

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, April 22, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 284 ~ 1 of 75

- [1- Sirens will sound on Today](#)
- [2- Groton City March Financial Report](#)
- [3- City Council Meeting](#)
- [3- Thanking the USPS Carriers](#)
- [4- Activities association board seeks three new members](#)
- [4- Activities group approves adding girls' wrestling](#)
- [6- Public broadcasting only bidder for SDHSAA events](#)
- [6- Activities association seeks merchandise vendor](#)
- [7- Governor Noem and GOED Announce Small Business Relief Fund Loans](#)
- [8- SD News Watch: Closure of Smithfield and other plants forces S.D. pork producers to consider desperate measures](#)
- [11- Area COVID-19 Cases](#)
- [12- April 21st COVID-19 UPDATE](#)
- [14- COVID-19 Update by Marie Miller](#)
- [19- Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs](#)
- [20- Weather Pages](#)
- [23- Daily Devotional](#)
- [24- 2020 Groton Events](#)
- [25- News from the Associated Press](#)



Sirens will sound on Today

This Wednesday April 22 at 10:30 AM Brown County will sound/ test the outdoor warning sirens as part of severe weather awareness week. Siren all across Brown County will be activated for this test. This is a change from the previous news release.

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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Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, April 22, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 284 ~ 2 of 75

Groton City March Financial Report

March 2020

1st State Bank Checking Acct	\$ 1,323,420.29
General Cash	\$ 300.00
SD FIT Acct	\$ 1,451,346.89
1st State Bank Water CD	\$ 83,654.27
BB Trust CD	\$ 1,500.00
SD FIT CD	\$ 102,514.21
Cemetery Perp Care CD	\$ 32,876.69
Total	\$ 2,995,612.35

Invested In		
Cash	\$ 300.00	0.01%
1st State Bank	\$ 1,441,451.25	48.12%
SD Fit	\$ 1,553,861.10	51.87%
Total	\$ 2,995,612.35	100.00%

	Beginning Cash Balance	Receipts	Expenditures	Transfers	Ending Cash Balance
General	\$ 288,671.45	\$ 50,309.12	\$ 31,046.69		\$ 307,933.88
Bed, Board, Booze Tax	\$ 58,634.72	\$ 3,276.40			\$ 61,911.12
Baseball Uniforms	\$ 1,710.20				\$ 1,710.20
Airport	\$ (3,527.07)		\$ -		\$ (3,527.07)
**Debt Service	\$ 329,196.27	\$ -	\$ -		\$ 329,196.27
Cemetery Perpetual Care	\$ 34,706.69				\$ 34,706.69
Water Tower	\$ 180,000.00				\$ 180,000.00
Water	\$ 151,364.32	\$ 32,851.01	\$ 12,664.02		\$ 171,551.31
Electric	\$ 1,386,461.85	\$ 165,084.12	\$ 101,136.79		\$ 1,450,409.18
Wastewater	\$ 251,762.55	\$ 17,771.64	\$ 5,383.88		\$ 264,150.31
Solid Waste	\$ 17,156.28	\$ 10,208.41	\$ 8,979.90		\$ 18,384.79
Family Crisis	\$ 6,904.58	\$ -	\$ -		\$ 6,904.58
Sales Tax	\$ 18,821.05	\$ 10,286.12	\$ 10,381.99		\$ 18,725.18
Employment	\$ 5,140.62	\$ -	\$ (3,656.61)		\$ 8,797.23
Utility Prepayments	\$ 67,184.07	\$ (179.58)			\$ 67,004.49
Utility Deposits	\$ 77,649.58	\$ -	\$ 250.00		\$ 77,399.58
Other	\$ 354.61	\$ -	\$ -		\$ 354.61
Totals	\$ 2,872,191.77	\$ 289,607.24	\$ 166,186.66	\$ -	\$ 2,995,612.35

**Debt to be Paid	
**2015 Refinance	\$ 2,533,062.50 by 12/1/2035
**West Sewer	\$ 89,026.75 by 10/15/2022
**RR Sewer Crossing	\$ 51,244.31 by 7/15/22
Total Debt	\$ 2,673,333.56

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, April 22, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 284 ~ 3 of 75



The Groton City Council meets all spread out at the Groton Community Center. Pictured are Councilmen David McGannon and David Blackmun, Finance Officer Hope Block, Mayor Scott Hanlon, City Attorney Drew Johnson, and Councilmen Shirley Wells, Karen Babcock and John Cutler. (Photo by Paul Kosel)

Allowing chickens in town discussed

Three items were discussed at the Groton City Council Meeting held Tuesday at the Groton Community Center.

The first was accepting the only soda bid for the baseball complex, pool and park, and that was from Coca-Cola. That will be contingent on if there is a summer rec season this year.

The next item was allowing chickens in town. There are three people in Groton that already have chickens. Aberdeen has an ordinance outlining the raising of chickens and the Groton City Council will review that ordinance and present something at the next meeting.

There was discussion on whether to have remote council meetings instead of personal meetings. Mayor Scott Hanlon said, "As long as we're all healthy, I would like to meet here (Groton Community Center)."



This was chaulked on the sidewalk at the Norma Helmer home on East Second Avenue. A USPS contractor alerted the Independent to this neat photo op. Groton Postmaster Mindy Vandervorst drew the art work.

Activities association board seeks three new members

By Dana Hess

For the S.D. Newspaper Association

BROOKINGS — At its annual meeting Tuesday, the South Dakota High School Activities Association took nominations to fill three upcoming openings on its board of directors.

The association, based in Pierre, held its annual meeting via teleconference.

Board members are elected for five-year terms. Among the board nominees were:

- Superintendents Heath Larson of Chester, Jeff Kosters of Frederick, Kelly Glodt of Pierre and Tom Culver of Avon are competing to serve as the East River at-large board member. This position is to be filled by a superintendent from any high school east of the Missouri River. The position is currently held by Sioux Valley High School Athletic Director Moe Ruesink of Volga.

- There was just one nomination for a school board member representing small schools to serve on the SDHSAA board. Nominated was Marty Weismantel of Groton. That position is currently held by Dave Planteen of Langford.

- Dan Conrad of Sioux Falls Washington High School and Mike Talley of Rapid City Central High School were both nominated to serve as the board's Division I representative. Division I is made up of the Sioux Falls and Rapid City school districts. The position will be filled by a secondary principal. The current Division I board member is Sioux Falls Superintendent Brian Maher.

Board members are elected by a majority of the votes cast. If no candidate earns a majority, a run-off election will be held. Ballots will be mailed to member schools by May 1 and must be returned by May 30.

The board members being replaced account for much of the board's leadership experience. Maher is a former chairman. Ruesink and Planteen currently serve as the board's chairman and vice chairman.

Member schools will also be voting on an amendment to the association's constitution that changes the mandated time required for team practices prior to the start of a season from two weeks to five days. Weather and other circumstances often cause the association to give out waivers shortening the length of time required for practices prior to the start of a sport.

The change in the constitution won't affect the first allowable contest dates or heat acclimatization rules.

—30—

Activities group approves adding girls' wrestling

By Dana Hess

For the S.D. Newspaper Association

BROOKINGS — Next year will likely see the start of SDHSAA-sanctioned girls' wrestling in South Dakota schools. The first reading approving the new sport was taken Tuesday by the South Dakota High School Activities Association's board of directors.

Meeting via teleconference, the board acted on the first reading of a variety of recommendations for changes to the SDHSAA Athletics Handbook that came out of the annual meeting of the state's athletic directors.

In the case of girls' wrestling, the board agreed to follow a pattern established in Missouri that provides four weight classes for girls' wrestling at the state tournament. The sport would be integrated into schools based on the interest shown in each school district.

The vote by athletic directors was 91-10 in favor of adding girls' wrestling.

Last year, without a separate girls' division, nearly 40 females competed in SDHSAA-sanctioned wrestling meets. About another 100 girls competed in club-only events.

The board sent a proposal to change to a five-class system in football back to the football advisory committee after some questions were raised about the amount of input that went into the proposal.

As proposed, the five-class system would include:

- 11AA—the nine largest schools according to male-only average daily membership as well as Sioux Falls O'Gorman which always seeks to be classified with larger schools. Teams would play a nine-game season

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, April 22, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 284 ~ 5 of 75

leading to an eight-team postseason.

- 11A—the next largest 16 schools which would play a nine-game season leading to an eight-team postseason.
- 11B—all remaining schools with a male-only ADM of 56.001 and greater. They would play an eight-game schedule leading to a 16-team postseason.
- 9A—the top half of all nine-man teams as determined by male-only ADM playing an eight-game season leading to a 16-team postseason.
- 9B—the remaining nine-man teams playing an eight-game season leading to a 16-team postseason.

Currently South Dakota has a six-class system with three 11-man classifications and three nine-man classifications. Since its implementation in 1999, the state has 33 fewer teams.

One of the school officials testifying against the classification proposal was Belle Fourche Athletic Director Adam Nowowiejski. "There's just too much disparity between the top and bottom," Nowowiejski said, noting the range in the number of students eligible to go out for football in the biggest schools in a division versus the smallest schools in the division.

Board member Brian Maher of Sioux Falls offered a motion to have SDHSAA staff reconvene the football advisory committee and work on a new five-class system for football. The new proposal should be ready for the board's June meeting. Maher's motion was favored on a 7-1 vote.

The board approved changes to the first allowable practice dates for 11AAA, 11AA and 11A football teams and 11B and nine-man teams. The larger divisions would start on Aug. 10 rather than Aug 13 and the small classifications would start on Aug. 6 rather than Aug. 10.

The extra days are not mandatory. The changes came because coaches said they wanted more practice opportunities to safely prepare athletes for their first contests.

The board approved the change in the first allowable practice dates despite criticism of the change from administrators representing Black Hills schools.

Steve Morford of Spearfish noted that the Black Hills Motorcycle Rally starts on Aug. 7, making it particularly tough for schools to hold practices due to all the traffic and the need for students to work during the rally.

"A large number of our athletes have rally jobs," according to Sturgis Activities Director Todd Palmer. "Having a week of missed practice would set us back tremendously."

SDHSAA Assistant Executive Director John Krogstrand said one coach had raised the issue that there are complaints from the Black Hills schools about an early start for football practices during the rally, but never any word of complaint from other fall sports like soccer, golf, and tennis.

The board decided to heed the athletic directors' wishes when it came to a proposal that would have changed soccer to a spring sport. Athletic directors voted against that proposal 7-25.

The change was proposed because some schools have said they won't add soccer because their student-athletes are already busy with other fall sports.

While athletic directors were split on the subject, the board voted in favor of adding the javelin as a standard Class AA event in the spring of 2021. Schools have seen an increasing demand for throwing the javelin when they compete with North Dakota schools.

Krogstrand used the Lemmon School District as an example, saying it needs to offer the javelin as an event in order to get North Dakota schools to compete at its meets. Lemmon athletes may be interested in the event, after watching other athletes throw the javelin.

"Here's a way of bringing it in and seeing how it goes," Krogstrand said.

SDHSAA rules would allow the use of rubber-tipped, nonmetallic javelins. Athletic directors were in favor of the proposal on a vote of 68-40.

Athletic directors were also split on the recommendation to allow the 200-meter dash to be reversed in direction. Running the race in a reverse direction would require agreement by the meet manager and the meet referee if the facility is properly marked for running the race in two directions and the wind direction would favor the switch.

Athletic directors didn't favor the change on a vote of 63-64 but the board approved the change unanimously.

Athletic directors and the SDHSAA board were in favor of a major change to the state track meet. The board approved changing the meet so that it would be held over three days at just one site. Currently the state meet is held at multiple sites over two days.

The change would take effect in the spring of 2022 with a committee appointed to figure out the logistics of setting up the three-day tournament during the coming school year.

Jordan Bauer, activities director at Rapid City Central, questioned the ability of Rapid City to host a three-day state track meet, particularly with limited bathroom facilities.

"In terms of facilities, I'd be concerned that we'd be doing justice to our kids and coaches," Bauer said.

Because the change wouldn't take place until 2022, there is time to address facility concerns, Krogstrand said.

"We've got a good amount of time to figure out those very specific capacity questions," Krogstrand said.

Athletic directors were in favor of the change on a vote of 77-62 and the board approved the change unanimously.

A second reading of the changes will take place at the board's June meeting.

—30—

Public broadcasting only bidder for SDHSAA events

By Dana Hess

For the S.D. Newspaper Association

BROOKINGS — South Dakota Public Broadcasting was the only bidder for the broadcast rights to state championships and events sanctioned by the South Dakota High School Activities Association.

The five-year bid was awarded to SDPB at the April meeting of the SDHSAA board of directors. The meeting took place in Pierre via teleconference.

The SDPB bid starts at \$100,000 for the 2020-2021 school year and increases by \$2,000 per year. The last year of the contract, 2024-2025, calls for a payment of \$108,000.

The bid includes live television broadcasts of championship football, basketball, volleyball, wrestling, track and field and the All-State Chorus and Orchestra grand concert.

Soccer, cheer and dance and gymnastics will be available on the SDPB website. Tape-delayed broadcasts are planned for the All-State Band and All-State Jazz Band concerts.

"They cover every single event that we have," said SDHSAA Executive Director Dan Swartos.

The association's ability to contract for broadcasting rights was the subject of a bill during the last legislative session. HB1213 would have kept the SDHSAA from granting exclusive broadcasting rights to its athletic and fine arts events.

Rep. Spencer Gosch, R-Glenham, sponsored the legislation, noting that broadcasters who followed a team throughout the season were not allowed to broadcast that team's games from championship tournaments. The bill was approved by the House of Representatives before being defeated by the Senate Education Committee.

Swartos said SDPB is now agreeable to allowing secondary broadcasts of championship contests.

—30—

Activities association seeks merchandise vendor

By Dana Hess

For the S.D. Newspaper Association

BROOKINGS — In an effort to help alleviate the costs incurred by school districts that host state events, the South Dakota High School Activities Association is issuing a request for proposals that seeks a vendor to sell T-shirts and souvenirs.

The SDHSAA board approved the RFP at its April meeting in Pierre. The meeting was conducted via teleconference.

The RFP calls for the vendor to pay the association \$60,000, or more, as well as 35% of gross sales, or more. The successful vendor will also provide personnel to sell the merchandise at state championship sites.

Board member Randy Soma of Brookings said schools that host state events end up paying a large share of the event's management fees.

"It would be nice to alleviate that, somehow," Soma said.

When hosting a tournament, schools often incur extra costs for workers at the events as well as substitute teachers who fill in for those workers.

Board member Brian Maher of Sioux Falls said hosting a state tournament brings economic development to the community but is not a moneymaking proposition for the school district.

"We lose money as a school district when we host those tournaments," Maher said.

SDHSAA will consider the vendor bids at its June 11 meeting.

—30—

Governor Noem and GOED Announce Small Business Relief Fund Loans

PIERRE, S.D. - Today, Governor Kristi Noem and the Governor's Office of Economic Development (GOED) announced the first 94 loan recipients of Governor Noem's Small Business Relief Fund. This fund provides small businesses in South Dakota access to capital to help during this COVID-19 pandemic.

"This crisis is historic in the worst way. So many small businesses are hurting, but my team at GOED is working to help," said Noem. "My Small Business Relief Fund has already approved just shy of 100 loans, equaling more than \$5 million, to help South Dakota communities from Keystone to Sioux Falls stay on their feet during this unprecedented pandemic."

Industries that have been approved for loans include hotels, restaurants, retail, tourism, manufacturing, and others.

Loan recipients can be found [here](#).

Here are the criteria for loan recipients:

Be a small for-profit or non-profit business as defined by SBA, but with less than 250 employees;

Physical presence in South Dakota;

Established prior to March 2020;

Provide a written acknowledgement from a South Dakota bank and/or certified public accountant that the applicant has made statements or otherwise provided information or evidence that supports applicant's claim that applicant's business has suffered material negative impact from the COVID-19 pandemic;

Have a personal credit with a minimum score of 650; lower requires a special exception;

Demonstrate 1:1 debt coverage ratio with the new debt factored under normal circumstances.

To learn more about Governor Noem's Small Business Relief Fund, visit sdgoed.com/covid-19/.

Closure of Smithfield and other plants forces S.D. pork producers to consider desperate measures

Nick Lowrey, South Dakota News Watch

The closure of major pork processing plants across the U.S., including the massive Smithfield Foods plant in Sioux Falls, has state officials and pork producers in South Dakota planning for the worst — the potential euthanization of thousands of hogs that cannot be sold.

Since the COVID-19 pandemic began, American pork processing capacity has declined as much as 25% due to closures and slowdowns at processing plants around the country.

As a result, thousands of pigs at all stages of life are backing up in barns around South Dakota as farmers race to find somewhere to take finished hogs for slaughtering and packaging. Some producers say they are selling hogs at a loss of around \$40 per animal in an effort to make space in their barns and avoid euthanization. Such losses, they say, are not sustainable if the pandemic drags on and plants that have become COVID-19 hot spots are not opened soon.

"The absolute worst case would be that we would have to work with our state veterinarians and our local vets and follow the guidelines set forth by them and in the national pork board on humanely euthanizing these hogs and having to dispose of them," said Shane Odegaard, a pork producer who lives near Lake Preston. "It's something nobody wants to do. But, heaven forbid, if there's absolutely no place to go with these hogs, you just can't keep them around forever from the standpoint of animal welfare."

Between plant closures and slowdowns around the country, COVID-19 has cut pork processing capacity by about a quarter of its pre-pandemic capacity, said Glenn Muller, executive director of the South Dakota Pork Producers' Council.

The loss of processing capacity translates to about 100,000 fewer hogs being processed in the country every day, Odegaard said. Statistics show it won't take long for a massive backlog of hogs to reach a critical stage.

South Dakota recorded a crop of 1.75 million finished hogs in the month of March alone, according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture. The state's hog producers also expected 140,000 sows to give birth to litters of 10 or more piglets from March to May, the USDA reported. South Dakota is ranked 11th out of the 50 states in terms of annual hog production, according to the national Pork Checkoff.

Pork production is a step-by-step, five or six month process that is difficult and costly to interrupt. When hogs are finished, or fully grown, they weigh about 280 pounds and must be moved out of barns for sale and processing to make room for the arrival of younger pigs and because it is expensive and time-



Hog farmers across South Dakota are facing pressure to offload animals in any way possible because the COVID-19 pandemic has led to closure of meat-packing plants and reduction of processing capacity by 25% or more. Photo: Bart Pfankuch, South Dakota News Watch

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, April 22, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 284 ~ 9 of 75

consuming to continue feeding them and handling their wastes. It is also inhumane to keep too many pigs in too small a space.

Raising pigs has become a precision industry with very little idle space in barns and a constant stream of new hogs being born, said state veterinarian Dustin Oedekoven, who would be responsible for overseeing mass euthanizations should they be necessary. Processing plant closures will affect the pork production chain at every level, meaning producers will have to make increasingly difficult decisions — including whether to euthanize pigs — as the pork processing slowdown drags on.

"It's an emotional, gut-wrenching thought to have, but it's the responsible thought to have if the welfare of the animals is going to suffer anywhere along that chain," Oedekoven said. "And that may be the sow that needs room to gestate, it might be a piglet that needs room to grow, it could be the finished hog that's just flat out of space to grow anymore."

If the processing slowdown doesn't reverse course soon, many producers will start having to euthanize market-weight hogs between May 1 and May 15, Oedekoven said. He noted that, so far, no producer has reported euthanizing large numbers of hogs.

But the situation has only gotten worse over the past week. The Sioux Falls Smithfield plant was processing around 19,000 hogs per day before shutting down indefinitely on April 12. That closure was bad enough, but within days Smithfield announced the closure of two other plants in different states. Then, on April 20, a JBS pork processing plant in Worthington, Minn. that was processing 20,000 hogs per day also shut down due to COVID-19 infections.

News of the Worthington plant closure was just as devastating as the Sioux Falls Smithfield closure, Odegaard said. He has historically sold up to 15,000 hogs per year, mostly to the Sioux Falls plant. While he has had some recent success finding processors with capacity to take his hogs — he has a load scheduled to be trucked to a processor in Nebraska at a \$40 per-head loss — Odegaard said he still has 400 to 500 finished hogs backlogged in his barns. And there are more pigs on the way.

"For every pig that goes to harvest, there's one being born. The infrastructure is not there to be able to just hold on to these pigs," Odegaard said. "For one thing, we don't have the building space we need to keep these pigs around, and second you just can't keep feeding them with the hopes of something happening here real soon."

The pressure on producers to offload finished animals has provided some unexpected work for small meat processing plants, such as Western Buffalo Company in Rapid City.

The shop with 22 employees typically processes about 70 buffalo a week to provide meat for restaurants, a market that has tanked during the pandemic, company owner Bruce Anderson said.

Anderson said he is taking several calls a day and has welcomed the business from people who have purchased whole hogs at a major discount from producers that are desperate to sell finished animals at any price.

"They're buying from producers who are saying, 'I can get a pig to you for a 100 dollar bill, but you've got to find a place to cut it,'" Anderson said. "If they can buy a pig for that little, less than half the price as normal, they can fill up their freezer with meat."

"The absolute worst case would be ... humanely euthanizing these hogs and having to dispose of them. It's something nobody wants to do. But, heaven forbid, if there's absolutely no place to go with these hogs, you just can't keep them around forever from the standpoint of animal welfare."

-- Shane Odegaard,
Lake Preston pork producer



Shane Odegaard

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, April 22, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 284 ~ 10 of 75

Given the sudden demand for hog processing, Anderson has shifted his system to handle pigs in an effort to serve the buyers but also to help sustain the market for hog farmers.

"We'll help these guys get some cash out of their hogs so they can stay in business any way they can," Anderson said. "It's a difficult situation for producers, but it's the best they can do given the current conditions."

Odegaard has sold some of his pigs directly to consumers and taken them to local meat lockers for processing. Direct sales do provide a small injection of cash but, more importantly, it's a way to reduce his backlog of animals. However, transporting hogs to multiple processors opens the door to exposing his remaining hogs to disease, Odegaard said.

Local meat processors also can't sell meat across state lines, so their ability is limited to fill gaps left by large processor shutdowns, such as the Sioux Falls Smithfield closure. The Animal Industry Board regulates between 60 and 80 such lockers, Odekoven said. But a 1968 federal law forbids state-inspected meat processors from selling their products in other states, despite meeting the same inspection standards as large processors.

"They do good work. We'd like to see their services be able to be expanded," Odekoven said. "The Renner locker, for example, can produce a product that can be packaged and sold in Lemmon or Rapid City but could not go over to Rock Rapids, Iowa just across the border. It just makes no sense."

South Dakota U.S. Senator Mike Rounds in September 2019 introduced legislation that would allow some state-inspected meat processors to sell products across state lines. Still, local meat lockers probably would not be able to make up much more than one or two percent of what processors such as Smithfield can do, Odekoven said.

In an effort to give farmers more options to handle backlogged pigs, South Dakota Gov. Kristi Noem issued an executive order on April 20 that would allow hog producers to keep more pigs in their barns than their Concentrated Animal Feeding Operation permits currently allow. The measure would only be effective during the COVID-19 emergency.

The South Dakota State University Extension Service has also issued guidance on how to safely and humanely reduce the amount of food given to hogs in order to slow their growth.

While such measures will help stave off euthanasia for a few weeks, Odekoven said, the only way to truly solve the problem is to reopen processing plants.

"The best way to dispose of those hogs is through the normal slaughter channels out there," Odekoven said. "That's what they were raised for, that's what the intention was. We've just got to get our slaughter capacity back up and going again, and that's not an easy thing to do."

— South Dakota News Watch reporter Bart Pfankuch contributed to this report.



ABOUT

NICK LOWREY

Nick Lowrey, based in Pierre, S.D., is an investigative staff reporter for South Dakota News Watch. A South Dakotan for more than 20 years, he is a former editor of the Pierre Capital Journal.



ABOUT BART PFANKUCH

Bart Pfankuch, Rapid City, S.D., is the content director for South Dakota News Watch. A Wisconsin native, he is a former editor of the Rapid City Journal and also worked at newspapers in Florida. Bart has spent more than 30 years as a reporter, editor and writing coach.

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, April 22, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 284 ~ 11 of 75

Area COVID-19 Cases

	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	6,202	6,510	6,893	7,303	7,691	7,941	8,280	8,675	
Wyoming	230	239	253	261	270	275	282	288	296	
North Dakota	251	269	278	293	308	331	341	365	393	439
South Dakota	393	447	536	626	730	868	988	1,168	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

	Apr. 18	Apr. 19	Apr. 20	Apr. 21
Minnesota	2,213	2,356	2,470	2,567
Nebraska	1,287	1,474	1,648	1,722
Montana	426	433	433	437
Colorado	9,433	9,730	10,106	10,447
Wyoming	309	313	317	322
North Dakota	528	585	627	644
South Dakota	1542	1635	1685	1755
United States	735,287	758,720	786,638	824,438
US Deaths	39,090	40,666	42,295	45,039

Minnesota	+142	+143	+114	+97
Nebraska	+149	+187	+174	+74
Montana	+4	+7	0	+4
Colorado	+379	+297	+376	+341
Wyoming	+7	+4	+4	+5
North Dakota	+89	+57	+42	+17
South Dakota	+131	+93	+50	+70
United States	+28,508	+23,433	+27,918	+37,800
US Deaths	+2,011	+1,576	+1,629	+2,744

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, April 22, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 284 ~ 12 of 75

April 21st COVID-19 UPDATE

South Dakota:

Positive: +70 (1755 total) - 20 more than yesterday

Negative: +419 (11,060 total)

Hospitalized: +13 (100 total)

Deaths: +1 in Minnehaha (8 total)

Recovered: +63 (824 total)

Still looking at a peak of the second week of June.

Counties with no positive cases report the following negative tests: Bennett 10, Brule 36, Buffalo +2 (9), Butte 13, Campbell 7, Custer 13, Day +1 (44), Dewey +1 (21), Douglas 21, Edmunds 18, Grant 30, Gregory 28, Haakon 10, Hand 18, Hanson 18, Harding 1, Jackson 3, Jones 4, Kingsburgy 55, McPherson +1 (12), Mellette 11, Perkins +4 (4), Potter 27, Stanley 29, Tripp 49, Ziebach 3, unassigned +20 (1051).

Brown: +1 recovered (12 of 20 recovered)

Charles Mix: +1 recovered (4 of 4 recovered)

Davison: +1 positive (4 total)

Hamlin: +1 recovered (2 of 2 recovered)

Lincoln: +4 positive, +3 recovered (51 of 99 recovered)

Minnehaha: +64 positive, +105 recovered (619 of 1469 recovered)

Smithfield: 761 positive among employees, 143 on close contact.

Moody: +1 positive (2 total)

Pennington: +1 recovered (8 of 11 recovered)

Spink: +1 recovered (3 of 3 recovered)

Yankton: +1 recovered (21 of 23 recovered)

The NDDoH & private labs are reporting 240 total completed tests today for COVID-19, with 18 new positive cases, bringing the statewide total to 644.

State & private labs have conducted 14,987 total tests with 14,343 negative results.

