

# Groton Daily Independent

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## Newspapers continuing to cut back

PIERRE, S.D. (Dakota News Now) - The Pierre Capital Journal is reducing the days it prints physical copies each week.

The newspaper publisher will move from five paper editions a week to three.

The decision was made in part because of the economic impact of the coronavirus pandemic, but also because of the growing online preference of its audience.

Capital Journal staff will produce a print version of the newspaper on Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday.

## **OPEN:** Recycling Trailer in Groton

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

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## Covid-19 Update: by Marie Miller

Quick update tonight. I spent most of the day outdoors, so although there is some news, I haven't had a chance to put it together for you. More tomorrow; just the numbers tonight. And unfortunately, the numbers aren't great. New case reports are up, driven, I suspect, largely by a small surge in NY. I'm not worried yet, but they'd had several days running of declines in new cases; today those declines are on pause.

We now have over 800,000 reported cases in the US with 832,325. The raw number and percentage increase both are larger than yesterday, but not by much. Probably nothing to get worried about yet, however, it's not what I like to see, particularly since the report I ran was earlier today so has only about 21 hours of new data instead of closer to 24. The fact that those 3 additional hours are in the evening means that's not a big deal; not too much comes in this late in the day. NY leads with 257,246, followed by NJ with 95,865. New case increase and percentage increase both are larger today for NY than they were yesterday. The number of new cases had declined for six straight days before today, so that's disappointing. NJ posted declines in growth of raw numbers and percentage for the second day.

Remaining states in the top 10: MA – 42,944, CA- 37,534, PA – 36,763, IL – 35,108, MI – 33,929, FL – 28,301, LA – 25,258, and CT 22,469. There are 2 more states over 20,000 cases, 6 more over 10,000, 6 more over 5000, 18 + DC over 1000, 8 more + PR and GU over 100, and just VI and MP under 100.

The main clusters are the same as yesterday: Marion Correctional Institution, Pickaway Correctional Institution, Smithfield Foods, Cook County Jail, USS Theodore Roosevelt, and Cummins Unit. All reported more new cases today, some by a fair amount. So either those are not yet contained or there's simply more testing going on.

42,353 people have died from this disease in the US. The increase in both raw numbers and percentage declined today. NY reports 15,302 deaths, a number which does not include some 4800 more deaths believed to have been caused by the disease, but not confirmed. NJ reports 5063, MI 2812, MA 2182, PA 1720, IL 1577, CT 1544, LA 1473 and CA 1424.

I do have one caution for you today: Some weeks ago, when hand sanitizer became scarce in the stores, I provided you with a formula for mixing up your own emergency supply from off-the-shelf alcohol and glycerin or aloe vera gel. At that time, the CDC guidance was that you need 60% alcohol in your hand sanitizer to be effective against this virus. That guidance has changed: Now, for isopropanol (isopropyl alcohol), which almost certainly is what you're finding on the shelf at the store (if you're finding it at all), you must mix up a 70% solution. Only ethanol is considered OK to use at 60%. And it's very, very difficult to find ethanol in the store—unless the store is a liquor store. So that formula I provided way back when is no longer accurate. Now, if you're starting with a 70% solution of isopropanol, you can't dilute this at all. If you're starting with a 90% solution, mix 12.5 oz. per 2 c. batch, if you have 95% alcohol, mix 12 oz. per 2 c. batch, and if you have 99% alcohol, mix 11.5 oz. per 2 c. batch. As always, if you can find commercially-available hand sanitizer at a reasonable price, that's best—no chance the company made a mistake mixing theirs up.

And that's all I have for you today. Make an excuse to be kind to someone today. We'll talk tomorrow.

## Projections in 2020 Report Do Not Reflect the Potential Effects of the COVID-19 Pandemic

The Social Security Board of Trustees today released its annual report on the long-term financial status of the Social Security Trust Funds. The combined asset reserves of the Old-Age and Survivors Insurance and Disability Insurance (OASI and DI) Trust Funds are projected to become depleted in 2035, the same as projected last year, with 79 percent of benefits payable at that time.

The OASI Trust Fund is projected to become depleted in 2034, the same as last year's estimate, with 76 percent of benefits payable at that time. The DI Trust Fund is estimated to become depleted in 2065, extended 13 years from last year's estimate of 2052, with 92 percent of benefits still payable.

In the 2020 Annual Report to Congress, the Trustees announced:

The asset reserves of the combined OASI and DI Trust Funds increased by \$2.5 billion in 2019 to a total of \$2.897 trillion.

The total annual cost of the program is projected to exceed total annual income, for the first time since 1982, in 2021 and remain higher throughout the 75-year projection period. As a result, asset reserves are expected to decline during 2021. Social Security's cost has exceeded its non-interest income since 2010.

The year when the combined trust fund reserves are projected to become depleted, if Congress does not act before then, is 2035 – the same as last year's projection. At that time, there would be sufficient income coming in to pay 79 percent of scheduled benefits.

"The projections in this year's report do not reflect the potential effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on the Social Security program. Given the uncertainty associated with these impacts, the Trustees believe it is not possible to adjust estimates accurately at this time," said Andrew Saul, Commissioner of Social Security. "The duration and severity of the pandemic will affect the estimates presented in this year's report and the financial status of the program, particularly in the short term."

Other highlights of the Trustees Report include:

Total income, including interest, to the combined OASI and DI Trust Funds amounted to \$1.062 trillion in 2019. (\$944.5 billion from net payroll tax contributions, \$36.5 billion from taxation of benefits, and \$81 billion in interest)

Total expenditures from the combined OASI and DI Trust Funds amounted to \$1.059 trillion in 2019.

Social Security paid benefits of \$1.048 trillion in calendar year 2019. There were about 64 million beneficiaries at the end of the calendar year.

The projected actuarial deficit over the 75-year long-range period is 3.21 percent of taxable payroll – higher than the 2.78 percent projected in last year's report.

During 2019, an estimated 178 million people had earnings covered by Social Security and paid payroll taxes.

The cost of \$6.4 billion to administer the Social Security program in 2019 was a very low 0.6 percent of total expenditures.

The combined Trust Fund asset reserves earned interest at an effective annual rate of 2.8 percent in 2019.

The Board of Trustees usually comprises six members. Four serve by virtue of their positions with the federal government: Steven T. Mnuchin, Secretary of the Treasury and Managing Trustee; Andrew Saul, Commissioner of Social Security; Alex M. Azar II, Secretary of Health and Human Services; and Eugene Scalia, Secretary of Labor. The two public trustee positions are currently vacant.

## South Dakota's Largest Education Conference Moves Online

For more than 30 years, the TIE Conference has brought the latest technology tools and teaching trends to educators across the region each April. The conference rotates between Rapid City and Sioux Falls and regularly draws more than a thousand participants.

This year, due to COVID-19, those attending the annual conference did so from the safety of their own homes on Monday, April 20. Participation nearly doubled, as more than 2,000 educators and community members registered for the TIE20 Virtual Conference.

TIE Director, Dr. Julie Mathiesen, says that TIE Learning Specialists pivoted quickly to offer the conference as a free online event:

"Providing the TIE20 Virtual Conference as a service was our way of conveying our gratitude and appreciation to educators for all that they are doing to continue to serve learners. Our education system was not designed to manage change of this magnitude, but teachers, schools, and families have stepped up in incredibly innovative and creative ways to meet students' learning needs."

TIE (Technology & Innovation in Education), an extension of public schools, has worked for more than three decades to improve instruction throughout the region. TIE is a division of BHSSC (Black Hills Special Services Cooperative) dedicated to building stronger communities by helping individuals and organizations reach their full potential.

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## 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	Apr. 22
Minnesota	2,213	2,356	2,470	2,567	2,721
Nebraska	1,287	1,474	1,648	1,722	1,813
Montana	426	433	433	437	439
Colorado	9,433	9,730	10,106	10,447	10,878
Wyoming	309	313	317	322	326
North Dakota	528	585	627	644	679
South Dakota	1,542	1,635	1,685	1,755	1,858
United States	735,287	758,720	786,638	824,438	842,624
US Deaths	39,090	40,666	42,295	45,039	46,785

Minnesota	+142	+143	+114	+97	+154
Nebraska	+149	+187	+174	+74	+91
Montana	+4	+7	0	+4	+2
Colorado	+379	+297	+376	+341	+431
Wyoming	+7	+4	+4	+5	+4
North Dakota	+89	+57	+42	+17	+35
South Dakota	+131	+93	+50	+70	+103
United States	+28,508	+23,433	+27,918	+37,800	+18,186
US Deaths	+2,011	+1,576	+1,629	+2,744	+1,746

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## April 22nd COVID-19 UPDATE

South Dakota:

Positive: +103 (1858 total) - 33 more than yesterday

Negative: +528 (11,588 total)

Hospitalized: +11 (111 total)

Deaths: +1 in Minnehaha (9 total)

Recovered: +113 (937 total)

Counties with no positive cases report the following negative tests: Bennett 10, Brule +2 (38), Buffalo 9, Butte 13, Campbell 7, Custer +1 (14), Day +4 (48), Dewey 21, Douglas +2 (23), Edmunds +1 (19), Grant +1 (31), Gregory 28, Haakon 10, Hand 18, Hanson +2 (20), Harding 1, Jackson +1 (4), Jones 4, Kingsburg +4 (59), McPherson 12, Mellette 11, Perkins 4, Potter +1 (28), Stanley +1 (30), Tripp +1 (50), Ziebach 3, unassigned +57 (1108).

Bon Homme: +1 recovered (4 of 4 recovered)

Brown: +7 positive (27 total)

Davison: +1 positive (5 total)

Hughes: +1 positive, +1 recovered (6 of 6 recovered)

Lincoln: +5 positive, +4 recovered (55 of 104 recovered)

Minnehaha: +87 positive, +104 recovered (723 of 1555 recovered)

Moody: +1 recovered (1 of 2 recovered)

Turner: +3 positive (9 total)

Union: +1 recovered (4 of 7 recovered)

Walworth: +1 recovered (5 of 5 recovered)

The N.D. DoH & private labs are reporting 602 completed tests today for COVID-19, with 35 new positive cases, bringing the statewide total to 679. NDDoH reports one new death.

State & private labs have reported 15,589 total tests & 14,910 negatives.

229 ND patients are recovered.

### COVID-19 IN SOUTH DAKOTA

Total Positive Cases*	1858
Total Negative Cases*	11588
Recovered	937
Ever Hospitalized**	111
Deaths***	9

### AGE GROUP OF SOUTH DAKOTA COVID-19 CASES

Age Range	# of Cases	# of Deaths
0-19 years	105	0
20-29 years	345	0
30-39 years	431	0
40-49 years	386	0
50-59 years	333	2
60-69 years	179	3
70-79 years	40	1
80+ years	39	3

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County	Positive Cases	Recovered Cases	Negative Cases
Aurora	1	1	34
Beadle	21	19	165
Bennett	0	0	10
Bon Homme	4	4	92
Brookings	9	9	296
Brown	27	12	471
Brule	0	0	38
Buffalo	0	0	9
Butte	0	0	13
Campbell	0	0	7
Charles Mix	4	4	65
Clark	1	1	47
Clay	5	4	107
Codington	13	12	388
Corson	1	1	8
Custer	0	0	14
Davison	5	3	252
Day	0	0	48
Deuel	1	1	66
Dewey	0	0	21
Douglas	0	0	23
Edmunds	0	0	19
Fall River	1	1	11
Faulk	1	1	14
Grant	0	0	31
Gregory	0	0	28
Haakon	0	0	10
Hamlin	2	2	50
Hand	0	0	18
Hanson	0	0	20
Harding	0	0	1
Hughes	6	6	199
Hutchinson	2	2	75

Hyde	1	1	9
Jackson	0	0	4
Jerauld	4	4	25
Jones	0	0	4
Kingsbury	0	0	59
Lake	3	2	91
Lawrence	9	9	62
Lincoln	104	55	1110
Lyman	2	2	18
Marshall	1	1	33
McCook	3	2	80
McPherson	0	0	12
Meade	1	1	58
Mellette	0	0	11
Miner	1	0	18
Minnehaha	1555	723	4817
Moody	2	1	74
Oglala Lakota	1	1	21
Pennington	11	8	355
Perkins	0	0	4
Potter	0	0	28
Roberts	4	4	75
Sanborn	3	2	33
Spink	3	3	81
Stanley	0	0	30
Sully	1	1	12
Todd	1	1	37
Tripp	0	0	50
Turner	9	3	115
Union	7	4	106
Walworth	5	5	26
Yankton	23	21	369
Ziebach	0	0	3
Unassigned****	0	0	1108

## SEX OF SOUTH DAKOTA COVID-19 CASES

Sex	# of Cases	# of Deaths
Female	859	2
Male	999	7

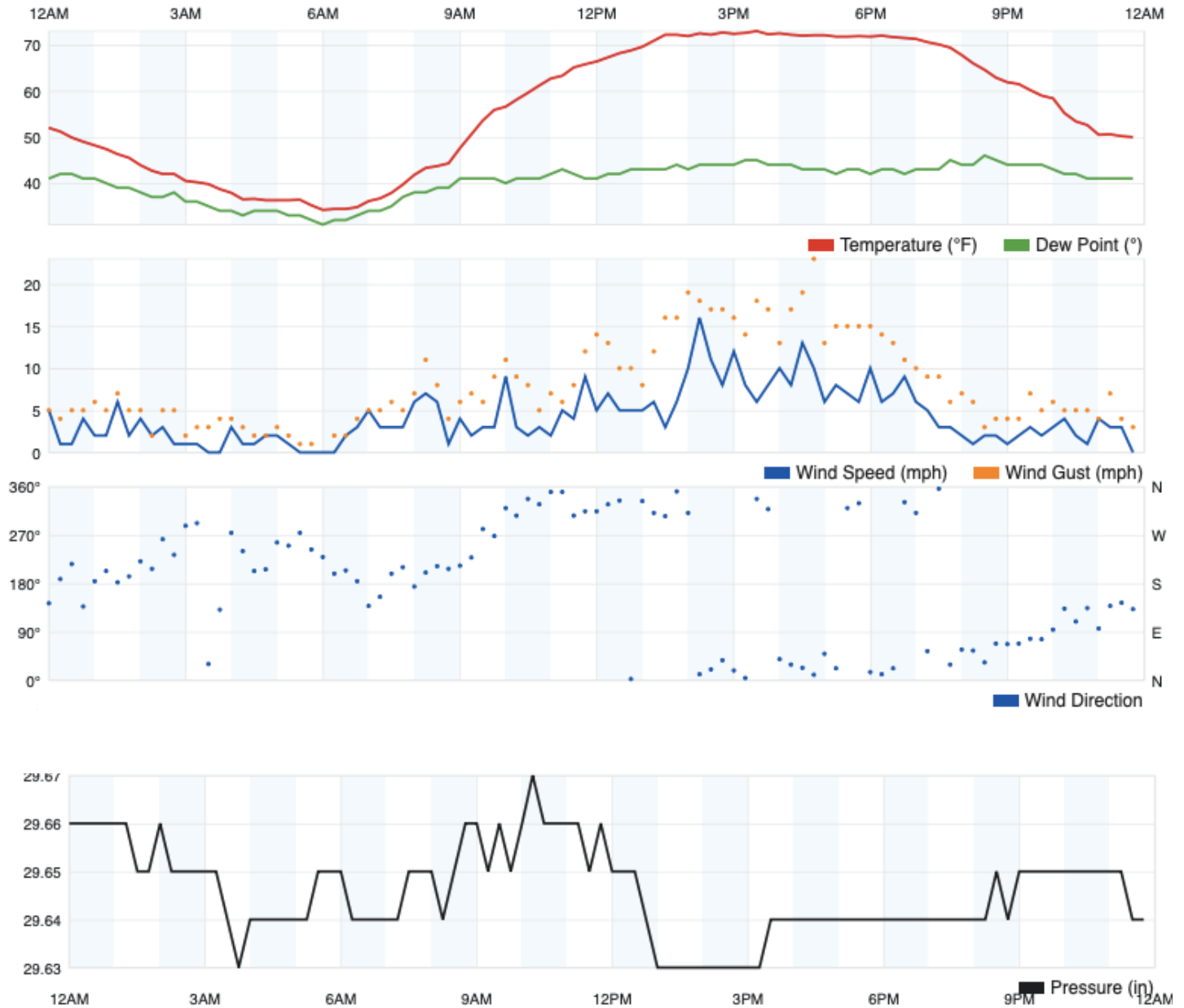
## COVID-19 DEATHS IN SOUTH DAKOTA BY COUNTY

County of Residence	# of Deaths
Beadle	2
McCook	1
Minnehaha	5
Pennington	1

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## Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs





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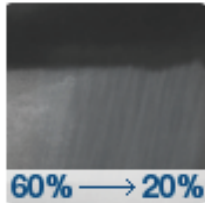
Today



Partly Sunny  
then Chance  
Showers

High: 70 °F

Tonight



Showers  
Likely then  
Slight Chance  
Showers

Low: 41 °F

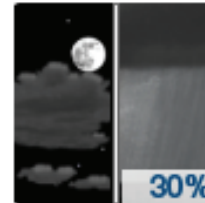
Friday



Mostly Sunny  
then Slight  
Chance  
Showers

High: 66 °F

Friday  
Night



Partly Cloudy  
then Chance  
Showers

Low: 43 °F

Saturday



Chance  
Showers

High: 60 °F



Today

Partly to  
Mostly  
Cloudy  
Highs:  
64 - 71



Showers and a  
few storms this  
afternoon.

National Weather Service  
Aberdeen, SD

weather.gov/abr

Graphic Created  
4/23/2020 3:55 AM

Showers and isolated thunderstorms will develop this afternoon and move east through the night. No severe weather is expected. Unsettled weather will remain in the forecast through Saturday.

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## Today in Weather History

April 23, 2002: High winds of 35 to 50 mph gusting to over 70 mph occurred across much of central and northeast South Dakota. The high winds caused some spotty damage to property and trees. With the dry conditions, dust was stirred up by the winds and caused reduced visibilities at many locations. The highest wind gust was 72 mph at Onida.

1948: A three block long section was devastated at the edge of Ionia, Iowa in Chickasaw County by an estimated F4 tornado. Six homes and a church were leveled, and nine other homes were severely damaged. Two deaths occurred in the collapse of the Huffman Implement Store. Overall, the tornado killed five people, injured 25, and caused \$250,000 in damages. An F2 tornado touched down initially 5 miles northeast of Rochester. Barns, silos, windmills, and machinery were destroyed on four farms as this tornado tracked north.

1961: Severe weather struck the south suburbs of Chicago, IL. Joliet, IL reported an inch of hail with some hailstones the size of golf balls. Heavy rain from these storms also resulted in some flooding. A tornado struck the town of Peotone resulting in damage to nearly every building with damage also reported in Lorenzo and Wilton Center, IL. Estimated damage was \$9 million with about 30,000 structures affected.

1989: Salina Kansas was the hot spot in the nation with a high of 105 degrees. The high of 105 degrees established an April record for the state of Kansas.

1999: On Friday, April 23, 1999, a horrific hailstorm moved southeast from Pennsylvania across Garrett County, Maryland and into the Eastern Panhandle of West Virginia. It had weakened some as it crossed Garrett County and the Alleghany Front, but as it passed east of Keyser, West Virginia, hail began to increase in size once again. By the time it reached Capon Bridge in eastern Hampshire County, West Virginia, the size of the hail had grown from golf balls to baseballs. As it moved into Frederick County, VA, the hail storm continued to grow dropping golf ball size hail in a swath now reaching from the north of Winchester, south to Stephen City (about 10 miles). Hailstones grew to the size of Grapefruit (4 inches in diameter) east of Winchester. The storm continued east through Clarke County, southern Loudoun, and northern Fauquier doing considerable damage to Middleburg, then across Fairfax County hitting Centreville, Chantilly, Fairfax, Burke, Springfield, and Lorton with golf ball size to baseball size hail. It crossed the Potomac River and weakened slightly. It moved across northern Charles, clipped southern Prince Georges and then into Calvert County with 1 inch to 1.5-inch diameter hail and onto the Chesapeake Bay continuing southeast to the ocean. The damage left behind was incredible. In Northern Virginia alone, it amounted to over \$50 million in losses to public and private properties. Some communities saw a third of the homes with siding and roof damage. Some required total replacement. Windows were broken, cars dented, and windshields smashed. Piles of shredded plant debris were left on the ground in the storm path. In about 6 hours of time, this one thunderstorm, moving at about 50 mph, did \$75 million in damage. There have been other severe hail storms to hit this area before, but none to cause this much damage to property.

