

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, April 28, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 290 ~ 1 of 78

[2- Superintendent's Report to the Board of Education](#)

[5- MS/HS Principal's Report to the Board of Education](#)

[7- Elementary Principal's Report to the Board of Education](#)

[9- Hale Groves Ad](#)

[10- Covid-19 Update: by Marie Miller](#)

[12- Area COVID-19 Cases](#)

[13- April 27th COVID-19 UPDATE](#)

[15- Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs](#)

[16- Weather Pages](#)

[19- Daily Devotional](#)

[20- 2020 Groton Events](#)

[21- News from the Associated Press](#)



Chicken Soup
for the Soul

“LIVING IN THE
MOMENT MEANS
LETTING GO OF THE
PAST AND NOT
WAITING FOR THE
FUTURE. IT MEANS
LIVING YOUR LIFE
CONSCIOUSLY,
AWARE THAT EACH
MOMENT YOU
BREATHE IS A GIFT.”

-OPRAH WINFREY

Parents encouraged to look elsewhere for summer daycare

The Groton Area Board of Education evaluated options for its summer OST program. One of the main concerns was safety for the students and staff this summer and the need for sanitizing every area after students were exposed to them. In addition, under the current CDC guidelines, the groups would have to be limited to 10 which would mean more staff would be needed and the staff members would have to be 18 or older. Elementary Principal Brett Schwan was directed to tell patrons they should look for summer nannies or other day care options, due to the uncertainty. “It’s a valuable program,” said board member Marty Weismantel, “but it’s too much of a risk for the district.” The board will revisit the need for OST at the May 11th meeting.

The meal program has been serving about 200 meals a day, which is more than anticipated, but it good for those that need it. The USDA is reimbursing the district for meals and that option was extended to the end of June. However, the board discussed the need for the program after the end of the school year. Board members have said people have been willing to step up and donate to the meal program, which is the direction the board will do after the last day of school. The board will also revisit the meal program extension at the May 11th board meeting.

The end of the current school year is getting close the the staff is preparing how to get the material back to the buildings. Once the material is in the building, it will have to set idle for 72 hours before the staff can sort through them. Those living out in the country will need to bring in their materials as there is no safe way for the buses to run the route and have staff collect the materials.

All of the teaching contracts have been signed and turned in. The board approved the contracts.

The paper work is rolling with auxiliary staff members.

Joellen Miller resigned as cheer coach.

OPEN: Recycling Trailer in Groton

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

© 2019 Groton Daily Independent

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, April 28, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 290 ~ 2 of 78

Superintendent's Report to the Board of Education

Groton Area Board of Education
Regular Meeting – April 27, 2020

COVID 19 Related Issues/Superintendent Report

SDHSAA. Congratulations to Mr. Weismantel on his nomination for the SDHSAA Board of Directors. We will have the opportunity to vote for him at an upcoming board meeting. Marty is the sole nomination for the small-school board of education position on the board to replace Dave Planteen from Langford.

Flexible Learning Plan. We are about 3.5 weeks from the end of our school year (2 weeks remain for class of 2020 graduates). It is my plan that the final delivery of work will be Monday, May 4 to the class of 2020 and Monday, May 11 for the rest of our students. For our under-class students, we will use the week of May 18 to work with those students who need time and assistance to get caught up prior to returning materials.

The general idea of turning in materials will be similar to how we've handed them out. Books, computers, etc. will be dropped at each individual student's location and will remain there untouched for a period of 72 hours after which time we'll deliver them internally to the appropriate classroom for check-in and storage. Scheduling materials drop off on Monday 5/18 and Tuesday 5/19 will allow for delivery, accounting, and storage on Thursday, 5/21 and Friday, 5/22.

| Class of 2020 Materials Return and Check Out | |
|----------------------------------------------|------------------------------|
| Tuesday, May 12, 2020 | |
| Time | Last Names Beginning with... |
| 9:00 - 9:30 AM | A-D |
| 9:30 - 10:00 AM | F-G |
| 10:00 - 10:30 AM | H-J |
| 10:30-11:00 AM | K-P |
| 11:00-11:30 AM | R-S |
| 11:30 - 12:00 PM | T-Z |

| Materials Return and Check Out | | | |
|--------------------------------|-------------------|-----------------------|-------------------|
| Monday, May 18, 2020 | | Tuesday, May 19, 2020 | |
| Time | Last Names | Time | Last Names |
| 9:00 - 9:30 AM | Aasen-Bah | 9:00 - 9:30 AM | Krause-Larson |
| 9:30 - 10:00 AM | Barbera-Bonn | 9:30 - 10:00 AM | Lehman-Loeschke |
| 10:00 - 10:30 AM | Brooks-Cunningham | 10:00 - 10:30 AM | Lord-Mitchell |
| 10:30-11:00 AM | Cutler-Dunbar | 10:30-11:00 AM | Monson-Olson |
| 11:00-11:30 AM | Dunker-Feser | 11:00-11:30 AM | Osterman-Pharis |
| 11:30 - 12:00 PM | Fjeldheim-Frasier | 11:30 - 12:00 PM | Pigors-Sandness |
| 1:00 - 1:30 PM | Freeman-Gleason | 1:00 - 1:30 PM | Say-Sippel |
| 1:30 -2:00 PM | Gonsior-Heathcote | 1:30 -2:00 PM | Slaight-Thorn |
| 2:00 - 2:30 PM | Heilman-Hubbs | 2:00 - 2:30 PM | Thurston-Wambach |
| 2:30 - 3:00 PM | Imrie-Johnson | 2:30 - 3:00 PM | Warrington-Wilson |
| 3:00 - 3:30 PM | Jones-Kramer | 3:00 - 3:30 PM | Wipf-Zoellner |

DRAFT – Not Final

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, April 28, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 290 ~ 3 of 78

Food Service. Our food service program is eligible under current USDA and state-level waivers to operate through the end of June. We continue to serve meals to nearly 200 students daily. There would be 24 days of meals served following the end of the school year if we chose to continue (assuming expiration of meals on Friday, June 26). My estimate for the cost of program administration above what is collected for meal reimbursement is \$4,250 assuming the utilization of volunteer work to assemble and distribute meals. Most districts in our area are choosing to allow their meal programs to end with their school calendar.

Summer OST. Mr. Brett Schwan and I have had a couple conversations about the viability of our summer OST program during periods of required school closure. In any situation, we have to maintain group sizes within the limitations provided by the Centers for Disease Control – currently limited to ten. It would be possible to have multiple groups with static membership so long as the groups are self-contained and do not have contact with one another including during drop off and pick up times. Typically, summer OST is a well-utilized service in our community. We do not know what impact COVID19 would have on that given individuals being laid off from work and/or working from home. The drop-in nature of our current program would need to be altered in order to keep the program fiscally viable given the restrictions on personal interactions during the summer of 2020.