214 ND patients are considered recovered.

COVID-19 IN SOUTH DAKOTA

Total Positive Cases*	1755
Total Negative Cases*	11060
Recovered	824
Ever Hospitalized**	100
Deaths***	8

AGE GROUP OF SOUTH DAKOTA COVID-19 CASES

Age Range	# of Cases	# of Deaths
0-19 years	98	0
20-29 years	330	0
30-39 years	408	0
40-49 years	361	0
50-59 years	316	2
60-69 years	168	3
70-79 years	35	1
80+ years	39	2

Broton Daily Independent

Wednesday, April 22, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 284 ~ 13 of 75

County	Positive Cases	Recovered Cases	Negative Cases
Aurora	1	1	34
Beadle	21	19	163
Bennett	0	0	10
Bon Homme	4	3	89
Brookings	9	9	278
Brown	20	12	418
Brule	0	0	36
Buffalo	0	0	9
Butte	0	0	13
Campbell	0	0	7
Charles Mix	4	4	64
Clark	1	1	44
Clay	5	4	102
Codington	13	12	375
Corson	1	1	7
Custer	0	0	13
Davison	4	3	248
Day	0	0	44
Deuel	1	1	61
Dewey	0	0	21
Douglas	0	0	21
Edmunds	0	0	18
Fall River	1	1	11
Faulk	1	1	14
Grant	0	0	30
Gregory	0	0	28
Haakon	0	0	10
Hamlin	2	2	49
Hand	0	0	18
Hanson	0	0	18
Harding	0	0	1
Hughes	5	5	199
Hutchinson	2	2	70

Hyde	1	1	7
Jackson	0	0	3
Jerauld	4	4	24
Jones	0	0	4
Kingsbury	0	0	55
Lake	3	2	87
Lawrence	9	9	61
Lincoln	99	51	1053
Lyman	2	2	18
Marshall	1	1	33
McCook	3	2	78
McPherson	0	0	12
Meade	1	1	55
Mellette	0	0	11
Miner	1	0	16
Minnehaha	1469	619	4591
Moody	2	0	72
Oglala Lakota	1	1	21
Pennington	11	8	341
Perkins	0	0	4
Potter	0	0	27
Roberts	4	4	74
Sanborn	3	2	32
Spink	3	3	79
Stanley	0	0	29
Sully	1	1	12
Todd	1	1	32
Tripp	0	0	49
Turner	6	3	111
Union	7	3	105
Walworth	5	4	25
Yankton	23	21	362
Ziebach	0	0	3
Unassigned****	0	0	1051

SEX OF SOUTH DAKOTA COVID-19 CASES

Sex	# of Cases	# of Deaths
Female	819	2
Male	936	6

COVID-19 DEATHS IN SOUTH DAKOTA BY COUNTY

County of Residence	# of Deaths
Beadle	2
McCook	1
Minnehaha	4
Pennington	1

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, April 22, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 284 ~ 14 of 75

Covid-19 Update by Marie Miller

We have another day where most of the indicators continue to tick down with the occasional hiccup. We now have 804,702 reported cases in the US. Both the raw number and the percentage increase have declined, the percentage for the fifth consecutive day. NY at 251,720 and NJ at 92,387 have 43% of the US cases; the rate of increase continues to decline for both. Following them are MA - 41,199, CA - 35,628 PA - 34,751, IL - 33,059, MI - 32,935, FL - 27,861, LA - 24,854, and T - 20,771. Together, these ten states have 74% of the nation's cases. There is 1 more state with over 20,000 cases, 6 more over 10,000, 7 more over 5000, 18 + DC and PR over 1000, 8 + GU over 100, and VI and MP under 100.

There have been 40,266 deaths. NY has 14,828, NJ has 5753, MI has 2698, MA has 1961 PA has 1576, IL has 1479, CT has 1423, LA has 1405, and CA has 1291. Increase in total deaths by both raw number and percentage grew today.

A few states have begun to loosen the restrictions in movement they'd placed on citizens. This occurred in SC, FL, and GA; we'll be watching to see what happens and hoping the news is good.

For those who don't follow the comment stream on these updates, I'll let you know I had an interesting exchange with a former student yesterday about the state of antibody testing in recovering Covid-19 patients. I'd been trying to figure out just what state of this kind of testing is in, but turns out this particular former student is working in a public health lab where it is her business to know these things, and she was able to let us know the tests now available for antibodies aren't so great because they are not specific to SARS-CoV-2, but rather tell us whether you have antibodies to any of a number of coronaviruses. This is not particularly helpful in detecting folks who've been making antibodies not to some random coronavirus that caused you a cold just lately, but to this specific coronavirus that causes Covid-19. So we're still on the drawing board in this regard. She did indicate there are some more promising candidates on the horizon, so we'll stay tuned for developments..

I have read of a new test supposed to be rolled out in May in huge numbers; the manufacturer is working with the FDA now for an emergency use authorization (EUA) for the test. I don't know whether this one will be more specific, but it's something to watch.

It is also important to note that having antibodies against this virus doesn't necessarily mean it's dandy for you to go wandering around among other people. Presence of the antibody might mean you are currently infected or only very recently recovered and still shedding virus, and in that case, you'd be the wrong person to be out wandering around. There will be refinements to this as we go along, but for now, there's work yet to be done.

I've seen results from a preprint of a retrospective study of hydroxychloroquine and azithromycin usage in patients at VA hospitals. The results were not encouraging. Of 368 male patients with 97 receiving hydroxychloroquine, 113 receiving the combination of the two drugs, and 158 receiving neither, the authors concluded, "we found no evidence that use of hydroxychloroquine, either with or without azithromycin, reduced the risk of mechanical ventilation in patients hospitalized with Covid-19. An association of increased mortality was identified in patients treated with hydroxychloroquine alone." They also noted that a study of cloroquine reported to have in vitro (lab) activity against the virus at similar peak serum concentrations in humans was stopped early because those high doses caused cardiac toxicity and higher fatality rates. In typical understated scientific fashion, the authors concluded there was no benefit from these drugs and recommended caution in using hydroxychloroquine for Covid-19 therapy until controlled studies have been completed.

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, April 22, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 284 ~ 15 of 75

Another thing that came across my desk just yesterday is a fascinating group of articles by and about physicians working in the heart of this pandemic in New York City. Their observations and speculation about a phenomenon they're seeing might have a fairly important effect on the ways we're treating seriously ill Covid-19 patients. Understand that the best way for this sort of discovery to be assessed and evaluated would be through study over time in carefully selected samples of patients, but given the crisis mode in which they're practicing, that's simply not able to happen. As a result, at the moment, what we're going to see is this sort of method of working from what we know.

What they're seeing is patients who present in the emergency department with respiratory disease that doesn't exactly look like any pneumonia they've seen before, and it's raising some questions about how best to treat. Like a lot of things to do with this virus, the details are sort of complicated, so let's talk first about lung infections, specifically pneumonia.

Last night, we talked about those tiny alveoli (air sacs) way in the deepest part of your lungs, basically little balloons filled with air whose job is to exchange oxygen for carbon dioxide with your blood: The blood unloads carbon dioxide collected from various tissues around your body and picks up a new load of oxygen to haul off to those same tissues.

Now if you've ever blown up a lot of balloons for a children's party, you will probably remember that, for most balloons, you put them to your lips and give a few puffs of air, and the balloon inflates quite easily. You can go along at a pretty good clip, inflating one balloon and moving on to the next. But then, with no warning, you grab one and start to puff—and it feels like you just dislocated your jaw. Because that balloon is NOT inflating like the others. (I don't know what's with balloon quality control, but they are not all the same, as it turns out.) What you generally do next is to pull and tug at the thing to loosen it up, trying again—only this time you've been warned, so your jaw stays in place. If you can't get it to inflate, eventually you move on to the next one.

Well, those alveoli inflate and deflate sort of the way balloons do, only they don't inflate because you force air into them from the opening at the top. Instead, your diaphragm, a muscle across the entire bottom of your chest cavity, contracts, moving downward, which makes your chest cavity larger, just like someone opening up an accordion. And that increased volume creates negative air pressure inside your chest (just like the accordion), which draws air through your airway right down into the alveoli. Healthy lungs are nice and stretchy, inflating easily like most of the balloons did; that negative pressure is enough to get air into the alveoli and stretch them a bit. Then when it's time to exhale, the diaphragm relaxes and moves upward, which makes the chest cavity smaller, pushing the air back out and deflating the lungs. Now the lungs don't collapse entirely, which is a very good thing because once completely collapsed, it would take a huge effort to get air back in there again. Instead, you retain some air in your lungs all of the time.

One of the things that prevents collapse of all those alveoli is a surfactant substance made in lung cells. These molecules have a lot in common with the detergent you use for dishwashing (also a surfactant), and they act in pretty much the same way—to reduce surface tension. When you're washing dishes, that reduced surface tension means the washing water covers the surface of the dish well so it can lift away bits of food. When you're breathing, the smaller the alveolus gets, the closer together the surfactant molecules get until they sort of repel one another, which holds the alveolus to a minimum size. This prevents the last of the air from leaving and holds the alveolus open. Important work. Nice stretchy lungs that inflate easily—like the "good" balloons—are called compliant lungs. And that's how we like them so that breathing isn't too much work.

So, when a patient has pneumonia, the picture is different. As a result of the tissue damage from the

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, April 22, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 284 ~ 16 of 75

virus and the rush of immune cells and fluid to the site of the infection, fluid and pus builds up in some of the alveoli. When those guys are full of fluid, they can't do gas exchange any more. If a lot of alveoli in a section of the lung all get filled with fluid, the doctor will say you have consolidation in that area. Consolidation is not a good thing. Because of the fluid, your lungs get sort of stiff and non-stretchy—that is, less compliant, and breathing becomes hard work. You have to really exert yourself to keep breathing going, maybe recruiting some additional muscles that don't generally have to help with breathing. And because there's not enough gas exchange happening, the amount of oxygen in your blood drops and carbon dioxide builds up too. You can do OK with a little less than normal oxygen levels in your blood, but if that goes too low, you're in some trouble. Your breathing becomes rapid, shallow, and labored; you're sort of gasping for air. Your heart rate goes up. It can hurt to breathe. You are in distress. You show up in an emergency department looking like that, and someone's going to do something in a hurry.

Usually, the first thing they're going to do is find out how low your oxygen level is. This is easy to measure in most people with a little device called a pulse oximeter. It clips on the end of your finger and by passing a beam of light through your finger (you're just a little bit transparent, it turns out) and measuring how much comes out the other side, something called oxygen saturation can be measured. That number's supposed to be upwards of 95% or so. Folks will start getting worried if you're below about 92%, and by the time you get down around 80-85%, you may be confused and experience some visual disturbances. This is because your brain is the organ most sensitive to oxygen deprivation, and so the effects of hypoxia (low oxygen) show up neurologically first. Below 65%, there is usually serious mental impairment, and you're going to be unconscious by the time you're down around 55%. But the alarm bells will be going off well before you get that low.

Now the way your body knows you're having oxygen problems before things get out of hand is a center in your brain that measures carbon dioxide in your blood. (Remember, if you can't get oxygen into the blood, you also can't get carbon dioxide out of it; those two things happen at the same time in your alveoli.) As soon as that level gets above normal, your brain tells your diaphragm to speed up breathing to get more oxygen into your lungs and your heart to speed up to get that oxygenated blood out to tissues faster. The problem is, if your lungs are stiff and can't expand well enough with your own breathing efforts, there is mechanical failure—the inability to get enough air in to serve the body's needs. So then we have to find a way to shove air into them. This is where the mechanical ventilator comes in. The doctor will stick a tube into your airway and hook you up to a machine that gives your breathing muscles a break, pushing air into lungs from the top instead of drawing it in from the bottom. That has its problems and drawbacks, but if you'll die without the support, then we do what we have to, right?

Thing is, only around 20-30% of Covid-19 patients who have serious lung problems present like this. That leaves a whole bunch of them who look very different, and doctors are finding that baffling. I've been reading some folks' thoughts about what's going on in those folks.

They're showing up at the hospital complaining that they've felt sick for a few hours or a few days, but just recently developed shortness of breath, so they have come in to have that evaluated. They're breathing fast, but having minimal distress, perfectly able to walk and carry on a conversation; this is not the usual look of a person in serious respiratory trouble. But they end up with a pulse oximeter on, and the numbers it returns have been startling—and worrying. People are walking around with oxygen saturation readings almost down to 50% before they feel short of breath. That's very odd, even unheard of. That patient is critically ill and doesn't know it because his lungs are not stiff and filled with fluid—they're still compliant; there's no mechanical failure here.

Now you might wonder why we care so much if the guy's doing so well; but there's the rub. They're not

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, April 22, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 284 ~ 17 of 75

actually doing that well; but because they don't know it, they don't come in for treatment until it's pretty darned late, whereas if they'd been seen sooner, they could have received treatment and prevented the need for ventilation. These folks can go from walking around to collapsed and near death, sometimes within minutes. And that's pretty scary.

One doctor wrote, "Never before in my life have I had to ask a patient to get off the phone because it was time to put in a breathing tube." But that's how it's happening. This patient had an oxygen saturation level the doctor said we'd generally think of as incompatible with life, and he was chatting away on his cell phone. Next thing in his future was maybe going to be dying.

So doctors are working to sort out just what's operating there. What I've been able to discover is that there are a lot of questions, but here is some interesting speculation about what might be happening. We know this virus attacks the lung cells that produce surfactant—that stuff that prevents alveoli from collapsing. And so they're collapsing. That's going to make it tough to get oxygen into the blood. The lungs, however, remain compliant (stretchy) because they're not full of fluid—that's not why they're unable to function properly. It's also why they don't look like lungs with pneumonia on X-rays. So you breathe pretty normally, probably faster since your oxygen level is so low, but you're not laboring. Because you're still able to expel carbon dioxide, your brain doesn't notice a problem right away; as a result you don't feel short of breath because your brain isn't signaling that to you. You are breathing faster and harder than normal, but because your lungs are expanding normally and you're not working too hard, you don't realize this so much and you just report some level of difficulty, not the full-blown crisis your body is having.

Some physicians have suggested this looks a lot like high-altitude pulmonary edema (HAPE), a condition seen in mountain-climbers who ascend too quickly at very high altitudes; but HAPE specialists disagree and caution against using HAPE treatments in these patients. It's well above my pay grade to weigh in on that, so I'll let the experts fight it out and report on the results if they become available.

The problem here is that this faster, harder breathing sets up some inflammation in your lungs, which causes the collapse of additional alveoli; turns out your attempts to breathe injure the lungs further. Now fluid builds up, the lungs become stiff, carbon dioxide levels shoot up, and very quickly you've gone from the cell phone thing to acute respiratory failure. And now it's getting pretty late to help you.

There is speculation that this atypical picture and rapid deterioration is why we're seeing so many patients needing ventilation from this infection when similar lung infections have not historically required ventilation for so many. And some doctors are now questioning whether immediately putting these "silent hypoxia" patients on a vent is a good plan at all. They're thinking the ventilation might be doing further damage and that a more measured approach might prevent progression and avoid the need for mechanical ventilation entirely. They are using positioning, something called proning, where you place the patient on her stomach or side to open up the lung lobes most often affected by Covid-19 infections. This has been reported to ease the breathing problems and prevent progression in some patients; one doctor reported that three-quarters of these patients were able to stay off the vent within the first 24 hours, which I gather is the critical time period.

Now, not being a physician, much less a pulmonologist or emergency or intensive care specialist, I am not equipped to evaluate how reasonable this approach is, but as I said from the top, we're in a place where there really isn't time for long-term studies of this and that. These people are making decisions on the fly; and so when experienced doctors who do know the things I don't suggest there may be a different way, I'm certainly interested to hear what they have to say.

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, April 22, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 284 ~ 18 of 75

I don't think a great many physicians are reading these updates, but if any are, I'd be most pleased to hear from those folks on this subject. This is something to follow as time goes on. Better treatments, especially those that avoid the dangers (and resource drain) of mechanical ventilation will save lives too.

So we are into another week of this pandemic. Some things are looking up, but there's clearly still a fair distance ahead of us. I think one of the difficulties is not knowing how long this will go on. I remember one of my times in grad school with small children at home, a full-time job, and my studies and research, it seemed like I would never get my head above water. But I could look at the calendar, see my projected graduation date, and know exactly how much longer I was going to have to do this. Having an end point made everything far easier to get through. Now, though, all we know is we're going to be doing this for a long while yet. And that's pretty unsatisfying.

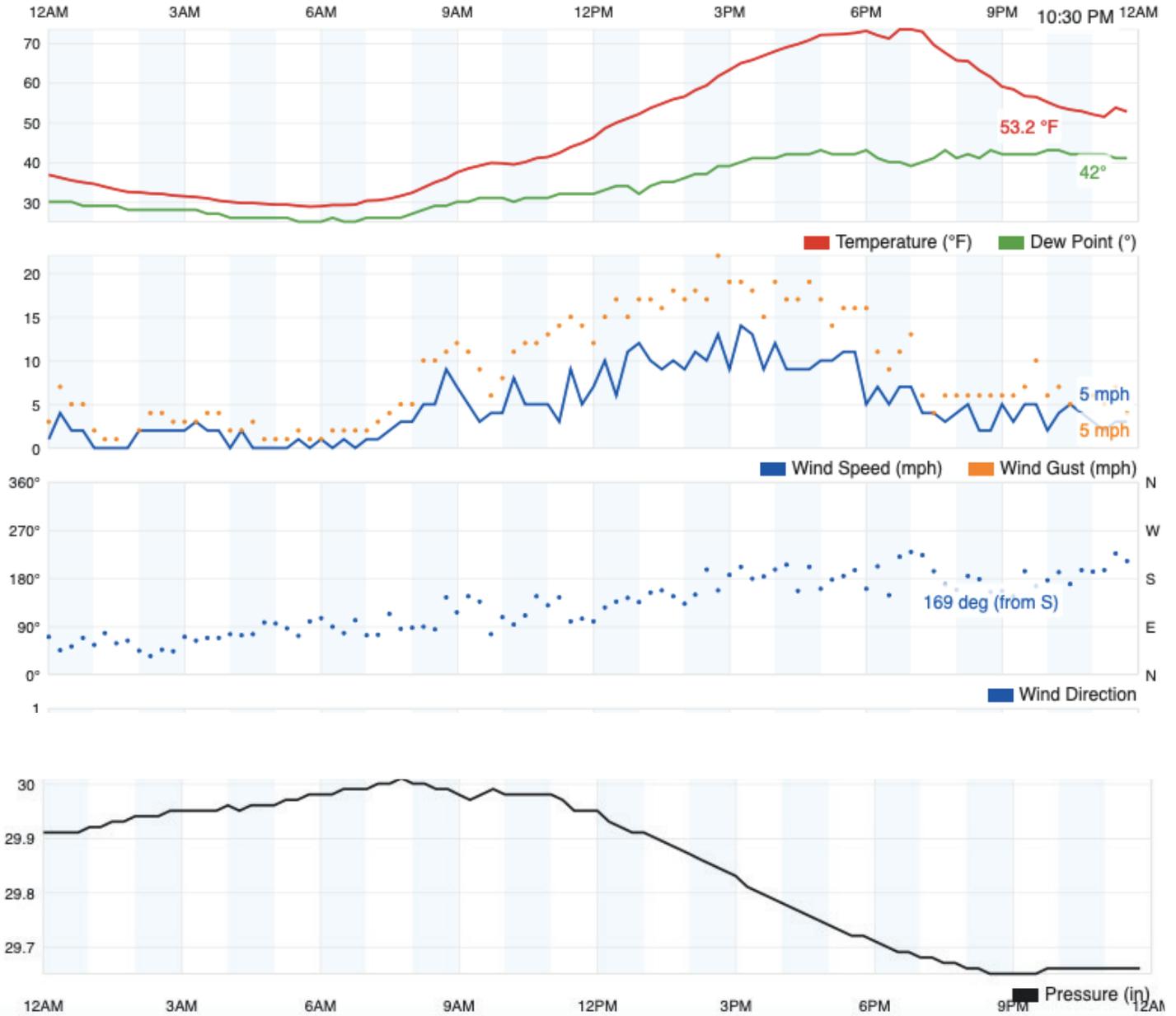
It's easy to become impatient and decide to just throw caution to the winds, go out and do things, have a normal life again. Even when you know better. Mitch Albom wrote about those feelings in Sunday's Detroit Free Press, saying, "But we also know you can't rebuild if you're dead. And those of us healthy enough to survive COVID-19 could still spread it to someone who is not, without knowing it. We are all potential victims. We are all potential killers." And I would add we are all potential heroes. Be a hero. Stay home, care for your fellow humans, ride this thing out. Unlike grad school, we don't know when this will end; but like grad school, we know it will. I'd like you and yours to still be here on that day.

Be well.

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, April 22, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 284 ~ 19 of 75

Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs



Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, April 22, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 284 ~ 20 of 75

Today



Sunny

High: 74 °F

Tonight



Partly Cloudy

Low: 42 °F

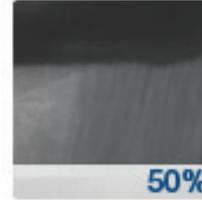
Thursday



Partly Sunny
then Chance
Showers

High: 65 °F

Thursday
Night



Chance
Showers

Low: 45 °F

Friday



Chance
Showers

High: 60 °F

NATIONAL WEATHER SERVICE

Breezy and Warm Wednesday

NARR

**Mostly Sunny;
Highs in the Upper
60s to Low 70s...**

**...Breezy Northwest
Winds of 20 to 30 mph**

Above average temperatures are on tap again Wednesday along with mostly sunny skies and breezy northwest winds of 20 to 30 mph. Shower and thunderstorm chances return to the area Thursday and Friday.

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, April 22, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 284 ~ 21 of 75

Today in Weather History

April 22, 1968: A late season snow storm affected most of South Dakota, with the heaviest snowfall measuring 18 inches at Eagle Butte. Also, localized icing damaged utility lines, and 40 mph winds caused localized blizzard conditions. Some calf losses were reported.

April 22, 1992: With a fresh blanket of snow from a recent snowstorm helping to keep the air cool the high temperature at Sioux Falls only reached 31 degrees. This cold temperature is the latest below freezing high temperature on record in Sioux Falls.

April 22, 2001: Heavy snow of 7 to 15 inches fell across much of central and northeast South Dakota from early on the 22nd to early on the 23rd. Some freezing rain also brought heavy icing in Buffalo, Eastern Lyman, and far southern Roberts counties resulting in some downed trees and branches along with some downed power lines. This late season snowstorm caused many travel problems along with some accidents. There were many vehicles in the ditch along Interstate-29 in Roberts County. Many schools and events were either canceled or delayed on the 22nd and 23rd. The heavy snow also caused problems with ranchers and their livestock with some calves lost in the storm. Around 9:30 am on the 23rd in Kennebec, the heavy snow resulted in the roof of the 40 by 64-foot feed and seed warehouse to collapse. Late season record snowfalls were set at Aberdeen and Pierre. Some snowfall amounts included 7 inches at Timber Lake and Leola, 8 inches at Eagle Butte, Mobridge and Aberdeen, 9 inches at Kennebec and Pollock, 10 inches at Gettysburg, Selby, Redfield, and Webster, and 11 inches at Onida, Mission Ridge, Hosmer, and Columbia. Locations with snowfall amounts of a foot or more included, 12 inches at Britton, Ree Heights, Highmore, Blunt, Seneca, and Pierre, 13 inches at Murdo, Presho, Miller, and Wilmot, 14 inches at Roy Lake and southwest of Harrold, and 15 inches at Saint Lawrence.

1883: A tornado outbreak from Louisiana to Kansas claimed the lives of at least 127 people and injured over 800 others. One of the tornadoes destroyed the town of Beauregard, Mississippi. Click [HERE](#) for more information from GenDisasters.com.

1978: Lightning sometimes strikes tents. In this case, a tent containing some sleeping Girl Scouts was hit by lightning as they were camping at DeGray Lake in Arkansas. Two of the Girl Scouts suffered minor burns.

1999: A one million dollar air charter Bowling 727 flew into large hail. Although the plane and its 66 occupants landed safely, the aircraft was declared a total loss.

2003: Tropical Storm Ana became the first Atlantic tropical storm since records began in 1871 to form during the month April. Maximum sustained winds reached 55 mph. Starting as a non-tropical area of low pressure on the 18th about 210 miles south-southwest of Bermuda, it was classified as a sub-tropical storm early on the 20th, it gained full tropical characteristics near 0000 UTC on the 21st, developing an "eye" feature.

1980 - A record April heat wave sent the mercury up to the 100 degree mark in Iowa. (The Weather Channel)

1987 - Fifteen cities in the southeastern U.S. reported new record high temperatures for the date. The afternoon high of 96 degrees at Pensacola FL established a record for the month of April. (The National Weather Summary)

1988 - Heavy snow fell over northern Nebraska, with 15 inches reported at Mullen. Heavy snow also blanketed the mountains of northern Arizona, with 16 inches reported at Munds Park. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1989 - Twenty-seven cities in the central U.S. reported record high temperatures for the date. The high of 96 degrees at Omaha was an April record, and the high of 100 degrees at Lubbock TX equalled their record for April. Hill City KS and Liberal KS tied for honors as the hot spot in the nation with afternoon highs of 103 degrees. (The National Weather Summary)

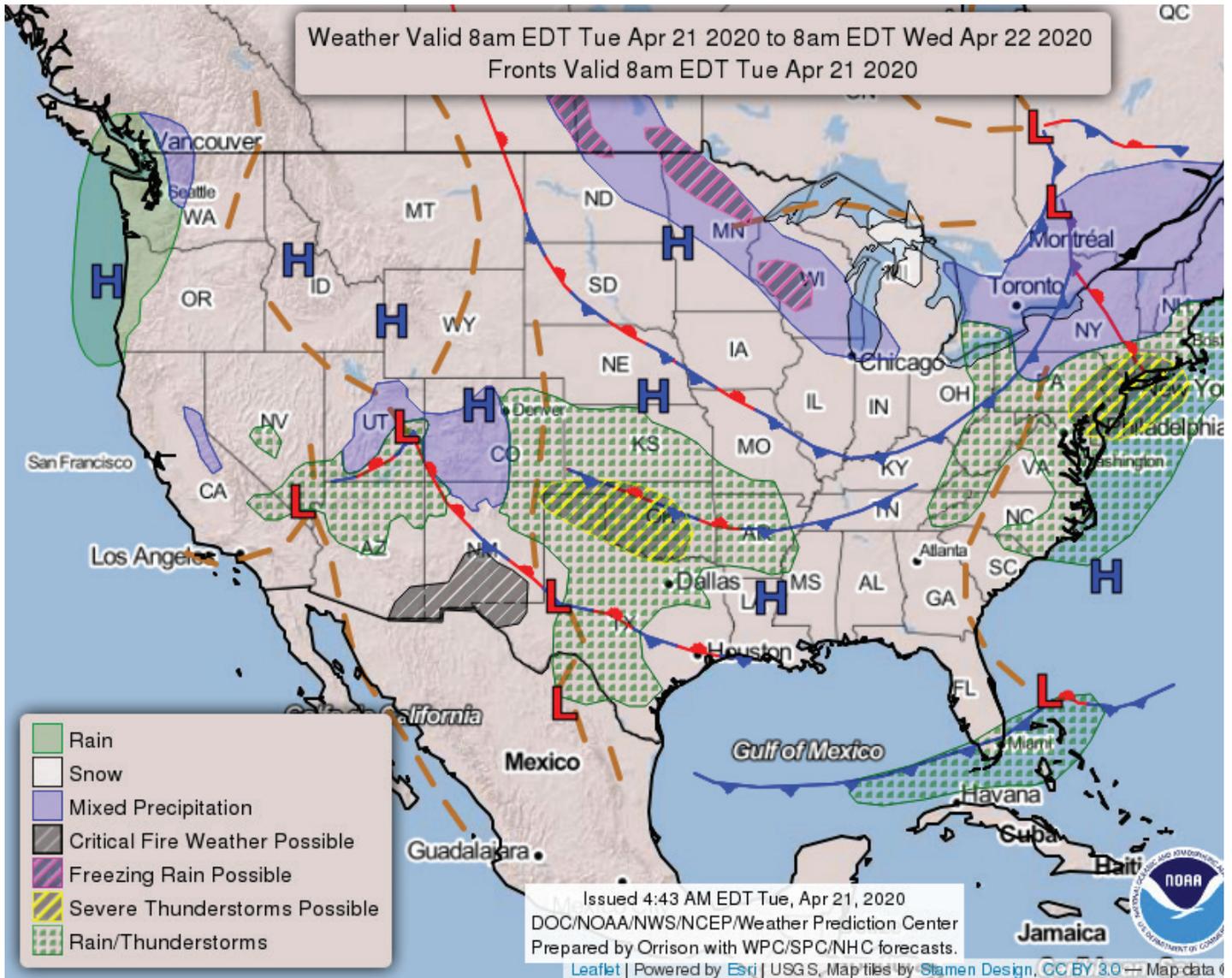
Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, April 22, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 284 ~ 22 of 75

Yesterday's Groton Weather Today's Info

High Temp: 73.4
Low Temp: 28.8
Wind: 22
Precip:

Record High: 90° in 1990, 1908
Record Low: 15° in 2015
Average High: 61°F
Average Low: 34°F
Average Precip in April.: 1.11
Precip to date in April.: 0.94
Average Precip to date: 3.29
Precip Year to Date: 1.29
Sunset Tonight: 8:30 p.m.
Sunrise Tomorrow: 6:34 a.m.



Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, April 22, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 284 ~ 23 of 75



ALL TOGETHER – NOW – SMILE!

It was her first day at work, and the manager was carefully going over the responsibilities of being his secretary with her. After thoroughly explaining her tasks, he said, "Now I'd like to tell you a few things about myself so you will know what kind of person I am."

He then began telling her about his college career - how he excelled in academics and athletics. He then started to talk about his accomplishments with the company, how he received one promotion after another and was rewarded with raises and bonuses. He spent a great amount of time bragging about himself.

Finally, in her frustration, she asked, "Tell me, sir, have you ever had a group photo taken of yourself?"

Many worry about being properly recognized for their position and status. We want others to know what we can do and how well we can do it - whether they are interested in us or not. We want others to look to us and stand in awe of our accomplishments.

However, Peter warns us to remember that it is God's recognition that matters most. Human praise is one thing but God's approval is really all that counts. In His own time, God will bless our efforts and honor our work. We must also remember that His recognition may not come in this lifetime. But, if we are faithful to Him and give Him the glory, He will surely reward us in heaven. And, that's what matters most!

Prayer: Lord, whatever we do in life is because of Your gifts and grace. Our talents and skills, abilities and strength come to us to give back to You in serving others. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: 1 Peter 5:6 So humble yourselves under the mighty power of God, and at the right time he will lift you up in honor.

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, April 22, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 284 ~ 24 of 75

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

SD Lottery

By The Associated Press undefined

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

Mega Millions

13-15-24-67-70, Mega Ball: 17, Megaplier: 2

(thirteen, fifteen, twenty-four, sixty-seven, seventy; Mega Ball: seventeen; Megaplier: two)

Estimated jackpot: \$164 million

Powerball

Estimated jackpot: \$29 million

The Latest: One new COVID-19 death, 71 cases in South Dakota

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — The Latest on the coronavirus outbreak in South Dakota (all times local):
12:15 p.m.

South Dakota health officials on Tuesday reported one new death from COVID-19 and 71 new cases.

So far, eight people have died in the state, and 1,755 people have confirmed infections. Over 80% of the cases in the state were reported in Minnehaha County, where an outbreak at a Smithfield pork processing plant infected 761 employees. The death reported Tuesday was also in Minnehaha County.

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.

10:35 a.m.

A halfway house in Sioux Falls is locked down tightly after 14 residents and two employees contracted the new coronavirus.

The Arch executive director Gary Tuschen said the facility has been working with a state health department case manager to do contract tracing and find individuals who may have come in contact with its residents.

Halfway house officials locked down the facility began prohibiting visitors and only allowing residents to go to and from work April 6.

As cases rose, the facility tightened measures and confined residents to their rooms.

The Argus Leader reported staff are using personal protective equipment, and are doing their best to give residents a break outside during the day, but officials couldn't risk having the virus spread to more residents and staff if only some were allowed to move around.

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

Ex-AG fails to stop probe into senators drinking on last day

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — Former South Dakota Attorney General Marty Jackley failed Tuesday to stop an investigation into whether Republican leaders of the state Senate were drinking at the Capitol during the final day of the 2020 Legislature.

Jackley is representing Senate Majority Leader Kris Langer of Dell Rapids and Senate Pro Tempore Brock Greenfield of Clark. Jackley, a Republican, tried several times to stop the investigation, warning the Senate Interim Investigation Committee that they were "on legal thin ice."

But committee chair and retired judge Sen. Arthur Rusch, a Republican from Vermillion, overruled Jackley's motions, the Argus Leader reported.

After Jackley's objected to the committee viewing Capitol security camera footage, Rusch said the panel

is going to proceed "in pursuit of the truth."

At issue is where were Langer and Greenfield during a five-hour gap during a recess before the Senate voted on a coronavirus-related bill.

The committee spent more than four hours Tuesday watching Capitol security camera footage and South Dakota Public Broadcasting's Senate videos of the early hours of March 31 to build a timeline for the movements around the Capitol of Langer and Greenfield.

The committee will begin hearing witness testimony Friday. Langer and Greenfield did not speak before the committee on Tuesday.

Noem says race event is a bad idea, but won't stop it

SIoux FALLS, S.D. (AP) — Gov. Kristi Noem said Tuesday that she does not want people to go to a dirt track race that's scheduled to take place in Jefferson on Saturday, but that she won't do anything to stop them.

The race is expected to draw about 700 people.

While Noem said the race is a bad idea, she didn't say why she wasn't stopping it. The Republican governor has exercised a light hand on businesses during the global pandemic, often using her daily briefings to highlight the economic woes felt across the state. She said the state's infection rate is still tracking with her projections, which predict a peak in mid-June.

Secretary of Labor and Regulation Marcia Hultman joined the governor at Tuesday's briefing to address what she described as an "unprecedented" surge in unemployment filings. She said about a quarter of people who have tried to file for unemployment have seen delays.

"Patience is wearing thin," she said.

The governor said she continues to wait for the final report from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention to release recommendations on how to reopen a Smithfield Foods pork processing plant where at least 761 workers became infected with the coronavirus. Two of the employees have died, according to the union representing workers at the plant.

One was 61-year-old Craig Allen Franken, who started working at the plant in 1979 when it was named John Morrell and Company, shortly after he was honorably discharged from the U.S. Army, according to an online obituary. The other worker who died was 64-year-old Agustin Rodriguez, died last week.

They are among eight statewide who have died from COVID-19, the disease caused by the new coronavirus. Statewide, a total of 1,755 people have been infected, up by 71 from Monday. More than 80% of the cases were in Minnehaha County, where the Smithfield Foods plant is located.

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.

Hundreds to gather at speedway amid COVID-19 outbreak

JEFFERSON, S.D. (AP) — Racing promoters plan to go ahead with an event at a track in Jefferson this weekend with some modifications for social distancing.

Sprint car promoter and racing veteran Terry McCarl is bringing the Open Wheel Nationals to Park Jefferson Speedway on Saturday.

But, the drivers won't be racing for a packed house. Instead only 700 tickets have been sold for a speedway that seats more than 4,000, KELO-TV reported.

McCarl says that should give each person more than six feet of distance from each other.

Concessions will be limited with distancing marks on the ground. And attendees are encouraged to bring a covering for their faces.

Gov. Kristi Noem is one of the few governors who hasn't issued a statewide stay-at-home order.

As people stay home, Earth turns wilder and cleaner

By SETH BORENSTEIN AP Science Writer

An unplanned grand experiment is changing Earth.

As people across the globe stay home to stop the spread of the new coronavirus, the air has cleaned up, albeit temporarily. Smog stopped choking New Delhi, one of the most polluted cities in the world, and India's getting views of sights not visible in decades. Nitrogen dioxide pollution in the northeastern United States is down 30%. Rome air pollution levels from mid-March to mid-April were down 49% from a year ago. Stars seem more visible at night.

People are also noticing animals in places and at times they don't usually. Coyotes have meandered along downtown Chicago's Michigan Avenue and near San Francisco's Golden Gate Bridge. A puma roamed the streets of Santiago, Chile. Goats took over a town in Wales. In India, already daring wildlife has become bolder with hungry monkeys entering homes and opening refrigerators to look for food.

When people stay home, Earth becomes cleaner and wilder.

"It is giving us this quite extraordinary insight into just how much of a mess we humans are making of our beautiful planet," says conservation scientist Stuart Pimm of Duke University. "This is giving us an opportunity to magically see how much better it can be."

Chris Field, director of the Stanford Woods Institute for the Environment, assembled scientists to assess the ecological changes happening with so much of humanity housebound. Scientists, stuck at home like the rest of us, say they are eager to explore unexpected changes in weeds, insects, weather patterns, noise and light pollution. Italy's government is working on an ocean expedition to explore sea changes from the lack of people.

"In many ways we kind of whacked the Earth system with a sledgehammer and now we see what Earth's response is," Field says.

Researchers are tracking dramatic drops in traditional air pollutants, such as nitrogen dioxide, smog and tiny particles. These types of pollution kill up to 7 million people a year worldwide, according to Health Effects Institute president Dan Greenbaum.

The air from Boston to Washington is its cleanest since a NASA satellite started measuring nitrogen dioxide in 2005, says NASA atmospheric scientist Barry Lefer. Largely caused by burning of fossil fuels, this pollution is short-lived, so the air gets cleaner quickly.

Compared to the previous five years, March air pollution is down 46% in Paris, 35% in Bengaluru, India, 38% in Sydney, 29% in Los Angeles, 26% in Rio de Janeiro and 9% in Durban, South Africa, NASA measurements show.

"We're getting a glimpse of what might happen if we start switching to non-polluting cars," Lefer says.

Cleaner air has been most noticeable in India and China. On April 3, residents of Jalandhar, a city in north India's Punjab, woke up to a view not seen for decades: snow-capped Himalayan peaks more than 100 miles away.

Cleaner air means stronger lungs for asthmatics, especially children, says Dr. Mary Prunicki, director of air pollution and health research at the Stanford University School of Medicine. And she notes early studies also link coronavirus severity to people with bad lungs and those in more polluted areas, though it's too early to tell which factor is stronger.

The greenhouse gases that trap heat and cause climate change stay in the atmosphere for 100 years or more, so the pandemic shutdown is unlikely to affect global warming, says Breakthrough Institute climate scientist Zeke Hausfather. Carbon dioxide levels are still rising, but not as fast as last year.

Aerosol pollution, which doesn't stay airborne long, is also dropping. But aerosols cool the planet so NASA climate scientist Gavin Schmidt is investigating whether their falling levels may be warming local temperatures for now.

Stanford's Field says he's most intrigued by increased urban sightings of coyotes, pumas and other wildlife that are becoming video social media staples. Boar-like javelinas congregated outside of a Arizona shopping center. Even New York City birds seem hungrier and bolder.

In Adelaide, Australia, police shared a video of a kangaroo hopping around a mostly empty downtown, and a pack of jackals occupied an urban park in Tel Aviv, Israel.

We're not being invaded. The wildlife has always been there, but many animals are shy, Duke's Pimm says. They come out when humans stay home.

For sea turtles across the globe, humans have made it difficult to nest on sandy beaches. The turtles need to be undisturbed and emerging hatchlings get confused by beachfront lights, says David Godfrey, executive director of the Sea Turtle Conservancy.

But with lights and people away, this year's sea turtle nesting so far seems much better from India to Costa Rica to Florida, Godfrey says.

"There's some silver lining for wildlife in what otherwise is a fairly catastrophic time for humans," he says.

Associated Press writer Aniruddha Ghosal in New Delhi contributed to this report.

Follow Seth Borenstein on Twitter at @borenbears .

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

Iran's Guard says it launched satellite amid US tensions

By **AMIR VAHDAT** and **JON GAMBRELL** Associated Press

TEHRAN, Iran (AP) — Iran's Revolutionary Guard said Wednesday it put the Islamic Republic's first military satellite into orbit, dramatically unveiling what experts described as a secret space program with a surprise launch that came amid wider tensions with the United States.

There was no immediate independent confirmation of the launch of the satellite, which the Guard called "Noor," or light. The U.S. State Department and the Pentagon did not immediately respond to requests for comment.

However, such a launch immediately raised concerns among experts on whether the technology used could help Iran develop intercontinental ballistic missiles.

Already, Iran has abandoned all the limitation of its tattered nuclear deal with world powers that President Donald Trump unilaterally withdrew America from in 2018. Trump's decision set off a monthlong series of escalating attacks that culminated in a U.S. drone strike in January that killed a top Iranian general in Iraq, followed by Tehran launching ballistic missiles at American soldiers in Iraq.

As the world grapples with the coronavirus pandemic and historically low oil prices, the missile launch may signal a new willingness to take risks by Iran.

"This raises a lot of red flags," said Fabian Hinz, a researcher at the James Martin Center for Nonproliferation Studies at the Middlebury Institute of International Studies in Monterey, California. "Now that you have the maximum pressure campaign, Iran doesn't have that much to lose anymore."

On its official website, the Guard said the satellite successfully reached an orbit of 425 kilometers (264 miles) above the Earth's surface. The Guard called it the first military satellite ever launched by Tehran.

The three-stage satellite launch took off from Iran's Central Desert, the Guard said, without elaborating.

Hinz said based on state media images, the launch appeared to have happened at a previously unnamed Guard base near Shahrud, Iran, some 330 kilometers (205 miles) northeast of Tehran. The base is in Semnan province, which hosts the Imam Khomeini Spaceport from which Iran's civilian space program operates.

The paramilitary force said it used a Ghased, or "Messenger," satellite carrier to put the device into space, a previously unheard-of system. It described the system as using both liquid and solid fuel.

"Today, the world's powerful armies do not have a comprehensive defense plan without being in space, and achieving this superior technology that takes us into space and expands the realm of our abilities is a strategic achievement," said Gen. Hossein Salami, the head of the Guard. He described the satellite as

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, April 22, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 284 ~ 29 of 75

“multifunctional.”

Wednesday marks the 41st anniversary of the founding of the Guard by Iran’s late leader, Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini. An image of the rocket that carried the satellite showed it bore a Quranic verse typically recited when going on a journey.

The Guard, which operates its own military infrastructure in parallel to Iran’s regular armed forces, is a hard-line force answerable only to Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei. It wasn’t immediately clear if Iran’s civilian government knew the launch was coming. President Hassan Rouhani gave nearly a 40-minute speech Wednesday before his Cabinet that included no mention of the launch.

Iran has suffered several failed satellite launches in recent months. The latest came in February, when Iran failed to put its Zafar 1 communications satellite into orbit.

That failure came after two failed launches of the Payam and Doosti satellites last year, as well as a launchpad rocket explosion in August. A separate fire at the Imam Khomeini Space Center in February 2019 also killed three researchers, authorities said at the time.

The rocket explosion in August drew even the attention of Trump, who later tweeted what appeared to be a classified surveillance image of the launch failure. The successive failures raised suspicion of outside interference in Iran’s program, something Trump himself hinted at by tweeting at the time that the U.S. “was not involved in the catastrophic accident.”

The U.S. alleges such satellite launches defy a U.N. Security Council resolution calling on Iran to undertake no activity related to ballistic missiles capable of delivering nuclear weapons. American officials, as well as European nations, worry that these launches could help Iran develop intercontinental ballistic missiles capable of carrying nuclear weapons.

Iran, which long has said it does not seek nuclear weapons, previously maintained its satellite launches and rocket tests do not have a military component. The Guard launching its own satellite now calls that into question.

Tehran also says it hasn’t violated a U.N. resolution on its ballistic missile program as it only “called upon” Iran not to conduct such tests. Western missile experts have also questioned the U.S. contention that Iran’s program could have a dual use for nuclear weapons.

But Wednesday’s launch raised new questions. While Iran isn’t known to have the know-how to miniaturize a nuclear weapon on a ballistic missile, any advances toward an intercontinental ballistic missile would put Europe and potentially the U.S. in range.

Over the past decade, Iran has sent several short-lived satellites into orbit and in 2013 launched a monkey into space.

Tensions have increased elsewhere as well. A U.S. Navy release video of the incident last week shows small Iranian fast boats coming close to American warships as they operated in the northern Persian Gulf near Kuwait, with U.S. Army Apache helicopters. On Sunday, the Guard acknowledged it had a tense encounter with U.S. warships in the Persian Gulf, but alleged without offering evidence that American forces sparked the incident.

Then on Monday, the Guard said it has significantly upgraded the range of its anti-warship missiles and that it now possesses surface-to-surface and subsurface anti-warship missiles with a range as high as 700 kilometers (430 miles).

Even as both face the same invisible enemy in the coronavirus pandemic, Iran and the United States remain locked in retaliatory pressure campaigns that now view the outbreak as just the latest battleground.

Initially overwhelmed, Tehran now seeks to sway international opinion on U.S. sanctions by highlighting its struggles with COVID-19, the illness caused by the virus. In Iran, the regional epicenter of the outbreak, the virus has killed more than 5,290 people, from among over 84,800 reported cases.

Gambrell reported from Dubai, United Arab Emirates. Associated Press journalists Nasser Karimi and Mehdi Fattahi in Tehran, Iran, contributed to this report.

Lack of virus testing stokes fears in world's refugee camps

By JOSEPH KRAUSS, RISHABH R. JAIN and CARA ANNA Associated Press

There are over 70 million people worldwide who have been driven from their homes by war and unrest, up to 10 million are packed into refugee camps and informal settlements, and almost none have been tested for the coronavirus.

While the relative isolation of many camps may have slowed the virus' spread, none is hermetically sealed. Without testing, as the world has seen repeatedly, the virus can spread unchecked until people start showing symptoms. That could have catastrophic results among the world's refugees: There will be few if any intensive care beds or ventilators for them. There might not even be gloves or masks.

"Testing is in short supply even in New York and Norway, but it is nonexistent in most of the countries in the (global) south for the people we try to help," Jan Egeland, the head of the Norwegian Refugee Council, told The Associated Press.

His group recently conducted a review of all 30 countries where it operates and found virtually no testing before people became sick.

In Syria's war-ravaged Idlib province, only one small health facility is equipped to receive suspected coronavirus cases. In the world's largest refugee camp, in Bangladesh, aid workers are racing to build isolation facilities. In two sprawling camps in Kenya, Somalis who survived decades of famine and war fear the worst is yet to come.

"If it's killing people daily in America, then what do you think will happen to us?" asked Mariam Abdi, a vegetable vendor in Kenya's Dadaab camp, where 217,000 people live in endless rows of tents. "We will all perish."

Western countries, which by then may have contained their own outbreaks, will have to reckon with the fact that if the virus finds refuge among the world's most vulnerable, it could return anytime.

Some refugee camps have been around so long they have apartment blocks and paved roads. Others are little more than clusters of tents or abandoned buildings. In many, cramped conditions and poor infrastructure can make it impossible to practice social distancing and frequent hand-washing.

There are no official figures for the number of refugees who live in camps, but Egeland estimates they make up 10% to 15% of all refugees and displaced people, a population the U.N. estimates at over 70 million.

Refugees have already tested positive in Italy, Germany, Iran, Australia and Greece, where authorities said Tuesday that 150 people living in a quarantined hotel for asylum-seekers had contracted the coronavirus, and none displayed symptoms of COVID-19.

Most people who become infected experience mild to moderate symptoms. But the virus can cause severe illness and lead to death, particularly among older people and those with underlying health problems. It is highly contagious and can be spread by those who appear healthy.

A 'MIRACLE' THAT NO CASES HAVE BEEN FOUND

The coronavirus has already appeared in Syria, where the decade-long civil war has displaced more than half of the population of 23 million. At least 350 health facilities have been bombed, mostly by the government. More than 900 medical staff have been killed and countless more have fled.

No cases have been reported yet in Syria's northwestern Idlib province, the last bastion of opposition to President Bashar Assad and where heavy fighting forced nearly a million people to flee their homes earlier this year.

Zaher Sahloul, a Syrian physician based in Chicago who heads MedGlobal, an international health NGO, calls that a "miracle."

He notes that the entire province, which is home to 4 million people, has 98 ventilators, compared to 230 in the Advocate Christ Medical Center, where he is a critical care specialist. An outbreak would be "catastrophic," he said.

The World Health Organization has sent 5,900 testing kits to Idlib, where they are being carefully rationed.

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, April 22, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 284 ~ 31 of 75

Authorities have carried out around 200 tests so far, all of which came back negative.

In Jordan, the two largest camps for Syrian refugees have been sealed since last month. In Zaatari, which has about 80,000 residents, the Jordanian government conducted 150 random tests, all of which came back negative, said Dominik Bartsch, the head of U.N. refugee agency in Jordan. Residents of Azraq, home to about 40,000, will be tested soon.

"We don't need the camp managers to tell us how serious the virus is. We see it in the news and read about it," said an anxious Massoud Ali, 35, who fled Syria for a camp in neighboring Iraq in October.

BECOMING 'INVISIBLE'

Refugees living outside camps are also uniquely vulnerable.

Nearly 5 million Venezuelans have fled economic chaos, crossing by foot and bus into neighboring Colombia and other countries.

Many live in crowded apartments in Bogota, which has the bulk of Colombia's coronavirus cases, and work as street vendors — jobs now prohibited. During the capital city's lockdown, many have been evicted from rentals and fined for being on the streets as they struggle to put food on the table.

"All of a sudden, they've become invisible, locked away behind closed doors," said Marianne Manjivar, International Rescue Committee director for Colombia and Venezuela.

'NO DOCTORS CAN SAVE US'

There's been little if any testing in Cox's Bazar, in southern Bangladesh, where more than a million members of Myanmar's Rohingya Muslim minority are packed into the world's largest refugee camp.

Kate White, the emergency medical coordinator for Doctors Without Borders, said there is "very limited testing capacity" in Bangladesh, with most of it in the capital, Dhaka, some 250 miles (400 kilometers) away.

While cases have been reported in the district, none have been detected inside the camp. There, refugees still gather in large groups to collect aid, and humanitarian workers are preparing for the worst.

The U.N. refugee agency is building isolation and treatment centers that can house 150-200 patients. It is also distributing soap and talking about how to prevent the virus' spread, but a government ban on cellphone and internet services in the camps has hindered those efforts.

Sakina Khatun, who lives with her husband and seven children in a small bamboo and tarp hut, said "the virus will kill everything it touches" if it enters the camps. "No doctors can save us then."

'IT WILL CERTAINLY COME BACK'

There's a similar sense of foreboding in conflict zones across Africa.

Burkina Faso is grappling with one of the world's fastest growing displacement crises, with 800,000 people having fled attacks by jihadis in recent months.

"We ran away from the terrorists and came here, but now there's the coronavirus, and we don't know what will happen," said Boureima Gassambe.

He and around 600 others have settled in an abandoned school on the outskirts of the capital, Ouagadougou. Twenty to 30 people stay in each room.

Aguirata Maiga says soap is so expensive for her — 40 cents a bar — that she has to choose between washing her children's hands and their clothes.

Burkina Faso's fragile health system has only 60 intensive care beds and a handful of ventilators, for a population of around 20 million people.

In Kenya's crowded Kakuma refugee camp, more than 190,000 Somali refugees live in tents and rely on 19 wells.

"That's more than 10,000 people getting water from the same borehole," said Kurt Tjossem of the International Rescue Committee.

There are also shortages of protective equipment, drugs and trained health workers.

There is no coronavirus testing at Kakuma or at the Dadaab camp, said the IRC's Kenya health coordina-

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, April 22, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 284 ~ 32 of 75

tor, John Kiogora. There are no intensive care units or ventilators, either.

The situation is even more dire inside Somalia, where more than 2.2 million people live in camps for the internally displaced. They have been uprooted by cycles of drought and the ever-present threat of al-Shabab, an al-Qaida-linked extremist group.

The camps have no testing facilities or equipment to treat those who contract the virus, according to Yuko Tomita, an officer with the U.N. migration agency. Somalia has just 46 intensive care beds nationwide.

In South Sudan, more than 180,000 people still live in crowded U.N.-run camps after a five-year civil war that left the health system reliant on NGOs for almost all services.

"The reality is, if the virus presents itself, we have no choice," said Charles Franzen, director of humanitarian and disaster response for World Relief. "Are we in a position to offer much in response other than having people just go home?"

Egeland, of the Norwegian Refugee Council, says vulnerabilities among refugee populations put the whole world at risk.

"If the pandemic survives in Venezuela or in Honduras or any other of the more vulnerable countries ... it is a permanent risk for the United States," he said. "If the coronavirus is spread from Europe, via Turkey, to Idlib, and gains a stronghold there, it will certainly come back to Europe."

Krauss reported from Jerusalem, Jain from New Delhi and Anna from Johannesburg. Associated Press writers Sam Mednick in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso; Sarah El Deeb in Beirut; Samya Kullab in Baghdad; Christine Armario in Bogota, Colombia, and Scott Smith in Caracas, Venezuela, contributed to this report.

Fresh cancellations show reopening from virus will be tough

By COLLEEN LONG and KATE BRUMBACK Associated Press

ATLANTA (AP) — Even with many former virus hotspots seeing a reduction in new deaths and hospitalizations, a flurry of cancellations of major events made it clear Wednesday that efforts to return to normal life could still be a long and dispiriting process.

In just the past day, the U.S. scrapped the national spelling bee in June, Spain called off the Running of the Bulls in July, and Germany canceled Oktoberfest five months away. Singapore, once a model of coronavirus tracking and prevention, saw an explosion of new cases and announced it would extend its lockdown into June.

Nevertheless there was growing impatience over virus-related shutdowns that have thrown tens of millions out of work, and more countries and U.S. states began taking steps to get back to business.

Business owners in the U.S. who got the go-ahead weighed whether to reopen, and some hesitated, in a sign that commerce won't necessarily bounce back right away.

Mark Lebos, owner of Strong Gym in Savannah, Georgia, where Gov. Brian Kemp announced that gyms and salons can reopen this week, said Tuesday that it would be professional negligence to do so right now.

"We are not going to be a vector of death and suffering," he said.

With deaths and infections still rising around the world, the push to reopen has set off warnings from health authorities that the crisis that has killed more than 177,000 people globally — including more than 45,000 in the U.S. — is far from over and that relaxing the stay-at-home orders too quickly could enable the virus to come surging back.

The economic damage mounted as oil prices suffered an epic collapse and stocks registered their worst loss in weeks Tuesday on Wall Street. Asia markets continued their slide on Wednesday.

