

Groton Daily Independent

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Coming up on GDILIVE.COM

School Board

Monday, April. 27, 2020

7 p.m.

Via Zoom Meeting

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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Chance of Transmission

Very High

High

Medium

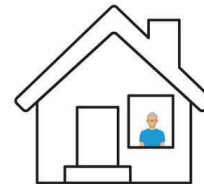
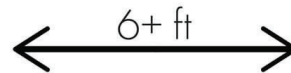
Low

Very Low

Virtually None

Asymptomatic
COVID-19 Carrier

Uninfected
Person



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The Minnesota Vikings entered the draft with some holes to fill on the roster, but they had plenty of draft picks to address those areas of concern. The biggest holes on the roster were wide receiver, cornerback and offensive line, so it was no surprise to see the team use their first four picks on those positions. The following is a breakdown of the picks the Vikings used in rounds one through three, with a breakdown of the remaining draft picks and undrafted rookies following next week.



By Jordan Wright

Justin Jefferson – the Vikings were going to try and trade up in the first round for an offensive lineman, but after the best OL prospects were drafted earlier than expected, the Vikings decided to stand pat and let the draft fall to them. Their patience was rewarded, as one of the best wide receivers fell to them at the 22nd pick.

Jefferson is a WR from LSU who is 6'1", 202 pounds, and ran the 40-yard dash in 4.43 seconds. He is a receiver who can play both outside and in the slot, but his production really elevated when he was used primarily in the slot last season at LSU. The best part about Jefferson is his ability to win contested catches – he has the perfect mindset for a wide receiver, a belief that any ball thrown in his direction is "his" and he will do anything he can to come down with the catch. It might take him a couple years to reach his potential, but the Vikings were able to grab an excellent replacement for Stefon Diggs.

Jeff Gladney – After picking Jefferson, the Vikings were back on the board three picks later. However, general manager Rick Spielman loves moving back in the draft, so the team traded with San Francisco, moving back to the 31st pick and accumulating two additional draft picks in the process. With pick number 31 in the first round, the Vikings elected to fill another hole on the roster: cornerback.

Gladney is a CB from TCU who is 5'10", 191 pounds, and ran the 40-yard dash in 4.48 seconds. The best term to describe Gladney is a ballhawk. He seems to always be around the ball and has amazing anticipation he uses to break on routes and get his hands on the pass. He was moved around a lot at TCU, so he has experience covering outside receivers and he can move into the slot. If he can bulk up a little and learn not to over-commit to double moves, Gladney has the potential to be a shutdown corner in the NFL.

Ezra Cleveland – The Vikings' best offensive lineman last season was Brian O'Neill, so the Vikings decided to draft his clone with the Cleveland pick. Ezra is an incredibly smart, athletic offensive tackle who seems to be a perfect fit in Gary Kubiak's zone blocking scheme.

He will need to bulk up to handle NFL defensive linemen, as he is 6'6" but played under 300 pounds for most of his college career. The hope is that after a year or two in a professional weight room with a nutrition specialist, he could become a franchise tackle for the Vikings. Nobody was happier to see Cleveland drafted than Alexander Mattison, the Vikings' backup running back who ran behind Cleveland in 2017 and 2018 at Boise State. Mattison describes Cleveland as a "monster", which I hope turns out to be an apt description.

Cameron Dantzler – The Vikings ended day two of the draft by double dipping into the cornerback pool and spending the 25th pick in the third round on Dantzler. It is hard to argue with the pick, however, as the Vikings lost their top three corners from 2019 and needed to come out of this draft with at least one CB who can play right away, so drafting two in the first three rounds goes a long way of ensuring they accomplish that.

Dantzler is a taller corner than Gladney (6'2", 189 pounds) but isn't as fast (4.64 in the 40-yard dash). According to draft experts around the league, he is one of the best pure cover corners in this year's draft. He will need to learn what he can get away with in the NFL, however, because if he plays the same way he did in college he will get flagged on every snap. With a year or two of being coached by Mike Zimmer, he should be ready to go dominate the gridiron.

Make sure to check back next week, as we break down the remaining draft picks and any undrafted free agents the Vikings signed after the draft. If you have any questions or comments, reach out to me on Twitter (@JordanWrightNFL). Skol!

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That's Love

When my mom called me and said that my dad found four N95 masks in the garage and she wanted to send them all to me since I'm a doctor – That's love.

When I reassured her that we had enough in clinic for now and that she should keep them, or at least keep two for her and dad – That's love.

When I received the box in the mail, all four masks were there, lovingly wrapped in tissue paper with a note of encouragement – That's love.

When I come home from work my children run to the top of the stairs yelling out, "Mommy's home" – That's love.

When I stop them from coming down to the landing until I can shower and change in the downstairs bathroom because I am scared that I might bring the virus home and I want to do everything I can to protect them – That's love.

When a patient sends a message to local health care workers that they are thinking of us and praying that we stay well – That's love.

When essential workers in any profession, show up to support their families and co-workers every day – That's love.

When the local theater department makes masks for the hospital and uses it as a final project for students – That's love.

When you order a take-out meal from a local restaurant or buy a gift card from a local small business – That's love.

When you turn off the news and call a friend instead so neither of you are so lonely – That's love.

When you practice social distancing, not because you are afraid, but because you do not want to add to anyone else's risk – That's love.

When teachers completely change the way they teach, with only a few days to prepare, and their eyes light up with happiness when they see their students on a Zoom meeting – That's love.

When you are frustrated, angry, scared, or just don't know what else to do, look for the love. It is all around you. Sometimes we do not see it because we are so overwhelmed with all these other waves of emotions that try to drown it out, but it is there. It is always there. That's love, waiting for you to find it.

Jill Kruse, DO is part of The Prairie Doc® team of physicians and currently practices family medicine in Brookings, South Dakota. For free and easy access to the entire Prairie Doc® library, visit www.prairiedoc.org and follow Prairie Doc® on Facebook featuring On Call with the Prairie Doc® a medical Q&A show streaming on Facebook and broadcast on SDPB most Thursdays at 7 p.m. central.



By Jill Kruse, DO ~ Prairie Doc® Perspectives

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Covid-19 Update: by Marie Miller

Typing's still slow, but I'm doing well, so I have more than the minimum for you tonight. It's looking like we might be getting back on track again; the numbers have taken a far better turn today.

We're at 964,888 cases in the US. The increase, both in raw number and percentage declined substantially today. NY leads with 288,076 cases, a big decline in both number and percentage increase. NJ, with 109,038 cases, looks like its rate of growth has been decreasing for 3 days. Remaining states are as follows: MA – 54,938, IL – 43,903, CA – 43,400, PA – 42,709, MI – 37,751, FL – 31,520, LA – 26,773, and CT – 25,269. These ten states still account for 73% of US cases. 2 more states have over 20,000 cases, 6 more have over 10,000, 10 more over 5000, 16 more + DC and PR over 1000, 6 more + GU over 100, and VI + MP under 100.

There have been 49,437 deaths in the US. The growth in percentage and raw number declined substantially from yesterday. NY has 16,966, NJ has 5938, MI has 3314, MA has 2899, IL has 1943, CT has 1975, PA has 1861, CA has 1700, and LA has 1670. There is 1 more state over 1000 deaths, 7 more over 500, 17 more + DC over 100, 7 more + PR over 50, 7 more over 10, and 2 + GU, VI, and MP under 10.

One of the keys to getting people back to work is figuring out who's already been infected and likely to be protected as a result. To do that, we need a reliable test for antibodies in the person's blood. There are dozens of antibody tests available, but because of the speed with which everything's moving, these have not gone through the usual vetting process, and it hasn't been very clear which of them are reliable enough to be useful. A team of researchers set to work to do that vetting. The team included those who did just this kind of work on tests for something called Chagas disease, so they had a solid research design to begin with. By working literally around the clock in shifts for a month, they were able to evaluate 12 tests, 10 of them rapid tests that just showed a positive or negative result and 2 of them more elaborate tests using a method called ELISA that can tell the level of antibody you have, not just whether you have it.

Now, there are two things you're interested in when you evaluate a test like this, sensitivity and specificity. Sensitivity is the test's ability to detect the thing you're looking for, in this case, antibodies to SARS-CoV-2. A test that is highly sensitive doesn't report you lack the antibody when you actually have it, a so-called false negative. Specificity is the test's ability to tell us you have the antibody only when you do actually have it. A test that is highly specific won't say someone is immune when they're not, a false positive. This would be particularly important here because we don't want to send someone off to work thinking they're protected when they actually are not; that could have serious consequences.

Here's what they found:

(1) None of the tests were especially good at detecting antibody until around 3 weeks after the infection started. Earlier than that, the results were too spotty to be super-useful. All of them were more reliable, the longer the time since the infection commenced. False negatives, even for the best tests ran around 10%.

(2) Only one test gave zero false positives; two more were 99% specific. This is the bigger deal because it means most of them, while good enough for population studies and that sort of research, are not good enough to use in our efforts to put folks out in the world with some assurance they're going to be safe.

There are a lot more tests available, and the team is continuing to evaluate them, so more information will become available as we go along.

On the treatment side, I am hearing about clinical trials using mesenchymal stem cells as therapeutics. Stem cells are interesting; you can think of them as sort of undeveloped cells. Consider when an embryo forms, for the first few days while the original cell begins to divide, the resulting cells are pretty much all the same. Any of those cells could potentially develop into any kind of tissue—liver cells, skin cells, bone cells, blood cells, etc. That process of turning into a specific kind of cell with a specific kind of function is called differentiation. Well, turns out, along the way as cells start to differentiate in that embryo, a few of them don't finish the job; they stay partially undifferentiated, that is, not yet turned into a specific kind of tissue cell. These are stem cells which can, if you need them to, turn into bone cells or cartilage cells or muscle cells or fat cells, and one place in your body where you store a supply of those stem cells is in your bone marrow.

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We've known for a while that stem cells that collect at the site of inflammation can modulate, or tamp down, an overactive immune response; so you can imagine why folks might be interested in whether administering them would have an effect on Covid-19 patients. They're of particular interest because injected stem cells tend to congregate in the lung, which is precisely where we want them, and they not only modulate an immune response, they contribute to reparative processes too. There are stem cell banks which culture stem cells in the lab, so availability should be relatively good, at least in quantities suitable for testing.

There are clinical trials getting underway, but there is some evidence this may be a promising avenue based on small numbers of patients who have received them already. It is important to remember that the results in a small number of patients do not constitute proof of the treatment's efficacy, but there have been a few patients who did very well after stem cell therapy. Of 12 patients on ventilators in NY, 10 were able to come off the vents; these are unusually good results for Covid-19 patients in NY. Controlled trials will enable doctors to determine whether these results are applicable to patients in general.

There are some studies underway of people who don't fit the usual mold of Covid-19 infections, for example, young people who get very sick and then people who are highly exposed and don't get sick at all. Both of those are atypical occurrences, and that makes them interesting. Sometimes, if we can figure out what's different about atypical cases for a disease, that understanding will form the basis for a treatment. So they're getting studied. One project is mapping the genomes of folks like these and comparing them to people who did fit the expected pattern to see what's different. This group of researchers, including scientists from around the world, is operating on the theory that there may be a single-gene mutation driving that unusual susceptibility in the young, healthy people who do get severe illness; identifying the gene, if there is such, would help us to identify other high-risk or low-risk people and also might give us a handle on an approach to treatment. This isn't a crazy idea; for example, there is a single-gene mutation in a few people which makes them highly resistant to HIV infection, and once that gene was understood, this understanding formed the basis for therapies.

Simply having a way to identify high-risk young people might make something else possible. It has been proposed to permit young, healthy people to volunteer for a vaccine challenge to speed vaccine approval; this would involve vaccinating people who are statistically at low risk for serious disease, then challenging that vaccination directly by exposing those volunteers to the virus. If you were going to do that (and I don't know that the ethicists will let that go forward, but if they did), it would be imperative to do everything you can to minimize the potential for harm. Being able to identify people who are at high risk for severe disease makes the ethical problem much smaller. The project, however, could take a very long time, so we'll have to keep an eye on that too.

We're starting a new week with a new outlook, one that is promising. Let's hope this time it holds and starts a trend that enables us to see our way out of this thing. I know we have a long road ahead, but it feels good to have our feet once again on that road. The only way out of this is right down the middle, so we just have to keep trudging along. We can figuratively link hands and help one another along the way, even if we're not allowed to touch in real life. So do that. Touch someone who needs you.

And I'll see you all tomorrow.

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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	6202	6,510	6,893	7,303	7,691	7,941	8,280	8,675	
Wyoming	230	239	253	261	270	275	282	288	296	
North Dakota	251	269	278	293	308	331	341	365	393	439
South Dakota	393	447	536	626	730	868	988	1168	1,311	1,411
United States	431,838	466,396	501,701	530,006	557,590	582,619	609,685	639,664	671,425	706,779
US Deaths	14,768	16,703	18,781	20,608	22,109	23,529	26,059	30,985	33,286	37,079

Minnesota	+85	+88	+94	+91	+194	+29	+45	+114	+103	+159
Nebraska	+45	+54	+71	+56	+110	+57	+30	+51	+114	+72
Montana	+13	+22	+23	---	+10	+7	+5	+5	+11	+7
Colorado	+226	+547	+308	+383	+410	+388	+250	+339	+395	
Wyoming	+9	+9	+14	+8	+9	+5	+7	+6	+8	
North Dakota	+14	+18	+9	+15	+15	+23	+10	+24	+28	+46
South Dakota	+73	+54	+89	+90	+104	+138	+120	+180	+143	+100
United States	+31,909	+34,558	+35,305	+28,305	+27,584	+25,029	+27,066	+29,979	+31,761	+35,354
US Deaths	+1,857	+1,935	+2,078	1,827	+1,501	+1,420	+2,530	+4,926	+2,301	+3,793

	Apr. 18	Apr. 19	Apr. 20	Apr. 21	Apr. 22	Apr. 23	Apr. 24	Apr. 25	Apr. 26
Minnesota	2,213	2,356	2,470	2,567	2,721	2,942	3,185	3,446	3,602
Nebraska	1,287	1,474	1,648	1,722	1813	2,124	2,421	2,732	3,028
Montana	426	433	433	437	439	442	444	445	448
Colorado	9,433	9,730	10,106	10,447	10,878	11,262	12,256	12,968	13,441
Wyoming	309	313	317	322	326	332	349	362	370
North Dakota	528	585	627	644	679	709	748	803	867
South Dakota	1542	1635	1685	1755	1858	1,956	2,040	2,147	2,212
United States	735,287	758,720	786,638	824,438	842,624	867,459	905,364	938,154	965,435
US Deaths	39,090	40,666	42,295	45,039	46,785	49,804	51,956	53,755	54,856

Minnesota	+142	+143	+114	+97	+154	+221	+243	+261	+156
Nebraska	+149	+187	+174	+74	+91	+311	+297	+311	+296
Montana	+4	+7	0	+4	+2	+3	+2	+1	+3
Colorado	+379	+297	+376	+341	+431	+384	+994	+712	+473
Wyoming	+7	+4	+4	+5	+4	+6	+7	+13	+8
North Dakota	+89	+57	+42	+17	+35	+30	+39	+55	+64
South Dakota	+131	+93	+50	+70	+103	+98	+84	+107	+65
United States	+28,508	+23,433	+27,918	+37,800	+18,186	+24,835	+37,905	+32,790	+27,281
US Deaths	+2,011	+1,576	+1,629	+2,744	+1,746	+3,019	+2,152	+1,799	+1,101

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April 26th COVID-19 UPDATE

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from Dept. of Health Lab records

Hand County recorded its first positive case while Sanborn County "graduated" to the fully recovered class. Both North and South Dakota each recorded one new death.

South Dakota:

Positive: +65 (2212 total)

Negative: +613 (14,062 total)

Hospitalized: +7 (135 total) - 64 currently hospitalized (3 more from yesterday)

Deaths: +1 (11 total) Minnehaha records its 6th death.

Recovered: +34 (1257 total)

Counties with no positive cases report the following negative tests: Bennett 13, Brule +5 (51), Buffalo 9, Butte 23, Campbell 7, Custer +2 (18), Day +2 (56), Dewey 23, Douglas +1 (24), Edmunds 19, Grant +2 (36), Gregory 32, Haakon +1 (16), Hanson +2 (23), Harding 1, Jackson +1 (9), Jones 4, Kingsbury +1 (63), Mellette 11, Perkins 5, Potter 31, Tripp +1 (53), Ziebach 3, unassigned +215 (1326).

Brown: No Change

Hand: First Positive Case

Hutchinson: +1 positive (3 total)

Lincoln: +3 positive, +3 recovered (73 of 128 recovered)

Minnehaha: +58 positive, +30 recovered (1013 of 1854 recovered)

Moody: +1 positive (3 total)

Pennington: +1 positive (12 total)

Sanborn: +1 recovered (3 of 3 recovered)

Fully recovered from positive cases: Aurora, Bon Homme, Charles Mix, Calrk, Corson, Deuel, Fall River, Faulk, Hamlin, Hutchinson, Hyde, Lawrence, Lyman, Marshall, Meade, Oglala Lakota, Roberts, Sanborn, Spink, Sully, Todd, Walworth.

The N.D. DoH & private labs are reporting 1,097 completed tests today for COVID-19 with 64 new positive cases, bringing the statewide total to 867. NDDoH reports one new death (17 total).

State & private labs have reported 20,447 total tests & 19,580 negatives.

326 ND patients are recovered.

COVID-19 IN SOUTH DAKOTA

Total Positive Cases*	2212
Total Negative Cases*	14062
Recovered	1257
Ever Hospitalized**	135
Deaths***	11

AGE GROUP OF SOUTH DAKOTA COVID-19 CASES

Age Range	# of Cases	# of Deaths
0-19 years	138	0
20-29 years	416	0
30-39 years	511	0
40-49 years	444	0
50-59 years	396	4
60-69 years	203	3
70-79 years	50	1
80+ years	54	3

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County	Positive Cases	Recovered Cases	Negative Cases
Aurora	1	1	37
Beadle	21	19	177
Bennett	0	0	13
Bon Homme	4	4	99
Brookings	11	9	329
Brown	30	15	561
Brule	0	0	51
Buffalo	0	0	9
Butte	0	0	23
Campbell	0	0	7
Charles Mix	4	4	78
Clark	1	1	52
Clay	5	4	124
Codington	14	13	450
Corson	1	1	17
Custer	0	0	18
Davison	5	3	288
Day	0	0	56
Deuel	1	1	70
Dewey	0	0	23
Douglas	0	0	24
Edmunds	0	0	19
Fall River	1	1	40
Faulk	1	1	17
Grant	0	0	36
Gregory	0	0	32
Haakon	0	0	16
Hamlin	2	2	57
Hand	1	0	19
Hanson	0	0	23
Harding	0	0	1
Hughes	7	6	214
Hutchinson	3	2	89

Hyde	1	1	11
Jackson	0	0	9
Jerauld	6	4	34
Jones	0	0	4
Kingsbury	0	0	63
Lake	4	2	123
Lawrence	9	9	148
Lincoln	128	73	1325
Lyman	2	2	26
Marshall	1	1	36
McCook	4	3	89
McPherson	1	0	16
Meade	1	1	115
Mellette	0	0	11
Miner	1	0	20
Minnehaha	1854	1013	5899
Moody	3	1	84
Oglala Lakota	1	1	30
Pennington	12	10	512
Perkins	0	0	5
Potter	0	0	31
Roberts	4	4	93
Sanborn	3	3	35
Spink	3	3	91
Stanley	1	0	33
Sully	1	1	13
Todd	1	1	44
Tripp	0	0	53
Turner	15	5	136
Union	12	6	130
Walworth	5	5	41
Yankton	26	21	404
Ziebach	0	0	3
Unassigned****	0	0	1326

COVID-19 DEATHS IN SOUTH DAKOTA BY COUNTY

County of Residence	# of Deaths
Beadle	2
Jerauld	1
McCook	1
Minnehaha	6
Pennington	1

SEX OF SOUTH DAKOTA COVID-19 CASES

Sex	# of Cases	# of Deaths
Female	1045	2
Male	1167	9

FROM JOHN HOPKINS HOSPITAL - DESTROYING THE VIRUS

Since the virus is not a living organism but is a protein molecule, it cannot be killed. It has to decay on its own. The disintegration time depends on the temperature, humidity and type of material where it lies.

The virus is not a living organism; It is a protein molecule (RNA or DNA) covered by a protective layer of lipid (fat), which, when absorbed by the cells of the ocular (eyes), nasal (nose) or buccal mucosa (mouth), changes their genetic code (mutates) and converts into aggressor and multiplier cells.

The virus is very fragile; the only thing that protects it is a thin outer layer of fat and that is the reason why soap or detergent is the best weapon. The foam CUTS THE FAT (that is why you have to scrub for 20 seconds or more, to create lots of foam). By dissolving the fat layer, the protein molecule disperses and breaks down.

HEAT melts fat; this is why it is necessary to use water above 25 degrees Celsius (77° F.) for hand washing, laundry and cleaning surfaces. In addition, hot water makes more foam, making it more effective.

Alcohol or any mixture with alcohol over 65% DISSOLVES ALL FAT, especially the external lipid layer of the virus.

Any solution with 1 part bleach and 5 parts water directly dissolves the protein, breaking it down from the inside.

Oxygenated water increases the effectiveness of soap, alcohol and chlorine, because peroxide dissolves the virus protein. However, because you have to use it in its pure form, it can damage your skin.

NO BACTERICIDE OR ANTIBIOTIC WILL WORK because the virus is not a living organism like bacteria; antibodies cannot kill what is not alive.

NEVER shake used or unused clothing, sheets or fabric. While it is glued to a porous surface, it is very inert and disintegrates after a period of time:

- up to 3 hours (fabric and porous),
- 4 hours (copper),
- 24 hours (cardboard),
- 42 hours (metal),
- 48 hours (wood), and
- 72 hours (plastic).

But if you shake it or use a feather duster, the virus molecules float in the air for up to 3 hours, and can lodge in your nose.

The virus molecules remain very stable at colder temperatures, including air conditioning in houses and cars. They also need moisture and darkness to stay stable. Therefore, dehumidified, dry, warm and bright environments will degrade the virus faster.

UV LIGHT on any object that may contain the virus breaks down the protein. Be careful, it also breaks down collagen (which is protein) in the skin.

The virus CANNOT go through healthy skin.

Vinegar is NOT useful because it does not break down the protective layer of fat.

NO SPIRITS, NOR VODKA, serve. The strongest vodka is only 40% alcohol, and you need a minimum of 65%.

LISTERINE is 65% alcohol.

The more confined the space, the higher the concentration of the virus there can be. The more open or naturally ventilated, the less.

You have to wash your hands before and after touching any commonly used surfaces such as: mucosa, food, locks, knobs, switches, remotes, cell phones, watches, computers, desks etc. and don't forget when you use the bathroom.

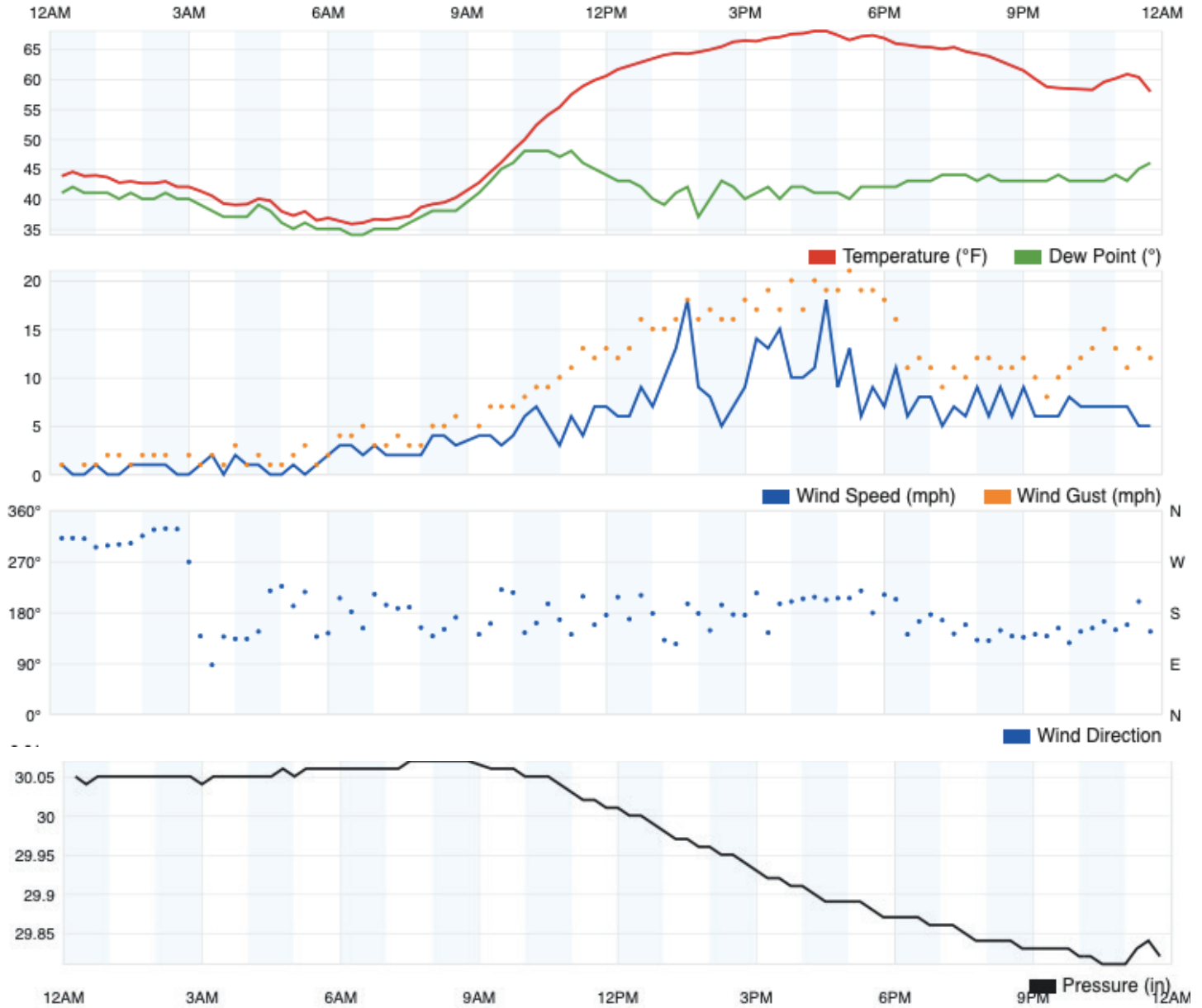
You have to MOISTURIZE YOUR HANDS due to frequent washing. Dry hands have cracks and the molecules can hide in the micro cracks. The thicker the moisturizer, the better.