Summer Work-outs/Camps, Etc. The SDHSAA Board approved language prohibiting summer contacts through the end of the Governor's executive order on COVID-19 which is currently set to expire on May 31. If this executive order is extended, summer contact and work outs will be put off accordingly. There has been no change to the July moratorium and/or end-date of July 31 for summer contact. They will revisit the issue if the executive order is extended into June.

2020-2021 School Calendar. SD Department of Education Secretary, Dr. Jones, has indicated that districts should plan multiple and flexible school calendars for the 2020-2021 school year to account for potential forced closures as a result of COVID-19. I'll keep consulting with other districts on what that might look like – I'm not sure how to plan for extended closures not knowing, of course, when those might be needed. On a positive note, one of the doctors that has been kind enough to hold weekly calls for school officials stated his belief that we will be back in school when fall rolls around.

CARES Act Funding. The list below is a section of the Act that describes acceptable uses of funds allocated to school districts. The state Department of Education is holding about 9% of the state's total allocations for regional and statewide initiatives. There is a separate relief bill that contains funding that will be allocated through the governor's office which would include post-secondary education as well. I believe one of the biggest challenges that we're going to face when we return is making a determination of where are students are academically – how far behind are we when we come back next fall and what steps can be taken to close that regression gap?

(d) USES OF FUNDS.—A local educational agency that receives funds under this title may use the funds for any of the following:

(1) Any activity authorized by the ESEA of 1965, including the Native Hawaiian Education Act and the Alaska Native Educational Equity, Support, and Assistance Act (20 U.S.C. 6301 et seq.), the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (20 U.S.C. 1400 et seq.) ("IDEA"), the Adult Education and Family Literacy Act (20 U.S.C. 1400 et seq.), the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act of 2006 (20 U.S.C. 2301 et seq.) ("the Perkins Act"), or subtitle B of title VII of the McKinney S.L.C.Vento Homeless Assistance Act (42 U.S.C. 11431 et seq.).

(2) Coordination of preparedness and response efforts of local educational agencies with State, local, Tribal, and territorial public health departments, and other relevant agencies, to improve coordinated responses among such entities to prevent, prepare for, and respond to coronavirus.

(3) Providing principals and other school leaders with the resources necessary to address the needs of their individual schools.

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, April 28, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 290 ~ 4 of 78

(4) Activities to address the unique needs of low-income children or students, children with disabilities, English learners, racial and ethnic minorities, students experiencing homelessness, and foster care youth, including how outreach and service delivery will meet the needs of each population.

(5) Developing and implementing procedures and systems to improve the preparedness and response efforts of local educational agencies.

(6) Training and professional development for staff of the local educational agency on sanitation and minimizing the spread of infectious diseases.

(7) Purchasing supplies to sanitize and clean the facilities of a local educational agency, including buildings operated by such agency.

(8) Planning for and coordinating during long term closures, including for how to provide meals to eligible students, how to provide technology for online learning to all students, how to provide guidance for carrying out requirements under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (20 U.S.C. 1401 et seq.) and how to ensure other educational services can continue to be provided consistent with all Federal, State, and local requirements.

(9) Purchasing educational technology (including hardware, software, and connectivity) for students who are served by the local educational agency that aids in regular and substantive educational interaction between students and their classroom instructors, including low-income students and students with disabilities, which may include assistive technology or adaptive equipment.

(10) Providing mental health services and supports.

(11) Planning and implementing activities related to summer learning and supplemental after school programs, including providing classroom instruction or online learning during the summer months and addressing the needs of low-income students, students with disabilities, English learners, migrant students, students experiencing homelessness, and children in foster care.

(12) Other activities that are necessary to maintain the operation of and continuity of services in local educational agencies and continuing to employ existing staff of the local educational agency.

MS/HS Principal's Report to the Board of Education

Principal's Report

MS/HS Building- Mrs. Sombke

April 27, 2020

1) End of Year Upcoming Dates:

a) Senior's Last Day: May 8, 2020

- Senior Fines/Dues: Will be emailed to student and parent/guardian
- Senior Materials Collected: Week of May 11-15
- Graduation: July 12, 2020

b) Grades 6-11 Last Day: May 21, 2020

- Grades 6-11 Fines/Dues: Will be emailed to student and parent/guardian
- Grades 6-11 Materials Collected: Week of May 18-21

c) Final Week of Instruct Grades 6-11

- Week of May 11th will be the final week of new assignments/work for the 2019-2020 school year
- Please continue to check your student K-12 email
- Please continue keeping up with assignments and coursework so that all students can successfully end the school year; contacting your teachers for assistance or with questions

2) SDCNA (South Dakota Comprehensive Needs Assessment) MS/HS Action Plan

a) MS/HS Team: Mrs. Sombke, Ms. Erickson, Ms. Compton, Ms. Seeklander

b) Theory of Action:

- "If we implement professional development training to all certified staff Grades 6-12, to facilitate a better understanding of how to create and implement evidence-based teaching strategies, then teachers will improve their classroom instruction effectiveness and student achievement and performance outcomes will improve."

c) Focus, Direction, and Expected Outcome:

- Groton Area certified staff Grades 6-12 will design lessons that promote the use of the following: state content standards, learning targets, evidence-based instructional strategies, formative assessments, and differentiation to meet the needs of all students.
- All lesson plans will be horizontally and vertically aligned throughout Grades 6-12.
- There will be continuity between all Grades 6-12 lesson plans.

d) Action Plan Steps and Timeline:

- Professional Development Training: 1 day on May 19, 2020 for Grades 6-12 Certified staff and Paraprofessional Staff, and ½ day during In-service in August to "Refresh-Remember" in supporting returning staff and also to be able to provide training to new staff

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, April 28, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 290 ~ 6 of 78

- Planbook/Lesson Planning Tool: Approved for use for 2020-2021 school year and Professional Development Days May 19th and August In-service
 - 2020-2021 Lesson Plans Reviewed: Lesson Plans will be reviewed weekly and corrections made accordingly
 - Teacher 2020-2021 Evaluation Process will continue to be used to collect data reflecting/demonstrating the use of evidence-based teaching strategies
 - Student grades will continue to be reviewed every two weeks using the “Eligible/Ineligible” list which will include notification of parent/guardian and the assignment of ICU when necessary to support each student’s journey to success
 - MS/HS SDCNA Team will meet 4 times during the 2020-2021 school year; at the beginning of each quarter to monitor progress and make adjustments as needed
- e) Evidence of Progress:**
- Certified Staff Grades 6-12 will be consistently instructing students using evidence-based teaching practices as measured through lesson plan review, as well as informal and formal observations
 - Student achievement will increase, or there will be a measurable decrease in failing grades
 - Summative assessment scores will improve

