away patients, hospitals are putting an excessive burden on the limited number of advanced and critical emergency centers, the groups said.

"We can no longer carry out normal emergency medicine," said Takeshi Shimazu, an Osaka University emergency doctor.

There are not enough protective gowns, masks and face shields, raising risks of infection for medical workers and making treatment of COVID-19 patients increasingly difficult, said Yoshitake Yokokura, who heads the Japan Medical Association.

In March, there were 931 cases of ambulances getting rejected by more than five hospitals or driving around for 20 minutes or longer to reach an emergency room, up from 700 in March last year. In the first 11 days of April, that rose to 830, the Tokyo Fire Department said. Department official Hiroshi Tanoue said the number of cases surged largely because suspected coronavirus cases require isolation until test results arrive.

Infections in a number of hospitals have forced medical workers to self-isolate at home, worsening staff shortages.

Tokyo's new cases started to spike in late March, the day after the Tokyo Olympics was postponed for

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a year. They've been rising at an accelerating pace for a current total of 2,595. Most patients are still hospitalized, pushing treatment capacity to its limits.

With about 10,000 cases and 170 deaths, Japan's situation is not as dire as New York City's which has had more than 10,000 deaths, or Italy's, with more than 21,000 fatalities, according to Johns Hopkins University.

But there are fears Japan's outbreak could become much worse.

Doctors say they are stretched thin. Since it takes time for COVID-19 to be diagnosed, patients who show up at hospitals can unintentionally endanger those around them. On Thursday, the medical workers' union demanded the government pay them high-risk allowances and provide sufficient protective gear.

Medical workers are now reusing N95 masks and making their own face shields. The major city of Osaka has sought contributions of unused plastic raincoats for use as hazmat gowns. Abe has appealed to manufacturers to step up production of masks and gowns, ventilators and other supplies.

A government virus task force has warned that, in a worst-case scenario where no preventive measures were taken, more than 400,000 could die due to shortages of ventilators and other intensive care equipment.

Prime Minister Shinzo Abe has said the government has secured 15,000 ventilators and is getting support of Sony and Toyota Motor Corp. to produce more.

Japanese hospitals also lack ICUs, with only five per 100,000 people, compared to about 30 in Germany, 35 in the U.S. and 12 in Italy, said Osamu Nishida, head of the Japanese Society of Intensive Care Medicine.

Italy's 10% mortality rate, compared to Germany's 1%, is partly due to the shortage of ICU facilities, Nishida said. "Japan, with ICUs not even half of Italy's, is expected to face a fatality overshoot very quickly," he said.

Japan has been limiting testing for the coronavirus mainly because of rules requiring any patients to be hospitalized. Surging infections have prompted the Health Ministry to loosen those rules and move patients with milder symptoms to hotels to free up beds for those requiring more care.

Calls for social distancing have not worked well enough in crowded cities like Tokyo, experts say, with many people still commuting to offices in crowded trains even after the prime minister declared a state of emergency.

Officials fear people may travel during the upcoming "golden week" holiday in early May.

"From the medical field, we are hearing cries of desperation that lives that can be saved may no longer be possible," Abe said Friday. "I ask you all again, please refrain from going out."

Follow Mari Yamaguchi on Twitter at <https://twitter.com/mariyamaguchi> and Yuri Kageyama at <https://twitter.com/yurikageyama>

Scant testing in US migration system risks spreading virus

By **SONIA PÉREZ D., NOMAAN MERCHANT, BEN FOX and MICHAEL WEISSENSTEIN** Associated Press

GUATEMALA CITY (AP) — The Trump administration's failure to test all but a small percentage of detained immigrants for the novel coronavirus may be helping it spread through the United States' sprawling system of detention centers and then to Central America and elsewhere aboard regular deportation flights, migrants' advocates said Friday.

The discovery of numerous COVID-19 cases among deportees on a flight that arrived this week prompted Guatemalan President Alejandro Giammattei to tell Guatemalans in a national address on Friday he was suspending such flights — a step his foreign minister had mentioned earlier to reporters.

Just 400 detainees in the U.S. out of more than 32,000 have been tested so far, according to testimony that Matthew Albence, the acting director of U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, gave Friday to a congressional committee. The House Committee on Oversight and Reform said that Albence "also confirmed that ICE does not routinely test detainees before deporting them."

More than 1,600 people deported from the United States to Guatemala over the last month were allowed

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to go home and into voluntary, unenforced quarantine. Fears are rising that it may have seeded the Central American nation with an untold number of undetected cases, increasing its vulnerability to the pandemic.

U.S. authorities took passengers' temperatures before departure, and Guatemalan officials checked them for cough, fever and other symptoms on arrival. Those with possible COVID-19 symptoms had their mucous and saliva tested, but apparently healthy deportees underwent no testing and were allowed to head home even if they arrived on a flight with sick people.

Health experts say that was very risky because many infected people never show symptoms but are still highly contagious. Airport workers and at least one family member of a deportee have tested positive in Guatemala and are believed to have been infected by returned migrants, said Dr. Edwin Asturias, a University of Colorado epidemiologist who is from Guatemala and maintains close contact with health authorities there.

"It's clear that deportees have been coming infected and without appropriate safety measures in the same airspace with other people," Asturias said. "As we're seeing, this type of deportation is producing contagion in Guatemala."

Only on Monday did Guatemala begin testing every passenger who shared a flight with someone confirmed as positive. The same day, a plane carrying 76 people arrived on an ICE flight from Alexandria, Louisiana. A migrant who was feeling ill was tested and found to be infected, leading to tests for everyone else. Forty-three tested positive despite showing no signs of illness and are in medical quarantine, officials said.

Giammattei, who spoke while wearing a surgical mask, said a team from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention also tested 12 of the passengers at random on Friday and all tested positive. He said flights would be suspended until the U.S. certifies passengers on such flights are free of the new virus.

"It's very worrying because these adults and children are being deported from places with high levels of contagion," said Leonel Dubón, director of Refuge for Childhood, a center for young and vulnerable deportees in Guatemala.

ICE has restricted the movement of hundreds of detainees across the United States after they were suspected of coming into contact with an infected person, according to interviews with detainees and lawyers. The agency says 124 have tested positive for COVID-19 in 25 detention facilities.

A Department of Homeland Security official who spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss internal procedures said not everyone in immigration custody is tested because there are a limited number of tests available not just to ICE but worldwide.

"We are only testing individuals we have reasons to believe may have the disease because of symptoms or close contact with individuals with symptoms," the official said.

DHS learned that four on a March 26 flight tested positive after arriving in Guatemala. Last week it started ensuring that everyone on deportation flights has a mask, and on Thursday began pulling people off if they had a temperature of 99 degrees, instead of 100.6 previously.

The U.S. will consider new procedures if needed but has no plans to halt removals, the official said: "We continue to feel strongly that each country has an obligation to receive its citizens, that taking those individuals out of custody is the safest situation for them."

At the Richwood Correctional Center in Monroe, Louisiana, three cases had been confirmed and dozens of detainees are under lockdown. One Guatemalan detainee who has COVID-19, Diego Ortiz Garcia, said Friday he is confined to a dorm with about 20 others suspected of having the virus. ICE said late Friday that it had confirmed 20 COVID-19 cases at Richwood.

Another Richwood detainee who was infected, Salomon Diego Alonzo, was hospitalized Thursday. According to his attorney, Veronica Semino, Alonzo was taken there shortly after a guard told an immigration judge he "does not have the lung capacity" to speak during a hearing he listened to remotely, by phone.

So far there hasn't been any documented case of the virus among deportees to other countries in Central America's Northern Triangle region.

In El Salvador, more than 800 have arrived over the last month and been placed into 30-day quarantine. President Nayib Bukele said in a statement to AP that 70 percent have been tested with none coming back

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positive. Tests are pending for the rest.

Honduran officials said they weren't aware of any cases among deportees, who undergo 14-day quarantine on arrival even if asymptomatic.

That hasn't eased concerns.

"Every airplane that arrives with deportees is an alarm bell for the communities in our countries" said César Ríos, director of the non-governmental Salvadoran Institute of Migration.

ICE has said 25 employees at U.S. detention centers have tested positive including 13 at a removal staging facility in Alexandria, which has sent at least 17 flights to Guatemala this year. It has not said how many of the 32,000 people in U.S. immigration detention have been tested.