The U.S. Senate on Tuesday approved nearly \$500 billion in coronavirus aid for businesses, hospitals and testing after a deal was reached between Congress and the White House. President Donald Trump urged House members to quickly pass the measure.

Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin said that while some big businesses obtained access to government loans under an earlier aid package, its intent was to help mostly companies with 10 or fewer workers. He and the president said bigger businesses should return those funds.

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, April 22, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 284 ~ 33 of 75

Trump also said he will stop issuing certain immigration green cards for 60 days to limit competition for jobs and "protect American workers" already suffering in an economy devastated by the pandemic.

In Europe, Denmark, Austria, Spain and Germany began allowing some people back to work, including hairdressers, dentists and construction workers, and some stores were cleared to reopen or will soon get approval.

But in an indication that it will be a long time before life returns to normal, Spain canceled its Running of the Bulls in Pamplona, the more than 400-year-old event. It was also called off during the Spanish Civil War in the 1930s.

The Scripps National Spelling Bee in the U.S. was canceled. The competition has been held since 1925 and was last scrubbed during World War II.

Germany called off the Oktoberfest beer festival in Munich, which draws about 6 million visitors each year. It was previously canceled during the two world wars; during a period of hyperinflation in Germany in 1923; and twice because of cholera outbreaks in the 1800s.

Praised for its swift response and meticulous tracing of contacts in the early stage of the outbreak, Singapore was grappling with an explosion of cases in foreign worker dorms that were largely overlooked earlier.

The tiny city-state reported 1,111 new cases Tuesday to increase its total to 9,125, the most in Southeast Asia. It marked the second straight day of over 1,000 new cases.

Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong said measures that shut down nonessential businesses and schools until May 4 would be extended to June 1 or until infections ease.

In Italy, Premier Giuseppe Conte confirmed that businesses can start reopening on May 4 but dashed any hopes of a full end to the country's strict lockdown any time soon, saying: "A decision of that kind would be irresponsible."

In the U.S., some states, including Tennessee, West Virginia and Colorado, announced plans this week to begin reopening in stages in the coming days. Sunbathers quickly flocked to the sand after some South Carolina beaches reopened with the governor's backing.

Political tensions were high.

Some sheriffs in Washington state, Michigan and Wisconsin said they won't enforce stay-at-home orders. Angry protesters demanding the lifting of restrictions marched in Alabama, North Carolina and Missouri with signs like "Enough is enough." And Wisconsin Republicans asked the state's high court to block an extension of the stay-at-home order there.

During an online ceremony Tuesday to donate masks, ventilators and other desperately needed medical supplies to hard-hit New York City, Chinese Consul-General Huang Ping indirectly appealed to Trump to tone down his recent rhetoric against the Asian country where the virus first emerged.

After weeks of elaborate praise of Chinese President Xi Jinping's response to 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.

"This is not the time for finger-pointing," Huang said. "This is the time for solidarity, collaboration, cooperation and mutual support."

Trump, meanwhile, said he had a "very productive" meeting with New York Gov. Andrew Cuomo at the White House on Tuesday during which they discussed how they could work to expand screening "with the goal of doubling testing" in New York in the next few weeks.

The meeting marks a sharp shift in rhetoric between the two politicians. Days earlier, Trump had called on Cuomo to work harder to secure testing material for his state, while Cuomo pushed back that the president should turn off his television and get back to work.

Numerous governors and local leaders have said that before they can relax social distancing restrictions, they need help from Washington in expanding testing to help keep the virus in check.

Long reported from Washington. AP journalists worldwide contributed to this report.

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

No prom? For this teen, it's a trifecta of missed milestones

By TAMARA LUSH Associated Press

ST. PETERSBURG, Fla. (AP) — On a Friday night in late February, 17-year-old Amanda Reynolds raced into a department store on Florida's Gulf coast. She'd been on a mission for weeks, and after countless hours shopping online and in stores, there it was.

Off the shoulder, blue lace, with crystal accents. Her perfect prom dress.

For decades, the prom has represented a cornerstone of American teenage life. Shopping for the dress, finding a date, posing for photos, dancing awkwardly in a low-lit gym - it's all enshrined in movies, books, television and the memories of generations of Americans.

Combine prom with graduation and an 18th birthday. It's a trifecta of milestones. But now, for millions of Class of 2020 teenagers living through the coronavirus outbreak, these coming-of-age moments look and feel vastly different. And while they're doing the best they can to reschedule, to wing it, to celebrate virtually with technology, the truth is that this generation will never regain these moments. Amanda Reynolds is like all of these young people - a case study in what is being lost by those who, in spring 2020, are on the cusp of adulthood and losing many of their expected rites of passage.

But that day at Macy's, Amanda had no idea a pandemic would change everything.

Amanda and her mom knew then, on Feb. 28, that the dress was the one. Her mom had promised Amanda that if she spent no money for homecoming, she could splurge on a prom dress.

"I was in love," Amanda said. "As soon as I put it on, I resembled Cinderella."

The next day, the United States recorded its first coronavirus-related death, a 44-year-old man in Washington. Amanda didn't pay much attention to the news. A week later, Florida reported its first two coronavirus deaths, but that was barely a blip on the high-school radar.

Instead, the beginning of March was like all the other days of senior year at Pinellas Park High, filled with classes, friends, homework and the anticipation of things to come. School would be out soon, goodbyes would be said, and it'd be time for college. Amanda planned to attend P-Tech, a local technical school, to take her first classes toward a nursing degree.

By the second week of March, as people nationwide called on Gov. Ron DeSantis to close Florida's beaches to spring break tourists over fears of spreading the virus, news of the pandemic seeped into conversations online and at school. Amanda wasn't worried: "It was all the way in China."

There were more pressing things on her mind: plans for spring break (which anime movies should she and her friends watch?), the theme of the prom (why did the school let juniors pick the theme - Mardi Gras instead of the Roaring '20s?), and her 18th birthday (where should she celebrate?)

In one class, Amanda and her peers spent a week watching and discussing the movie "Contagion," about a fast-moving lethal virus. The teacher talked about how viruses spread through the air. He put baby powder on a desk in the middle of the room. "Then he smacked the baby powder a couple of times for a visual representation of germs when you cough," she said.

The lesson was a timely tie-in to real-world events. But Amanda and other students were skeptical COVID-19 would reach Pinellas County. They didn't know anyone who had it, much less anyone who died. It seemed to be happening half a world away, in places like Italy and Spain, countries Amanda hasn't had a chance to visit yet.

On Friday the 13th, the day before spring break, Amanda sailed through classes. "I was fully expecting to come back after spring break, and it would completely be like normal," she said. Prom was two weeks away.

But it turned out to be the last normal day. That afternoon, as school let out, President Donald Trump declared a national emergency.

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, April 22, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 284 ~ 35 of 75

Florida Sen. Rick Scott was self-quarantining after possible virus exposure. The governor told Floridians to put mass gatherings on hold.

On Saturday, Amanda's school sent a text message: Prom was postponed, indefinitely.

But a new date would be set, Amanda figured - probably late April. She carefully wrapped her Cinderella dress in plastic and hung it. She saw it each night before she went to bed and each morning when she woke up.

She'd been waiting for a night to dress up with a group of girlfriends and have the most fun in all their 12 years of school. And if a guy asked her to dance, she probably wouldn't say no.

Amanda hoped the district could deep-clean the school, and it'd be back to normal. "It's not even that bad," she told herself.

Hope began to waver March 15. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommended a ban on gatherings of more than 50 people. In neighboring Orlando, Universal Studios and Walt Disney World shuttered. The only other time the theme parks closed like this was after the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks - before Amanda was born.

On March 16, her district extended spring week.

And yet, the Florida primary election went on as planned the next day. Some things were normal - why wouldn't school continue on schedule?

On March 24, halfway through the unexpected second week of break, the Tokyo Olympics were postponed. Closer to home, Amanda was crushed that grad bash - a weekend at Universal Studios - was canceled.

Amanda reluctantly started online school. On March 26, the U.S. led the world in coronavirus cases. On April 1, the governor of Florida issued a statewide lockdown.

Amanda's world grew smaller. She couldn't visit her friends or her grandparents. There were no movie nights with friends.

On the phone, her grandma told her: "You are literally living through history right now." Amanda thought, "I prefer my normal life."

Amanda's 18th birthday — April 5 — loomed. Before the pandemic, she and her friends had dreamed up a three-day extravaganza. They'd hang out in her hot tub at home, watch movies, go to the beach, and, for the big event, head to an "escape room," an intense game where they'd discover clues and solve puzzles to win freedom.

Now her home had become an escape room — but without time limits, prizes or exits. Nowhere to go, no one to see.

She had questions she'd never imagined. How long would life be like this? Would she march at graduation? What about the summer? College? Would anything normal ever happen again?

"I miss going to school. I miss being able to talk to my friends and have something to do," she said. "I feel a little guilt. There are people who are getting sick and dying, but this is also, like, I've been looking forward to this my entire school career. I get to be sad because my emotions are real."

Her mom is just as sad. Missing the 18th birthday festivities was bad enough. Now, it's prom and graduation, too.

"Once we get back to normal, whatever normal may be, we're going to do something," Annette Reynolds said. "Have a big party for her to celebrate. It's kind of a half-replacement idea. It won't be the same memories she would have had, but it will be something."

On the day of the big birthday, the family of four — Annette, Amanda, her dad and sister — made the best of things. They drove to a convenience store where Amanda bought her first lottery scratch-off ticket. She was the only customer. She and her mom made a cake infused with coffee and giggled while filming a video.

They sang "Happy Birthday," and presented Amanda her cake, with candles in the shape of the number 18. "Make a wish," Annette said.

Sure, Amanda wished things were different. She wants to dance at prom in her Cinderella dress, walk the Major League Baseball field where her school would normally hold graduation, and have a real 18th

birthday party — all the milestones teenagers wait years to experience but Amanda will miss.

But her wish that day - that has to stay secret to come true, she believes.

"I can tell you that I hope for the pandemic to get better," she said, "and for everyone not to suffer anymore."

Follow AP reporter Tamara Lush on Twitter at <http://twitter.com/TamaraLush>

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

AP Exclusive: ER staff saves lives, suffers in hot spot

By BRIAN MAHONEY and JOHN MINCHILLO Associated Press

YONKERS, N.Y. (AP) — A nurse furiously pushes down on a man's chest as five other staff in full protective gear surround the patient's bed.

Suddenly, one throws up his arms and steps backward.

"OK, move! Everybody move!" are the instructions.

Moments after they back away, the patient's heart is shocked, his arm spasms and he shakes on the bed. Soon after, he is placed on a ventilator. He has been saved — for now.

Many more at Saint Joseph's Medical Center have not.

"It's been a nightmare. We have a volume of sick people like you can't believe. In one shift, I pronounced six people dead," said Dr. Anthony Leno, the hospital's director of emergency medicine, who on average pronounces one dead in a 10-12 hour shift.

The Yonkers hospital, which sits near the Bronx border and serves one of the poorest sections of Westchester County's largest city, has been besieged by the new coronavirus. Half of the approximately 280 staff members who were tested for the disease were positive — with another 25 to 30 still awaiting results, according to Dean Civitello, the vice president for human resources.

The Associated Press was granted access to the facility's emergency room, which at one point earlier in the pandemic had 28 patients waiting to be treated and ambulances lined up outside with more, said Dr. James Neuendorf, Saint Joseph's medical director.

Staff from other areas of the hospital was redeployed to manage patients and additional treatment areas were set up to augment the hospital's 194 acute-care beds.

The adjustments meant "we were able to take care of a large number of patients — well over above our numbers that we normally see on a daily basis," Neuendorf said.

More than 900 have died in Westchester, which had an early outbreak in neighboring New Rochelle in March before Yonkers became a hot spot. At Saint Joseph's, coronavirus-related symptoms accounted for more than 85% of all admissions for a period of nearly four weeks from March 20 to April 19.

Officials at the hospital knew the pandemic was going to crush them, since COVID-19 has proved particularly punishing for the largely minority population that makes up a significant portion of southwest Yonkers.

One particular challenge is that large families frequently live together in small homes, making it difficult to isolate sick ones. And, Leno noted, there have been few effective therapies other than isolation.

"We've had many family members and groups, and we've even had people from the same family who have died within days of each other," Leno said.

The community was hit so hard that a tent was erected outside the hospital on March 19 to accommodate the rush of people seeking to be tested. In the first few days it was up, 150 to 175 people were examined each day to determine who should be tested, according to Catherine Hopkins, Saint Joseph's director of school health and community relations.

Even some in the area who may otherwise be reluctant to seek medical care, fearing the loss of pay or in some cases deportation, showed up after seeing the effects of the coronavirus.

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, April 22, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 284 ~ 37 of 75

"People are afraid," Hopkins said. "They're scared. Their relatives, their friends are dying."

For most people, the coronavirus causes mild or moderate symptoms that clear up in two to three weeks. But for some, especially older adults and people with existing health problems, it can cause more severe illness and lead to death.

Beyond the unprecedented medical challenges, the outbreak caused financial hardships for the Catholic hospital that has served Yonkers since 1888. Beds and equipment had to be bought or rented to meet Gov. Andrew Cuomo's mandate for hospitals to increase their capacity, and personal protective equipment had to be purchased at much higher costs than usual as normal suppliers ran out.

"There's a lot of people gouging out there. A mask that cost 50 cents before are costing \$7, \$8 each. Gowns that would cost 50 cents as well, are \$7 each. Protective shields that were \$1.25, people looking for 25 bucks a pop," said Frank Hagan, Saint Joseph's chief financial officer. "So, cost is a significant issue."

As is the morale of the staff, who fear for their own health, are juggling responsibilities when their colleagues are ill and are bombarded — even more than usual — with death and disease.

"It is tiring. It is stressful," said chief nursing officer Margaret Cusumano, who has been back about three weeks after she had tested positive. "You're watching people be sick. You're watching people succumb to the disease. It weighs on you mentally, physically."

Fewer patients are coming to Saint Joseph's now. Though there's still a steady stream of patients wearing masks being wheeled into the ER every day, the staff is optimistic that the worst is over. But there is also the fear that people will rush too quickly back to their lives — potentially triggering another flurry of infections.

"They hear we're over the plateau and they think, 'OK, it's business as usual,'" Hopkins said. "It's not. It can't be."

Southern states largely go it alone in reopening decisions

By MELINDA DESLATE and JEFFREY COLLINS Associated Press

BATON ROUGE, La. (AP) — Governors in 17 states have committed to regional coordination to reopen their economies during the coronavirus outbreak — but none are in the South, where leaders are going it alone, just as they did in imposing restrictions.

As questions about when and how to ease virus-control measures becomes increasingly politically charged, governors in the Deep South have resisted any appearance of synchronization, instead driving home their message that each state must make its own decision.

Georgia Gov. Brian Kemp plans to have many of his state's businesses up and running again as soon as Friday. Fellow Republican Tennessee Gov. Bill Lee announced that most businesses will begin resuming operations as soon as next week.

Some other Republican leaders were taking smaller steps, like reopening their beaches. In the virus hot spot of Louisiana, Democratic Gov. John Bel Edwards was also taking a more cautious approach, announcing he'll first allow some non-emergency medical procedures to resume next week.

But no one wants to coordinate. Edwards, for one, notes neighboring states have less expansive outbreaks. Even when several Republican governors held phone calls to talk about reopening plans, they insisted they weren't working in concert — and left out their Democratic counterparts in the region.

"We're trying to take, where we can, our destiny into our own hands," said Kemp.

He's been one of the region's most aggressive so far, allowing gyms, bowling alleys, tattoo parlors and other businesses to reopen Friday, if owners follow social-distancing and hygiene requirements. Restaurants can bring back dine-in service and movie theaters can reopen by Monday.

Such moves runs counter to the advice of many experts and have left many businesses wary.

The lack of regional coordination also raises concerns that a loosening in one state — especially with insufficient testing — could lead to a spike in cases in another. But agreement would be difficult in a region with such disparate approaches.

The strategy stands in stark contrast to coordination elsewhere. California, Oregon and Washington

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, April 22, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 284 ~ 38 of 75

have agreed to synchronize how they will begin lifting their shelter-in-place restrictions. Seven states in the Northeast have done the same as have seven governors in the Midwest. In the latter two regions, governors from both parties are involved.

In the South, it's ad hoc: Kemp said he's talked to other Southern governors, but he didn't coordinate with any of them, even though urban areas in Georgia lap over borders with several. Edwards and Republican Mississippi Gov. Tate Reeves have also had conversations because of the travel and business shared between New Orleans and the Mississippi Gulf Coast. But Edwards said he did not believe further coordination was necessary.

"I think if you look at those areas where this is happening, you have very similar situations in terms of the amount of COVID that they have in those various states and they have a much greater degree of inter-connectedness in terms of their economies," he said.

Beyond easing the medical restrictions, Edwards says he's waiting to see if Louisiana's improving trajectory — fewer hospitalizations, fewer people on ventilators — remains on course, before deciding what steps he'll take when his stay-at-home order expires April 30. Louisiana still has more cases and far more deaths than any other state in the region.

For most people, the highly contagious coronavirus causes symptoms such as high fever and a dry cough. But some people, especially older adults and people with existing health problems, become much sicker and even die.

Elsewhere in the South, decision-making is varied.

Even as neighboring Georgia pushed to reopen, Republican Alabama Gov. Kay Ivey decided to keep a stay-home order in place through the end of the month. Meanwhile, Arkansas' Republican governor, Asa Hutchinson, never issued such a mandate, though he's imposed other restrictions.

Reeves in Mississippi and Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis, meanwhile, have allowed beaches to reopen. Reeves also has said that nonessential businesses can start offering curbside pickup or delivery.

In South Carolina, barricades came off public boat ramps Friday. Closed retailers, like department stores and specialty shops, were next, but only, Republican Gov. Henry McMaster insisted, if strict social distancing was followed. He let local governments decide whether to reopen beaches. Most declined, for now.

Still, it wasn't clear if the state's COVID-19 cases had peaked yet, since state health data shows the number of coronavirus tests have fallen. Georgia, too, is seeing a testing decline.

Experts say that's the opposite of what's needed as restrictions ease. The leader of South Carolina's teaching hospital warned the state also needed robust tracing of the people who have had contact with the sick.

"We need to have in place the pieces to keep a second wave from becoming crippling," said Dr. David Cole, president of the Medical University of South Carolina.

The outbreak has hit different parts of the country in different ways — and the response has been just as varied — so there isn't one playbook, said Dr. Richard Oberhelman, an infectious disease specialist at Tulane University's School of Public Health and Tropical Medicine in New Orleans.

"Coordination makes sense, but the flip side is different states are in different parts of the epidemic," Oberhelman said, adding that communication remained key.

Some fear that if Southern states get too far out ahead of the rest of the country, they could attract visitors — and possibly open the door to more infections.

Myrtle Beach has suffered, but if it starts to ease restrictions on hotels and short-term rentals, it could see an influx of visitors looking for warm weather far from hot spots. Without extensive testing, that could spell disaster, infectious control nurse Debbie Borst told a meeting of the Myrtle Beach City Council.

"The public hears one thing, but they don't realize we don't have testing available like other cities and states, so I'm worried that they have a false sense of security concerning our numbers," Borst said.

Collins reported from Columbia, South Carolina. Associated Press writers Jeff Amy in Atlanta; Andrew DeMillo in Little Rock, Arkansas; and Emily Wagster Pettus in Jackson, Mississippi, contributed to this report.

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

Trump bars new immigration green cards, not temporary visas

By JILL COLVIN, ELLIOT SPAGAT and BEN FOX Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump announced what he described as a “temporary suspension of immigration into the United States.” But the executive order would bar only those seeking permanent residency, not temporary workers.

Trump said Tuesday he would be placing a 60-day pause on the issuance of green cards in an effort to limit competition for jobs in a U.S. economy wrecked by the coronavirus. The order would include “certain exemptions,” he said, but he declined to outline them, noting the order was still being crafted.

“By pausing immigration we’ll help put unemployed Americans first in line for jobs as America reopens, so important,” Trump said at the White House. “It would be wrong and unjust for Americans laid off by the virus to be replaced with new immigrant labor flown in from abroad.”

An administration official familiar with the plans, however, said the order will apply to foreigners seeking employment-based green cards and relatives of green card holders who are not citizens. Americans wishing to bring immediate family will still be able to do so, according to the official, who spoke on condition of anonymity before the plan was announced. About 1 million green cards were granted in the 2019 fiscal year, about half to spouses, children and parents of U.S. citizens.

By limiting his immigration measure to green cards, Trump was leaving untouched hundreds of thousands of foreign workers granted non-immigrant visas each year, including farm workers, health care workers and software programmers. The Migration Policy Institute, a nonpartisan think tank, estimated that some 110,000 green cards could be delayed during a two-month pause. Trump said he would consider extending the restrictions, depending on economic conditions at the time.

Trump has long advocated restrictions on both legal and illegal immigration and has raised concerns for years about foreigners competing with American citizens for jobs.

But he denied he was using the virus to make good on a longstanding campaign promise during an election year. “No, I’m not doing that all,” he said. The president has also used the crisis to push other stalled priorities, from tax reform to dramatic border restrictions.

Trump has often pivoted to his signature issue of immigration when he’s under criticism. It’s one he believes helped him win the 2016 election and one that continues to animate his loyal base of supporters heading into what is expected to be a brutal reelection fight. It has also served as a useful tool for distracting from news he’d prefer removed from the headlines.

Much of the immigration system has already ground to a halt because of the pandemic. Almost all visa processing by the State Department has been suspended for weeks. Travel to the U.S. has been restricted from much of the globe. And Trump has used the virus to effectively end asylum at U.S. borders, including turning away children who arrive by themselves and putting a hold on refugee resettlement — something Congress, the courts and international law hadn’t previously allowed.

Criticism of Trump’s announcement was swift, especially his timing during the pandemic. Ali Noorani, president of the National Immigration Forum, noted that thousands of foreign-born health care workers are currently treating people with COVID-19 and working in critical sectors of the economy.

Andrea Flores of the American Civil Liberties Union said Trump seemed “more interested in fanning anti-immigrant flames than in saving lives.”

But Jessica Vaughan, director of policy studies at the Center for Immigration Studies, which favors lower rates of immigration, said before the announcement that eliminating millions of work permits and visas would “instantaneously create” new jobs for Americans and other legal workers — even though most businesses are shuttered because of social distancing dictates and stay-at-home orders.

She was less enthusiastic after Trump outlined the plan, tweeting a single word: “Yawn.”

Indeed, Carl Shusterman, who has practiced immigration law since the 1970s, said a 60-day pause would

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, April 22, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 284 ~ 40 of 75

have little impact because the government effectively stopped processing green cards in March.

"The embassies are not open anyway, so this is like nothing new," said Shusterman. "This announcement doesn't really change anything unless the embassies were to open up next week or in the next 60 days."

Trump first announced his intentions in a vague tweet Monday night. Across the country, those who could be impacted waited in suspense through the day. Chicago immigration attorney Fiona McEntee said she had been inundated with calls, emails and social media messages, including from company executives hoping to expand their business in the U.S., a person applying for a fiance visa and wondering about their wedding plans, artists seeking "extraordinary ability" visas and foreign students.

"It has created absolute panic," said McEntee. "These are people's lives. ... It is irresponsible and cruel to put out something like that without any consideration."

As is often the case, Trump's tweet also caught many across the administration off-guard.

Trump has already used the crisis to take dramatic steps to limit immigration. Last month, the administration effectively ended asylum, relying on a rarely used 1944 law aimed at preventing the spread of communicable disease. U.S. borders with Mexico and Canada have also been closed to tourism and recreational travel. Commercial traffic and a wide range of "essential" workers are still allowed to travel freely.

The U.S. is now reporting more COVID-19 cases than any other country in the world, with almost 800,000 Americans infected, according to figures compiled by Johns Hopkins University. More than 42,000 have died.

Trump had been expected to use his authority to slash the number of foreign workers allowed to take seasonal jobs in the U.S. Before the outbreak, the administration had planned to increase the number of H-2B visas, angering people who favor more restrictive immigration policies, including some supporters of the president who view foreign workers willing to accept lower wages as unfair competition to American labor. The Department of Homeland Security later put that plan on hold.

Spagat reported from San Diego. Associated Press writers Colleen Long, Zeke Miller and Darlene Superville in Washington, Carlos Rodriguez in Mexico City and Sophia Tareen in Chicago contributed to this report.

Michelle Obama's star power could help Biden unite Democrats

By DARLENE SUPERVILLE Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Seeking to unite Democrats, Joe Biden has raced to line up supporters ranging from progressive icon Bernie Sanders to former President Barack Obama, whose administration sometimes irked liberals. But the person with the most influence may be Michelle Obama.

The former first lady is a unique figure in a deeply polarizing political environment, exceedingly popular with the party faithful while also having some appeal with Republicans and independents.

She left the White House with a 68% approval rating, according to Gallup polling. She also was named "the most admired woman" in the world for the second year in a row in a Gallup poll from December.

And her memoir, "Becoming," has sold more than 11 million copies worldwide since its November 2018 release, making it one of the bestselling political memoirs in history. Her book tour filled arenas with thousands of cheering fans.

That type of energy could be critical for Biden, who is trying to build momentum for his campaign at a time when the coronavirus is dominating headlines. Michelle Obama could help Biden present a clear contrast with President Donald Trump and rebuild the multiracial, multigenerational coalition that twice put Barack Obama in the White House.

"She brings to the table not just her own experience of being an active and well-respected first lady but, at a time when the country is looking for leadership and looking for role models, she fills so many gaps," said Democratic strategist Donna Brazile. "I can only imagine what her endorsement would mean to the former vice president."

Like most Americans, Michelle Obama is staying at home, along with her husband and daughters Malia and Sasha, who are back from college. She has not yet weighed in on the 2020 campaign, though a person close to her said there's little doubt she supports Biden. The person spoke on condition of anonymity to

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, April 22, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 284 ~ 41 of 75

discuss Michelle Obama's thinking.

An endorsement does not appear imminent. Biden campaign aides who spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss possible scenarios said they want to ensure that any announcement lands with the biggest impact possible.

Biden's team sees Michelle Obama as a major endorser in her own right, with an appeal distinct from Barack Obama that would justify her own spotlight when, and if, she chooses to announce an endorsement, according to a Democrat with knowledge of the dynamics but not authorized to speak publicly.

That's partly why Barack Obama's endorsement stood alone last week amid similar announcements from Sanders and Elizabeth Warren, two of Biden's former top rivals.

The Obama and Biden families grew close during their White House years, and Biden's advisers say Michelle Obama is someone who can speak credibly about Biden's personal traits, further connect him to the Obama legacy and highlight differences with Trump.

Even so, Michelle Obama does not see herself as a political figure and has repeatedly said she has no desire to run for office. She has campaigned for candidates, including 2016 presidential nominee Hillary Clinton, but only during the final weeks before an election.

She has never announced an endorsement of her own. In 2018, she and the ex-president jointly endorsed nearly 100 Democratic candidates in federal and state races.

"The general election really hasn't even gotten going yet," said Valerie Jarrett, a longtime friend and adviser to Mrs. Obama, suggesting that it's too early for talk about her possible endorsement.

Jarrett said her friend's focus right now is on When We All Vote, a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization she co-founded with actor Tom Hanks and other celebrities in 2018 to help increase voter turnout.