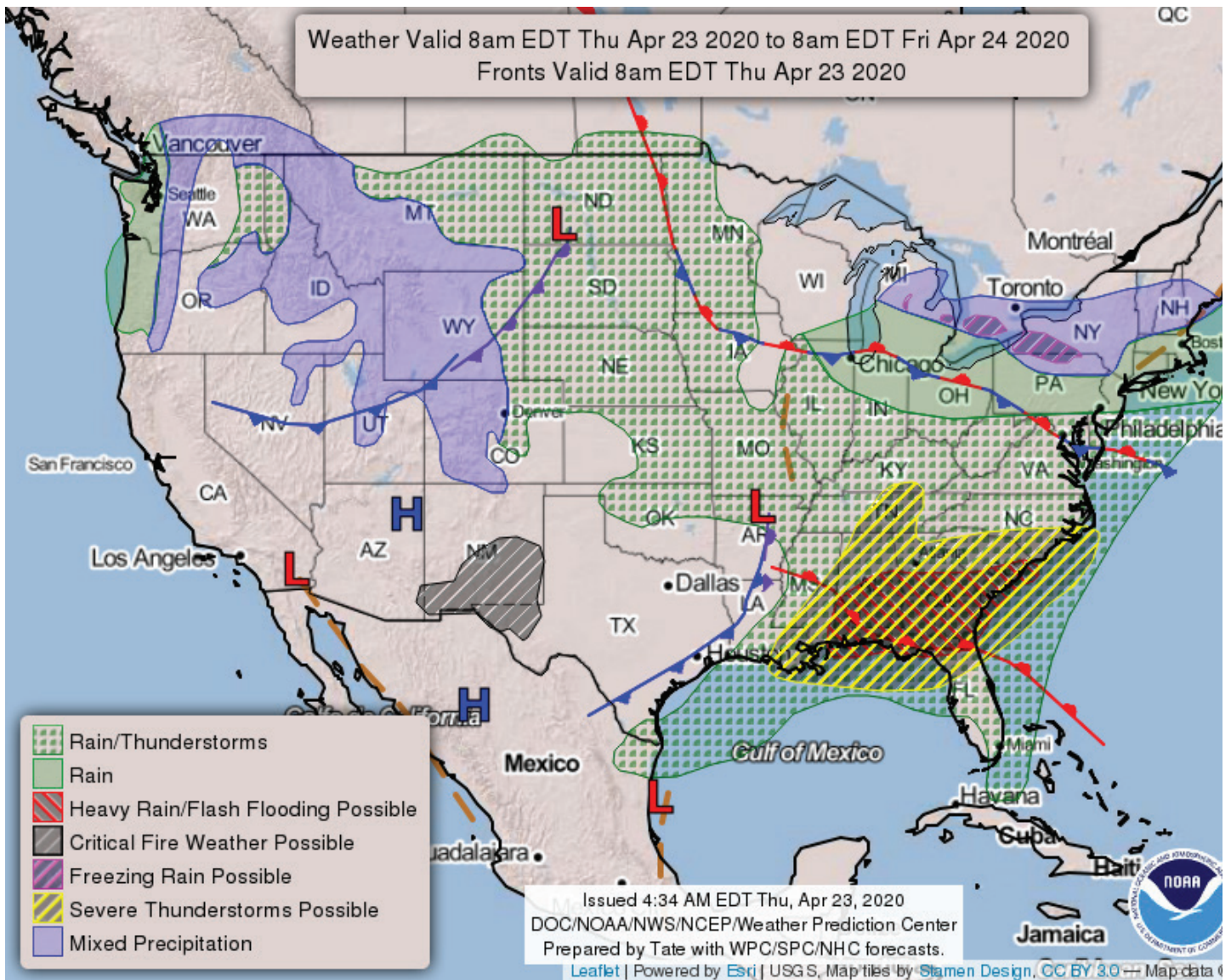
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## Yesterday's Groton Weather Today's Info

**High Temp: 73 °F at 3:23 PM**  
**Low Temp: 34 °F at 5:59 AM**  
**Wind: 23 mph at 4:38 PM**  
**Precip:**

**Record High: 90° in 1909**  
**Record Low: 14° in 1956**  
**Average High: 61°F**  
**Average Low: 35°F**  
**Average Precip in April.: 1.18**  
**Precip to date in April.: 0.94**  
**Average Precip to date: 3.36**  
**Precip Year to Date: 1.29**  
**Sunset Tonight: 8:31 p.m.**  
**Sunrise Tomorrow: 6:32 a.m.**



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## **DOWN, BUT NOT OUT!**

Packy East began his professional career as a lightweight boxer. He ended his career as one of the world's best-known ambassadors. What started in a ring ended on a stage.

Packy entered the ring in Cleveland, Ohio one evening for a boxing match he intended to win. It was not to be. At the end of the second round, he was knocked down and carried to his dressing room.

But that setback did not hinder him. It actually helped him and changed his life and career. He eventually became a comedian, traveled the world entertaining large audiences and was very generous with his time to visit American troops wherever they were stationed. He was not known as "Packy the Performer." He changed his name and was known as Bob Hope, the comedian.

It's not being knocked down that destroys us - it's staying down. When we are down, it is time to look up and to look out! We need to look up to God to see what He has in store for us and then look out into His world to see where He would have us serve Him.

Jesus said that "everything is possible if a person believes." He did not mean that anything was possible with "positive thinking." He did want us to know, however, that nothing is impossible for God to do in our lives if it is in keeping with His will for us.

Prayer: Help us, Father, to be open and alert to what is going on around us and discover what You would have us to do to serve and honor You. May we do Your will! In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: Mark 9:23 "What do you mean, 'If I can'?" Jesus asked. "Anything is possible if a person believes."

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## 2020 Groton SD Community Events

- **CANCELLED** Groton Lions Club Easter Egg Hunt - City Park (Saturday a week before Easter Weekend)
  - **CANCELLED** Dueling Piano's Baseball Fundraiser at the American Legion
  - **CANCELLED** Fireman's Fun Night (Same Saturday as GHS Prom)
  - **POSTPONED** Front Porch 605 Rural Route Road Trip
  - **CANCELLED** Father/Daughter dance.
  - **CANCELLED** Spring City-Wide Rummage Sales, (1st Saturday in May)
  - **CANCELLED** Girls High School Golf Meet at Olive Grove Golf Course
  - 05/25/2020 Groton American Legion Post #39 Memorial Day Services
  - 06/05/2020 Athletic Fundraiser at Olive Grove Golf Course
  - 06/8-10/2020 St. John's VBS
  - 06/19/2020 SDSU Golf at Olive Grove Golf Course
  - 06/20/2020 Shriner's Golf Tournament at Olive Grove Golf Course
  - 06/22/2020 Olive Grove Golf Course Ladies Invitational
  - 06/26/2020 Groton Businesses Golf Tournament at Olive Grove Golf Course
  - 07/04/2020 Firecracker Golf Tourney at Olive Grove Golf Course
  - 07/12/2020 Summer Fest/Car Show
  - 07/16/2020 Olive Grove Golf Course Pro Am Golf Tourney
  - 07/31-08/04/2020 State American Legion Baseball Tournament in Groton
  - 08/07/2020 Wine on Nine Event at Olive Grove Golf Course
  - 09/12/2020 Fall City-Wide Rummage Sales (1st Sat. after Labor Day)
  - 09/13/2020 Olive Grove Golf Course Couples Sunflower Classic
  - 10/09/2020 Lake Region Marching Band Festival (2nd Friday in October)
  - 10/10/2020 Pumpkin Fest (Saturday before Columbus Day)
  - 10/31/2020 Downtown Trick or Treat
  - 10/31/2020 Groton United Methodist Trunk or Treat
  - 11/14/2020 Groton Legion Annual Turkey Party (Saturday closest to Veteran's Day)
  - 11/26/2020 Community Thanksgiving at the Community Center
  - 12/05/2020 Olive Grove Golf Course Tour of Homes & Holiday Party
  - 12/05/2020 Santa Claus Day at Professional Management Services
  - 01/--/2021 83rd Annual Carnival of Silver Skates
- 
- Bingo every Wednesday 6:30pm at the American Legion Post #39
  - Groton Lions Club Wheel of Meat, American Legion Post #39 7pm (Saturday nights November 30th thru April 11th)
  - Groton Lions Club Wheel of Pizza, Jungle Lanes 8pm (Saturday nights November 30th thru April 11th)
- 
- All dates are subject to change, check for updates here

## News from the Associated Press

### SD Lottery

By The Associated Press

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

Dakota Cash

11-14-15-32-33

(eleven, fourteen, fifteen, thirty-two, thirty-three)

Estimated jackpot: \$37,000

Lotto America

11-12-16-41-42, Star Ball: 9, ASB: 5

(eleven, twelve, sixteen, forty-one, forty-two; Star Ball: nine; ASB: five)

Estimated jackpot: \$2.25 million

Mega Millions

Estimated jackpot: \$174 million

Powerball

01-33-35-40-69, Powerball: 24, Power Play: 5

(one, thirty-three, thirty-five, forty, sixty-nine; Powerball: twenty-four; Power Play: five)

Estimated jackpot: \$29 million

### Stopping virus a huge challenge at crowded US meat plants

By JOSH FUNK Associated Press

OMAHA, Neb. (AP) — Daily reports of giant meat-processing plants closing because workers tested positive for the coronavirus have called into question whether slaughterhouses can remain virus-free.

According to experts, the answer may be no.

Given that the plants employ thousands of people who often work side by side carving meat, social distancing is all but impossible. Because of that, the risk of catching the virus will likely remain even as companies take numerous steps to increase protections for workers.

"It's not that people aren't trying. It's just that it is very difficult to control this illness," said Dennis Burson, an animal science professor at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln.

The list of companies dealing with infected workers has been growing every day at plants across the country. Among the latest was the closure Wednesday of Tyson Foods' huge pork-processing plant in Waterloo, Iowa, after numerous workers tested positive. That follows closures of a Smithfield Foods pork plant in Sioux Falls, South Dakota; a JBS beef plant in Greeley, Colorado; and many others. Some, including the Tyson pork plant in Perry, Iowa, have reopened after deep cleanings.

The closures shouldn't cause any immediate meat shortages or big price jumps at supermarkets, but as Purdue University economist Jason Lusk noted, "It's a very fluid and volatile situation to keep an eye out for in the days to come."

Iowa Gov. Kim Reynolds, whose state leads the nation in pork production, acknowledged the likelihood of "clusters of positive cases" at meat-processing plants but said the operations must remain open.

"Without them, people's lives and our food supply will be impacted," Reynolds said.

In an attempt to protect workers, companies have started checking employee temperatures before they start their shifts, staggering breaks and altering start times. Owners said they have also done more to clean plants, added space for workers to spread out on breaks, slowed production lines so workers can spread out and added plastic shields between work stations.

"We are looking for countless ways of ensuring we have good healthy social distancing in our plants. It's not impossible despite the number of people in our plants," said Hector Gonzalez, Tyson's senior vice

president of human resources.

Major meat companies, including Smithfield, Tyson, Cargill and JBS, said they also relaxed their attendance and sick leave policies to encourage sick workers to stay home and allow them to be paid. The North American Meat Institute trade group says companies are sharing information about their safety practices to help the industry respond to the outbreak.

Still, workplace safety expert Celeste Monforton said some companies are doing more than others, and it's difficult to ensure people working so closely together won't spread the virus.

"The scary thing is you know if it could happen in one plant, the potential is there for a lot of other plants," said Monforton, a lecturer in public health at Texas State University. "Unless you're super vigilant, this is a recipe for disaster."

Even companies with the best intention may have trouble given that plant layouts make 6-foot distancing difficult, said Jim Roth, director of the Center for Food Security and Public Health at Iowa State University. Precautions like face masks and plastic shields can help but likely won't stop the risk, he said. In some cases, plants may be able to spread workers out by slowing down operations, but the feasibility of the change depends on the layout of each plant and would reduce a plant's capacity.

"They were constructed to have people stand next to each other and work, and that's very difficult to change," he said.

Edgar Fields, president of the Southeast Council of the Retail, Wholesale and Department Store Union, which represents thousands of poultry workers, said it's hard to know if the precautions at plants will protect workers.

"We say 6 feet ... but what is enough?" Fields asked. "What else is it that we can ask them to do to try to protect their employees when they walk in the door and when they walk out. I don't know. All of this is new."

Alejandra Wehunt, 22, of Gainesville, Georgia, said she stopped going to work at a poultry processing plant as soon as she found out a male worker she knew had tested positive for COVID-19, the disease caused by the coronavirus.

"I have a young daughter. I live with my grandmother. I have seizures and heart problems. I can't catch anything," said Wehunt, a single mother who trims and marinates the chicken with seasoning at the plant. "If one person got it, probably many others have it too. He was around other people."

Wehunt said the plant manager at the Gold Creek Foods plant had told workers that, despite the pandemic, they had to show up to work or they could risk losing their jobs.

"Why are we losing our jobs because we don't want to put our health in jeopardy," she said.

A Gold Creek Foods spokesman did not respond to phone calls seeking comment.

Joshua Specht, a University of Notre Dame history professor who has studied the meat industry, said it relies on workers at the margins of society — including recent immigrants — who don't have a safety net and therefore feel pressure to continue working even if they are ill.

"With workers in close proximity, working long hours, and feeling pressure to continue even when sick, the meat industry is at particular risk for pandemic-related disruptions," Specht said.

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Associated Press Writers Stephen Groves contributed to this report from Sioux Falls, South Dakota, Amy Forliti reported from Minneapolis, David Pitt reported from Des Moines, Iowa, and Adriana Gomez Licon reported from Miami.

## Tyson Foods idles largest pork plant as virus slams industry

By RYAN J. FOLEY Associated Press

IOWA CITY, Iowa (AP) — Tyson Foods suspended operations Wednesday at an Iowa plant that is critical to the nation's pork supply but was blamed for fueling a massive coronavirus outbreak in the region.

The Arkansas-based company said the closure of the plant in Waterloo would deny a vital market to hog farmers and further disrupt U.S. meat supply. Tyson had kept the facility, its largest pork plant, open in

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recent days over the objections of alarmed local officials.

The plant can process 19,500 hogs per day, accounting for 3.9% of U.S. pork processing capacity, according to the National Pork Board.

More than 180 infections have been linked to the plant and officials expect that number to dramatically rise. Testing of its 2,800 workers is expected to begin Friday. Cases and hospitalizations in Black Hawk County have skyrocketed in recent days and local officials say the plant is the source of most infections.

In addition to those who have tested positive for the virus, hundreds of workers were staying home out of fear, and the plant had been running at reduced production levels.

Employers have struggled to contain the virus in meatpacking plants, where workers toil side by side on production lines and often share crowded locker rooms, cafeterias and rides to work. While plants have added safety measures, public health experts say social distancing is virtually impossible.

Several facilities have temporarily closed due to virus outbreaks, including a Smithfield Foods plant in Sioux Falls, South Dakota, a JBS USA plant in Worthington, Minnesota, and a Redwood Farms Meat Processors in Estherville, Iowa. Others have stayed open or resumed production after pauses for testing and cleaning.

On Wednesday, Tyson announced it would close a pork plant in Logansport, Indiana, and that its 2,200 workers would undergo testing after some became infected with the virus. The plant takes hogs from farmers across nine states.

In Texas, state health investigators said Wednesday they have identified 114 cases of COVID-19 "associated" with a JBS Beef plant and are working to determine whether there's an ongoing source of infection. Department of State Health Services spokeswoman Lara Anton said the company contacted the agency last week to ensure they were doing everything they should to protect staff at the facility in Cactus, in the Texas Panhandle. The plant has not closed.

JBS Beef spokesman Cameron Bruett said in an email "there is no investigation to our knowledge" but that the company would shut down its Cactus location if it was deemed unsafe.

The company contacted the health department last week to ensure they were doing everything they should be to protect its staff, Anton said. Health officials visited the plant Wednesday and confirmed JBS implemented the department's recommendations and is "following all of the best practices for an essential business to remain in operation," Anton said.

An estimated 25% of U.S. pork processing capacity has been closed or idled due to reduced operating speed over the past two days, said Steve Meyer, an economist with Kerns and Associates in Ames, Iowa.

As a result, prices are starting to increase and analysts warn that customers could soon see shortages of certain products at grocery stores. At the same time, hog prices are plummeting due to excess supply, devastating farmers.

In Kansas, a critical beef production state, an official said Wednesday that 168 meatpacking workers had tested positive to date. In Missouri, two rural counties that are home to several meatpacking plants reported huge spikes in infections.

Tyson Fresh Meats President Steve Stouffer said its Waterloo closure was driven by "the combination of worker absenteeism, COVID-19 cases and community concerns." He warned of "significant ramifications" for farmers, distributors and grocers in the supply chain.

Tyson said workers would be compensated during the shutdown and that the timing of reopening would depend on several factors, including testing.

Local officials, including Waterloo Mayor Quentin Hart and the Black Hawk County Board of Health, had called on Tyson or Republican Gov. Kim Reynolds to temporarily close the plant. They had warned that its continued operation would exacerbate the spread of the virus in the area and that the company was endangering its workers.

A 65-year-old employee in the plant's laundry department died Sunday after contracting the virus, the Waterloo-Cedar Falls Courier reported.

The governor blocked local authorities from closing the plant in an April 16 order that banned social gatherings in northeastern Iowa. It granted the exclusive power to the Iowa Department of Public Health



to shut down businesses over coronavirus concerns.

The governor and the department had been working with Tyson to keep the plant open.

Reynolds argued that the economic disruption caused by plant closures outweighed the health risks, warning that farmers might have to euthanize their pigs. She said that "people are gonna get" the virus in large workplaces but most will experience mild or no symptoms.

While it's true that for most people, the virus causes mild or moderate symptoms that clear up in a few weeks, it can lead to more severe illness and even death for some, especially older adults and those with existing health problems.

Lawmakers said an earlier closure would have better protected public health and been less harmful economically. "My concern is the impact this has had because we didn't act soon enough," said Democratic Rep. Ras Smith of Waterloo.

The governor didn't respond directly when asked Wednesday if the state should have intervened. She defended her overall response to the crisis but said, "There's always more we could have done."

Tyson resumed operations Tuesday at its pork plant in Columbus Junction, Iowa, which had been shut down for two weeks after an outbreak infected hundreds and killed two workers.

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Associated Press writer David Pitt in Des Moines, Iowa, Jim Salter in St. Louis, Roxana Hegeman in Belle Plaine, Kansas, and Jake Bleiberg in Dallas contributed to this report.

## Indiana meat plant closing after workers contract virus

LOGANSFORT, Ind. (AP) — Tyson Foods Inc. announced Wednesday that it will temporarily close its meatpacking plant in north-central Indiana after 146 employees tested positive for coronavirus.

The Tyson Fresh Meats plant in Logansport produced 3 million pounds of pork daily. Tyson suspended production Monday to allow for cleaning and sanitizing. The plant reopened Tuesday and is running at limited capacity because of decreased worker attendance. The company will stop all production by Saturday.

"The combination of worker absenteeism, COVID-19 cases and community concerns has resulted in a collective decision to close," said Steve Stouffer, of Tyson's beef-and-pork subsidiary.

Cass County officials said 47 people in the county have tested positive for the virus, with some of those traced back to Tyson employees. Testing of all remaining plant workers will start Thursday, said Cass County Health Department Administrator Serenity Alter. She said officials are hopeful that the test results back within several days so the plant can resume production.

Employers have struggled to contain the virus in meatpacking plants, where workers toil side by side on production lines and often share crowded locker rooms, cafeterias and rides to work.

Several facilities have temporarily closed due to virus outbreaks, including a Smithfield Foods plant in Sioux Falls, South Dakota, a JBS USA plant in Worthington, Minnesota, and a Redwood Farms Meat Processors in Estherville, Iowa. Others have stayed open or resumed production after pauses for testing and cleaning.

An estimated 25% of U.S. pork processing capacity has been closed or idled due to reduced operating speed over the past two days, said Steve Meyer, an economist with Kerns and Associates in Ames, Iowa.

"Closing facilities have serious implications to the national food supply for American families, local communities, growers and farmers," Stouffer said. "When a facility closes, the availability of protein for consumers across the nation will only decrease."

Prices are starting to rise as a result, with analysts warning of an upcoming shortage of certain products at grocery stores. At the same time, hog prices are plummeting due to excess supply, which is hurting farmers.

## Noem says more testing supplies needed to identify hot spots

By **STEPHEN GROVES** Associated Press

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — South Dakota Gov. Kristi Noem said Wednesday that she's requesting more coronavirus testing supplies from the federal government, as the state tries to navigate the partial opening of businesses.

Democratic and Republican governors have called on President Donald Trump to help them scale up testing as he pushes for a reopening of the economy. Noem, a Republican, was light in her criticism of the administration but made it clear that South Dakota needs greater testing capability.

"We're in a much better spot with testing supplies than we were two to three weeks ago," she said. "But do we have enough? Not yet."

Noem said her decision to resist ordering business closures already put the state at phase one of Trump's plan to reopen state economies. She has assembled a committee of health care professionals to evaluate the plan and make recommendations specific to the state.

Health officials on Wednesday reported a new South Dakota death from COVID-19 and 104 more confirmed cases. The latest death was a man from Minnehaha County who was more than 80 years old, according to data from the Department of Health. It was the state's ninth COVID-19 death.

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.

The state has now tallied 1,858 confirmed cases of the coronavirus. The number of infections is thought to be higher because many people have not been tested, and studies suggest people can be infected with the virus without feeling sick.

More than half of the state's confirmed cases have been linked to an outbreak at a Smithfield pork processing plant in Sioux Falls where 783 employees and 206 of their close contacts have tested positive.

The governor said she was working to procure personal protective equipment for the facility and would like to see it reopen as soon as possible. But the availability of testing for COVID-19 is key to addressing hot spots like Smithfield, she said.

Noem's leniency in allowing businesses to stay open is being tested by a pair of motor racing events planned for this weekend. The races expect to attract hundreds of spectators on Saturday and Sunday nights.

Although race organizers are planning to space people out and implement other measures to prevent coronavirus infections, Noem said she thinks the races are a bad idea. Still, she said she would not be taking legal action to stop them from happening.

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

## Hundreds expected at South Dakota auto races despite virus

By **STEPHEN GROVES** Associated Press

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — A pair of South Dakota speedways are forging ahead with plans to hold two auto races expected to draw hundreds of fans this weekend, even as the state's governor warns against attending them.

Gov. Kristi Noem said she won't be taking any action to shut down the events planned for Saturday and Sunday nights even though she thinks they are a bad idea and could lead to the spread of the coronavirus. The two race tracks, just over the border from Iowa, decided to sell limited tickets to give race fans a taste of "normalcy" after weeks of social distancing and canceled sporting events.

South Dakota's Republican governor said the crowds at the races would violate her guidance not to gather in groups of more than 10, but she has not said why she won't stop the races from proceeding. Health

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experts have said eliminating group gatherings are crucial to curbing the spread of the coronavirus, which can be transmitted by people who do not exhibit symptoms.

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.

As Noem touts her constraint in allowing businesses to operate during a global pandemic, the races push the limits of her hands-off approach.

Promoters of the races said they are taking steps to reduce the chances that the event will become a hotbed of virus transmission, including keeping the crowds well below capacity, screening people's temperatures and making concessions cashless. The Saturday race at Park Jefferson International Speedway has sold out of the 700 tickets it offered to a track that usually holds 4,000. The Sunday event at New Raceway Park in Jefferson is offering 500 tickets, less than one-third of its capacity of 1,800. Organizers said they would offer refunds to anyone with second thoughts about going.