Attorneys for detainees have raised concerns about the risks of holding people in close proximity. About half of those in ICE detention have no criminal history apart from an immigration violation, and advocates question whether they need to be in custody given the crisis.

Despite twice halting deportation flights briefly, Guatemala has been receiving about one per day carrying 50 to 100 people from a variety of U.S. locations over the last month, a sharp reduction from the normal pace.

Dr. Michele Heisler, a professor of internal medicine at the University of Michigan, said ICE's practice of screening only deportees with fevers is "absolutely inadequate" and it would be best to test them all.

With a population of 17.2 million, Guatemala had 235 confirmed cases as of Friday afternoon.

"Guatemala will be overwhelmed," Heisler said. "They already have a very fragile health care system. From a public health and medical perspective, this is just unbelievably irresponsible of our country."

Merchant reported from Houston, Fox from Washington and Weissenstein from Havana. Elliot Spagat in San Diego, Colleen Long in Washington, Marcos Aleman in San Salvador and Marlon González in Tegucigalpa, Honduras, contributed.

What you need to know today about the virus outbreak

By The Associated Press undefined

President Donald Trump appears to be encouraging resistance to stay at home orders aimed at containing the coronavirus that have thrown millions of Americans out of work. But some governors say they badly need help from Washington in expanding testing before they can safely lift them.

A day after Trump gave U.S. governors a road map for recovering from the pandemic's financial pain and told them they could call the shots, he ramped up pressure on three Democratic states in a series of tweets: "LIBERATE MINNESOTA!" "LIBERATE MICHIGAN!" "LIBERATE VIRGINIA."

Meanwhile, the accuracy of figures that governments rely on to make crucial decisions — including whether it is safe enough to ease lockdowns — was being openly questioned as many countries, including China, revised up sharply their death tolls.

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

WHAT'S HAPPENING TODAY:

— Scant testing by the U.S. government of detained immigrants may be contributing to the coronavirus spreading through its detention centers and causing cases to be brought into Central America aboard deportation flights.

— Doctors warn Venezuela's unusual approach to testing its citizens for the coronavirus by using a rapid blood antibody test from China could be producing misleading results.

— Restaurant patrons might find dining out a new experience once coronavirus restrictions are lifted — masked waiters, disposable menus and disinfectant wipes next to the napkin dispensers.

— Several Native American tribes are suing the U.S. government over the distribution of coronavirus relief funds.

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—Mexico's president says U.S. President Donald Trump has promised to provide the country with 1,000 ventilators by the end of the month.

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW:

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

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

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

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

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

ONE NUMBER:

— 6.8: China's 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.

IN OTHER NEWS:

— **BICYCLE DELIVERY:** No fans were cheering, but Italian professional cyclist Davide Martinelli achieved a victory of a different sort. He is using his bike to help deliver medicine to elderly residents and others in need during the pandemic.

— **MAIL SAFETY:** Is it safe to open your mail during the pandemic?

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

Ex-Trump lawyer Cohen to serve out prison sentence at home

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 because of the coronavirus pandemic.

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 the coronavirus.

After he is released, Cohen will serve the remainder of his sentence at home, according to a Justice Department official and another person familiar with the matter. They could not discuss Cohen's release publicly and spoke to The Associated Press on condition of anonymity.

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 the 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

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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."

The Justice Department official said Barr had told senior officials at the Bureau of Prisons when he first issued his directives that they must scrupulously apply the same criteria to all inmates and not give anyone special treatment.

On Friday, the Bureau of Prisons said it was moving about 111 inmates — most of whom are likely to qualify for home confinement or furlough — from the prison camp at Otisville into the medium-security prison at the facility so they could begin a quarantine period, which would be required before they could be released, as their records are reviewed.

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, 53, 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.

The Bureau of Prisons said Friday the death of a case manager working at USP Atlanta is being considered the first potential coronavirus death of a federal prisons staff member. Robin Grubbs, who had worked at BOP since 2007, was found dead at her home Tuesday and posthumously tested positive for coronavirus, according to an agency spokesman. Officials said she had last worked at the Atlanta prison on April 10 and appeared to be asymptomatic. A cause of death is undetermined.

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

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.

When the judge asked Salomon Diego Alonzo to say his name Thursday, the guard responded that Alonzo "does not have the lung capacity," according to 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.

Alonzo was hospitalized later that day, Semino said, and by Friday, she had not received an update on his condition. The jail where he was detained went from two confirmed cases of COVID-19 on Thursday to 20 by Friday night.

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 head-

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aches, diarrhea and severe exhaustion that made it difficult for him to get out of bed. He's confined with 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 believed was also sick.

On Friday, with Alonzo hospitalized, nearly two dozen other detainees were confined to the same dorm. ICE posted on its website that it had 20 confirmed coronavirus cases at Richwood and 124 cases nationally.

Richwood 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.

Trump consults faith leaders on phased-in reopening

By ELANA SCHOR Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — President Donald Trump held a call with faith leaders on Friday that included discussion about a phased-in return to broader in-person worship after weeks of religious services largely shifting online in response to the coronavirus pandemic.

Trump's call with faith leaders came one day after the White House included houses of worship among "large venues" that could be able to reopen while observing "strict physical distancing protocols" in the first stage of a three-part plan to reopen a U.S. economy that's been frozen by the toll of the highly contagious virus.

The call included representatives of multiple Christian denominations as well as Jewish and Islamic leaders, according to a statement distributed by the White House.

Trump "mentioned his memories as a young child attending Billy Graham's service at Yankee Stadium, and acknowledged that while he has enjoyed watching services online from the White House, he told the faith leaders it is important for people to soon be able to once again come together, pray, and worship," the White House said in its statement.

Participants in the call with faith leaders said it featured discussion about how restarting in-person worship could work, without any conclusion reached, and underscored their commitment to not imperiling the health of the faithful. Indeed, Trump has said that governors would be empowered to spearhead their states' paces of economic reopening.

Jack Graham, pastor of Texas-based Prestonwood Baptist Church, said the call included conversation about "how would we go about bringing people back together," adding that those involved agreed that "we're going to do that carefully and gradually, and not put people at risk."

Samuel Rodriguez, president of the National Hispanic Christian Leadership Council, said that religious institutions "want to be a blessing and not a burden" by not returning to practices that could "cause more harm than good" if taken up too early.

Rodriguez added that he hoped to see clergy and other faith leaders nationwide identified as essential workers, as well as a clear resumption of outdoor religious services that can be conducted with people remaining in their automobiles. That sort of step would "help us transition to a new normal," he said.

Cissie Graham Lynch of the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association and Samaritan's Purse, said churches would be committed to keeping their congregations safe and emphasized the importance of healing the spiritual pain caused by widespread social distancing restrictions imposed to fight the virus.

"People are lonely, people are scared," Lynch said.

Those who participated in the call described Trump as closely engaged in the discussion.

"We may be opening, but we're putting safety first," the president told reporters Friday.

The faith leaders' conversation with Trump is not the only sign that religious leaders are beginning to explore how to resume in-person worship services. The Christian executive search firm Vanderbloemen has launched ReopeningChurch.com and ReopeningSchool.com websites to start a conversation on that process.

Associated Press religion coverage receives support from the Lilly Endowment through the Religion News Foundation. The AP is solely responsible for this content.

Biden looks to placate Sanders by letting him keep delegates

By STEPHEN OHLEMACHER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Seeking to avoid the bitter feelings that marred the 2016 Democratic convention, Joe Biden's campaign is angling to allow Bernie Sanders to keep some of the delegates he would otherwise forfeit by dropping out of the presidential race.

Under a strict application of party rules, Sanders should lose about a third of the delegates he's won in

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primaries and caucuses as the process moves ahead and states select the actual people who will attend the Democratic National Convention. The rules say those delegates should be Biden supporters, as he is the only candidate still actively seeking the party's nomination.

Quiet talks between the two campaigns center on allowing Sanders to keep some of his delegates, essentially a goodwill gesture from a presumptive nominee seeking to court Sanders' progressive supporters and unite the party. It is not yet settled how many.

"We feel strongly that it is in the best interest of the party to ensure that the Sanders campaign receives statewide delegates to reflect the work that they have done to contribute to the movement that will beat Donald Trump this fall," said a Biden official, who wasn't authorized to discuss private negotiations publicly and spoke on condition of anonymity. "We are in discussion with them now on how to best accomplish that."