Elementary Principal's Report to the Board of Education

Elementary Board Report

4/27/20

Summer OST: Summer options and what can we do

- Option 1
 - Limit to group sizes of 10 (including 1 staff member)
 - No drop-ins
 - Families will have to sign up prior to the start of OST
 - All staff responsible for a group will have to be 18 years old
 - Groups will not be allowed to interact with other groups during OST.
 - Staff members will work 11 hour days.
 - OST will close at 5:30 for cleaning/disinfecting
 - Issues:
 - When group sizes get low...we cannot send staff home
 - Groups will have to stay in their designated areas for the entire day/week until that area is sanitized.
 - Limits the number of families that will be able to come (drop-ins)
 - What if baseball/softball open and the pool. How will students get there and back?
 - No workers under 18
- Option 2
 - Run OST as normal
 - Limit the size of centers
 - Drop-ins welcome
 - Only need one 18 year old on duty at a time
 - Close at 5:30 for cleaning/disinfecting
 - Issues:
 - Social distancing
 - Group sizes
 - Continual sanitizing

South Dakota Comprehensive Needs Assessment: After analyzing and reviewing all of our data the elementary team determined that our biggest area of concern is assessment and how that impacts lesson planning and mastery.

Library Books: The elementary is encouraging all in town families to return library books each Monday morning when they are picking up materials and lunches. Out of town families will return materials at designated times.

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, April 28, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 290 ~ 8 of 78

Consolidated Application: We believe that the grant management system will be open within the next week or two. This will allow us to fill out our application. Nearly all of the documents (LEA Plan, School Wide, and Talent Development) were updated when we did our online Title 1 review earlier this year.

Summer Bridge Activity Books: Ordering information will be send home either digitally or in their Monday packets.

No Connect 4Ed this summer.

ESY services will be provided via zoom/activities

AR Reward: Deadline is May 1st. Elementary PAC will be giving away backpacks this year since we are unable to have the magic show.

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, April 28, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 290 ~ 9 of 78

Special Offer FREE Shipping!
Spring Basket Box



WOW! Handpicked fresh from the grove!
Brighten Someone's Day! Mention Promo Code SPG20.

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

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

Order by May 31, 2020.



Since 1947.
Hale Groves, Vero
Beach, FL 32966

IC: HMVS-A271

Call now to receive
FREE Shipping!

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

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, April 28, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 290 ~ 10 of 78

Covid-19 Update: by Marie Miller

Another better day overall.

We're at 987,689 cases in the US. The increase, both in raw number and percentage declined today; this was the third consecutive day of declines. NY leads with 292,027 cases, a substantial decline in both number and percentage increase for the second consecutive day. NJ, with 111,188 cases, looks like its rate of growth has been decreasing for 4 days. Remaining states are as follows: MA – 56,462, IL – 45,883, CA – 45,186, PA – 43,189, MI – 38,190, FL – 32,130, LA – 27,068, and CT – 25,997. 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, PR, and GU over 1000, 6 more over 100, and VI + MP under 100.

We have now lost over 50,000 people to this disease in the US. There have been 50,819 deaths in the US. The growth in percentage and raw number was slightly increased from yesterday. NY has 17,303, NJ has 6044, MI has 3406, MA has 3003, CT has 2012, IL has 1992, PA has 1946, CA has 1800, and LA has 1697. There is 1 more state over 1000 deaths, 7 more over 500, 18 more + DC over 100, 6 more + PR over 50, 7 more over 10, and 2 + GU, VI, and MP under 10.

An interesting drug trial got underway very secretively in New York early this month; the secrecy was to enable the researchers to lay hands on a sufficient supply of the drug before word got out and people bought it all up. The drug is famotidine, the active ingredient in the over-the-counter heartburn medicine, Pepcid. It is being administered intravenously at about nine times the heartburn dosage to 187 critically ill patients, some of them on ventilators, with more to be enrolled as time goes on.

Famotidine was identified as a potential candidate for treating Covid-19 after doctors in China noted that, among elderly patients, survival rates were much higher among the poorest people. They recognized that many of these survivors suffered from heartburn and, being poor, were on the cheaper famotidine rather than the high-priced omeprazole (the active ingredient in Prilosec); in fact patients who'd been taking famotidine showed about half the mortality rate as those who'd been taking omeprazole. These data were crude and not super-reliable, but suggestive. The suspicion was that the drug interfered with a viral enzyme needed for replication called papainlike protease. Since at that early point, scientists did not yet know the structure of the enzyme, they couldn't be sure this drug would interact with it in the way they were theorizing, so they did some predictive modeling for the enzyme's structure based on what was known about SARS-CoV, the virus that causes SARS, and concluded it was a likely fit. This, along with the anecdotal evidence from China was enough to put the current drug trial in motion. Early results with a small number of patients gave fairly dramatic results, but we can't really draw any conclusions until the full study is finished. We will see preliminary results from the first few hundred trial patients in a few weeks. This is another thing to watch

An interesting and relatively new form of therapy is in phase two clinical trials. The drug is called Leroninmab and was initially developed as a therapy for HIV infections. It is what's called a monoclonal antibody. It is an antibody much like the ones we've already talked about that your body makes in response to an infection. It is different from those natural antibodies in that it is deliberately induced in a mouse. What is interesting about it is that it is not a mouse antibody, even though a mouse makes it; it is what's called a humanized or fully human antibody because we first drop the gene for making human immune proteins into the mouse, then challenge the mouse to produce antibodies. We talked most of a month ago about these so-called transgenic mice which can make human antibodies, a very useful thing. Leroninmab modulates your response to the virus, which can quell cytokine storms; additionally, it appears to reduce

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, April 28, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 290 ~ 11 of 78

viral load in the patient by a mechanism I'm not entirely clear on—that is, I understand how it does the job for HIV, but not how it does it for Covid-19. Prior to the trial's beginning, the drug was given to a small number of patients under an eIND (emergency investigational new drug) authorization by the FDA. Early results are in for four of them, and the immune profile of the patients approached normal while viral loads decreased. This looks very promising, but as always, we will want to remember these are not controlled studies, so do not provide proof of efficacy.

We're on a good trajectory right now; I hope it holds. Our understanding of this virus and what it does in the body grows by the day, even as we acknowledge there is still a great deal left to learn. The science is progressing. Still a ways to go, however, so I hope you are keeping yourself safe, keeping your spirits up, and offering something of yourself in service.

See you all tomorrow.