After Wisconsin voters had to choose between staying at home or risking their health to vote in this month's primary, When We All Vote publicly backed expanding vote by mail, early in-person voting and online voter registration to make voting easier and safer.

"Putting people in that position is unacceptable, especially when leaders like us don't have to do that," Michelle Obama told more than 21,000 supporters who joined a virtual When We All Vote event Monday night. She and Barack Obama have voted by mail in every election in the past decade, she said.

Over the weekend, she appeared with former first lady Laura Bush during a concert organized to support health care workers and the World Health Organization. And this week, she launched "Mondays with Michelle Obama," a four-week series in which she reads popular children's books aloud online.

Michelle Obama continues to work on her education initiatives for girls in developing countries and for U.S. high school seniors.

Karen Finney, who advised Clinton's 2016 campaign, said Michelle Obama's voice "could be very powerful and carry tremendous weight" as Biden considers a running mate.

Biden has committed to putting a woman on the ticket, and some want him to choose a black woman, considering that South Carolina's largely black electorate helped revive Biden's campaign in late February.

"There's no question that her endorsement would carry a lot of weight with voters," said Finney.

Biden took the speculation a step further during an interview with KDKA-TV in Pittsburgh.

Asked if he'd ask Mrs. Obama to be his running mate if she signaled interest in joining the ticket, Biden said Monday that he'd take her in a "heartbeat."

"She's brilliant. She knows the way around. She is a really fine woman," Biden said.

Associated Press writers Bill Barrow in Atlanta, Hannah Fingerhut in Washington and Hillel Italie in New York contributed to this report.

Follow Darlene Superville on Twitter: <https://www.twitter.com/dsupervilleap>

Congress set to pass \$483B virus aid as Trump eyes next deal

By LISA MASCARO and ANDREW TAYLOR Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Congress is sprinting to approve the next coronavirus aid package, a \$483 billion deal backed by the White House to replenish a small-business payroll fund and pump more money into hospitals and testing programs.

President Donald Trump is urging swift passage this week. The Senate approved the bill Tuesday and the House planned a vote on Thursday.

The bipartisan bill, Washington's fourth in response to the crisis, is not expected to be the last as lawmakers take unprecedented steps to confront the virus and prop up communities nationwide amid the health crisis.

Most of the funding, \$331 billion, would go to boost a small-business payroll loan program that ran out of money last week. There would be \$100 billion for health care, with \$75 billion to hospitals and \$25 billion to boost testing for the virus, a key step in building the confidence required to reopen state economies. There is \$60 billion for a small-business loans and grants.

What started as a Trump administration effort with Republicans to bolster the government's small-business Paycheck Protection Program quickly doubled in size, second only to the nearly \$2 trillion coronavirus rescue package that became law last month.

As negotiations dragged on, Democratic demands for additional funds for hospitals and virus testing in the states became more pressing, and eventually gained support from Republicans.

Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer said the bill was made "better and broader" by the effort from Democrats.

Of the \$25 billion for increased testing efforts, at least \$11 billion goes to state and tribal governments to detect and track new infections. The rest will help fund federal research into new coronavirus testing options.

Currently, the U.S. has tested roughly 4 million people for the virus, or just over 1% of its population, according to the Covid Tracking Project website.

While the White House says the U.S. has enough testing to begin easing social distancing measures, most experts say capacity needs to increase at least threefold, if not more.

As announced Tuesday, the centerpiece of the deal remains the small-business payroll program. It provides forgivable loans so shops can continue paying workers while businesses remain closed for social distancing and stay-at-home orders.

Launched just weeks ago, the paycheck program quickly reached its lending limit after approving nearly 1.7 million loans. That left thousands of small businesses in limbo as they sought help.

Controversies dogged its rocky roll-out and Democrats highlighted the number of smaller and minority-owned shops missing out on the aid. A number of publicly traded, big-name corporations also received loans, drawing complaints and Trump's vow that some will be asked to return the money.

As part of the new agreement, \$60 billion or so has been set aside for — and divided equally among — smaller banks and community lenders, a nod to neighborhoods and rural areas underserved by banks.

"This is a significant package," said Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, R-Ky., ahead of Tuesday's vote.

The Senate swiftly approved it by consent late Tuesday, despite opposition from key conservatives, Sen. Rand Paul, R-Ky., and Sen. Mike Lee, R-Utah.

The House has asked lawmakers, who have been at home with Congress all but shuttered, to return Thursday for a roll-call vote.

Missing from the package, however, was extra funding for state and local governments staring down budget holes and desperate to avert furloughs and layoffs of workers needed to keep communities running.

Trump said he was open to including in a subsequent virus aid package fiscal relief for state and local government — Democrats had wanted such funding for the current bill — along with infrastructure projects.

At the White House, Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin outlined the contours of the next bill, which

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, April 22, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 284 ~ 43 of 75

he said should include the president's long-promised effort to rebuild roads, bridges and, especially as Americans stay home, broadband.

But facing Republican unease over the White House's deal-making with Democrats, McConnell indicated he is unwilling to engage in another round of negotiations on his own, without calling senators back for a full vote.

He welcomed the White House plans to start reopening the economy, and signaled similar for Congress. "Unless we get our economy up and running again, there's not any way we can spend enough to continue to prop up the country," McConnell said.

The House planned to vote on a proposal to allow proxy voting during the pandemic, a first for Congress, which has required in-person business essentially since its founding.

"The House must show the American people that we continue to work hard on their behalf," Majority Leader Steny Hoyer, D-Md., wrote to colleagues.

Many lawmakers are wary of boarding airplanes to Washington and crowding back into cramped offices and meeting spaces. But the landmark rules change met with objections from conservative Republicans. "Congress should be in session," said Rep. Clay Higgins, R-La.

Congress is not scheduled to fully resume until May 4, but officials continue to watch virus projections and the District of Columbia remains under stay-at-home rules.

Associated Press writers Matthew Perrone, Mary Clare Jalonick and Matthew Daly contributed to this report.

Analysis: Pandemic fallout tracks nation's political divide

By JULIE PACE AP Washington Bureau Chief

WASHINGTON (AP) — America's entrenched political divide is now playing out over matters of life and death.

Republican governors, urged on by President Donald Trump, are taking the first steps toward reopening parts of their states' economies in the midst of the coronavirus pandemic, and without adhering to the president's own guidelines. Democratic governors are largely keeping strict stay-at-home orders and nonessential business closures in place, resisting small pockets of Trump-aligned protesters and public pressure from the president.

The fault lines are familiar, exposing many of the same regional and demographic divisions that have increasingly come to define U.S. politics, as well as the stark differences in the ways the parties view the role of government in American life. But the stakes go far beyond the normal risks and rewards of an election cycle, instead putting the health and well-being of millions of Americans in the balance.

"We do imagine that in times of crisis, that will alleviate some of the political divisions we see in normal times. But every time we go through a crisis, small ones and severe ones, the political divisions re-emerge right away," said Julian Zelizer, a professor of political history at Princeton University.

It could be months before the ultimate consequences of the various shutdown and reopen orders are known. Public health officials concede no one-size-fits all approach exists, and the decisions being made by states are dependent on factors such as the density of major population areas, the capacity of medical resources and the availability of testing.

Yet there's also an undeniable political tenor to the debate over when and how states should begin easing restrictions. And much of that has been shaped by Trump, who began agitating to reopen businesses almost as soon as they were shuttered, well aware that his reelection prospects in November likely hinge on the strength of the economy.

Democrats say they, too, care about the nation's economic health and getting millions of Americans back on the job. But most are hewing closely to the warnings of top public health officials, who argue that sending people back to work and into their communities prematurely would lead to more outbreaks of the virus and many more deaths.

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, April 22, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 284 ~ 44 of 75

"The worst thing would be for us to spike the football and think we are outside of the danger zone and to reengage and find another peak of COVID-19," Michigan Gov. Gretchen Whitmer said Tuesday in an interview with The Associated Press.

Whitmer's comments came a day after Republican governors in Georgia, South Carolina and Tennessee — all staunch Trump allies — outlined steps to begin opening businesses within a matter of days.

They are a few steps ahead of other GOP governors who also have moved toward reopening businesses. One exception is Colorado, where Democratic Gov. Jared Polis plans to let shelter-in-place orders across the state expire on Sunday.

"Every business is essential. Everything people do is essential," Polis said. "That's what's so frustrating, to try to put things in essential and nonessential buckets. Nobody thinks like that and the world doesn't work like that."

Polling shows the majority of Americans support stay-at-home restrictions to ease the pandemic — 78% in an Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research poll this month. But politicians in both parties recognize that the public's patience may wane in the coming weeks and months as more job losses and other economic hardships take hold.

Officially, Trump is leaving the decisions on easing restrictions in the hands of the nation's governors. Last week he unveiled a series of guidelines for the states that recommend reopening sectors of the economy in waves that are correlated with infection rates as well as robust testing and tracking systems that would allow states to quickly pull back if new outbreaks occur.

But the president almost immediately undercut his own guidance, exhorting supporters on Twitter to "LIBERATE" some states that do not yet meet conditions for a phased reopening. All of the states Trump singled out are led by Democratic governors: Michigan, Minnesota and Virginia, where he also linked the issue to gun rights.

None has so far acquiesced to his demands.

The ways Americans are experiencing the pandemic have already been shaped by where they live. Many of the hardest-hit areas, where stay-at-home restrictions have been the tightest, are in dense cities in liberal states, including New York and California. Many less populous states, which tilt conservative, have seen lower rates of infection so far and have often had fewer restrictions.

But the virus has not spread along perfectly partisan lines. According to data compiled by Johns Hopkins University, the top 15 states by infection and death rate include Democratic-leaning states, Republican-leaning states and states that swing between the two parties in presidential and statewide elections.

Among them: Georgia, which has recorded nearly 20,000 infections and more than 770 deaths. On Monday, Republican Gov. Brian Kemp announced that gyms, hair salons, bowling alleys and other businesses could start opening at the end of this week, with more restrictions set to be lifted in coming days.

The decision by Kemp, a stalwart Trump supporter in a state that is moving increasingly to the center, was met with anger by Democrats in the state. Stacey Abrams, who narrowly lost to Kemp in 2018 and is considered a possible vice presidential pick for presumptive Democratic nominee Joe Biden, said of the governor's decision: "Nothing about this makes sense."

In announcing his decision, Kemp conceded that Georgia is likely to see an increase in coronavirus infections, and deaths, as businesses start opening. The risk, he decided, is worth it.

EDITOR'S NOTE — Julie Pace has covered the White House and politics for the AP since 2007. Follow her at <http://twitter.com/jpaceDC>

AP source: A-Rod, J-Lo retain JP Morgan in bid for Mets

By RONALD BLUM AP Baseball Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Alex Rodriguez, once again, wants to be like Derek Jeter.

A-Rod and Jennifer Lopez, who are engaged, have retained J.P. Morgan to represent them in raising

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, April 22, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 284 ~ 45 of 75

capital for a possible bid for the New York Mets. The move was first reported by Variety and confirmed to The Associated Press by a person familiar with the decision who spoke on condition of anonymity because it was not announced.

A three-time AL MVP, Rodriguez retired in August 2016 with 698 home runs, a .295 average and 2,086 RBIs in 22 years. He was suspended for the 2014 season for violations of Major League Baseball's drug agreement and labor contract.

A-Rod, now 44 years old, earned about \$448 million as a player. The 14-time All-Star started his career with Seattle, signed a record contract with Texas in December 2000, and then moved from shortstop to third base when he was traded from the Rangers to the New York Yankees ahead of the 2004 season.

Jeter, the Yankees captain and shortstop, retired after the 2014 season and was elected to baseball's Hall of Fame in January. He became CEO of the Miami Marlins as part of the team's sale from Jeffrey Loria to a group headed by Bruce Sherman in October 2017.

The Mets' ownership is headed by Fred Wilpon, brother-in-law Saul Katz and Jeff Wilpon's son Jeff, the team's chief operating officer. The team said Dec. 4 it was negotiating an agreement with Steve Cohen. The hedge fund manager bought an 8% limited partnership stake in 2012 for \$40 million. The deal under discussion would have seen him acquire an 80% controlling share in a transaction that values the team at \$2.6 billion, and the Wilpons would have remained in place for five years.

The sides announced the deal's collapse on Feb. 6, and the Mets owners said they intended to find a new buyer. Allen & Co. represents the Mets owners.

Given the drop in equities prices caused by the new coronavirus pandemic, the next few months figure to be a difficult time to raise money for a bid.

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

Virus cancels events worldwide; opinions on reopening mixed

By COLLEEN LONG and KATE BRUMBACK Associated Press

ATLANTA (AP) — Spain called off the Running of the Bulls in July, the U.S. scrapped the national spelling bee in June and Germany canceled Oktoberfest five months away, making it clear Tuesday that the effort to beat back the coronavirus and return to normal could be a long and dispiriting process.

Amid growing impatience over the shutdowns that have thrown tens of millions out of work, European countries continued to reopen in stages, while in the U.S., one state after another — mostly ones led by Republican governors — began taking steps to get back to business.

Business owners in the U.S. who got the go-ahead weighed whether to reopen, and some hesitated, in a sign that commerce won't necessarily bounce back right away.

Mark Lebos, owner of Strong Gym in Savannah, Georgia, where Gov. Brian Kemp announced that gyms and salons can reopen this week, said it would be professional negligence to do so right now.

"We are not going to be a vector of death and suffering," he said.

With deaths and infections still rising around the world, the push to reopen has set off warnings from health authorities that the crisis that has killed well over 170,000 people globally — including more than 45,000 in the U.S. — is far from over and that relaxing the stay-at-home orders too quickly could enable the virus to come surging back.

The economic damage mounted as oil prices suffered an epic collapse and stocks registered their worst loss in weeks on Wall Street.

The crisis hit home at Trump's Mar-a-Lago club in Palm Beach, Florida, which laid off 153 workers, including bartenders, cooks, dishwashers and housekeepers.

The U.S. Senate on Tuesday approved nearly \$500 billion in coronavirus aid for businesses, hospitals and testing after a deal was reached between Congress and the White House. Trump urged House members to quickly pass the measure.

Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin said during the daily White House briefing Tuesday that while some

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, April 22, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 284 ~ 46 of 75

big businesses obtained access to government loans under an earlier aid package, its intent was to help mostly companies with 10 or fewer workers. He and the president said bigger businesses should return those funds.

Trump also said he will stop issuing certain immigration green cards for 60 days to limit competition for jobs and "protect American workers" already suffering in an economy devastated by the pandemic.

In Europe, meanwhile, Denmark, Austria, Spain and Germany began allowing some people back to work, including hairdressers, dentists and construction workers, and some stores were cleared to reopen or will soon get the OK.

But in an indication that it will be a long time before life returns to normal, Spain canceled its Running of the Bulls in Pamplona, the more than 400-year-old event made world-famous by Ernest Hemingway's 1926 novel "The Sun Also Rises." It was also called off during the Spanish Civil War in the 1930s.

The Scripps National Spelling Bee in the U.S. was canceled. The competition has been held since 1925 and was last scrubbed in 1945, during World War II.

Germany called off the centuries-old Oktoberfest beer festival in Munich, which draws about 6 million visitors each year. It was previously canceled during the two world wars; during a period of hyperinflation in Germany in 1923; and twice because of cholera outbreaks in the 1800s.

"We agreed that the risk is simply too high," Bavarian governor Markus Soeder said.

In Italy, Premier Giuseppe Conte confirmed that businesses can start reopening on May 4 but dashed any hopes of a full end to the country's strict lockdown any time soon, saying: "A decision of that kind would be irresponsible."

In the U.S., some states, including Tennessee, West Virginia and Colorado, announced plans this week to begin reopening in stages in the coming days. Sunbathers quickly flocked to the sand after some South Carolina beaches reopened with the governor's backing.

Political tensions were high.

Some sheriffs in Washington state, Michigan and Wisconsin said they won't enforce stay-at-home orders. Angry protesters demanding the lifting of restrictions marched in Alabama, North Carolina and Missouri with signs like "Enough is enough." And Wisconsin Republicans asked the state's high court to block an extension of the stay-at-home order there.

During an online ceremony Tuesday to donate masks, ventilators and other desperately needed medical supplies to hard-hit New York City, Chinese Consul-General Huang Ping indirectly appealed to Trump to tone down his recent rhetoric against the Asian country where the virus first emerged.

After weeks of elaborate praise of Chinese President Xi Jinping's response to 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.

"This is not the time for finger-pointing," Huang said. "This is the time for solidarity, collaboration, cooperation and mutual support."

Trump, meanwhile, said he had a "very productive" meeting with New York Gov. Andrew Cuomo at the White House on Tuesday during which they discussed how they could work to expand screening "with the goal of doubling testing" in New York in the next few weeks.

The meeting marks a sharp shift in rhetoric between the two politicians. Days earlier, Trump had called on Cuomo to work harder to secure testing material for his state, while Cuomo pushed back that the president should turn off his television and get back to work.

Numerous governors and local leaders have said that before they can relax social distancing restrictions, they need help from Washington in expanding testing to help keep the virus in check.

"If some of these reopenings are done the wrong way, it's going to affect all of us," New York Mayor Bill de Blasio said on CNN.

De Blasio said Tuesday that New York City will honor health care workers and first responders with a ticker tape parade — once it's safe to hold large gatherings again.

Long reported from Washington. AP journalists worldwide contributed to this report.

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

Trump bars new immigration green cards, not temporary visas

By JILL COLVIN, ELLIOT SPAGAT and BEN FOX Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump announced what he described as a “temporary suspension of immigration into the United States” on Tuesday. But the executive order would bar only those seeking permanent residency, not temporary workers.

Trump said he would be placing a 60-day pause on the issuance of green cards in an effort to limit competition for jobs in a U.S. economy wrecked by the coronavirus. The order would include “certain exemptions,” he said, but he declined to outline them, noting the order was still being crafted.

“By pausing immigration we’ll help put unemployed Americans first in line for jobs as America reopens, so important,” Trump said at the White House. “It would be wrong and unjust for Americans laid off by the virus to be replaced with new immigrant labor flown in from abroad.”

An administration official familiar with the plans, however, said the order will apply to foreigners seeking employment-based green cards and relatives of green card holders who are not citizens. Americans wishing to bring immediate family will still be able to do so, according to the official, who spoke on condition of anonymity before the plan was announced. About 1 million green cards were granted in the 2019 fiscal year, about half to spouses, children and parents of U.S. citizens.

By limiting his immigration measure to green cards, Trump was leaving untouched hundreds of thousands of foreign workers granted non-immigrant visas each year, including farm workers, health care workers and software programmers. The Migration Policy Institute, a nonpartisan think tank, estimated that some 110,000 green cards could be delayed during a two-month pause. Trump said he would consider extending the restrictions, depending on economic conditions at the time.

Trump has long advocated restrictions on both legal and illegal immigration and has raised concerns for years about foreigners competing with American citizens for jobs.

But he denied he was using the virus to make good on a longstanding campaign promise during an election year. “No, I’m not doing that all,” he said. The president has also used the crisis to push other stalled priorities, from tax reform to dramatic border restrictions.

Trump has often pivoted to his signature issue of immigration when he’s under criticism. It’s one he believes helped him win the 2016 election and one that continues to animate his loyal base of supporters heading into what is expected to be a brutal reelection fight. It has also served as a useful tool for distracting from news he’d prefer removed from the headlines.

Much of the immigration system has already ground to a halt because of the pandemic. Almost all visa processing by the State Department has been suspended for weeks. Travel to the U.S. has been restricted from much of the globe. And Trump has used the virus to effectively end asylum at U.S. borders, including turning away children who arrive by themselves and putting a hold on refugee resettlement — something Congress, the courts and international law hadn’t previously allowed.

Criticism of Trump’s announcement was swift, especially his timing during the pandemic. Ali Noorani, president of the National Immigration Forum, noted that thousands of foreign-born health care workers are currently treating people with COVID-19 and working in critical sectors of the economy.

Andrea Flores of the American Civil Liberties Union said Trump seemed “more interested in fanning anti-immigrant flames than in saving lives.”

But Jessica Vaughan, director of policy studies at the Center for Immigration Studies, which favors lower rates of immigration, said before the announcement that eliminating millions of work permits and visas would “instantaneously create” new jobs for Americans and other legal workers — even though most businesses are shuttered because of social distancing dictates and stay-at-home orders.

She was less enthusiastic after Trump outlined the plan, tweeting a single word: “Yawn.”

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, April 22, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 284 ~ 48 of 75

Indeed, Carl Shusterman, who has practiced immigration law since the 1970s, said a 60-day pause would have little impact because the government effectively stopped processing green cards in March.

"The embassies are not open anyway, so this is like nothing new," said Shusterman. "This announcement doesn't really change anything unless the embassies were to open up next week or in the next 60 days."

Trump first announced his intentions in a vague tweet Monday night. Across the country, those who could be impacted waited in suspense through the day. Chicago immigration attorney Fiona McEntee said she had been inundated with calls, emails and social media messages, including from company executives hoping to expand their business in the U.S., a person applying for a fiance visa and wondering about their wedding plans, artists seeking "extraordinary ability" visas and foreign students.

"It has created absolute panic," said McEntee. "These are people's lives. ... It is irresponsible and cruel to put out something like that without any consideration."

As is often the case, Trump's tweet also caught many across the administration off-guard.

Trump has already used the crisis to take dramatic steps to limit immigration. Last month, the administration effectively ended asylum, relying on a rarely used 1944 law aimed at preventing the spread of communicable disease. U.S. borders with Mexico and Canada have also been closed to tourism and recreational travel. Commercial traffic and a wide range of "essential" workers are still allowed to travel freely.

The U.S. is now reporting more COVID-19 cases than any other country in the world, with almost 800,000 Americans infected, according to figures compiled by Johns Hopkins University. More than 42,000 have died.

Trump had been expected to use his authority to slash the number of foreign workers allowed to take seasonal jobs in the U.S. Before the outbreak, the administration had planned to increase the number of H-2B visas, angering people who favor more restrictive immigration policies, including some supporters of the president who view foreign workers willing to accept lower wages as unfair competition to American labor. The Department of Homeland Security later put that plan on hold.

Spagat reported from San Diego. Associated Press writers Colleen Long, Zeke Miller and Darlene Superville in Washington, Carlos Rodriguez in Mexico City and Sophia Tareen in Chicago contributed to this report.

Wuhan embraces Yangtze River as virus-hit city reopens

By SAM McNEIL Associated Press

WUHAN, China (AP) — Bathed in golden late-afternoon light, Chen Enting snapped a photo of his ticket to commemorate his first ferry ride across the Yangtze River after a 76-day quarantine ended in the Chinese city where the coronavirus pandemic began.

The reopening of ferry services on the Yangtze, the heart of life in Wuhan for two millennia, was an important symbolic step to get business and daily life in this city of 11 million people back to normal.

Wearing goggles, gloves, a homemade mask and a black trench coat, Chen was checked by security guards in protective suits and bought a 1.5-yuan (20-cent) ferry ticket. He boarded with a dozen other passengers, some pushing electric scooters, and found a bench at the front beside a red flag with a yellow sickle. He sprayed the seat with disinfectant before sitting.

"The ferry on the Yangtze River is a symbol of Wuhan's people," said Chen, a 34-year-old cost engineer and Chinese Communist Party member.

"The choppy river symbolizes the force of life," he said, as the sun set behind the Tortoise Mountain TV Tower. "Although Wuhan had such an ordeal, it will flow away just like the river and receive exuberant vitality."

Wuhan was one of China's most important centers under inward-looking dynasties that had little interest in foreign trade and carried out commerce and politics over the country's vast river networks.

The city was eclipsed by the explosive rise of Shanghai, Hong Kong and other coastal cities after the ruling Communist Party set off a trade boom by launching market-style economic reforms in 1979.

Today, Wuhan is regaining its status as an economic dynamo as Chinese leaders shift emphasis from exports to developing more sustainable growth based on domestic consumer spending. The city govern-

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, April 22, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 284 ~ 49 of 75

ment says more than 300 of the world's 500 biggest companies, including Microsoft Corp. and Honda Motor Co., have operations in Wuhan to get access to central China's populous market.

The metropolis was formed from three ancient cities — Wuchang, Hankou and Hanyang — at the meeting of the Yangtze and Han rivers that grew together.

"If you are in Wuchang, you can go anywhere under heaven," said Ji Li, a University of Hong Kong historian, quoting a traditional saying.

The emperor Kublai Khan visited in the 13th century when China was part of his Mongol empire and Shanghai was a fishing village of a few thousand people.

In the mid-19th century, Wuhan became, along with Shanghai, Tianjin and Qingdao, one of a series of "treaty ports" where China's Manchu rulers were forced to give Western powers trading privileges and exempt their people from local laws.

A rebellion began on Oct. 11, 1911, in Wuhan that spread across the country and led to the breakup of the Manchu empire and the founding of President Sun Yat-sen's Republic of China.

The Yangtze's water is "very sweet," communist leader Mao Zedong said after he swallowed a mouthful while swimming in the 1950s, according to a report from the time by The Associated Press.

Meandering 6,300 kilometers (3,900 miles) from Tibet's Tanggula Mountains to the East China Sea, the Yangtze is the longest river in Asia and the world's third-longest.

It and the Yellow River in the north are the "mother rivers of the nation," much like America's Missouri and Mississippi or Eastern Europe's Danube. It is also the site of the Three Gorges Dam, the world's biggest hydroelectric project.

The Yangtze stars in countless poems, songs and history-making events, including the third century "Battle of Red Cliffs," which was fought by one of China's wiliest strategists, Zhuge Liang. The story, involving armored battleships, has been turned into a traditional opera and a 2008 blockbuster movie directed by John Woo.

Today, Wuhan produces agricultural chemicals, 6% of China's cars, and components for smartphones, industrial machinery and optical devices for markets in Europe and North America. Skyscrapers loom above parks and ancient temples.

Ships carry goods 700 kilometers (450 miles) downriver to Shanghai by way of Nanjing, another ancient inland city.

Shipping, however, plunged after the coronavirus outbreak started in Wuhan late last year and led to a strict lockdown of the city. Traffic near Wuhan fell by as much as 70%, according to HawkEye 360, a company in Virginia that follows radio communications and ships' satellite-linked tracking beacons.

Traffic is back to less than half its pre-outbreak level, the company says.

Mao's face, etched in a giant gold coin, perches atop a stone obelisk in the Bund, the riverfront former center of Western business activity and now a tourist spot. On it is etched a poem by Mao calling for a bridge to be built across the river.

That bridge was finished in 1957, cementing Wuhan's renaissance as a transportation hub by connecting rail networks in northern and southern China.

That connection is one reason the coronavirus spread so fast.

Wuhan's Huanan Seafood Market, where scientists suspect the virus might have jumped from a bat to humans, is next door to the Hankou Train Station.

Authorities have since decontaminated the station, and on April 11, high-speed trains began leaving Wuhan for Beijing again. The ferry system had opened a few days before.

Chen Xianming, a 70-year-old veteran of 26 years in appliance sales, knew that would save him money. Paying for taxis across the bridge had cut into profits.

"We should be thrifty," Chen said as he secured boxes on a motorized tricycle he uses to make deliveries.

Most of Wuhan is thinking the same way and tightening its belt after factories, restaurants, shopping malls, cinemas and almost every other business except supermarkets were shut for 2 1/2 months. Jittery consumers aren't spending much. Manufacturing has yet to get back to normal levels.