Sanders' campaign declined to comment on the talks. "Nothing to add from us," said Sanders spokesman Mike Casca.

In some ways, the delegate count is a moot point. While he has yet to formally win the 1,991 delegates needed to claim the Democratic nomination on the first ballot at the party convention, Biden is the Democrat's presumptive nominee. All of his rivals — including Sanders — have endorsed him after ending their own campaigns.

But with the nomination essentially decided, who has how many delegates takes on a new meaning. In 2016, rowdy Sanders supporters booed some speakers and any mention of nominee Hillary Clinton at the party's Philadelphia convention. The disruptions were so embarrassing to the party that Sanders pleaded with his supporters not to stage protests on the floor.

By claiming the delegates that ought to belong to him under party rules, Biden could cut down on the number of Sanders' backers — some of whom have been slow to embrace the former vice president — who could stage a replay of that divide. Instead, he's decided to try to attract Sanders' supporters rather than silence them.

For his part, Sanders wants as many delegates as possible to help shape the party's platform and get Biden and the Democratic Party to embrace his democratic socialist agenda.

It is not unusual for rival presidential campaigns to negotiate over delegates once the nominating contest is over. In 2008, Clinton and Barack Obama fought over how to divvy up delegates from disputed primaries in Michigan and Florida. Clinton won both states. However, the states had violated party rules by holding their primaries too early in the calendar and were therefore to be stripped of all their delegates.

Clinton's supporters were furious over the outcome, which saw Obama getting delegates from both states even though he wasn't even on the ballot in Michigan. But at the national convention that summer, it was Clinton who made the motion during the roll call vote to nominate Obama by acclamation.

Democratic candidates win convention delegates based on their share of the vote in the party's primaries and caucuses. To date, Biden leads Sanders 1,293 to 937.

Nearly two-thirds of delegates are won based on results in individual congressional districts and they stay with the candidates all the way to the convention.

It's the other third of delegates — won based on statewide results — that are at issue. To keep these delegates, candidates must still be running for president when the people who will serve as convention delegates are selected, usually at state party conventions, according to the party's delegate selection rules.

Those rules say Biden should get 346 delegates won by Sanders, Elizabeth Warren, Mike Bloomberg, Pete Buttigieg and Amy Klobuchar. Sanders' delegate count would fall to 628.

Most states have yet to select the people who will attend the convention as delegates, and The Associated Press has not yet updated its delegate count to reflect the shift in delegates from Biden to Sanders that should take place under party rules. But some states, including Colorado, have updated their delegate counts based on those rules.

Sanders won the Colorado primary on March 3 and took the most delegates from the state. But after he quit the race, the state party announced that Biden — the only candidate left — will end up with the most delegates from Colorado.

Biden will take 34 delegates from Colorado to the Milwaukee convention, including all those awarded statewide. Sanders, meanwhile, will get 16, with Bloomberg getting nine and Warren eight.

Associated Press writer Will Weissert contributed to this report.

Stephen Ohlemacher is The AP's Election Decision Editor.

Hope takes the reins on Wall Street, stocks rally worldwide

By **STAN CHOE, DAMIAN J. TROISE and ALEX VEIGA AP Business Writers**

NEW YORK (AP) — In Wall Street's tug of war between hope and pessimism about the coronavirus pandemic, hope is fighting back.

U.S. stocks joined a worldwide rally Friday and closed out their first back-to-back weekly gain since the market began selling off two months ago. The S&P 500 jumped 2.7% for the day, following up on even bigger gains in Europe and Asia.

Investors latched onto several strands of hope about progress in the fight against the coronavirus. They included the White House's release of guidelines for states to reopen their economies and a very early but encouraging report on a possible treatment for COVID-19. Those events dovetailed with recent numbers that raised hopes for a leveling off of infections in some of the world's hotspots.

The gains came even as data piles higher showing the severe economic and human toll of the outbreak. The virus has killed more than 150,000 worldwide and forced the formerly high-flying Chinese economy to shrink a crunching 6.8% last quarter. A measure of leading economic indicators in the U.S. plunged last month by the most in its 60-year history, the latest in a string of similarly unprecedented data reports.

The S&P 500 rose 75.01 points to 2,874.56. The Dow Jones Industrial Average jumped 704.81, or 3%, to 24,242.49, and the Nasdaq added 117.78, or 1.4%, to 8,650.14.

"There's no clear path yet" on when the pandemic and the economic devastation it's caused will end, said Lindsey Bell, chief investment strategist at Ally Invest.

That's caused the stock market to cycle up, down and up again, sometimes in the same day, as it tries to set prices now for where corporate profits will be months in the future.

Optimists have been more forceful recently as they point to infections leveling off in some hard-hit areas around the world. That raises the possibility that parts of the economy could reopen — although not tomorrow — and eventually boost profits, which are currently expected to fall by roughly 25% in the second quarter, according to FactSet. Optimists are willing to look through all the economic damage in the near term, which is being mitigated somewhat by massive aid from the Federal Reserve and the U.S. government.

"Just having that light at the end of the tunnel is what people really want to see," said J.J. Kinahan, chief market strategist at TD Ameritrade.

The S&P 500 fell about 33% from its all-time high on Feb. 19 to March 23 as the virus moved quickly from Asia to Europe to the U.S., largely shutting down economies as it went. The market has recovered a little more than half of those losses since.

Pessimists say the recent rally for stocks has been overdone and point to the severe pain shocking the health care system and the economy. They say conditions are unlikely to get back to anything approximating "normal" soon. Even the unprecedented aid from the Fed and Congress won't be nearly enough for households and businesses to weather a protracted downturn.

"We're trying to bridge from the current state to the aftermath, and that bridge is just not long enough," said Eric Freedman, chief investment officer at U.S. Bank Wealth Management. "That's the bearish case, that consumers are impacted beyond what the policy can provide because the virus extends and people really hold off on making more expenditures."

Among the wisps of optimism that investors were focusing on Friday:

— A news report cited early progress in a drug candidate for the virus. Analysts cautioned that the encouraging data was only anecdotal, and they were hesitant to put too much stock in it. Shares of the company behind the candidate, Gilead Sciences, surged 9.7%.

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— Boeing said late Thursday that it will resume production of passenger jets in Washington state next week. It suspended work late last month after workers tested positive for the coronavirus. Its 14.7% surge was a big reason for the Dow's climb Friday.

In a sign of a bit less caution in the market, Treasury yields ticked higher but remain extremely low. The yield on the 10-year Treasury rose to 0.64% from 0.61% late Thursday, though it remains well below the 1.90% level it was near at the start of the year. Bond yields drop when their prices rise, and investors tend to buy Treasuries when they're worried about the economy.

"The government can give the mandate to reopen the economy, but it's going to be all about how comfortable consumers feel in going back to their workplace and how comfortable they feel about going back to restaurants or doing other activities around other people," said Ally Invest's Bell. "The best way for us to get any insight into that is to listen to what corporations say about how they're going to bring back their workforce. Is it going to be at a 25% rate? A 50% rate?"

Investors could hear such commentary in upcoming weeks, with hundreds of CEOs scheduled to discuss how badly their profits got hit by stay-at-home orders in the first three months of the year.

The market's gains were widespread Friday, across all 11 sectors that comprise the S&P 500. Energy producers and banks led the way, a sharp turnaround from their laggardly ways earlier in the week when worries about the economy were at the forefront.

In European trading, the CAC 40 in Paris rose 3.4%, while Germany's DAX climbed 3.1%. Britain's FTSE 100 added 2.8%.

Japan's Nikkei 225 index jumped 3.1%, the Hang Seng in Hong Kong advanced 1.6% and South Korea's Kospi leaped 3.1%.

India's S&P BSE 100 rose 2.8% after the central bank cut its benchmark interest rate to help the stalled economy and ease financing troubles amid a nationwide lockdown to fight the pandemic.

"Human spirit is ignited by the resolve to curb the pandemic," said Reserve Bank of India Gov. Shaktikanta Das. "It is during our darkest moments that we must focus on the light."

AP Business Writer Elaine Kurtenbach contributed

TV doctors Oz and Phil explaining controversial Fox comments

By DAVID BAUDER AP Media Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Two television doctors — Dr. Oz and Dr. Phil — are finding themselves trying to explain comments they made about coronavirus restrictions during appearances on Fox News Channel this week.