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, April 28, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 290 ~ 12 of 78

Area COVID-19 Cases

| | Apr. 8 | Apr. 9 | Apr. 10 | Apr. 11 | Apr. 12 | Apr. 13 | Apr. 14 | Apr. 15 | Apr. 16 | Apr. 17 |
|---------------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| Minnesota | 1,154 | 1,242 | 1,336 | 1,427 | 1,621 | 1,650 | 1,695 | 1,809 | 1,912 | 2,071 |
| Nebraska | 523 | 577 | 648 | 704 | 814 | 871 | 901 | 952 | 1,066 | 1,138 |
| Montana | 332 | 354 | 377 | --- | 387 | 394 | 399 | 404 | 415 | 422 |
| Colorado | 5,655 | 6,202 | 6,510 | 6,893 | 7,303 | 7,691 | 7,941 | 8,280 | 8,675 | |
| Wyoming | 230 | 239 | 253 | 261 | 270 | 275 | 282 | 288 | 296 | |
| North Dakota | 251 | 269 | 278 | 293 | 308 | 331 | 341 | 365 | 393 | 439 |
| South Dakota | 393 | 447 | 536 | 626 | 730 | 868 | 988 | 1,168 | 1,311 | 1,411 |
| United States | 431,838 | 466,396 | 501,701 | 530,006 | 557,590 | 582,619 | 609,685 | 639,664 | 671,425 | 706,779 |
| US Deaths | 14,768 | 16,703 | 18,781 | 20,608 | 22,109 | 23,529 | 26,059 | 30,985 | 33,286 | 37,079 |
| Minnesota | +85 | +88 | +94 | +91 | +194 | +29 | +45 | +114 | +103 | +159 |
| Nebraska | +45 | +54 | +71 | +56 | +110 | +57 | +30 | +51 | +114 | +72 |
| Montana | +13 | +22 | +23 | --- | +10 | +7 | +5 | +5 | +11 | +7 |
| Colorado | +226 | +547 | +308 | +383 | +410 | +388 | +250 | +339 | +395 | |
| Wyoming | +9 | +9 | +14 | +8 | +9 | +5 | +7 | +6 | +8 | |
| North Dakota | +14 | +18 | +9 | +15 | +15 | +23 | +10 | +24 | +28 | +46 |
| South Dakota | +73 | +54 | +89 | +90 | +104 | +138 | +120 | +180 | +143 | +100 |
| United States | +31,909 | +34,558 | +35,305 | +28,305 | +27,584 | +25,029 | +27,066 | +29,979 | +31,761 | +35,354 |
| US Deaths | +1,857 | +1,935 | +2,078 | 1,827 | +1,501 | +1,420 | +2,530 | +4,926 | +2,301 | +3,793 |
| | Apr. 18 | Apr. 19 | Apr. 20 | Apr. 21 | Apr. 22 | Apr. 23 | Apr. 24 | Apr. 25 | Apr. 26 | Apr. 27 |
| Minnesota | 2,213 | 2,356 | 2,470 | 2,567 | 2,721 | 2,942 | 3,185 | 3,446 | 3,602 | 3,816 |
| Nebraska | 1,287 | 1,474 | 1,648 | 1,722 | 1,813 | 2,124 | 2,421 | 2,732 | 3,028 | 3,358 |
| Montana | 426 | 433 | 433 | 437 | 439 | 442 | 444 | 445 | 448 | 449 |
| Colorado | 9,433 | 9,730 | 10,106 | 10,447 | 10,878 | 11,262 | 12,256 | 12,968 | 13,441 | 13,879 |
| Wyoming | 309 | 313 | 317 | 322 | 326 | 332 | 349 | 362 | 370 | 389 |
| North Dakota | 528 | 585 | 627 | 644 | 679 | 709 | 748 | 803 | 867 | 942 |
| South Dakota | 1,542 | 1,635 | 1,685 | 1,755 | 1,858 | 1,956 | 2,040 | 2,147 | 2,212 | 2,245 |
| United States | 735,287 | 758,720 | 786,638 | 824,438 | 842,624 | 867,459 | 905,364 | 938,154 | 965,435 | 988,189 |
| US Deaths | 39,090 | 40,666 | 42,295 | 45,039 | 46,785 | 49,804 | 51,956 | 53,755 | 54,856 | 56,255 |
| Minnesota | +142 | +143 | +114 | +97 | +154 | +221 | +243 | +261 | +156 | +214 |
| Nebraska | +149 | +187 | +174 | +74 | +91 | +311 | +297 | +311 | +296 | +330 |
| Montana | +4 | +7 | 0 | +4 | +2 | +3 | +2 | +1 | +3 | +1 |
| Colorado | +379 | +297 | +376 | +341 | +431 | +384 | +994 | +712 | +473 | +438 |
| Wyoming | +7 | +4 | +4 | +5 | +4 | +6 | +7 | +13 | +8 | +19 |
| North Dakota | +89 | +57 | +42 | +17 | +35 | +30 | +39 | +55 | +64 | +75 |
| South Dakota | +131 | +93 | +50 | +70 | +103 | +98 | +84 | +107 | +65 | +33 |
| United States | +28,508 | +23,433 | +27,918 | +37,800 | +18,186 | +24,835 | +37,905 | +32,790 | +27,281 | +22,754 |
| US Deaths | +2,011 | +1,576 | +1,629 | +2,744 | +1,746 | +3,019 | +2,152 | +1,799 | +1,101 | +1,399 |

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, April 28, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 290 ~ 13 of 78

April 27th COVID-19 UPDATE

Groton Daily Independent
from Dept. of Health Lab records

South Dakota:

Positive: +33 (2245 total) 32 less than yesterday

Negative: +68 (14,130 total)

Hospitalized: +15 (150 total) - 61 currently hospitalized (3 less from yesterday)

Deaths: 11 total (no change)

Recovered: +59 (1316 total)

Counties with no positive cases report the following negative tests (lost Douglas County): Bennett 13, Brule 51, Buffalo 9, Butte 23, Campbell 7, Custer 18, Day +1 (57), Dewey +3 (26), Edmunds +1 (20), Grant +2 (38), Gregory 32, Haakon 16, Hanson +2 (25), Harding 1, Jackson 9, Jones 4, Kingsburg +1 (64), Mellette 11, Perkins 5, Potter 31, Tripp +1 (54), Ziebach 3, unassigned -96 (1230).

Brookings: +1 positive (12 total)

Brown: +3 recovered (18 of 30 recovered) - no new positives

Davison: +1 recovered (4 of 5 recovered)

Douglas: First positive case

Lincoln: +3 positive, +1 recovered (74 of 131 recovered)

Minnehaha: 58 positive, 52 recovered (1065 of 1880 recovered)

Smithfield: 850 total positive among employees plus 245 close contacts.

Stanley: +1 positive (2 total)

Yankton: --+1 positive, +1 recovered (22 of 27 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 1,987 completed tests today for COVID-19 with 75 new positive cases, bringing the statewide total to 942. NDDoH reports 2 new deaths (19 total)

State & private labs have reported 22,434 total tests & 21,492 negatives.