Dennis Moore, who is organizing the Sunday race, said his message is clear: If you are concerned about coronavirus infections, don't come. But he feels the economy needs to reopen.

"This country's going to be on its butt if we don't open this up," he said.

The South Dakota races stand in contrast with NASCAR, where discussions are underway to resume racing — but without fans in the stands.

The coronavirus outbreak has infected millions worldwide and killed about 180,000, including more than 45,000 in the U.S., according to a tally compiled by Johns Hopkins University from official government figures. South Dakota has reported 1,858 confirmed cases and nine deaths, though the number of infections is likely higher because many people have not been tested and studies suggest people can be infected and not feel sick.

Both tracks are in Jefferson in Union County, which has confirmed seven cases. Jefferson is a city of about 550 people that's about 10 miles (16 kilometers) from Sioux City, Iowa.

Jerry Miller, the state's attorney for Union County, said holding the races was "risky and irresponsible." He said the county has tried to stop them from going forward, but authorization would have to come from the state.

Moore said people from as far away as Texas are planning to fly in to attend Sunday's race. Race crews have also lined up to join, with many on a waiting list, he said.

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This story has been updated to correct that dates have not been set for NASCAR races.

## Police say 3 men arrested were in possession of stolen guns

RAPID CITY, S.D. (AP) — Rapid City police have arrested three men they say were in possession of firearms stolen from a local pawn shop.

Ten AR-15-style rifles and one shotgun were stolen from Pawn With Us early in the morning on Sunday and Monday, according to authorities.

Investigators said they received a tip Tuesday afternoon that some of the weapons were at a Rapid City home.

Officers saw three men leaving the property in a vehicle, pulled it over, found two of the guns in the vehicle and arrested the three.

The Rapid City Journal reports tactical officers were called to the house and three men inside were questioned and released. Police say two additional guns and methamphetamine were found in the residence.

"The execution of the search warrant and the associated traffic stop have generated additional leads which detectives are actively following up on," police spokesman Brendyn Medina said. The police department "is committed to recovering the seven remaining stolen firearms from this business burglary."

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## The Latest: County looks for homeless recovery center

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — The Latest on the coronavirus outbreak in South Dakota (all times local): 7:40 a.m.

Minnehaha County officials are looking at options for a recovery center for homeless people awaiting COVID-19 test results. Currently, four hotels have housed homeless individuals waiting for test results.

County human services director Kari Benz says if a test comes back negative, the person is cleared to return to a shelter. If they test positive they are housed at the hotels until they're cleared by the Department of Health or a health care provider.

Benz says about 35-40 people have been housed for some period of time at one of the hotels, 24 of whom have ended up testing positive.

The Argus Leader reports health officials have been talking with the Union Gospel Mission and the Bishop Dudley House to identify possible locations for a recovery center.

## Virus warnings back safety over tradition during Ramadan

By KATHY GANNON and ANGELA CHARLTON Associated Press

ISLAMABAD (AP) — The coronavirus pandemic is cutting off the world's 1.8 billion Muslims from their cherished Ramadan traditions as health officials battle to ward off new infections during Islam's holiest month, haunted by multiple outbreaks traced to religious gatherings around the world.

Ramadan, a month of daytime fasting, overnight festivity and communal prayer and giving, begins with the new moon this week and comes in the middle of the worldwide debate over when and how to lift virus restrictions. Keeping the faithful healthy during the entire month poses a whole new challenge.

The virus has already disrupted Christianity's Holy Week, Passover, the Muslim hajj pilgrimage and other major religious events.

"Ramadan is coming, and people have nothing to eat," said Afghan daily laborer Hamayoon, who goes by only one name. "The government must have some mercy on us and allow people to work at least half a day to be able to feed themselves."

U.S. President Donald Trump is pushing for a swift nationwide reopening, Vietnam and New Zealand moved Thursday to end their lockdowns and European leaders were gathering via video later Thursday to try to reinvigorate their virus-crippled economies.

The coronavirus crisis is far from over, however, and the threat of new outbreaks looms large. German Chancellor Angela Merkel expressed dismay Thursday, criticizing some states for moving "very briskly, if not to say too briskly" in trying to reopen their economies.

"We're not living in the final phase of the pandemic, but still at the beginning," Merkel warned ahead of the European Union summit. "Let us not squander what we have achieved and risk a setback. It would be a shame if premature hope ultimately punishes us all."

Germany has been praised for its proactive approach to the pandemic, testing widely, shutting down citizens' movement and achieving a much lower reported death toll, at 5,315, than other large European nations.

As Muslim leaders announce the official start of Ramadan, governments are trying to balance health protection with traditions and many have closed mosques or banned collective evening prayers.

In addition to Ramadan's sunrise-to-sunset fast, families and friends gather for large festive meals at sunset, worshippers go to mosques for hours of evening prayers and communal meals are organized for the poor.

Authorities in the capital of Indonesia, the world's most populous Muslim majority nation, on Thursday extended to May 22 its strict disease-fighting restrictions — covering the whole holy month. Turkey banned communal eating during the holiday and banned Ramadan drummers marking the times for fasting from going door-to-door to collect tips.

Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan bowed to the country's religious clerics, refusing to close the mosques despite a warning from the Pakistan Medical Association that such gatherings are like a petri dish to spread

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the virus in a country that has a fragile health care system.

Egypt's Grand Mufti Shawki Allam said Thursday that healthy Muslims have a religious obligation to fast despite the global pandemic — but said coronavirus patients would be “the most eligible” for an exemption.

U.S. authorities have also struggled to reconcile religious freedom with stemming the virus. A federal judge said he will deny a bid by three Southern California churches to hold in-person church services during the pandemic, saying that government's emergency powers trump what in normal times would be fundamental constitutional rights.

U.N. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres urged Muslims to “focus on our common enemy — the virus,” and repeated an earlier appeal for an immediate cease-fire for all conflicts.

The U.N. also warned that more than 135 million people were at acute risk of starvation even before COVID-19 appeared. The virus is making that situation worse, leading to massive lines for food banks from the Texas city of El Paso to the Paris suburbs, and hitting Africa especially hard.

“On one hand, the lockdown and lack of jobs, and on the other hand, Ramadan is coming and the prices for all food items have gone up. It is a huge problem for the people,” shopkeeper Noor Alam lamented in the Afghan capital of Kabul.

The EU has pledged 20 billion euros (\$22 billion) to provide help to vulnerable communities globally. EU leaders were holding a virtual summit Thursday to take stock of the damage the coronavirus has inflicted on the bloc's own citizens and to thrash out an economic rescue plan.

Merkel warned: “It's a long journey; We can't run out of stamina and air too soon.”

Meanwhile scientists are reporting new signs that the virus was circulating in the population earlier than initially thought. Two people with the coronavirus died in California as much as three weeks before the U.S. reported its first death from the disease in late February, which may have led to delays in issuing stay-at-home orders.

In China, authorities reported no new deaths and just 10 new cases on Thursday.

China has reopened many businesses. Middle and high school seniors preparing for exams are returning to classes. But a ban on foreign arrivals and strict quarantine measures remain to prevent an influx of new cases from abroad or fresh infections.

The coronavirus has infected more than 2.6 million people and killed over 183,000, including more than 45,000 in the United States, according to a tally compiled by John Hopkins University from official government figures.

The true numbers are undoubtedly far higher, since testing is limited and methods vary for counting the dead. While most people suffer from only mild or moderate symptoms, the elderly and the infirm have been hardest hit by the virus.

The head of the World Health Organization's Europe office said Thursday that up to half of the coronavirus deaths across the region have been in nursing homes, calling it an “unimaginable tragedy.” Europe has seen over 115,000 people die in the pandemic, according to the Johns Hopkins tally.

Dr. Hans Kluge said a “deeply concerning picture” was emerging of the impact of COVID-19 on long-term homes for the elderly, where care has “often been notoriously neglected.” Kluge said health workers in such facilities were often overworked and underpaid and called for them to be given more protective gear and support, describing them as the “unsung heroes” of the pandemic.

To help people in Belgium's capital bear their coronavirus lockdowns, a “love bus” is traveling the streets and broadcasting personal voice messages to those stuck at home.

“We miss you a lot. Big kisses!” trumpeted one message to 82-year-old Asuncion Mendez from her great-grandchildren. As Mendez looked out from her Brussels balcony, a huge smile spread across her face.

Charlton reported from Paris. Edith M. Lederer in New York, Elaine Kurtenbach in Bangkok and Associated Press reporters from around the world contributed.

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

## At least 5 dead as storms hit Oklahoma, Texas and Louisiana

MADILL, Okla. (AP) — Severe weather was moving through Mississippi early Thursday after apparent tornadoes tore through parts of Oklahoma, Texas and Louisiana, where five deaths included a trailer factory worker whose body was found a quarter mile from his workplace.

More than 100,000 customers from Texas to Mississippi were without power Thursday as the severe weather moved through, according to poweroutage.us, which tracks utility reports.

The worker was killed in southern Oklahoma's Marshall County, where the storm hit Madill, near the Red River, about 4:30 p.m. Wednesday, causing widespread damage to the town, including its residential neighborhoods, said Donny Raley, the city's emergency manager.

The worker's body was found about a fourth of a mile (0.4 kilometers) from J&I Manufacturing, a trailer factory outside town where a suspected twister hit just as the workforce was leaving for the day, causing severe damage, Marshall County Emergency Management Director Robert Chaney said. Chaney said he had no other information on the person.

At least three people were killed when apparent tornado touched down in southeast Texas about 6 p.m. Wednesday near Onalaska, about 75 miles (120 kilometers) north of Houston, the Polk County Emergency Management System said in a statement. The storm rumbled east through Seven Oaks and caused severe damage to homes and other structures, said Carrie Miller, a spokeswoman for Polk County Judge Sydney Murphy.

There was no immediate information on how the victims were killed.

A woman was killed on a bridge in Woodworth, Louisiana, 15 miles (24 kilometers) south of Alexandria, due to the severe weather, the Rapides Parish Sheriff's Office told KALB-TV.

The sheriff's office did not provide detail on how she died.

The Alexandria campus of Louisiana State University also saw some damage from the storm. The university tweeted, "All resident students safe. There is damage to DeWitt Livestock building and a camper flipped over." The campus was also left without power.

The Clarion Ledger reported that storms were moving through Mississippi early Thursday, bringing the threat of tornadoes, flooding and wind surges.

The storms crossed into southwest Mississippi before midnight Wednesday and radar indicated tornado, the Ledger said. There were no immediate reports of damage or injuries in Mississippi early Thursday.

A National Weather Service team will be dispatched to survey damage and to confirm whether the storms were tornadoes.

## Biden's ties to Obama could hamper appeal to Latino voters

By WILL WEISSERT Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Joe Biden's tenure as Barack Obama's vice president is complicating his efforts to deepen ties with Latinos who could be critical to winning the White House.

For many Latinos, Biden's embrace of the Obama years is a frightening reminder of when the former president ejected about 3 million people living in the U.S. illegally, earning him the moniker of "deporter in chief."

That's one reason Latinos overwhelmingly backed Bernie Sanders during the Democratic primary. But with the Vermont senator out of the race and Biden left as the presumptive Democratic nominee, Latinos face an agonizing choice. They could look past Biden's resume and vote for him or sit out the election and risk another four years of President Donald Trump, who escalated his hard-line stance this week with an executive order freezing some immigration into the U.S. during the coronavirus pandemic.

"The 'Let's go back to how things were' for people who feel like they have a boot on their neck, it's not always that compelling," said Marisa Franco, director and co-founder of the Latino activist group Mijente, which made its first-ever endorsement when it backed Sanders for president.

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The record number of deportations under Obama came as his administration sought to show it was serious about enforcement while waiting on Congress to approve an overhaul to the immigration system. But in the process, it deported a large percentage of people without criminal records, even while publicly saying its priority was removing criminals from the country.

Obama eventually gave up on Congress and changed tactics, extending temporary legal protections to young immigrants through Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals, or DACA, which is still being challenged in federal court.

Biden long defended the administration's immigration policy, even telling one activist in South Carolina who decried deportations, "You should vote for Trump." But just before losing the caucuses in heavily Hispanic Nevada in February, Biden conceded, "We took far too long to get it right."

"I think it was a big mistake," Biden said.

Domingo Garcia, president of the League of United Latin American Citizens, said some "in the more liberal side of the Latino community" view the issue as a "litmus test that's something they've not forgotten." But he said many activists see it as paling in comparison to Trump's race baiting.

Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, D-N.Y., a leading progressive voice, has said she'll vote for Biden in November even as she's said he needs to pay close attention to Latino issues. Sanders has endorsed Biden and called on his base of loyal supporters to rally around the former vice president to ensure Trump's defeat.

The Republican president isn't toning down his approach to the issue of immigration, viewing it as a way to motivate his base. Trump's latest executive order likely guarantees immigration will remain in the spotlight heading into the election.

The Trump administration deported about 267,260 people in fiscal year 2019, well below the single-year record of nearly 410,000 the Obama administration set in 2012. But Trump has increased the number of people jailed in the U.S. awaiting immigration court proceedings while sending around 60,000 back to Mexico while they wait for the same.

"Our community definitely understands and knows the consequences of having Trump as president," said Laura Jiménez, the Biden campaign's Latino engagement director. "This election is about our lives, our safety, our ability to thrive and be in this country and be accepted."

About 32 million Hispanics will be eligible to vote in November, accounting for 13.3% of the electorate, outpacing African Americans to become the largest minority voting bloc for the first time, according to the Pew Research Center.

Biden's campaign has increased the budget for Latino outreach efforts. He has called into Hispanic radio shows and held weekly "Unidos Con Biden," or "United For Biden," calls to engage Hispanic supporters. Lately, those have focused on speaking to Hispanic elected officials in states around the country about the fallout from the coronavirus.

In recent weeks, the campaign has begun using more nuanced approaches to target Latinos from an array of backgrounds since Cuban Americans have different concerns than those with ancestral roots in places such as Mexico, Puerto Rico or Venezuela.

Biden will soon begin vetting potential running mates who will likely include prominent Latinas such as Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham of New Mexico and Sen. Catherine Cortez Masto of Nevada.

Still, the former vice president has not backed decriminalizing illegal border crossings, an issue on which he split from rivals including Sanders and former Obama administration housing chief Julián Castro during the primary.

Hispanics also represent a high number of uninsured Americans, meaning Sanders' support for universal health coverage under "Medicare for All" appealed to many — another issue Biden hasn't embraced. Younger Latinos tend to be major supporters of sweeping initiatives to fight climate change, which Sanders backed and Biden didn't.

Since Sanders exited the race, his chief Hispanic strategist, Chuck Rocha, has launched a political action committee aiming to motivate Latino voters up and down the ballot, especially in battleground states like Pennsylvania. Rocha said that he had not spoken to the Biden campaign about Hispanic outreach but that such initiatives need to be well funded and start now, not mere weeks before the election when they can

feel superficial.

"You do it with the same percentage of the budget that you spend talking to that white swing voter that voted for Donald Trump," Rocha said. "Democrats and progressives need to understand that there's way more untapped potential in engaging a Latino infrequent voter."

Catch up on the 2020 election campaign with AP experts on our weekly politics podcast, "Ground Game."

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

By The Associated Press

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

1. **LATINOS FACE DILEMMA WITH BIDEN** They could look past the former vice president's resume and vote for him or sit out the election and risk another four years of Trump, who escalated his hardline immigration stance this week.

2. **DEADLY STORMS RAKE US SOUTH** At least five people were killed after apparent tornadoes tore through parts of Oklahoma, Texas and Louisiana.

3. **US CHURCH FACES NEGLECT ALLEGATIONS IN HAITI** A fire at one of the children's homes run by the Church of Bible Understanding killed 15 people, residences which have faced years of infractions and failed two state inspections.

4. **HISTORY, GEOGRAPHY SCORES DIP** The latest Nation's Report Card gives eighth-grade students unsatisfactory marks in U.S. history, geography and civics.

5. **NFL HELPING LAUNCH NEW LEAGUE** Brad Lang, a Marine who lost both legs in an explosion in Afghanistan, will compete in a new wheelchair football league that will play in Chicago, Los Angeles, Phoenix and Kansas City.

## White House shifts from raising alarms to reopening country

By ZEKE MILLER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — For weeks, the Trump administration played up the dangers of the coronavirus as it sought to persuade Americans to disrupt their lives and stay home. Now, as President Donald Trump aims for a swift nationwide reopening, he faces a new challenge: convincing people it's safe to come out and resume their normal lives.

It's a defining question for a cloistered nation — and a political imperative for Trump, whose reelection likely rides on the pace of an economic rebound.

Can the country move beyond a crippling fear of the virus and return to some modified version of its old routines, doing what's possible to mitigate the risk of COVID-19 but acknowledging it may be a fact of life for years to come?

"We need to create the kind of confidence in America that makes it so that everybody goes back to work," said Kevin Hassett, a White House adviser and former chair of the Council of Economic Advisers. "And that confidence is going to require testing and confidence that your workplace is a healthy place, but also confidence in the economy."

At the White House, officials believe they've entered a new chapter of the pandemic response, moving from crisis mode to sustained mitigation and management.

It began last Thursday with the release of guidelines to governors for how to safely reopen their states. Trump and Vice President Mike Pence celebrated Americans for successfully "flattening the curve" of the epidemic.

A day later, a phalanx of the administration's top medical officials sought to reassure the nation that there were plenty of tests available to safely begin easing restrictions.

Governors have been lifting restrictions each day since then, including aggressive moves announced Wednesday in Montana and Oklahoma. The Montana governor gave schools the green light to open their



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doors in early May, and Oklahoma will allow salons, barbershops, spas and pet groomers to reopen Friday.

Trump, in his evening news conference, did take issue with Republican Georgia Gov. Brian Kemp's bold reopening plans. "I disagree strongly," he said. "I think it's too soon."

The governors' moves coincided with lingering bleak news around the country. The death toll in Massachusetts eclipsed 2,000 on Wednesday, doubling from just a week earlier. About 16,000 people remained hospitalized across New York. A meat plant in Iowa that is vital to the nation's pork supply is the latest slaughterhouse to shut down because of outbreak. With the economy in for a long, brutal slump, Congress was on the verge of passing an almost \$500 billion relief bill to bolster small businesses.

Trump flatly promised Americans that there will no repeat of the national lockdown. "We will not go through what we went through for the last two months," he said.

It's a sharp shift in rhetoric after Trump and allies stressed the threat of an "invisible enemy" to persuade people to abide by social distancing recommendations. The American people have also been scarred by the daunting death toll and images of body bags piled up in refrigerated trailers.

Moving from fear to acceptance will take confidence in government, medical professionals and businesses at a time when faith in those institutions is low. White House aides say restoring confidence will require the same "whole-of-America" approach that slowed the virus spread.

"It's one thing for government to say, 'OK, it's safe to go out,'" New York Gov. Andrew Cuomo, a Democrat, said Tuesday. "If people don't believe it's safe, they're not going to go."

While there have been isolated protests in states aimed at lifting aggressive stay-at-home measures, most Americans don't believe it will be safe to ease the restrictions anytime soon, according to a new survey from The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research.

Trump predicted earlier this month that the economy would take off like a "rocket ship once we get back to business." But experts say the recovery will be far slower.

"It'll be a very gradual process regardless of what a governor says or the president says," said Dr. Robert Blendon, a Harvard professor of health policy and political analysis. He said the history of lockdowns, particularly the quarantine of more than 25,000 people around Toronto in 2003 to slow the spread of SARS, shows that it will take weeks, even months, for people to develop the confidence to resume normal activity.

Blendon also warned that a predicted second wave of COVID-19 could reverse any gains made in the interim.

It's not just government, but individual businesses that will need to convince employees and consumers that it's safe to return, once they decide to reopen.

Delta Airlines CEO Ed Bastian on Wednesday warned his employees to be prepared for a "choppy, sluggish recovery even after the virus is contained."

The White House expects businesses "will advertise to the public" about the safety measures they are putting in place when they reopen, said Larry Kudlow, the director of the National Economic Council. He said the White House is also considering asking Congress to provide liability protection for employers in case their workers or customers fall sick. "We want small businesses to have some confidence that if they do reopen, they'll stay open," Kudlow said.

The outbreak has infected over 2.5 million people and killed about 180,000 around the world, including more than 45,000 in the U.S., according to a tally compiled by Johns Hopkins University from official government figures, though the true numbers are believed to be far higher.

Mark Schlesinger, a Yale professor of health policy, said it's going to take time "for people to re-equilibrate emotionally, and it's very hard to predict how long."

"For lots of reasons we put people on a state of heightened anxiety," he said.

So even if people who are worried about their economic situation want to get back to work, "it's less clear whether consumers who would go to a restaurant or a store or the doctor's office" will change their behavior, he said. "There may be permanent behavioral changes in how people do business and interact as a society."

Trump hosted Cuomo in the Oval Office on Tuesday, viewing it as opportunity to win over one of the

most trusted voices on the virus response about the nation's ability to conduct enough tests to ensure it has a handle on the matter.

Trump agreed to work with Cuomo to double his state's testing capacity, believing that if the administration can earn the buy-in of Cuomo, other governors across the state will follow.

Cuomo announced Wednesday that he is enlisting former New York City Mayor Mike Bloomberg to help create a massive "tracing army" that will find infected people and get them into isolation, a move toward building confidence among leery Americans.

At the White House, the administration is adjusting its posture away from drastic containment measures to managing virus "flareups" and bottlenecks in testing or supplies.

And officials hope to use the daily White House briefings to inundate Americans with facts and figures on testing and therapeutics, blanketing television with graphics of flattening and declining curves and statistics on the number of testing kits available.

White House officials also are planning to step up travel in coming weeks as a visual representation of reopening. Pence has traveled to Colorado and Wisconsin in recent days, and Trump is pushing aides to get him back on the road.

There are still plenty of caution flags.

"There's a possibility that the assault of the virus on our nation next winter will actually be even more difficult than the one we just went through," Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Director Robert Redfield told The Washington Post in an interview Tuesday. "We're going to have the flu epidemic and the coronavirus epidemic at the same time."

"We've got to be very careful," Trump said Tuesday of a potential second wave, which in some predictions could hit just weeks before the November elections. "We don't want that to happen; it could happen. I think we stamp it out if it does happen."