Mehmet Oz says that he misspoke in an interview with Fox's Sean Hannity, when he said reopening schools was a "very appetizing opportunity" despite the coronavirus pandemic.

Phil McGraw, another daytime talk show host who, like Oz, catapulted to TV fame as a protege of Oprah Winfrey, received social media heat for comparing coronavirus deaths to those caused by swimming pool and automobile accidents.

Oz, in a Twitter post late Thursday, said that he recognized his comments had confused and upset people, and that was never his intention. The heart surgeon talked with Hannity on Tuesday about ways to get "our mojo back" during the outbreak and mentioned schools, which are largely closed across the United States.

"I just saw a nice piece in the Lancet arguing that the opening of schools may only cost us 2% to 3% in terms of total mortality," he said.

"You know, any life is a life lost, but to get every child back into school where they are being safely educated, being fed and making the most out of their lives with the theoretical risk on the backside might be a trade-off some folks would consider," he said.

It's not clear exactly what he was trying to say — if he meant that a certain number of deaths was worth the benefit of schools resuming — and his representative did not immediately offer a clarification on Friday.

While not a staff member at Fox News, Oz has made frequent appearances on the network since the

beginning of the outbreak.

In his Twitter message, he said that he's spent his career fighting to save lives by minimizing risk. But he's constantly being asked how people can get back to their normal lives.

"To do that, one of the important steps will be figuring out how to get our children safely back to school," he said. "We know for many kids school is a place of security, nutrition and learning that is missing right now.

"These are issues that we are all wrestling with and I'll continue to look for solutions to beat this virus," he said.

McGraw appeared on Laura Ingraham's show Thursday. He pointed out the number of people who died because of cigarettes, auto accidents and swimming pool accidents and noted that those didn't cause any lockdowns.

"The fallout is going to last for years because people's lives are being destroyed," he said. Ingraham has been among the television personalities who have pushed for a plan to reopen the country.

In an online message posted Friday, McGraw said he used bad examples because they were not contagious diseases. He also said he incorrectly stated the number of swimming pool deaths.

"If I offended people's sensibilities last night with my examples, then erase those," he said.

McGraw urged listeners to follow guidelines from health experts and government leaders. He said he was trying to express concern about the mental health and economic impacts of shutting much of the country down.

France finds more than 1,000 virus cases on aircraft carrier

By JEFFREY SCHAEFFER and ELAINE GANLEY Associated Press

PARIS (AP) — The French navy is investigating how the coronavirus infected more than 1,000 sailors aboard the aircraft carrier Charles de Gaulle, amid growing pressure on government leaders to explain how it could have happened.

The ship, France's biggest carrier and the flagship of its navy, is undergoing a lengthy disinfection process since returning to its home base in Toulon five days ago.

One person remains in intensive care and some 20 others hospitalized, navy spokesman Cmdr. Eric Lavault told The Associated Press.

Two of four U.S. sailors serving aboard the Charles de Gaulle as part of an exchange program also tested positive, according to a U.S. Navy statement. A British sailor was aboard another vessel, Lavault said, refusing to reveal the sailor's health status.

Lavault insisted that the aircraft carrier's commander sought to increase the physical distance among the crew on the vessel, where there was no testing equipment and for most of its three months on operations, no masks.

It is "very difficult to apply social distancing measures ... on a combat vessel," Lavault said. But "security of the crew is the first concern. A combat ship, especially an aircraft carrier, is nothing without its crew."

A similar outbreak on the USS Theodore Roosevelt and a dispute about how the at-sea health crisis was handled led to the firing of its captain and the resignation this month of the acting U.S. Navy secretary.

The French navy has been spared major controversy so far, but the defense minister and the head of the French military's health service arm were questioned Friday about the infections at parliamentary hearings.

Defense Minister Florence Parly told lawmakers that 1,081 of the 2,300 people aboard the Charles de Gaulle and its escort vessels have tested positive so far — nearly half the overall personnel.

While the virus has immobilized the immense and important ship, Parly insisted that otherwise "our forces continue to assure the defense of our country at sea, under the sea, on land and in the air."

An investigation to retrace the paths of the personnel is in progress. Lavault noted that the aircraft carrier made a call in the French port of Brest, on the Atlantic Ocean, had been in the North Sea as part of a "naval diplomacy" mission with NATO partners, and had stopped in Cyprus during an operation in the eastern Mediterranean Sea to join in the fight against the Islamic State group.

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Journalists had boarded the vessel at one point.

"All hypotheses are on the table," Lavault said.

So far, 350 crew members have been grilled about their movements on and off the vessel, according to Lavault.

The defense minister defended the decision to allow the ship to stop in Brest in mid-March, even though France had already ordered all schools closed to fight the virus and the government was preparing confinement measures. Hours after the ship left, President Emmanuel Macron announced a nationwide lockdown, among the strictest in Europe.

With nearly 2,000 sailors on the aircraft carrier alone, there is a constant flow of people frequenting the infirmary. In the North Sea, temperatures sometimes dropped to -5 degrees Celsius (23 F), he said.

The number of infections "rose exponentially" from about April 4-5, and lung scans were taken on suspected cases, Lavault said.

"It's from this date that the commander decided to alert Navy headquarters to propose ending the operation, a decision taken immediately by the (defense) minister," he said.

The aircraft carrier was back in its home base at the Mediterranean port of Toulon on April 12.

"We are and will be transparent" about the health situation, the health director Maryline Gygax Genero told the parliamentary commission.

Lavault said the carrier was being cleaned top to bottom, first with high-pressure water at 60 C (140 F), then with an anti-viral product, a process that could take weeks. He said the goal is to get the carrier back to sea sometime in May.

France has been among the countries hardest hit by the virus, with more than 18,000 deaths confirmed as of Friday and more than 100,000 reported cases. As France heads into a second month of confinement, the head of the national health agency said Friday that the country is seeing "a slow but regular decline" in the virus, with the number of hospitalizations and people in intensive care continuing to drop.

Nicolas Garriga and Angela Charlton contributed to this report.

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

NASA, SpaceX pick May 27 to resume astronaut launches in US

By **MARCIA DUNN AP Aerospace Writer**

CAPE CANAVERAL, Fla. (AP) — NASA and SpaceX have picked May 27 for resuming astronaut launches from the U.S. after nine years of complete Russian dependence.

NASA Administrator Jim Bridenstine announced the launch date Friday. Astronauts haven't launched into orbit from the U.S. since NASA's last space shuttle flight in 2011. SpaceX aims to end the drought by sending two NASA astronauts to the International Space Station.

"On May 27, @NASA will once again launch American astronauts on American rockets from American soil!" Bridenstine tweeted.

Astronauts Doug Hurley and Bob Behnken will blast off atop a SpaceX Falcon 9 rocket, departing from the same Kennedy Space Center launch pad used by shuttle Atlantis in July 2011, as well as the Apollo moonshots a half-century ago. Hurley served as pilot on that last shuttle mission and will be the spacecraft commander for SpaceX's Dragon crew capsule.

Launch day will be a Wednesday, with a liftoff time of 4:32 p.m. EDT. It's too soon to know whether the coronavirus pandemic will prompt crowd restrictions.

Only three countries have launched people into orbit since 1961: Russia, the U.S. and China, in that order. SpaceX would be the first company.

SpaceX successfully conducted its first test flight of a Dragon crew capsule a year ago, sending the capsule — minus a crew — to the space station. The returned capsule was accidentally destroyed during

ground testing at Cape Canaveral, further delaying the astronaut launch.

With the space station crew now down to three, Hurley and Behnken will spend weeks, perhaps months, helping to maintain the orbiting lab. The length of their mission is still under review, according to NASA.

NASA, meanwhile, is in the process of buying another seat on a Russian rocket. Russian Soyuz capsules have been the sole means of crew transportation to and from the space station since 2011.

SpaceX has been using Falcon 9 rockets to launch cargo to the space station in the company's original Dragon capsules since 2012. NASA turned to private companies for deliveries once the shuttle program ended.

Boeing also is working to launch astronauts under NASA's commercial crew program, but the company's effort suffered a serious setback following last December's botched test flight. Launching without anyone on board, Boeing's Starliner capsule failed to reach the space station after ending up in the wrong orbit and came close to destruction twice because of software errors.

Boeing plans to repeat the test flight, again without astronauts, this fall.

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.