Also keep your NAILS SHORT so that the virus does not hide there.

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Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs



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Today



Mostly Sunny

High: 74 °F

Tonight



30% → 80%

Chance
Showers then
Showers

Low: 48 °F

Tuesday



80%

Showers

High: 60 °F

Tuesday
Night



20%

Slight Chance
T-storms

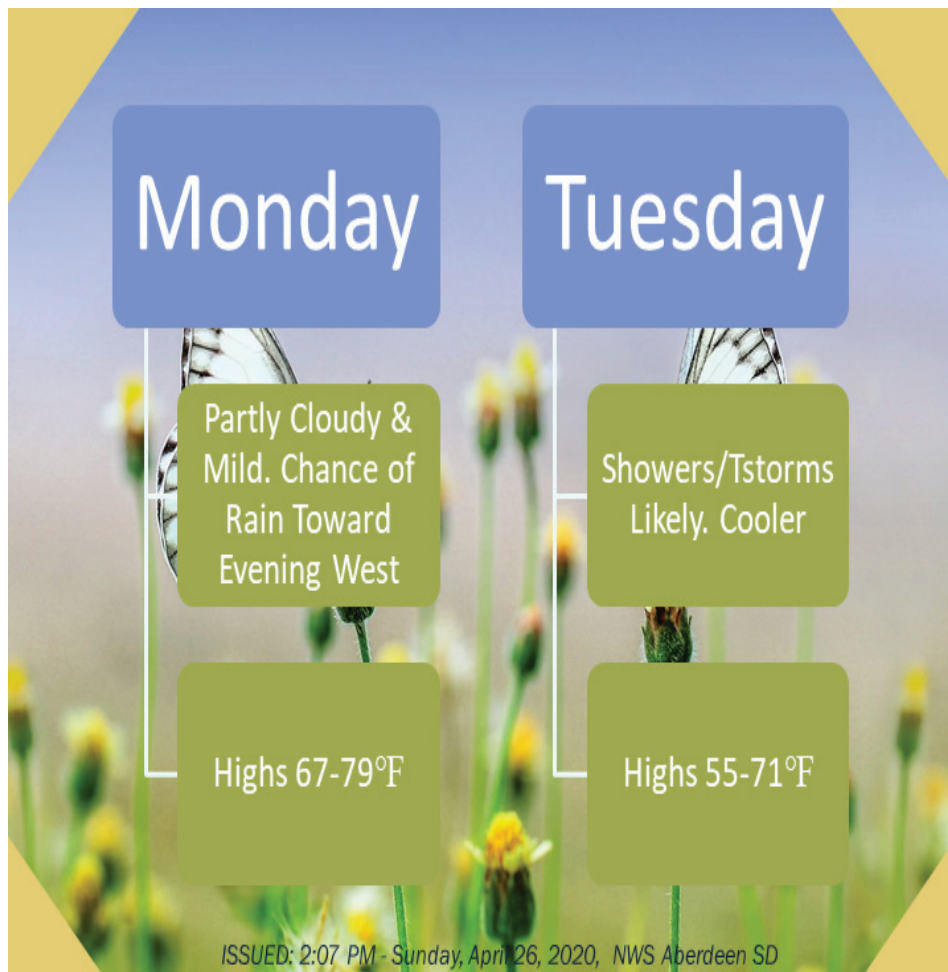
Low: 45 °F

Wednesday



Mostly Sunny

High: 67 °F



Monday should prove mainly dry and mild. However, for Monday night and Tuesday, more widespread showers and isolated thunderstorms are expected.

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Today in Weather History

April 27, 1968: A significant snowstorm raged over the northern Black Hills blocking many highways near Gillette and Moorcroft with an estimated three to four feet of snow. Winds in the Sturgis area were nearly 90 mph.

1898: The first Weather Bureau kite was launched in Topeka, Kansas to report daily, early morning, atmospheric observations. By year's end, 16 additional launch sites would be in operation.

1899 - A tornado struck Kirksville, MO, killing 34 persons and destroying 300 buildings. (David Ludlum)

1931: The temperature at Pahala, located on the main island of Hawaii, soared to 100 degrees to establish a state record.

1912: The April 27-28, 1912 outbreak was the climax of a wild, week-long period of severe weather that occurred in Oklahoma. Strong to violent tornadoes struck portions of central and north-central Oklahoma on April 20, 1912. Also, a violent tornado hit Ponca City, OK on April 25, 1912. From the 27 through the 28th, 16 tornadoes rated F2 or greater touched down in the state with 6 of them rated F4. About 40 people were killed, and the storms injured 120 people.

1931 - The temperature at Pahala, located on the main island of Hawaii, soared to 100 degrees to establish a state record. (The Weather Channel)

1942 - A destructive tornado swept across Rogers County and Mayes County in Oklahoma. The tornado struck the town of Pryor killing 52 persons and causing two million dollars damage. (David Ludlum)

1987 - Forty-two cities in the western and south central U.S. reported record high temperatures for the date. The afternoon high of 87 degrees at Olympia WA was an April record, and highs of 92 degrees at Boise ID, 95 degrees at Monroe LA, and 96 degrees at Sacramento CA tied April records. (The National Weather Summary) More than 300 daily temperature records fell by the wayside during a two week long heat wave across thirty-four states in the southern and western U.S. Thirteen cities established records for the month of April. (Sandra and TI Richard Sanders - 1987)

1988 - Mount Washington NH reported seven feet of snow in ten days, pushing their snowfall total for the month past the previous record of 89.3 inches set in 1975. (The National Weather Summary)

1989 - Thunderstorms produced severe weather from the Lower and Middle Mississippi Valley to Virginia and the Carolinas. Hail up to four and a half inches in diameter caused five million dollars damage around Omaha NE. Thunderstorms spawned eleven tornadoes, and there were 160 other reports of large hail and damaging winds. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1990 - Thunderstorms produced severe weather in eastern Texas and the Lower Mississippi Valley. Severe thunderstorms spawned thirteen tornadoes in Texas and twelve in Louisiana. A tornado southwest of Coolidge TX injured eight persons and caused more than five million dollars damage. There were also eighty-five reports of large hail and damaging winds, with baseball size hail reported at Mexia TX and Shreveport LA. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data) Forty-three cities in the eastern U.S. reported record high temperatures for the date. Records highs included 94 degrees at Charleston WV, 95 degrees at Baltimore MD and 96 degrees at Richmond VA. (The National Weather Summary)

2003: For only the 11th time since records began in 1871, hail was observed in Key West Florida. A severe thunderstorm produced hail to 1.75 inches in diameter which easily broke the previous record of a half an inch in diameter which was set on May 10, 1961.

2011 - An estimated 305 tornados between the 27th and 28th sets a record for the largest outbreak ever recorded, including two EF-5s, four EF-4s and 21 EF-3s. Arkansas through Mississippi, Alabama, Georgia, southern Tennessee, Virginia to Pennsylvania and New York were all affected. An estimated 300 died including 210 in Alabama alone. This brought the April total past 600, the most in any month in recorded US weather history.

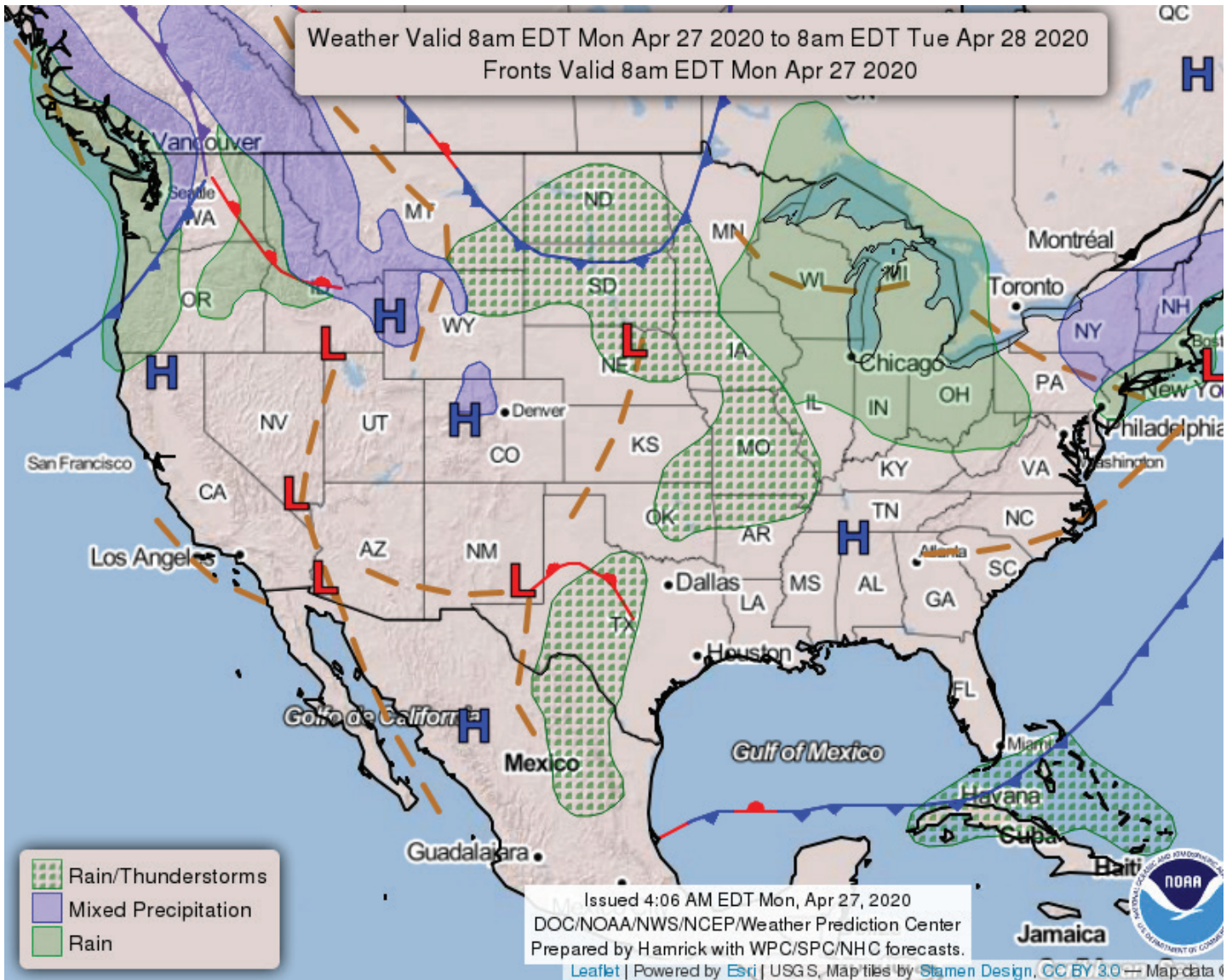
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Yesterday's Groton Weather Today's Info

High Temp: 69 °F at 4:34 PM
Low Temp: 36 °F at 6:27 AM
Wind: 21 mph at 3:51 PM
Precip:

Record High: 91° in 1897
Record Low: 17° in 2005
Average High: 63°F
Average Low: 37°F
Average Precip in April.: 1.50
Precip to date in April.: 0.97
Average Precip to date: 3.68
Precip Year to Date: 1.32
Sunset Tonight: 8:36 p.m.
Sunrise Tomorrow: 6:26 a.m.



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WHAT NEXT?

Have you ever eaten a Twinkie? Those moist cakes filled with creamy vanilla? Do you know how they got to the grocer's shelf?

Jimmy Dewar is the creator of the delicious little treats. He never planned on baking Twinkies. The idea for them came to him out of frustration.

He began by making strawberry shortcakes but ran into a problem. At the end of the season, he had pans but no strawberries. He then decided to create a banana filling which was well received in the stores. But he ran into another problem.

One year there was a shortage of bananas, and he was forced to try something else. He thought and worked and experimented and came up with the idea of a vanilla filling. It was and still is a delicious treat and enjoyed by many every day. Besides, the creamy vanilla filling has no season.

That's the way God works in our lives. When he closes one door, He willingly opens another if we are faithful, work diligently, and look to Him for guidance. Unfortunately, many Christians look upon difficult days as a reason to become despondent and discouraged and not dependent upon God for His answers to their problems.

God's Word declares, "I have opened a door for you that no one can shut." Trust Him. He wants you to succeed. Only you can shut the door He opens for you.

Prayer: Open our eyes, Lord, to see the opportunities that You set before us. May we look to You each day with excitement for the challenges You will bring us! In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: Revelation 3:8 " I know all the things you do, and I have opened a door for you that no one can close. You have little strength, yet you obeyed my word and did not deny me. "

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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

'Crazy day': Avera doctor helps deliver 16 babies in one day

By DANIELLE FERGUSON Argus Leader

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — Dr. Catherine Brockmeier had an exhausting bundle-of-joy-filled 24 hours. The Avera Health OB/GYN helped deliver 16 babies in one 24-hour shift earlier this month: a record for the health care system.

"It was definitely a crazy day," Brockmeier told the Argus Leader.

Brockmeier, who has been with Avera since 2016, said the team of OB/GYNs, nurses and surgical assistants usually delivers about six babies per day. She beat her own personal top of about 10 deliveries. More than half of the babies were delivered by cesarean sections, which can usually take around an hour, and the women who labored varied in time, so there was always something to manage, Brockmeier said.

"I felt exhausted," she said. "Occasionally I get to sleep a little bit on a shift. I didn't sleep at all that night."

Brockmeier usually has three of those 24-hour shifts each month. With the scheduling changes the hospital made because of the COVID-19 pandemic, however, she pulled two all-day and a 12-hour shift in the same week. Now, teams are spending a week in the hospital and two weeks in the clinic, a rotating shift to help prevent exposure, she said.

Patients are screened for the illness, caused by the new coronavirus, and doctors are wearing personal protective equipment. Rooms are limited to one support person during labor to protect staff and patients from potential additional exposure.

Brockmeier has had to help COVID-19-positive mothers deliver their babies. While many are asymptomatic, others have had a fever or cough during labor. Some may opt for a cesarean section, or the delivery team will tailor labor management to the patient's needs.

"We're seeing things across the board at this point," Brockmeier said. "Unfortunately, I think there's more to come."

For parents, bringing a child into the world in the middle of a pandemic can be understandably anxiety-inducing, Brockmeier said. Brockmeier encouraged parents to reach out to their healthcare provider with questions or concerns. As a mother herself, Brockmeier said she understands the worries, and hopes parents will reach out to and support other parents.

"Welcoming a baby is almost always a joyous time," she said. "Even though there is so much chaos and uncertainty right now, it's still a celebration. We still want them to look back as a great moment for them."

To top off the record-setting day, which started at 7 a.m. April 16 and ended 7 a.m. the next day, Brockmeier got another memorable moment: helping deliver triplets, something she said hadn't happened at the hospital in her four years there.

"That day was particularly special," Brockmeier said. "It never gets old, delivering babies. Despite what's going on in the world, it's still an incredible time. I want them (mothers) to be thrilled and happy. Stay positive. Rely on family and friends. It's such a momentous occasion to celebrate."

U.S. states build stockpiles of malaria drug touted by Trump

By BRADY McCOMBS and LINDSAY WHITEHURST Associated Press

SALT LAKE CITY (AP) — State and local governments across the United States have obtained about 30 million doses of a malaria drug touted by President Trump to treat patients with the coronavirus, despite warnings from doctors that more research is needed.

At least 22 states and Washington, D.C., secured shipments of the drug, hydroxychloroquine, according to information compiled from state and federal officials by The Associated Press. Sixteen of those states were won by Trump in 2016, although five of them, including North Carolina and Louisiana, are now led by Democratic governors.

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Supporters say having a supply on hand makes sense in case the drug is shown to be effective against the pandemic that has devastated the global economy and killed nearly 200,000 people worldwide, and to ensure a steady supply for people who need it for other conditions like lupus.

But health experts worry that having the drug easily available at a time of heightened public fear could make it easier to misuse it. The U.S. Food and Drug Administration on Friday warned doctors against prescribing the drug, hydroxychloroquine, for treating the coronavirus outside of hospitals or research settings because of reports of serious side effects, including dangerous irregular heart rhythms and death among patients.

It's the latest admonition against the drug that Trump mentioned 17 times in various public appearances, touting its potential despite his own health advisors telling him it is unproven.

Oklahoma spent \$2 million to buy the drugs, and Utah and Ohio have spent hundreds of thousands on purchases. The rest of the cities and states received free shipments from drug companies or the U.S. government over the last month. Ohio received a large donation from a local company.

Several states including New York, Connecticut, Oregon, Louisiana, North Carolina and Texas received donations of the medication from a private company based in New Jersey called Amneal Pharmaceutical. Florida was given 1 million doses from Israeli company Teva Pharmaceutical.

The Federal Emergency Management Agency said Friday it has sent out 14.4 million doses of hydroxychloroquine to 14 cities, including Washington, D.C., Philadelphia and Baltimore, from the federal government's national stockpile, a source that also provided South Dakota and California with supplies. The agency said earlier this month it had sent 19 million tablets and didn't explain the discrepancy between the two figures. The U.S. government received a donation of 30 million doses from Swiss drugmaker Novartis on March 29 to build up the stockpile, which does not normally stock the drug.

"If he (Trump) hadn't amplified the early and inappropriate enthusiasm for the drug, I doubt if the states would have even been aware of it," said Dr. Kenneth B. Klein, a consultant from outside of Seattle who has spent the last three decades working for drug companies to design and evaluate their clinical trials.

Klein said it's understandable that government and health officials looked into hydroxychloroquine — which is approved for treating malaria, rheumatoid arthritis and lupus — as a possible remedy during a frightening pandemic, but the time and energy has been misspent. The potential side effects are worrisome, especially because many coronavirus patients already have underlying health conditions, he said.

"The states and the federal government are reacting in light of that fear. But it's not a rational response," Klein said.

Doctors can already prescribe the malaria drug to patients with COVID-19, a practice known as off-label prescribing, and many do. Medical and pharmacy groups have warned against prescribing it for preventive purposes. The FDA has allowed it into the national stockpile, but only for narrowly defined purposes as studies continue.

Utah Gov. Gary Herbert, a Republican, has previously acknowledged that the drug is "not without controversy," but defended the state's efforts to build up a supply. As questions mounted Friday, though, he distanced himself from an \$800,000 purchase the state made from a local company and said it would be investigated.

Herbert also halted a plan to spend \$8 million more to buy 200,000 additional treatments. "The bottom line is, we're not purchasing any more of this drug," he said.

Other states have received it from the federal government. South Dakota, with a population of 885,000 people, received 1.2 million doses and is using the drug for a trial as well as doctor-approved prescriptions for COVID-19 positive patients.

South Dakota Gov. Kristi Noem, a Republican and Trump ally, said earlier this month she pushed the White House to provide enough hydroxychloroquine to give it to every hospitalized person, others who are vulnerable to the coronavirus and "front line" health care workers. As of Tuesday, Sanford Health said there were 200 patients who have recovered from COVID-19 in a registry, and that some of them may have taken hydroxychloroquine, but it was not a requirement.

It is one of several states that say they are using some of the doses for clinical trials going on to assess

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whether the drug has benefits for COVID-19 patients.

Many states, however, have opted to steer clear over concerns about side effects and lingering questions about the drug's effectiveness. At least one of those states is led by a Republican governor, Tennessee, where the state's Department of Health sent a letter warning against using the drug or hoarding it.

"We were seeing a flood of inappropriate prescribing and hoarding, quite frankly," Health Commissioner Lisa Piercey told reporters.

Kansas health director Dr. Lee Norman said the state has no plans to buy the drug because evidence is lacking that it helps treat COVID-19.

Most states aren't paying for the drug, and it's not clear why Utah didn't get it from the federal reserve or a donation from a business like Amneal Pharmaceutical.

News releases from state governments show the New Jersey-based company has sent millions of doses of the drug free of cost to states, including 2 million to New York and 1 million to Texas. A company spokesperson declined to provide a list of donations or answer other questions from The Associated Press.

Pharmaceutical companies can often manufacture pills they already make fairly cheaply. The donations may have been done to earn good publicity while setting it up to make future sales if hydroxychloroquine ends up being a reliable treatment for the virus, Klein said.

Controversy has swirled around the drug since Trump started promoting it in the White House briefing room on March 19.

He mentioned the drug in briefings through April 14, and the White House distributed press releases praising Trump's efforts to stockpile it for use in areas of the country hard-hit by the virus. But for the past week, as studies have shown mixed or even harmful results, Trump has gone silent on the drug.

Asked about it Thursday, Trump said he hadn't heard of the a study done at U.S. veterans hospitals with preliminary results that showed no benefit, and rejected the notion he had stopped promoting hydroxychloroquine as a cure.

"I haven't at all. I haven't at all," Trump said. "We'll see what happens."

This story was first published on April 24, 2020. It was updated on April 26, 2020 to correct that 200 patients in South Dakota who had recovered from COVID-19 were on a registry, and that some of them may have taken hydroxychloroquine, but it was not a requirement.

Associated Press writers Zeke Miller, Darlene Superville and Matthew Perrone in Washington, DC, Susan Haigh in Hartford, Connecticut, Don Thompson in California, Melinda Deslatte in Louisiana, Gary Robertson in North Carolina, Andrew Welsh-Huggins in Ohio, Andrew Selsky in Oregon, Amy Forliti in Minnesota, Paul Weber in Texas, John Hanna in Kansas, Kimberlee Kruesi in Tennessee, Summer Ballentine in Missouri, Emily Wagster in Jackson, Mississippi, Sean Murphy in Oklahoma, and Marina Villeneuve in New York contributed to this story.

Sturgis man sentenced to 3 years on child porn charges

STURGIS, S.D. (AP) — A Sturgis man convicted of possession of child pornography has been sentenced to three years in federal prison.

The Rapid City Journal reports 28-year-old Sean Gertsch's conviction stemmed from an undercover sting operation targeting people using the internet to meet minors for sex at the 2019 Sturgis motorcycle rally.

The operation targeted "online predators" by posting or creating profiles on Craigslist and dating and chatting apps.

The sting was conducted by the South Dakota Division of Criminal Investigations, federal Homeland Security Investigations and local agencies.

South Korea maintains Kim Jong Un health rumors are untrue

By HYUNG-JIN KIM Associated Press

SEOUL, South Korea (AP) — A top South Korean official said his country remains confident there have been no “unusual developments” in North Korea, suggesting that rumors about the possible ill health of leader Kim Jong Un are untrue.

Unification Minister Kim Yeon-chul told a closed-door forum in Seoul on Sunday that South Korea has “enough intelligence to confidently say that there are no unusual developments” in rival North Korea that would back up speculation about Kim Jong Un’s health, according to his ministry.

The minister said he would not reveal what specific intelligence led to that conclusion, but stressed that it had undergone a complex analysis.

The rumors about Kim’s health began to swirl after he missed the April 15 commemoration of the 108th birthday of his grandfather, North Korea founder Kim Il Sung. Kim Jong Un is the third generation of his family to rule North Korea, and he hadn’t missed the event, one of the most important in the North, since assuming power after his father Kim Jong Il’s death in late 2011.

The unification minister’s comments are a reiteration of earlier South Korean statements that Kim Jong Un appeared to be handling state affairs normally and that no unusual activities had been detected in North Korea. Those comments failed to dispel the rumors about Kim, which have been fed by the silence of North Korea’s state media about their leader’s whereabouts.

As the absolute leader of a country with a nuclear weapons program, Kim’s health is matter of intense interest both regionally and globally. If something were to happen to Kim, some experts say it could lead to instability in North Korea.

South Korea’s presidential office earlier said it has information that Kim has been staying out of Pyongyang, North Korea’s capital, and that there had been no emergency readiness order issued by the North’s military or the ruling Workers’ Party that likely would have been made if Kim were truly in serious condition.