Instead, White House aides hope that people accept a "new normal" that envisions short-term disruptions when there are COVID-19 cases, causing routine week-long school or office closures but not panic.

But Blendon said, "People will watch the cases and listen to the major public health leaders, and if there's a conflict, that will slow things even greater."

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

## **VA medical facilities struggle to cope with coronavirus**

**By MICHAEL CASEY and HOPE YEN Associated Press**

BOSTON (AP) — As she treated patient after patient infected with the coronavirus at a Veterans Affairs medical center in New York City, Heather Espinal saw stark warning signs.

So many nurses had called in sick, she said, that the Bronx facility was woefully understaffed. It lacked specially equipped rooms for infected patients, she said, and didn't have enough masks, gloves and other protective gear to guard against the spread of the highly contagious disease.

Espinal, 34, says she and her colleagues were told to do the best they could, using a single N95 face mask for an entire shift rather than getting a new one for each patient. In early April, she tested positive for COVID-19.

"I definitely believe it was related to me being at work," said Espinal, who was out sick for two weeks.

Espinal is one of 1,900 VA health care workers who have become sick with the coronavirus, according to agency documents obtained by The Associated Press. Twenty have died. Another 3,600 of the 300,000-plus VA health care employees are quarantined and unable to work because they have been exposed to the virus, according to VA figures.

As the coronavirus spreads across the U.S., VA health care facilities are struggling with shortages of workers and the equipment necessary to protect employees from contracting the virus, according to VA staff and internal documents obtained by the AP.

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"We thought we were doing everything right, even with reusing these N95 respirators. But we still ended up getting sick," Espinal said.

More than 5,700 veterans treated by the VA have been infected by the coronavirus, and nearly 380 have died.

The Labor Department is now investigating, and several Democrats in Congress plan to send a letter Thursday calling on President Donald Trump to invoke the Defense Production Act to get more supplies for VA health facilities.

The VA, responsible for the health care of 9 million military veterans, denied it was short of supplies and stressed that it follows federal health guidelines when rationing personal protective equipment like masks and gloves.

"VA's PPE conservation posture is precisely why the department has not encountered any PPE shortages that have negatively impacted patient care or employee safety," said spokeswoman Christina Mandreucci. She said the VA has moved aggressively in recent weeks to add staff, hiring 3,183 people, including 981 nurses, from March 29 to April 11.

But interviews with nurses and other employees at facilities around the country, internal VA documents, and a March report by the agency's inspector general tell another story.

The facilities were short of staff and equipment like masks, eye shields, hand sanitizer and gowns. Some workers were forced to reuse masks for days or weeks, according to interviews with VA nurses. In hard-hit states like New York, a crush of coronavirus patients led to a shortage of negative pressure rooms to limit the spread of the virus, several VA nurses told the AP.

The VA inspector general's staff visited more than 230 facilities in March. It found that nearly a third of the medical centers could improve their processing for screening visitors. More than half of the medical centers reported shortages of supplies and equipment including respirator masks, and 10 reported shortages of staffing mostly for nurses in intensive care units.

"There has been a failure of leadership at VA, and veterans, VA employees and the public are suffering as a result," said Paul Rieckhoff, founder and former head of the Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America and now host of the podcast "Angry Americans."

Susan Gordon, a senior policy analyst at the nonpartisan Veterans Healthcare Policy Institute, said VA preparations were hampered by inadequate funding and staff, leaving it with nearly 50,000 job openings.

"In VA facilities all over the country, they are doing a really incredible job trying to respond to the crisis in a situation where they have been deliberately crippled by the Trump administration," Gordon said.

As the nation's largest health care system, the VA typically enjoyed preferred status in orders for medical supplies from prime vendors.

But as the outbreak escalated in the U.S., surging demand for crucial medical equipment spurred frantic competition for supplies, including from state governments and the National Stockpile. The Federal Emergency Management Agency began buying supplies directly from manufacturers, and VA began submitting its orders to FEMA alongside others.

Not long after, according to people familiar with VA's weekly briefings to Congress, the supply shortages got worse as medical workers burned through 250,000 masks a day.

On April 7, the VA issued guidelines asking workers to ration masks in response to what the department described as "shortages" and challenges in getting "adequate supplies" to protect VA staff, according to an internal memo. Citing Centers for Disease Control and Prevention guidelines, the VA said employees in direct contact with COVID-19 patients should use N95 masks as protection but may need to reuse them. VA staff working with high-risk elderly or vulnerable patients, such as those in nursing homes or spinal cord facilities, would only get one face mask per work week.

After criticism from staff, and a small increase in supplies, the VA on April 16 said those employees working with high-risk elderly or vulnerable veterans could now have one face mask per day.

Individual medical centers have wide discretion if they face shortages, including allowing employees in direct contact with COVID patients to use surgical masks instead of N95 respirators and permitting staff to bring their own.

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All other VA staff would be encouraged to bring in handmade masks, even if they work in a building where the disease is present.

A complaint filed by the American Federation of Government Employees alleges that VA workers who came in contact with someone suspected of contracting the virus were told on orders of VA Secretary Robert Wilkie that they still had to report to work — ignoring a 14-day quarantine period. The Occupational Safety and Health Administration is investigating.

The staff and equipment shortages are creating chaos at the VA medical center in Brooklyn, New York, according to Maria Lobifaro, an intensive care nurse.

"Usually the ratio is one nurse to two critical patients. I'm having five critical ICU patients on ventilators," said Lobifaro, who also is a member of the union National Nurses United, which has organized protests at VA facilities in Brooklyn and Baltimore.

"This has happened four times in the last week and a half. It's to the point where ... my hands are trembling because of what I'm going to walk into," she continued. "I've never seen anything like this."

A group of Senate Democrats blames Trump for a "broken procurement and distribution system developed by this administration."

"Those who care for veterans should not be afraid to wake up every morning, go to work and help save veterans' lives," says a letter being sent to the White House on Thursday by Sen. Jon Tester of Montana, the top Democrat on the Senate Veterans Affairs Committee. More than a dozen senators joined him, including Sens. Bernie Sanders of Vermont, Elizabeth Warren of Massachusetts and Kamala Harris of California, all former 2020 presidential contenders.

Wilkie defended his agency's response.

"We have the lowest employee infection rate in the world. It is less than half of 1 percent," he said Wednesday on MSNBC, citing higher rates in Italy and elsewhere in the U.S.

Irma Westmoreland, a nurse at the Charlie Norwood VA in Augusta, Georgia, said it's hard for nurses to be tested, so no one really knows how bad the situation is.

"We are told if you have symptoms or feel like you have been exposed and you want to be tested unless you are veteran, you can't be tested," Westmoreland said, adding that employees are told go to their own doctors if they want to be tested.

"It's stressful for the nurses to be in this environment," she said. "But it's even more stressful when they don't have information they need."

## Legal battles loom as businesses hit by virus sue insurers

By MICHAEL TARM AP Legal Affairs Writer

CHICAGO (AP) — A once-bustling bar and grill tucked below a Michigan Avenue overpass famously inspired a "Saturday Night Live" skit starring John Belushi and Bill Murray. But the money the Billy Goat Tavern is losing during the coronavirus outbreak is no joke.

The tavern and millions of other shuttered businesses nationwide have turned to their insurers to help recoup their losses following state-mandate closures, which combined may exceed \$300 billion a month. But insurers have widely rejected the claims, so the Billy Goat joined a growing line of businesses, including barbershops and casinos, suing insurers to force them to pay.

"These businesses are in the most trying times in their history and are going to their insurance company to get what they paid for," said Chris Esbrook, a lawyer for the landmark tavern, which opened in 1934 and, as legend goes, cursed the Chicago Cubs.

Insurers say policies for natural or man-made disasters don't cover virus outbreaks that bring economies to a standstill, and high-stakes battles in courtrooms coast to coast are sure to follow. What's at stake could be the survival of thousands of businesses if insurers don't pay and the insolvency of big-name insurance companies if they do.

"Pandemic outbreaks are uninsured because they are uninsurable," David A. Sampson, president of the American Property Casualty Insurance Association, said this month.

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No revenue is flowing into the Billy Goat, which previously drew hundreds of tourists a day, including some who remember the best-known line from a series of late 1970s SNL skits in which restaurant staff rebuffs patrons ordering anything but the house specialties: "Cheezborger, cheezborger, cheezborger! No Coke ... Pepsi!"

As many as 30 million small businesses straining to survive with little to no revenue could submit virus-related claims worth up to \$430 billion, the insurance association estimated. Those unprecedented numbers would be multiple times higher than claims following the Sept. 11 attacks.

The expectation is that insurers will continue to reject the vast majority of claims, triggering waves of lawsuits from businesses in nearly every town and city. Such a filing frenzy could add to logjams in courts when they reopen fully after the pandemic eases.

Among dozens of lawsuits filed to date is one by the Choctaw Nation casinos in Oklahoma and another by the Los Angeles law firm of celebrity attorney Mark Geragos.

"You pay insurance for decades for precisely the unthinkable, and when it happens these insurance companies do the unconscionable" by rejecting claims, Geragos told The Hollywood Reporter.

Forcing insurers to pay hundreds of billions of dollars a month could quickly deplete the \$800 billion set aside to cover future home, auto and other losses, according to the insurance association.

The attorney for the Billy Goat, which expanded from its flagship site to include establishments around Chicago, says he has little sympathy for insurers.

"They are in the business of selling people insurance for exactly this kind of situation," Esbrook said. "They can't now cry they're poor when the very situation they are insuring arises."

President Donald Trump recently expressed sympathy for businesses asking insurers to pay up for business interruption coverage.

"When they finally need it, the insurance company says, 'We're not going to give it,'" he said at a coronavirus task force news conference. "We can't let that happen."

Similar conflicts are playing out in Europe and Asia, though they aren't likely to see the torrent of lawsuits sure to come in the litigious United States.

The question on which many cases will hinge is whether the presence of the virus in or near a business can be categorized as direct physical damage, something that would otherwise be clearly covered. It's a question courts haven't definitively answered.

Proving a microscopic virus was ever even on a business's premises, never mind damaged it, could pose a challenge to plaintiff attorneys.

The Pennsylvania Supreme Court last week may have inadvertently helped business owners make their case when it upheld a state order closing nonessential businesses during the pandemic, likening the coronavirus to hurricanes in its ruling.

"COVID-19 pandemic is, by all definitions, a natural disaster and a catastrophe of massive proportions," the majority opinion said.

Insurance companies say most policies that cover unanticipated interruptions to a business's operations specifically exclude pandemics. Such exclusions became more common after a SARS virus outbreak in the early 2000s devastated businesses in parts of Asia.

A message seeking comment from the insurer the Billy Goat is suing, Society Insurance, wasn't returned.

A note to policyholders on the website of Travelers Indemnity, the insurer Geragos is suing, reads like a blanket denial of virus shutdown claims because they're "not a result of direct physical loss or damage." It also cites virus exclusions in its policies.

But such exclusions don't mean businesses don't have valid claims, the business lawyers contend. They point to separate policy provisions requiring that insurers pay losses when civil authorities intervene during emergencies and order businesses to close.

The Billy Goat Tavern's legal team says their case may be that much stronger because their insurer did not write in a virus exclusion and then still denied coverage.

Pressure on insurers isn't only coming in the form of lawsuits.

State lawmakers, including in Illinois, New York and New Jersey, have proposed laws that would dictate insurers accept business claims for coronavirus damage, in some cases even if policies exclude pandemics.

Industry advocates say such mandates could drain insurance funds needed to pay claims during upcoming hurricane season and when other natural disaster inevitably strike. The laws, they argue, also would undermine the contract law upon which free markets rely.

"If elected officials require payment for perils that were excluded, never underwritten for, and for which no premium was ever collected, catastrophic results will occur," said Charles Chamness, president of the National Association of Mutual Insurance Companies.

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## **Nurse Jenny from New Zealand recounts treating Boris Johnson**

WELLINGTON, New Zealand (AP) — Nurse Jenny from New Zealand says that helping save somebody as notable as Boris Johnson in his battle with the coronavirus didn't faze her thanks to her years of dealing with stressful situations in intensive care wards.

Jenny McGee was one of two National Health Service nurses who were singled out for praise by the British prime minister after he was discharged from St. Thomas' Hospital in London earlier this month. Johnson, 55, was the first world leader confirmed to have the virus.

In an interview with Television New Zealand that aired Thursday, McGee said the staff treated Johnson as just another patient. She has worked for 10 years in intensive care, including five as a leader.

"When I got in the car after work each night and I could hear things about Boris Johnson on the news. That was very surreal because I thought 'Wow. I've been looking after him,'" she said. "But I really wasn't fazed by looking after Boris Johnson."

But she was taken by surprise when he mentioned her by name.

"My first reaction was that it was a joke. I thought my friends were playing a joke on me. I wasn't expecting it," she said.

McGee told TVNZ that in her role she is constantly monitoring her patients and giving feedback to the doctor.

Johnson had said the nurses — he also praised Luis from Portugal — made needed interventions, but McGee declined to say what they were out of respect for patient privacy.

"He was interested in where I came from and what my story was, and we spent a lot of time together and we talked away about New Zealand," McGee said.

She said another shock came when New Zealand Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern messaged her.

"So on the night that it happened I had to turn my phone off because it was so overwhelming and when I turned my phone on in the morning people were like 'Jenny, you need to look at your Facebook' and I was called a snob for not responding to Jacinda," she said, laughing.

"She's a hero of mine. I think she's amazing, she just said how proud she was of me and the country was so proud and it was so heart-warming and that's something I will never forget."

McGee told TVNZ the work during the pandemic has been physically exhausting and emotionally straining as she and her colleagues do their best to save as many lives as they can.

"The darkest moment most definitely is being with someone who has passed away and their family is not there," she said.

She said there remains a wonderful sense of spirit and teamwork in the NHS and everyone is supporting each other.

## Virus traps, sickens foreign laborers in Gulf Arab states

By JON GAMBRELL and AYA BATRAWY Associated Press

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates (AP) — Long a lifeline for families back home, migrant workers in oil-rich Gulf Arab states now find themselves trapped by the coronavirus pandemic, losing jobs, running out of money and desperate to return to their home countries as COVID-19 stalks their labor camps.

Whether on the island of Bahrain, hidden in the industrial neighborhoods behind Dubai's skyscrapers or in landlocked cities of Saudi Arabia, a growing number of workers have contracted the virus or been forced into mass quarantines. Many have been put on unpaid leave or fired.

The United Arab Emirates is even threatening the laborers' home countries that won't take them back with possible quotas on workers in the future — something that would endanger a crucial source of remittances for South Asian countries.

Workers like Hunzullah Khaliqnoor, an IT manager from Peshawar, Pakistan, who shares a room in Dubai with his two brothers, just wants to escape.

Khaliqnoor said he has been pleading daily with the Pakistani Consulate to fly him and one of his brothers out. "Our job is gone and we need to move."

It's a cruel fate for the millions of mostly South Asian migrants who left their homes. They've missed priceless years and family milestones for more lucrative wages in the Gulf.

Their work is essential for the region that hosts them and for their home countries. Their remittances are a lifeline for nations like Afghanistan, India, Nepal, Pakistan and the Philippines.

Some 35 million laborers work in the six Arab Gulf states of Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the UAE, as well as in Jordan and Lebanon, according to U.N. figures. Foreigners far outnumber locals in the Gulf states, accounting for over 80% of the population in some countries.

Gulf states have increased coronavirus testing for residents and citizens alike. The UAE, for example, says 10,000 workers are being screened daily in Abu Dhabi's industrial district.



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Many of the migrants hold low-paying construction jobs, laboring in scorching heat to transform the region's deserts into cities teeming with highways, skyscrapers, luxury hotels and marbled malls. Others work as cleaners, drivers, waiters and in jobs traditionally shunned by locals. Women often find jobs as nannies or maids.

The virus represents a new danger, especially in their living quarters. Krishna Kumar, the head of the Abu Dhabi-based Kerala Social Center, named after the Indian state from which many laborers come, said up to 10 workers share a room in some labor camps in the region.

In Bahrain and Qatar, hundreds of migrant workers were quarantined after an unknown number contracted COVID-19, the disease caused by the coronavirus. Saudi Arabia also noted the danger of the virus spreading in housing for laborers. It's a crisis striking Singapore as well.

Gulf countries have introduced amnesty periods for workers whose visas and residencies expire during the pandemic. Several have ordered firms to provide food and accommodation to migrant workers who've been furloughed, though laborers have been vulnerable to abuse for decades. Countries also have promised free treatment for any confirmed case of the virus, regardless of citizenship.

Access to health care, however, remains an issue. In Dubai's industrial Al Quoz neighborhood, an Associated Press journalist recently saw more than 20 people who were worried that they had the virus standing for hours in the rain outside a private clinic, waiting to be seen.

In a statement to the AP, clinic owner Aster DM Healthcare said it hadn't "observed any unprecedented queues at any of our clinics" and followed "all measures of social distancing."

In Dubai's Naif neighborhood, home to the famed Gold Souq, a man who gave his name as Bilal told the AP that he and his colleagues had been stuck in their office building because police closed the area off without warning as a weeks-long curfew came into effect. Dubai has since imposed a citywide 24-hour lockdown.

Qatar, the host of the 2022 FIFA World Cup, cordoned off parts of its Industrial Area to prevent the spread of the disease. That's left an undisclosed number of laborers reliant on government-distributed food and essentials.

Qatar's government told the AP in a statement that any of the workers quarantined or ill will continue to be paid in full.

Across the Gulf, construction has been deemed essential and continued in spite of curfews and restrictions. Amnesty International researcher May Romanos said it's unclear if workers can practice social distancing on buses, at construction sites and in their accommodations.

"These governments have the responsibility to make sure that workers are being protected," she said.

Amnesty recently criticized Qatar for deporting migrant workers who thought they were being tested for the coronavirus, stripping them of their owed salary and end-of-service benefits. Qatar alleged the workers were illegally manufacturing and selling banned substances, something the men denied when speaking to Amnesty.

For those hoping to return home, flights are still largely grounded across the Gulf. Some nations refuse to accept returnees over concerns about controlling their own outbreaks.

Thousands of Filipino workers in the Mideast have returned home since February, while tens of thousands more may be repatriated in the next few months, Department of Foreign Affairs official Ed Menez told the AP.

Pakistan has launched some return flights for its workers.

However, India has no plan yet to evacuate its nationals from Gulf Arab countries, said a Foreign Ministry official who spoke on condition of anonymity as he wasn't authorized to speak publicly on the matter. Nepal also has no plans to bring its citizens home.

Meanwhile, ambulances regularly can be seen in Dubai's Al Quoz neighborhood. Chukwuma Samuel of Nnewi, Nigeria, looked on nervously as an ambulance stopped near his home. Samuel lost his job as a kitchen assistant, but he isn't yet ready to leave the Gulf because he sold everything for the chance to work in Dubai.

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"Honestly, we are not safe," he said, watching an ambulance attendant in a hazmat suit. "It's only God that we have."

Associated Press writers Aijaz Hussain in Srinagar, India; Binaj Gurubacharya in Kathmandu, Nepal; and Jim Gomez in Manila, Philippines, contributed to this report.

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

## 'We are in prison': France opens nursing homes, exposes pain

By JOHN LEICESTER Associated Press

PARIS (AP) — For her first authorized visit in more than six weeks with her 80-year-old mother, Sabrina Deliry prepared a selection of their favorite tunes, among them Edith Piaf's "La Vie en Rose."

Later, at the Paris nursing home where the mother has been agonizing in the solitude of her room, feeling imprisoned and miserable without the sun on her cheeks, the breeze in her hair or her daughter's tender hugs, they listened to the French songbird together.

"When he takes me in his arms," Piaf wailed.

With mother and daughter forced to sit 1 meter (3 feet) apart, unable to hug or hold each other during their half-hour visit in the home's fenced-off small garden, the words rang like a cruel joke.

When might Sabrina get to take Patricia, her mother, in her arms again? No one can say for sure. Likely no time soon.

Even before many businesses rumble back to life or schoolyards bustle again, France started to allow tightly regulated nursing home visits this week, puncturing a strict no-visitors lockdown that still failed to prevent an ongoing tidal wave of coronavirus deaths among elderly nursing home residents.

For some, seeing their parents again brought joy and relief.

"I know how important it is for her," Christopher Cronenberger said after seeing his 87-year-old mother, Germaine, with a broad table and red-and-white plastic tape in between.

"We do have the telephone and my mother is still lucid. We speak by telephone every day. I knew things were okay but visual contact is better," he said.

But for others, the visits are proving bittersweet: Better than nothing, but nowhere close to being enough. After all, how can a few minutes, sat across a table in face masks, make up for so many days apart?

Sabrina and Patricia were on the phone to each other minutes after they said goodbye with blown air kisses and the mother trundled back alone to her room in her motorized wheelchair, giving a final wave.

"Stopping us from seeing our children is a crime," she said. "They wait for us to die before sending our children to us."

The visit, she said, "makes me want to live again."

But the next cannot come soon enough.

"We are in prison," Patricia said.

As the virus raced through Europe, the hardest-hit countries — Italy, Spain, Britain, France — banned nursing home visits to protect the elderly, who are particularly vulnerable to the coronavirus. From Belgium to Turkey, several other countries did the same.

While the virus causes mild to moderate symptoms for many, it can trigger much more severe illness in older people and those with health problems. Nursing homes have been hard hit around the world. In France, more than one-third of the over 21,300 deaths reported have occurred in care homes.

The emotional toll of cutting off the homes has been immense and largely untold because the suffering has been taking place behind sealed-shut nursing home doors. For residents' families, the only news some have had from the inside has been in dribs and drabs, in written updates from care home directors.

Now that visits are being allowed again, a fuller picture of the agony is starting to emerge.

French President Emmanuel Macron has taken notice. He led the push in March to seal off homes before

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the rest of the country, pleading publicly for people to stop visiting their elderly relatives before he ordered France into a nationwide lockdown from March 17.

This week, Macron retweeted a painful-to-watch interview with a 96-year-old nursing home resident, Jeanne Pault, complaining tearfully about being stuck in her room, deprived of the daily visits she used to get from her husband and family.