But the public has returned to the banks of the Yangtze, known in Mandarin as Chang Jiang, or Great

River.

Couples wearing masks walk hand-in-hand. Fishermen flick long rods out across the babbling waters. Joggers run past picnickers. People fly kites shaped like butterflies, birds, lanterns and fighter jets. A ship's horn blares.

"Wuhan reopens," Chen said. "This is a day of remembrance."

Associated Press video producer Olivia Zhang in Wuhan and archivist Francesca Pitaro in New York contributed to this report.

Canadian police say 22 victims after rampage in Nova Scotia

By ROB GILLIES Associated Press

TORONTO (AP) — Canadian police said Tuesday they believe there are at least 22 victims after a gunman wearing a police uniform shot people in their homes and set fires in a rampage across rural communities in Nova Scotia over the weekend.

The Royal Canadian Mounted Police said they have recovered remains from some of the destroyed homes. Earlier, authorities had said at least 18 people were killed in the 12-hour attack.

Officials said the suspect, identified as 51-year-old Gabriel Wortman, was shot and later died on Sunday. Authorities did not provide further details or give a motive for the killings.

The dead include a 17-year-old as well as a police officer, a police news release said. All the other victims were adults and included both men and women. There were 16 crime scenes in five different communities in northern and central Nova Scotia, it said.

"Some of the victims were known to Gabriel Wortman and were targeted while others were not known to him," the police statement said.

Authorities also confirmed Wortman was wearing an authentic police uniform and one of the cars he used "was a very real look-alike RCMP vehicle."

"This is an unprecedented incident that has resulted in incredible loss and heartbreak for countless families and loved ones. So many lives will be forever touched," the police statement said.

In an earlier news release authorities had said they believed there were 23 victims, but Royal Canadian Mounted Police spokesman Daniel Brien later clarified the death toll included 22 victims and the gunman.

As fears mounted that more dead would be found in burned out homes, a young man said Tuesday that his grandparents were missing and believed dead after their log cabin was set ablaze during the attack.

Justin Zahl told The Associated Press he finally heard from police after frantic calls for information and seeing images of his grandparents' home in the rural town of Portapique burned to the ground, with their cars in the driveway.

It was not immediately clear, however, if they were among the remains police said were found.

Police teams were spread out across the 16 crime scenes including the neighborhood where the rampage began late Saturday on Portapique Beach Road, where the suspect lived.

Police have warned the death toll will almost certainly rise as investigators comb through homes destroyed by fire.

Zahl said he last heard from his grandmother early Saturday evening via iMessage on her iPad.

"They were angels," he said, adding that the couple were like parents to him and his 19-year-old brother, Riley. "He was the smartest man I knew, and could hold a conversation with anyone," he said of the grandfather.

He said John Zahl, in his late 60s, and Elizabeth Joanne Thomas, in her late 50s, lived in Albuquerque, New Mexico, before retiring to their dream home in Nova Scotia in 2017 after falling in love with the place on a visit. Justin and his brother lived with them for a while but both young men no longer do and neither was at the home during the attack, he said.

Authorities said Wortman made his car look like a Royal Canadian Mounted Police cruiser allowing him to travel easily within a 30-mile (50-kilometer) area.

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, April 22, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 284 ~ 51 of 75

As the attack ensued, police warned residents in Portapique to lock their doors and stay in their basements. The town, like all of Canada, had been adhering to government advice to remain at home because of the coronavirus pandemic, and most of the victims were inside homes when the attack began.

But no wider warning was issued, and questions emerged about why a public emergency alert was not sent province-wide through a system recently used to advise people to maintain social distancing. Police provided Twitter updates, but no alert that would have automatically popped up on cellphones.

"There should have been some provincial alert," said David Matthews, who said he heard a gunshot while walking with his wife Sunday. Shortly after they returned home, their phone started ringing with warnings from friends that there was an active shooter in the neighborhood.

Several bodies were later found inside and outside one house on Portapique Beach Road, police said. Bodies were also found at other locations in Nova Scotia and authorities believe the shooter may have targeted his first victims but then began attacking randomly as he drove around.

Authorities said Wortman did not have a police record, but information later emerged of at least one run-in with the law.

Nova Scotia court records confirm he was ordered to receive counselling for anger management after pleading guilty to assaulting a man in the Halifax area on Oct. 29, 2001. The guilty plea came on Oct. 7, 2002, as his trial was about to begin.

He was placed on probation for nine months, fined \$50 and told to stay away from the man, and also prohibited from owning or possessing a weapon, ammunition or explosive substances.

Royal Canadian Mounted Police Commissioner Brenda Lucki said police were still determining what weapons were used in the attacks.

Cheryl Maloney, who lives near where one victim, 54-year-old Gina Goulet, was killed, believes she was likely saved by a warning message Sunday morning from her son that read, "Don't leave your house. This guy is at the end of your road and he's dressed like a cop."

"I really could have used that provincial warning, as I walk here all the time and I've been in the yard all week," she said.

What you need to know today about the virus outbreak

By The Associated Press undefined

Iconic events like the U.S. national spelling bee in June, Spain's Running of the Bulls in July and Germany's Oktoberfest are being scrapped because of the coronavirus pandemic, even amid growing impatience over shutdowns that have thrown millions of people out of work.

The push to reopen has set off warnings from health authorities and politicians about a crisis that by Tuesday had killed well over 170,000 people worldwide. Experts say the crisis is far from over and relaxing the stay-at-home restrictions too quickly could enable the virus to surge.

Meanwhile, a nearly \$500 billion coronavirus aid package flew through the Senate on Tuesday after Congress and the White House reached a deal to replenish a small business payroll fund and provide new money for hospitals and testing. Economic damage from the pandemic has mounted as stocks dropped around the world and oil prices suffered a historic collapse.

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

WHAT'S HAPPENING TODAY:

— Oil prices crumpled even further Tuesday, and U.S. stocks sank to their worst loss in weeks as worries swept markets worldwide about the economic carnage caused by the pandemic. The spotlight was again on oil, where prices have plummeted because very few people are flying or driving, and factories have shut amid widespread stay-at-home orders.

— Setting aside their differences for at least an afternoon, President Donald Trump and New York Gov. Andrew Cuomo agreed in an Oval Office meeting Tuesday to work to double coronavirus testing in the

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, April 22, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 284 ~ 52 of 75

hard-hit state over the next few weeks. The meeting marked a sharp shift in rhetoric from just days earlier.

— A malaria drug widely touted by President Donald Trump for treating the new coronavirus showed no benefit in a large analysis of its use in U.S. veterans hospitals. There were more deaths among those given hydroxychloroquine versus standard care, researchers reported after the study of 368 patients.

— Trump announced he would be placing a 60-day pause on the issuance of green cards in an effort to limit competition for jobs in a U.S. economy wrecked by the coronavirus. Already, almost all visa processing by the State Department has been suspended for weeks because of the pandemic.

— The loose network of Facebook groups spurring protests of stay-at-home orders across the country have fast become a hotbed of misinformation, conspiracy theories and skepticism around the coronavirus pandemic. Launched in recent weeks by pro-gun advocacy groups and conservative activists, the pages are repositories of Americans' suspicion and anxiety — often fueled by notions floated by television personalities or President Donald Trump himself.

— A Louisiana pastor has been arrested on an assault charge after after he admitted to driving his church bus toward a man who has been protesting his decision to continue holding mass gatherings at church. Police say Tony Spell turned himself into the department and was arrested on charges of aggravated assault and improper backing.

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:

— \$5 billion: U.S. hog farmers have endured an estimated \$5 billion in losses for the industry amid restaurant closures.

IN OTHER NEWS:

— **HOME TEST:** U.S. health regulators on Tuesday OK'd the first coronavirus test that allows people to collect their own sample at home, a new approach that could help expand testing options in most states. The test from LabCorp will initially only be available to health care workers and first responders under a doctor's orders.

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

Agent: Gronkowski to have reunion with Brady in Tampa Bay

By FRED GOODALL AP Sports Writer

TAMPA, Fla. (AP) — Four-time All Pro tight end Rob Gronkowski has agreed to a reunion with Tom Brady. The agent for the retired New England star confirmed Tuesday that pending completion of a physical Gronkowski has agreed to play for the Tampa Bay Buccaneers, who are acquiring his rights from the Patriots.

A proposed trade that needs to be finalized before this week's NFL draft would bring Gronkowski and a seventh-round pick to Tampa Bay in exchange for a fourth-round selection.

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, April 22, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 284 ~ 53 of 75

"Pending the physical, Rob has agreed to play for Tampa this season," agent Drew Rosenhaus said. The deal would reunite the 30-year-old Gronkowski with Brady, who signed a two-year, \$50 million contract with the Bucs last month.

Gronkowski, who'll turn 31 on May 14, retired in March 2019 after nine seasons with the Patriots, who drafted him in the second round in 2010. He has one year left on his contract at \$10 million.

"He will honor his current contract at this time," Rosenhaus said.

In addition to 521 receptions for 7,861 yards and 79 touchdowns in 115 regular-season games, the five-time Pro Bowl selection has another 81 catches for 1,163 yards and 12 TDs in 16 playoff games.

Even without the prospect of adding Gronkowski, the tight end position was considered one of Tampa Bay's biggest strengths, with O.J. Howard and Cameron Brate teaming with Pro Bowl receivers Mike Evans and Chris Godwin to form the best collection of targets Brady has had to work with in more than a decade.

The Bucs are coming off a 7-9 finish and missed the playoffs for the 12th consecutive season in 2019. They haven't won a postseason game since the franchise's only Super Bowl championship run 18 years ago.

Brady played in nine Super Bowls — winning six — in 20 seasons with the Patriots, who also appeared in 13 AFC championship games and won 17 division titles while the three-time league MVP was their primary starting quarterback.

A few days after signing with the Bucs in free agency, Brady said not only was he impressed with a talented young roster Tampa Bay has assembled in recent years, but what he sensed is a commitment to do whatever necessary to be successful.

"I don't want to get into every process to the decision I was making at the time, but there were a lot of things that really were intriguing to me about the organization — the players, and the coaches and the willingness of everyone to try to accomplish what the goal of playing football is, which is to win," the four-time Super Bowl MVP said.

"I'm going to try to do everything I can in my position, and in what I am responsible for to make it happen," Brady added. "I've got to trust that everyone else is doing the exact same thing. That part is no different from what I've experienced in 20 years of my own role."

Gronkowski was an All-Pro in 2011, 2014, 2015 and 2017. He had 43 receptions for 682 yards and three TDs in 2018, his final season with the Patriots.

Without his favorite target, Brady had one of his worst non-injury seasons last year, throwing for 4,057 yards with 24 TDs vs. eight interceptions.

The Patriots, nevertheless, won 12 games and extended their string of consecutive playoff appearances to 11 before a sputtering offense contributed to a first-round loss to the Tennessee Titans.

More AP NFL: <https://apnews.com/NFL> and https://twitter.com/AP_NFL

Pandemic and chill: Netflix adds a cool 16M subscribers

By MICHAEL LIEDTKE AP Technology Writer

BERKELEY, Calif. (AP) — Netflix picked up nearly 16 million global subscribers during the first three months of the year, helping cement its status as one of the world's most essential services in times of isolation or crisis.

The quarter spanned the beginning of stay-at-home orders in the U.S. and around the world, a response to the coronavirus pandemic that apparently led millions to latch onto Netflix for entertainment and comfort when most had nowhere to be but home.

Netflix more than doubled the quarterly growth it predicted in January, well before the COVID-19 outbreak began to shut down many major economies. It was the biggest three-month gain in the 13-year history of Netflix's streaming service.

The numbers — released Tuesday as part of Netflix's first-quarter earnings report — support a growing belief that video streaming is likely to thrive even as the overall U.S. economy sinks into its first recession in more than a decade.

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, April 22, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 284 ~ 54 of 75

"Our small contribution to these difficult times is to make home confinement a little more bearable," Netflix CEO Reed Hastings said while speaking to investors during a video call from a bedroom.

Investor optimism about Netflix's prospects propelled the company's stock to new highs recently, a sharp contrast with the decline in the broader market.

Netflix's shares initially surged in after-hours trading after the first-quarter report came out, although they soon fell back. One reason: The strengthening U.S. dollar will likely depress the company's revenue from outside the U.S., which could dampen gains from some of its fastest growing markets.

Currency effects also limited Netflix revenue growth to 17%, for a total of \$5.8 billion, even though the company ended March with nearly 183 million worldwide subscribers, a 23% increase from the same time last year. Netflix earned \$709 million in the first quarter, nearly tripling its profit from last year.

Netflix shares edged up by less than 1% in Tuesday's extended trading to \$435.69, leaving them below last week's record high of \$449.52.

Even though it faces plenty of competition, Netflix appears better positioned to take advantage of the surging demand for TV shows and movies largely because of its head start in video streaming.

Since beginning its foray into original programming seven years ago, Netflix has built up a deep catalog that can feed viewer appetites even though the pandemic response has shut down production on many new shows.

That stoppage could hurt Netflix as well, although analysts at Canaccord Genuity believe its video library will serve as a "content moat" that can keep most competitors at bay.

One notable exception is Walt Disney Co., whose recently launched streaming service is also stocked with perennial classics, especially for children who have even more free time than usual.

That's one of the big reasons Disney's service has amassed 50 million subscribers and why Netflix is basking in another resurgence in popularity. Netflix predicted it will add 7.5 million subscribers from April through June. That's nearly three times more than its average springtime gain of 2.7 million subscribers during the past seven years.

Hastings praised Disney's fast start in streaming as "stunning" in his video call with investors. "My hat's off to them," he said. "We are both going to do great work."

Most of the most popular programs Netflix has in the works for this year are already completed, including the fourth season of "The Crown," its acclaimed series about Queen Elizabeth's continuing reign in the United Kingdom.

Even so, Hastings warned that subscriber growth seems likely to taper off during the second half of the year, given how many new viewers are poring into the service during the first half. That was just a guess, Hastings said, adding that the only thing he feels certain about these days is that video streaming win more converts for at least the next five years.

More deaths, no benefit from malaria drug in VA virus study

By MARILYNN MARCHIONE AP Chief Medical Writer

A malaria drug widely touted by President Donald Trump for treating the new coronavirus showed no benefit in a large analysis of its use in U.S. veterans hospitals. There were more deaths among those given hydroxychloroquine versus standard care, researchers reported.

The nationwide study was not a rigorous experiment. But with 368 patients, it's the largest look so far of hydroxychloroquine with or without the antibiotic azithromycin for COVID-19, which has killed more than 171,000 people as of Tuesday.

The study was posted on an online site for researchers and has not been reviewed by other scientists. Grants from the National Institutes of Health and the University of Virginia paid for the work.

Researchers analyzed medical records of 368 male veterans hospitalized with confirmed coronavirus infection at Veterans Health Administration medical centers who died or were discharged by April 11.

About 28% who were given hydroxychloroquine plus usual care died, versus 11% of those getting routine care alone. About 22% of those getting the drug plus azithromycin died too, but the difference

between that group and usual care was not considered large enough to rule out other factors that could have affected survival.

Hydroxychloroquine made no difference in the need for a breathing machine, either.

Researchers did not track side effects, but noted a hint that hydroxychloroquine might have damaged other organs. The drug has long been known to have potentially serious side effects, including altering the heartbeat in a way that could lead to sudden death.

Earlier this month, scientists in Brazil stopped part of a study testing chloroquine, an older drug similar to hydroxychloroquine, after heart rhythm problems developed in one-quarter of people given the higher of two doses being tested.

On Tuesday, NIH issued new treatment guidelines from a panel of experts, saying there was not enough evidence to recommend for or against chloroquine or hydroxychloroquine for COVID-19. But it also advised against using hydroxychloroquine with azithromycin because of the potential side effects.

Many doctors have been leery of the drug.

At the University of Wisconsin, Madison, "I think we're all rather underwhelmed" at what's been seen among the few patients there who've tried it, said Dr. Nasia Safdar, medical director of infection control and prevention.

Patients asked about it soon after Trump started promoting its use, "but now I think that people have realized we don't know if it works or not" and needs more study, said Safdar, who had no role in the VA analysis.

The NIH and others have more rigorous tests underway.

Marilynn Marchione can be followed on Twitter: @MMarchioneAP

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Senate approves \$483B virus aid deal, sends it to House

By LISA MASCARO and ANDREW TAYLOR Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — A \$483 billion coronavirus aid package flew through the Senate on Tuesday after Congress and the White House reached a deal to replenish a small-business payroll fund and provided new money for hospitals and testing.

Passage was swift and unanimous, despite opposition from conservative Republicans. President Donald Trump tweeted his support, pledging to sign it into law. It now goes to the House, with votes set for Thursday.

"I urge the House to pass the bill," Trump said at the White House.

After nearly two weeks of negotiations and deadlock, Congress and the White House reached agreement Tuesday on the nearly \$500 billion package — the fourth as Washington strains to respond to the health and economic crisis.

"The Senate is continuing to stand by the American people," said Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, R-Ky., to an almost empty chamber.

Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer said the bill was made "better and broader" after Democrats forced the inclusion of money for hospitals and testing.

A copy of the measure was provided to The Associated Press by a GOP aide.

Most of the funding, \$331 billion, would go to boost a small-business payroll loan program that ran out of money last week. An additional \$75 billion would be given to hospitals, and \$25 billion would be spent to boost testing for the virus, a key step in building the confidence required to reopen state economies.

Missing from the package, however, was extra funding for state and local governments staring down budget holes and desperate to avert furloughs and layoffs of workers needed to keep cities running.

Trump said he was open to including in a subsequent virus aid package fiscal relief for state and local

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, April 22, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 284 ~ 56 of 75

government — which Democrats wanted for the current bill — along with infrastructure projects.

Not all Republicans are backing Trump on the deal.

Two conservative Republicans, Sen. Mike Lee, R-Utah, and Sen. Rand Paul, R-Ky., voiced opposition during Tuesday's session but did not halt passage.

Lee said it was "unacceptable" that the full Senate was not present and voting in the pro forma session as Congress shuttered during the virus outbreak.

Paul said no amount of federal funding will be able to salvage a shuttered economy. "Deaths from infectious disease will continue, but we cannot continue to indefinitely quarantine," said Paul, who tested positive for the virus last month but has since recovered.

The House is being called to Washington for a Thursday vote, said Rep. Steny Hoyer, the House majority leader.

Hoyer, D-Md., said the House will also vote on a proposal to allow proxy voting on future business during the pandemic, a first for Congress, which has required in-person business essentially since its founding.

"The House must show the American people that we continue to work hard on their behalf," Hoyer wrote to colleagues.

But the landmark rules change met with objections from conservative Republicans.

"I don't support it at all," said Rep. Clay Higgins, R-La., one of a handful of Republicans who showed up for Tuesday's pro forma session to protest proxy votes. "Congress should be in session."

Signaling concerns, House Minority Leader Kevin McCarthy, R-Calif., wrote Speaker Nancy Pelosi, D-Calif., seeking more information on plans to reopen the House.

The emerging virus aid package — originally designed by Republicans as a \$250 billion stopgap to replenish the payroll subsidies for smaller businesses — has grown into the second largest of the four coronavirus response bills so far.

Democratic demands have caused the measure to balloon, though Republicans support additions for hospitals and testing.

The now \$310 billion for the Paycheck Protection Program includes \$60 billion or so set aside for — and divided equally among — smaller banks and community lenders that seek to focus on underbanked neighborhoods and rural areas. Democrats have highlighted the number of smaller and minority-owned shops missing out on the aid.

Another \$60 billion would be available for a small-business loans and grants program delivered through an existing small business disaster aid program, \$10 billion of which would come in the form of direct grants.

The bill provides \$25 billion for increased testing efforts, including at least \$11 billion to state and tribal governments to detect and track new infections. The rest will help fund federal research into new coronavirus testing options.

Currently, the U.S. has tested roughly 4 million people for the virus, or just over 1% of its population, according to the Covid Tracking Project website.

While the White House says the U.S. has enough testing to begin easing social distancing measures, most experts say capacity needs to increase at least threefold, if not more.

Despite yet another big package from Congress, all sides say more aid is likely needed.

Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin outlined infrastructure and broadband spending for the next bill. And there's pressure to help cities with populations of less than 500,000 that were shut out of the massive \$2 trillion relief bill that passed last month.

Schumer said Monday that he had talked to Federal Reserve Board Chairman Jerome Powell and that Powell said the Fed is working to open up the Main Street Lending program to nonprofits and municipal governments.

The government's Paycheck Protection Program has been swamped by companies applying for loans and reached its appropriations limit last Thursday after approving nearly 1.7 million loans. That left thousands of small businesses in limbo as they sought help.

Controversies have enveloped the program, with many businesses complaining that banks have favored

customers with whom they already do business. Some businesses that haven't been harmed much by the pandemic have also received loans, along with a number of publicly traded corporations.

Associated Press writers Matthew Perrone, Mary Clare Jalonick and Matthew Daly contributed to this report.

Virus outbreak in Ohio prisons highlights risk at US lockups

By ANDREW WELSH-HUGGINS Associated Press

COLUMBUS, Ohio (AP) — A massive coronavirus outbreak that has sickened nearly 4,000 inmates in Ohio has highlighted the dangers lurking in the nation's correctional facilities during the pandemic and what system-wide testing reveals about the scope of infections behind prison walls.

The state ordered testing in prisons earlier this month as infections began to streak through guards, and this week the spike sent Ohio's broader tally of virus cases to nearly 14,000, including more than 550 deaths and over 2,600 hospitalizations.

Prisons have been a major focus of concern since the virus first hit the United States, which incarcerates more people than any other nation — about 1.3 million inmates in state prisons and another 180,000 in federal penitentiaries.

With inmates crammed together in small cells, and eating and exercising in large groups, conditions are ripe for the virus to spread quickly and silently. Hygiene varies widely, and supplies such as soap aren't always available. Medical treatment and release rates vary widely, making it difficult to track sick inmates who are paroled and the quality of care they receive inside.

"Prison is set up for everything to be close — there is no social distancing," Cornelius Patterson Jr., a 40-year-old serving 30 years to life for aggravated murder at the Marion Correctional Institution in north-central Ohio, told The Associated Press on Tuesday.

Systemwide in Ohio, 3,762 inmates have tested positive and nine have died, including seven at the Pickaway Correctional Institution, southwest of Columbus. The head of the prison guards' union is in self-quarantine after his wife, a guard at the Lorain Correctional Institution, tested positive.

The numbers at Marion are particularly eye-popping: Of about 2,500 total inmates, 2,011 have tested positive according to figures from the Department of Rehabilitation and Correction. In addition, 154 employees have tested positive out of a staff of about 350, which includes about 295 guards, forcing those remaining to work 16-hour shifts. One guard has died.

Across the country there are similar stories of flareups in densely packed prison populations.

In North Carolina, more than 330 of 700 inmates at the Neuse Correctional Institution in Goldsboro and about a dozen of its 250 employees have been infected, with about 200 test results pending. State Commissioner of Prisons Todd Ishee said more 90% of prisoners testing positive were asymptomatic. None have died.

In Texas, which has the nation's largest prison system, more than 200 staffers and nearly 470 inmates at over two dozen facilities have tested positive. Another 42,000 prisoners, about 29 percent of the state's total, were locked down in their cells this week in an effort to prevent the spread of the virus, according to the Texas Department of Criminal Justice.

"The rapid spread of it is my greatest concern, not just for myself but for quite a few others that are here in the unit too," Laddy Valentine, a 69-year-old prisoner with a heart condition, testified during a federal court hearing last week over conditions at the Pack Unit prison northwest of Houston. "Some are in worse condition than I am, and obviously one has already died."

In Maryland, a civil rights group filed a class action suit Tuesday over what it called an "uncontrolled" outbreak at a county jail housing nearly 600 prisoners. The suit claims that inmates at Prince George's County Jail who test positive are isolated in cells with walls covered in feces, mucus and blood, and that "they are barely monitored and receive no real treatment." It's one of multiple lawsuits filed around the country on behalf of inmates seeking improved conditions or releases to help avoid contagion.

Back at Ohio's Marion Correctional Institution, inmates said they have at most two masks per person,

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, April 22, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 284 ~ 58 of 75

one disposable and one cloth, which they're told to reuse. Soap supplies are limited, and there's currently no access to the commissary where such items can be purchased.

The testing conducted was the nasal swab exam, which detects the virus from the onset, rather than antibody tests, which detect proteins that show up a week or more later.

Multiple inmates on G Block told AP they were tested April 16 but still hadn't gotten the results. While they awaited word, they were continuing to mingle in common areas and housed in their double-bunked cells.

Republican Gov. Mike DeWine said he would look into reports of inmates remaining in normal living situations without social distancing while awaiting delayed test results.

"Prisons, nursing homes, anyplace where we have Ohioans gathered together in close quarters, we're very, very concerned about them," DeWine said.

Several Marion inmates also charged that guards initially handled the outbreak as a security situation, appearing on cell blocks with pepper spray pistols.

"It is an international health crisis, but it was as if the staff members were mad at us and some were actually taunting us," said Dennis "Sal" Salerno, who's serving life for aggravated murder.

The Ohio prisons agency said it was working on a response.

The large number of inmates who aren't showing symptoms is indicative of the virus' ability to quietly spread through populations and reinforces the need for social distancing policies the state has put into place, said Dr. Amy Acton, the Ohio health director.

"All of this is about how much we're spreading and putting others at risk, maybe while not knowing it," Acton said Monday.

Associated Press writers Jake Bleiberg in Dallas, Jonathan Drew in Raleigh, N.C., Michael Kunzelman in College Park, Md., and Colleen Long in Washington, D.C., contributed to this report.

Presidential debate planning proceeds despite virus worries

By ZEKE MILLER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Preparations for the 2020 general election debates are proceeding "according to schedule" despite the coronavirus outbreak.

The nonpartisan Commission on Presidential Debates, which has organized all general election debates since 1988, said in a statement Tuesday that it "will continue to monitor and assess developments regarding public health and safety as debate planning proceeds."

The debates are traditionally held before a large live audience, though it remains to be seen whether larger gatherings of that size will be advisable by the time of the first debate, scheduled for Sept. 29, 2020, at the University of Notre Dame in Indiana.

The two other presidential debates will be held on Oct. 15 at the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor and on Oct. 22 at Belmont University in Nashville, Tennessee.

The final debate of the Democratic primary was held last month at a CNN studio with no audience.

The general election debates are expected to feature President Donald Trump and presumptive Democratic nominee Joe Biden, but the formal invitations won't be issued until the summer. The organization will also organize one vice presidential debate, set for Oct. 7 at the University of Utah in Salt Lake City.

Virus misinformation flourishes in online protest groups

By AMANDA SEITZ Associated Press

CHICAGO (AP) — Hundreds, sometimes thousands, of posts fly in the new Facebook groups daily.

The coronavirus numbers are fake, some of the social media videos claim. "Social distancing is the new way to control you, your family and your behavior," another commenter warns. Others say the pandemic is an overblown hoax.

The loose network of Facebook groups spurring protests of stay-at-home orders across the country

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, April 22, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 284 ~ 59 of 75

have fast become a hotbed of misinformation, conspiracy theories and skepticism around the coronavirus pandemic. Launched in recent weeks by pro-gun advocacy groups and conservative activists, the pages are repositories of Americans' suspicion and anxiety — often fueled by notions floated by television personalities or President Donald Trump himself and amplified by social media accounts.