On Monday, South Korean President Moon Jae-in repeated an offer to conduct some inter-Korean cooperation projects such as a joint anti-coronavirus quarantine campaign. Moon also said he will strive for mutual prosperity “based on confidence between Chairman Kim and me and our firm resolve to (achieve) peace.”

Monday is the second anniversary of Moon’s first summit with Kim at the Korean border village of Panmunjom.

Satellite photos released Saturday by 38 North, a website specializing in North Korea studies, showed that a train likely belonging to Kim has been parked at his compound on the country’s east coast since last week.

“The train’s presence does not prove the whereabouts of the North Korean leader or indicate anything about his health, but it does lend weight to reports that Kim is staying at an elite area on the country’s eastern coast,” 38 North said.

Saudi coalition urges Yemen separatists to honor Riyadh deal

By JON GAMBRELL Associated Press

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates (AP) — A Saudi-led coalition mired in a yearslong war in Yemen on Monday urged Emirati-backed southern separatists to honor terms of a Riyadh peace deal and return control of the port city of Aden to the country’s internationally recognized government.

The statement by Saudi Arabia comes after the separatists’ Southern Transitional Council again claimed sole control on Sunday of Aden, a Red Sea port that serves as the seat of the internationally recognized government as Yemen’s Shiite rebels, known as Houthis, hold the country’s capital, Sanaa.

The council’s decision adds yet more complexity to the grinding war in Yemen that has pushed the Arab world’s poorest nation to the brink of famine and killed over 100,000 people.

The Saudi statement urged the council to return to the terms of the November 2019 Riyadh agreement, which ended earlier fighting between the separatists and the government forces — ostensible allies in the war against the Houthis — after the council seized control of Aden just a few months earlier.

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That deal had called for both sides to remove heavy military equipment from Yemeni cities under their control and form a unity government that included equal representation. But that deal had yet to be implemented as the war continued, massive floods struck Aden and Yemen faces the threat of the coronavirus pandemic and the COVID-19 illness it causes.

In its statement, the Saudi-led coalition urged the council to honor the deal "to unite Yemeni ranks, restore state institutions and combat the scourge of terrorism."

The deal "entails forming a competent government" that would operate out of Aden "to tackle economic and developmental challenges, in light of natural disasters such as floods, fears of the COVID-19 pandemic outbreak and work to provide services to the brotherly people of Yemen."

The statement did not say what Saudi Arabia would do if the council refused. The kingdom, itself focused on the coronavirus outbreak, declared a unilateral cease-fire with the Houthis in April that was later extended through the holy Muslim month of Ramadan. But fighting has continued, with each side blaming the other for violations.

The Southern Transitional Council had been the on-the-ground allies of the United Arab Emirates, once Saudi Arabia's main partner in the war that subsequently withdrew from the conflict. The council's backers often fly the flag of former Communist South Yemen and have pushed to again split the country into two like it was from 1967 to 1990.

The Houthis in 2014 overran major parts of northern Yemen, including Sanaa, pushing out the internationally recognized government. The Saudi-led coalition entered the conflict backing the internationally recognized government in 2015.

In a separate development, Yemeni tribal leaders and security officials said Monday that two suspected U.S. drones strikes killed at least six al-Qaida militants in Yemen's southern province of Shabwa earlier this week. The U.S. military did not confirm the strikes.

The militants were killed in two separate strikes in the district of Bayhan, which is known as a stronghold of Yemen's al-Qaida branch, the security officials said. The officials spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to speak to reporters, while the tribal leaders did so for fear of reprisals.

Associated Press writer Ahmed al-Haj in Sanaa, Yemen, contributed to this report.

Mosque's makeshift morgue shows virus toll on UK minorities

By JO KEARNEY and JILL LAWLESS Associated Press

BIRMINGHAM, England (AP) — The holy month of Ramadan is underway, and the Central Jamia Mosque Ghamkol Sharif in Birmingham should be full of worshippers. But this year, the main arrivals are the dead.

While the mosque in the central England city has been closed in response to the coronavirus pandemic, its parking lot has been transformed into a temporary morgue with room for 150 bodies.

The volunteer-run mortuary, with its white tents, industrial refrigerators and neat stacks of coffins, is evidence of the toll the virus is taking on Britain's Muslim and ethnic-minority communities. The two most diverse regions of the U.K. — London and the Midlands area centered in Birmingham — have seen the largest number of deaths in the outbreak.

Mohammed Zahid, a mosque trustee who helped set up the mortuary with a firm of Muslim funeral directors, said the mosque in Birmingham's predominantly South Asian Small Heath district normally holds one or two funerals a week.

In the last few weeks, "we were doing five to six a day," he said.

"You can see how the families were grieving," said 44-year-old Zahid, who wears a mask, coveralls and gloves as he moves among the coffins.

Local government social-distancing rules allow only six people to attend each burial.

"Especially when they can't get their own cousins and brothers and sisters around them — it's made it really hard for the people who've lost their loved ones," said Zahid, who has lost two aunts to COVID-19. "What do you say to a family who's got five sons or daughters, and some of them have to stay home?"

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It's a similar story at the nearby Green Lane Mosque, where coffins lie stacked up inside the prayer hall. Usually the mosque holds about 25 funerals a year. For the past three weeks it has seen five a day.

"Everybody's worrying about whether it will be their family members next, their loved ones," said Saleem Ahmed, the mosque's head of welfare and services.

Britain has recorded more than 20,700 hospital deaths of people with coronavirus. Thousands more are likely to have died in nursing homes.

The virus has hit people of all ages and backgrounds, including Prime Minister Boris Johnson, who spent three nights in intensive care. But evidence suggests that ethnic-minority Britons are feeling a disproportionate impact.

Statistics show that 16% of those who died in Britain with the coronavirus up to April 17 were from black, Asian or minority ethnic (BAME) backgrounds. About 14% of the U.K. population comes from those backgrounds.

Even more starkly, data from Intensive Care National Audit and Research shows that a third of people in intensive care with COVID-19 in the U.K. are non-white. And many of the over 100 health care workers who have died in the outbreak were from BAME backgrounds.

The government has asked public health officials to investigate the virus' heavy impact on minorities.

A similar trend has been seen in countries including the United States, where an Associated Press analysis found that about 42% of Americans who have died from COVID-19 were black, while African Americans account for roughly 21% of the population in the areas analyzed.

In France, the poor and largely immigrant neighborhoods on the fringes of Paris have seen some of the highest increases in mortality since the outbreak began.

Kamlesh Khunti, a professor of primary care, diabetes and vascular medicine at the University of Leicester, said complex factors may be involved. While black Americans often have worse access to medical care than white Americans, "in the U.K. we have a free health care service, so we can't put it down to just inequalities in care," he said.

Khunti said ethnic-minority Britons are more likely to live in large, multi-generational families and cramped housing. Many hold jobs with a high risk of infection: doctors, nurses, taxi drivers and transit workers.

Black and South Asian people, in Britain and elsewhere, also have higher rates of cardiovascular disease, diabetes and hypertension, conditions that have been linked to more severe COVID-19 symptoms.

Others argue that racism is a factor. Gurch Randhawa, professor of diversity in public health at the University of Bedfordshire, said extensive research shows that minority nurses and health care assistants "often receive poorer treatment than their colleagues."

"In the context of the present crisis, this means they may have worse access to (personal protective equipment), more trying shift patterns and greater exposure to COVID-19 patients," he said.

In Birmingham's Muslim community, everyone seems to know someone who has died. Haly Bano lost her uncle, a taxi driver who likely caught the virus from a customer.

"It is really hard for mum, because she can't go to pay respects to the family or anything," she said. "So we just called on the phone and FaceTimed and that's all we could do."

Picking up meat for a Ramadan meal in the predominantly South Asian Sparkbrook neighborhood, Bano said she was shocked at the number of people thronging the supermarkets and butcher shops. Some wore masks but few were following government instructions to remain two meters (over 6 feet) apart.

"People are not listening," she said. "It is really scary and dangerous."

At the Ghamkol Sharif mosque, Zahid is thankful that the temporary morgue hasn't reached its capacity. It was set up amid fears that without sufficient refrigerated storage, bodies would have to be cremated, counter to Muslim custom. But everyone who has been brought here has had a proper burial.

"We just make sure they get their final rites," Zahid said.

Scientists say Britain has likely passed the peak of its outbreak. The number of people hospitalized is declining, and the increase in the number of deaths has slowed, even though hundreds with COVID-19 are still dying each day.

Zahid said in the past week the number of bodies arriving at the mosque has ebbed but the anxiety

has not.

"There is fear in people about the corona, there's no doubt about that," Zahid said.

"Whatever comes, comes from God," he added. "We just have to carry on doing what we're doing."

Jill Lawless reported from London.

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

Invisible virus, invisible fear: How to navigate the unseen?

By TED ANTHONY AP National Writer

Back in the early 20th century, the baseball pitcher Walter Johnson confounded opposing batters by throwing the fastest fastball they'd ever seen. "You can't hit what you can't see," they would say.

A century later, it's an apt saying for those navigating this unusual moment.

The surreptitious and the invisible are defining the human landscape during these weeks in ways we are only barely beginning to understand. There is, of course, a fast-moving and elusive new virus. But the attitudes and fears that have emerged in the battle against it can be equally unsettling.

Now the entire world — its physical well-being, its economy, its people's livelihoods — is being upended by something unseen and aggressive and hard to avoid. Is it any wonder that unease and disorientation are the result?

"There's this invisible threat of a virus, but then there are visible threats of me losing my job or my livelihood or the economic shutdown or my mental health because I'm isolated," says Lindsey Root Luna, a clinical psychologist who teaches at Hope College in Michigan.

"So I look at the fact that I have both a visible threat and an invisible one," she says. "And people tend to respond to the visible threat."

"The whole world's my hiding place. I can stand out there amongst them in the day or night and laugh at them."

—Jack Griffin (Claude Rains), "The Invisible Man" (1933)

The coronavirus is an apt adversary for our times. It's a specific threat, yet its invisibility has made it a Petri dish where people can cultivate all kinds of misinformation.

Already, this was an era when entertainment and politics screamed: Even if you can see it, don't necessarily believe it. In the United States, which has been full-on grappling with the coronavirus since isolation began in mid-March, it resonates especially potently.

To begin with, American life is a 400-year exercise in wrestling invisible ideals into something tangible — a functioning country and its laws. That country, shaped by visuals and concrete things and loud volumes, sits today at a particularly weird juncture when people with agendas use those loud volumes and sophisticated visuals to call even the most concrete things into doubt.

On top of that, enough is coming at people already that many resist or reject storylines involving more abstract or unseen forces — a virus, political manipulation, climate change.

"We are evolved to respond to threats that exist — a car crash, a punch in the face — that we can perceive at that level," says Alix Spiegel, co-host and co-producer of the NPR program "Invisibilia," which tells stories that add structure and context to things we can't see.

"But when they exist on a physical scale or a time scale that is hard for us to relate to, then we're much, much worse at coming up with the appropriate actions," Spiegel says.

This is evident in the reactions to antivirus measures taken by authorities. Many comments echo this observation: We can't see this getting worse where we are, so let's fix the urgent problem we already can see — the collapse of life around us.

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"From a visible perspective, nothing's changed. Very few of us actually see someone suffering from coronavirus," says Adam Kotsko, who teaches at North Central College in Illinois. He is the author of "The Prince of This World," a history of one of humankind's most notorious unseen adversaries — the devil.

"Society," Kotsko says, "has been thrown into upheaval for no visible, apparent reason."

"Messages from invisible sources. Or what some people think of as progress." — Al Swearengen in "Deadwood," disapprovingly watching telegraph poles go up in his town in 1876.

In American culture, unease about invisibility has surfaced in assorted ways since early colonial days, when dark accusations of unseen powers and influences became the pretext for the Salem witch trials in 1692.

It has meant many things over the years as new forms of the invisible emerged, from the telegraph and the telephone to bacteria and viruses to radio waves and microwaves to perhaps the most destructive invisible force of them all — the harnessed atom, the radiation it produced and the Cold War armageddon terror that it spread across an entire generation.

But invisibility often stands in for a menacing adversary, as with "Invasion of the Body Snatchers," the mid-1950s novel and movie about aliens undetectably replacing humans that evoked postwar fears of unseen American threats — conformity, communism, McCarthyism.

That kind of unease was an early signpost of the decline in faith in American institutions and government's motives. Suspicion about puppetmasters who guide events — the precursor of today's "deep state" fears — became an even more potent cultural thread.

At the same time, the invisible threat of lethal contagious disease was receding in the American consciousness as vaccinations became commonplace. Smallpox was eradicated, polio conquered. Measles, mumps and rubella were largely vanquished. So their effects — disfigured children, firsthand knowledge of the dead — naturally became less visible.

Today, given that many people's connections to COVID-19 victims are still indirect, the unseen nature of virus unease seems more analogous to the fear of ghosts, says Marc Longenecker, a film scholar at Wesleyan University in Connecticut who has written about invisibility in movies.

It's a fear you can't see except when it materializes. You don't even know if it's in the room. You know it's a threat but are limited in your ability to fight it. Says Longenecker: "It's the question of, 'Is there really something there, or not?'"

There is, of course, something there, whether visible or not. The questions for most of us are these: Is it hovering near us right now? And what can we do to stop it?

"The chasm between seeing and knowing is ever widening in the 21st century," Akiko Busch writes in "How to Disappear: Notes on Invisibility in a Time of Transparency."

One thing, though, is both seeable and knowable at this important moment: To push this threat away, or to vanquish it, will require a kind of work — the brainpower of research, and the microscopic vaccine that we hope it produces — that will be just as invisible to most of us as the thing that's causing all the ruckus in the first place.

Until then, the Walter Johnson rule still prevails. Even knowing precisely what you can't see doesn't mean you'll be able to hit it.

Ted Anthony, director of digital innovation for The Associated Press, has been writing about American culture since 1990. Follow him on Twitter at <http://twitter.com/anthonyted>.

Some countries and US states move to ease virus lockdowns

By NICK PERRY and JOSEPH WILSON Associated Press

WELLINGTON, New Zealand (AP) — Some countries and U.S. states are starting to ease coronavirus lockdown restrictions and focus on fixing their battered economies.

In Spain, the streets echoed again with joyful cries on Sunday as the nation let children go outside for

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the first time in six weeks. Many European countries are reopening factories and construction sites. In New Zealand, people will be able to buy takeout restaurant food again starting midnight Monday.

But some worry that prematurely lifting measures that were imposed to halt the spread of the coronavirus could spark a resurgence in infections.

In the U.S., governors in states including hard-hit New York and Michigan are keeping stay-at-home restrictions in place until at least mid-May, while their counterparts in places such as Georgia, Oklahoma and Alaska are allowing certain businesses to reopen.

White House strategists are planning to shift President Donald Trump's public focus from the pandemic toward fixing the economy. This comes after he was sharply criticized in recent days for publicly musing that scientists should explore injecting toxic disinfectants as a potential virus cure.

In China, state-run media said that hospitals in Wuhan, the original epicenter of the pandemic, no longer have any COVID-19 patients. And in Japan, the central bank eased monetary policy, prompting a surge in the stock market.

The official death toll from the virus topped 205,000 worldwide, with nearly 3 million confirmed infections, according to a tally by Johns Hopkins University, though the real figures are believed to be much higher, in part because of inadequate testing and differences in counting the dead.

Italy, Britain, Spain and France accounted for more than 20,000 deaths each. In the U.S., the death toll was nearly 55,000 — close to the 58,000 U.S. troops who were killed during the Vietnam War.

Some encouraging signs were seen, as Italy recorded its lowest 24-hour number of deaths since mid-March, with 260. New York state registered its fewest since late last month, with 367.

Seven weeks into Italy's strict lockdown, Premier Giuseppe Conte laid out a long-awaited timetable for getting back to normal, announcing that factories, construction sites and wholesale supply businesses can resume activity as soon as they put safety measures in place against the virus.

Conte also said that starting May 4, parks and gardens will reopen, funerals will be allowed, athletes can resume training, and people will be able to visit relatives living in the same region. If all goes well, stores and museums will reopen May 18, and restaurants, cafes and salons on June 1, he said.

Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez will present a detailed plan Tuesday for the "de-escalation" of Spain's lockdown, but said it would be cautious. His French counterpart will do the same on Tuesday.

British Prime Minister Boris Johnson planned to be back at his desk Monday at 10 Downing St. after a bout with the virus put him in intensive care. He faces calls for more clarity on when his government will ease the lockdown, now set to run until at least May 7.

Other European nations are further along in relaxing their restrictions. Germany allowed nonessential shops and other facilities to open last week, and Denmark has reopened schools for children up to fifth grade.

In the U.S., the split in approaches to reopening states has often been along partisan lines.

Oklahoma Gov. Kevin Stitt, a Republican, told "Fox News Sunday" that with hospitalizations dropping in his state, he will reopen churches and restaurant dining on Friday, with social-distancing guidelines in place.

"We believe it's the time to have a measured reopening," he said.

But Michigan Gov. Gretchen Whitmer, a Democrat, told ABC that her state is not ready and needs more robust testing, community tracing and a plan for isolating people who get sick.

"We've got to be nimble and we have to follow the science and be really smart about how we reengage," she said.

In a sign that it could get harder to enforce restrictions as the weather improves, a lingering heat wave in California lured people to beaches, rivers and trails Sunday, prompting warnings that defiance of stay-at-home orders could reverse progress.

Wilson reported from Barcelona, Spain. Associated Press journalists around the world contributed to this report.

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

Mideast economies take massive hit with oil price crash

By **SAMYA KULLAB** and **QASSIM ABDUL-ZAHRA** Associated Press

BAGHDAD (AP) — Iraq is planning painful cuts in social benefits relied on by millions of government workers. Saudi Arabia will likely have to delay mega-projects. Egypt and Lebanon face a blow as their workers in the Gulf send back less of the much-needed dollars that help keep their fragile economies afloat.

The historic crash in oil prices in the wake of the coronavirus pandemic is reverberating across the Middle East as crude-dependent countries scramble to offset losses from a key source of state revenue — and all this at a time when several of them already face explosive social unrest.

The economies of all the Arab Gulf oil exporters are expected to contract this year, as much as 5% in Iraq, according to the International Monetary Fund.

While some Gulf countries can rely on a cushion of foreign currency reserves, nowhere in the region are the circumstances more dire than in Iraq, where oil sales fund 90% of the state budget.

Iraq saw massive protests in the past months by a populace angry over the weak economy and rampant corruption — and the turmoil could erupt again. Cutbacks in spending will only add to the pain for a population struggling to get by under coronavirus restrictions. In the capital's Tahrir Square, protesters are still camped out, determined not to let their movement die.

"Coming into summer the conditions are developing for a perfect storm for the government," said Sajad Jiyad, an Iraq-based analyst.

Oil is currently trading at \$20 per barrel, dipping even lower some days to levels not seen since 2001. Further constraints will be felt as an OPEC agreement to cut production levels by 23% to stabilize the oil market takes hold. May and June are expected to be particularly difficult as that is when oil storage space will be full, making it harder for countries to market oil, according to Robin Mills, CEO of Dubai-based Qamar Energy.

So far it's early, and no one has reached a stage where the budget runs out, Mills said. "But that is inevitable — Iraq will probably hit first."

In its draft 2020 budget, Iraq had been counting on revenues from oil prices at \$56 a barrel to fund badly needed development projects and the bloated public sector, costing nearly \$45 billion in compensation and pensions. Oil Minister Thamir Ghadhban said recently that revenue from crude exports has dropped by 50%.

Now officials are debating difficult salary cuts. One proposed idea would defer paying public sector workers part of their social benefits until the financial sector improves, according to three Iraqi officials. The question is how much to cut and from whom; one recommendation is that higher-end earners take a 50% cut. The officials spoke on condition of anonymity so as not to derail ongoing talks.

That would save Iraq hundreds of millions of dollars, but risks triggering unrest. Public sector workers receive a host of benefits that effectively add 50-70% to their take-home wages. They include family allowances and so-called danger pay benefits for security forces.

Still, experts said that won't be enough if oil prices remain between \$20-30 per barrel.

"Cuts need to be deeper to make a dent in payroll, and even then, if revenues are so low there comes a point where cuts are not enough," Jiyad said.

On top of this, expected compliance with OPEC will require Iraq to cut over 1 million barrels per day from production in May and June.

Moreover, the country has been left without an effective executive to carry out reforms by an ongoing leadership vacuum since December, when Prime Minister Adel Abdul-Mahdi resigned under pressure from protesters. Prime Minister-designate Mustafa Kadhimi is due to present his proposed Cabinet to Parliament next week, but he faces opposition from key political blocs.

Until his government is in place, a 2020 budget is unlikely to be approved. This limits Iraq's ability to

borrow from international agencies for budgetary support.

Across the region, the drop in oil prices will derail future investment and development plans.

The region's largest crude producer, Saudi Arabia, plans to cut spending by 5%, or about \$13.3 billion. Additional cuts and measures are expected as it digs into its roughly \$500 billion in foreign reserves.

Target dates of Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman's plan for the completion of new cities and mega projects will likely be delayed as businesses suffer and foreign investment dips amid the pandemic.

Kuwait has ample reserves as well. But the island nation of Bahrain faces a debt estimated to be equal to 105% of its GDP, even after it received a \$10 billion bailout from its neighbors to avoid defaulting on a \$750 million Islamic bond repayment in 2018.

Other giant global oil producers will have to grapple with job losses and economic shocks.

U.S. producers and service companies have laid off thousands of employees, and greater job losses are expected as the pandemic drags on. Many shale producers were already struggling before the pandemic hit, and some have filed for bankruptcy, with more expected.

The price crash has dealt a blow to Russia at a time of partial economic shutdown. Russian officials say that the nation's solid hard currency reserves can help sustain the shock and insist low production costs allow Russian oil companies to stay profitable.

The double shock of the pandemic and dropping oil prices is also expected to hit hard in Egypt, Jordan and Lebanon, which rely on a large diaspora and workers in oil-rich Arab Gulf countries who send foreign currency home.

In Lebanon, remittances once made up 12.5% of GDP; in Egypt, they account for 10% of GDP. Coupled with its own economic crisis and financial turmoil, the anticipated losses for Lebanon will be devastating.

"How are we expected to survive from now on? Hunger is knocking at the doors," a Lebanese man told reporters this week, as he waited in a long line outside a money transfer shop in Beirut, on the last day he would be allowed to collect a wire transfer in dollars from his older brother in Qatar.

Associated Press writers Zeina Karam in Beirut; Jon Gambrell and Aya Batrawy in Dubai, the United Arab Emirates; Vladimir Isachenkov in Moscow; and Cathy Bussewitz in New York contributed to this report.

Tokyo Olympics: Questions, few answers in face of pandemic

By **STEPHEN WADE AP Sports Writer**

TOKYO (AP) — The Tokyo Olympics were postponed a month ago. But there are still more questions than answers about the new opening on July 23, 2021, and what form those games will take.

In the face of the coronavirus pandemic, will the Olympics really start in 15 months? If so, in what form? With fans? Without fans? Can they open without a vaccine? TV broadcasters and sponsors provide 91% of the income for the International Olympic Committee. How much pressure will they exert on the form these Olympics take? What about the Beijing Winter Olympics, opening in February 2022. China is where the coronavirus was first discovered, and the authoritarian government has been draconian in terms of lockdowns and travel restrictions.

IOC President Thomas Bach has already said there is "no blueprint" in assembling what he called this "huge jigsaw puzzle."

"I cannot promise ideal solutions," he said. "But I can promise that we'll do everything to have the best possible games for everybody."

Q: Some scientists are skeptical the delayed Tokyo Olympics can open in 15 months. What are the prospects?

A: Many scientists believe an Olympics with spectators can't happen until a vaccine is developed. That is probably 12-18 months away, experts say, and then there will be questions about efficacy, distribution, and who gets it first. Kentaro Iwata, a Japanese professor of infectious disease, said last week: "I am very pessimistic about holding the Olympic Games next summer unless you hold the Olympic Games in a totally different structure such as no audience or a very limited participation." Yoshitake Yokokura, president of

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the Japan Medical Association, came to the same conclusion in a recent interview. An Olympics in empty venues is looking more likely, which is the scenario for many sports. Fans hungry for some action may have grown accustomed to this configuration by the time the Olympics arrive.

Q: Postponing the Olympics will be costly. Who will pick up the expenses?

A: In two words: Japanese taxpayers. Japanese organizers and the IOC have said they are "assessing" the added costs. They have not ventured an estimate — at least not publicly. Estimates in Japan range from \$2 billion to \$6 billion. Host country Japan is bound by the terms of the Host City Contract signed in 2013 to pay most of the bills. The IOC has already said the delay will cost it "several hundred million dollars." IOC member John Coates, who oversees preparations for Tokyo, said this money will go to struggling international federations and national Olympic committees, and not to Japan organizers. The bills keep piling up. Japan originally said the Olympics would cost \$7.3 billion. Officially the budget is now \$12.6 billion, although a national audit board says it's twice that much. All but \$5.6 billion is public money. And now come the costs of the delay. Tokyo organizers were upset last week with the IOC. On its website it had Prime Minister Shinzo Abe saying Japan would pick up the added costs. The IOC deleted the statement, even though in principle it is correct.