"I'm locked in here all day. It's not a life," she said. "My neighbor hasn't got the virus. Neither have I. We could see each other from time to time, chat a little."

In his tweet, Macron wrote: "Madame, your pain overwhelms us all. For you, for all of our elders in retirement homes or establishments, visits by loved ones are now allowed. Always with one priority: to protect you."

But among families, fury is mounting with the death toll. Some are filing legal complaints accusing care homes of neglect and endangering lives.

Sabrina is among those who believes that nursing homes were sealed off not to protect residents but to prevent families from knowing what was happening inside.

"It sickens me," she said. "Those are our parents behind those walls, my mother, our fathers. They have no right to deprive us of them like that."

She worries that Patricia, a retired hairdresser who has suffered a stroke, will be even more diminished physically by weeks of being confined to her room.

"I'm going to fight," she promised her mother in the phone call after their meeting. "Put bluntly, you have just two choices: either die from COVID or end up like vegetables."

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Associated Press journalist Jean-François Badias contributed from Kaisersberg, France.

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

## US church faces neglect allegations after Haiti child deaths

By MICHAEL WEISSENSTEIN and BEN FOX Associated Press

KENSCOFF, Haiti (AP) — For a limestone mantel from the Waldorf Astoria, the church that owns the Olde Good Things antique stores asks for \$8,500.

But for the death of each child in a fire at a home it ran in Haiti, parents said the same church offered to pay just \$50 to \$100 in family compensation — along with \$150 for funeral-related costs such as new clothes and transportation.

The wealth of the Church of Bible Understanding in the United States has long stood in contrast with the shoddiness of its two children's homes in Haiti, which have faced years of infractions and failed two state inspections. But the gap came into even sharper focus on Feb. 13, when the fire killed 13 children and two adult caretakers described by the church's lawyer as disabled. Authorities suspect the fire started because the home used candles instead of a functioning generator or battery in a country where power failures are frequent.

The deaths have devastated parents like Eustache Arismé, 33, who put his two daughters in the home shortly after they were born because he has a withered left arm and cannot find work. His daughters Nedjie, 4, and Vanise, 3, died in the fire at the home, which is known as an orphanage in Haiti although many children have at least one living parent.

Like Arismé's daughters, the children in such "orphanages" are usually handed over, often as babies, by parents who struggle to support them and want them to at least get food and shelter. Parents generally keep custody and are allowed to visit.

"At first, I was happy to see the children growing up in the orphanage. But now I profoundly regret my decision," Arismé said. "When we put our children in the orphanage, the owners welcomed us. Now, after this tragedy, they send a lawyer to deal with us."

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The lawyer for the church, Osner Fevry, said it is being unfairly singled out by critics in Haiti and overseas. The church may send less money to Haiti than some people would like, he said. But many other U.S. groups solicit donations in the name of needy Haitians and only send a fraction to the country after staff salaries and overhead, he added.

"It happens to hundreds and thousands of American organizations working in Haiti, raising millions of dollars in the names of churches and NGOs in Haiti," he said.

Fevry said the church members running the homes left for the U.S. a few days after the fire not to avoid prosecution, but because they were hounded by police and local media. Along with compensation and spending money for the parents, the church is assuming the costs of funerals for the 15 victims.

"I don't think the church can endorse legal responsibility, but moral responsibility, yes," Fevry acknowledged. "Morally, how come there was a candle to get light for those kids?"

The homes have run into problems before. A series of inspections beginning in November 2012 found they didn't meet minimum health and safety standards, with overcrowding, unsanitary conditions and insufficient trained staff. Haitian authorities stripped them of accreditation.

When the church members brought in outside experts, one declared them "completely clueless about what is needed to take care of that many babies."

"I'm shocked," she said. "That no one has died."

The orphanages failed another round of state inspections in 2017 but hired Fevry to fight closure, according to Haitian child welfare authorities. They said closing an orphanage can take months or years, particularly if the management has money or influence.

Through its U.S.-based spokeswoman, the church declined to comment on specific allegations of neglect and mistreatment at its children's homes in Haiti.

"We are devastated by the tragic fire that took the life of our children at our Haitian orphanage. Words would fail to express our immense grief and heartbreak," the church said in a written statement. "We are taking this very seriously and are moving forward to help all of those affected by this horrific accident."

I CRIED BITTERLY

On the night of Feb. 13, 61 children were sleeping inside the church's two-story home in the town of Kenscoff in the mountains above the Haitian capital, Port-au-Prince, according to the Institute of Social Welfare. A 16-year-old boy living there told authorities that he and a caretaker went out to buy candles, which they lit in each of the rooms filled with children, then went to bed.

A short time later, around 9 p.m., the smell of smoke filled the orphanage. Thirteen children, ages 3 to 18, died, along with a 39-year-old woman and a 34-year-old man.

Among them was Tania Caristan's 6-year-old son, Ricardo.

Caristan makes a living selling items on the street and washing neighbors' clothes. She moved back in with her parents, and said she had to leave Ricardo with her estranged husband.

It was only two months later that she learned her former husband had put the boy in a Church of Bible Understanding home. Shocked, she went there with a copy of the birth certificate to get her baby back.

But a white man told her through an interpreter that she couldn't take him because she was not one of the people who had given him to the orphanage, she said.

"I tried everything I could to convince the person in charge at the orphanage," she said quietly, as she watched her younger daughter play outside their shack. "I cried bitterly."

A security guard opened the gate and asked her to leave. One of her sisters later tried to get the boy back but also failed.

But Caristan never lost hope. She always thought she would see her son again one day.

She never did.

The day after the fire, the boy's father told Caristan's sister he was dead. Caristan rushed to the hospital to see her son's face for the last time, but he had already been taken to the morgue. She said no one from the orphanage or state had contacted her since.

"Whatever my situation, it would have been better to have my son with me," she said. "He would have

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eaten crumbs from my bit of bread ... If I'd known his father was going to take him to an orphanage, I would have kept my child."

Through its spokeswoman, the church declined to comment on Caristan's story.

Haitian prosecutors have begun a criminal investigation into the church's homes, which held 154 children at the time of the fire, according to the national child-welfare institute. The institute finally shut down the homes after the fire, and took 28 children into custody to be reunited with parents or family members. More than 100 other children have fled.

Some children raised in the orphanages say they were generally treated kindly. Others describe conditions as mentally and physically abusive, including social isolation and beatings.

Anaika Francois, 19, told The Associated Press that she entered the homes at six because her parents were too poor to take care of her and her little sister. She said children with bed-wetting issues from about that age were physically punished. In bad cases, they were stretched across a table and spanked by the monitor or head of the orphanage, she said.

"That would often produce marks, in which case the monitor would give you a bath with warm salt water," she said. "The marks would disappear in two or three days."

Fedania Charles, 20, said that when she lived with the church, children were hit on the buttocks for wetting their beds and then washed with salty warm water.

"You could see the bruises for at least 24 hours," she said.

James Dindin, 36, said he was given to the orphanage at around 9 months old. He said that as a teenager, he would be put in a "punishment room" with a single window along with about a dozen other children for two or three weeks, and escorted to the bathroom by an employee. At times, he said, rebellious children were expelled and forced to sleep on the streets.

He said the trauma remains for him and other children he grew up with in the homes.

"Every time I see one of the kids that I grew up with on the streets begging for money.....it would trigger back everything," he said. "Almost every day."

The church declined to comment specifically on the former residents' allegations.

Haiti has more than 700 "orphanages" housing more than 25,000 children, and only about 35 of the homes meet the standards of the Hague Convention on the Protection of Children, according to the Haitian child welfare institute and the UN children's fund, UNICEF.

Defenders of Haitian orphanages say despite any defects, the homes help children who would otherwise be in far worse conditions with desperately poor parents unable to feed or clothe them. But child welfare advocates say the orphanages harm children by creating incentives to separate them from their parents. By one estimate, Haitian orphanages receive more than \$100 million a year in donations, but another study has shown that just a single grant of \$220 can help a poor Haitian family maintain a child in acceptable conditions at home.

"No child should be placed in an orphanage," said Maria Luisa Fornara, UNICEF's representative in Haiti. "I would ask to any of these organizations coming in and supporting orphanages, would they want their children to be in those places?....I don't think so."

## THE FOREVER FAMILY

The Church of Bible Understanding was founded as the "Forever Family" in the early 1970s by Stewart Traill, a former vacuum cleaner salesman. In his mid-30s, he started preaching on the streets of Philadelphia and New York, creating a string of communal houses around the Northeast that drew young people and runaways.

It wasn't a comfortable life. Former members said they were crammed into tightly packed rooms, slept on mats on the floor and discouraged from dating, attending school or doing anything outside of church activities. Members worked for church businesses, and, in turn, received small allowances.

In September 1982, four members of the church were convicted in Philadelphia for beating Traill's then 13-year-old son with a belt and a board, seriously enough that he was hospitalized.

The Forever Family had 10,000 members at its peak in the mid-1970s, according to the Encyclopedia of Cults, Sects and New Religions. Traill, who died in 2018 at age 82, rechristened it as the Church of Bible

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Understanding in 1976, and the church is now believed to have 30 to 50 members.

Over the years, the church ran a string of enterprises, including a carpet-cleaning company lampooned on a TV episode of "Seinfeld" about a sect-linked business hired by one of the main characters. Contracts to demolish old buildings evolved into a business selling vintage architectural features.

That became Olde Good Things, which has a thriving online business and retail shops in New York, Los Angeles and at the headquarters in Scranton, Pennsylvania. They offer antique and vintage home décor such as crystal chandeliers for as much as \$22,000. One of the least expensive items for sale this week is a pair of antique bronze door hinges for \$55.

Olde Good Things, which says on its website that it donates half of its profits to the church's mission work in Haiti, announced plans last year to open a new flagship store on West 52nd Street in Manhattan this year.

Public tax documents depict a church and business with considerable overlap. In its most recent filing, the church reported revenue of \$6.6 million and expenses of \$2.2 million. It reported a net loss of \$125,537 from Olde Good Things, and the church loaned \$3.7 million to the business.

The church listed \$19 million in assets. Those assets included a 12,000-square foot house in Coral Springs, Florida where Traill lived with his wife, exempt from state property taxes on religious grounds, according to public records.

The church says in its tax records that "a large part of our operation is to fund our missionary work," operating the two homes in Haiti's capital and distributing food in the countryside. The Olde Good Things website says, "We appreciate our patrons and want them to understand that profits from their purchase go directly to supporting this worthy work."

The church also received food grants worth more than \$579,000 from the U.S. Agency for International Development between 2003 and 2012. USAID rejected their grant application as "non-competitive" in 2013, the same year the Haitian government said their homes for children did not meet minimum standards. It has not been renewed.

Former members and employees say the work in Haiti was always a central focus of the church and the business.

Church members would frequently talk at Olde Good Things about their work in Haiti and would bring children from the homes to the U.S. for medical treatment, said Rashida Lovely, who worked as an accounting clerk and supervisor for the company and said they treated her well. She recalled using a check from the business to buy toiletries and medical supplies for the children's homes, which were then sent to the Caribbean country on a church-owned plane.

Any problems at the homes, Lovely said, were likely a result of business revenues being strained or because most of the work in Haiti was done by older church members.

"They did the best they can do up until now and there are not enough young people to support it," she said. "They are too old to be doing it anymore."

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Fox reported from Washington. Evens Sanon contributed to this story from Port-au-Prince, Haiti.

## Fear for themselves and families on drive-thru testing lines

By BRIAN MAHONEY and SETH WENIG Associated Press

PARAMUS, N.J. (AP) — They climb into their cars in the middle of the night, racing to get on a line from which they may be turned away.

Feeling sick and stressed, people in the states hardest hit by the coronavirus have continued to stream into drive-thru testing sites, hoping to get guidance about whether to seek treatment, or reassurance that they aren't infected.

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So, they wait in darkness outside tented testing sites like the one at Bergen Community College, in Paramus, New Jersey, with achy bodies and uneasy minds, hoping shortly after sunrise they can finally be tested.

"This is obvious, but I just hope I didn't infect anybody," said Alexander Carpio, 17, as he waited for his turn.

Mobile testing sites like the one in northern New Jersey, across the border from the epicenter of the U.S. outbreak in New York, were hastily arranged in a scramble to catch up on testing that remains difficult to get, especially for those who weren't showing severe symptoms or elderly. There are 24 in New Jersey handling about 8,000 tests per day.

As of Wednesday, about 96,000 people had tested positive in the state. Next door, in New York, more than a quarter million people have learned through testing that they are infected. The true number of ill people in both states is undoubtedly higher, as in many places tests remain scarce enough that people are being urged to only seek them if they are very ill.

In New Rochelle, the New York City suburb that was an early hot spot for the virus, a drive-thru testing site was established at Glen Island Park. That still left many people frustrated: Police turned away cars when they showed up without required appointments.

Even those who didn't feel sick were jolted when they arrived at the popular location for picnics and special events on the Long Island Sound, and were greeted by National Guard troops and medical personnel outfitted head-to-toe in masks and other protective equipment.

"It was nerve-wracking because it was like a movie scene. I used to go to Glen Island all the time and now it's a pandemic zone," said Joe Goubeaud, who was advised to test along with his family after his wife, Kristina, a nurse in the New Rochelle school system, had symptoms.

An appointment wasn't required in Paramus, but those seeking to be tested had to be showing symptoms. And with the ability to conduct only 500 tests per day, the site was reaching its capacity so quickly that it was closing not long after its 8 a.m. opening.

Teresa Reyes arrived after 4 a.m. and, with her husband Gene, she waited in line of cars that can snake dozens deep inside lanes divided by orange cones. They both work in New York hospitals, watching colleagues fall ill and dreading they would as well. She's back at work now, but baffled at the struggle to get a test.

"It's kind of sad and also frustrating because this is America and we came from the Philippines and it's a third-world country. And I feel also for my co-workers, because we're dealing with something that we don't know, and we're not even protected," she said while breaking into tears.

"It's heartbreaking. This is the USA. This is a first-world country. It's supposed to be rich."

Officials in many states hit hard by the virus have said that the lack of widespread testing is the biggest challenge to lifting restrictions on social interaction that have kept people away from their jobs, and each other, for weeks.

A majority of the people who successfully get a test wind up testing negative, state statistics show.

Roseli Contreras, a new mother with a 2-month-old son, was one of them. The baby's pediatrician told her to stop breastfeeding after she began feeling ill, and even testing negative didn't ease her concerns because she feared a mix-up in the results.

Her father, Roselio Contreras, who tested with her, was positive — even though he feels no symptoms. She wonders whether the similarity of their names resulted in a mistake, all while hoping she won't have to stop seeing her son altogether.

"I just don't want to end up in a hospital," she said. "I don't want us to separate. Yeah, it's just a scary thought really."

It's one that consumes all of them. Besides wondering if they may be infected with an illness that has killed more than 18,000 in the two states, there is a desire to protect family members who may be even more susceptible.

For most people, the coronavirus causes mild or moderate symptoms that clear up after a few weeks.

For some, it can cause more severe illness, including pneumonia, and death.

Alexander is a senior in high school, aware he may miss out on prom night, a graduation ceremony and so much more that was supposed to make this springtime so fun. He's been accepted to college but doesn't know where that stands, because he isn't sure if or when he can take the placement exams that are supposed to determine his classes.

But he has much bigger concerns.

He shares a room in his family's home with his 72-year-old grandmother, who is diabetic. With pain in his lungs that was so severe that he switched from sleeping on his stomach to his back, he was certain he would be like his mother, who had already tested positive.

He did, though he's now feeling better. But still, his questions keep coming back to others. What if he causes his grandmother to get an illness she might not be able to handle? How would they protect his father and sister? Could his mother get the virus a second time?

"The hardest part is like, just hoping that you didn't infect anybody else," he said. "That's probably the hardest part."

Mahoney reported from New Rochelle.

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Mahoney reported from New Rochelle.

## Stopping virus a huge challenge at crowded US meat plants

By JOSH FUNK Associated Press

OMAHA, Neb. (AP) — Daily reports of giant meat-processing plants closing because workers tested positive for the coronavirus have called into question whether slaughterhouses can remain virus-free.

According to experts, the answer may be no.

Given that the plants employ thousands of people who often work side by side carving meat, social distancing is all but impossible. Because of that, the risk of catching the virus will likely remain even as companies take numerous steps to increase protections for workers.

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"It's not that people aren't trying. It's just that it is very difficult to control this illness," said Dennis Burson, an animal science professor at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln.

The list of companies dealing with infected workers has been growing every day at plants across the country. Among the latest was the closure Wednesday of Tyson Foods' huge pork-processing plant in Waterloo, Iowa, after numerous workers tested positive. That follows closures of a Smithfield Foods pork plant in Sioux Falls, South Dakota; a JBS beef plant in Greeley, Colorado; and many others. Some, including the Tyson pork plant in Perry, Iowa, have reopened after deep cleanings.

The closures shouldn't cause any immediate meat shortages or big price jumps at supermarkets, but as Purdue University economist Jason Lusk noted, "It's a very fluid and volatile situation to keep an eye out for in the days to come."

Iowa Gov. Kim Reynolds, whose state leads the nation in pork production, acknowledged the likelihood of "clusters of positive cases" at meat-processing plants but said the operations must remain open.

"Without them, people's lives and our food supply will be impacted," Reynolds said.

In an attempt to protect workers, companies have started checking employee temperatures before they start their shifts, staggering breaks and altering start times. Owners said they have also done more to clean plants, added space for workers to spread out on breaks, slowed production lines so workers can spread out and added plastic shields between work stations.

"We are looking for countless ways of ensuring we have good healthy social distancing in our plants. It's not impossible despite the number of people in our plants," said Hector Gonzalez, Tyson's senior vice president of human resources.

Major meat companies, including Smithfield, Tyson, Cargill and JBS, said they also relaxed their attendance and sick leave policies to encourage sick workers to stay home and allow them to be paid. The North American Meat Institute trade group says companies are sharing information about their safety practices to help the industry respond to the outbreak.

Still, workplace safety expert Celeste Monforton said some companies are doing more than others, and it's difficult to ensure people working so closely together won't spread the virus.

"The scary thing is you know if it could happen in one plant, the potential is there for a lot of other plants," said Monforton, a lecturer in public health at Texas State University. "Unless you're super vigilant, this is a recipe for disaster."

Even companies with the best intention may have trouble given that plant layouts make 6-foot distancing difficult, said Jim Roth, director of the Center for Food Security and Public Health at Iowa State University. Precautions like face masks and plastic shields can help but likely won't stop the risk, he said. In some cases, plants may be able to spread workers out by slowing down operations, but the feasibility of the change depends on the layout of each plant and would reduce a plant's capacity.

"They were constructed to have people stand next to each other and work, and that's very difficult to change," he said.

Edgar Fields, president of the Southeast Council of the Retail, Wholesale and Department Store Union, which represents thousands of poultry workers, said it's hard to know if the precautions at plants will protect workers.

"We say 6 feet ... but what is enough?" Fields asked. "What else is it that we can ask them to do to try to protect their employees when they walk in the door and when they walk out. I don't know. All of this is new."

Alejandra Wehunt, 22, of Gainesville, Georgia, said she stopped going to work at a poultry processing plant as soon as she found out a male worker she knew had tested positive for COVID-19, the disease caused by the coronavirus.

"I have a young daughter. I live with my grandmother. I have seizures and heart problems. I can't catch anything," said Wehunt, a single mother who trims and marinates the chicken with seasoning at the plant. "If one person got it, probably many others have it too. He was around other people."

Wehunt said the plant manager at the Gold Creek Foods plant had told workers that, despite the pan-

demic, they had to show up to work or they could risk losing their jobs.

"Why are we losing our jobs because we don't want to put our health in jeopardy," she said.

A Gold Creek Foods spokesman did not respond to phone calls seeking comment.

Joshua Specht, a University of Notre Dame history professor who has studied the meat industry, said it relies on workers at the margins of society — including recent immigrants — who don't have a safety net and therefore feel pressure to continue working even if they are ill.

"With workers in close proximity, working long hours, and feeling pressure to continue even when sick, the meat industry is at particular risk for pandemic-related disruptions," Specht said.

Associated Press Writers Stephen Groves contributed to this report from Sioux Falls, South Dakota, Amy Forliti reported from Minneapolis, David Pitt reported from Des Moines, Iowa, and Adriana Gomez Licon reported from Miami.

## What you need to know today about the virus outbreak

By The Associated Press undefined

President Donald Trump faces a new challenge as he aims for a swift reopening for the United States: Convincing people it's safe to come out and resume their normal lives.

It's a defining question for a cloistered nation — and a political imperative for Trump. His reelection could ride on the pace of an economic rebound and Congress is sprinting to approve a \$483 billion coronavirus aid package this week.

But a new survey from The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research shows most Americans don't believe it will be safe to ease the restrictions anytime soon, despite isolated protests in states aimed at lifting aggressive stay-at-home measures.

Here are some of AP's top stories Wednesday on the world's coronavirus pandemic. Follow APNews.com/VirusOutbreak for updates throughout the day and APNews.com/UnderstandingtheOutbreak for stories explaining some of its complexities.

### WHAT'S HAPPENING TODAY:

— Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell says it's time to "push the pause button" on federal spending, even as Congress rushes to approve a \$483 billion coronavirus aid package this week. The deal would replenish a small-business payroll fund and pump more money into hospitals and testing programs.

— Federal officials say two pet cats in New York state have tested positive for the new coronavirus, marking the first confirmed cases in companion animals in the United States and joining a small number of confirmed cases of the virus in animals worldwide. The cats had mild respiratory illnesses and are expected to recover.

— A survey from The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research finds that Americans largely believe restrictions on social interaction to curb the spread of the new coronavirus are appropriate. Despite pockets of attention-grabbing protests, the survey finds Americans remain overwhelmingly in favor of stay-at-home orders and other efforts to slow the spread of the virus.

— Health officials say two people died with the new coronavirus in California weeks before the first reported death from the virus. Santa Clara County officials said the people died at home Feb. 6 and Feb. 17.