In a matter of days, the Facebook pages have mobilized protests at state capitols and collectively gained an audience of nearly 1 million followers on Facebook, according to The Associated Press' analysis of the groups.

There's little basis in reality for many of the claims on the sites. The coronavirus has infected millions of people worldwide, and the U.S. has recorded more deaths — 43,000 — than anywhere else in the world, according to a Johns Hopkins University count. Stay-at-home orders have been used by governments across the world — and the political spectrum — to try to contain the spread, as recommended by the world's top health officials.

But the power of suspicion is apparent in the Facebook groups. A private group was key in enlisting people for a "Liberate Minnesota" march outside Democratic Gov. Tim Walz's home Friday, despite his order limiting large gatherings. Trump backed the protesters on Twitter, calling to "LIBERATE MINNESOTA" right before the protest kicked off.

"We recruited some trusted friends, threw it up on Facebook Sunday night," said conservative activist Michele Even, who oversees two Facebook groups in Wisconsin and Minnesota with a collective following of 100,000. "By Friday, we had over a thousand shares for the event."

Under pressure after a spate of nationwide protests organized on its site, Facebook said Monday that it would ban events that don't follow social distancing rules.

"Events that defy government's guidance on social distancing aren't allowed on Facebook," the company said in a brief statement that did not explain how it would evaluate whether the events violate local ordinances. Facebook said it removed postings for events in California, New Jersey and Nebraska.

Users on the platform are still promoting future stay-at-home protests in Wisconsin, Virginia and Illinois. One Facebook ad calls for people to "descend on the Capitol building and surrounding streets, either on foot or in vehicles," this Saturday in Denver. Some Facebook users are promoting a "drive-in" protest called Operation Gridlock to clog roads surrounding state capitols.

The movement is also becoming increasingly partisan online, with prominent conservatives urging their followers to protest Democratic governors, despite stay-at-home orders coming down in nearly every state, including some led by Republican governors.

"Every patriot should go outside, socially distanced and with masks, and protest these Democrat tyrants," Charlie Kirk wrote last Friday to his 1.7 million Twitter followers.

Twitter users are also pushing YouTube video links that describe the coronavirus as a hoax or promoting farflung theories that it was created in a lab, using the hashtags ReOpen or Gridlock, said Kathleen Carley, a researcher at Carnegie Mellon University's CyLab Security and Privacy Institute. Trump has also floated the idea that the virus is man-made.

Nearly identical claims are also being posted across multiple platforms — from Twitter to Reddit to the Facebook groups — suggesting that the misinformation is orchestrated on some level, she added.

"There are some people in these groups that have legitimate concerns about the economy, but they're being overwhelmed," Carley said. "There's a lot of these conspiracy theories, linked right into these reopen groups."

At least some of those Facebook groups are part of a coordinated campaign.

Facebook groups in Ohio, Wisconsin, Minnesota, New York and Pennsylvania were launched by Ben Dorr and his brothers, who run pro-gun groups in several Midwestern states. The brothers have also registered several websites under the "Reopen" name that directs users to their pro-gun lobbying group and invites them to "donate" to the cause.

The Dorr brothers have spent years raising money off conservative causes like anti-abortion rights or gun rights, said Kurt Daudt, Minnesota's Republican House minority leader. Daudt believes it's a scam —

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, April 22, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 284 ~ 60 of 75

saying he once watched them take a video outside the statehouse, claiming they were headed inside to lobby, but they left immediately after filming wrapped.

"They really try to take advantage of whatever issue people are passionate about at any given time and try to raise money for themselves," Daudt said.

Dorr contends his Facebook groups are part of a "grassroots" movement to protest stay-at-home orders.

"We want to reopen these states, save these peoples livelihoods," Dorr said in a phone interview with the AP.

He wouldn't say precisely how many pages or websites he and his brothers operate. Calls to brothers Chris and Aaron Dorr were not returned.

Their Facebook groups are peppered with posts that predict the government will force people to get coronavirus vaccinations and videos that say health officials are intentionally inflating coronavirus death numbers.

Even, who helps run the Facebook groups in Minnesota and Wisconsin with the Dorrs, said she believes many people are unintentionally sharing misinformation on the pages.

"A lot of times people are posting because they're not aware it is fake or false information," she said.

But that false information could be driving some people to protest the stay-at-home orders, said Nir Hauser, the chief technology officer at VineSight, a company that tracks misinformation.

Hauser identified news articles of protesters who cited popular coronavirus conspiracy theories in interviews. One woman told a North Carolina TV station that "nobody is sick with COVID."

"The stuff that we're seeing online does eventually percolate to real people," Hauser said. "It got them to leave the house, go out and protest."

Associated Press writer David Klepper contributed to this report from Providence, R.I.

Cuomo, Trump ready to meet after trading virus barbs, praise

By **JONATHAN LEMIRE, MARINA VILLENEUVE and ZEKE MILLER** Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Their back-and-forth during the coronavirus pandemic has included insults, sharply contrasting views on the role of the federal government and some moments of mutual admiration.

Now President Donald Trump and New York Gov. Andrew Cuomo will meet face-to-face Tuesday for the first time since the global crisis began.

Ahead of their Oval Office meeting, Cuomo said he wanted to discuss the need for more federal help in increasing testing capacity — a persistent sticking point between the governors and Washington.

Cuomo said Trump is right in saying that "states should take the lead" on testing, but the federal government needs to manage the flow of supplies from abroad while governors are "trying to put together their testing protocol in their state."

"I think in many ways we're talking past each other," Cuomo said.

Despite well-documented shortages of testing supplies, Trump and White House aides have insisted that states have enough test capacity to move ahead with the first phase of efforts to reopen their economies.

The hot-and-cold relationship between Trump and Cuomo has been on full display in their respective briefings and Twitter posts during the crisis. In recent days, Trump has admonished Cuomo to "do your job." Cuomo, in turn, has questioned Trump's grasp of the Constitution and suggested the president is trying to act like a "king."

For all of that, though, Trump said Monday that "we, believe it or not, have — we get along. Okay?"

He added that Cuomo had been "very generous" with recent praise.

Through daily briefings and scores of media appearances, Cuomo has in many ways emerged as the Democratic face of the response to the pandemic. With the party's likely presidential nominee, Joe Biden, largely sidelined at his Delaware home, Cuomo has become one of several governors thrust into the spotlight as the pandemic has forced a reordering of American life.

As Cuomo conducts briefings from New York, he has vacillated between being Trump's foil and his un-

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, April 22, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 284 ~ 61 of 75

likely ally. The two Queens natives — they grew up just a few neighborhoods apart — have traded barbs on Twitter but also consulted in late-night phone calls.

Asked if he's had to walk a "fine line" in dealing with the president, Cuomo said: "Life is a fine line."

"He has no problem telling me when he disagrees," Cuomo told reporters Tuesday before departing for Washington. "And he tells me when he agrees. I have no problem telling him when I disagree and when I agree."

Cuomo, according to aides, has deliberately used both the carrot and the stick in dealing with a president who is extremely sensitive about his media image and how governors respond to him.

At times, he has preemptively praised the president on cable news hits, trying to gently persuade him to do more. He has made a point of thanking Trump — resulting in video clips that the president has eagerly showed off in the White House briefing room in recent days.

But at other times, Cuomo has shown no hesitation to lace into the president, including during a recent monologue in which he urged Trump to stop watching television and to "get back to work" safeguarding American lives during the pandemic.

Trump often catches at least some of Cuomo's daily briefings and has expressed annoyance to aides at the positive press that the governor has received, according to advisers. He has reveled in the bits of praise he has received from Cuomo — and other Democratic governors.

Cuomo and other governors are also pushing for \$500 billion in unrestricted aid from the federal government for states to offset revenue shortfalls resulting from the outbreak.

The Senate is nearing agreement on a nearly \$500 billion coronavirus aid package for small businesses, including additional help for hospitals and virus testing. Cuomo said he was disappointed it didn't include direct aid for states.

"I think it's a terrible mistake not to provide funding for the states," Cuomo said. "I get small businesses, I get airlines. How about police? How about fire? How about health care workers? How about teachers?"

Lemire reported from New York and Villeneuve from Albany. Associated Press writer Aamer Madhani in Chicago contributed to this article.

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

Lester Holt starts show for children about the coronavirus

By DAVID BAUDER AP Media Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — In the NBC "Nightly News" inaugural kids edition, Sadie of Morristown, New Jersey, posed the question that everyone wishes had an answer.

"When is coronavirus going to end? she said.

After a test run last week, NBC's Lester Holt on Tuesday is starting a twice-weekly newscast that he hopes can ease some of the mystery and worry for young people about a pandemic that's kept them out of school and many of their parents at home.

Posted Tuesday and Thursday afternoons, the program will run between six to 10 minutes and be available on NBC's YouTube channel and other digital platforms.

NBC's medical correspondent, Dr. John Torres, gamely took a whack at Sadie's question, saying experts hoped that within a couple of months, and with adherence to medical advice, she might be able to begin going outside and playing with friends again.

"It's healthy to have someone who will talk to them in as plain a language as possible and really walk them through what we know and what the coping techniques are for all of us," Holt said.

One of the "Nightly News" producers, Bradd Jaffy, came up with the idea a couple of weeks ago and it was quickly put into motion, he said.

Besides the question-and-answer session with Torres, correspondent Kate Snow talked with an expert about tips for home schooling — yes, you should change out of your pajamas, he suggested. A filmed

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, April 22, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 284 ~ 62 of 75

story featured a teenager in Virginia who didn't have his driver's license but flew a small plane around the state distributing donated supplies to hospitals.

At the show's end, Holt said that "we hope you found this informative, answered some of your questions and made you smile."

Tuesday's show features a report on a virtual zoo visit by Jackson Daly, who's Carson Daly's son, and has a story about a 14-year-old volunteer from Illinois who makes face shields for doctors and nurses.

Linda Ellerbee, who made a series of award-winning news programs for young people on Nickelodeon starting with the first Gulf War, applauded Holt's effort. She said it was the first time since she retired where she wished she was able to make one of her signature shows.

"I think it's hugely important because it's not a story these kids can avoid," she said.

Children need to feel that they have a voice, and often have trouble digesting bits and pieces of information. "Kids need to know that it is OK to talk about things, it's OK to be afraid, it's OK to ask questions," she said.

Ellerbee wasn't an expert in child psychology when first asked to do a program that tries to make sense of complex and disturbing news stories for young people. She followed her instincts. Similarly, Holt is taking cues from his experience as a father and grandparent. Holt said the show won't address the grimmer aspects of the story, like the death toll.

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

The questions that some children sent in to Torres weren't all that different from what some adults would ask. One wanted an explanation of what "flattening the curve" meant and another wondered whether coronavirus survived in the water and whether it would be safe to swim (Torres said the most important issue would be not getting too close to fellow swimmers.)

"The important thing that this program will provide is an affirmation to kids that it's OK to be a little freaked out by this, because all of us are, too," he said. "It's really important that we convey, even if it's in a very subtle manner, that what you're feeling is completely normal."

Israel's Netanyahu notches key wins in a deal with his rival

By JOSEF FEDERMAN Associated Press

JERUSALEM (AP) — Israel's embattled prime minister, Benjamin Netanyahu, has notched two critical victories in this week's power-sharing agreement with his chief rival: He can stay in office throughout his upcoming corruption trial, and he can press forward with a potentially explosive plan to annex large parts of the occupied West Bank.

Netanyahu and former military chief Benny Gantz, leader of the Blue and White Party, announced their "national emergency government" late Monday, ending 16 months of political paralysis and narrowly averting an unprecedented fourth national election in just over a year.

The emergency government's stated mission is to steer the country through the coronavirus crisis, which has killed over 180 Israelis and put a quarter of the country out of work. But after a bruising period of prolonged political stalemate, both men also appear to have been driven toward each other by their deepest survival instincts.

Netanyahu and Gantz agreed to rotate 18-month terms as prime minister, and they have evenly divided key government ministries and parliamentary committees. In effect, each side will be able to veto the other's actions.

Commentator Sima Kadmon said the coronavirus crisis served as the pretext for the unlikely alliance. "The real goal was Netanyahu's effort to buy time," she wrote in the Yediot Ahronot daily.

An early test for the alliance will be an issue close to Netanyahu's heart: the annexation of large parts of the West Bank. Such a move would destroy any lingering hopes of establishing an independent Palestinian state and draw widespread international condemnation.

Netanyahu and his pro-settler base see an opportunity under the friendly administration of President

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, April 22, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 284 ~ 63 of 75

Donald Trump who seeks re-election in November. Although their government is to focus on coronavirus issues for its first six months, Netanyahu persuaded Gantz to allow him to raise annexation plans in the Cabinet from July 1.

Netanyahu could still face some obstacles. The deal says any move would require U.S. support and need to take into account the opinions of key allies. Gantz has given annexation only lukewarm support. But the vague language of their deal allows Netanyahu to present the proposal to parliament — where he appears to have majority support for the idea — even without Gantz's backing.

Palestinian official Saeb Erekat called the coalition agreement a threat to regional peace and security. "It is an international responsibility to hold the new Israeli government accountable," he said.

The coalition deal has also come under heavy criticism in Israel.

Through three bitter election campaigns in the past year, Gantz portrayed himself as the antithesis to Netanyahu and repeatedly vowed never to sit in a government with a prime minister suspected of serious crimes. After the most recent election last month, Gantz even began pushing legislation in parliament to ban the indicted Netanyahu from remaining as prime minister.

Yet with the clock ticking, and his fragile alliance unraveling, Gantz accepted Netanyahu's invitation last month to form a government together. The sudden announcement angered many of his supporters and broke up the Blue and White alliance, leaving him with only a shrunken version of the party. A fourth election would likely have sent Gantz into political irrelevance.

Speaking in parliament Tuesday, Gantz vowed to uphold the rule of law.

"I took upon myself the mission to safeguard the democracy because I believe it is the most significant source of strength as a society," he said.

Netanyahu also defended the deal as best for the nation. Yet for all of his talk in recent weeks about the coronavirus and national unity, leaks from the coalition negotiations indicated he was also motivated by his own personal survival as he prepares to go on trial.

Netanyahu has been charged with fraud, breach of trust and accepting bribes in a series of scandals. He denies the charges and says he is the victim of a hostile media and aggressive prosecution.

Yair Lapid, who withdrew his Yesh Atid party from Blue and White last month and will likely be the next opposition leader, said Tuesday that he apologized to those he persuaded to vote for Gantz.

"There hasn't been a fraud like this since the state was established," said Lapid. "You don't fight corruption from within. If you're in, you're part of it."

While Israeli law requires public officials to resign if charged with a crime, that does not apply to sitting prime ministers.

Although Netanyahu is supposed to step aside next year under the deal, it creates a new position of "designated prime minister" that would permit him to remain in office while on trial.

Netanyahu has been desperate to stay as prime minister. As the case against him has gained steam, the office has provided him a high-profile stage to lash out against his opponents and rally his base. And last month, his hand-picked justice minister managed to delay Netanyahu's trial until late May.

Although Netanyahu will not be able to prevent the trial, he nonetheless will be able to continue to use his office as a bully pulpit throughout the proceedings.

Several nonprofit advocacy groups filed challenges to the coalition deal, asking the Supreme Court to ban an indicted politician, such as Netanyahu, from being allowed to form a new government. If the court rules in favor of the challenge, the deal could unravel and the country could still be plunged into new elections.

Yohanan Plesner, a former lawmaker who is now president of the Israel Democracy Institute, said the coalition agreement ends a difficult stalemate but offers little hope.

He said the government would likely make progress on consensus issues, like rescuing the economy and passing a budget.

But in other areas, including annexation, "I very much expect it to be very difficult," he said. "It will be mainly a government of mutual vetoes and paralysis."

Back to work? Companies finding it easier said than done

By MAE ANDERSON, TOM KRISHER and ANNE D'INNOCENZIO AP Business Writers

NEW YORK (AP) — As state and federal leaders tussle over when and how fast to “reopen” the U.S. economy amid the coronavirus pandemic, some corporations are taking the first steps toward bringing their employees back to work. Which in many cases is easier said than done.

Detroit-area automakers, which suspended production roughly a month ago, are pushing to restart factories as states like Michigan prepare to relax their stay-at-home orders. Fiat Chrysler has already announced a May 4 gradual restart date; General Motors and Ford don't want to be left behind.

In negotiations with the United Auto Workers union, automakers are offering to provide protective gear, frequently sanitize equipment, and to take worker temperatures to prevent anyone with a fever from entering factories. These steps, they say, have worked at repurposed factories now making medical equipment.

Matt Himes, who installs SUV doors at a GM plant in Spring Hill, Tennessee, said he's ready to get back to work. But he also fears catching the virus.

“I guess we all should worry about it, but you can't keep us closed down forever,” said Himes, who added that it's impossible to keep social distance on his assembly line. “You work within 3 or 4 feet from everybody,” he said. “People right across from you, people right beside you.”

In line with White House guidelines announced last week, several states with Republican governors have begun restoring access to public spaces -- not just beaches and parks, but in states like Georgia, hair salons, gyms, bowling alleys, restaurants and movie theaters as well.

Health officials fear that such moves, if not carefully planned, could fuel a second wave of COVID-19 infections. Some companies that never closed offer a cautionary tale: Meat-packing plants across the Midwest have reported hundreds of coronavirus cases among their tightly quartered workforces. Several have shuttered in an attempt to stem the spread.

Above all else, executives will need to be flexible, said Nicholas Bloom, an economics professor at Stanford University. “You can have a set of plans, but those plans are going to have to be updated on a rolling basis,” he said. “The forecast is incredibly uncertain.”

Retailers, restaurants and mall operators are looking at China's experience to see how they can reopen stores, said Meghann Martindale, global head of research at CBRE, a real estate services firm. Malls, for instance, probably won't open food courts and big play areas for children for a while, and shopping complexes will likely limit the number of entrances to control the flow of customers.

Build-A-Bear Workshop, which operates 350 mostly mall-based stores in the U.S., is exploring new ways to ease coronavirus fears, such as letting families make appointments so they can customize and stuff their own plush toys without strangers around, said founder and former CEO Maxine Clark. It's also giving its workers masks that feature bears so they won't be scary for children.

Amazon, which drew sharp criticism for firing an employee who led a walkout to demand greater coronavirus protection for workers, now says it is developing an internal lab that could potentially provide coronavirus tests for all employees, even those without symptoms. (Amazon says the employee in question was fired for violating social-distance guidelines and other infractions.)

Many technology companies embraced stay-at-home policies early on, since most of their workers can do their jobs remotely. That gives Facebook the luxury of requiring the vast majority of its employees to continue working from home through at least the end of May. Those who can't easily return after that -- if, say, they have no good childcare options -- can continue to work remotely at least through the summer.

But some high-tech firms are in a bigger hurry. Andrei Taraschuk, a software engineer who works for the chip maker Broadcom in Broomfield, Colorado, said employees learned at a town hall meeting Friday that they would be required to go into the office one week out of every four starting April 27.

According to Taraschuk, the company told workers they would be randomly assigned to new groups, not their existing teams, and that their attendance would be monitored via badge checks. The company would give them face masks, gloves and temperature checks. Those who refused to come in would have the option of not working for up to 90 days without pay.

"We've been working from home for weeks," Taraschuk told The Associated Press in an interview. "It's bizarre. We write software."

Broadcom did not reply to a detailed request for comment.

Krisher reported from Detroit. AP technology writer Barbara Ortutay in San Francisco contributed to this story.

Big unknowns about virus complicate getting back to normal

By LAURAN NEERGAARD AP Medical Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — Reopening the U.S. economy is complicated by some troubling scientific questions about the new coronavirus that go beyond the logistics of whether enough tests are available.

In an ideal world, we'd get vaccinated and then get back to normal. But, despite unprecedented efforts, no vaccine will be ready any time soon.

"We're all going to be wearing masks for a while," Dr. Rochelle Walensky, infectious diseases chief at Massachusetts General Hospital, predicted during a podcast with the Journal of the American Medical Association.

Three big unknowns top the worry list:

WHO'S CONTAGIOUS?

"The really unknown in this, to be completely transparent," is asymptomatic spread, said Dr. Deborah Birx, the White House coronavirus task force coordinator.

From the beginning, authorities have rightly told people to stay home if they're sick. But according to Dr. Anthony Fauci of the National Institutes of Health, somewhere between 25% and half of infected people might not show symptoms.

That means there's no way to tell if you're standing next to someone who's contagious in the checkout line.

And even in people who eventually develop symptoms, it's not clear exactly how soon after infection they can spread the virus. That's one reason U.S. officials recently encouraged people to wear cloth masks in public, even as they try to keep 6 feet away from others.

To reopen the economy, officials are emphasizing the availability of more virus tests. That's key to spotting and isolating the infected, and tracing and quarantining the people they may have exposed. But it's not a panacea.

"If you get a test today, that does not mean that tomorrow or the next day or the next day or the next day as you get exposed, perhaps from someone who may not even know they're infected, that that means 'I'm negative,'" Fauci said at a recent White House briefing.

WHO'S IMMUNE?

Doctors assume people who had COVID-19 will have some immunity against a repeat infection. But they don't know how much protection or how long it will last.

Another key question: Do people who survive a severe infection have stronger immunity than those who had mild symptoms — or those who had no obvious symptoms at all?

To tell, scientists are rolling out blood tests that look for antibodies, proteins that the immune system makes to fight off infection. They don't detect active infection like the tests needed for the currently sick. They're intended to tell who already was infected whether they knew it or not — including those who had few or no symptoms and those who were sick but couldn't get a diagnostic test.

As they test more people, researchers will look for the level of antibodies that seems to be the key threshold for protection. They're also trying to tell if having certain types of antibodies are more critical than an overall count.

"How long is the protection — one month, three months, six months, a year?" Fauci said. "We need to be humble and modest that we don't know everything."

Another hurdle: Dozens of antibody tests are being sold without proof that they work as promised. Some countries have reported wildly inaccurate results from certain tests. Among other things, scientists must

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, April 22, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 284 ~ 66 of 75

prove the tests don't confuse antibodies against another respiratory bug for COVID-19 protection.

The situation is so worrisome that FDA Commissioner Stephen Hahn recently warned that his agency has given "emergency use authorization" backing to just four tests — and that urgent work to validate others is underway.

WHO'S AT-RISK?

One early warning has borne out: Older adults are especially susceptible to COVID-19. So are people of any age who have certain health troubles, such as lung disease, heart problems or diabetes.

But being young and apparently healthy is no guarantee. Plenty of 20- and 30-somethings, and even some children, get infected and occasionally die.

"Some people do extremely well and some people completely crash," Fauci told The Associated Press in a recent interview. "It's something more than just age and underlying condition."

There are theories. Maybe genetic differences play a role in how the body responds to this infection, particularly the overactive immune response — what's called a "cytokine storm" — that is blamed for many deaths. Some scientists are looking into variations in cell receptors, the docking ports that allow the virus to stick to a cell and burrow inside.

Whatever the culprit, there's no way to predict who's going to crash. Yet that will become increasingly important if some of the experimental therapies being studied pan out, Fauci said, because doctors would need to know whether to focus treatment on the seriously ill or try to reach the newly infected quickly.

"If this acts like any other virus, you always want to hit it early," he noted.

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Fans invited to compete for 'Friends' reunion special spot

By The Associated Press undefined

NEW YORK (AP) — The big upcoming "Friends" reunion special is inviting a few extra friends — maybe even you.

Castmembers of the popular show have announced that five fans will get a chance to watch the reunion taping live and rub shoulders with stars Jennifer Aniston, Courteney Cox, Matthew Perry, Lisa Kudrow, Matt LeBlanc and David Schwimmer.

"Be our personal guests in the audience for the taping where you'll get to see us all together again for the first time in ages, as we reminisce about the show and celebrate all of the fun we had," the cast announced Tuesday. "Plus, sip a cup of coffee with us in Central Perk, and get the 'Friends' VIP experience on the Warner Bros. Studio Tour."

The sweepstakes offer is being presented by The All In Challenge and all proceeds will go to No Kid Hungry, Meals on Wheels and America's Food Fund, which benefits Feeding America and World Central Kitchen. The minimum bid is \$10.

Production on the HBO Max special has been delayed by the coronavirus pandemic. Plans call for it to be shot on the same Burbank, California, sound stage where the series taped.

VIRUS DIARY: The kids, at a distance, caring for 'Madad'

By JOHN O'CONNOR AP Political Writer

SPRINGFIELD, Ill. (AP) — We call them "Madad," my siblings and I: So inseparable, not to say indistinct, have my parents become during 66 years of marriage. When they call it's a twofer, dueling voices on separate extensions cheerfully greeting the new arrival on the line.

But they don't call often. Depression babies, I suspect they have never completely let go of the long-distance toll charge. So when I recently picked up a buzzing phone to see "Jack & Shirley O'Connor," my stomach dropped. As I explained in a text to my sisters and brother:

"Disconcerting: Unexpected call from Madad."

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, April 22, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 284 ~ 67 of 75

"Frightening: Unexpected call from Madad during pandemic."

"Heart-stopping: Unexpected call from Madad during pandemic in which the first thing Dad says is, 'John, I've got a problem.'"

Fortunately, the problem was my father's inability to link to the online Mass celebrated by my brother, the Rev. Dan O'Connor, pastor of a church in Alexandria, Louisiana. A few keystrokes later, I could hear through the phone my brother's familiar voice saying the opening prayer. Crisis averted.

Surrounded by a world of true suffering, life-risking heroism by men and women who don't think twice, and the most uncertain future many of us have ever faced, I am so fortunate. I have remained healthy. I have retained a paycheck, unlike an unfathomable number of others. I have friends on the phone and two goofy dogs at my feet.

My primary focus has been my parents, Jack and Shirley, in Freeport, Illinois, 115 miles (185 kilometers) northwest of Chicago. Both turned 90 late last year, my father a week after Ma. He has never tired of gossiping about the chance that Shirley would marry a younger man.

They are still in the home they bought in 1959. But both have endured knives that cut out cancer. Shirley uses a walker. Jack has a replaced heart valve and lung issues that would be far worse had he not tossed the cigarettes circa 1964 and started jogging before anyone knew what "aerobic" exercise was.

In other words: If the coronavirus caught them, they would not wrench free.

They get it. They listen patiently as my sisters, Sue and Terry, and my brother Dan commiserate and cajole.

There was Mass — daily for Jack, and no Sundays or holy days missed by Shirley. Fortunately, churches and synagogues and mosques caught on early, canceling in-person worship and making video stars of clerics the world over. (When I sent Dan a clip of an Italian priest turning on the video for Mass, and with it the funny filters of horns and sunglasses and mustaches, he responded, "That's why I have someone else turn on the camera.")

Jack does the grocery shopping. The day that the Illinois Retail Merchants Association announced that state grocers had established "senior shopping" hours, I called my folks' store and learned the appointed hour is 6 to 7 a.m. daily. My father has complied and laughed when I told him, "It's a good thing it's not 'Chubby Middle-Aged Man Shopping' hours, 'cause ain't no way I'm going at 6 a.m.!"