Q: Where do we stand with venues and the Olympic Village?

A: Not much word so far. CEO Toshiro Muto has said it will take time to see if all these venues can be used. Of course, some may require renegotiated contracts. Proprietors of all venues will be under tremendous pressure to cooperate so the original competition schedule can be maintained. Tokyo's Big Sight convention center is likely to remain the media center. Muto said it has been configured for the Olympics and hinted it would likely stay that way. The Olympics draw 11,000 athletes from 206 nations. The Paralympics add 4,400 more.

Q: What about tickets?

A: Organizers have said they will try to honor tickets already purchased. Officials say a total of 7.8 million are available. Organizers budgeted \$800 million in revenue from ticket sales, and unprecedented demand has pushed that to \$1 billion. That's roughly 15% of the \$5.6 billion of the privately funded operating budget. This income can't be sacrificed with the bills piling up. Same is true for \$3.3 billion sold in local sponsorships. The problems will arise if ticket holders are not allowed to attend and want refunds. Tickets carry a "force majeure" clause, which might free organizers from the obligation to provide refunds. However, it's not clear that COVID-19 will stand up as a justification.

Q: How reliant is the IOC on income from broadcasters and sponsors?

A: A massive 91% of IOC income is from those two sources — broadcasters and sponsors — and 73% is from broadcasters. Bach has said the IOC does not have "cash flow" problems, and the committee reportedly has a reserve fund of about \$1 billion. But it stages only two events every four years, almost the entire source of its \$5.7 billion income in a four-year cycle. It's not like a soccer or baseball league with thousands of matches. It needs the Summer Olympics. American broadcaster NBC pays more than \$1 billion to air each Olympics. The IOC will push the Olympics to go forward, in whatever form.

Q: Where is the Olympic flame, which arrived from Greece on March 26?

A: It was taken off public display earlier this month in Fukushima prefecture, located 250 kilometers (150 miles) northeast of Tokyo. Muto said after the Olympic torch relay was canceled that "the Olympic flame was put under the management of Tokyo 2020. Obviously in the future there is a possibility it might be put on display somewhere. However, for now it is under the management of Tokyo 2020 and I'm not going to make any further comment on the issue." There are suggestions the IOC is thinking of taking the flame on a world tour, hoping to use it as a public-relations tool and a symbol of the battle against the virus. However, any tour would be impossible until travel restrictions are lifted. Taking the flame away from Japan could also upset the hosts. China took the flame on a world tour in 2008, which was met with protests over China's human rights policies. At the time IOC President Jacques Rogge said the "crisis" threatened the Olympics. World tours with the flame have not been held since.

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

In New Orleans, friends respond as virus claims a Zulu king

By GERALD HERBERT and JANET McCONNAUGHEY Associated Press

NEW ORLEANS (AP) — If he had died in a normal time, Larry Arthur Hammond would have had a funeral befitting a Zulu king, with more than a thousand mourners in the church and marching in second-line parades celebrating a mainstay of New Orleans Mardi Gras royalty.

Instead, only 10 people were allowed into the funeral parlor, his widow grieving from a socially distanced chair while family and friends strained to hear through cell phones on speaker mode. Hundreds of close-knit members of his century-old parade group and African American fraternity were prevented from honoring one of their leaders, weeks after he died of COVID-19.

It seemed cruel, how this virus that summoned them to mourn was keeping them apart. The masks his wife and daughter wore to protect each other muffled their weeping. Nobody could see a smile; nobody could hug.

"Only having 10 family members was so hurting to me because we have such a large, loving family," said his wife, Lillian Hammond.

But improvisation is integral to the jazz culture of New Orleans, and improvise they did.

After the funeral, scores of cars and trucks passed the Hammond home as the family sat in chairs on their front lawn, still dressed in their funeral attire. A police escort led the procession.

Honking, waving and calling to his family, drivers and passengers showed their respect and love for the 2007 king of the Zulu Social Aid and Pleasure Club, a retired postal worker and Air Force veteran who tutored, mentored and provided Christmas presents through Omega Psi Phi.

"I was so pleased. I was amazed. I was excited and not just excited for my family, but excited for Larry, because their procession, that motorcade was him," Lillian Hammond said.

The Zulu club, as with African Americans nationwide, has been particularly hard-hit by this virus, to which humans have no natural immunity. At least eight of its 800 members have died of COVID-19, according to its board chairman, City Councilman Jay H. Banks. African Americans represent more than 56% of Louisiana's 1,670 coronavirus deaths, the state public health department reported Sunday.

Larry Hammond, 70, died on March 31. If not for the pandemic, which delayed his funeral until April 22, he would have received "past-king" honors, with massive second-line tributes organized by the Zulus and his fraternity brothers, marching behind his casket with brass bands playing dirges and then breaking out into Dixieland jazz, celebrating his ascension to heaven.

"There would have been thousands of people there, I can say that without qualification," said Banks, who dressed in crisp white for the procession because he was King Zulu in 2016. "It's the funeral of a king, you don't get any higher than that."

The loneliness of the sparse funeral parlor seemed grievous by comparison.

Lillian Hammond's daughter, wearing a cloth mask and protective blue gloves, embraced her as she wept. Beside his open casket, an easel bore his portrait, wearing the white suit of Zulu kings. Another portrait was in the waiting area, with a bottle of hand sanitizer and a sign: "Please sanitize your hands before signing the guest book."

"I am so happy that Larry's in a better place," Lillian Hammond said. "I want to say to all of you, we don't know what's going on with this coronavirus but please take it serious. And make sure that every day that you say something about the Lord and bless your family."

It was a much warmer setting in their front yard that afternoon, where Lillian, her daughter Nicole and her sister Lori Adams were joined by his granddaughter, Kailyn Hammond Gouch. People in cars and trucks rolled slowly by for about 15 minutes, waving, calling out and holding handmade signs and memorabilia.

Hammond said she recognized people from Zulu, the fraternity, the neighborhood, the school where her husband tutored students for standardized tests, and from outside the New Orleans area. As the last car drove past, the family applauded.

Barry Hammond said his brother was a giver who saw the value in helping others and bringing people together. He hopes Americans will reach similar conclusions, since the pandemic has shown that we're all human beings first, undivided by race or politics.

"We are all in this together. Corona has proven this," he said. "My prayer is the virus causes us to reunite as a country."

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Military chaplains pivot to serve soldiers in virus outbreak

By SARAH BLAKE MORGAN Associated Press

FORT BRAGG, N.C. (AP) —

Maj. Brian Minietta's eyes are locked down the barrel of a camera lens. He sways gently back and forth in silence, then his gruff voice belts out, in singsong: "A little patience ... yeah, yeah!"

He finishes the chorus — it's the 1989 Guns N' Roses hit "Patience." And he tells the Green Berets he counsels as an Army chaplain: "Yeah. Patience. That's the word we're going to talk about today."

For two years, Minietta, 46, has served the 3rd Special Forces Group, based at Fort Bragg, North Carolina, though many of the soldiers have spent more time bouncing from deployments to conflict zones in Afghanistan, Iraq and Syria than at home. As Green Berets — the better-known moniker for the elite soldiers of the Special Forces — these operators specialize in unconventional warfare, foreign internal defense and counterinsurgency.

Now, the coronavirus outbreak has upended the norm on base and beyond. Some training and deployments continue, but many have been sidelined. Only essential workers are reporting on post, ushered through gates patrolled by military police officers wearing masks.

A chaplain's ministry — no matter the religion — has always been about in-person connections. How does that continue when the flock is forced apart? Minietta and others are figuring it out on the fly, with the help of technology, all while tensions are high for soldiers.

"Whether that's anxiety, whether that's fear, whether it's the family dynamics that come up from being home — we have the opportunity to support," he said. "This has given us the opportunity to be innovative and creative."

Minietta's patience-themed video message is the third he's recorded since the pandemic began. He's also preached about fear and hope in video clips uploaded to his group's Facebook page.

The Green Berets he serves are known as quiet professionals. They've done a lot, seen a lot — but they don't talk about it much. Gaining their trust takes time and effort, Minietta said. And while most chaplains don't go through the Special Forces selection process, they train, deploy and are airborne qualified, jumping out of airplanes alongside the operators they serve. Minietta, after spending years as a missionary and youth pastor, was commissioned in 2007 and has deployed seven times.

When Capt. Scott Britton, a fellow Fort Bragg chaplain who serves the Green Berets of 3rd Group's 3rd Battalion, joined the Army in 2012, he felt he was walking among giants. But through his training and building relationships, he now feels connected to his soldiers.

"This style of ministry allows the shepherd to smell like the sheep," Britton, 42, said. "We get to experience a lot of the same things the soldiers do, and I think for a lot of chaplains that's a comfortable place to be."

This month, Britton preached his Easter sermon alone on his back porch, while 35 soldiers training in the field listened on the phone. It was certainly a first, he said, but "we do find ways."

Both chaplains say they're used to being out of their comfort zones. Working with soldiers whose lives are grounded in chaos and loss can be hard.

Since 2002, the 3rd Special Forces Group has lost 60 Green Berets in action. Sixteen times, Minietta has knocked on doors alongside casualty assistance officers who are giving families the worst kind of news.

"Every time I knock on a door, there are an unbelievable amount of nerves," he said.

Minietta brings up those door knocks at the end of his video message. He tells the camera he couldn't have done it without patience — patience to know the worst thing is never the last thing, whether it's death, divorce and or a pandemic.

"May we remember that Axl Rose ultimately had it right," he told his video audience. "All we need is a little patience."

Follow Morgan at www.twitter.com/StorytellerSBM.

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Undefeated, high schoolers head online for isolation proms

By **LEANNE ITALIE** Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — In party dresses or come as you are, with colored lights flashing in their bedrooms and teachers-turned-DJs spinning, high schoolers have turned to virtual proms to salvage at least one slice of fun and tradition for the Class of 2020.

And they're getting help from familiar brands like Teen Vogue and Jack in the Box, with both serving as hosts to thousands of teens.

Celebrities, too, are taking on prom: The "Get Out" actress Allison Williams was a guest DJ for Zoom partygoers in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, and "Jack Ryan" star John Krasinski was joined by Billie Eilish when he threw a prom live on YouTube.

"It's terrible that it's happening to your class, but I hope you're having a good time anyway," Williams told about 100 teens, staff and guests April 16 at the prom hosted by the Baton Rouge Youth Coalition, an after-school program.

The theme was "Royaltee," an acknowledgement that while some kids had already bought their dresses before lockdown, others never got the chance and were welcome in T-shirts.

On top, Williams sparkled in a strapless copper sequin dress, joking that she couldn't get up and dance because "there are sweatpants happening."

Alauna Stults, 17, in Findlay, Ohio, will wear a blue bedazzled two-piece outfit when she attends an online prom May 9 thrown by the party apparel rental service Charlotte's Closet and an event planning site, My School Dance. Charlotte's Closet is donating dresses to teens in need, including Alauna.

"I was looking forward to prom," she said. "I was pretty pumped up about it. I was planning on going with a group of my friends, but it's really cool we can still dress up and do everything we would do for a prom, like doing makeup."

High schools and cheer teams have thrown virtual proms of their own as social media has filled up with sweet moments among families. Dads have taken their dressed-up daughters for living room spins for a dance or two, and teens have organized home proms among parents and siblings.

"Prom is definitely one of those bigger life moments when you're growing up, even if you find it to be corny or not cool. It definitely still is something that's a moment you look back on and remember," said Teen Vogue Editor-in-Chief Lindsay Peoples Wagner.

The site expects about 5,000 teens to attend its virtual prom May 16 on Zoom. Organizers are working with high schools around the country to set up separate rooms so kids can be with their friends as celebrity co-hosts pop in and DJs get busy.

YouTuber Emma Chamberlain, H.E.R. and "Euphoria" star Storm Reid are expected.

"It will be really interactive, and that's going to be the fun part of it," Peoples Wagner said.

As part of a social distancing campaign, #StayInTheBox, Jack in the Box is working with schools in San Francisco, Los Angeles, Phoenix and Houston to put on a prom in May, complete with free food and delivery codes.

Serenity Cadogan in Covington, Georgia, near Atlanta is only 12, but she hosted a high school prom

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live on Instagram on March 31, which was National Prom Day, for more than 600 teens around the world, from Texas to London.

"We wanted to brighten their day," said the seventh-grader, who leads a chapter of Becca's Closet, a nonprofit that donates free prom dresses to high school girls. "Everybody was really happy. It was really classy. I didn't expect that many people but it actually ran pretty smoothly."

Ironically enough, at least one online school, the public K-12 Washington Virtual Academies, hosts an offline prom each year for the students it serves across the state of Washington. Not this year. Prom will be online, just like school.

"People have reached out to us saying, hey, how do we do a virtual prom? But that's not something we've previously done, so we're embarking on this adventure just like schools all over the U.S.," said Summer Shelton, the head of school.

Offline, the school hosts prom in Tacoma, its home base. Students travel from as far away as Spokane to attend, staying in hotels. The date for Shelton's virtual prom had not been finalized but will likely be in June. The school has about 500 juniors and seniors.

"This is one of the most looked-forward-to nights of the year," Shelton said. "Right now they're dealing with disappointment, understandably, but trying to move past disappointment and saying, OK, what do we do now to make this special?"

Donna Sheperis, an associate professor of counseling at Palo Alto University's Los Altos, California, campus, sees other ironies for a tech-savvy generation missing out on prom.

"They also crave human connection," she said. "They crave a chance to dress up and dance with their friends. They crave some time that's just for them. And this year, they can't get it."

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

The Latest: Japan adds 14 more countries to entry ban list

By The Associated Press undefined

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

TOP OF THE HOUR:

- Japan adds 14 more countries to entry ban list.
- New Zealand prepares to ease rules on strict lockdown.
- South Korea mulls reopening schools after 26th straight day under 100 new cases.
- China reports just 3 new virus cases, no new deaths.

TOKYO — Japan's Prime Minister Shinzo Abe said Monday that his country is adding 14 more countries, including Russia, Peru and Saudi Arabia, to the entry ban list as the country steps up border control as the coronavirus infections continued to spread in the country.

Japan has already banned entry from more than 70 other countries, banning foreigners with records of visiting those countries in the past two weeks, while invalidating visas for the rest of the world. The additional step on the 14 countries will take effect Wednesday, Abe said.

The entry ban and the visa restrictions, initially set to end on April 30, are extended until the end of May.

Japan is now under a month-long state of emergency through May 6, for now. Officials and experts are now gauging its effect and whether to extend the measure.

Japan has 13,385 confirmed cases, as well as 712 others from a cruise ship quarantined near Tokyo earlier this year, with 364 deaths, according to the health ministry.

WELLINGTON, New Zealand — New Zealand reported five new coronavirus cases Monday as the nation

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got ready to ease the rules on a strict lockdown from midnight.

Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern said there hasn't been widespread community transmission of the virus and the country has so far managed to avoid the worst scenarios for an outbreak. She said it would continue to hunt down the last few cases.

From midnight, certain businesses such as construction will be allowed to reopen, but social distancing rules will still apply. Ardern said the nation was opening up the economy, but not people's social lives.

SEOUL, South Korea — South Korea reported only 10 new cases of the coronavirus, its 26th straight day below 100 as officials mulled reopening schools amid the slowing caseload.

The figures released by the Korea Centers for Disease Control and Prevention on Monday brought the national totals to 10,738 cases and 243 deaths.

At least 1,044 infections have been linked to international arrivals, but such cases have also declined in recent weeks amid tightened border controls.

Using an active test-and-quarantine program, South Korea has so far managed to slow its outbreak without imposing lockdowns or business bans. But schools remain shut while providing children remote learning.

Prime Minister Chung Sye-kyun during a virus meeting Monday instructed education officials to prepare measures to ensure hygiene and enforce distance between students at schools so the government could announce a timeline for reopening schools no later than early May.

BEIJING — China reported just three new coronavirus cases Monday, and no new deaths for the 12th day in a row.

A total of 723 people remain hospitalized and just under 1,000 were being kept in isolation and under monitoring for being suspected cases or for having tested positive for COVID-19 without showing symptoms.

Beijing added one additional postmortem death to its count, raising China's overall death toll to 4,633 among 82,830 cases. Of the new cases, two were imported and one was detected in the province of Heilongjiang bordering Russia, according to the National Health Commission.

SIMI VALLEY, Calif. — The family of a U.S. Marine killed in Iraq last month had to postpone his memorial service because of restrictions on large gatherings in California to slow the spread of the coronavirus.

On Sunday morning, they were surprised with a parade outside their Simi Valley home that began with a police helicopter flyover, followed by about 1,500 law enforcement vehicles, fire engines and cars.

The Ventura County Star reports the huge turnout to honor Gunnery Sgt. Diego D. Pongo was orderly. Pongo's sister-in-law helped organize the parade to surprise his parents and brothers. The city's police department helped with traffic control.

Community members kept the parade going for more than two hours, and many of their cars blasted music while kids hung out of windows waving flags. People who gathered on the sidewalk to watch the parade followed social distancing measures, Sgt. Patrick Zayicek told the newspaper.

"It was a great show of support in our community," he said.

CANBERRA, Australia — China's ambassador to Australia has told a newspaper that the Australian government's pursuit of an independent international inquiry into the coronavirus outbreak could spark a Chinese consumer boycott of students and tourists visiting the country, as well as sales of major exports including beef and wine.

Ambassador Cheng Jingye told The Australian Financial Review in an interview published Monday that Australia's push for an inquiry was "dangerous" and predicted it would fail to gain traction among global leaders.

"Resorting to suspicion, recrimination or division at such a critical time could only undermine global efforts to fight against this pandemic," Cheng said.

Cheng did not accept that the virus had started in a "wet market" in the city of Wuhan, saying the scientific jury was still out on its origins.

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Australian Health Minister Greg Hunt said such an independent inquiry was in the interests of Australia and the world.

The Australian government has called for an inquiry into the virus and for changes to the World Health Organization.

Education is Australia's third largest export industry and China is the largest source of students studying in Australia. China is also Australia's largest trading partner.

The Chinese Embassy did not immediately respond to a request for comment on the accuracy of the newspaper story.

LOS ANGELES — A lingering heat wave lured people to Southern California beaches, rivers and trails again Sunday, prompting warnings from officials that defiance of stay-at-home orders could reverse progress and bring the coronavirus surging back.

Tens of thousands of people packed the sand at Newport Beach in Orange County, where residents compared weekend crowds to the Fourth of July and lifeguards reminded people to stay apart if they were in groups of six or more.

Neighboring Huntington Beach also saw big gatherings, despite the closure of parking lots and metered parking restricted along Pacific Coast Highway. Temperatures were close to 90 degrees.

Robin Ford surveyed the crush of visitors with concern.

"Unless all these people are in one household, it does look like they are not social distancing," Ford told the Orange County Register. "They could be spread out more."

ROME — After Italy's bishops complained that the latest lockdown rules still don't allow public Masses, Premier Giuseppe Conte's office has promised to come up with a plan that would let the faithful attend services while respecting social distancing during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Since a national lockdown began in early March, churches in Italy haven't been allowed to hold Masses for the public, although they can keep their doors open for those wanting to pray individually.

Conte on Sunday announced some easing of containment measures for the nation, starting May 4.

In response, the Italian bishops conference quickly put out a sharply worded statement, saying bishops "cannot accept seeing the exercise of freedom of worship be compromised" and insisting that the faithful must have access especially to the sacraments.

ROME — After seven weeks in lockdown to contain one of the world's worst outbreaks of COVID-19, Italians are regaining some freedoms.

Premier Giuseppe Conte says that starting May 4, public parks and gardens will re-open and people will be able to visit relatives who live in the same region.

However, Conte told the nation in a televised address Sunday night that citizens must practice social distancing. In the case of parks, mayors can impose limits, such as how many people enter, to avoid crowding.

During family visits, people will have to wear masks and can't hold parties. If people don't follow the new measures, Conte says "the curve of contagion can rise again, it will go out of control, deaths will climb and we'll have irreparable damage" to the economy.

Conte says professional sports teams can resume training on May 18 and athletes in individual sports can resume training on May 4.

That means the Serie A soccer league could resume playing games in June. It has been suspended since March 9. Twelve rounds remain in Serie A, plus four other games that were postponed from the 25th round. The Italian Cup was suspended after the first leg of the semifinals.

Also on May 18, libraries, museums and art exhibitions can re-open.

Factories, construction sites and wholesale supply businesses can resume activity as soon as they put safety measures into place aimed at containing COVID-19.

But Conte says that if the epidemiological curve of contagion starts to rise again, the government will quickly intervene and shut down such industrial activity again.

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Conte offered a new mantra for the about-to-begin second phase: "If you love Italy... keep the social distance."

Health ministry figures indicate that Italy had seen its lowest day-to-day increase in deaths – 260 – since mid-March, during the first week of lockdown. Starting May 4, funerals will be allowed, but preferably should be held in the open, no more than 15 persons can participate and mourners must wear masks. If all goes well, retail shops will reopen on May 18, and restaurants, cafes, barber shops and hair salons on June 1.

FISHERS, Ind. — A church in suburban Indianapolis resumed in-person services for the first time in a over a month.

The iTown Church in Fishers limited the number of attendees to 10 on Sunday in order to adhere to a state order that prohibits gatherings of over 10 people. According to the Indianapolis Star, the 40-minute services began on the hour, with each service followed by a 20-minute period to allow cleaning crews to sterilize the area.

PARIS — While the number of COVID-19 patients in intensive care in France is continuing to trend downward, the overall number of ICU patients is increasing, with more people needing emergency care for other ailments.

The build-up of patients in French ICUs comes amid concerns that people with long-term medical problems have been delaying or not getting treatment during the outbreak, while hospitals have been struggling with huge flows of patients seriously ill with the new coronavirus.

The Health Ministry said hospital ICUs were treating 7,553 people on Sunday, 28 more than on Saturday. But the proportion of COVID-19 patients in ICUs was again down, at 4,682. That was 43 fewer than the day before.

The ministry said the increase of non-COVID patients in ICUs "underscores the necessity of tracking and treating patients with chronic illnesses as well as the urgent need to care for serious acute illnesses."

The overall death toll from France's virus outbreak is now up to 22,856, behind only Italy and Spain in Europe. More than one-third of France's victims died in care facilities, mostly for the elderly.

LAUREL, Mont. — Montana took its first, halting step toward reopening as churchgoers returned to services after a month-long hiatus and a general stay-at-home order expired.

While other states have been extending restrictions amid the continuing spread of the coronavirus, Montana is among those that are beginning to loosen rules in hopes of restoring battered economies and regaining some normalcy.

Roughly 100 people streamed into St. Anthony Catholic Church in Laurel on Sunday, where ushers tried to keep families separate from one another and large bottles of hand sanitizer were on offer at the sanctuary's entrance. Church member Jack Auzqui says being unable to attend had been spiritually difficult for him and his wife. Returning, he said, was akin to a family being reunited.

Rev. Bart Stevens opened with an instruction for attendees "not to linger" after the Mass to minimize social interactions.

At Christ the King Lutheran Church in Billings, Pastor Ryan Wendt said the church was mixing faith with common sense precautions. Every other pew was kept empty to comply with social distancing guidelines, while elderly and medically-vulnerable members of the congregation were advised to stay home.

TORONTO — Canada's most populous province says all publicly-funded schools will remain closed until May 31 to keep students and staff safe amid the pandemic.

Ontario Education Minister Stephen Lecce says the decision was based on advice from medical experts. Lecce says the school closure could be further extended. Students have already transitioned to learning online over the past month.

The Ministry of Education says it has already distributed 20,000 iPads to students whose families don't

have the means to access online learning.

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

Virus ends daredevil life of double-lung transplant patient

By MICHAEL CASEY Associated Press

BOSTON (AP) — Before her double-lung transplant, Joanne Mellady could barely put on a shirt without losing her breath. Afterwards, she barely stopped moving.

Mellady, who died of the coronavirus in March, had a bucket list that made her family blush.

Since getting her transplant in 2007, the widow and former technology consultant from the town of Washington, New Hampshire, traveled in her RV up and down the East Coast and made trips to Alaska and the Grand Canyon.

Mellady, 67, transformed herself from a shy person dependent on oxygen around the clock to a vivacious risk taker willing to try almost anything. Hang gliding, skiing, skateboarding and kayaking were among the thrills she took on.

Before her death, Mellady was talking of a return visit to Alaska this summer and of participating again in the Transplant Games (now postponed). She won medals in bocce, bowling and swimming in past competitions and was hoping to compete in the golf event.

"She had this bucket list she made and went after it with a vengeance," said Mellady's sister, Jean Sinofsky. "She appreciated every day. She lived her life like everybody should."

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

Sinofsky and another sister, Joyce Smith, remembered how Mellady's sense of wonder left a distinct mark on their children, who called her "Auntie Jo" and always treated her like another teenager.

They recalled when one of Smith's sons won a trampoline in a raffle, Mellady was the one of the first to try it out — and did flips. And how she sledded down her snowy driveway to pick up the mail with her 12-year-old dachshund, Oscar, along for the ride.

"Anything new thing that came out, she wanted to do it," Smith said. "She had a second chance at life. She knew she had the second chance and she was lucky to have that."