— Tyson Foods suspended operations at an Iowa plant that is critical to the nation's pork supply but had been blamed for fueling a massive coronavirus outbreak in the community. The company said the indefinite closure of the Waterloo, Iowa, plant would deny a vital market to hog farmers and further disrupt the nation's meat supply.

### WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW:

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

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

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

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

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

**ONE NUMBER:**

— 10 MILLION: 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 new coronavirus.

**IN OTHER NEWS:**

— **INDOOR ULTRAMARATHON:** A Russian man in the far eastern city of Vladivostok ran circles around his bed for more than 10 hours in an effort to replicate completing a 100-kilometer ultramarathon. Experienced ultra-runner Dmitry Yakukhny found himself stuck at home after the race was postponed to September.

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

## Trump: I 'disagreed strongly' with Georgia's reopening plan

By **JEFF AMY and RUSS BYNUM** Associated Press

ATLANTA (AP) — President Donald Trump said Wednesday that he "disagreed strongly" with the decision by Georgia's Republican governor to reopen salons, gyms and other nonessential businesses that had been shuttered to contain the coronavirus, saying, "It's just too soon."

During the daily White House briefing, the president indicated that while he is in favor of states reopening their economies, Gov. Brian Kemp is moving a little too fast.

Kemp announced earlier this week that as of Friday, elective medical procedures could resume in Georgia, and that barbershops, nail salons and gyms could reopen with restrictions. Limited in-restaurant dining is scheduled to resume on Monday.

The announcement immediately prompted pushback by Atlanta's Democratic mayor, other political opponents and health experts who warned that the state has not yet taken the steps recommended under federal guidelines the Trump administration issued for reopening the economy safely.

Georgia ranks in the bottom 10 U.S. states in per capita testing for the coronavirus. Officials are struggling to increase testing for new infections and boost tracking of those in contact with infected people. If that isn't done, health officials said, the state risks a quick rebound of COVID-19.

"The virus moves faster than government does," said Dr. Jennifer Nuzzo, an epidemiologist at the Johns Hopkins Center for Health Security. "So if I had to bet on who would come out of the gate faster, it would be the virus."

Trump has been stressing the importance of reopening states sooner rather than later to get the U.S. economy back on track. Just last week, the president urged his supporters on Twitter to "LIBERATE MICHIGAN!" and other Democratic-led states from stay-at-home orders — at the same time that mostly Republican governors like Kemp were taking steps to lift those restrictions.

But on Wednesday, Trump indicated that Kemp's aggressive reopening strategy went beyond the recommendations of a three-phase plan the administration unveiled last week. The plan advises 14 days of declining new infections and robust testing of health care workers before proceeding to a phased opening of the economy.

"I want him to do what he thinks is right," Trump said. "But ... I think (opening) spas and beauty salons

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and tattoo parlors and barbershops in Phase One ... it's just too soon."

The president added that "there's a lot of good feeling between myself and Brian Kemp. I like him a lot. ... I know the people from spas and beauty parlors, tattoo parlors. Bikers for Trump — a lot of tattoos. I love them. I love these people. And barbershops, these are great people. But you know what? Maybe wait a little bit longer until you get into a Phase Two."

Not long after Trump's remarks, Republican U.S. Sen. Lindsey Graham of neighboring South Carolina issued a statement saying he agreed with the president and that while he has "great respect for Governor Kemp ... the best path forward is to follow the guidelines set by President Trump and his team."

Kemp responded in a tweet Wednesday night that he appreciated Trump's guidance but would move forward with his plan.

"Our next measured step is driven by data and guided by state public health officials," the governor said. "I am confident that business owners who decide to reopen will adhere to minimum basic operations, which prioritize the health and well-being of employees and customers."

In pushing his plans to jump-start the state's economy, Kemp stressed that the state was ramping up its virus testing. The number of tests administered in Georgia had plateaued between 3,500 to 4,000 a day. However, on Wednesday, the state reported almost 6,000 tests over 24 hours.

State Public Health Commissioner Kathleen Toomey said the state will expand its ability to "aggressively" trace the contacts of infected people.

"This is the way we're going to keep spread from occurring, even as we begin to gradually open up the state," Toomey said.

The state hasn't said how many people are tracing contacts now, how many it seeks, or how quickly the state's 18 public health districts can ramp up.

As of Wednesday, more than 21,000 people in Georgia had been infected with the virus and more than 840 had died, according to the state Department of Public Health.

Toomey and Kemp said the state will use a cellphone app to track infected people, and ask those people to voluntarily share cellphone data so that the state can find other contacts.

Many businesses and workers have expressed reservations about Kemp's plan.

"I understand everybody wants to get back to normal," said Dewond Brown, a 42-year-old line cook who was laid off last month. "But you hear the medical people say every day it's not time yet."

State Sen. Nikema Williams, chairwoman of the Democratic Party of Georgia, weighed in on the situation Wednesday after the president's briefing, remarking, "You know it's a serious failure when Donald Trump, whose failed leadership is responsible for how badly this crisis is hitting America, distances himself from his crony Brian Kemp, who is endlessly determined to make this crisis as painful as possible for Georgians."

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Bynum reported from Savannah, Georgia. Associated Press reporters Sudhin Thanawala and Ben Nadler in Atlanta; and Kimberly Kruesi in Nashville, Tennessee, contributed to this report.

## **New virus timeline: California had 2 deaths weeks earlier**

**By JANIE HAR and MIKE STOBBE Associated Press**

SAN FRANCISCO (AP) — Two people with the coronavirus died in California as much as three weeks before the U.S. reported its first death from the disease in late February — a gap that a top health official said Wednesday may have led to delays in issuing stay-at-home orders in the nation's most populous state.

Dr. Sara Cody, health director in Northern California's Santa Clara County, said the deaths were missed because of a scarcity of testing and the federal government's limited guidance on who should be tested.

The infections in the two patients were confirmed by way of autopsy tissue samples that were sent to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention for analysis. The county coroner's office received the results on Tuesday, officials said.

"If we had had widespread testing earlier and we were able to document the level of transmission in the county, if we had understood then people were already dying, yes, we probably would have acted earlier

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than we did, which would have meant more time at home," Cody said.

In the wake of the disclosure, Gov. Gavin Newsom said he has directed coroners throughout the state to take another look at deaths as far back as December to help establish more clearly when the epidemic took hold in California.

He declined to say whether the two newly recognized deaths would have changed his decisions about when to order a shutdown. He imposed a statewide one in late March.

Officials said the two Santa Clara County patients died at home — a 57-year-old woman on Feb. 6 and a 69-year-old man on Feb. 17 — and that neither had traveled out of the country to a coronavirus outbreak area. The epidemic emerged in the Chinese city of Wuhan in late December.

Family members identified the woman as Patricia Dowd of San Jose, a manager at a semiconductor company who became sick in late January with flu-like symptoms.

She appeared to recover and was working from home the day she died. Her daughter found her, the Los Angeles Times reported.

Dowd traveled to various countries several times a year and had planned to visit China later in the year, her brother-in-law, Jeff Macias, told the paper.

"Where did this come from if it wasn't her traveling?" Macias said. "Patricia may not be the first. It's just the earliest we have found so far."

"Let's keep looking so we know the extent of it," he said of the virus. "That's the greater good, for everyone else and my family included."

The first known death from the virus in the U.S. was reported on Feb. 29 in Kirkland, Washington, a Seattle suburb. Officials later attributed two Feb. 26 deaths to the virus.

The two newly reported deaths show that the virus was spreading in California well before officials realized it and that outbreaks were underway in at least two parts of the country at about the same time.

"It shifts everything weeks earlier, extends geographic involvement, (and) further shows how our inability to test let this outbreak loose," said Dr. Eric Topol, head of the Scripps Research Translational Institute in San Diego, in an email.

Because it can take one or two weeks between the time people get infected and when they get sick enough to die, the Feb. 6 death suggests the virus was circulating in California in late January, if not earlier. Previously, the first infection reported anywhere in the U.S. was in the Seattle area on Jan. 21.

On March 17, authorities across the San Francisco Bay Area, Santa Clara County included, confined nearly 7 million people to their homes for all but essential tasks and exercise in what was at the time the most aggressive measure taken against the outbreak in the U.S. Three days later, California put all 40 million of its residents under a near-lockdown.

What the newly reported deaths show "is that we had community transmission probably to a significant degree far earlier than we had known," Cody said. "And that indicates that the virus was probably introduced and circulating in our community, again, far earlier than we had known."

Thousands of travelers from China and other affected regions entered the U.S. before travel bans and airport screenings were put in place by the Trump administration in mid- and late January. Lack of widespread testing meant the country was flying blind to the true number of infections.

County officials said the tissue samples from the two patients were sent to the CDC in mid-March. CDC officials did not immediately respond to questions about why it took a month to come back with the findings.

Dr. Charles Chiu, a researcher at the University of California at San Francisco who has been looking at genetic information from virus samples from patients, said it appears that the coronavirus was most likely introduced into the U.S. by travelers from China and that it turned up independently in Santa Clara County and Washington state.

"It now appears most likely that there were multiple seeding events that introduced the virus to the United States," he wrote.

Cody said the two deaths in California may have been written off as the flu because there were significant numbers of influenza cases at the time: "It had been extraordinarily difficult to pick out what was

influenza and what was COVID.”

It’s not unusual, as an epidemic is first unfolding, for infections to go unrecognized, said Stephen Morse, a Columbia University expert on the spread of diseases.

“When you’re not expecting it, you don’t look for it,” he said. That’s why tissues from autopsies can be important in understanding an outbreak, he added.

A test for the coronavirus was not available in the early weeks of the crisis. It was not until Jan. 11 that the world had the genetic makeup of the virus, which is necessary to design a test for it.

Cody said officials will now go back to determine how the patients became infected and what contacts with others they may have had.

Los Angeles County Public Health Director Barbara Ferrer was asked Wednesday to estimate the earliest case her county may have had, given the finding in Santa Clara.

She said that back in January health officials worried that a small number of coronavirus illnesses might be occurring but were mistaken for flu and missed. “In hindsight we should have probably looked more carefully, particularly at deaths,” she said.

“I think everybody in public health would say that we anticipate that there were many more early deaths across the country that weren’t captured,” Ferrer said.

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Associated Press writers John Antczak in Los Angeles, Adam Beam in Sacramento, Carla K. Johnson in Seattle, Marilyn Marchione in Milwaukee and Malcolm Ritter in New York contributed to this report. Stobbe reported from New York.

## Trump signs immigration order featuring numerous exemptions

By JILL COLVIN and ELLIOT SPAGAT Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump claimed Wednesday that he had signed an executive order “temporarily suspending immigration into the United States.” But experts say the order will merely delay the issuance of green cards for a minority of applicants.

Trump said his move was necessary to help Americans find work in an economy ravaged by the coronavirus.

“This will ensure that unemployed Americans of all backgrounds will be first in line for jobs as our economy reopens,” he said.

But the order includes a long list of exemptions, including for anyone who is currently in the country, those seeking entry to work as physicians and nurses, wealthy foreign investors, and the spouses and minor children of American citizens. The 60-day pause also leaves untouched the hundreds of thousands of temporary work and student visas the U.S. issues each year.

That left partisans on both sides of the immigration battle accusing Trump of being driven more by politics than policy as he tries to rally voters in an election year. Yet experts say that, if the order is made permanent, it would also satisfy Trump’s long-stalled push to end what he calls “chain migration.” It’s the latest example of his administration using the pandemic as cover to enact immigration policy changes he has long championed.

Trump ran in 2016 on promises to crack down on both illegal and legal immigration, making the case — disputed by many — that foreign workers compete with Americans for jobs and drive down wages. While many of Trump’s efforts to dramatically upend the nation’s immigration system have been stymied by Congress and the courts, the pandemic has allowed him to move forward with some.

Like other world leaders, Trump has restricted travel from much of the globe, including China and large swaths of Europe. The borders with Mexico and Canada have been closed to all but “essential” travel.

With consulates closed, almost all visa processing by the State Department has been suspended for weeks. And Trump has used the virus to effectively end asylum at U.S. borders, turning away migrants, including children, by invoking a rarely used 1944 law aimed at preventing the spread of communicable diseases.

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Since the vast majority of employment-based green card applicants already live in the U.S., the proclamation Trump signed Wednesday will most affect the parents, adult children and siblings of citizens and permanent residents hoping to one day join them in the country. Trump has derided that practice as "chain immigration" and pushed Congress for years to adopt legislation that would favor what he calls "merit-based" immigration instead.

Ur Jaddou, the director of DHS Watch and former chief counsel to U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, noted the move was something Stephen Miller, a top White House aide, and other immigration hardliners in the administration have long been advocating.

"These are people who are waiting in line for decades. And they just made it that much harder," she said.

Nonetheless, the final version of the order was far less drastic than advocates on both sides of the issue had expected after Trump posted a tweet late Monday that sent businesses, would-be immigrants and administration officials scrambling.

"In light of the attack from the Invisible Enemy, as well as the need to protect the jobs of our GREAT American Citizens, I will be signing an Executive Order to temporarily suspend immigration into the United States!" Trump wrote.

Matt O'Brien of the Federation for American Immigration Reform, which advocates for lower immigration rates, estimated anywhere from 5,000 to 80,000 green cards could be delayed by the order. But since international travel has ground to a halt, he said in a statement, "it's difficult to say whether these folks will even notice a temporary pause in the processing of their visa applications."

David Bier, an immigration policy analyst at the Cato Institute, noted that embassies and consulates are already closed for visa processing. But he said Trump appeared to be setting the stage for permanent reductions to legal immigration along the lines of what he has failed to achieve through legislation.

"There's no such thing as a temporary ban with this administration," said Bier, who advocates for a more open immigration policies.

Bier and others estimated the changes — if made permanent — would reduce green cards about 30% from last year's total of 1 million.

Still others said the move appeared driven more by politics than a desire to enact a stalled agenda.

While the measure would "have some very modest policy effect," Mark Krikorian, executive director of the Center for Immigration Studies, which advocates for lower immigration rates, said he believed its "primary function was political, to respond to people's concern that at this point, with maybe 15% of the labor force out of work, they had to do something."

"This announcement is more about grabbing a headline than changing immigration policy," said Frank Sharry, executive director of America's Voice, a liberal immigration reform group. "To me, it smacks of an electoral strategy, not a policy change, and it smacks of desperation and panic."

Trump's pivot to immigration is a strategy he has often used to rev up his base.

Ahead of the 2018 midterm elections, for instance, Trump put immigration at the forefront, using migrant caravans in Latin America as a rallying cry as he ordered thousands of U.S. troops to the southern border to stop an "invasion."

In recent days, officials bolstered by their successful efforts to restrict travel at the country's borders had been discussing how they might seize the opportunity to enact additional immigration restrictions.

Trump's team, however, denied Tuesday that he was using the virus to make good on a longstanding campaign promise during an election year.

"This is common sense the American people can very well understand: When Americans need jobs, Americans must come first," said White House spokeswoman Kayleigh McEnany.

With 22 million Americans applying for unemployment, Trump campaign spokesman Tim Murtaugh asked, "Why would you in good conscience introduce brand-new competition for them?"

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Spagat reported from San Diego. Associated Press writers Colleen Long and Matthew Lee in Washington contributed to this report.



## Under pressure, Harvard says it will reject US relief aid

By COLLIN BINKLEY AP Education Writer

CAMBRIDGE, Mass. (AP) — Harvard University announced Wednesday it will turn down \$8.7 million in federal coronavirus relief, a day after President Donald Trump excoriated the wealthy Ivy League school over taxpayer money it stood to receive.

Similar action was taken at Stanford, Princeton and Yale universities, which said they too will reject millions of dollars in federal funding amid growing scrutiny of wealthy colleges.

Officials at Harvard said the school still faces significant financial challenges due to the pandemic but will refuse the money over concerns that "intense focus by politicians" will undermine the relief program created by Congress.

"While we understand any reallocation of these resources is a matter for the Department of Education, we hope that special consideration will be given to Massachusetts institutions that are struggling to serve their communities and meet the needs of their students through these difficult and challenging times," Harvard said in a statement.

Trump later thanked Harvard and Stanford at a White House press conference, saying he was pleased the schools turned down the funding.

"They stopped it," he said. "They're not accepting the money and that's great. So I want to thank Harvard. I want to thank Stanford."

Congress is offering \$14 billion to the nation's colleges and universities as part of a \$2.2 trillion rescue package. Schools were allotted varying sums based on their size and the number of students they teach from poorer backgrounds.

But Trump said Tuesday that Harvard "shouldn't be taking" its share because it has such deep financial reserves. It echoed concerns from other critics, including some alumni, who said Harvard doesn't need the money and can rely on its nearly \$40 billion endowment.

Education Secretary Betsy DeVos on Wednesday said other rich schools should reject the funding. Affluent schools that do not primarily serve low-income students "do not need or deserve additional taxpayer funds," she said in a statement.

"Schools with large endowments should not apply for funds so more can be given to students who need support the most. It's also important for Congress to change the law to make sure no more taxpayer funds go to elite, wealthy institutions," she said.

Only hours later, Sen. Josh Hawley, R-Mo., said he was introducing legislation to block colleges from receiving coronavirus relief if they have endowments topping \$10 billion. Under the proposal, those schools could access federal relief only after they spend a large share of their own money — an amount 10 times the size of their federal allotment — on direct aid for students.

About a dozen U.S. schools have endowments large enough to be affected by the proposal.

The higher education funding was meant to help colleges and students facing financial losses triggered by the pandemic. If colleges accept the funding, they're required to spend at least half on direct grants for students. Harvard had previously committed to spending its entire share on students, and on Wednesday said it is "fully committed to providing the financial support that it has promised to its students."

Stanford, which has an endowment of nearly \$28 billion, said it told the Education Department on Monday it would refuse \$7.4 million allocated in the package. The school said it wanted to free the funding to be directed to smaller colleges that now face an "existential threat" because of the pandemic. Yale expressed a similar sentiment, saying it wants its \$6.9 million to go to "colleges and universities in Connecticut whose continued existence is threatened by the current crisis."

Officials at Princeton said they will reject \$2.4 million in aid, but not because of the pressure from DeVos. The school said it made the decision after the Education Department issued new guidelines forbidding the funding from going to students in the federal Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program for immigrants who were brought to the country illegally. The school, which has a \$26 billion endowment, said

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the rules were inconsistent with Princeton's values.

Harvard also said the "evolving guidance" around the funding factored into its decision.

More than 300 colleges were granted larger shares than Harvard, including some that also rank among the nation's wealthiest. The University of Southern California, which had an endowment of \$5.7 billion last year, was allotted nearly \$20 million. Columbia University, with an endowment of \$11 billion, was allotted nearly \$13 million.

Major public universities received many of the largest shares, including Arizona State University, which was granted \$63.5 million, and the Pennsylvania State University system, with \$55 million.

Wealthy colleges are facing new pressure to reject the funding amid a similar outcry over major companies that received emergency aid meant for small businesses. The Shake Shack burger empire said it would return a \$10 million loan after facing public anger.

But some of the richest colleges still plan to take the funding. Cornell University, with a \$7.3 billion endowment, says it plans to accept \$12.8 million in relief and use it entirely on student grants. The University of Southern California said its \$5.7 billion endowment is "substantially smaller than that of our peers" and noted that 1 in 5 of its undergraduates receive federal Pell grants for low-income students.

"We desperately need these emergency funds and will drive 100% of them toward supporting our students who are experiencing financial hardships," the school said Wednesday.

Other affluent universities contacted by The Associated Press, including Duke and Columbia universities, said they have yet to make decisions on the funding.

Scores of colleges say they have taken heavy hits as they refund money to students for housing after campuses closed last month. Many more are losing millions in ticket sales after sports seasons were cut short, and some have lost big shares of their endowments amid swings in the stock market.

Some colleges have starting to furlough employees to avoid deeper layoffs later, and some small colleges have had to shut down permanently amid financial crisis.

Terry Hartle, a senior vice president with the American Council on Education, an association of college presidents, said Congress did not exclude any type of institution when it created the formula used to distribute funding. Instead, lawmakers said all colleges qualified to receive federal education funding were eligible for the relief.

"All schools means all schools: barber colleges, dance schools, community colleges, publicly traded for-profit schools and elite universities," said Terry Hartle, the group's senior vice president. "Congress could have but did not exclude any category of institution."

## Leaving Wuhan: Getting into virus-hit city was the easy part

By SAM McNEIL Associated Press

BEIJING (AP) — Getting into Wuhan was the easy part.

New virus infections had fallen to almost zero and travel restrictions were easing. As a 76-day lockdown neared its end, journalists and others were allowed to enter the city in central China where the global pandemic started.

Getting out was more challenging. Hundreds of thousands of people were also trying to leave after being stuck for months in the metropolis of 11 million. The bureaucracy had yet to finalize how they would safely organize their return. Three official documents were needed: A green health code, home neighborhood approval and a recent nucleic acid test.

Wuhan has gained notoriety as the origin of the disease but it has a long history as a fulcrum of change in China, a nation 1.4 billion and the world's second largest economy.

On Oct. 10, 1911, an "outbreak of serious revolutionary movement" erupted in the port city spread on either side of the Yangtze, China's mightiest river. As word spread, Associated Press correspondent J.R. Kennedy left Tokyo for Shanghai, then traveled upriver to cover the uprising against the Manchu empire. Another reporter traveled with soldiers sent from Beijing to crush it.

"The city was a scene of desolation," read one AP report. "Corpses piled everywhere," said another.

Insurgencies soon broke out across China, and the tumultuous decades that followed saw occupation

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by Japan, civil war, and the victory of the Chinese Communist Party in 1949.

In 2020, international journalists came back to see once again how events in Wuhan might shape the entire world.

Few hotels were accepting foreigners and each neighborhood had different regulations. Some forced multiple nucleic acid tests on journalists and 48 hours of quarantine.

Ours did not, and as the final hours closed on Wuhan's lockdown, AP video producer Olivia Zhang and I climbed atop the steel 1957 Wuhan Yangtze River Bridge to watch the countdown.

Skyscrapers and bridges radiated animated images of health workers aiding patients, along with one building displaying the words "heroic city," a title bestowed on Wuhan by President Xi Jinping.