350 ND patients are recovered.

COVID-19 IN SOUTH DAKOTA

| | |
|------------------------|-------|
| Active Cases | 918 |
| Currently Hospitalized | 61 |
| Recovered | 1316 |
| Total Positive Cases* | 2245 |
| Total Negative Cases* | 14130 |
| Ever Hospitalized** | 150 |
| Deaths*** | 11 |

AGE GROUP OF SOUTH DAKOTA COVID-19 CASES

| Age Range | # of Cases | # of Deaths |
|-------------|------------|-------------|
| 0-19 years | 143 | 0 |
| 20-29 years | 422 | 0 |
| 30-39 years | 514 | 0 |
| 40-49 years | 449 | 0 |
| 50-59 years | 402 | 4 |
| 60-69 years | 208 | 3 |
| 70-79 years | 53 | 1 |
| 80+ years | 54 | 3 |

Broton Daily Independent

Tuesday, April 28, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 290 ~ 14 of 78

| 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 | 12 | 9 | 336 |
| Brown | 30 | 18 | 569 |
| Brule | 0 | 0 | 51 |
| Buffalo | 0 | 0 | 9 |
| Butte | 0 | 0 | 23 |
| Campbell | 0 | 0 | 7 |
| Charles Mix | 4 | 4 | 81 |
| Clark | 1 | 1 | 53 |
| Clay | 5 | 4 | 125 |
| Codington | 14 | 13 | 451 |
| Corson | 1 | 1 | 17 |
| Custer | 0 | 0 | 18 |
| Davison | 5 | 4 | 290 |
| Day | 0 | 0 | 57 |
| Deuel | 1 | 1 | 72 |
| Dewey | 0 | 0 | 26 |
| Douglas | 1 | 0 | 25 |
| Edmunds | 0 | 0 | 20 |
| Fall River | 1 | 1 | 40 |
| Faulk | 1 | 1 | 17 |
| Grant | 0 | 0 | 38 |
| Gregory | 0 | 0 | 32 |
| Haakon | 0 | 0 | 16 |
| Hamlin | 2 | 2 | 58 |
| Hand | 1 | 0 | 21 |
| Hanson | 0 | 0 | 25 |
| Harding | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| Hughes | 7 | 6 | 224 |
| Hutchinson | 3 | 2 | 89 |

| | | | |
|----------------|------|------|------|
| Hyde | 1 | 1 | 12 |
| Jackson | 0 | 0 | 9 |
| Jerauld | 6 | 4 | 34 |
| Jones | 0 | 0 | 4 |
| Kingsbury | 0 | 0 | 64 |
| Lake | 4 | 2 | 128 |
| Lawrence | 9 | 9 | 152 |
| Lincoln | 131 | 74 | 1338 |
| Lyman | 2 | 2 | 26 |
| Marshall | 1 | 1 | 37 |
| McCook | 4 | 3 | 89 |
| McPherson | 1 | 0 | 16 |
| Meade | 1 | 1 | 115 |
| Mellette | 0 | 0 | 11 |
| Miner | 1 | 0 | 20 |
| Minnehaha | 1880 | 1065 | 5950 |
| Moody | 3 | 1 | 85 |
| Oglala Lakota | 1 | 1 | 31 |
| Pennington | 12 | 10 | 536 |
| Perkins | 0 | 0 | 5 |
| Potter | 0 | 0 | 31 |
| Roberts | 4 | 4 | 94 |
| Sanborn | 3 | 3 | 35 |
| Spink | 3 | 3 | 91 |
| Stanley | 2 | 0 | 33 |
| Sully | 1 | 1 | 13 |
| Todd | 1 | 1 | 47 |
| Tripp | 0 | 0 | 54 |
| Turner | 15 | 5 | 136 |
| Union | 12 | 7 | 132 |
| Walworth | 5 | 5 | 41 |
| Yankton | 27 | 22 | 411 |
| Ziebach | 0 | 0 | 3 |
| Unassigned**** | 0 | 0 | 1230 |

SEX OF SOUTH DAKOTA COVID-19 CASES

| Sex | # of Cases | # of Deaths |
|--------|------------|-------------|
| Female | 1062 | 2 |
| Male | 1183 | 9 |

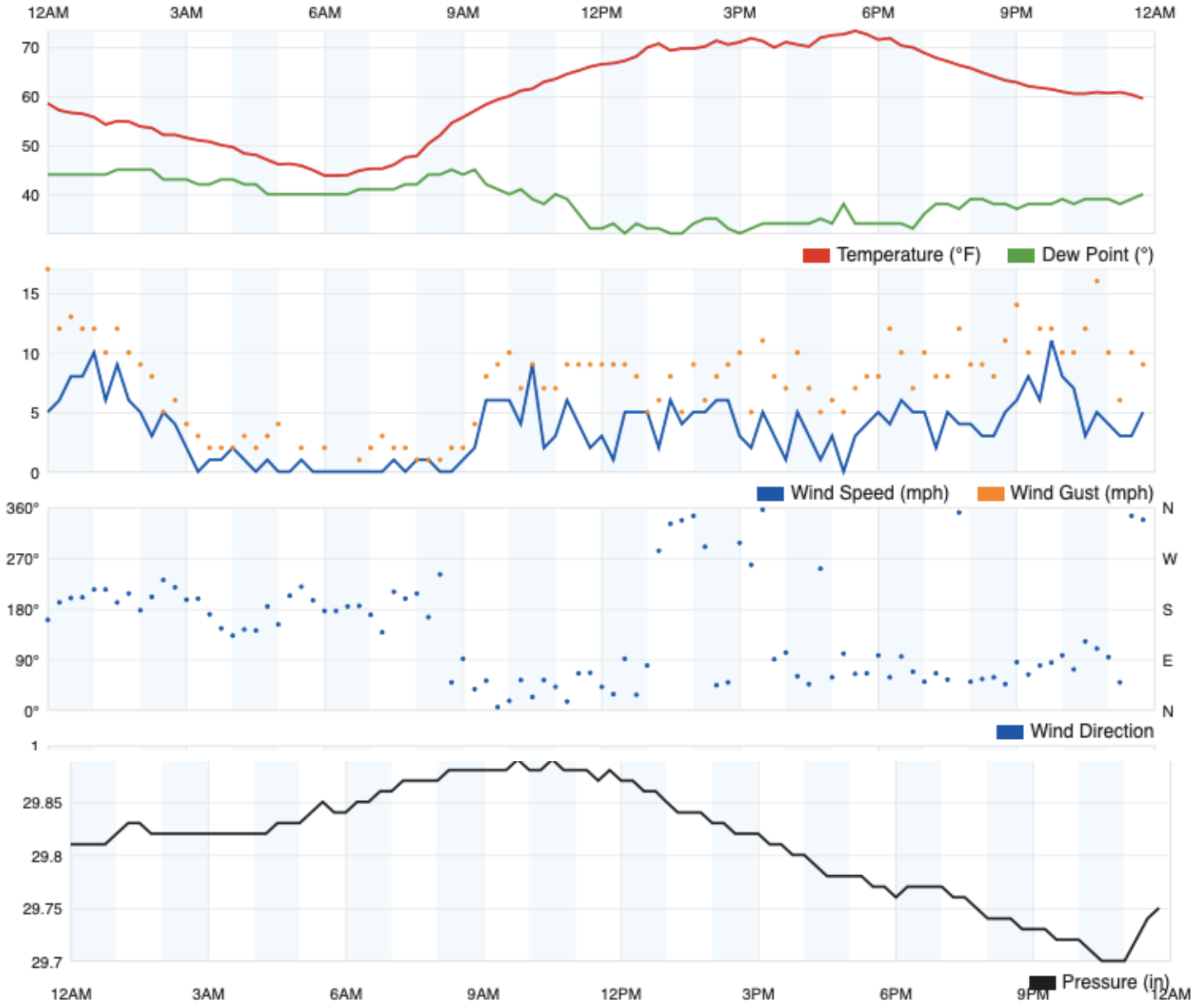
COVID-19 DEATHS IN SOUTH DAKOTA BY COUNTY