For much of her earlier life in Massachusetts, Mellady was hobbled by a mysterious lung condition. Then, in her late 30s, she tested positive for alpha-1 antitrypsin deficiency, a genetic disorder.

The inherited condition predisposes people to lung conditions like chronic obstructive pulmonary disease and the emphysema Mellady developed before her transplant. The condition is caused by a lack of a protein in the blood called alpha-1 antitrypsin, which protects the lungs from inflammation.

When Mellady's lungs were replaced in 2007, doctors at the Cleveland Clinic said they were among the worst they had ever seen, functioning at 15 percent of capacity.

Over the next 13 years, Mellady served as an inspiration for other patients about to undergo similar transplants, a source of support for their relatives and a wealth of information for doctors studying her condition.

She ended up living more than twice as long on her new lungs as the average 6.3 years for lung transplant patients.

Dr. Marie Budev, the medical director of Cleveland Clinic's lung and heart-lung transplant program, oversaw Mellady's care and said she was the first person from the program who died of COVID-19 and second to test positive.

That scared Budev because transplant recipients are seen as particularly vulnerable to the virus because

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of the drugs they take that suppress their immune systems, making them more susceptible to infections. Five other people who have had lungs transplanted by the clinic have been infected by the virus and one more has died.

Budev said Mellady's death was devastating because she had become a testament to the possibilities of how to live life to the fullest after receiving an organ transplant.

"She knew this was a lease on life that she had gotten," Budev said.

Mellady participated in several research projects in Boston related to her condition and was active in groups looking for a cure for alpha-1 antitrypsin deficiency and who supported organ donation.

"She was just blooming with excitement to help others and help the field of medicine especially transplantation," Budev said.

Gary Schmidt, who received a double-lung transplant nearly seven years ago, repeatedly sought advice from Mellady about the transplant anti-rejection drugs he had to take and a free medical transport service.

"When I had the lung transplant, you don't know what is in the future ... She opened me right up and made me feel more comfortable there was life ahead," he said. "That was huge."

After his lung transplant, Schmidt, of Watkins Glen, New York, had open heart surgery, was on dialysis for three years and then received kidney transplants.

"Throughout this whole thing, she said don't let this get you down. You are going to recover from this. You are a strong person. Get out there," Schmidt's wife, Deb, said of the calls and cards they received from Mellady. "I honest to goodness don't think he would have traveled through a lot of the things we went through if it weren't for Joanne."

In early March, Mellady had lunch at an Irish restaurant with her sisters, brother Fred Smith and other family members.

The next day, Mellady entered a Concord, New Hampshire hospital with what she thought was pneumonia.

She tested positive a few days later for the coronavirus and her health steadily declined. Toward the end, she was on a ventilator and her family couldn't visit.

Instead, a nurse on March 29 held a phone to Mellady's ear as her sister-in-law Diane Kozwicz and sisters spoke their final words.

Sinofsky sounded more hopeful, saying she loved her and would see Mellady soon. Mellady was taken off a ventilator the next day. She lasted four minutes.

"I just told her I would miss her a lot and that I would take care of Oscar and that I loved her," Smith said.

Trump's focus on his base complicates path to reelection

By JILL COLVIN and JONATHAN LEMIRE Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — During times of war and strife, national leaders often aim to unite a broken country and, in the process, broaden their appeal beyond their most loyal supporters. Not President Donald Trump.

Confronting a pandemic that has upended his presidency and threatened his reelection prospects, Trump has focused almost exclusively on tending to his base.

While the coronavirus has claimed the lives of more than 54,000 Americans, eliminated more than 20 million jobs and dashed the routines of daily life for nearly everyone, Trump has leveled attacks on Democrats. He's blamed former President Barack Obama's team for his own administration's failures, picked fights with reporters and thrown rhetorical bombs meant to thrill his hardcore supporters.

During a particularly rough stretch last week, Trump pledged to bar foreigners from entering the country. The executive order Trump ultimately signed was less severe than he suggested, but still gave him a chance to highlight action on an issue that's central to his political brand.

Four years after Trump captured the White House by perfectly threading narrow victories in critical battleground states, he is betting that a relentless focus on his base will yield a repeat performance. It's a risky strategy because Trump's standing in some of those states shows signs of weakening. And there's little evidence to suggest he has significantly broadened his appeal in other places to offset those vulnerabilities.

The pandemic hasn't changed that.

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"It drives me crazy, frankly, because part of being the president is to rise above, to ignore certain things," said Ari Fleischer, who served as White House press secretary under President George W. Bush, whose lukewarm approval ratings soared after his handling of the Sept. 11 attacks. "And I think at a time like this he should leave a lot of the gauntlets on the ground and rise above. But that's not him."

Fleischer said that, while the virus puts limits on the president's ability to travel and the political environment is far more polarized today than it was in the early 2000s, Trump's White House could be appealing to the country as a whole with events honoring doctors, nurses and front-line workers that "send helpful, meaningful signals that we are one nation and we can play a meaningful part."

Other modern presidents have looked to transcend partisan boundaries at a time of crisis or tragedy, including Bill Clinton in the aftermath of the Oklahoma City bombing, Ronald Reagan after the Challenger space shuttle explosion and Lyndon Johnson after John F. Kennedy's assassination.

"I'm surprised the administration isn't doing this as well," Fleischer said.

Other Republicans, however, believe Trump is playing it right. Stephen Bannon, the president's former chief strategist, believes 2020 is a "base election" year and thinks Trump can broaden his support because of a "new nationalism" born in the wake of a pandemic that began in China. He predicted Americans would rally around their president during a period of crisis.

"Trump is a wartime president," Bannon said.

Trump's approval rating has remained remarkably steady over the course of his presidency, with about 42% of poll respondents saying they approve of the job he's doing as president, according to a new The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research. That's even as many question the veracity of his statements and believe he is not listening to health experts enough during the crisis.

But the coronavirus has threatened to rewrite the Electoral College map and Trump's campaign has become concerned about losing support in several key swing states, particularly Florida and Wisconsin. Some advisers have all but written off Michigan, which Trump captured in 2016 by fewer than 11,000 votes. He is now locked in a feud with the state's Democratic governor.

In former Vice President Joe Biden, Trump faces a presumptive Democratic nominee whose promises of across-the-aisle outreach and pragmatic, experienced-based management may play well in several battleground states at a time of crisis. That includes Arizona, which has a vast suburban population uneasy with the constant Trump drama, tweets and base plays.

"People are going to look for stability," said Doug Cole, a veteran Republican operative in Arizona who worked on John McCain's 2008 presidential campaign. "Biden can capitalize on that."

Trump campaign officials who requested anonymity to describe campaign strategy stressed that the election is still six months away, an eternity in politics. They noted polls can be wrong or change, especially if the pandemic wanes or the economy rebounds. And they said the campaign believes that voters will credit Trump for the strong economy before the pandemic hit, even as they have expressed worry that he could be pushing to open things too quickly and that any resulting deaths will not be forgiven by voters in November.

But there are warning signs. Several Republicans who mimicked Trump's 2016 strategy by focusing on immigration failed to win congressional or governors' races.

"Whatever impact it has in boosting turnout among core supporters, it boosts the backlash vote even more," said Frank Sharry, the executive director of the liberal immigration advocacy group America's Voice.

He noted the 2017 Virginia's governor's race, in which GOP nominee Ed Gillespie tried to feather candidate Ralph Northam with ads on immigration. The strategy backfired, as it did in many 2018 midterm races.

Jason Miller, who served as communications director for Trump's 2016 campaign, countered that last week's immigration executive order may appeal to the base. But he said it was also aimed at helping African Americans, Hispanics, women and immigrants already in the U.S. legally who typically hold lower-wage jobs at a higher percentage than those is what is typically viewed as the president's base.

Trump's campaign has been trying to chip away at Democrats' advantage with those demographic groups, even as advocates counter that minority immigrants will suffer by being prevented from having their parents and other family members join them in the country.

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Miller also defended the president's refusal to put petty political riffs aside at a time of national crisis, arguing that some fights are worth picking and that Trump will be judged, not on his daily briefings, but on how the country eventually recovers from the crisis.

"He is bringing the country together with determinative action and results," he said.

Lemire reported from New York. Associated Press writer Nicholas Riccardi in Denver contributed to this report.

Follow Colvin and Lemire on Twitter at <https://twitter.com/colvinj> and <https://twitter.com/JonLemire>

Stephen Sondheim gets starry but tardy 90th birthday concert

By **MARK KENNEDY AP Entertainment Writer**

NEW YORK (AP) — Josh Groban, Nathan Lane and Jake Gyllenhaal honored composer and lyricist Stephen Sondheim on Sunday with an online 90th birthday concert that was stuffed with his songs, but delayed by technical difficulties.

The starry special called "Take Me to the World" featured performances by Lin-Manuel Miranda, Kelli O'Hara, Lea Salonga, Judy Kuhn, Katrina Lenk, Aaron Tveit, Laura Benanti, Brian Stokes Mitchell, Patti LuPone and Bernadette Peters, who closed out the show with a triumphant version of "No One Is Alone" without any accompanying music.

Sondheim actually turned 90 on March 22, but plans to celebrate were taken online after Broadway shut down because of the coronavirus pandemic. The celebration on Sunday night coincided with the 50th anniversary of the opening of Sondheim's Broadway show "Company," and served as a fundraiser for Artists Striving to End Poverty.

Sutton Foster was the first to sing, picking "There Won't Be Trumpets" and her young daughter, Emily, wished Sondheim a happy birthday at the end. Christine Baranski, Audra McDonald and Meryl Streep each downed glasses of booze to team up for a raucous "The Ladies Who Lunch."

Neil Patrick Harris sang "The Witch's Rap" and thanked Sondheim: "He made me love theater, he made me love music, he made me love rhythm," he said. Harris' children also played a role in the performance, bowing at the end.

Jason Alexander of "Seinfeld" fame told of being challenged by the composer, while Annaleigh Ashford and Gyllenhaal reunited for a song from their 2017 Broadway partnership, the Sondheim revival of "Sunday in the Park With George."

There was a duet from Beanie Feldstein and Ben Platt, who sang "It Takes Two." Victor Garber recalled raptly hearing "Johanna" from "Sweeney Todd" for the first time. In a video from a field with his dog, Mandy Patinkin said of Sondheim: "He simply turns my darkness into light."

There was an intimate vibe to the event, with many musicians and singers dressed in T-shirts, minimal makeup and in front of simple backdrops.

"I've got to go make dinner," said Melissa Errico confessed after singing "Children and Art."

Starting fashionably late, the tribute kicked off on YouTube more than an hour after the announced start time.

"Send in the singers!" one cranky fan posted, riffing off Sondheim's classic tune "Send in the Clowns" — that was later sung by Donna Murphy.

It was hosted and produced by Raúl Esparza, who starred in the Tony Award-winning revival of "Company" in 2006. Esparza blamed the tardiness on technical difficulties, tweeting, "The curtain always goes up late on opening night."

During one aborted start, Esparza appeared, but his opening speech could not be heard and he abruptly walked off-screen. ("They should have hired the 'SNL' folks," said one online commentator.) Esparza later appeared in short videos offering personal commentary and sang "Take Me to the World."

The delay and the fact that many of the videos were pre-taped reminded some of Fox's 2019 broadcast of the musical "Rent," which used pre-recorded material for much of the show after a performer was

injured during a rehearsal.

Sondheim's shows include "Merrily We Roll Along," "Sweeney Todd" and "A Little Night Music." He also worked alongside Leonard Bernstein as a lyricist for "West Side Story."

Steven Spielberg honored Sondheim's photographic knowledge of film and thanked him for helping on the filmmaker's upcoming version of "West Side Story."

"For me it was like going back to school and meeting my most favorite professor," Spielberg said.

Lane, a frequent collaborator, joked that the oft-celebrated Sondheim was "an unsung hero" of the American theater.

"Here's my little show business adage for this evening: If at all possible, try to work with a genius," Lane said. "They're fun. They're smart. They're inspiring and they tend to bring out the best in you. And that's the kind of genius Steve is."

Mark Kennedy is at <http://twitter.com/KennedyTwits>

Plan is for Trump to shift focus to prospects for economy

By ZEKE MILLER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — After two months of frantic response to the coronavirus, the White House is planning to shift President Donald Trump's public focus to the burgeoning efforts aimed at easing the economic devastation caused by the pandemic.

Days after he publicly mused that scientists should explore the injection of toxic disinfectants as a potential virus cure, Trump has now rejected the utility of his daily task force briefings, where he has time and again clashed with scientific experts. Trump's aides are aiming to move the president onto more familiar — and safer, they hope — ground: talking up the economy, in tighter controlled settings.

It's a political imperative as allies have seen an erosion in support for the president. What had been his greatest asset in the reelection campaign, his ability to blanket news headlines with freewheeling performances, has become a daily liability. At the same time, new Republican Party polling shows Trump's path to a second term depends on the public's perception of how quickly the economy rebounds from the state-by-state shutdowns meant to slow the spread of the virus.

Some states have started to ease closure orders, and Trump is expected to begin to highlight his administration's work in helping businesses and employees. Aides said the president would hold more frequent roundtables with CEOs, business owners and beneficiaries of the trillions of dollars in federal aid already approved by Congress, and begin to outline what he hopes to see in a future recovery package.

Trump last left the White House grounds a month ago, and plans are being drawn up for a limited schedule of travel within the next few weeks, aide said. It would be a symbolic show that the nation is beginning to reopen.

The shift comes in conjunction with what the White House sees as encouraging signs across the country, with the pace of new infections stabilizing and deaths declining.

Still, medical experts warn that the virus will remain until at least a vaccine is developed and that the risk of a severe second wave is high if social distancing is relaxed too quickly or if testing and contact tracing schemes aren't developed before people return to normal behaviors.

The White House is deliberating whether to continue to hold news briefings in a modified form without Trump, potentially at a different location. Before Trump said in a tweet Saturday that they were "Not worth the time & effort," aides had been eager to use the briefings to highlight positive trends and to overwhelm Americans with statistics. It was an effort to restore confidence in the response so that the public would be comfortable resuming more normal activities.

"We know that's important," Dr. Deborah Birx, the White House coronavirus task force coordinator, told Fox News Channel's "Sunday Morning Futures." "We understand those messages of science and policy need to be brought forward to the American people in a nonpolitical way."

Few Americans regularly look to or trust Trump as a source of information on the pandemic, according

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to a survey from The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research released last week.

On Monday, the White House was expected to release a recap of what the federal government has done so far to improve the availability of COVID-19 testing, personal protective equipment and ventilators.

Still, governors in both parties say much more is needed, particularly in testing, in the coming months, as they deliberate how and when to reopen their states.

"I want to get our economy back opened just as soon as we can, but I want to do so in a safe way so we don't have a spike, we don't cause more deaths, or an overloading of our health care system," Gov. Larry Hogan, R-Md., told ABC's "This Week."

Birx expressed frustration that Trump's injection comments were still in the headlines, illustrating the tensions that have emerged between the president and his medical advisers.

"As a scientist and a public health official and a researcher, sometimes, I worry that we don't get the information to the American people that they need, when we continue to bring up something that was from Thursday night," she said on CNN's "State of the Union."

As the White House hopes it has turned a corner, it is also beginning to assess responsibility for critical missteps. Two senior administration officials said Trump has begun discussions about replacing Health and Human Services Secretary Alex Azar, who led the coronavirus task force during its initial weeks and has been blamed for a culture of bureaucratic infighting during that period. Azar has been largely sidelined since Vice President Mike Pence took charge of the task force in late February.

Trump on Sunday denied that he was going to fire Azar in a tweet, saying "Alex is doing an excellent job!"

White House aiming for Trump pivot from virus to economy

By ZEKE MILLER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — After two months of frantic response to the coronavirus, the White House is planning to shift President Donald Trump's public focus to the burgeoning efforts aimed at easing the economic devastation caused by the pandemic.

Days after he publicly mused that scientists should explore the injection of toxic disinfectants as a potential virus cure, Trump has now rejected the utility of his daily task force briefings, where he has time and again clashed with scientific experts. Trump's aides are aiming to move the president onto more familiar — and safer, they hope — ground: talking up the economy, in tighter controlled settings.

It's a political imperative as allies have seen an erosion in support for the president. What had been his greatest asset in the reelection campaign, his ability to blanket news headlines with freewheeling performances, has become a daily liability. At the same time, new Republican Party polling shows Trump's path to a second term depends on the public's perception of how quickly the economy rebounds from the state-by-state shutdowns meant to slow the spread of the virus.

Some states have started to ease closure orders, and Trump is expected to begin to highlight his administration's work in helping businesses and employees. Aides said the president would hold more frequent roundtables with CEOs, business owners and beneficiaries of the trillions of dollars in federal aid already approved by Congress, and begin to outline what he hopes to see in a future recovery package.

Trump last left the White House grounds a month ago, and plans are being drawn up for a limited schedule of travel within the next few weeks, aide said. It would be a symbolic show that the nation is beginning to reopen.

The shift comes in conjunction with what the White House sees as encouraging signs across the country, with the pace of new infections stabilizing and deaths declining.

Still, medical experts warn that the virus will remain until at least a vaccine is developed and that the risk of a severe second wave is high if social distancing is relaxed too quickly or if testing and contact tracing schemes aren't developed before people return to normal behaviors.

The White House is deliberating whether to continue to hold news briefings in a modified form without Trump, potentially at a different location. Before Trump said in a tweet Saturday that they were "Not worth the time & effort," aides had been eager to use the briefings to highlight positive trends and to overwhelm

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Americans with statistics. It was an effort to restore confidence in the response so that the public would be comfortable resuming more normal activities.

"We know that's important," Dr. Deborah Birx, the White House coronavirus task force coordinator, told Fox News Channel's "Sunday Morning Futures." "We understand those messages of science and policy need to be brought forward to the American people in a nonpolitical way."

Few Americans regularly look to or trust Trump as a source of information on the pandemic, according to a survey from The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research released last week.

On Monday, the White House was expected to release a recap of what the federal government has done so far to improve the availability of COVID-19 testing, personal protective equipment and ventilators.

Still, governors in both parties say much more is needed, particularly in testing, in the coming months, as they deliberate how and when to reopen their states.

"I want to get our economy back opened just as soon as we can, but I want to do so in a safe way so we don't have a spike, we don't cause more deaths, or an overloading of our health care system," Gov. Larry Hogan, R-Md., told ABC's "This Week."

Birx expressed frustration that Trump's injection comments were still in the headlines, illustrating the tensions that have emerged between the president and his medical advisers.

"As a scientist and a public health official and a researcher, sometimes, I worry that we don't get the information to the American people that they need, when we continue to bring up something that was from Thursday night," she said on CNN's "State of the Union."

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Spain lets children play as US states move at various speeds

By AMY FORLITI and JOSEPH WILSON Associated Press

MINNEAPOLIS (AP) — Spain let children go outside and play Sunday for the first time in six weeks as European countries methodically worked to ease their lockdowns and reopen their economies, while governors in the United States moved at differing speeds, some more aggressive, others more cautious.

Elsewhere around the world, China's state-run media said that hospitals in Wuhan, the original epicenter of the disaster, no longer have any COVID-19 patients, after a crisis in which the city recorded nearly 3,900 deaths. And British Prime Minister Boris Johnson planned to be back at his desk Monday at 10 Downing St. after a bout with the coronavirus that put him in intensive care.

While governors in states like hard-hit New York and Michigan are keeping stay-at-home restrictions in place until at least mid-May, their counterparts in places such as Georgia, Oklahoma and Alaska are allowing certain businesses to reopen. And churches in Montana began holding in-person services again Sunday.

Dr. Deborah Birx, the White House coronavirus task force coordinator, said each state is different. Still, she told NBC, social-distancing recommendations would "be with us through the summer to really ensure that we protect one another as we move through these phases."

The official death toll from the virus topped 205,000 worldwide, with over 2.9 million reported infections, according to a tally by Johns Hopkins University, though the real figures are believed to be much higher, in part because of inadequate testing and differences in counting the dead.

Italy, Britain, Spain and France accounted for more than 20,000 deaths each, the U.S. for about 55,000.

Some encouraging signs were seen, as Italy recorded its lowest 24-hour number of deaths since mid-March, with 260, and New York state registered its fewest since late last month, with 367.

Seven weeks into Italy's strict lockdown, Premier Giuseppe Conte laid out a long-awaited timetable for getting back to normal, announcing that factories, construction sites and wholesale supply businesses can

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resume activity as soon as they put safety measures in place against the virus.

Conte also said that starting May 4, parks and gardens will reopen, funerals will be allowed, athletes can resume training, and people will be able to visit relatives living in the same region. If all goes well, stores and museums will open May 18, and restaurants, cafes and salons on June 1, he said.

But he warned that if people don't wear masks and obey other social-distancing rules, "the curve of contagion can rise again, it will go out of control, deaths will climb and we'll have irreparable damage" to the economy. After Italian bishops complained that these latest rules didn't allow for public Masses, Conte's office said a plan for such worship would be released.

In Spain, where the crisis is also easing, the streets echoed again with children's shrieks of joy and the clatter of bicycles after youngsters under 14 were allowed out of their homes with one parent for up to an hour of play.

"This is wonderful! I can't believe it has been six weeks," Susana Sabaté, a mother of 3-year-old twin boys, said in Barcelona. "Today when they saw the front door and we gave them their scooters, they were thrilled."

Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez will present a detailed plan Tuesday for the "de-escalation" of Spain's lockdown but said it would be cautious. His French counterpart will do so on the same day.

In the U.S., where President Donald Trump has repeatedly pushed to reopen the country for business and a split has opened among the states along often partisan lines. Oklahoma Gov. Kevin Stitt, a Republican, told "Fox News Sunday" that with hospitalizations dropping in his state, he will reopen churches and restaurant dining on Friday, with social-distancing guidelines in place.

"We believe it's the time to have a measured reopening," he said.

But Michigan Gov. Gretchen Whitmer, a Democrat, told ABC that her state is not ready and needs more robust testing, community tracing and a plan for isolating people who get sick.

"We've got to be nimble and we have to follow the science and be really smart about how we reengage," she said, "because no one — no one, even if you're a protester or you're the sitting governor or you're on another side of the issue — we know that no one wants a second wave."

In Montana, some churchgoers returned to Sunday services as a general stay-at-home order expired. At Christ the King Lutheran Church in Billings, every other pew was kept empty. Roughly 100 people streamed into St. Anthony Catholic Church in Laurel, where ushers tried to keep families separate from one another and hand sanitizer was available.

"It's like being given life again," said church member Jack Auzqui. He said being unable to attend had been spiritually difficult for him and his wife.

Georgia's Republican Gov. Brian Kemp, in announcing the opening of several businesses last week, reiterated religious services were allowed as long as strict social-distancing protocols were followed. But leaders of various denominations said they would keep their buildings shuttered for now.

In a sign that it could get harder to enforce restrictions as the weather improves, a lingering heat wave in California lured people to beaches, rivers and trails Sunday, prompting warnings that defiance of stay-at-home orders could reverse progress. Most recreation areas are shuttered, but officials worried that those still open could draw people who will ignore the rules.

On the other side of the Atlantic, as Britain's prime minister returns to work, he faces calls for more clarity on when his government will ease the lockdown, now set to run until at least May 7.

Other European nations are further along in relaxing their restrictions. Germany allowed nonessential shops and other facilities to open last week, and Denmark has reopened schools for children up to fifth grade.

In China, Wuhan said all major construction projects have resumed as authorities push to restart factory production and other economic activity after a 2 1/2-month lockdown.

Wilson reported from Barcelona, Spain. Associated Press writer Matthew Brown in Laurel, Montana, and AP journalists around the world contributed to this report.

Follow AP pandemic coverage at <http://apnews.com/VirusOutbreak> and <https://apnews.com/Understand-ingtheOutbreak>

NFL draft averages record 8.4M viewers across 3 days

By JOE REEDY AP Sports Writer

Seth Markman was just as nervous as NFL coaches and general managers about the unknown factors involved with a virtual draft. But the ESPN executive producer said he was overwhelmed with how everything came together over the three days.

It also ended up being must-see TV as the first significant live sporting event since the coronavirus pandemic ground everything to a halt. The draft averaged a record 8.4 million viewers over all three days, according to the NFL and Nielsen. The previous high was 6.2 million last year.

"I thought a coach or general manager might put a towel on the camera or point it another direction, but there were zero issues," Markman said. "There were a couple times that we lost a feed or two, but it quickly came back."

After early concerns about how the NFL could conduct a virtual draft, everyone appeared to end up having fun with it. Coaches and general managers embraced their children or spouses being on camera and draft picks got to watch from home comfortably instead of waiting in a green room.

Even normally stodgy New England coach Bill Belichick got into the spirit of things by giving his dog, an Alaskan Klee Kai named Nike, some television time.

"I thought coaches and general managers were going to lock themselves in a room and it was the opposite. Every time I looked up there was more family around," Markman said. "I think it speaks to the coaches that when this is done, they can remember it is OK not to be in the office at all times."

Miami coach Brian Flores, who was shown celebrating picks with sons Miles and Maxwell in his office, said it was important for fans to see another side of him.

"When I think about being a coach, you want to help players become good players but good people, good husbands, good fathers, good sons; and I think we, as coaches, need to be good examples of that," said Flores, whose young daughter, Liliana, at times sat on his lap. "I think that was evident. It was nice to see everyone's families."