The one battle none of us offspring could win was the one over "perpetual adoration." This is the Catholic practice in which the Body of Christ in the Eucharist, exposed on the church altar, must be attended around the clock. Jack rebuffed each of his children's individual entreaties to give up his volunteer slots. I believe he thought: "My hours of prayer alone in the church, this is my contribution." The church recently suspended adoration, too, because of the crisis.

Now, at home, he and Shirley have television, books, word puzzles and prayer. Perhaps the thing they do best — praying — is the thing the world now needs most.

Fortunately, God isn't picky about their doing it from home.

"Virus Diary," an occasional feature, will showcase the coronavirus saga through the eyes of Associated Press journalists around the world. Follow Illinois-based AP Political Writer John O'Connor on Twitter at <http://twitter.com/APOConnor>

A century later, victory gardens connect Americans again

By KRISTIN M. HALL Associated Press

During World War I, posters proclaiming "Food will win the war" encouraged Americans to grow victory gardens. A century later, home gardeners are returning to that idea in the fight against a global pandemic.

Backyard gardeners are coming together, mostly virtually, to learn and share stories on how to grow vegetables, fruits and flowers as the novel coronavirus raises fears about disruptions in food supplies and the cost of food in a down economy.

Creating a victory garden now can be, as it was during World Wars I and II, a shared experience during

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, April 22, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 284 ~ 68 of 75

hardship and uncertainty.

"World War I, to me, is a pretty stark parallel," said Rose Hayden-Smith, a historian and author of "Sowing the Seeds of Victory: American Gardening Programs of World War I." "Not only was there a war, but there was an influenza pandemic."

Now, gardeners new and old are getting online and on social media to post pictures of freshly tilled backyards, raised garden beds, seeds germinating under grow lights or flocks of chickens. Facebook groups like Victory Garden 2020 or Victory Garden Over COVID-19 are filling up.

Some of these gardeners are newly unemployed, or working parents stuck at home with bored kids. Others are gardening enthusiasts who never had the time before to delve deep into the hobby. Urban community gardeners are ramping up production to feed families who have lost income and kids who no longer get meals at school.

Jennifer McShane had to close her bar in Brooklyn due to the COVID-19 spread in New York City. She's been eating mostly frozen vegetables and is wary of buying fresh produce from a grocery store. But she knew how to plant herbs in containers on her brownstone's patio, so she picked up some tomato seeds, sowed them indoors and labeled them "Seeds of Hope."

"I can't wait for the plants to come in because I am desperate," said McShane. "The things I am missing are the fresh things."

Emanuel Sferios of Las Cruces, New Mexico, was a self-employed contract worker before the virus, but his work has dried up.

So he borrowed a tiller from a neighbor and dug a 30-by-30-foot garden in his backyard. He filled it with compost and planted lettuce, beets, kale and broccoli. He plans to grow squash, melons, tomatoes and peppers, too. He and his girlfriend found a friend on Facebook who was giving out seedlings.

"It's not like we needed this in order to get groceries," said Sferios. "It's more like, wow, what do I do now? I don't have work and I have all this time on my hands."

A common reason to grow vegetables during WWI was limited food supply. America was sending food to European allies and American troops, explained Hayden-Smith. Victory gardens also were a way to assimilate America's many new immigrants through a patriotic and community-building effort.

"So these gardening posters and food preservation posters would appear in literally dozens of languages," said Hayden-Smith.

By WWII, the federal government started encouraging gardening as good economics after the Depression. And as it looked for healthy young men to draft, the government promoted nutrition as part of the national defense, Hayden-Smith said.

Hayden-Smith sees social-media posts about gardening during the pandemic as a 21st century version of the victory garden poster.

"We don't have poster art, but we have Instagram," she said.

In Chicago, a nonprofit called Urban Growers Collective teaches kids and others to grow vegetables at eight urban farms around the city. While their spring educational programs are on hold due to rules on social distancing, co-founder Laurell Sims said they are still focusing on food production and getting produce to families that need it. The group is selling bags of homegrown vegetables like kale, spinach and scallions.

"We're starting to see prices spike here in Chicago for certain kinds of produce just because it's harder to get it," Sims said.

She said most community gardens right now are closed, but her group is hoping to get them reopened with limits on the number of people allowed to work in them at one time.

"The whole heart of a community garden is a community," said Sims. "When we know that our neighbors are sick, when we know our neighbors are compromised, we're able to help them out."

Gardening skills were once passed on from generation to generation, but farming became more industrialized and people moved away from rural areas. Now there's nostalgia for a connection to the land, including gardening, preserving and cooking at home.

Across the country, stores are selling out of flowers, vegetable plants, seeds, and garden soil and compost. At Burpee Seeds, an online, catalog and retail supplier, business has doubled during the pandemic.

George Ball, chairman of Burpee, said this cyclical interest in gardening is tied to the national economy. "We do really well when the economy is stressed or sort of knocked sideways," Ball said, adding that Burpee also saw an uptick in seed purchases during the Great Recession and the stock market crash in 1987.

Brenda Flowers, in Crystal River, Florida, built a tall raised garden for her 96-year-old mother, Lorraine, who grew up in the Great Depression and was among the many women who went to work in factories during World War II to replace the men who were fighting overseas.

"Wouldn't that be so cool if she could go out and just rip off some lettuce leaves and pull up some radishes and some carrots and kale, just like she did when she was younger?" said Flowers.

Before the coronavirus, Bettie Egerton wanted to revive victory gardens in her community of McMinnville, Oregon, to address climate change. She handed out victory garden signs for people to put in their gardens, and encouraged people to avoid buying produce that was trucked in from thousands of miles away. Now, Egerton says the idea of a victory garden has added resonance.

"It's like victory over all kinds of things," she said.

Hospitals, volunteers combine to ease isolation of sick kids

By LEANNE ITALIE Associated Press

What kind of tree can you carry in your hand? Which letter of the alphabet has the most water?

Sarah Schneider's grandmother, Estelle Slon, is full of riddles, and she shares them in emails to sick children forced into isolation as they undergo treatment for cancer, blood disorders and other dire illnesses.

Fifteen-year-old Sarah in Maplewood, New Jersey, thought up the idea in a Zoom session with her school's social justice club after they were sent home for remote learning in the coronavirus crisis.

They decided to focus on kids undergoing prolonged medical treatment who are doing without their regular visitors and activities. Sarah's mom connected them to The Valerie Fund, which operates pediatric treatment centers free of charge in five hospitals, primarily in New Jersey.

"I wanted them to know they're not alone," Sarah said.

Sarah consulted with Valerie Fund staff to advise her growing team of pen pals on what to write, so as not to offend on religious grounds or offer undue hope. She attaches funny animal photos and memes.

Jill Chhowalla is grateful. Her 8-year-old daughter, Sophie, is among Sarah's recipients. The third grader was diagnosed in November with an advanced, rare form of cancer.

She has begun chemotherapy, which requires an overnight hospital stay every three weeks. She wasn't able to attend school before the coronavirus pandemic hit but had been participating through a "telepresence" robot which allowed her to learn alongside her classmates.

After lockdowns began, she lost that interaction. Aside from one parent at a time, she was no longer allowed to have friends and relatives keep her company during the long hours of treatment and hospital recuperation.

"It's been a tough change," Chhowalla said.

Enter a senior member of Sarah's team — Slon. And her riddles.

"I'm a grandma and I live in Florida. One of my grandkids lives all the way in Italy. Two live right near where you are in New Jersey," she wrote. "I can't visit them right now because of the virus but I think about them all the time and I'm thinking about you too!"

The answers to her two riddles above, by the way: A palm tree. And the letter C.

Sophie was tickled. She also loved a picture of a dog with a baby chick on his head.

Around the U.S., hospitals and volunteers are pitching in to ease the isolation of sick kids, many who are immune deficient.

"Prior to this pandemic, they'd have people with them to cheer them up," said Barry Kirschner, executive director of The Valerie Fund. "Hospitals are obviously very scary places for kids."

Since the virus struck, patients under 18 have been limited to one parent or caregiver, he said.

Around the country, hospitals and treatment programs like The Valerie Fund are rounding up volunteers to help ease the isolation.

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, April 22, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 284 ~ 70 of 75

In Washington, D.C., Children's National Hospital has been doing without its team that usually reads books to young patients. The kids are also missing regular visits from therapy dogs.

Allie Williams, the hospital's resource coordinator, put out the call for volunteers to record themselves reading at home. Their contributions are broadcast on the hospital's in-house TV station, including bedtime stories in the evenings.

And the best thing? When a pet wanders into the shot, Williams said.

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

Muslims try to keep Ramadan spirit amid virus restrictions

By SAMY MAGDY and LEE KEATH Associated Press

BAHTIM, Egypt (AP) — Every year during Ramadan, the Light of Muhammad Mosque sets up long tables on the street and dishes up free meals at sunset for the poor to break their daily fast. It's a charity that many rely on in this impoverished district on the edge of the Egyptian capital.

But it's too dangerous in this era of the coronavirus — in Egypt and in many Muslim countries, such as "Tables of the Compassionate" have been barred.

So the mosque, which like others in Egypt had to shut its doors as a precaution against the virus, will use the funds that would have gone into the free communal tables to distribute packed meals and cash to those in need.

"We hope this could ease their suffering," said Sheikh Abdel-Rahman, the muezzin of the mosque in the district of Bahtim.

As Ramadan begins with the new moon later this week, Muslims around the world are trying to maintain the cherished rituals of Islam's holiest month without further spreading the outbreak.

At the heart of Ramadan is the sunrise-to-sunset fast, meant to instill contemplation of God. But alongside the hardship of abstaining from food and drink for hours every day, the month sweeps everyone up into a communal spirit. Families and friends gather for large meals at sunset, known as iftars. In some countries, cafes and cultural events are packed late into the night. Worshippers go to mosques for hours of evening prayers, or "taraweeh." Many devote themselves to charity.

Muslims now find themselves cut off from much of what makes the month special as authorities fight the pandemic. Many countries have closed mosques and banned taraweeh to prevent crowds. Prominent clerics, including in Saudi Arabia, have urged people to pray at home.

Governments are trying to balance restrictions with traditions.

Lebanon, Iraq, Syria and Egypt loosened their curfews, moving them back to start anywhere from a half hour to 90 minutes after sunset. That gives time to get to Iftar, but not much: people can't go too far to visit others for the meal unless they're prepared to stay the night.

Other countries have banned long internal travel. Syria gave people a window of two days this week to move between provinces, then restored its ban.

In Malaysia, Mohamad Fadhil said he was resigned to missing out on the surge in business at the Ramadan bazaar, where he and other sellers hawk food and drinks in crowded open-air markets. The bazaars have been shut down.

But he hoped the country's lockdown will be eased so he can bring his 7-year-old daughter home. She was at his parents about an hour away when the lockdown began six weeks ago, trapping her there.

"I hope we can be together as a family during Ramadan," he said.

In Indonesia, the world's most populous Muslim nation, the government has banned millions of government employees, soldiers and police from travelling home during the Eid al-Fitr, the holiday marking the end of Ramadan.

"Fear of coronavirus has blocked us from celebrating Eid with my parents," said Rachmad Mardiansyah,

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, April 22, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 284 ~ 71 of 75

a civil servant in Jakarta.

The loss of communal charity meals will particularly hurt as people lose jobs under coronavirus restrictions. Some are rushing to fill the void.

In Kashmir, the Muslim-majority territory contested by India and Pakistan, volunteers wearing masks and gloves drop off sacks of rice, flour, lentils and other staples for Ramadan at the doorsteps of those in need in the city of Srinagar.

They try to do it quietly, so not even the neighbors know they are receiving help.

"We have to take care of these people's self-respect," said one volunteer, Sajjad Ahmed.

Taïb Socé, a famous Muslim preacher on Rfm, a private radio station in the Senegalese capital, Dakar, said that while the government is taking action, "the rich must also help the poor."

"Solidarity must be in order. This is what the Prophet Muhammad did during times of war. COVID-19 is like a war," he said.

Donors can't help everywhere when need surges so quickly.

In the Gaza Strip, the group Salam Charitable usually receives donations from Turkey, Malaysia, Jordan and elsewhere for its Ramadan relief projects. Last year, it was able to distribute 11,000 food parcels and clothes for children. Charities are vital in Gaza, which has been under an Israeli-Egyptian blockade for 13 years, leaving more than half the population of 2 million under the poverty line.

This year, giving has dried up.

"This time last year, we had already three contracts to give food parcels to the poor. This year we don't have any," said Omar Saad, spokesman for the charity. "I think we missed the opportunity because Ramadan is starting soon."

In Pakistan, powerful Muslim clerics forced the government to leave mosques open throughout Ramadan. Mullah Abdul Aziz of the Red Mosque in the capital, Islamabad, ordered adherents to pack communal prayers. Last Friday, worshippers were shoulder-to-shoulder.

Still, calls by influential Saudi clerics to stay home also have an effect.

"We hear on TV what the big imams say," said Zaheer Abbas, an Islamabad resident who has been praying at home. "Praying is praying. God isn't only in the mosque."

In Somalia, while people lament the loss of community, Mogadishu resident Osman Yusuf tried to find optimism. The new restrictions "keep you closer to your loved ones for comfort," he said.

Not all Ramadan traditions are rooted in religion. Egypt is known for the TV comedies and drama series it churns out for the month, which are broadcast between the iftar and the pre-sunrise meal. A new batch is being produced for this year, despite coronavirus restrictions.

Iraqis have to give up a unique Ramadan tradition: tournaments of a game called "Mheibes." In the game, teams of up to several dozen people each line up and one member hides a ring in his hand. A member of the other team must guess who has the ring, usually by going up and down the line, trying to read facial tics or other "tells." The long tournaments are accompanied by sweets and tea and singing.

Health authorities pleaded with Jassim al-Aswad, the longtime Mheibes champion and tournament organizer, to call it off for the sake of public safety — while praising his "preternatural abilities and unrivaled powers of discernment."

The 65-year-old al-Aswad relented.

"I feel very sad," he said. "Ramadan will be devoid of these popular rituals this year ... God wreak vengeance on corona, which deprived us of our most beautiful hobby."

Keath reported from Cairo. Associated Press writers Aijaz Hussain in Srinagar, India; Babacar Dione in Dakar, Senegal; Eileen Ng in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia; Niniek Karmine in Jakarta, Indonesia; Abdi Guled in Nairobi, Kenya; Fares Akram in Gaza City, Gaza Strip; Qassim Abdul-Zahra in Baghdad; Kathy Gannon in Islamabad; Aya Batrawy in Dubai, United Arab Emirates, and Bassem Mroue in Beirut contributed to this report.

Doctors: Execution drugs could help COVID-19 patients

By JUAN A. LOZANO Associated Press

HOUSTON (AP) — Secrecy surrounding executions could hinder efforts by a group of medical professionals who are asking the nation's death penalty states for medications used in lethal injections so that they can go to coronavirus patients who are on ventilators, according to a death penalty expert and a doctor who's behind the request.

In a letter sent this month to corrections departments, a group of seven pharmacists, public health experts, and intensive care unit doctors asked states with the death penalty to release any stockpiles they might have of execution drugs to health care facilities.

"Your stockpile could save the lives of hundreds of people; though this may be a small fraction of the total anticipated deaths, it is a central ethical directive that medicine values every life," according to the letter.

But it's unclear what drugs the states may have, as they have tended to release information about execution protocols and drug supplies only through open records requests or lawsuits. Only one state, Wyoming, responded directly to the letter, and it indicated it doesn't have the drugs in question.

"I'm not trying to comment on the rightness or wrongness of capital punishment," said Dr. Joel Zivot, one of the medical professionals who signed the letter. "I'm asking now as a bedside clinician caring for patients, please help me."

For most people, the new coronavirus causes mild or moderate symptoms, such as fever and cough that clear up in two to three weeks. But for some, it can cause severe illness, requiring them to be placed to ventilators to help them breathe.

Many medications used to sedate and immobilize people put on ventilators and to treat their pain are the same drugs that states use to put inmates to death. Demand for such drugs surged 73% in March.

Twenty-five states have the death penalty, while three have moratoriums on capital punishment.

While some states contacted by The Associated Press, including Alabama and Florida, didn't respond to inquiries about the letter, others, including Arkansas, Texas and Utah, limited their comment to mainly saying they don't have the medications in question. Tennessee wouldn't confirm whether it has the drugs and indicated it has no plans to give any medications to a hospital. Oklahoma said it hadn't received any requests for such medications from state hospitals.

States may be hesitant to turn over their drugs because they have had problems securing them as many pharmaceutical companies oppose their use in executions, said Robert Dunham, executive director of the Death Penalty Information Center.

Since 2011, 13 states have enacted new statutes that conceal information about the execution process, according to the Death Penalty Information Center, which takes no position on capital punishment but has criticized the way states carry out executions.

Drugs being requested include the sedative midazolam, the paralytic vecuronium bromide and the opioid fentanyl. They're needed because putting a patient on a ventilator "with no drugs ... would be torture," said Zivot, an associate professor of anesthesiology and surgery at Emory University in Atlanta who has studied medicine's role in capital punishment.

The tense debate over the supply of execution drugs was highlighted in a 2018 lawsuit that several pharmaceutical companies filed against Nevada over accusations that it illegally obtained its inventory.

In a court brief, 15 states, including Florida, Oklahoma and Texas, called the lawsuit part of the "guerilla warfare being waged by antideath-penalty activists and criminal defense attorneys to stop lawful executions."

The lawsuit was dismissed this month after Nevada agreed to return its supplies to the companies, leaving the state without any drugs to carry out executions.

Pharmaceutical companies have long warned that states' use of these medications for executions could result in shortages, Dunham said.

"Some of the responses over the past several years had been, 'That's chicken little saying the sky is falling,'" Dunham said. "But with COVID-19, the sky has fallen."

Associated Press writers Kimberlee Kruesi in Nashville, Tennessee, and Sean Murphy in Oklahoma City contributed to this report.

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

US pork farmers panic as virus ruins hopes for great year

By DAVID PITT Associated Press

DES MOINES, Iowa (AP) — After enduring extended trade disputes and worker shortages, U.S. hog farmers were poised to finally hit it big this year with expectations of climbing prices amid soaring domestic and foreign demand.

Instead, restaurant closures due to the coronavirus have contributed to an estimated \$5 billion in losses for the industry, and almost overnight millions of hogs stacking up on farms now have little value. Some farmers have resorted to killing piglets because plunging sales mean there is no room to hold additional animals in increasingly cramped conditions.

"One producer described it to me the other day as a snowball rolling downhill, and every additional disruption that we have just kind of adds to that and how fast and how big it's going to be when it finally hits," said Mike Paustian, who farms 2,400 acres (971 hectares) of corn and soybeans and sells 28,000 pigs a year near the small eastern Iowa community of Walcott.

COVID-19, the disease caused by the coronavirus, has created problems for all meat producers, but pork farmers have been hit especially hard.

They entered this spring in shaky financial condition because tariffs had drastically reduced sales to China and Mexico. Many operations have struggled to get enough workers, in part due to federal immigration policies. Then demand plunged because the virus forced the closure of restaurants, hotels and other businesses that buy about 25% of pork, including nearly three-quarters of bacon produced in the U.S.

The biggest problem could be getting worse as additional giant slaughterhouses that can process more than 20,000 hogs a day have had to close at least temporarily as the virus spreads among workers. The industry slaughters from 10 million to 12 million pigs a month.

Whereas poultry producers can slow production by not hatching baby chicks and ranchers can keep cattle on pastures longer, pork farmers don't have good options. Hogs are raised inside barns with limited space, and it takes time to stop the birthing cycle for pigs.

"We are in crisis and need immediate government intervention to sustain a farm sector essential to the nation's food supply," said Howard Roth, a pig farmer from Wauzeka, Wisconsin, and president of the National Pork Producers Council, an industry trade group.

The group has asked the federal government to buy \$1 billion worth of pork in cold storage that had been destined for restaurants and instead give it to food banks, which have been besieged by people who have lost their jobs as much of the economy has shut down.

On Friday, the U.S. Department of Agriculture announced it would spend \$3 billion to buy fresh produce, dairy and meat that will be sent to food banks. Roth said the purchase will hopefully help move a backed up supply of pork and help raise hog prices. The USDA also said it planned \$1.6 billion in direct payments to pork farmers with limits of \$250,000 per individual.

Roth said the aid was appreciated but wasn't enough to meet their problems.

Farmers have also received emergency waivers from the government to increase the number of pigs they can keep in barns beyond normally allowed limits. Still, farmers without extra space are faced with the prospect of killing baby pigs they can't afford to feed.

"Sadly it's true that euthanizing is a question that's going to come up on farms," Roth said.

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, April 22, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 284 ~ 74 of 75

Paustian, the eastern Iowa farmer, said the most frustrating part has been the uncertainty of scheduling deliveries of hogs to meat producers that fall through. Even as the majority of slaughterhouses have continued to operate, most plants are large and their closure is a severe hardship for hog farmers who operate in the region, he said.

Because a plant has closed about 40 miles (64 kilometers) away in Columbus Junction, Iowa, Paustian said farmers in his area are sending hogs to other plants in the state and Indiana.

"Producers are on pins and needles every day right now, and nobody knows if they're going to get loads out. They get loads scheduled then they get canceled. It's kind of a roller coaster of emotion for producers right now," Paustian said.

Producers he knows have been able to sell about half of the pigs they'd normally send to market. It's enough to get by for a few weeks, but it's not sustainable, Paustian said.

For many pork producers, the coronavirus pandemic may be the final straw, said Nick Giordano, a vice president at the National Pork Producers Council.

"We are hearing from lots of producers. They're hanging on for dear life," Giordano said.

Besides seeking the purchases for food banks and direct payments to producers, the group wants to make agricultural businesses eligible for a federal economic injury disaster loan program.

While not denying the industry's problems, some people who raise pigs independently say the coronavirus has revealed that the industry is too reliant on a few large international corporations that oversee everything — from raising hogs to processing plants and even marketing and sales.

Chris Petersen, a northern Iowa farmer, raises Berkshire pigs "the old fashioned way" — in individual A-frame houses instead of large confinement buildings. He laments the loss of the independent farmers who marketed pigs to nearby buying stations that delivered the animals to smaller packing plants much closer to the farms.

"It's a very fragile system because everything has to work just right," Petersen said.

Today in History By The Associated Press

Today in History

Today is Wednesday, April 22, the 113th day of 2020. There are 253 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On April 22, 1915, the first full-scale use of deadly chemicals in warfare took place as German forces unleashed chlorine gas against Allied troops at the start of the Second Battle of Ypres (EE'-preh) in Belgium during World War I; thousands of soldiers are believed to have died.

On this date:

In 1616, Spanish novelist Miguel de Cervantes, author of "Don Quixote," died in Madrid. (The date is according to the New Style Gregorian calendar that was adopted by Spain in 1582.)

In 1864, Congress authorized the use of the phrase "In God We Trust" on U.S. coins.

In 1898, with the United States and Spain on the verge of war, the U.S. Navy began blockading Cuban ports. Congress authorized creation of the 1st U.S. Volunteer Cavalry, also known as the "Rough Riders."

In 1954, the publicly televised sessions of the Senate Army-McCarthy hearings began.

In 1964, President Lyndon B. Johnson opened the New York World's Fair.

In 1970, millions of Americans concerned about the environment observed the first "Earth Day."

In 1994, Richard M. Nixon, the 37th president of the United States, died at a New York hospital four days after suffering a stroke; he was 81.

In 2000, in a dramatic pre-dawn raid, armed immigration agents seized Elian Gonzalez, the Cuban boy at the center of a custody dispute, from his relatives' home in Miami; Elian was reunited with his father at Andrews Air Force Base near Washington.

In 2003, President George W. Bush announced he would nominate Alan Greenspan for a fifth term as Federal Reserve chairman.

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, April 22, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 284 ~ 75 of 75

In 2004, Army Ranger Pat Tillman, who'd traded in a multi-million-dollar NFL contract to serve in Afghanistan, was killed by friendly fire; he was 27.

In 2005, Zacarias Moussaoui (zak-uh-REE'-uhs moo-SOW'-ee) pleaded guilty in a federal courtroom outside Washington, D.C. to conspiring with the Sept. 11 hijackers to kill Americans. (Moussaoui is serving a life prison sentence.)

In 2013, a seriously wounded Dzhokhar Tsarnaev (joh-HAHR' tsahr-NEYE'-ehv) was charged in his hospital room with bombing the Boston Marathon in a plot with his older brother, Tamerlan (TAM'-ehr-luhn), who died after a fierce gunbattle with police. Richie Havens, 72, the folk singer and guitarist who was the first performer at the 1969 Woodstock festival, died in Jersey City, New Jersey.

Ten years ago: The Deepwater Horizon oil platform, operated by BP, sank into the Gulf of Mexico two days after a massive explosion that killed 11 workers. The NCAA announced a 14-year, \$10.8 billion deal with CBS and Turner Broadcasting under which every game during an expanded March Madness schedule would be broadcast live nationally for the first time in the tournament's 73-year history.

Five years ago: A federal judge in Philadelphia approved a settlement agreement expected to cost the NFL \$1 billion over 65 years to resolve thousands of concussion lawsuits. A federal appeals court in San Francisco overturned home run leader Barry Bonds' obstruction of justice conviction, ruling 10-1 that his meandering answer before a grand jury in 2003 was not material to the government's investigation into illegal steroids distribution.

One year ago: Democratic presidential candidate Elizabeth Warren proposed the elimination of existing student loan debt for millions of Americans as part of a sweeping set of education funding proposals. The Trump administration said it would no longer exempt any countries from U.S. sanctions if they continued to buy Iranian oil. A federal court in Detroit declared it unconstitutional for police to mark a car's tires with chalk in order to enforce parking rules; the court said the practice was like entering property without a search warrant. (The ruling applied to Michigan, Ohio, Kentucky and Tennessee.)

Today's Birthdays: Actress Estelle Harris is 92. Actor Jack Nicholson is 83. Singer Mel Carter is 81. Author Janet Evanovich is 77. Country singer Cleve Francis is 75. Movie director John Waters is 74. Singer Peter Frampton is 70. Rock singer-musician Paul Carrack (Mike and the Mechanics; Squeeze) is 69. Actor Joseph Bottoms is 66. Actor Ryan Stiles is 61. Baseball manager Terry Francona is 61. Comedian Byron Allen is 59. Actor Chris Makepeace is 56. Rock musician Fletcher Dragge (DRAH'-guh) is 54. Actor Jeffrey Dean Morgan is 54. Actress Sheryl Lee is 53. Actress-talk show host Sherri Shepherd is 53. Country singer-musician Heath Wright (Ricochet) is 53. Country singer Kellie Coffey is 49. Actor Eric Mabius is 49. Actor Ingo Rademacher (RAH'-deh-mah-ker) is 49. Rock musician Shavo Odadjian (System of a Down) is 46. Rock singer-musician Daniel Johns (Silverchair) is 41. Actor Malcolm Barrett is 40. Actress Cassidy Freeman is 38. Actress Michelle Ryan is 36. Actor Zack Gottsagen is 35. Actress Amber Heard is 34. Singer-songwriter BC Jean (Alexander Jean) is 33. Drummer Tripp Howell (LANCO) is 31. Rapper/singer Machine Gun Kelly is 30.

Thought for Today: "Demasiada cordura puede ser la peor de las locuras, ver la vida como es y no como debería de ser." (Too much sanity may be the worst folly, see life as it is and not as it should be.) — Miguel de Cervantes (1547-1616).

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