Along the embankments and bridges, citizens waved flags, chanted "Wuhan, let's go!" and sang acapella renditions of China's national anthem.

One recently freed resident told us, "I haven't been outside for more than 70 days. ... Being indoors for so long drove me crazy." He seemed shell-shocked, yet happy.

The next day we went to Hankou Railway Station and filmed the first train departing for Beijing. In between government-arranged media trips over subsequent days, I donned a mask, laced up and ran to the river. The sky was icy blue, the air warm. A guard let me into a riverside park, but only after checking my phone for the green health code.

This code was generated through WeChat, China's essential messaging app that includes e-payment for utility bills and donations to charity. Tencent, the app's owner, also added a function with algorithms that analyze a user's geolocation data to produce color codes of coronavirus infection risk: safe green, cautious yellow or dire red.

A green code is now required for most public life in China — a reminder of the state's constant data surveillance.

People thronged the riverbank, all wearing masks; parents with children finally free to run and shout, nurses, fishermen, amorous couples and other joggers passing as I took photos of the spring sunlight.

Before returning to Beijing there was a ritual. The first stop was a local hospital where we stepped through a box of grey decontaminant gas similar to an airlock. We then paid about \$40 to spit in a test tube that would return results in 48 hours.

Neighborhood permission was harder. Some allowed home quarantine, others required returnees to spend about \$700 on a 14-day quarantine in small hotel rooms. Catering is reportedly adequate.

With a green health code and neighborhood permission, people could then apply to Beijing's city government for permission to return home. Success came in the form of a phone message with a secret purchasing link when a ticket became available. The link expired in two hours.

Tickets bought, we packed up and prepared to leave. I went one last time to the Yangtze before we packed up and headed to the train station.

Back in Beijing, officials in white protective outfits herded us through biosecurity checks at the railway station and a commandeered city park that separated passengers into smaller and smaller groups based on their destination.

Three hours later, a government-chartered bus dropped me off at my apartment complex. Two officials in street clothes took me to my door where I signed a paper pledging that I would stay inside and record my temperature for 14 days. A new poster on my door implores my neighbors to help enforce the quarantine. An electronic sensor records any breaches.

As soon as I got home, I put my clothes in the wash and myself in the shower, thanking my wife for volunteering to quarantine with me and handing me a cold drink.

Eventually we will undergo nucleic acid tests to prove we're virus-free, but no symptoms have appeared so far.

A cool breeze blows in from our windows as the last days of springs slowly pass.

McNeil, a Beijing-based journalist for The Associated Press, visited Wuhan April 4 - 14. Follow him on

Twitter at <http://twitter.com/stmcneil>

## Moving past 'invisible enemy,' Trump nudges nation to reopen

By ZEKE MILLER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — For weeks, the Trump administration played up the dangers of the coronavirus as it sought to convince Americans to disrupt their lives and stay home. Now, as President Donald Trump aims for a swift nationwide reopening, he faces a new challenge: convincing people it's safe to come out and resume their normal lives.

It's a defining question for a cloistered nation — and a political imperative for Trump, whose reelection likely rides on the pace of an economic rebound.

Can the country move beyond a crippling fear of the virus and return to some modified version of its old routines, doing what's possible to mitigate the risk of COVID-19, but acknowledging it may be a fact of life for years to come?

"We need to create the kind of confidence in America that makes it so that everybody goes back to work," said Kevin Hassett, a White House adviser and former chair of the Council of Economic Advisers. "And that confidence is going to require testing and confidence that your workplace is a healthy place, but also confidence in the economy."

At the White House, officials believe they've entered a new chapter of the pandemic response, moving from crisis mode to sustained mitigation and management.

It began last Thursday with the release of guidelines to governors for how to safely reopen their states. Trump and Vice President Mike Pence celebrated Americans for successfully "flattening the curve" of the epidemic.

A day later, a phalanx of the administration's top medical officials sought to reassure the nation that there were plenty of tests available to safely begin easing restrictions.

Governors have been lifting restrictions each day since then, including aggressive moves announced Wednesday in Montana and Oklahoma. The Montana governor gave schools the green light to open their doors in early May, and Oklahoma will allow salons, barbershops, spas and pet groomers to reopen Friday.

Trump, in his evening press conference, did take issue with Republican Georgia Gov. Brian Kemp's bold reopening plans. "I disagree strongly," he said. "I think it's too soon."

The governors' moves coincided with lingering bleak news around the country. The death toll in Massachusetts eclipsed 2,000 on Wednesday, doubling from just a week earlier. About 16,000 people remained hospitalized across New York. A meat plant in Iowa that is vital to the nation's pork supply is the latest slaughterhouse to shut down because of outbreak. With the economy in for a long, brutal slump, Congress was on the verge of passing an almost \$500 billion relief bill to bolster small businesses.

Trump flatly promised Americans that there will no repeat of the national lockdown. "We will not go through what we went through for the last two months," he said.

It's a sharp shift in rhetoric after Trump and allies stressed the threat of an "invisible enemy" to persuade people to abide by social distancing recommendations. The American people have also been scarred by the daunting death toll and images of body bags piled up in refrigerated trailers.

Moving from fear to acceptance will take confidence in government, medical professionals and businesses at a time when faith in those institutions is low. White House aides say restoring confidence will require the same "whole-of-America" approach that slowed the virus spread.

"It's one thing for government to say, 'OK, it's safe to go out,'" New York Gov. Andrew Cuomo, a Democrat, said Tuesday. "If people don't believe it's safe, they're not going to go."

While there have been isolated protests in states aimed at lifting aggressive stay-at-home measures, most Americans don't believe it will be safe to ease the restrictions anytime soon, according to a new survey from The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research.

Trump predicted earlier this month that the economy would take off like a "rocket ship once we get back to business." But experts say the recovery will be far slower.

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"It'll be a very gradual process regardless of what a governor says or the president says," said Dr. Robert Blendon, a Harvard professor of health policy and political analysis. He said the history of lockdowns, particularly the quarantine of more than 25,000 people around Toronto in 2003 to slow the spread of SARS, shows that it will take weeks, even months, for people to develop the confidence to resume normal activity.

Blendon also warned that a predicted second wave of COVID-19 could reverse any gains made in the interim.

It's not just government, but individual businesses that will need to convince employees and consumers that it's safe to return, once they decide to reopen.

Delta Airlines CEO Ed Bastian on Wednesday warned his employees to be prepared for a "choppy, sluggish recovery even after the virus is contained."

The White House expects businesses "will advertise to the public" about the safety measures they are putting in place when they reopen, said Larry Kudlow, the director of the National Economic Council. He said the White House is also considering asking Congress to provide liability protection for employers in case their workers or customers fall sick. "We want small businesses to have some confidence that if they do reopen, they'll stay open," Kudlow said.

The outbreak has infected over 2.5 million people and killed about 180,000 around the world, including more than 45,000 in the U.S., according to a tally compiled by Johns Hopkins University from official government figures, though the true numbers are believed to be far higher.

Mark Schlessinger, a Yale professor of health policy, said it's going to take time "for people to re-equilibrate emotionally, and it's very hard to predict how long."

"For lots of reasons we put people on a state of heightened anxiety," he said.

So even if people who are worried about their economic situation want to get back to work, "it's less clear whether consumers who would go to a restaurant or a store or the doctor's office" will change their behavior, he said. "There may be permanent behavioral changes in how people do business and interact as a society."

Trump hosted Cuomo in the Oval Office on Tuesday, viewing it as opportunity to win over one of the most trusted voices on the virus response about the nation's ability to conduct enough tests to ensure it has a handle on the matter.

Trump agreed to work with Cuomo to double his state's testing capacity, believing that if the administration can earn the buy-in of Cuomo, other governors across the state will follow.

Cuomo announced Wednesday that he is enlisting former New York City Mayor Mike Bloomberg to help create a massive "tracing army" that will find infected people and get them into isolation, a move toward building confidence among leery Americans.

At the White House, the administration is adjusting its posture away from drastic containment measures to managing virus "flareups" and bottlenecks in testing or supplies.

And officials hope to use the daily White House briefings to inundate Americans with facts and figures on testing and therapeutics, blanketing television with graphics of flattening and declining curves and statistics on the number of testing kits available.

White House officials also are planning to step up travel in coming weeks as a visual representation of reopening. Pence has traveled to Colorado and Wisconsin in recent days, and Trump is pushing aides to get him back on the road.

There are still plenty of caution flags.

"There's a possibility that the assault of the virus on our nation next winter will actually be even more difficult than the one we just went through," Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Director Robert Redfield told The Washington Post in an interview Tuesday. "We're going to have the flu epidemic and the coronavirus epidemic at the same time."

"We've got to be very careful," Trump said Tuesday of a potential second wave, which in some predictions could hit just weeks before the November elections. "We don't want that to happen; it could happen. I think we stamp it out if it does happen."

Instead, White House aides hope that people accept a "new normal" that envisions short-term disrup-

tions when there are COVID-19 cases, causing routine week-long school or office closures but not panic. But Blendon said, "People will watch the cases and listen to the major public health leaders, and if there's a conflict, that will slow things even greater."

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

## AP-NORC poll: Few Americans support easing virus protections

By THOMAS BEAUMONT and HANNAH FINGERHUT Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Americans remain overwhelmingly in favor of stay-at-home orders and other efforts to slow the spread of the coronavirus, a new survey finds, even as small pockets of attention-grabbing protests demanding the lifting of such restrictions emerge nationwide.

The survey from The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research also finds that a majority of Americans say it won't be safe to lift social distancing guidelines anytime soon, running counter to the choice of a handful of governors who have announced plans to ease within days the public health efforts that have upended daily life and roiled the global economy.

More than a month after schoolyards fell silent, restaurant tables and bar stools emptied, and waves from a safe distance replaced hugs and handshakes, the country largely believes restrictions on social interaction to curb the spread of the virus are appropriate.

Only 12% of Americans say the measures where they live go too far. About twice as many people, 26%, believe the limits don't go far enough. The majority of Americans — 61% — feel the steps taken by government officials to prevent infections of COVID-19 in their area are about right.

About 8 in 10 Americans say they support measures that include requiring Americans to stay in their homes and limiting gatherings to 10 people or fewer — numbers that have largely held steady over the past few weeks.

"We haven't begun to flatten the curve yet. We're still ramping up in the number of cases and the number of deaths," said Laura McCullough, 47, a college physics professor from Menomonie, Wisconsin. "We're still learning about what it can do, and if we're still learning about what it can do, this isn't going to be the time to let people go out and get back to their life."

While the poll reveals that the feelings behind the protests that materialized in the past week or so in battleground states such as Michigan, Ohio, Pennsylvania and Wisconsin are held by only a small fraction of Americans, it does find signs that Republicans are, like President Donald Trump, becoming more bullish on reopening aspects of public life.

Just 36% of Republicans now say they strongly favor requiring Americans to stay home during the outbreak, compared with 51% who said so in late March. While majorities of Democrats and Republicans think current restrictions where they live are about right, Republicans are roughly four times as likely as Democrats to think restrictions in place go too far — 22% to 5%.

More Democrats than Republicans, meanwhile, think restrictions don't go far enough, 33% to 19%.

"They'll be lifted, but there are still going to be sick people running around," said 66-year-old Lynn Sanchez, a Democrat and retired convenience store manager from Jacksonville, Texas, where Gov. Greg Abbott has reopened state parks and plans to announce further relaxations next week. "And we're going to have another pandemic."

More than 45,000 people in the United States have died from COVID-19, while 22 million have applied for unemployment benefits since March. It's that economic cost that has led some governors to follow Trump's lead and start talking about allowing some shuttered businesses to reopen, including in Georgia, where many businesses — including gyms, bowling alleys and tattoo parlors — can do so starting Friday. Restaurants there can resume dine-in service next week.

Yet the survey finds that few Americans — 16% — think it's very or extremely likely that their areas will be safe enough in a few weeks for the restrictions to be lifted. While 27% think it's somewhat likely, a

majority of Americans — 56% — say conditions are unlikely to be safe in a few weeks to start lifting the current restrictions.

“If we try too hard to restart the economy prematurely, there will be waves of reinfection,” said 70-year-old retired medical equipment salesman Goble Floyd, of Bonita Springs, Florida. “I don’t think the economy or life will get back to normal until there’s a vaccine. It just seems this is so seriously contagious.”

The emerging partisan differences are apparent. Georgia Gov. Brian Kemp is a Republican and unwavering Trump supporter. GOP lawmakers in Wisconsin filed suit Tuesday against the state’s Democratic governor after he ordered most nonessential businesses to remain closed until May 26.

The poll finds 59% of Republicans say it’s at least somewhat likely that their areas will be safe enough for reopening in just a few weeks, compared with 71% of Democrats who say it is unlikely. Still, even among Republicans, just 27% say that’s very likely.

“I haven’t met one person at the protests that disagrees with the fact that we need to self-quarantine until April 30,” said Matt Seely, a spokesman for the Michigan Conservative Coalition, which sponsored an automobile-based protest at the state’s capitol in Lansing last week. “Nobody wants to do the wrong thing. But the solution is not to stay in your home until the last case of COVID is gone.”

## **AP-NORC poll: Few Americans support easing virus protections**

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Beaumont reported from Des Moines, Iowa.

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The AP-NORC poll of 1,057 adults was conducted April 16-20 using a sample drawn from NORC's probability-based AmeriSpeak Panel, which is designed to be representative of the U.S. population. The margin of sampling error for all respondents is plus or minus 4.0 percentage points. Respondents were first selected randomly using address-based sampling methods and later were interviewed online or by phone.

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Online:

AP-NORC Center: <http://www.apnorc.org/>

## Hotels become barracks for health workers 'going to war'

By JAKE SEINER and LARRY NEUMEISTER Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — The tourists and conventioners who once filled the rooms of The New Yorker hotel are long gone, driven away by the coronavirus, but its lobby is still bustling.

The big, art-deco hotel in midtown Manhattan is one of several across the U.S. that have become barracks for an army of health care workers deployed to fight COVID-19.

"You come home, get your dinner, take a shower, get to sleep and then do it all over again the next day," said physician assistant Shadon Daniels, through his mask, in a ballroom converted into an intake area, where shoe sanitizing stations are a must-stop before guests head to the elevators.

The Honesdale, Pennsylvania, resident likened his workday to "going to war."

More than 15,000 of the nation's 56,000 hotels and motels are now offering rooms for emergency and health care workers, according to Chip Rogers, president of the American Hotel and Lodging Association.

Some health care workers have snagged free rooms at the Sophy Hyde Park hotel in Chicago or the



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luxurious Four Seasons Hotel New York.

Others, like Daniels, are being put up by staffing agencies hired to quickly bring reinforcements to overwhelmed hospitals.

At another time, hotels packed with out-of-town workers on a shared mission might have been buzzing like a college dorm, with nurses or doctors sharing drinks at the bar after shifts or heading out to a Broadway show.

But several healthcare workers staying at The New Yorker told The Associated Press that they are too exhausted after 12-hour workdays to do much more than shower, eat, exercise, read and sleep. Shuttered bars, restaurants and businesses limit options.

Zuri Longoria, a nurse from Aransas Pass, Texas, said she relieves stress from tending to dying patients by chatting with other medical volunteers like herself.

"You can't share that type of bond with anybody else," Longoria said.

In the hotel's ballroom, sanitizing materials rest on a table and prayer cards and handwritten well wishes from the community hang from a bulletin board. "Thank you for helping others in their time of need!" reads one.

One note acknowledged how inadequate words, prayers and small contributions seemed for the workers. "It's not a lot and way less than you guys deserve! Please be safe!" it said.

Nathan Shapiro-Shellaby, a nurse anesthetist from Seattle, said he runs outdoors and meditates before boarding a shuttle bus for work at Elmhurst Hospital in Queens, which has been ground zero for the crisis.

After work, he's sharpening his Facetime and Zoom skills to maintain relationships.

"That's been one of my favorite things to do to kind of release stress and hear about family and friends from all around the world," Shapiro-Shellaby said.

Daniels said immediately after a shift he sanitizes his shoes, wipes down anything he carries with Clorox wipes and drops his clothing in a laundry bag at his room.

"Then I jump right in the shower. My bedroom is like COVID-free, as much as it can be," Daniels said.

Daniels, Longoria and Shapiro-Shellaby were recruited to New York by Krucial Staffing, which advertised that three-week stints for 400 nurses starting in mid-April would pay \$10,000 per week.

Two weeks ago, the Marriott hotel chain announced it would provide \$10 million of free "Rooms for Responders" in New York City, New Orleans, Chicago, Detroit, Los Angeles, Las Vegas, Washington, D.C. and Newark, New Jersey. In less than two days, 6,200 nights in rooms had been booked, with 53% of them in the New York area and 34% in Los Angeles.

Hilton and American Express also teamed up to donate up to 1 million hotel room nights nationwide.

Rogers estimates that half of the hotels in the country are closed due to the coronavirus pandemic. And most of the rest are operating with skeletal staffs.

Hotel authorities say most hotels still up and running are housing workers, while some have offered space for hospital operations or to provide rooms for the homeless or quarantined individuals.

"It's a win, win, win," said Kim Sabow, president of the Arizona Lodging and Tourism Association. She said 300 Arizona hotels had volunteered to house medical workers. "This is just a wonderful way in which the hotels can keep their doors open and give back at this horrific time of crisis."

Some hotels volunteered after California's governor threatened to use the powers of the state to take over hotels.

"Hotels were rightfully concerned. At the same time, we had already heard hotels saying: 'Look, if this starts getting worse, they can use our hotel if they need to,'" Rogers recalled.

Michael Jacobson, president of the Illinois Hotel & Lodging Association, said Chicago and state officials asked hotels in early March to identify locations that could be used.

Some offered free rooms; others at cost. Tight security ensures nobody breaks social distancing rules. Rather than housecleaning, linens and towels are left outside rooms, along with meals.

"Hotels aren't making a profit out of this. It is allowing them to at least maintain some basic operations and frankly, keep at least a portion of their staff employed," Jacobson said. "I knew folks would step up, there's no question about it, but I also knew that every hotel owner I know of is hurting right now, and

hurting bad.”

## **Analysis: Expect college football to take a slow road back**

**By RALPH D. RUSSO AP College Football Writer**

While professional sports leagues can ponder plans to isolate their athletes from the new coronavirus and have them play in unusual, even secluded places, college sports have no such option.

Pro sports leagues can get creative with solutions to save their multibillion-dollar businesses. College sports will take a slower road back.

“The most at-risk sport of starting up again, in my opinion, is collegiate athletics,” said A.J. Maestas, the CEO of Navigate Research, which consults with professional sports leagues and college conferences. “There is less of an incentive and less alignment with the ultimate mission of the entity they work at, live at. That fund them.”

The commissioners of the 10 Bowl Subdivision conferences made it clear to Vice President Mike Pence last week: There cannot be college sports played if campuses are not open. If university leaders do not deem it safe for students to return to classrooms and dorms, locker rooms and practice fields will also remain closed.

As big as the business of college sports is it is dwarfed by the business of higher education. For example: The University of Alabama’s budget in fiscal 2018 was \$1.03 billion. Its athletic budget in 2018-19 was \$164 million.

“You think of all the stakeholders and constituents in the collegiate space and all the missions they’re meant to serve in. This sports thing is like 3% of their budget,” Maestas said.

Colleges and universities, for the most part, have been quicker than governments in enacting measures to slow the spread of the virus. They sent students home, extended spring breaks and shifted to online classes weeks before widespread bans of large gatherings and stay-at-home orders by governors and mayors.

Even before the NCAA canceled its basketball tournaments and spring sports March 12, schools were shuttering campuses.

Fast forward to the fall, when the hope is many businesses and routine parts of daily life will be operating again, even if not back to business as usual. That doesn’t mean colleges will be rushing to get students on campus. If they were first to shut down, they could also be among the last to reopen and it will be university presidents, not the NCAA, making those decisions.

Schools would take a significant financial hit by continuing to operate online only, but balance that against the legal and ethical liability they could face by being the catalyst for reigniting an outbreak.

“I think they do have to be conservative in how they approach this,” said attorney Tim Nevius, a former college baseball player and NCAA investigator who now represents and advocates for college athletes.

If, come September, the students are physically going back to school, even then there will be hurdles to clear for football to start.

“Large gatherings of people are going to be the last thing we check off the box,” Ohio Gov. Mike DeWine said last week when asked about Ohio State football games.

So play without fans?

“It isn’t appropriate for us to play college football without fans. If that were the case, it would mean there would be major reservations about group gatherings,” Northwestern athletic director Jim Phillips said on the Paul Finebaum Show, echoing a sentiment that is also becoming popular among administrators.

Commissioners and athletic directors have stressed the importance of collaboration across conferences and starting any season at once. But the public health crisis is not playing out the same everywhere. Within 24 hours this week the president of the University of Connecticut said he was personally pessimistic about the return of fall sports while the University of Missouri System president Mun Choi said he expects in-person classes to resume this fall.

In professional sports, players are well-paid and unionized. Essentially, they are business partners with

the leagues. Players have to sign off on any return-to-play plan, and they might be motivated to take some risk to get paid.

In college sports, the relationship between the players and the schools, administrators and coaches is almost paternal.

"In framing it that way it restricts athletes' rights," Nevius said. "So it prevents them from being considered employees. It reduces their economic rights. It frames things so that the athletes also think that they are in this caretaker environment so they have to rely upon the coaches and the schools to advance their rights."

"But that is not always the case with the big business of college sports," Nevius added.

Later this week, the NCAA is scheduled to reveal some details of a plan to begin allowing college athletes to be compensated for use of their names, images and likenesses. The earliest it would go into effect is 2021-22.

Yes, college football players with professional aspirations have much to gain by playing. But not paychecks. And their scholarships are good whether they play or not.

"College sports are theoretically intended to exist to enhance that academic experience of its athletes," Nevius said. "And the NCAA repeatedly says that publicly and in defense of lawsuits as well. We've seen over time decisions made that completely contradict that. This is another test with respect to that philosophy."