Each day attracted record audiences. Thursday's first round averaged 15.6 million, Friday's second and third rounds 8.2 million and Saturday's final four rounds 4.2 million. ESPN and NFL Network had a combined production all three days while ABC had separate telecasts Thursday and Friday before simulcasting the ESPN/NFL Network feed Saturday. ESPN Deportes also had a separate broadcast.

Here are some other takeaways:

TOO UP CLOSE AND PERSONAL?

The biggest criticism of ESPN/NFL Network's coverage was that discussions too often were focused on the personal tragedies in each prospect's life, which ended up dominating the telecast at times. The storytelling and off-the-field stories are a huge part of ABC's coverage the first two nights while many expected ESPN to stick more to the X's and O's.

Markman said they have seen feedback on social media and that it is something they will evaluate in the future in order to strike the right balance.

"Our intention is in some cases talk about and celebrate the obstacles these kids overcame in an amazing moment. If that's not coming across as well that is something we need to look at," he said. "Our company puts a huge emphasis on storytelling. We don't go as in-depth on the human stories on the ESPN coverage, but we do need to self-scout a little more. If three straight kids are picked who have overcome huge obstacles, we have to be disciplined in our approach so that it doesn't take too much of a turn."

When Tee Higgins was selected in the second round by the Cincinnati Bengals, the ABC broadcast discussed his mother's battle with drug addiction and how she was an inspiration to the Clemson wide receiver. Her addiction was listed on an ESPN graphic without any additional context on that broadcast. Markman said that shouldn't have happened and that ESPN apologized to Higgins.

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Higgins said on Twitter he had “no problem with them showing the world that my mom is a true fighter.”

McSHAY'S ABSENCE

Analyst Todd McShay was to participate on television before he announced Thursday that he wouldn't take part because he was recovering from the new coronavirus. McShay was supposed to be part of ABC's telecast the first two days before moving to ESPN for the final four rounds.

“He has been focusing on his recovery. His mind should be on that and not on last-minute draft preparations,” Markman said. “Our top priority is the health and safety of all of our employees.”

PRETTY SMOOTH SAILING

Despite being spread out throughout the country, there were very few instances of analysts talking over one another, which Markman credited to his directors keeping everyone informed of what was happening.

Due to the quick-moving nature of Thursday's first round, there weren't many interviews with players. Markman said by the time players were done celebrating with their families and got into position to be interviewed, they already had the next selection. Interviews still took place but were distributed on ESPN and NFL digital channels, as well as some airing on ABC.

Follow Joe Reedy at <https://twitter.com/joereedy>

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

Silenced by virus, Met Opera links for digital global gala

By RONALD BLUM Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Javier Camarena was at his home in Zurich singing an aria from Bellini's “Il Pirata” when the screen for the video feed split, and he was joined by Metropolitan Opera music director Yannick Nézet-Séguin in Montreal and general manager Peter Gelb in New York.

“Just a second,” the tenor from Mexico said, raising an index finger.

He had just finished the slow-moving first section. An associate director an ocean away didn't realize he also planned to perform the cabaletta, the faster-moving second part. Restored to a full screen, Camarena continued.

With the entertainment world shut down by the coronavirus pandemic, the Met staged an At-Home Gala on Saturday that would have been inconceivable to the Vanderbilts and Morgans who helped found the company in 1883. A starry array of classical music's biggest names sang live on Skype from their living rooms across 13 nations, including Renée Fleming in Virginia, Jonas Kaufmann in Germany, Bryn Terfel in Wales and Roberto Alagna in France.

Thirty-three live and seven prerecorded performances stretched for four hours. The Met said the live stream on its website that started at 1 p.m. EDT Saturday peaked at about 300,000 views in 162 countries and the total with replays was expected to reach 1 million by Sunday night.

Gelb, trying to overcome a budget deficit of up to \$60 million, said there were many small donations but it was too early to total.

“It was a temporary kind of panacea and it just lifted people's spirits in a way that would never have happened. This type of program only works because of the horrible conditions that we're in right now,” Gelb said Sunday. “I got so many e-mails and text messages from people that said that they were in tears for large portions of this program.”

Joyce DiDonato, in Spain, joined seven violists and Nézet-Séguin in a recorded tribute to Vincent Lioni, a Met violist for 33 years who died on April 4 after contracting the coronavirus. Nézet-Séguin sniffled after watching the playback of Handel's “Ombra mai fu.”

“To lose him to the virus made this reality so much closer, immediate, that we could lose a member of our family to this threat,” Nézet-Séguin said.

Erin Morley, Matthew Polenzani, Étienne Dupuis and Günther Groissböck showed off their piano-playing abilities, accompanying themselves. Dupuis and wife Nicole Car sang a duet from Massenet's “Thaïs” after

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an initial connectivity delay.

Artists' homes were on showcase: Kaufmann has a Bösendorfer piano surrounded by red theater-style seats in Munich; Anita Rachvelishvili has a "NO AUTOGRAPHS PLEASE" sign on her piano in Tbilisi, Georgia; René Pape has a red Le Corbusier chair and decorative Fornasetti globe in Dresden. Groissböck has a model of the Met on his piano and a statue of composer Richard Wagner in a corner wearing a blue facemask with the word: "No."

Attire ranged from Alagna in a tuxedo jacket, blue jeans and what appeared to be a soccer jersey, to Sonya Yoncheva in a white-and-black recital ready dress.

Ildar Abdrazakov in Moscow sang in Moscow just a few hours before his wife gave birth to a son.

Her face flush with emotion, Fleming gave one of the most moving performances, the "Ave Maria" from Verdi's "Otello." After a few moments of quiet, Gelb's microphone caught him saying "Go, Gary," to director Gary Halvorson in Los Angeles, a sign of the unusual technical logistics.

Some singers used recorded piano tracks played by Met director of music administration Thomas Lausmann and assistant conductors Howard Watkins and Bryan Wagorn. Lisette Oropesa went a step further, having a video of pianist Michael Borowitz on a video screen behind her playing "Idole de ma vie" from Meyerbeer's "Robert Le Diable."

Morley provided one of the best performances with fluid voice, considerable piano skill and ebullient personality in "Chacun le sait" from Donizetti's "La fille du régiment (The Daughter of the Regiment)," imploring viewers to "sing along" for the choruses. Isabel Leonard sang an inspiring a cappella for "Somewhere" from Bernstein's "West Side Story."

Another highlight was Diana Damrau and husband Nicolas Testé in "Là ci darem la mano" from Mozart's "Don Giovanni" while standing in front of their kitchen in Orange, France, joined after by excited sons Alexander and Colyn. Unable to perform at home in Vienna, Anna Netrebko and husband Yusif Eyvazov recorded separate pieces at an ORF network studio.

In the hardest technical tasks, lead video editor Pete Scalzitti spent most of the previous week piecing together the individual orchestra and choral videos for the intermezzo from Mascagni's "Cavalleria Rusticana," the "Va, pensiero" chorus from Verdi's "Nabucco" and the third act prelude of Wagner's "Lohengrin." Nézet-Séguin air conducted as a video was made, and Lausmann used it to create a piano accompaniment sent to the players and singers. Up to 90 squares were used to show the videos aligned simultaneously, and David Frost mixed most to the audio.

Unable to globe trot, performers were happy to entertain. Many introduced and bantered with the person up next.

"Ooh, it's fun to get to sing again!" Jamie Barton exclaimed.

Brad Pitt portrays Fauci in SNL's 2nd at-home edition

NEW YORK (AP) — Brad Pitt portrayed Dr. Anthony Fauci in the second at-home episode of "Saturday Night Live," that featured musical guest Miley Cyrus, an Adam Sandler cameo and plenty of disinfectant jokes.

A bespectacled Pitt, speaking in Fauci's raspy voice, tried to recast false assurances and misstatements pitched by President Donald Trump during the pandemic, for instance when Trump said there'd be a COVID-19 vaccine "relatively soon."

"Relatively soon is an interesting phrase. Relative to the entire history of earth? Sure, the vaccine is going to come real fast," said Pitt's Fauci, seated at a desk behind a stately bookcase. "But if you were going to tell a friend, 'I'll be over relatively soon' and then showed up a year and a half later, well, your friend may be relatively pissed off."

The episode was the show's second "quarantine edition," with pre-recorded segments at actors' homes delving into the frustrations and touchstones of quarantine life, but, of course, with an SNL twist.

Sandler and Pete Davidson teamed up to mock being cooped up with family for a musical duet called "Stuck In The House," another sketch featured a Zoom version of "Law and Order" and another poked

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fun at zealous fitness moved online during the pandemic with one boasting of "eating clean" by preparing a "Clorox juice" cleanse.

Cyrus, sitting fireside with a guitar, performed Pink Floyd's "Wish You Were Here."

Pitt's depiction followed a Fauci interview on CNN when he jokingly said he thought Pitt should portray him when he was asked to choose between Ben Stiller or Pitt. The cold open also featured Trump's far-fetched statements earlier this week about disinfectant and light being studied in the fight against the virus.

"When I hear things like the virus can be cured if everyone takes the Tide Pod Challenge, I'll be there to say, 'Please don't,'" said Pitt's Fauci, before he broke character, took off his wig and paid tribute to Fauci and thanked him.

There also were jabs at Trump's battle with governors in an outdoors segment with Cecily Strong as Michigan Gov. Gretchen Whitmer, who has blasted Trump's handling of the pandemic. Strong's Whitmer urged continued social distancing.

"We're not out of the woods yet," she said, gesturing to her surroundings. "We never will be. We live in Michigan."

Mayor imposes curfew, then entertains fellow bored residents

By JENNIFER SINCO KELLEHER Associated Press

HONOLULU (AP) — When a curfew goes into effect each night for one county in Hawaii, the mayor gets bored -- and posts videos on social media.

And his constituents? They're entertained.

"Our Mayor is bettah than yours!!" one woman commented, responding to Kauai Mayor Derek Kawakami's stiff but earnest version of the Renegade to the rap song "Lottery," one of the most popular dances on social media.

In other videos, posted to his personal Facebook and Instagram accounts, he creates a mask out of a T-shirt and makes ice cream.

Even before Gov. David Ige issued a statewide stay-at-home order to curb the spread of the coronavirus, Kawakami set a 9 p.m. to 5 a.m. curfew for his county, which includes the islands of Kauai and Niihau.

The videos, the 42-year-old mayor explains on Facebook, are meant to "break the boredom together as a community." And they seem to have succeeded.

As of Monday, a video he posted April 4 of him dancing generated more than 2,000 shares and more than 400 comments on Facebook.

"And if you're wondering why I'm out of breath and why I'm sweating," he says after his Renegade dance, "because that was like take 1,022."

Kawakami also uses his videos for some serious commentary, including demonstrating the proper way to remove disposable gloves, which he's seen left behind in shopping carts and baskets.

"And please folks throw your opala away," he says, using the Hawaiian word for trash.

"We no leave our trash for somebody else pick up," he says in Pidgin, Hawaii's creole language that he slips in and out of easily, reflecting his island roots.

He's also garnered attention by publicly calling those who defy quarantine orders "covidiot."

"I LOVE all your postings!" a woman commented on a video. "So fun, so caring, so empathetic, and a blessing to us all, even us who live on Oahu!!!"

Kauai resident Michael Miranda said the videos show a human side to the mayor. "On the policy side, I appreciate all the hard decisions he's been making," Miranda said.

Miranda said Kawakami seemed to be "a couple steps ahead" of Hawaii's other counties -- discouraging tourists from visiting Kauai, even before a statewide 14-day quarantine for travelers arriving in Hawaii went into effect.

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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Popular Honolulu Star-Advertiser columnist Lee Cataluna wrote earlier this month that Kawakami “has emerged as one of the most decisive and blunt political leaders in Hawaii” during the pandemic.

Many comments suggest he should be Hawaii’s next governor. He said he’s not thinking about his political future.

“Throughout this whole challenging event, all that it’s done for me is further solidified my heart where I belong,” he said. “And right now, it’s here on Kauai.”

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.

Satellite imagery finds likely Kim train amid health rumors

By HYUNG-JIN KIM Associated Press

SEOUL, South Korea (AP) — A train likely belonging to North Korean leader Kim Jong Un has been parked at his compound on the country’s east coast since last week, satellite imagery showed, amid speculation about his health that has been caused, in part, by a long period out of the public eye.

The satellite photos released by 38 North, a website specializing in North Korea studies, don’t say anything about Kim’s potential health problems, and they echo South Korean government intelligence that Kim is staying outside of the capital, Pyongyang. Seoul has also repeatedly indicated that there have been no unusual signs that could indicate health problems for Kim.

That hasn’t stopped growing unconfirmed rumors and media reports about Kim’s health that have emerged since he missed the April 15 commemoration of the 108th birthday of his grandfather, North Korea founder Kim Il Sung.

Kim Jong Un is the third generation of his family to rule North Korea, and he hadn’t missed the April 15 event, one of the year’s most important for the North, since assuming power after his father Kim Jong Il’s death in late 2011.

Kim’s health is of crucial importance because of worries that the serious illness or death of a leader venerated with near godlike passion by millions of North Koreans could cause instability in the impoverished, nuclear-armed country.

Many experts in South Korea downplayed speculation that Kim is seriously ill. They also said North Korea won’t likely face a serious immediate turmoil even if Kim is incapacitated or dies because someone else like his influential sister Kim Yo Jong will quickly step in, though the prospect for the North’s long-term political future would be unclear.

Kim Jong Un’s train has been parked at the Leadership Railway Station servicing his Wonsan compound since at least April 21, the 38 North website said Saturday, citing an analysis of recent satellite photos of the area. The website said the approximately 250-meter (820-foot) -long train wasn’t present on April 15 but was present on both April 21 and 23.

“The train’s presence does not prove the whereabouts of the North Korean leader or indicate anything about his health, but it does lend weight to reports that Kim is staying at an elite area on the country’s eastern coast,” it said.

The photos indicate the train arrived before April 21 and was still present on April 23, when it appeared to be repositioned for departure. However, there was no indication when that departure might take place, 38 North said.

North Korea exerts extremely tight control on information about its leadership, making it virtually impossible for outsiders to find out what’s going on at those senior levels. Even South Korea’s main spy agency has a mixed record on confirming developments in North Korea. When Kim Jong Il died in December 2011, for instance, few outsiders knew it until it was reported by North Korea’s state media two days later.

A U.S. official, speaking on condition of anonymity because he wasn’t authorized to talk to the media, said the latest rumors about Kim’s health had not changed the U.S. assessment of the information as

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“speculation.”

White House counselor Kellyanne Conway wouldn't comment on Kim's status. "The president will make any announcement about a head of state," she said Saturday night on Fox News Channel's "Justice with Judge Jeanine."

Danny Russel, a former National Security Council director and assistant secretary of state for Asia who has dealt with North Korea in the past, cautioned that rumors have abounded for years about Kim, his father, Kim Jong Il, and his grandfather, Kim Il Sung, and most turned out to have been false.

"While serving in government I was on the receiving end of multiple intelligence reports about alleged accidents, illnesses and assassination attempts against North Korean leaders — only to have them reappear in public," he said.

South Korea's presidential office said last week that Kim appeared to be handling state affairs normally and that there had been no suspicious activities, such as an emergency readiness order issued by the North's military or the ruling Workers' Party. The South Korean government has since maintained its assessment that Kim's health remains the same. Some South Korean media outlets, citing unidentified government officials, have reported that Kim was staying at Wonsan.

North Korea's state media have been silent about the speculation on Kim's health. On Saturday, the North's official Korean Central News Agency reported that Kim had received a message of greetings from the chairman of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Russian Federation on the occasion of the first anniversary of Kim's summit with Russian President Vladimir Putin. The message wished Kim "good health and happiness," KCNA said.

It's not the first time that Kim has vanished from the public eye, and past absences in state media dispatches have also triggered speculation about his health. In 2014, state media didn't report any public activities for Kim for about six weeks, before he reappeared with a cane. South Korea's spy agency said later that he had a cyst removed from his ankle.

AP Diplomatic Writer Matthew Lee in Washington contributed to this report.

This story has been corrected to reflect that the first name of the Fox News Channel host is Jeanine, not Jeannine.

Muted and vacant, Las Vegas struggles to survive shutdown

By MICHELLE L. PRICE Associated Press

LAS VEGAS (AP) — Slot machines are powered down, casinos boarded up and barricaded.

Sidewalks are largely deserted and electronic marquees that once flashed neon calls for nightclubs, magic shows and topless revues instead beam somber messages of safety.

The famous fountains of the Bellagio casino, where water choreographed to lights and music shoots hundreds of feet in the air, are still. Throngs of visitors who made it tough to maneuver on sidewalks have been replaced by the occasional jogger or skateboarder.

On the always busy, always noisy, never sleeping Las Vegas strip, you can now hear birds chirping.

"It's crazy," said Chris Morehouse, a 70-year-old Elvis impersonator who spent a recent afternoon sipping Miller High Life and posing with a few locals who took advantage of the eerie silence to take photos at the neon-bedecked welcome sign on the Las Vegas Strip. "It's like the end of the world."

Instead of hosting throngs of visitors for one of the busiest seasons of the year, with March Madness drawing swarms to sportsbooks, or the now-scuttled plan to host the NFL draft this weekend, ferrying players in boats to a red carpet stage on the Bellagio lake, Las Vegas is trying to survive.

Nevada's tourism, leisure, hospitality and gambling industry accounts for one in three jobs in the state - making the state more dependent on tourism than Alaska on oil.

Workers are expected to lose \$7.7 billion in wages and salaries over the next 18 months if the tourism industry is shuttered between 30 and 90 days, according to a study from the Nevada Resort Association.

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With the industry effectively closed for more than five weeks now, more than 343,000 residents have filed for unemployment, and state and local governments could lose more than \$1 billion in tax revenues.

The politically independent mayor of Las Vegas, Carolyn Goodman, has issued public pleas calling for the Democratic Gov. Steve Sisolak to end the statewide shutdown of casinos and non-essential businesses, which she calls "total insanity."

"For heaven's sake," Goodman said at an April city council meeting, "being closed is killing us already, and killing Las Vegas, our industry, our convention and tourism business that we have all worked so hard to build."

Sisolak has declined to give a date for when he'll start easing restrictions, saying the state has to see at least two weeks of declines in deaths and new cases, along with more widespread testing and tracking, with before he will start gradually easing rules.

Sisolak said in an interview on CNN Wednesday night that he didn't want workers to have to choose between their paycheck and their life and noted that the casino workers' union has reported 11 deaths among its ranks due to the virus.

"We will rebuild our economy. Las Vegas will continue to thrive. But I can't do that if I lose more people," he said.

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.

So far, the casino closures are expected to extend at least into May, leaving workers like Kimberly Ireland struggling to find a way to hang on.

The 49-year-old was laid off from her job as a bell desk dispatcher at the Mirage casino-resort, where she worked for a decade.

She's living off her savings and the unemployment, and also supporting her adult daughter, who is on an unpaid maternity leave, and a new grandson, who was born days after the casinos were shuttered.

"Money is running out. It's getting low for the majority of us," she said.

Ireland said workers at her casino weren't given any guidance about when they'd be back or what it might be like then they return. For now, she doesn't think Las Vegas is ready.

"Everybody wants to get back to business. Everybody wants to get back to semi-normal," she said. "I just don't think it's safe."

Victor Chicas, a restaurant server in the Mandalay Bay casino-hotel, was facing foreclosure on his home before the virus shut down the city and the 54-year-old was laid off.

He immediately ended his cable and internet service to cut his expenses and drained his swimming pool to trim his electric bill. He's still waiting to find out if his home loan modification will be approved and if he'll get a chance to try to keep his house, while also supporting his sister and her two children, who immigrated to the U.S. from Guatemala.

"Now when we come back," he said, "I'm going to be underwater."

Like Ireland, said he wishes his employer would pay him through the shutdown but disagrees with the mayor's call to reopen Las Vegas.

"Life is more important than anything else," he said. "You're not going to buy life with money."

While about 24% of the state's workforce has filed for unemployment benefits since March 21, that doesn't include waves of others who haven't been able to get through the overburdened system. Nor does it include the self-employed and gig workers, who are newly eligible for benefits under a federal aid package that the state is scrambling to accommodate. Nevada officials say the state may not have a website ready for them to seek benefits until mid-May.

Those who rely on the amusements of Las Vegas in non-traditional ways are trying to find a way to endure.

Wearing a white, rhinestone-studded jumpsuit, a thick black wig, a gold chain shining on his bare chest and sunglasses to match, Morehouse, the Elvis impersonator, has seized on the sunny weather and the restless locals visiting one of the few tourist attractions still open amid the COVID-19 outbreak--the iconic

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"Welcome to Fabulous Las Vegas" sign. He's brought a speaker to perform karaoke and a few cans of beer, which he sips as he sings and sways in the open-air park as people in groups of twos and threes still come up to take a photo with the sign.

While foot traffic is light, Morehouse hopes he might lure curious drivers to pullover.

"They see an Elvis here. They think something's going on," he said. "I'm like the sign."

At dusk falls and dim lights start glow, many locals slowly drive several miles of the Strip, with their car windows rolled down and phones raised to photograph and film America's most flamboyant party reduced to a vacant, muted spectacle, a post-apocalyptic remnant of a time before social distancing and stay-at-home orders, when excess and wild attractions were the main draw.

Brandy Little, a 35-year-old economist and Las Vegas native, said she cried the first time she drove the empty Strip during the shutdown, knowing how devastating it is for the city.

"It wouldn't have been bad if we were only briefly in it," she said of the coronavirus. "But the whole world is really being hit by it, and we rely on the world to come here and play. If they're hurting, they might not come and play."

What you need to know today about the virus outbreak

By The Associated Press undefined

Shrieks of joy ring out on the streets of Spain as children are allowed to leave their homes briefly for the first time in six weeks. The country has the second-highest number of confirmed infections behind the United States.

As Italy prepares to emerge from the West's first and most extensive coronavirus lockdown, it is increasingly clear that something went terribly wrong in Lombardy, the hardest-hit region in Europe's hardest-hit country.

The billions of dollars in coronavirus relief targeted at small businesses may not prevent many of them from ending up in bankruptcy court.

Church services are resuming in certain states, including Montana, where a general stay-at-home order is expiring.

With limited supplies of coronavirus tests available, the Pentagon is focusing first on testing those performing duties deemed most vital to national security.

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

WHAT'S HAPPENING TODAY:

— During the pandemic, Detroit — the nation's largest majority black U.S. city — is grieving collectively.

— A few states may have found a way to help slow the spread of the coronavirus in nursing homes by converting some of them into "recovery centers" set aside mostly for residents who have left the hospital but still might be contagious or lack immunity.

— British Prime Minister Boris Johnson is returning to work after recovering from a coronavirus infection that put him in intensive care, with his government facing growing criticism over the deaths and disruption the virus has caused.

— The U.S. Census Bureau needs more time to wrap up the once-a-decade count because of the coronavirus, opening the possibility of delays in the drawing of new legislative districts.

— New York Gov. Andrew Cuomo says the 367 deaths from the coronavirus reported Sunday are less than half the nearly 800 deaths that occurred in a single day during the pandemic's peak in the state. It is the first time this month that the statewide daily death toll has been below 400.

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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

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can cause more severe illness, including pneumonia. The vast majority of people recover.

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

One of the best ways to prevent the spread of the virus is to wash one's 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.

Phones should also be washed. 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:

— 7,000: The number of coronavirus tests being administered per day to U.S. military personnel.

IN OTHER NEWS:

— SAILING HOME: A group of 25 Dutch high school students with very little sailing experience ends a trans-Atlantic voyage that was forced on them by coronavirus restrictions.

— HAWAII MAYOR: Kauai Mayor Derek Kawakami delights constituents with videos on social media that show fun things to do during the coronavirus lockdown.

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Many failures combined to unleash death on Italy's Lombardy

By **NICOLE WINFIELD** Associated Press

ROME (AP) — As Italy prepares to emerge from the West's first and most extensive coronavirus lockdown, it is increasingly clear that something went terribly wrong in Lombardy, the hardest-hit region in Europe's hardest-hit country.

Italy had the bad luck of being the first Western nation to be slammed by the outbreak, and its official total of 26,600 fatalities lags behind only the U.S. in the global death toll. Italy's first homegrown case was recorded Feb. 21, at a time when the World Health Organization was still insisting the virus was "containable" and not nearly as infectious as the flu.

But there is also evidence that demographics and health care deficiencies collided with political and business interests to expose the 10 million people in the northern Italian region of Lombardy to COVID-19 in ways unseen anywhere else, particularly the most vulnerable in nursing homes.

Virologists and epidemiologists say what went wrong there will be studied for years, given how the outbreak overwhelmed a medical system long considered one of Europe's best, while in the neighboring Veneto region, the impact was significantly more controlled.

Prosecutors, meanwhile, are deciding whether to lay any criminal blame for the hundreds of dead in nursing homes, many of whom don't even figure into Lombardy's official death toll of 13,325, half of Italy's total.

By contrast, Lombardy's front-line doctors and nurses are being hailed as heroes for risking their lives to treat the sick under extraordinary levels of stress, exhaustion, isolation and fear. One WHO official said it was a "miracle" they saved as many as they did.