Venezuela's go-to test for fighting virus raising questions

By **CHRISTINE ARMARIO, SCOTT SMITH and FABIOLA SANCHEZ** Associated Press

CARACAS, Venezuela (AP) — Venezuelan officials have taken to state TV in recent weeks to crow that the socialist government is conducting more coronavirus tests than any other country in Latin America. But instead of detecting more infections, as has happened elsewhere when testing ramps up, they are reporting fewer.

The odd result highlights that Venezuela is going about testing its citizens unlike any other country: Mass deployment of a rapid blood antibody test from China that checks for proteins developing a week or more after someone is infected, while using on a much smaller scale the gold-standard nasal swab exam that detects the virus from the onset.

Doctors warn Venezuela's approach could be missing untold numbers who test negative because they do not yet have high antibody levels but could nonetheless have the virus and be spreading it to others.

"We could be letting people slip under the table who have the infection," said a doctor at the University of the Andes medical school, speaking on condition of anonymity for fear of reprisals.

Physicians in and outside Venezuela say the antibody test is best utilized not as a diagnostic tool but to help assess how widespread the virus is in a community, when to lift quarantines or to identify potential plasma donors.

Yet defenders say Venezuela, mired in a profound economic and public health crisis that began years before the pandemic, has little choice but to rely on it as a first-line test. The nation is one of the least-prepared to confront the pandemic, with hospitals routinely lacking basics like running water, gloves and masks, and thousands of physicians having emigrated in recent years.

"With limited staff and financial resources, the country has to explore other options such as the rapid test," Dr. Gerardo de Cosío, head of the Venezuela office of the Pan American Health Organization and the World Health Organization, told The Associated Press.

De Cosío, who has worked with government health officials on the nation's strategy, said Venezuela is further hampered in terms of machines and personnel available to process nasal swab tests, which can take hours.

The antibody test comes from Chinese biotech company Wondfo and takes about 20 minutes to yield a result, health workers say.

Those who test positive are then given a nasal swab exam to confirm, a process that can take days because a single lab in Caracas is processing almost all of them. Those who come back negative but have numerous coronavirus symptoms or were in contact with an infected person also undergo the swab test.

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Only swab-test positives are added to the country's official case count, several physicians told AP.

Government officials, who did not respond to a request for information on the matter, have not said exactly who is getting tested, but doctors and TV images indicate subway workers, hospital staff and returning fishermen and migrants are among those being tested. It's not clear how many positives the antibody tests have yielded.

"I'm not sure I would choose to do exactly what they're doing," said Dr. Angela Caliendo, a professor of medicine at Brown University and board member of the Infectious Diseases Society of America. Still, she too noted Venezuela's resource difficulties and said "they have a lot of these tests that are inexpensive to run (and) they're getting quite a bit of data."

Bruised by years of economic calamity and more recently by U.S. sanctions, President Nicolás Maduro appealed for international help in March even before the country's first confirmed case. Allies Beijing, Havana and Moscow plus the United Nations sent tests, medical gear and, in Cuba's case, doctors.

One of the largest shipments from China arrived at the end of last month carrying a half-million antibody tests.

As of March 31, according to the U.N. Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, Venezuela had done just 1,779 swab tests with an 8% positive rate.

In the two weeks since, authorities say they have conducted more than 250,000 tests, and Pan American Health Organization figures show all but about 3,000 were antibody tests.

"We are at the forefront of Latin America," Vice President Delcy Rodríguez declared.

But it's an inexact comparison since the rest of the region relies on the genetic swab test.

Neighboring Colombia, for example, has conducted about 50,000 tests, all swabs. Mexico health under-secretary Hugo López-Gatell has expressed disdain for the antibody tests, saying they're about as reliable as a coin toss. Chile has also ruled out using them as a diagnostic tool.

"It's complementary to what we are doing," Chilean Health Minister Jaime Mañalich said. "But it doesn't work for a general screening of the population."

The Wondfo test has approval from an EU regulating agency, but some physicians warn that many exams are being pushed to market without rigorous testing and it's not yet known how sensitive they are.

Venezuelan officials say 143 coronavirus cases were confirmed during the second half of March, and 61 since the dramatic ramping up with antibody tests.

"What's seen normally is that when a country increases testing, cases increase," said Enrique Acosta, of the Max Planck Institute for Demographic Research in Germany. "I look at (Venezuela's) numbers with concern."

Experts say the antibody tests do have value as a broader public health tool and are likely to be used more around the world in the months ahead.

"It does give you a snapshot of what is going on with the virus," said Dr. Carl Fichtenbaum, an infectious disease specialist at the University of Cincinnati, but "it's probably a bottom number."

Some physicians believe it's possible the virus has not yet begun to spread widely in Venezuela, which could help explain the still-low case numbers. The country was largely cut off from the world even before the pandemic, and severe gasoline shortages make even domestic travel difficult.

A strict quarantine – the first nationwide shutdown in Latin America – could also be slowing the virus.

In the coastal state of Nueva Esparta, a military plane arrives about every three days to pick up nasal specimens for transport to the lab in Caracas. Until results come back, doctors must rely on potentially imperfect information from antibody testing.

"It's all we have right now," said Dr. Elesban Gómez, head of the state's public health unit. "It's the only thing to guide us."

Christine Armario reported from Bogota, Colombia. Associated Press writers Eva Vergara in Santiago, Chile, and Christopher Sherman in Mexico City contributed to this report.

Virus-fueled conspiracy theories take aim at hospitals

By MICHAEL KUNZELMAN Associated Press

The video lasts just 13 seconds and shows nothing more than the view from a car quietly driving past a hospital entrance. But the person who posted it on Twitter used the footage to sarcastically question reports of “apocalyptic conditions” at Mount Sinai Queens in New York City.

That video and dozens of others like it have been spreading on social media through the #FilmYourHospital hashtag. The people taking and posting videos of quiet scenes outside hospitals are promoting a right-wing conspiracy theory that fear-mongering media outlets and Democrats are intentionally exaggerating COVID-19’s deadly toll. The clip from Queens racked up more than 227,000 views in less than three weeks.

“It’s very sad because I’m working with a team of thousands of people who are putting their lives at risk. They are struggling every day to provide the best care they can in horrendous conditions,” said Dr. David Reich, president of Mount Sinai Queens and Mount Sinai Hospital in Manhattan. The Mount Sinai system has treated thousands of coronavirus patients.

Hospitals aren’t the only targets of the far-right fringe during the pandemic. The coronavirus has breathed fresh life into old conspiracy theories and inspired a mishmash of new ones, with a cast of villains that includes Bill Gates, 5G wireless technology, the United Nations and President Donald Trump’s political foes.

New York is also the setting for one of the wildest virus-related conspiracy theories circulating on social media — that the pandemic is masking a military operation to rescue thousands of deformed “mole children” from the clutches of sex traffickers in underground tunnels beneath medical tents recently erected in Central Park.

Many of the social media accounts driving that baseless story and the #FilmYourHospital campaign belong to followers of “QAnon,” a far-right, apocalyptic conspiracy theory that believes Trump is waging a secret campaign against “deep state” enemies and Satan-worshipping Democrats who prey on children. The Twitter user who posted the March 29 video of Mount Sinai Queens has a profile that includes the QAnon slogan “WWG1WGA,” which stands for “Where we go one, we go all.”

Alex Friedfeld, an investigative researcher for the Anti-Defamation League’s Center on Extremism, said quarantine conditions are ripe for conspiracy theories to mutate and quickly spread. The purveyors are scared and cooped up inside their homes with abundant free time to spend on the internet.

“We are in a time of crisis, so people are frightened,” he said. “They are looking for explanations. Conspiracy theories can be comforting because they basically place order on chaos. A lot of them give you somebody to blame, and that can be comforting to people at an uncertain time.”

Friedfeld said the virus has become fodder for old tropes like “Agenda 21,” a conspiracy theory that a network of global elites are using a United Nations resolution adopted in 1992 to control citizens and depopulate the earth.

Other new conspiracy theories being fueled by the virus include one that claims maps show a link between 5G networks and coronavirus outbreaks. Another holds that Microsoft co-founder Bill Gates intends to use a COVID-19 vaccine to track and control the world’s population. Fox News host Laura Ingraham amplified the narrative with an April 7 tweet that said, “Digitally tracking Americans’ every move has been a dream of the globalists for years.”