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

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, April 28, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 290 ~ 15 of 78

Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs



Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, April 28, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 290 ~ 16 of 78

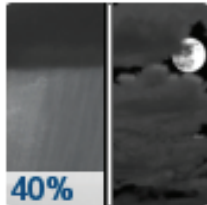
Tuesday



Scattered
Showers

High: 63 °F

Tuesday
Night



Scattered
Showers then
Mostly Cloudy

Low: 44 °F

Wednesday



Decreasing
Clouds

High: 63 °F

Wednesday
Night



Mostly Clear

Low: 40 °F

Thursday

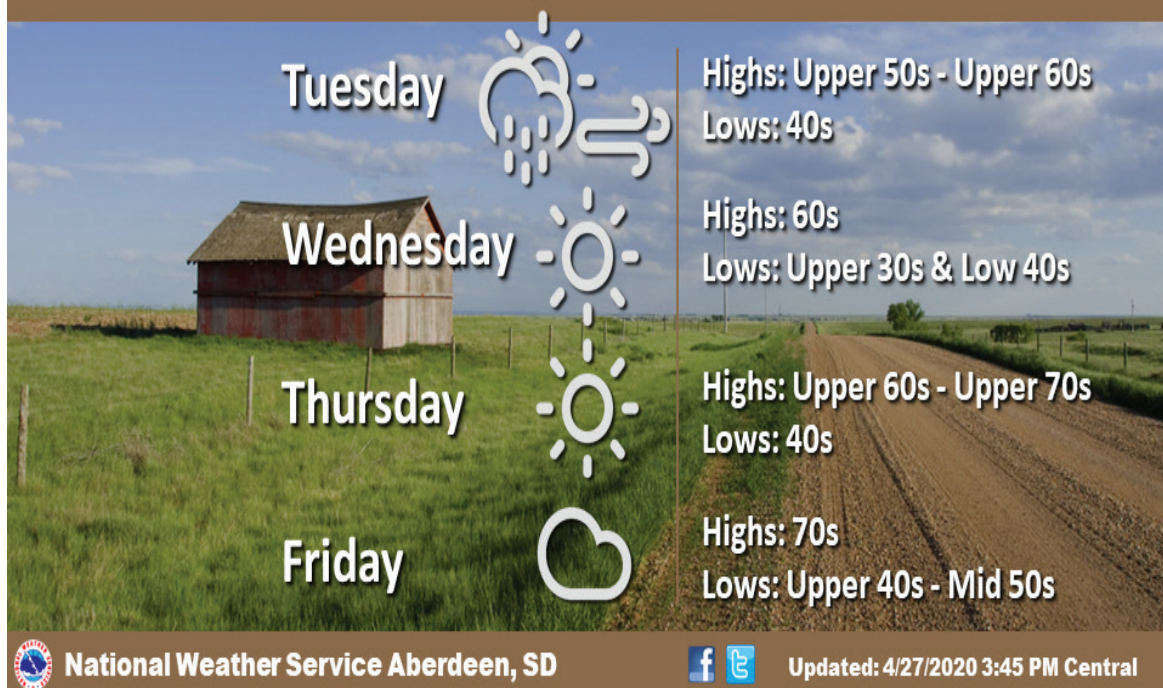


Mostly Sunny

High: 71 °F

Seasonally Mild Weather Continues

Stormy Tonight & Tuesday – Dry For The Rest Of The Week



National Weather Service Aberdeen, SD



Updated: 4/27/2020 3:45 PM Central

Seasonal temperatures for the rest of the week with some showers and storms overnight into early Tuesday, and then mostly across far eastern South Dakota and western Minnesota for Tuesday afternoon. Dry conditions otherwise.

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, April 28, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 290 ~ 17 of 78

Today in Weather History

April 28, 1994: Snow accumulated 5 to 12 inches over most of the eastern half of South Dakota, with the 12-inch report from Winner. Ten to eleven inches of snow was reported at numerous places including Sioux Falls and Platte in the southeast, and Summit in the northeast. Numerous accidents were caused by snow and ice, including one which killed a man and injured two women on Highway 12 near Bath, South Dakota. There was some undetermined crop damage, and livestock loss was feared as the late season cold and snow lowered resistance to disease.

1893: A half-mile wide estimated F4 tornado killed 23 people and injured 150 as it tore a path of devastation through Cisco, Texas. Every building in the town was either destroyed or severely damaged.

1973: The record crest of the Mississippi River at St. Louis, Missouri was registered at 43.23 feet on this day. This level exceeded the previous 1785 mark by 1.23 feet. This record was broken during the 1993 Flood when the Mississippi River crested at 49.58 feet on August 1st. At Memphis, Tennessee, the Mississippi was over flood stage for 63 days, more than that of the historic 1927 flood, and the river was above flood stage for an even longer 107 days at upstream Cairo, Illinois. Out of the seven largest floods on the Mississippi between 1927 and 1997, the 1973 event ranked third in both volume discharged and duration but only sixth in flood height. Over \$250 million of damages were incurred mainly in the Mississippi Valley states of Missouri, Arkansas, Tennessee, Mississippi, and Louisiana.

1991: Memphis, Tennessee recorded their wettest April ever with 15.03 inches, breaking their previous record of 13.90 inches in 1872.

2002: During the evening hours, a violent F4 tornado carved a 64-mile path across southeast Maryland. The La Plata, Maryland tornado was part of a larger severe weather outbreak that began in the mid-Mississippi Valley early on that day and spread across portions of the Ohio Valley and the Mid-Atlantic States. In Maryland, three deaths and 122 injuries were a direct result of the storm. Property damage exceeded \$100 million. Tornadoes along the Atlantic coast are not frequent, and tornadoes of this magnitude are extremely rare. Only six F4 tornadoes have occurred farther north and east of the La Plata storm: Worchester, Massachusetts - 1953; New York/Massachusetts - 1973; Windsor Locks, Connecticut - 1979; five counties in New York - 1989; New Haven, Connecticut - 1989; North Egremont, Massachusetts - 1995. None was as close to the coast. The tornado traveled across the Chesapeake Bay almost to the Atlantic.