Here's a look at the perfect storm of what went wrong in Lombardy, based on interviews and brief-

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ings with doctors, union representatives, mayors and virologists, as well as reports from Italy's Superior Institute of Health, national statistics agency ISTAT and the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, which advises developed economies on policy.

CAUGHT UNPREPARED

Italy was the first European country to halt all air traffic with China on Jan. 31, and even put scanners in airports to check arrivals for fever. But by Jan. 31, it was already too late. Epidemiologists now say the virus had been circulating widely in Lombardy since early January, if not before.

Doctors treating pneumonia in January and February didn't know it was the coronavirus, since the symptoms were so similar and the virus was still believed to be largely confined to China. Even after Italy registered its Feb. 21 case, doctors didn't understand the unusual way COVID-19 could present itself, with some patients experiencing a rapid decline in their ability to breathe.

"After a phase of stabilization, many deteriorated quickly. This was clinical information we didn't have," said Dr. Maurizio Marvisi, a pneumologist at a private clinic in hard-hit Cremona. "There was practically nothing in the medical literature."

Because Lombardy's intensive care units were already filling up within days of Italy's first cases, many primary care physicians tried to treat and monitor patients at home. Some put them on supplemental oxygen, commonly used for home cases in Italy.

That strategy proved deadly, and many died at home or soon after hospitalization, having waited too long to call an ambulance.

Reliance on home care "will probably be the determining factor of why we have such a high mortality rate in Italy," Marivi said.

Italy was forced to use home care in part because of its low ICU capacity: After years of budget cuts, Italy entered the crisis with 8.6 ICU beds per 100,000 people, well below the OECD average of 15.9 and a fraction of Germany's 33.9, the group said.

As a result, primary care physicians became the front-line filter of virus patients, an army of mostly self-employed practitioners who work within the public health system but outside Italy's regional hospital network.

Since only those with strong symptoms were being tested because Lombardy's labs couldn't process more, these family doctors didn't know if they themselves were infected, much less their patients.

With so little clinical information available, doctors also had no guidelines on when to admit patients or refer them to specialists. And being outside the hospital system, they didn't have the same access to protective masks and equipment.

"The region was extremely behind in giving us protective equipment and it was inadequate, because the first time, they gave us 10 surgical masks and gloves," said Dr. Laura Turetta in the city of Varese. "Obviously for our close contact with patients, it wasn't the correct way to protect ourselves."

The Lombardy doctors' association issued a blistering letter April 7 to regional authorities listing seven "errors" in their handling of the crisis, key among them the lack of testing for medical personnel, the lack of protective equipment and the lack of data about the contagion.

The regional government pushed back at the criticism and defended its efforts. But the civil protection agency also acknowledged that Italy was dependent on imports and donations of protective equipment and simply didn't have enough to go around.

Some 20,000 Italian medical personnel have been infected and 150 doctors have died.

LOST WEEKS

Two days after registering Italy's first case in the Lombardy province of Lodi, sparking a quarantine in 10 towns, another positive case was registered more than an hour's drive away in Alzano in Bergamo province. Whereas the emergency room of the Lodi-area hospital was closed, the Alzano ER reopened after a few hours of cleaning, becoming a main source of contagion.

Internal documents cited by Italian newspapers indicate the handful of serious pneumonia cases the Alzano hospital saw as early as Feb. 12 were likely COVID-19. At the time, Italy's health ministry recom-

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mended tests only for patients who had been to China or been in contact with a suspected or confirmed positive case.

By March 2, the Superior Institute of Health recommended Alzano and nearby Nembro be sealed off as the towns in Lodi had been. But political authorities never implemented the quarantine recommendation there, allowing the infection to spread for a second week until all the Lombardy region was locked down March 7.

"The army was there, prepared to do a total closure, and if it had been done immediately maybe they could have stopped the contagion in the rest of Lombardy," said Dr. Guido Marinoni, head of the association of doctors in Bergamo province. "This wasn't done, and they took softer measures in all of Lombardy, and this allowed for the spread."

Asked why he didn't seal off Bergamo sooner, Premier Giuseppe Conte argued the regional government could have done so on its own. Lombardy's governor, Attilio Fontana, shot back that any mistake "was made by both. I don't think that there was blame in this situation."

Lombardy has one-sixth of Italy's 60 million people and is the most densely populated region, home to the business capital in Milan and the country's industrial heartland. Lombardy also has more people over 65 than any other Italian region, as well as 20% of Italy's nursing homes, a demographic time bomb for COVID-19 infections.

"Clearly, with the benefit of hindsight, we should have done a total shutdown in Lombardy, everyone at home and no one moves," said Andrea Crisanti, a microbiologist and virologist advising the Veneto regional government. But he acknowledged how hard that was, given Lombardy's outsize role in the Italian economy, which even before the pandemic was heading toward a recession.

"Probably for political reasons, it wasn't done," he told reporters.

INDUSTRIAL LOBBYING

Unions and mayors of some of Lombardy's hardest hit cities now say the country's main industrial lobby group, Confindustria, exerted enormous pressure to resist lockdowns and production shutdowns because the economic cost would be too great in a region responsible for 21% of Italy's GDP.

On Feb. 28, a week into the outbreak and well after more than 100 cases were registered in Bergamo, the province's branch of Confindustria launched an English-language social media campaign, #Bergamois-running, to reassure clients. It insisted the outbreak was no worse than elsewhere, that the "misleading sensation" of its high number of infections was due to aggressive testing, and that production in steel mills and other industries was unaffected.

Confindustria launched its own campaign in the larger Lombardy region, echoing that message, #Yeswe-work. Milan's mayor proclaimed that "Milan doesn't stop."

At the time, Confindustria Lombardy chief Marco Bonometti acknowledged the "drastic measures" needed in Lodi but sought to lower the sense of alarm.

"We have to let people know they can go back to life as it was, while safeguarding their health," he said.

Even after the Rome-based national government locked down all of Lombardy March 7, it allowed factories to stay open, sparking strikes from workers worried their health was being sacrificed to keep Italy's industrial engine rolling.

"It was a huge error. They should have taken the example where the first cluster was found," said Giambattista Morali of the metalworkers' union in the Bergamo town of Dalmine. "Keeping factories open didn't help the situation; obviously it worsened it."

Eventually, all but essential production was shut down nationwide March 26. Confindustria's national president, Carlo Bonomi, has been urging that industry be reopened, but in a safe way.

"The paradigm has changed," Bonomi told RAI state television. "We can't make Italians secure if we don't reopen factories. But how do we make factories safe to secure Italians?"

It's a tough sell, given Lombardy is still adding an average of 950 infections daily, while other regions add from a few dozen to 500 apiece, with most new cases registered in nursing homes. Italy is set to begin a gradual reopening May 4, leading with regions farther south where the outbreak is more under control.

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Lombardy probably will be last to fully open, with its 73,000 confirmed cases, 70% of Italy's total, and estimates that the real number could be 10 times that.

A COSTLY FIELD HOSPITAL

Perhaps no initiative better illustrates Italy's confused coronavirus response than the 200-bed field hospital built in less than two weeks on the grounds of Milan's convention center.

The hospital was unveiled to great fanfare on March 31, the fruit of a 21 million euro (\$23 million) fundraising campaign headed by Lombardy's governor, a member of the right-wing League party, to try to ease pressure on regional ICUs, which on that date were near capacity at 1,324 patients.

The national civil protection agency opposed the plan, arguing it could never equip it with ventilators or personnel in time. Instead, the agency, which reports to the rival 5-Star-Democratic government in Rome, preferred smaller field units set up outside hospitals and a program to move critical patients elsewhere.

In the end, the Milan field hospital was barely used, treating only a few dozen patients. Since it opened, Lombardy has seen pressure on its ICUs fall considerably, with just 700 people needing intensive care today.

Fontana, the governor, defended the decision and said he would do it again, telling Radio 24: "We had to ... prepare a dam in case the epidemic overcame the embankment."

NURSING HOME 'MASSACRE'

While the regional government was focused on building the field hospital and scrambling to find ICU beds, its testing capacity lagged and Lombardy's nursing homes were in many ways left to fend for themselves.

Hundreds of elderly have died in Lombardy and across Italy in what one WHO official has termed a "massacre" of those most vulnerable to the virus. Prosecutors are investigating dozens of nursing homes, as well as measures taken by local health authorities and the regional governments that may have worsened the problem.

Lombardy has more nursing homes than any other region, housing at least 24,000 elderly, and it registered more dead at those facilities than others too. Of the 3,045 dead from Feb. 1 to April 15 in the region, 1,625 were either positive for the virus or showed its symptoms, according to preliminary results from a survey by the Superior Institute of Health.

Of particular attention to prosecutors was the March 8 decision by the regional government to allow recovering COVID-19 patients to be put in nursing homes to free up hospital beds. The region says it required the homes guarantee the patients would be isolated, but it's not clear who was responsible to ensure that or whether anyone checked.

Even before that, staff at some homes said management prevented them from wearing masks for fear of scaring residents.

A March 30 regional decree, again aimed at easing pressure on Lombardy's ICUs, told nursing home directors to not hospitalize sick residents over 75 if they had other health problems. The decree said it was "opportune to treat them in the same facility to avoid further risks of decline in transport or during the wait in the emergency room."

For the elderly at a nursing home in Nembro, one of the hardest-hit towns in Bergamo province, the decree amounted to a death warrant. But it wasn't the first or only one that gave the home's managers the sense that they were being abandoned.

When management proactively barred visitors on Feb. 24 to try to protect residents and staff from infection, local health authorities responded by threatening sanctions and a loss of accreditation for cutting off family visits, said the facility's new director, Valerio Poloni.

In the end, 37 of the 87 residents died in February and March. Its doctor, as well as Poloni's predecessor as director, also tested positive, were hospitalized and died. A nursing home resident couldn't get admitted to the hospital in late February because the ER was too crowded.

The facility's health director, Barbara Codalli, said she was told to use her existing resources to treat the sick. "The patient returned a few hours later, and a few days later the patient died," she told La7 television.

To date, none of the surviving residents has been tested. Poloni said tests were expected to begin in a few days. Two more residents died so far in April, but the situation seems under control.

"We are tranquil," he said.

A previous version of this story corrected the spelling of Attilio Fontana.

Colleen Barry in Soave, Italy, contributed to this report.

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

A flood of business bankruptcies likely in coming months

By **JOYCE M. ROSENBERG AP Business Writer**

NEW YORK (AP) — The billions of dollars in coronavirus relief targeted at small businesses may not prevent many of them from ending up in bankruptcy court.

Business filings under Chapter 11 of the federal bankruptcy law rose sharply in March, and attorneys who work with struggling companies are seeing signs that more owners are contemplating the possibility of bankruptcy.

Companies forced to close or curtail business due to government attempts to stop the virus's spread have mounting debts and uncertain prospects for returning to normal operations. Even those owners receiving emergency loans and grants aren't sure that help will be enough.

The most vulnerable companies include the thousands of restaurants and retailers that shut down, many of them more than a month ago. Some restaurants have managed to bring in a bit of revenue by serving meals for takeout and delivery, but even they are struggling financially. Small and independent retailers, including those with online stores, are similarly at risk; clothing retailers have the added problem of winter inventory that they are unlikely to sell with spring here and summer approaching.

Independent oil companies whose revenue was slammed by the collapse in energy prices also are strapped, as are other companies that were already burdened with high debt levels before the virus struck.

Jennifer Bennett, who closed one of her San Francisco restaurants on Wednesday, was still waiting for the financial aid she sought from the federal, state and city governments. Even with the money, she doesn't know if the revenue will cover the bills when she's finally able to reopen Zazie — especially if she's required to space tables six feet apart for social distancing.

"Our occupancy is going to be cut 60% to 65%," Bennett says. "I fear bankruptcy is a possibility."

Other small companies have similar anxieties, says Paul Singerman, a bankruptcy attorney with Berger Singerman in Miami.

"There is no reliable visibility into when business operations will be able to resume the pre-COVID normal," Singerman says.

Even larger companies are in trouble, including already struggling retailers who had to shut their stores.

The jeans company True Religion filed for Chapter 11 earlier this month, saying extended closures of its stores in the pandemic have hurt its business. Recent reports say department store chains Neiman Marcus and J.C. Penney, which has struggled for years with slumping sales, could soon file for bankruptcy protection.

The number of Chapter 11 filings rose 18 percent in March from a year earlier, a dramatic swing from the 20 percent decrease in February, according to the American Bankruptcy Institute, a trade organization for attorneys and other professionals involved in bankruptcy proceedings. The numbers don't break out filings by company size, but given that the vast majority of companies are small to mid-size, it does give an indication that smaller companies are struggling.

The federal government has already approved or given out more than 2 million loans and grants to small businesses totaling nearly \$360 billion; another \$310 billion is on the way to one of the programs. Still, the money may be at best a stopgap for companies with little to no revenue coming in. And the new funds are expected to go so quickly that thousands of owners won't get loans.

There's no way to predict how many companies will file for bankruptcy. There were over 160,000 bankruptcy filings from 2008 to 2010, during the Great Recession and its aftermath, according to statistics

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compiled by the federal court system. The numbers don't break out filings by company size. The majority were for liquidations. although some companies restructured their debt and continued operating under Chapter 11.

Many companies, however, just shut their doors, and that's likely to be the case again, Singerman says. According to some estimates, 170,000 companies failed during the recession.

But the Small Business Reorganization Act, which took effect in February, may encourage more companies to seek Chapter 11. The law is aimed at allowing owners to retain their ownership rather than lose their companies to their creditors; that is generally what happens in Chapter 11. The law also streamlines the reorganization process so a company is not wiped out by attorneys' fees, says Edward Janger, a professor at Brooklyn Law School in New York whose expertise includes bankruptcy law.

Another change under the law is that a bankruptcy judge can approve the reorganization over creditors' objections, Janger says.

Business owners will try to avoid bankruptcy by seeking leniency from landlords, lenders and vendors, bankruptcy attorney David Wander says. But with their companies' financial troubles beyond their control because of the virus outbreak, many will file for Chapter 11 because the stigma that bankruptcy has long held will be gone, says Wander, a partner at Davidoff Hutcher & Citron in New York.

"The tsunami is going to happen in the coming months and it's going to be ongoing," Wander says.

Boris Johnson returns to face growing virus divisions in UK

By JILL LAWLESS Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — British Prime Minister Boris Johnson is returning to work after recovering from a coronavirus infection that put him in intensive care, with his government facing growing criticism over the deaths and disruption the virus has caused.

Johnson's office said he would be back at his desk in 10 Downing St. on Monday, two weeks after he was released from a London hospital. Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab, who has been standing in for the prime minister, said Sunday that Johnson — the only world leader to be diagnosed with the coronavirus — was "raring to go."

Britain has recorded 20,732 deaths among people hospitalized with COVID-19, the fifth country in the world to surpass 20,000 deaths. Thousands more are thought to have died in nursing homes.

Johnson, 55, spent a week at St. Thomas' Hospital, including three nights in intensive care, where he was given oxygen and watched around the clock by medical workers. After he was released on April 12, he recorded a video message thanking staff at the hospital for saving his life.

Johnson hasn't been seen in public since, as he recovered at Chequers, the prime minister's country retreat outside London.

While he convalesced, Britain's coronavirus death toll has mounted, with another 413 virus-related deaths announced Sunday.

Opposition politicians say Britain's death toll could have been lower if Johnson's Conservative government had imposed a nationwide lockdown sooner. But they are also demanding to know when and how the government will ease the restrictions that were imposed March 23 and run to at least May 7.

Some people and businesses are growing impatient with the restrictions, which have brought much of the economy and daily life to a halt. Road traffic has begun to creep up after plummeting when the lockdown first was imposed, and some businesses have begun to reopen after implementing social-distancing measures.

"Decisions need to be taken quicker and communication with the public needs to be clearer," opposition Labour Party leader Keir Starmer said in a letter to Johnson.

"The British public have made great sacrifices to make the lockdown work," he wrote. "They deserve to be part of an adult conversation about what comes next."

But Johnson's government, facing criticism for being too slow to impose the lockdown, appears in no hurry to end it. Raab said there would be no dramatic sudden change to the restrictions.

"We won't just have this binary easing up of measures. We will end up moving to a new normal," he told the BBC. "We need to take a sure-footed step forward which protects life but also preserves our way of life. So we are very focused on doing the homework that can allow us to do that."

Scientists say the U.K. has reached the peak of the pandemic but isn't yet out of danger. The number of people hospitalized with COVID-19 is declining and the number of daily deaths peaked on April 8.

But with hundreds of new deaths announced each day, some health experts say Britain could eventually have the highest virus death toll in Europe.

As fears recede that the health system will be overwhelmed, opponents are criticizing Johnson's government over shortages of protective equipment for medical workers and a lack of testing for the virus. More than 100 infected medical workers have died so far.

The government has promised to conduct 100,000 coronavirus tests a day by the end of the month, but has yet to reach even 30,000 a day. Increasing testing, so that all people with the virus can be identified and their contacts traced and isolated, is key to loosening the lockdown.

The British government says all health care staff and other essential workers can be tested if they show symptoms. It is rolling out almost 100 mobile testing sites, staffed by soldiers, to conduct tests at nursing homes, police stations, prisons and other sites.

In the first two days of expanded testing, however, the online system handling daily demand for the tests had exceeded the supply by early morning.

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

Pentagon focusing on most vital personnel for virus testing

By ROBERT BURNS AP National Security Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — With limited supplies of coronavirus tests available, the Pentagon is focusing first on testing those performing duties deemed most vital to national security. Atop the list are the men and women who operate the nation's nuclear forces, some counterterrorism forces, and the crew of a soon-to-deploy aircraft carrier.

Defense leaders hope to increase testing from the current rate of about 7,000 a day to 60,000 by June. This will enable them to test those showing symptoms as well as those who do not.

The current tight supply forced the Pentagon to take a phased approach, which includes testing sailors aboard the USS Nimitz, the Bremerton, Washington-based Navy carrier next in line to head to the Pacific. Officials hope to avoid a repeat of problems that plagued the virus-stricken USS Theodore Roosevelt. On Friday the Navy disclosed a virus outbreak aboard another ship at sea, the USS Kidd.

Despite President Donald Trump's assertion that testing capacity is not an issue in the United States, Pentagon officials don't expect to have enough tests for all service members until sometime this summer.

Defense Secretary Mark Esper recently approved the tiered approach. It expands the Pentagon's practice of testing mainly those who show symptoms of the virus to eventually testing everyone. Many virus carriers show no symptoms but can be contagious, as was discovered aboard the Roosevelt.

The aim is to allocate testing materials to protect what the military considers its most important missions, while not depleting supplies for high-risk groups in the civilian population, including the elderly at nursing homes and health care professionals on the front lines of battling the virus.

The first tier of U.S. troops are being tested this month, followed in May and June by the second-highest priority group: forces in combat zones such as Syria, Iraq and Afghanistan. Next will be those abroad outside of war zones, like troops in Europe and aboard ships at sea, as well as those returning to the United States from overseas deployments.

Last in line: the remainder of the force.

Gen. John Hyten, vice chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, said the first three groups could be fully tested by June. By then the Pentagon hopes to reach its goal of being able to conduct 60,000 tests per

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day. To complete testing of the entire force will take "into the summer," he said without being specific.

Hyten said that testing under this tiered approach started to step up in mid-April, and that it included a plan to fully test the crew of the Nimitz. The complications that come with trying to test for coronavirus aboard a ship while it's already underway were made clear with the Roosevelt, which pulled into port at Guam in late March after discovering its first infections. It wasn't able to test 100% of the crew until a few days ago.

Beyond its desire to limit the spread of the virus, the Pentagon views testing and associated measures such as isolating and quarantining troops as tools to keep the force viable and to ensure it can perform its central function: to defend the nation. At least 3,900 members of the military had tested positive, including more than 850 from the Roosevelt.

Military members, being fitter and younger than the general U.S. population, are thought to be less vulnerable to COVID-19, the disease caused by the virus. So far only two military members have died from it.

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

The military's staggered approach to testing is necessary, officials said, because of limited supplies and incomplete knowledge about the virus.

"It is a supply issue right now, which is causing us not to be able to go down the full spectrum of all of the forces," Hyten said. "So we'll have to -- that's why we came up with the tiered approach."

Keeping coronavirus out of the nuclear force has been a high priority from the earliest days of this crisis. There are several reasons for that, including the Pentagon's view that operating those forces 24/7 is central to deterring an attack on the United States. Also, there are limited numbers of military personnel certified to perform those missions, which include controlling Minuteman 3 intercontinental ballistic missiles from cramped underground modules and operating nuclear-armed Ohio-class submarines.

Since early in the outbreak crisis, Minuteman 3 launch officers have been operating in the missile fields for 14 days at a time, an extraordinary arrangement for personnel who for years had done 24-hour shifts and then returned to base.

Gen. David Goldfein, the Air Force chief of staff, said Wednesday there are no COVID-positive cases in the nuclear force. That's a "no fail" mission, he said, that will have to work around the virus indefinitely.

Other first-tier forces, Goldfein said, are elements of the new Space Force, including those who operate Global Positioning System navigation satellites as well as the satellites that would provide early warning of a missile attack on the United States or its allies.

The Air Force and the other services are prioritizing testing in their own ranks, he said, "to make sure that as test kits become available, we're able to put them where they are most needed."

Goldfein said the military understands that the limited national supply of test kits means it cannot have all that it would like.

"One of the top priorities right now across the nation is nursing homes," he said. "I would not want to take tests away from that top national priority for my younger and healthier force. As tests become available, we've tiered them out and we know where we need to put them."

In Detroit, grief runs deep as city grapples with COVID-19

By KAT STAFFORD Associated Press

DETROIT (AP) — Jamon Jordan could not mourn his mother in the traditional way. At Jacquelynne Jordan's memorial in early April, there were just seven people. No hugs. No traditional dinner where family members could gather to honor the 66-year-old matriarch's memory.

That stripped-down scenario has played out hundreds of times in Detroit — 912 to be exact, the number of city residents who have died of COVID-19.

So amid the pandemic, Detroit — the nation's largest black city, the birthplace of distinctive soulful music and black cultural significance — grieves collectively.

Famed across the world as Motown, Detroiters know it as a big city with a small-town feel, with a con-

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nectivity that has only magnified the community's pain.

"People always say that Detroit is like a northern country town," said Marsha Battle Philpot, a cultural writer known as Marsha Music. "There tends to be very closely knit familial connections. In Detroit, there's not six degrees of separation — there are only two and, most of the time, just one. Detroit has this character, which in a time like this, exacerbates the grief and the loss. But it will also be part of the recovery because Detroit is a fighting town."

The virus has disproportionately impacted black Americans across the country, including Detroit, where more than 8,500 infections have been reported, with black people accounting for more than 64% of them. And nearly 77% of the city's residents who have died from coronavirus-related complications have been African American. The losses have shattered the city, compounded by a heightened economic uncertainty.

Among those lost: community pillars, dedicated public servants and Michigan's youngest victim, 5-year-old Skylar Herbert, whose parents, LaVondria and Ebbie Herbert, have served Detroit for decades — as a police officer and a firefighter.

"They've been on the front line and they've served with honor and integrity," Gov. Gretchen Whitmer said after Skylar's death. "They did not deserve to lose their child to this virus. Nobody does."

Jamon Jordan, who runs the Black Scroll Network History and Tours company in Detroit, contracted COVID-19 himself, most likely while giving tours in early March.

While he was battling the virus, his mother also fell ill. Despite his mother having existing health conditions, he said they both struggled to convince doctors they needed to be tested and were told not to come to the hospital and instead self-quarantine for two weeks.

Jordan got better; his mother grew sicker. She died March 28.

"She did not make it to two weeks," Jordan said. "She was brought in by ambulance and, within an hour of arriving to the hospital, she had already passed away. I made it, but she didn't."

And then her family could safely offer only an abbreviated farewell.

"In the African American community, homegoing celebrations, funerals, are just a part of a very spiritual experience that allows family and the community to move this ancestor onto the afterlife," said Jordan, a black historian. "It's a part of a communal practice that goes all the way back to our African roots."

"It's a blow to this culture, our practices, our traditions, that we can't really say goodbye," he said. "When this is over, there are things that will not exist in our community, there are ideas that we will never see come to fruition. Detroit will be different."

Tributes cascade in every day on a Facebook COVID-19 group memorial page created by Michigan State Rep. Sherry Gay-Dagnogo. Just weeks after she started it, Gay-Dagnogo's own sister became one of hundreds honored on the page.

Julena Gay was Gay-Dagnogo's backbone, everything a sister should be. She died April 14 at the age of 63.

"This type of collective loss, it's profound," Gay-Dagnogo said. "There's a fear of 'am I next?' I started this page because people need to get beyond the thought that black people aren't dying — they're dying in record numbers."

Beyond the grief lies deep economic pain.

Despite gains in recent years, including the city emerging from bankruptcy, swaths of neighborhoods remain blighted and 33% of Detroit residents live below the poverty line. And city leaders announced this month that the pandemic has created a projected \$348 million budget deficit.

A poll shared exclusively with The Associated Press, conducted in early April by the University of Michigan's Detroit Metro Area Communities Study, found 35% of Detroiters employed full time or part time before March 1 have lost their jobs as a result of the pandemic. The study surveyed 1,020 residents across demographics.