U.N. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres warned Tuesday that COVID-19 misinformation is a poisonous threat to the world and urged social media organizations to do more to counter it. Social media platforms say they are trying to stop the spread of coronavirus hoaxes and connect users with reliable information.

Facebook is removing content related to the “#FilmYourHospital” hashtag when it violates the social network’s policies, according to company spokesman Andy Stone. The company says it removes coronavirus-related misinformation from Facebook and Instagram that could contribute to “imminent physical harm.”

Twitter says it is removing COVID-19 content “when it has a call to action that could potentially cause harm.” One of the first and most popular tweets promoting #FilmYourHospital remains on the platform. DeAnna Lorraine, a California Republican who unsuccessfully challenged House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, posted a video taken outside a Los Angeles-area hospital and urged her followers to get the hashtag

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trending. The video she tweeted on March 29 has 1.4 million views.

A copycat video posted on Twitter showed an empty parking lot and vacant tents outside University Medical Center Tucson in Arizona. "We should be picketing in protest of this hoax!" the user tweeted.

A hospital official said the exterior appears quiet because the medical center is not allowing visitors, has furloughed nonessential employees, canceled elective procedures and stopped using the tents to test outpatients with mild virus symptoms. Dr. Christian Bime, medical director of the intensive care unit at the Tucson hospital, said he has treated approximately 20 COVID-19 patients, some of whom have died.

"This is not a hoax. This is real. These are real patients who have real families," Bime said.

A Mount Sinai spokeswoman says the lobby inside its Queen hospital appeared empty in the video because it also barred visitors. Another Twitter user posted a copycat video outside Mount Sinai's Manhattan hospital, which normally has about 970 patients but had approximately 1,250 on Wednesday. Around 700 were COVID-19 patients, including roughly 150 on ventilators, according to Reich. He called it "the worst crisis of our lifetimes."

"There is so much obvious evidence that this is real. It almost defies imagination that anybody would have to try to prove it," Reich said.

Follow Michael Kunzelman on Twitter at <http://twitter.com/Kunzelman75>. Follow AP news coverage of the coronavirus pandemic at <http://apnews.com/VirusOutbreak> and <https://apnews.com/UnderstandingtheOutbreak>.

To air or not air Trump briefings? Pressure on at networks

By DAVID BAUDER AP Media Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — After CNN's John King described a video played at President Donald Trump's coronavirus briefing this week as propaganda, the response was predictable. So why is CNN airing it?

The moment intensified a debate over how much unfiltered airtime the president should get virtually every day during a pandemic.

The coverage is a moving target, with CNN and MSNBC taking a more critical approach lately. Yet despite on-air talent like Rachel Maddow, Don Lemon, Chris Hayes and Joe Scarborough suggesting they'd pull the plug if it were up to them, their bosses have given no indication that they will.

Each day, the decisions are also being played out in newsrooms across the country.

"Journalists have long taken pride in their gatekeeping role, selecting from each day's many developments those that are most deserving of the public's attention and presenting them in a way that helps citizens understand what's at issue," said Thomas Patterson, professor of government and the press at Harvard University.

"Indiscriminate coverage of the president's press conferences sullies this tradition," he said. "One is left to wonder why. Is it ratings? Is it fear of Trump's wrath? It certainly is not journalism."

It's not so simple for the news executives making the call.

When Trump began the briefings, they were undeniably news. Yet the events evolved beyond health updates to give some journalists the sense they're being used. Three markers stand out: the March 30 parade of corporate executives, including a pillow manufacturer praising the president; the April 1 discussion of drug smuggling by law enforcement officials; and Monday's video, a seeming response to newspaper investigations that were critical of Trump's early actions during the crisis.

The White House generally gives no guidance before each day's briefings on what Trump plans to address, although the president offered a day's notice about Thursday's announcement of a back-to-work plan.

A network can choose not to cover Trump live. But what if he strides to the podium and instantly makes news — declares a day the country should reopen, for instance — and your rivals are showing it while you aren't?

"The instinct to go live to important people in the middle of important stories is pretty deeply embedded," said Mark Lukasiewicz, a former NBC News executive now dean of Hofstra University's School of

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Communication.

The risk that misinformation will be spread in the middle of a health emergency now is so great that the networks curb those natural inclinations, he said.

"All of us should stop broadcasting," MSNBC's Maddow said last month. "It's going to cost lives."

Top cable executives wouldn't talk for attribution about their decision-making process since the situation is so fluid.

"We are using our news judgment when it comes to these briefing events to navigate them as best we can to make sure our viewers have the news and they have the news with context," said one.

It's a day-to-day decision, said another.

Recently, CNN and MSNBC have kept analysts on standby during live briefings, and dip out for fact checks or if they feel the subject has gotten too far afield.

"We are going to avoid airing anymore of this briefing until it returns to what it was supposed to be, which was the coronavirus task force providing medical information," MSNBC's Ari Melber said during a cutaway on Monday.

CNN provides counterpoints with sharply-worded on-air chyrons at the bottom of the screens. One said Wednesday: "Trump Again Falsely Claims He Has Right to Override Governors' Decisions on Social Restrictions."

"I don't think it's effective at all," Hofstra's Lukasiewicz said. "The misstatements are too frequent and too complex to be effectively fact-checked in the moment. It's a very hard exercise to do."

Fox News Channel, its audience dominated by Trump supporters, usually carries Trump in full — unless he bleeds into Tucker Carlson's prime-time show.

Tom Jones, analyst at the Poynter journalism think tank, said he believes journalists should not shield Trump from the public.

"While Trump's press conferences might occasionally be dangerous and divisive, not showing them would be irresponsible," he said.

His exception would be if briefings conflict with national or local news programs on broadcast network or their affiliates, which lately they've done. ABC, CBS and NBC have stopped airing the briefings, yet stream them online and give local affiliates the option to air them if they wish.

With Thursday's announcement of a plan for reopening the country, network affiliates in New Orleans; Chicago; Charlotte, North Carolina; Richmond, Virginia; and Louisville, Kentucky all showed at least some of Trump's session.

"A lot to digest," anchor Debra Morgan of WRAL-TV in Raleigh, North Carolina, after breaking away from Trump after a half hour.

As Trump has boasted, the briefings are successful in the ratings, although that's the case for virtually all news programming lately. During the last two weeks, Fox News has drawn nearly 5 million viewers in the hours between 5 p.m. and 8 p.m., when the briefings are usually held. CNN (2.2 million) is up 204% over the same period a year ago and MSNBC (1.9 million) is up 47%.

Cable executives would face political blowback if they abandon the briefings. CNN's Oliver Darcy reported that Vice President Mike Pence's office for several days blocked administration health experts like Dr. Anthony Fauci from appearing as guests on the network because the briefings were not aired in full.

Any decision to stop live airing the briefings will almost certainly come from top executives like Warner Media News and Sports Chairman Jeff Zucker or NBC News Chairman Andy Lack.

UK youth orchestra plays 'Ode to Joy' alone but together

LONDON (AP) — A nationwide lockdown didn't stop Britain's National Youth Orchestra from making music — alone but together.

With the country in its fourth week of isolation to slow the spread of the new coronavirus, the collection of teenage musicians from across the U.K. can't meet in person the way they usually do during school holidays.

Instead, the orchestra's 164 musicians opened their windows or stood their doorsteps to play 40 seconds of Beethoven's "Ode to Joy" at 5 p.m. (1600 GMT) on Friday.

Members of the public across Britain joined in on myriad instruments — from violin and viola to saxophone, trombone and tuba — and posted footage of their performances on social media using the hashtag #NYOdetoJoy. In London, Anglican vicar Jeremy Fletcher gave his rendition on an electric guitar.

The performance was dedicated to health care staff, other essential workers and anyone who feels isolated in their home.

Violinist Kynan Walker, the 18-year-old orchestra leader, said the performance was intended as "a nationwide gesture of gratitude."

"Beethoven wanted this music to be a completely new innovation for classical music, but also a message to society in terms of uniting, and this overwhelming sense of joy," he said. "So it's been great for us to prepare something that seems so relevant to today — especially in the circumstances that we're in right now."

Look left, turn right.. jump! Islands offer remote tourism

JAMES BROOKS Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — Wish you could travel to a faraway island during the lockdown? The Faroe Islands are offering remote tourism, where web users can control a real life tour guide to trek around the remote archipelago's quaint towns and volcanic islands.