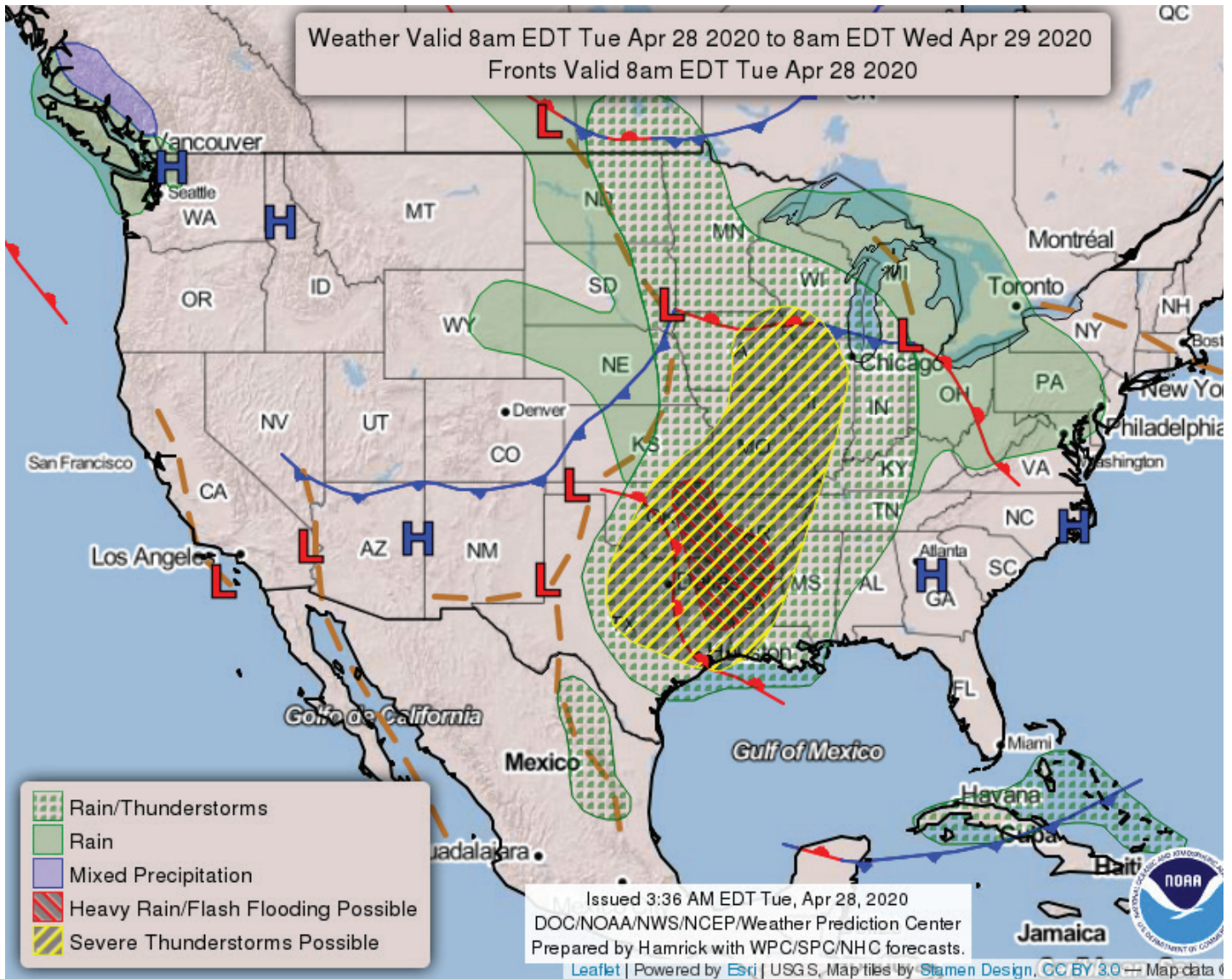
Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, April 28, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 290 ~ 18 of 78

Yesterday's Groton Weather Today's Info

High Temp: 75 °F at 5:23 PM
Low Temp: 44 °F at 6:08 AM
Wind: 16 mph at 12:01 AM
Precip:

Record High: 90° in 1934
Record Low: 19° in 2008
Average High: 63°F
Average Low: 37°F
Average Precip in April.: 1.59
Precip to date in April.: 0.97
Average Precip to date: 3.77
Precip Year to Date: 1.32
Sunset Tonight: 8:37 p.m.
Sunrise Tomorrow: 6:24 a.m.



Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, April 28, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 290 ~ 19 of 78



A DISCOURAGING DAY

It began with a toaster that didn't work. Then the washing machine stopped in the middle of a large load of soiled clothes and dirty water. The garbage disposal quit, and the sink backed up. Deciding to take a walk outside to get the mail, Bev looked up at the clouds and shook her head.

Opening the one letter she found in the mailbox, she was overwhelmed when she discovered a bill that she could not pay. Her husband hadn't worked for two months. He was laid-off when work slowed down at the factory.

Walking back into the house she picked up her young toddler, placed him on her lap, hugged him tightly, and began to cry. Suddenly he struggled in her arms and when he got loose and without saying a word, took the pacifier from his mouth and placed it in hers.

He felt her pain and reached out, giving her all that he had.

If a child can feel our sorrow, how much more our Heavenly Father? Whatever concerns us concerned Him first. Certainly, then, our problems become His priorities.

That is why Jesus said, "You can ask for anything in My name, and I will do it." Need a toaster or washer, a plumber or a job? God is bigger than any of them. No wonder, then, that Jesus said: "ask for anything." We limit God when we put limits on our requests.

Prayer: We ask, Lord, that You will increase our faith to exceed the size of our problems. May we take You at Your Word - in faith, believing in Your promises. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: John 14:13-14 You can ask for anything in my name, and I will do it, so that the Son can bring glory to the Father. Yes, ask me for anything in my name, and I will do it!

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, April 28, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 290 ~ 20 of 78

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

South Dakota governor to release 'back-to-normal' plan

SIoux FALLS, S.D. (AP) — Gov. Kristi Noem said she will release what she called a back-to-normal plan for South Dakota on Tuesday, and also hopes that a shuttered pork processing plant that was the site of a cluster of COVID-19 cases will present a plan for reopening this week.

Noem didn't provide details of her plan on Monday, but said there would be some changes and recommendations for going forward. Noem acknowledged that as more people resume activities in the state, the coronavirus will continue to spread.

"This virus will spread more. There will be more positives, which is just a fact that we need to realize will happen," she said, later adding: "If you are concerned about getting sick in the coming days, just know that you can still stay home."

South Dakota reported 33 new confirmed cases of COVID-19 on Monday and no additional deaths. The state has seen a total of 2,245 coronavirus cases, and 11 deaths overall.