Jeffrey Morenoff, one of the study's faculty research leads and director of the university's Population Studies Center, said roughly 1 in 5 Detroiters say they will run out of money in three months. And research associate Lydia Wileden said the survey also found 49% of black residents are concerned about access to food, water and other supplies and 42% said they wouldn't be able to afford a \$400 emergency expense.

For now, the focus is on how to help the city survive the widening ripples of devastating loss.

"There's going to be an aftermath of this, not only physically, socially, spiritually but also, mentally," said Bishop Edgar Vann, who has been senior pastor of Detroit's Second Ebenezer Church for 45 years.

"It's going to be difficult whenever you reopen because the norms that we had will be old and shattered. But there is a uniqueness about the city and, of course, one of them is the population being 80% African American. There is a certain spirit here, there's a grit, toughness and resilience."

Kat Stafford is a member of The Associated Press' Race and Ethnicity team. Follow her on Twitter at https://twitter.com/kat__stafford.

Associated Press writers Corey Williams and David Eggert contributed.

'You are a miracle': Home care is new front in virus fight

By JENNIFER PELTZ Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Ruth Caballero paused outside an unfamiliar apartment door, preparing to meet her new patient.

She covered the knob with a plastic bag. Put on a surgical gown, then a heavy-duty N95 mask, a lighter surgical mask on top. Cap, face shield, shoe covers. Hand sanitizer between each step of the process. Finally, the nurse donned two sets of gloves and knocked on the door with her elbow, ready to care for her first coronavirus patient.

After about three weeks in a hospital, the man was home in his New York apartment but still so weak that sitting up in bed took some persuading.

"You made it out of the hospital, so you are a miracle," Caballero told him. "Now let's keep you out of the hospital."

Home health care is becoming a new front in the national fight against COVID-19 as some patients come back from hospitals and others strive to stay out of them.

Home care nurses, aides and attendants — who normally help an estimated 12 million Americans with everything from bathing to IV medications — are now taking on the difficult and potentially dangerous task of caring for coronavirus patients.

While Americans are being told to keep to themselves, home health providers and their clients still largely have to engage in person, often intimately. Many agencies are ramping up phone or video visits but can't always get paid for them, and even the smartest phone can't physically dress a wound or get someone to the bathroom.

Like their colleagues in hospitals and nursing homes, home care workers have faced a scarcity of protective equipment, but with a lower public profile. Some agencies have scoured for masks at nail salons, auto body shops and tattoo parlors, said William Dombi, president of the National Association for Home Care and Hospice, an industry group.

The crisis is testing the industry, but it's also a moment of pride for workers who have often felt under-recognized.

"It is a challenge to keep the business operational, but it's an opportunity," Dombi said. "We're getting a chance to establish what can be done."

Coronavirus care at home has expanded rapidly in the last few weeks. At least some agencies in most states are now taking COVID-19 patients referred after hospitalization or nursing home care or as an alternative to them, Dombi said.

Still, some patients have struggled to get care. After being diagnosed with coronavirus-related pneumonia late last month, Penny Wittbrodt contacted multiple agencies around her home in Winchester, Kentucky. None was then accepting COVID-19 patients, she said, though her doctor was able to arrange home oxygen. Wittbrodt, who has asthma and a history of respiratory hospitalizations, is still not well, though she's had some relief at times.

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A retired home health nurse, Wittbrodt feels such care is especially valuable in the pandemic.

"Home health would expose far less people to COVID than hospitalization," she said.

New York-based Americare Inc. has taken about 100 COVID-19 patients released from hospitals, and over 200 of the agency's other patients also have tested positive or shown symptoms, VP Bridget Gallagher said.

Every corporate staffer including the CEO is calling protective gear suppliers, but the agency still counts its stock of N95 masks every day.

"We're doing what we can, but I have to be honest: None of it feels like enough," said Gallagher, who's also on the board of the Home Care Association of New York State.

For many agencies, chronic staff shortages are amplified by absences due to illness or quarantine. And workers are grappling with patients' fears while reckoning with their own risk.

The surgical mask and gloves that Washington home health aide Adassa Clarke now wears rattle her patient, who has Alzheimer's disease and relies on a wheelchair. The patient doesn't have COVID-19 but can't retain what she's been told about an illness going around.

"What's going on? Do I have a germ? Am I dying?" she asks, according to Clarke. Sometimes, the patient breaks into tears.

At 65, Clarke herself is in an age group at higher risk of severe cases of COVID-19, and she's trying to stay home as much as she can.

But patients "come first," said Clarke, a certified nursing assistant.

"I just feel like the more I help, the more I keep going," she said.

A home health nurse with Chicago-area patients with COVID-19, Vanessa Pepino-Adraneda is extra-vigilant about protective gear and other precautions. Pepino-Adraneda also girds herself by focusing on caring for her patients and allowing herself moments of sadness, frustration or exhaustion.

"I try my best to protect my sanity amidst all this chaos," she said.

For some people, especially older adults and people with existing health problems, the virus can cause severe illness or be fatal. For most people, it carries mild symptoms or none at all, meaning some patients could have the virus and not know it.

The Visiting Nurse Service of New York, one of the nation's largest home health agencies, currently has nearly 400 COVID-19 patients, and another nearly 300 referrals await, Executive Vice President Dan Savitt said. Separately, about 80 confirmed and presumed coronavirus patients are getting hospice care.

As an industry, "I do feel like we've risen to the challenge," he said.

When the agency first told Caballero and other nurses in late March that COVID-19 patients were coming, "I won't say that I wasn't nervous," Caballero says.

She was relieved, though, to see the protective equipment the agency issued. And her first visit, to the man in the apartment, went well. When she called later that night, he was not only sitting up but had gotten into a chair.

The person who would have been her next coronavirus patient died before visits began.

Caballero is now caring for several COVID-19 patients. They came home debilitated and fearful, afraid that hospitals "sent them home to die," she says.

She encourages them to take step after small step: to sit on the side of the bed, to walk to the bathroom, to have a meal at the kitchen table.

"It is a challenge. This disease has taken so many lives," she says, but "I'm so blessed and so honored and so grateful that these patients are coming home."

"Think about it -- there but for the grace. It could be I."

Associated Press Video Journalist Ted Shaffrey contributed to this report.

Census delay could put off new voting districts, primaries

By DAVID A. LIEB and MIKE SCHNEIDER Associated Press

JEFFERSON CITY, Mo. (AP) — The U.S. Census Bureau needs more time to wrap up the once-a-decade count because of the coronavirus, opening the possibility of delays in drawing new legislative districts that

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could help determine what political party is in power, what laws pass or fail and whether communities of color get a voice in their states.

The number of people counted and their demographics guide how voting districts for the U.S. House and state legislatures are redrawn every 10 years. The monthslong delay in census data could make a divisive process more complicated, potentially forcing lawmakers into costly special sessions to complete the work or postponing some primary elections.

"It will pinch the timing for sure on everybody," said Justin Levitt, a professor at Loyola Law School in Los Angeles who tracks redistricting nationwide. "For a few states, that's incredibly meaningful."

Despite the complications, advocates, lawmakers and others largely embraced the census delay as necessary to get a complete count.

With the U.S. so politically polarized, redistricting plays a major role in whether Republicans or Democrats drive the agenda in each state and how those lawmakers' decisions can affect people's lives. Parties that win large legislative majorities can tilt policy to the left or right on abortion, guns, taxes and other contentious issues.

Redistricting typically is done by state lawmakers and governors, but an increasing number of states have shifted to special commissions.

The new districts frequently are challenged in court for not properly representing minority communities or for favoring one party over another in what is called gerrymandering.

After Republicans scored big statehouse victories in the 2010, for example, they used their enhanced power in 2011 to draw districts to their advantage in some states, spawning Democratic-backed lawsuits that spanned much of the next decade. Democrats have historically done the same when they were in control.

The census delay could trigger more lawsuits.

Because of stay-at-home orders designed to combat the coronavirus, the Census Bureau put off hiring and training temporary census takers in mid-March. They won't start knocking on doors of people who haven't answered the questionnaire until August. The bureau pushed back the deadline to wrap up the count from the end of July to the end of October.

Congress must approve the Census Bureau's request to delay turning over redistricting data to the states from the end of March 2021 to the end of July 2021.

A delay could have big implications for states with legislative elections next year — New Jersey and Virginia.

"There will not be enough time for redistricting, candidate filing, preparing for an election and running a general election. There simply won't be time for it," said Michael McDonald, a political science professor at the University of Florida.

California, Illinois, North Carolina and Texas all have early 2022 primaries, which could create a compressed schedule for new maps. Some states could require special legislative sessions to complete the work before candidates file to run for office in 2022. Others may have to postpone candidate filing, said Michael Li, a redistricting attorney at New York University School of Law's Brennan Center for Justice.

The New Jersey Constitution requires a commission to adopt new maps within 30 days of receiving census data and candidates to run in those new districts that same year. The state's primary elections are scheduled for June 8, 2021, seven weeks before the Census Bureau's new deadline for turning over the population figures.

"A delay in the release of the census information has the potential to throw everything out of whack," said Al Barlas, Republican chairman of New Jersey's redistricting commission.

"There's constitutional ramifications to this. There's obviously timelines and deadlines," Barlas added. "Do you move the primary from June back? ... Do you do a gubernatorial primary and everybody-else-primary in June, but do you do a legislative primary later, perhaps in August or right after Labor Day? Honestly, I don't know."

In 2011, Virginia moved its primary from June 14 to Aug. 23 to allow time for redistricting after receiving census data. A similar delay could be needed for its 2021 election, which is scheduled for the second

Tuesday in June.

Virginia voters are deciding this November on a constitutional amendment creating a bipartisan commission to draw the districts. If approved, the commission would have 45 days after receiving the census numbers to submit new maps to lawmakers for a vote.

State Sen. George Barker, a Democrat who sponsored the amendment, said it's unclear whether the 2021 primary could be delayed long enough to allow time for the work. If not, candidates may have to run under current districts in 2021, he said.

"If the data isn't in until sometime in early to mid-July, it would be very, very difficult to get it done in time to even come close to meeting requirements for both the primary and a general election," Barker said.

Schneider reported from Orlando, Florida. Follow Lieb on Twitter at: <http://twitter.com/DavidALieb>. Follow Schneider at: <http://twitter.com/MikeSchneiderAP>

Coronavirus sweeps through Iowa firefighter's family

By RYAN J. FOLEY Associated Press

IOWA CITY, Iowa (AP) — His mother first fell sick a month ago with an illness she believes she caught at the Iowa egg factory where she works.

His younger sister, 22, was next — a new mother who was soon on a ventilator fighting for her life. Then the coronavirus came for his father, Jose Gabriel Martinez, 58, who died Tuesday in the same hospital where he lived his final days near his unknowing daughter.

After a month of caring for his virus-stricken family, firefighter Omar Martinez is now planning a funeral for his father, who was a factory worker known for giving his all to provide for his family. He's hoping for the recovery of his sister Evelyn, who is alert after being taken off a ventilator Thursday. He's dreading having to tell her the news about their dad.

Omar, 29, said he's grateful that his mother has recovered and that he, two siblings and his 2-year-old niece have stayed healthy. He's also touched by the support they've received from neighbors in West Liberty, a heavily Hispanic city of 3,800 where his family settled after immigrating from Mexico in the 1990s.

He wants people to know how easily the virus can spread if they infect others and how quickly that can devastate a family.

"All it takes is one person to be irresponsible to affect a family that doesn't deserve it," Omar Martinez said in an interview. "I don't wish this upon anybody. I get asked every day how do I do it? I have no answers."

The Martinez family's situation is illustrative of the startling racial and ethnic disparities among those getting infected and dying from the coronavirus.

While Latinos make up 6% of Iowa's population, they have accounted for more than 22% of its confirmed COVID-19 cases, according to the state Department of Public Health. The disparity widened as more testing was conducted on plant workers, who are disproportionately Latino and account for more than a quarter of Iowa's confirmed cases. State officials say more dense housing environments also play a role.

The virus has spread faster in Iowa, which now has more than 5,000 confirmed cases, than almost any other state in recent days. In West Liberty, a turkey processing factory that has long attracted immigrants to the area reported that 52 workers had tested positive.

Omar's parents met in their Mexican home town before moving to Dallas and then to West Liberty in the 1990s, when Omar was a child. His father, who went by his middle name Gabriel, became a U.S. citizen.

The family added two daughters and another son and became a staple of the community, taking part in school activities and attending the Catholic church. Omar worked with his father at a distribution warehouse before he joined the West Liberty Fire Department. Two years ago, Evelyn gave birth to a baby, Maia. Gabriel became a doting grandfather.

The family still lives together in the one-story home that Omar's parents purchased in the early 2000s for \$45,000.

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Aurelia Martinez, 52, had been a stay-at-home mother as the children grew up. She got a job after Hy-Line North America opened a large egg production plant in nearby Wilton in 2015.

In late March, Aurelia began feeling tired and sick and isolated herself in one of the bedrooms, Omar said. She tested positive for COVID-19 on April 3, suspecting that a sick coworker passed her the virus. A Hy-Line spokesman confirmed that's the date that the last of six Wilton factory workers tested positive.

Evelyn, a waitress, got the chills, body aches and a fever two days later. Soon, she started suffering from coughing spasms and was unable to sleep or eat. Omar gave her Tylenol and fluids.

The family persuaded Evelyn to go to Mercy Hospital in Iowa City on April 10 after her coughing got so bad that her face turned purple. That night, she was intubated and put on a ventilator.

"Her oxygen levels were low. If we would have waited a day she might not have made it," Omar said.

The family patriarch, Gabriel, started showing symptoms two days later. By then, the Procter and Gamble factory where he worked had started making hand sanitizer because demand was surging.

Omar recalled sleeping on the floor of his father's bedroom and giving him Tylenol in the middle of the night. He took Gabriel to the hospital on April 15 when his cough worsened, holding his hand on the way and telling him everything would be okay.

That night would be his last conversation with his father, who had been healthy just days earlier. On a FaceTime call, Gabriel said the hospital was transferring him to the intensive care unit that was already housing Evelyn. His oldest son and wife told him they loved him. Soon, he was also on a ventilator.

Doctors said Gabriel made steady progress over the next few days and they began turning down the settings on his ventilator. But on Monday night, he started showing irregular heart rhythms. The family stayed up praying, but early Tuesday morning, they were told he had died.

Remarkably, that's when Evelyn's condition started to dramatically improve.

"She had been very unstable while my dad was doing well. But when he passed, in those next 24 hours she was making big improvements," Omar said.

On Thursday, doctors removed her from the ventilator and reported that she was awake and alert and asking to see her parents and daughter. They are cautiously optimistic that she may soon begin rehabilitation if her breathing keeps improving.

Neighbors have inundated the family with groceries and other offers of help. A local grocery store held a fundraiser for the family. Donors have given more than \$23,000 to a GoFundMe account to cover funeral and health expenses.

Omar, choking up, said his father had been touched by the outpouring before his death.

"Seeing all the groceries, his face would light up with a smile," he said. "The little things like that brightened up his world."

Can nursing homes dedicated to virus patients stop spread?

By SUSAN HAIGH Associated Press

HARTFORD, Conn. (AP) — A few states may have found a way to help slow the spread of the coronavirus in nursing homes by converting some of them into "recovery centers" set aside mostly for residents who have left the hospital but still might be contagious or lack immunity.

Critics worry about harming frail, elderly residents by transferring them to make room in repurposed nursing homes. But some public health experts and advocates see potential in combating further infection and freeing up hospital space, and many relatives embrace the concept as a way to protect their loved ones.

Debra Ellis agonizes over whether to bring her 87-year-old wife home if a coronavirus case appears in her nursing home, which currently isn't reporting any. Ellis lives in Meriden, Connecticut, a state where three of nine planned nursing homes set aside for recuperating COVID-19 patients opened this month.

"It's terrible, the anxiety, you almost feel like they're sitting ducks," Ellis said.

While nursing homes routinely isolate residents who have an infectious illness, such as the flu, advocates see the more dramatic idea of setting aside an entire facility as necessary, given how easily and fast the coronavirus can spread.

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"You can't stop it. Once it gets in, then it's going to run its way through the facility," said Charlene Harrington, a professor emeritus of nursing at the University of California, San Francisco, and an expert in the risks of transferring elderly COVID-19 patients.

"So that's why we want the COVID-only facilities set up and have the hospitals test patients. And if they have the virus, send them to the COVID-only facility," said Harrington, who would like to see California set up such homes.

The idea has been introduced in some other states, including Massachusetts and Utah, but not on as large a scale as in Connecticut.

It's too soon for statistics to show whether keeping hospital-discharged patients in a separate home to recuperate until they test negative will change the infection rate within nursing homes, but Connecticut officials say it has helped open hospital beds. As of Friday, state officials said about 100 patients had been discharged to recovery homes.

The nine homes are expected to free up about 800 beds. The longer plan is to contract with more nursing home operators and have 1,175 beds in COVID-19 recovery homes, state health officials said.

For most people, the coronavirus causes mild or moderate symptoms, and the vast majority recover. For some others, especially older adults and people with existing health problems, it can cause more severe illness, including pneumonia, or death.

Over 10,000 deaths have been linked to coronavirus outbreaks in nursing homes and other long-term care centers nationwide. In Connecticut, 43% of the more than 1,700 people who have died of COVID-19 were from nursing homes. Of about 215 nursing homes in the state, 135 have at least one case, the state reported Friday.

Initially, Connecticut officials intended simply to move residents sick with COVID-19, who were already being kept away from others within their nursing homes, to a few homes designated for them. But then it emerged that people can be infected for 48 hours before exhibiting symptoms — so moving people to a different home could actually abet the spread.

The state then tweaked the concept, designating the specialized homes primarily for residents who have the disease but improved enough to leave the hospital — freeing up hospital beds for COVID-19 patients of all stripes by letting nursing home residents complete their recovery elsewhere, but with medical supervision.

Additionally, all residents whose nursing homes are being turned into recovery centers will be temporarily quarantined in their new spaces in case they aren't sick but have the virus anyway.

But that requires uprooting people who might be fragile, even without having the virus, and plopping them into an unfamiliar setting.

"We all know that a lot of seniors, whether they have end-stage dementia or not, they can get confused very often," said Lisa Warzecha, of Middletown, Connecticut, whose 89-year-old grandmother lives in a nursing home in Cromwell that hasn't had a COVID-19 case. "And if they're sick, in particular, they're really going to be confused or frightened, and they're going to wake up and have all these machines on them possibly, and new nursing staff."

Warzecha said she can see benefits on both sides, but Brent Colley, an elected official in Sharon, Connecticut, where the 88-bed Sharon Health Care Center was converted into the state's first COVID-19 recovery center, objected outright.

"Moving residents out of their home/care facility is wrong and places these individuals at risk; it disrupts their care; places them in a mindset of confusion, possibly depression; it also affects their care-givers in similar, although different ways," he wrote on social media.

Sharon's owner, Athena Health Care Systems, has agreed to transform another home in Bridgeport, as well as two empty ones, providing about 500 beds.

All patient transfers have been voluntary, said Athena spokesperson Timothy Brown. They have been quarantined in their temporary homes and promised they will return to their original site, he said.

To entice companies, the state is doubling the Medicaid reimbursement for the COVID-19 recovery centers to \$600 a day per resident. Typical pay for staff at the Athena homes will nearly double to \$35 an hour

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for a certified nurse's aide, \$50 an hour for a licensed practical nurse and \$70 an hour for a registered nurse, Brown said.

Elsewhere, a 34-bed home in Salt Lake City is being transformed into a recovery center. The decision came after six residents and two workers tested positive and one resident died.

In Worcester, Massachusetts, the Beaumont Rehabilitation and Skilled Nursing Center this month became a recovery center. Plans to transfer healthy residents were temporarily disrupted as some began testing positive for the fast-spreading virus.

The long-term care ombudsman for Connecticut has heard both compliments and complaints.

"It's very important to ask that individual rights are protected in people's homes, and so I think our state is going very slow because of that," said Mairead Painter, the ombudsman. "We don't want to go so slow that we don't react appropriately, but we also don't want to rush and neglect the fact that this is somebody's home."

Today in History

By The Associated Press undefined

Today in History

Today is Monday, April 27, the 118th day of 2020. There are 248 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On April 27, 2011, powerful tornadoes raked the South and Midwest; according to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, more than 120 twisters resulted in 316 deaths.

On this date:

In 1521, Portuguese explorer Ferdinand Magellan was killed by natives in the Philippines.

In 1791, the inventor of the telegraph, Samuel Morse, was born in Charlestown, Massachusetts.

In 1810, Ludwig van Beethoven wrote one of his most famous piano compositions, the Bagatelle in A-minor.

In 1865, the steamer Sultana, carrying freed Union prisoners of war, exploded on the Mississippi River near Memphis, Tennessee; death toll estimates vary from 1,500 to 2,000.

In 1950, Britain formally recognized the state of Israel.

In 1965, broadcast journalist Edward R. Murrow died in Pawling, New York, two days after turning 57.

In 1978, 51 construction workers plunged to their deaths when a scaffold inside a cooling tower at the Pleasants Power Station site in West Virginia fell 168 feet to the ground.

In 1982, the trial of John W. Hinckley Jr., who shot four people, including President Ronald Reagan, began in Washington. (The trial ended with Hinckley's acquittal by reason of insanity.)

In 1992, the new Federal Republic of Yugoslavia was proclaimed in Belgrade by the republic of Serbia and its lone ally, Montenegro. Russia and 12 other former Soviet republics won entry into the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank. Betty Boothroyd became the first female Speaker of Britain's House of Commons.

In 1994, former President Richard M. Nixon was remembered at an outdoor funeral service attended by all five of his successors at the Nixon presidential library in Yorba Linda, California.

In 2002, South African entrepreneur Mark Shuttleworth arrived at the international space station for an eight-day, seven-night cruise that had cost him \$20 million.

In 2009, a 23-month-old Mexico City toddler died at Texas Children's Hospital in Houston, becoming the first swine-flu death on U.S. soil.

Ten years ago: Defending his company against blistering criticism, the chief executive of Goldman Sachs, Lloyd Blankfein, told a Senate hearing that clients who'd bought subprime mortgage securities from the Wall Street powerhouse in 2006 and 2007 came looking for risk "and that's what they got." Former Panamanian dictator Manuel Noriega was extradited from the United States to France, where he was later convicted of laundering drug money and received a seven-year sentence. Thomas Hagan, the only man to admit shooting Malcolm X, was freed on parole. University of Washington president Mark Emmert was selected as president of the NCAA.

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Five years ago: Rioters plunged part of Baltimore into chaos, torching a pharmacy, setting police cars ablaze and throwing bricks at officers hours after thousands attended a funeral for Freddie Gray, who died from a severe spinal injury he'd suffered in police custody; the Baltimore Orioles' home game against the Chicago White Sox was postponed because of safety concerns. Opening statements took place in Centennial, Colorado, at the trial of movie theater shooter James Holmes. Loretta Lynch was sworn in as the 83rd U.S. attorney general, the first African-American woman to serve as the nation's top law enforcement official.

One year ago: A gunman opened fire inside a synagogue near San Diego as worshippers celebrated the last day of Passover, killing a woman and wounding the rabbi and two others. (John Earnest is awaiting trial on charges including hate-crime-related murder and attempted murder; he is also facing charges in a mosque fire that happened weeks earlier.) A construction crane collapsed at the new Google Seattle campus, pinning six cars underneath; two ironworkers and two people in the cars were killed. Oliver North announced that he would not serve a second term as National Rifle Association president; he made it clear that he'd been forced out after his own failed attempt to remove the group's longtime CEO, Wayne LaPierre.

Today's Birthdays: Actress Anouk Aimee is 88. Rock musician Jim Keltner is 78. Rock singer Kate Pierson (The B-52's) is 72. Rhythm-and-blues singer Herbie Murrell (The Stylistics) is 71. Actor Douglas Sheehan is 71. Rock musician Ace Frehley is 69. West Virginia Gov. Jim Justice is 69. Pop singer Sheena Easton is 61. Actor James Le Gros (groh) is 58. Rock musician Rob Squires (Big Head Todd and the Monsters) is 55. Singer Mica (MEE'-shah) Paris is 51. Sen. Cory Booker, D-N.J., is 51. Actor David Lascher is 48. Actress Maura West is 48. Actress Sally Hawkins is 44. Rock singer Jim James (My Morning Jacket) is 42. Rock musician Patrick Hallahan (My Morning Jacket) is 42. Rock singer-musician Travis Meeks (Days of the New) is 41. Neo-soul musician Joseph Pope III (Nathaniel Rateliff & the Night Sweats) is 41. Country musician John Osborne (Brothers Osborne) is 38. Actor Francis Capra is 37. Actress Ari Graynor is 37. Rock singer-musician Patrick Stump (Fall Out Boy) is 36. Actress Sheila Vand is 35. Actress Jenna Coleman is 34. Pop singer Nick Noonan (Karmin) is 34. Actor William Moseley is 33. Actress Emily Rios is 31. Singer Allison Iraheta is 28.

Thought for Today: "Fear not those who argue but those who dodge." — Dale Carnegie, American writer-lecturer (1888-1955).

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