The innovation is meant to sustain global interest in the North Atlantic islands, which have recently come to rely more on revenue from tourism. And it might help locked-down people around the world broaden their horizons beyond their apartment walls.

"If you ask them to go left, they go left. If you ask them to jump, they jump. If you ask them to run, they run," said tourist board spokesman Levi Hanssen.

"You're sort of steering this person and deciding what you want to see and where you want this person to go."

Wearing helmet cameras, local guides provide commentary to web audiences remotely, guiding them across the Danish semiautonomous territory, which has had less than 200 confirmed COVID-19 cases and no deaths.

Nearly 50,000 people joined the first four hour-long tours, which are offered for free, said Hanssen. Most viewers were trying to land one of the minute-long slots for controlling the guide, available on a first-come, first-served basis.

Tours started Wednesday and will run until at least April 25. They are webcast on a tourist board website and on its Facebook and Instagram accounts.

Online tours come with new risks, Hanssen says. On one trip, a web user tried to make the guide jump into the ocean but he stopped in time.

"It's very surreal to know that you're walking around here in the Faroe Islands being controlled by someone on their sofa or even on the toilet. Who knows where they are," he said.

Previous tours have visited the territory's second largest city, Klaksvik, and other picturesque locations. There are plans for a kayak tour, a horse ride and more.

"We're going to try and see if we can get on a helicopter and see if we can get people to steer a pilot," Hanssen said.

The Faroe Islands is a rocky 18-island volcanic archipelago that's home to 50,000 people, most of whom live in Torshavn, the capital.

Fishing and aquaculture are the traditional industries, but tourism has been growing in the last five years, with around 120,000 people visiting in 2019. The tourism industry ground to a halt after authorities urged travelers not to come until at least May 1. The project is a way to help the industry rebound once the pandemic ends.

"The idea is to whet people's appetite and get them to want to come and experience this in real life," Hanssen said.

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Let's go to the videotape: 'Hoosiers' No. 1 AP Top 25 film

By **HOWARD FENDRICH AP Sports Writer**

"Hoosiers" shot all the way to No. 1 in The Associated Press Top 25 of best sports movies, a one-of-a-kind poll from the news organization known for its rankings of college teams.

Released in 1986 and starring Gene Hackman, "Hoosiers" led the tally in results released Friday, receiving 46 votes from a 70-person global panel of sports writers and editors who work for the AP.

"If you put your effort and concentration into playing to your potential, to be the best that you can be, I don't care what the scoreboard says at the end of the game," coach Norman Dale, Hackman's character, says in the top-ranked movie. "In my book, we're gonna be winners."

And in this case, they were.

Loosely based on an Indiana high school basketball team in the 1950s, "Hoosiers" narrowly edged Academy Award Best Picture honoree "Rocky" -- released in 1976, it was the first installment of Sylvester Stallone's series about an unknown boxer from Philadelphia who gets a shot at the big time -- and "Bull Durham" -- starring Kevin Costner and Susan Sarandon in 1988, it offered a fictionalized look at characters that populate minor league baseball.

Those two movies tied for second place with 45 votes each.

There was a significant gap between the top three and the rest of the AP Top 25.

At No. 4 with 33 votes was "Caddyshack," the sole golf tale to make the rankings. That was followed closely by "Slap Shot" with 32 votes, and "Field of Dreams" with 31.

"Raging Bull," "Major League," "The Natural" and "A League of Their Own" rounded out the poll's top 10.

Other tidbits from this special AP Top 25:

DOUBLE TAKES

Two screenwriters, Angelo Pizzo and Ron Shelton, each earned two mentions on the list. Pizzo penned top-ranked "Hoosiers" and "Rudy," which tied for No. 18; Shelton wrote and directed both "Bull Durham" and No. 17 "White Men Can't Jump."

REAL AS CAN BE

Two documentaries made the rankings: "Hoop Dreams" at No. 14 and "When We Were Kings," tied for No. 21.

STATISTICS

In all, 117 films got at least one mention in the complete balloting; 69 received at least two votes apiece. Nine sports served as the subjects of the AP Top 25, a group that actually wound up including 26 total movies, because three tied for 24th place.

MOST POPULAR SPORTS

The sport represented the most in the list was baseball with 10 entries, followed by football with four. Basketball and boxing each put three selections in the rankings, while hockey earned two. Golf, running, horse racing and cycling each got one mention.

OSCAR AND EMMY NODS

Six of the movies in the poll won at least one Academy Award, led by the five earned by "Chariots of Fire," which was ranked No. 16. Nine other films were nominated for at least one Oscar. "Brian's Song," which tied for No. 24, was the only television movie to make the list and collected five Emmy Awards.

More on the AP Top 25 poll of sports movies: <https://apnews.com/Sportsmovies>

China pushes back on Trump administration coronavirus theory

By **CALVIN WOODWARD Associated Press**

WASHINGTON (AP) — China is pushing back against President Donald Trump and some of his officials, who've flirted in recent days with an outlier theory that the coronavirus was set loose by a Chinese lab that let it escape.

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The Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman on Friday accused the U.S. administration of attempting to shift the focus from its own missteps in dealing with the pandemic by talking up a theory that it was started by a pathogen from a laboratory in Wuhan, the city where the global outbreak began.

But that spokesman, Zhao Lijian, has demonstrated that China, too, is not above sowing confusion in the face of the pandemic. He tweeted in March the falsehood that the virus might have come from the U.S. Army.

A scientific consensus is still evolving, but the leading theory is that infection among humans began at an animal market in Wuhan, probably from an animal that got the virus from a bat.

Without the weight of evidence, Trump and some administration officials are trying to blame China for sickness and death from COVID-19 in the United States.

"More and more, we're hearing the story," Trump says. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo adds, "The mere fact that we don't know the answers — that China hasn't shared the answers — I think is very, very telling."

On Friday, Pompeo said the U.S. is pressing China to let outside experts into the lab "so that we can determine precisely where this virus began."

Asked on Fox Business Network about whether China might have manipulated the virus for sinister purposes, he said, "It is completely appropriate that the world ask the right questions," then diverted to another subject.

Trump officials have largely been steering clear of baseless conspiracy theories in circulation that the virus was intentionally set loose by China, even as some give weight to the unsubstantiated idea the virus mistakenly spread from a negligent lab in Wuhan.

Experts overwhelmingly say analysis of the new coronavirus's genome rules out the possibility that it was engineered by humans, as some commentators have suggested.

Nor is it likely that the virus emerged from a negligent laboratory in Wuhan, they say. "I would put it on a list of 1,000 different scenarios," said Nathan Grubaugh of Yale University, who studies the epidemiology of microbial disease.

Scientists say the virus arose naturally in bats.

Even so, Pompeo and others are pointing fingers at an institute that is run by the Chinese Academy of Sciences and has done groundbreaking research tracing the likely origins of the SARS virus, finding new bat viruses and discovering how they could jump to people.

"We know that there is the Wuhan Institute of Virology just a handful of miles away from where the wet market was," Pompeo said. The institute has an address 8 miles, or 13 kilometers, from the market.

U.S. officials say the American Embassy in Beijing flagged concerns about potential safety issues at the lab in Wuhan in 2018, but stressed there's no evidence the virus originated there nearly two years later.

The episode shows that both world powers — the country where the virus originally spread and the country with the most sickness and deaths from it — are willing to use shaky theories and propaganda to divert attention from problems in their pandemic response.

At a briefing Friday, Zhao asserted that suspicions about the lab were generated by the U.S. "simply to confuse the public, divert attention and shirk responsibility." He added: "We have said many times that tracing of the virus's origin is a serious scientific issue and requires scientific and professional assessment."

Yet on March 12, he tweeted: "It might be US army who brought the epidemic to Wuhan.. Be transparent! Make public your data! US owe us an explanation!"

Lea Gabrielle, head of the State Department's Global Engagement Center, said in late March that China was heavily pushing the fabrication that the virus came from the U.S., especially to its online audiences in Africa. China dropped the claim late that month because people weren't buying it.

China and the U.S. both wasted crucial time responding to the outbreak.

More than 3,000 people had been infected before China's government told the public what it had concluded six days earlier — that a pandemic was probably coming.

Beijing muffled early warnings, such that the Chinese were assured the risk of sustained human-to-human transmission was low even as infected people entered hospitals across the country and the first case outside China was found, in Thailand.

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The United States, also late to take the threat seriously, has lagged a number of other countries in the thick of the pandemic when it comes to its response.