Follow Ralph D. Russo at <https://twitter.com/ralphDrussoAP> and <https://appodcasts.com/category/ap-top-25-college-football/>

More AP college football: <https://apnews.com/APTop25CollegeFootballPoll> and <https://apnews.com/Collegefootball> and [https://twitter.com/AP\\_Top25](https://twitter.com/AP_Top25)

## Judge tosses Smollett's malicious prosecution lawsuit

CHICAGO (AP) — A federal judge on Wednesday dismissed actor Jussie Smollett's malicious prosecution lawsuit against the city of Chicago and several police officers.

The former "Empire" actor told police that he was beaten by two men who looped a noose around his neck and threw vile comments at him in an attack near his home in downtown Chicago in January last year. Chicago police said the attack was staged, and Smollett was charged with making a false report. Those charges were subsequently dropped with little explanation from prosecutors.

In April 2019, the city sued Smollett seeking reimbursement of more than \$130,000 paid in overtime to police officers who were involved in investigating the alleged racist and homophobic attack on Smollett, who is black and gay.

Smollett countersued in November, saying the city couldn't recover costs because it accepted \$10,000 from Smollett "as payment in full in connection with the dismissal of the charges against him." The lawsuit said Smollett had been the victim of a malicious prosecution that caused him humiliation and extreme distress.

U.S. District Judge Virginia Kendall ruled Wednesday that Smollett can't bring a malicious prosecution claim until all proceedings against him have ended.

Kendall was referring to the appointment of a special prosecutor in February, who indicted Smollett on six charges, including that he lied to police about the alleged attack.

She said the Chicago Police Department's motive was bringing Smollett to justice "for a crime it had probable cause to think he committed."

## Volunteer + tutor = learning and fun for isolated students

By LUIS ANDRES HENAO Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — "Tell us about Vikings; tell us about shipwrecks; tell us about pirates and ancient myths."

Sara Herlevsen nods, smiles and answers these questions from students via video conferencing. Or this

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31-year-old massage therapist and tutor from Calgary helps them with their math homework, a science quiz or an art project.

Sometimes, she simply listens. Many want someone to talk to because the spread of the coronavirus outbreak has forced their schools to close and isolated them from their classmates.

Herlevsen said it all started because she was worried about students falling behind. So she volunteered to help on social media: "During Pandemic Times," she said. "I would like to offer FREE remote assistance/tutoring to any child who is at home right now. Anywhere in the world."

Her Facebook post last month spread in Canada and other countries, including Australia, Britain and as far away as Vietnam. Since then, she wakes up at dawn every day to teach children and some parents everything from biology to the Latin root of words.

"I have nothing else to offer at this time as I am self-isolating. But I have Facetime and chat! And lots of time and random knowledge and need something to do!"

Herlevsen said her wide-ranging knowledge, love for books and teaching comes her father, a theologian. Above all, she hopes to be a mentor to some of the students she tutors who, like her, have attention deficit hyperactivity disorder.

During a recent lesson, she reviewed facts about the Titanic with Corban Music, a 9-year-old from Calgary who loves ships. They also briefly spoke about Norse mythology ("Do you know Thor from the Avengers?" she asked) and a bit about Vikings: "Did you know that they didn't really have those horns in their helmets?"

"I know about this stuff!" the boy said. They both laughed when he changed the virtual backdrop on his video conference to famous tourist spots. She then listened in silence when he read a story that he had dictated to his mother about the popular Nintendo brothers, Mario and Luigi.

In her next lesson, she reviewed biology and the Latin roots of medical words with 12-year-old Nevaeh Siipola, who dreams of becoming a doctor.

"When we see a root word with the word 'dento' in front ... it pertains to?" she asked.

"Teeth!" Siipola answered.

The lessons have been welcomed by parents who are trying to juggle working from home without childcare.

"Kindness from a stranger like Sara is more appreciated," said Nevaeh's mother, Quynh Siipola. "It's more than winning the lottery."

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

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

## AP Exclusive: 'It's been a nightmare' for Yonkers ER doc

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 caregivers 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, an alarm sounds and the electrodes fastened to the patient's chest deliver a shock to his heart. His arm spasms. 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 before the

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outbreak on average pronounced 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.

"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."

## Administration offers plan to cover COVID care for uninsured

By RICARDO ALONSO-ZALDIVAR Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Trump administration announced a plan Wednesday to start paying hospitals and doctors who care for uninsured patients with COVID-19, but Democratic lawmakers and health industry groups are likely to press for more.

Under the approach detailed by Health and Human Services Secretary Alex Azar, hospitals and doctors would submit their bills directly to the government and they would get paid at Medicare rates.

Uninsured people would not be liable for costs, and health care providers would not have to ask any questions about a patient's immigration status, an issue that's been cited as a barrier to care in communities with many foreign-born residents.

"This says if you don't have insurance, go get taken care of — we have you covered," Azar said in an interview.

The money will come from a pot of \$100 billion that Congress has approved to provide relief for the health care system, which is trying to cope with the high cost of coronavirus care while facing a cash crunch because elective surgeries and procedures have been put on hold. For COVID-19 patients who are covered by health insurance, hospitals and doctors accepting money from the relief fund would have to agree to not to send "surprise" bills for out-of-network services.

COVID-19 treatment for the uninsured could cost from \$14 billion to \$48 billion, according to a recent estimate from the nonpartisan Kaiser Family Foundation.

Azar said the administration is not providing an estimate on what its plan will cost, but he is confident it will fit within the \$100 billion allocated by Congress. Lawmakers are finalizing another coronavirus relief bill, expected to add \$75 billion more for the health care system.

Democrats and some health industry groups say the relief money approved by Congress should go directly to health care facilities, and the administration should cover the uninsured by expanding programs such as Medicaid and the Affordable Care Act. An HHS press release describing the plan for the uninsured says payments for their care would be made "subject to available funding."

About 28 million people were uninsured before the pandemic hit, and that number is expected to rise sharply. Consultants at Health Management Associates estimate that 12 million to 35 million people could lose workplace coverage in the economic shutdown aimed at containing the spread of the coronavirus.

The plan for the uninsured was part of a broader announcement by the government detailing a second round of economic relief payments to hospitals, doctors and other health care service providers.

Before Wednesday's announcement, \$30 billion had been distributed. Additional funds now being released include:

- \$20 billion in payments across a range of health care facilities.
- \$10 billion targeted to coronavirus hot spots; New York will receive \$4.4 billion.
- \$10 billion for rural health clinics and hospitals
- \$400 million for Indian Health Service facilities.

Azar said additional allocations will be announced for nursing homes, for hospitals and doctors that rely on Medicaid, and for dentists.

## Iran Guard reveals secret space program in satellite launch

By AMIR VAHDAT and JON GAMBRELL Associated Press

TEHRAN, Iran (AP) — Iran's Revolutionary Guard launched its first satellite into space Wednesday, dramatically revealing what experts described as a secret military space program that could advance its ballistic missile development amid wider tensions between the Islamic Republic and the U.S.

Using a mobile launcher at a new launch site, the Guard said it put the "Noor," or "Light," satellite into a low orbit circling the Earth. While the U.S., Israel and other countries declined to immediately confirm the satellite reached orbit, their criticism suggested they believed the launch happened.

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Iranian state TV late Wednesday showed footage of what it said was the satellite and said it had orbited the earth within 90 minutes. It said the satellite's signals were being received.

The launch comes as Iran has abandoned all the limitations of its tattered nuclear deal with world powers that President Donald Trump unilaterally withdrew America from in 2018. Trump's decision set off a monthslong 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. Trump himself later tweeted he told the U.S. Navy "to shoot down and destroy any and all Iranian gunboats if they harass our ships at sea," both raising energy prices and renewing the risk of conflict.

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

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 unacknowledged Guard base near Shahroud, 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 "Qased," 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. Such a system may allow Iran to more quickly fuel a rocket, something crucial in an offensive weapon system, Hinz said, while stressing more information was needed about the launch.

Wednesday marked 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, as well as a drawing of the Earth with the word Allah in Farsi wrapped around it. It remained unclear what the satellite it carried does.

"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.

The Guard, which operates its own military infrastructure parallel to Iran's regular armed forces, is a hard-line force answerable only to Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei.

International criticism of the launch came quickly.

U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said "Iran needs to be held accountable for what it's done."

At a Pentagon news conference Wednesday, senior officials called the satellite launch a provocation.

"We view this as further evidence of Iran's behavior that is threatening in the region," said David Norquist, the deputy secretary of defense.

Gen. John Hyten, vice chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, said the launched vehicle "went a very long way." He said it was too early to say whether it successfully placed a satellite in orbit.

Israel's Foreign Ministry described the launch as a "façade for Iran's continuous development of advanced missile technology." German Foreign Ministry spokesman Christofer Burger warned that "the Iranian rocket program has a destabilizing effect on the region and is also unacceptable in view of our European security interests."

U.S. Army Maj. Rob Lodewick, a Pentagon spokesman, told The Associated Press that American officials continue to monitor Iran's program.

"While Tehran does not currently have intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs), its desire to have a strategic counter to the United States could drive it to develop an ICBM," Lodewick said.

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.

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.

Wednesday's launch, however, raises new questions. While Iran isn't known to have the know-how to miniaturize a nuclear weapon for a ballistic missile, any advances toward an intercontinental ballistic missile would put Europe and potentially the U.S. in range. Iran long has said it limits its ballistic missiles' range to 2,000 kilometers (1,240 miles) under Khamenei's orders, which puts the Mideast but not the West in its reach.

Iranian commentators described Wednesday's launch as honoring Hassan Tehrani Moghaddam, a Guard commander who led its missile development until his death in 2011 in a massive explosion at a facility outside of Tehran that killed 16 others. The state-run IRAN newspaper around that time quoted the slain commander's brother as saying he worked on an ICBM program, though the brother later denied that in subsequent interviews.

Iran has suffered several failed satellite launches in recent months. A separate fire at the Imam Khomeini Space Center in February 2019 also killed three researchers, authorities said at the time.

A 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."

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

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Gambrell reported from Dubai, United Arab Emirates. Associated Press writers Nasser Karimi, Mehdi Fatahi and Amir Vahdat in Tehran, Iran; Aron Heller and Josef Federman in Jerusalem; Darlene Superville, Robert Burns and Matthew Lee in Washington and Frank Jordans in Berlin contributed to this report.

## **Berlin gets 'pop-up' bike lanes to boost cycling in pandemic**

BERLIN (AP) — Authorities in Berlin are setting up temporary bicycle lanes to meet demand for safe cycling on the German capital's streets during the coronavirus pandemic, angering some motorists.

The move is intended to help people get about the city without having to use public transport, where social distancing can be difficult.

Felix Weisbrich, who oversees street planning in Berlin's district of Friedrichshain-Kreuzberg, said miles of new 'pop-up' bike lanes now being set aside for cyclists would have been implemented in the long term anyway.

"We are bringing them forward against the backdrop of the pandemic and the need to maintain distancing," he told public broadcaster rbb Wednesday.

But cycling advocates say the outbreak appears to have encouraged the city's administration to slice through reams of bureaucratic red tape that would normally have delayed the process by years.

Some Berlin motorists have reacted with anger to the new yellow bike symbols being spray-painted on lanes normally used to park cars, though alternative, paid parking facilities are usually being offered nearby.

"There's no right to free parking on the streets," said Weisbrich.

Berlin is following in the tracks of cities such as Bogota, Budapest and Vancouver, which have also set aside more road space for cyclists during the outbreak.

Anxiety about getting too close to strangers has contributed to a drop in public transport use, with many commuters dusting off their old bikes to get to work instead. Doctors also note the health benefits of outdoor physical exercise in boosting people's immune systems.

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



## Amid pandemic, charities and nonprofits face huge challenges

By **DAVID CRARY** and **KATHY McCORMACK** Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — While celebrities and billionaires have announced huge gifts to combat the COVID-19 pandemic, many charities and nonprofits are still struggling. Donations to some churches have plummeted, and many charities have had to cancel crucial fundraising events such as galas, bike races and walkathons.

There's plenty of big-time philanthropy: Nine-figure gifts for coronavirus relief efforts — including food banks and medical research — were recently announced by billionaires Jeff Bezos, George Soros and the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation.

Nonetheless, nonprofits are facing hard times amid prolonged lockdowns and a floundering economy.

"The arts and culture sectors are in trouble because they can't earn revenue from performances and exhibitions," said Stacy Palmer, editor of the Chronicle of Philanthropy. "Colleges and universities are worried — are people still going to see them as indispensable institutions?"

In hard-hit New York City, the Metropolitan Museum of Art is bracing for a \$100 million shortfall. The Metropolitan Opera has canceled the rest of its season, stopped paying the orchestra and chorus, and launched an emergency fundraising drive.

Those two Mets, and comparably large nonprofits, will almost certainly survive. Palmer isn't so confident about some smaller organizations that have had to cancel fundraisers.

"Some of them are one benefit away from not being able to pay the bills," she said.

Some religious groups are anxious as online worship replaces in-person services. The Catholic Archdiocese of New York has reported a 50% drop in cash donations and warned that some parishes will struggle to stay open.

Nashville-based LifeWay Research, affiliated with the Southern Baptist Convention, surveyed 400 Protestant pastors in late March. More than 90% said they had halted in-person services; more than half said donations from their congregations had decreased from earlier this year — often by more than 50%.

Catholic Charities, which operates nationwide and employs 55,000 people, does its own fundraising separate from parish collections.

CEO Donna Markham says it's a constant struggle to meet increasing demands for shelter and food programs, and some regular donors give less. In the diocese of Venice, Florida, demand for food assistance from the organization has doubled. Catholic Charities of Eastern Washington has laid off several dozen workers, mostly from a child-care program where enrollment fell sharply.

"The enormity of this has stretched us to the point where it's unclear how long it's sustainable," Markham said.

Canceling fundraisers is a challenge for charities large and small. Some, like the American Lung Association, American Heart Association and American Red Cross, have responded with pandemic-related fundraising initiatives.

The lung association canceled its premier outdoor fundraising event, the 180-mile (290-kilometer) Trek Across Maine bicycle ride, which raised \$1.3 million last year. It's now inviting people worldwide to track their mileage goals virtually before June 30 and donate to efforts to combat COVID-19 and other respiratory viruses.

The Cystic Fibrosis Foundation has canceled or postponed about 400 fundraisers nationwide, even as it scrambles to support those with the disease who are at increased risk for severe complications from COVID-19. It plans a virtual event June 5 for its 65th anniversary.

The nonprofit Portsmouth Music and Arts Center in New Hampshire moved its gala online, airing a fundraising video featuring faculty and students performing. The punk band Dropkick Murphys, whose lead singer Al Barr has Portsmouth ties, shared the video with its 1.8 million Facebook fans.

Organizers were glad they raised \$44,000, but that's barely half the \$84,000 raised at last year's gala.

"We're confident our organization will make it through this crisis, but not without significant hardship," CEO Russ Grazier said.

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United Way, perennially one of the biggest recipients of donations, says local offices have raised more than \$238 million since March 21 for pandemic relief. CEO Brian Gallagher says far more will be needed.

"United Way was born from and made for crises like this one," Gallagher said. "But along with other nonprofits, we need support from the federal government, just like the airlines or the hospitality industry."

In addition to direct funding from Congress, United Way, Goodwill Industries and other major nonprofits are seeking expanded tax deductions for charitable giving.

The New York-based James Beard Foundation has raised \$4.3 million to save independent restaurants nationwide from going out of business because of the pandemic.

Similarly, the New York Foundation for the Arts is funneling emergency funds to financially stressed artists.

Its executive director, Michael Royce, says many cultural institutions in New York may already have lost 50% of their operating budget and are undertaking large-scale layoffs or furloughs.

Celebrities from Lady Gaga and Rihanna to Dolly Parton and Leonardo DiCaprio have helped raise funds for pandemic relief.

Sometimes it's local stars who pitch in, such as New Hampshire's Episcopal bishop, Robert Hirschfeld. Wearing his miter headdress and a face mask, he pedaled around the Statehouse in Concord on a unicycle last week, encouraging donations to the New Hampshire Charitable Foundation's crisis fund.

Katie Merrow, who oversees the foundation's community impact department, says it's "an incredibly important time" to give to nonprofits.

"It's the people who are the most vulnerable who need help ... or just what fills our hearts and our spirit in terms of work in the arts, and protecting the outdoors," she said. "On every one of those fronts there will be challenges, with less giving, less revenue."

McCormack reported from Concord, New Hampshire.

## 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.

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

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Collins reported from Columbia, South Carolina. Associated Press writers Jeff Amy in Atlanta; Andrew

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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>

## Today in History By The Associated Press

### Today in History

Today is Thursday, April 23, the 114th day of 2020. There are 252 days left in the year.

### Today's Highlight in History:

On April 23, 1616 (Old Style calendar), English poet and dramatist William Shakespeare died in Stratford-upon-Avon on what has traditionally been regarded as the 52nd anniversary of his birth in 1564.

### On this date:

In 1898, Spain declared war on the United States, which responded in kind two days later.

In 1914, Chicago's Wrigley Field, then called Weeghman Park, hosted its first major league game as the Chicago Federals defeated the Kansas City Packers 9-1.

In 1943, U.S. Navy Lt. (jg) John F. Kennedy assumed command of PT-109, a motor torpedo boat, in the Solomon Islands during World War II. (On Aug. 2, 1943, PT-109 was rammed and sunk by a Japanese destroyer, killing two crew members; Kennedy and 10 others survived.)

In 1954, Hank Aaron of the Milwaukee Braves hit the first of his 755 major-league home runs in a game against the St. Louis Cardinals. (The Braves won, 7-5.)

In 1968, student protesters began occupying buildings on the campus of Columbia University in New York; police put down the protests a week later. The Methodist Church and the Evangelical United Brethren Church merged to form the United Methodist Church.

In 1969, Sirhan Sirhan was sentenced to death for assassinating New York Sen. Robert F. Kennedy. (The sentence was later reduced to life imprisonment.)

In 1987, 28 construction workers were killed when an apartment complex being built in Bridgeport, Connecticut, suddenly collapsed.

In 1988, a federal ban on smoking during domestic airline flights of two hours or less went into effect.

In 1996, a civil court jury in The Bronx, New York, ordered Bernhard Goetz (bur-NAHRD' gehts) to pay \$43 million to Darrell Cabey, one of four young men he'd shot on a subway car in 1984.

In 1998, James Earl Ray, who confessed to assassinating the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. and then insisted he'd been framed, died at a Nashville, Tennessee, hospital at age 70.

In 2005, the recently created video-sharing website YouTube uploaded its first clip, "Me at the Zoo," which showed YouTube co-founder Jawed Karim standing in front of an elephant enclosure at the San Diego Zoo.

In 2007, Boris Yeltsin, Russia's first freely elected president, died in Moscow at age 76.

Ten years ago: Arizona Gov. Jan Brewer signed the nation's toughest illegal immigration law, saying "decades of inaction and misguided policy" had created a "dangerous and unacceptable situation"; opponents said the law would encourage discrimination against Hispanics. The Coast Guard suspended a three-day search for 11 workers missing after an explosion rocked the Deepwater Horizon oil platform in the Gulf of Mexico.

Five years ago: Blaming the "fog of war," President Barack Obama revealed that U.S. drone strikes in Pakistan had inadvertently killed an American and an Italian, two hostages held by al-Qaida, as well as two other Americans who had leadership roles with the terror network. Former CIA Director David Petraeus, whose career was destroyed by an extramarital affair with his biographer, Paula Broadwell, was sentenced in Charlotte, North Carolina, to two years' probation and fined \$100,000 for giving her classified material while she was working on the book. The Senate voted 56-43 to confirm Loretta Lynch as U.S. attorney general.

One year ago: President Donald Trump met with Twitter CEO Jack Dorsey, hours after bashing the

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company and accusing it of not treating him well because he's a Republican. The S&P 500 hit an all-time high, closing at 2,933.68 and marking the stock market's complete recovery from a nosedive at the end of 2018. Sri Lanka's president gave the country's military sweeping police powers in the wake of the Easter Sunday church and hotel bombings that killed more than 250 people.

Today's Birthdays: Actor Alan Oppenheimer is 90. Actor David Birney is 81. Actor Lee Majors is 81. Hockey Hall of Famer Tony Esposito is 77. Irish nationalist Bernadette Devlin McAliskey is 73. Actress Blair Brown is 73. Writer-director Paul Brickman is 71. Actress Joyce DeWitt is 71. Actor James Russo is 67. Filmmaker-author Michael Moore is 66. Actress Judy Davis is 65. Actress Valerie Bertinelli is 60. Actor Craig Sheffer is 60. Actor-comedian-talk show host George Lopez is 59. U.S. Olympic gold medal skier Donna Weinbrecht is 55. Actress Melina Kanakaredes (kah-nah-KAH'-ree-deez) is 53. Rock musician Stan Frazier (Sugar Ray) is 52. Country musician Tim Womack (Sons of the Desert) is 52. Actor Scott Bairstow (BEHR'-stow) is 50. Actor-writer John Lutz is 47. Actor Barry Watson is 46. Rock musician Aaron Dessner (The National) is 44. Rock musician Bryce Dessner (The National) is 44. Professional wrestler/actor John Cena is 43. Actor-writer-comedian John Oliver is 43. Actor Kal Penn is 43. Retired MLB All-Star Andruw Jones is 43. Actress Jaime King is 41. Pop singer Taio (TY'-oh) Cruz is 37. Actor Aaron Hill is 37. Actor Jesse Lee Soffer is 36. Actress Rachel Skarsten is 35. Rock musician Anthony LaMarca (The War on Drugs) is 33. Singer-songwriter John Fullbright is 32. Tennis player Nicole Vaidisova (vay-deh-SOH'-vuh) is 31. Actor Dev Patel (puh-TEHL') is 30. Actor Matthew Underwood is 30. Actor Camryn Walling is 30. Model Gigi Hadid is 25. Rock musicians Jake and Josh Kiszka (Greta Van Fleet) are 24. Actor Charlie Rowe (TV: "Salvation") is 24. Tennis player Ashleigh Barty is 24. U.S. Olympic gold medal snowboarder Chloe Kim is 20.

Thought for Today: "For in that sleep of death what dreams may come,/ When we have shuffled off this mortal coil,/ Must give us pause." — From "Hamlet."

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