Trump failed to live up to his early promises to have ample testing, a key factor in containing disease. The U.S. still struggles to supply hospitals, front-line workers and patients with necessities in a climate of confusion spilling into chaos. More than 670,000 people in the U.S. have been sickened with COVID-19, not counting large numbers whose illnesses are not being registered, and more than 33,000 have died, according to figures compiled by Johns Hopkins University.

Against that backdrop, the pressure for scapegoats is strong.

After weeks of elaborate praise of Chinese President Xi Jinping's performance in the pandemic, Trump has turned to blaming China and halting U.S. contributions to the World Health Organization, accusing it of parroting misinformation from Beijing.

In the U.S., claims that the virus was created in or released from a Chinese lab emerged just weeks after the outbreak began and quickly spread from fringe internet sites to the wider public.

The reality is more mundane, said Dr. Gregory Poland, head of vaccine research at the Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minnesota. "This virus is a typical bat coronavirus that has developed the capacity to infect other mammals, and bats are mammals, too," he said. "What's becoming evident is that the natural origin of this fits with the transmission dynamics and biology of it all."

This story has been corrected to reflect that comments on Fox Business Network were by Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, not Vice President Mike Pence.

Associated Press writers Dake Kang in Beijing, Matthew Lee in Washington, David Klepper in Providence, Rhode Island, Amanda Seitz in Chicago and Malcolm Ritter and Beatrice Dupuy in New York contributed.

Native American woman removed from Land O'Lakes packaging

ARDEN HILLS, Minn. (AP) — The Native American woman who has graced the packaging of Land O'Lakes butter, cheese and other products since the late 1920s has quietly disappeared.

Known as Mia, the woman was shown sitting in a serene landscape of lakes and woods. That landscape remains on the Minnesota cooperative's packaging, but Mia is nowhere to be found.

On some packaging she is replaced by photos of Land O'Lakes member farmers.

President and CEO Beth Ford said that as the cooperative, founded in 1921, looks toward its 100th anniversary it needed packaging that reflects the foundation and heart of the company's culture.

"As a farmer-owned co-op, we strongly feel the need to better connect the men and women who grow our food with those who consume it," Ford said in a statement.

The woman's image has been modified over the years.

Ojibwe artist Patrick DesJarlait remade Mia in the mid-1950s. DesJarlait's work is included in the Minnesota Museum of American Art in St. Paul.

"I have mixed feelings about it," Robert DesJarlait, Patrick's son and an artist and writer, told the Star Tribune from his home in Onamia, Minnesota. "I'm sad to see it go, but I can understand why it's gone. We live in a politically correct time, so maybe it was time to get rid of it. It certainly devolved into a stereotype."

Land O'Lakes, which is headquartered in Arden Hills, posted \$14 billion in sales in 2019.

Today in History By The Associated Press

Today in History

Today is Saturday, April 18, the 109th day of 2020. There are 257 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On April 18, 1978, the Senate approved the Panama Canal Treaty, providing for the complete turnover of control of the waterway to Panama on the last day of 1999.

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On this date:

In 1775, Paul Revere began his famous ride from Charlestown to Lexington, Massachusetts, warning colonists that British Regular troops were approaching.

In 1831, the University of Alabama in Tuscaloosa was officially opened.

In 1906, a devastating earthquake struck San Francisco, followed by raging fires; estimates of the final death toll range between 3,000 and 6,000.

In 1910, suffragists showed up at the U.S. Capitol with half a million signatures demanding that women be given the right to vote.

In 1934, the first laundromat (called a "washateria") opened in Fort Worth, Texas.

In 1938, Superman, AKA "The Man of Steel," made his debut as the first issue of Action Comics (bearing a cover date of June) went on sale for 10 cents a copy. (In 2014, a nearly flawless original copy was sold on eBay for \$3.2 million.)

In 1945, famed American war correspondent Ernie Pyle, 44, was killed by Japanese gunfire on the Pacific island of Ie Shima (ee-EH' shee-MAH'), off Okinawa.

In 1954, Gamal Abdel Nasser seized power as he became prime minister of Egypt.

In 1956, American actress Grace Kelly married Prince Rainier (ren-YAY') of Monaco in a civil ceremony. (A church wedding took place the next day.)

In 1983, 63 people, including 17 Americans, were killed at the U.S. Embassy in Beirut, Lebanon, by a suicide bomber.

In 1988, an Israeli court convicted John Demjanjuk (dem-YAHN'-yuk), a retired auto worker from Cleveland, of committing war crimes at the Treblinka death camp in Nazi-occupied Poland. (However, Israel's Supreme Court later overturned Demjanjuk's conviction.)

In 1995, quarterback Joe Montana retired from professional football. The Houston Post closed after more than a century.

Ten years ago: Tens of thousands of Poles bade farewell to President Lech Kaczynski (lehk kah-CHIN'-skee) at a state funeral in Krakow. Brian Davis called a two-stroke penalty on himself on the first playoff hole to give Jim Furyk a victory at the Verizon Heritage. Rafael Nadal defeated Fernando Verdasco 6-0, 6-1 in an all-Spanish final to win the Monte Carlo Masters for the sixth straight year. Carrie Underwood became the first woman to win entertainer of the year twice at the Academy of Country Music Awards.

Five years ago: A ship believed to be carrying more than 800 migrants from Africa sank in the Mediterranean off Libya; only about 30 people were rescued. A motorcycle-riding suicide bomber attacked a line of people waiting outside a bank in eastern Afghanistan, killing at least 35. Ringo Starr, Joan Jett and The Blackhearts, pop punkers Green Day, soul singer-songwriter Bill Withers, underground-rock icon Lou Reed, bluesy guitarist Stevie Ray Vaughan and Double Trouble, The Paul Butterfield Blues Band and The "5" Royales were inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame.

One year ago: The final report from special counsel Robert Mueller's Russia investigation was made public; it outlined Russian interference in the 2016 presidential election but did not establish that members of the Trump campaign conspired or coordinated with the Russian government. Mueller offered no conclusion on the question of whether the president obstructed justice. As France paid a daylong tribute to the firefighters who saved Notre Dame Cathedral, a police official said investigators believed that the fire at the landmark was most likely caused by an electrical short-circuit.

Today's Birthdays: Actor Clive Revill is 90. Actor Robert Hooks is 83. Actress Hayley Mills is 74. Actor James Woods is 73. Actress-director Dorothy Lyman is 73. Actress Cindy Pickett is 73. Country musician Walt Richmond (The Tractors) is 73. Country musician Jim Scholten (Sawyer Brown) is 68. Actor Rick Moranis is 67. Actress Melody Thomas Scott is 64. Actor Eric Roberts is 64. Actor John James is 64. Rock musician Les Pattinson (Echo and the Bunnymen) is 62. Author-journalist Susan Faludi is 61. Actress Jane Leeves is 59. Ventriloquist-comedian Jeff Dunham is 58. Talk show host Conan O'Brien is 57. Bluegrass singer-musician Terry Eldredge is 57. Actor Eric McCormack is 57. Actress Maria Bello is 53. Actress Mary Birdsong is 52. Actor David Hewlett is 52. Rock musician Greg Eklund (The Oolahs) is 50. Actress Lisa

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Locicero is 50. Actress Tamara Braun is 49. TV chef Ludovic Lefebvre is 49. Actor Fedro Starr is 49. Actor David Tennant is 49. Country musician Marvin Evatt (EH'-veht) is 46. Rock musician Mark Tremonti is 46. Rhythm-and-blues singer Trina (Trina and Tamara) is 46. Actress Melissa Joan Hart is 44. Actor Sean Maguire is 44. Actor Kevin Rankin is 44. Actor Bryce Johnson is 43. Reality TV star Kourtney Kardashian (kar-DASH'-ee-uhn) is 41. Detroit Tigers first baseman Miguel Cabrera is 37. Actress America Ferrera is 36. Actor Tom Hughes is 35. Actress Ellen Woglom (TV: "Marvel's Inhumans") is 33. Actress Vanessa Kirby is 32. Actress Alia Shawkat is 31. Actress Britt Robertson is 30. Actress Chloe Bennet is 28. Rock singer Nathan Sykes (The Wanted) is 27. Actor Moises Arias is 26.

Thought for Today: "There is no shame in not knowing; the shame lies in not finding out." — Russian proverb.