More than 1,000 of the state's cases are tied to the Smithfield Foods pork processing plant in Sioux Falls, which closed indefinitely. The U.S. Centers for Disease Control visited the plant last week and issued some recommendations for reopening. Noem said Monday that she's hopeful the company will provide more information, and possibly even reopen, this week.

"We are hopeful they will open as soon as possible and as soon as it is safe for their employees to be working there," Noem said. "We will be supporting them in testing and making sure that those guidelines were put into place."

When asked by email if Smithfield had a date for reopening, Keira Lombardo, executive vice president of corporate affairs and compliance said the company received the report last Thursday and "will thoroughly and carefully examine the report point by point and respond in full once our assessment is complete."

Earlier Monday, state epidemiologist Joshua Clayton said officials anticipate the number of new cases among individuals at Smithfield, or any closed business, will become fewer over time as potential transmission at the workplace is curbed while the businesses are not operating.

Health officials said 61 people were hospitalized Monday, and a total of 150 people have been hospitalized since the outbreak began. A total of 1,316 people in South Dakota have recovered.

The actual number of infections is thought to be far higher because many people have not been tested and studies suggest people can be infected without feeling sick.

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.

Minnesota producers euthanize livestock; food supply stable

MINNEAPOLIS (AP) — Producers are having to euthanize pigs and chickens because of decreased demand caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, but Minnesota's food supply remains stable, Minnesota's top agriculture official said Monday.

However, state Agriculture Commissioner Thom Petersen said consumers may see some higher prices, especially if the coronavirus outbreak continues.

Minnesota's meat processing capacity has taken a big hit as slaughterhouses temporarily shut down due to workers becoming sick with COVID-19, the disease caused by the coronavirus. The Smithfield pork plant in Sioux Falls, South Dakota, which takes in Minnesota hogs, closed indefinitely, followed by the JBS pork plant in Worthington, in southwestern Minnesota. Petersen said it may be some time before both plants reopen.

As of Sunday, Minnesota has recorded 175 cases of COVID-19 associated with meat processing plants, according to Kris Ehresmann, the infectious disease director at the Minnesota Department of Health. There

have been no deaths.

But Petersen noted that Comfrey Farm Prime Pork in Windom, which temporarily closed last week after at least one employee was diagnosed with COVID-19, has since reopened.

"This continues to be a very difficult situation for our farmers with these plants being down," Petersen said during Monday's daily briefing on Minnesota's response to the pandemic. He said the state is working on increasing capacity at small meat plants around Minnesota.

"The decision to euthanize animals is not done easily, and it's very emotional," Petersen said.

While some farmers are euthanizing livestock because of reduced demand, Petersen said Minnesota's food supply is stable, thanks to a good amount of product in stores and in storage. But he said there will be occasional disruptions to the supply chain.

"Our goal is to get the plants running and keep them running," Petersen said.

Minnesota health officials said Monday 214 new cases of the coronavirus have been confirmed in the state in the last 24 hours, and 14 more people have died from the disease — including 12 people who lived in long-term care facilities.

The new numbers bring the state's death toll to 286, with a total of 3,816 confirmed cases statewide. Health officials have said the real number of Minnesotans infected with the coronavirus is likely much higher because most people don't qualify for testing. More than 1,800 people no longer need to be isolated.

The state reported 292 patients are currently hospitalized, including 122 in intensive care.

The number of cases in Minnesota continues to grow just as stay-at-home restrictions are being eased Monday. Last week, Gov. Tim Walz outlined plans that allow up to 100,000 people to return to work this week, though schools will remain closed for the rest of the academic year.

Most of Minnesota's cases are in Hennepin County, but there are 399 cases in Nobles County, the site of the recently shuttered JBS pork plant.

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.

Virus is expected to reduce meat selection and raise prices

By DAVID PITT Associated Press

DES MOINES, Iowa (AP) — Meat isn't going to disappear from supermarkets because of outbreaks of the coronavirus among workers at U.S. slaughterhouses. But as the meat plants struggle to remain open, consumers could face less selection and slightly higher prices.

Industry leaders acknowledge that the U.S. food chain has rarely been so stressed and that no one is sure about the future, even as they try to dispel concerns about shortages.

On Sunday, the meat processing giant Tyson Foods ran a full-page advertisement in the New York Times and other newspapers outlining the difficulty of producing meat while keeping more than 100,000 workers safe and shutting some plants.

"This means one thing — the food supply chain is vulnerable," the statement said. "As pork, beef and chicken plants are being forced to close, even for short periods of time, millions of pounds of meat will disappear from the supply chain."

Company spokesman Gary Mickelson said the Tyson family thought it was important to explain their perspective.

"The letter encourages government leaders to unite to address food supply chain challenges," Mickelson said. "We are taking a proactive approach to balance safety and production by moving aggressively with testing and plant closures when necessary."

COVID-19, the disease caused by the virus, has infected hundreds of workers at meat-processing plants and forced some of the largest to close and others to slow production. While the output at beef and poultry plants has diminished, pork plants in the Midwest have been hit especially hard. The viral outbreaks have persisted despite efforts by the meat companies to keep workers at home with pay if they become sick.

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, April 28, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 290 ~ 23 of 78

The 15 largest pork-packing plants account for 60 percent of all pork processed, so when even one of those plants closes for days or weeks, the consequences ripple across the industry. That has become abundantly clear with two of the nation's biggest plants now closed: Tyson suspended operations at its plant in Waterloo, Iowa. And Smithfield Foods halted production at its plant in Sioux Falls, South Dakota. Each plant can butcher nearly 20,000 hogs a day. Some plants have reopened days after cleaning.

The result is that the nation's pork processing capacity had declined by about 25% as of last week, said Steve Meyer, an industry economist with Kerns and Associates in Ames, Iowa.

Sarah Little, a spokeswoman for the North American Meat Institute, an industry trade group, said: "It's down across the board right now, so the next couple of weeks we should see how the system works. It's never been tested like this before."

A beef production plant in Green Bay, Wisconsin, is the latest to shut down because of infections among employees. JBS USA said the JBS Packerland plant, which employs 1,200, would be closed temporarily. As of Monday, 255 employees at the plant tested positive for COVID-19, said Claire Paprocki, a spokeswoman for the county health department.

Nationally, although the reduced meat supply is expected to cause consumer prices to rise, expectations are that the increases will be slight. The U.S. Department of Agriculture said late last week that it expects beef prices to climb 1% to 2% this year, poultry as much as 1.5% and pork between 2% and 3%.

The agency acknowledged that consumer buying patterns change weekly and that some products face supply-chain disruptions that could affect prices. But the USDA said its planned \$3 billion purchase of fresh produce, dairy and meat should help stabilize prices. The government will work with food distributors to provide the purchased products to food banks, community and faith-based organizations and other nonprofits serving the needy.

The United Food and Commercial Workers International Union, which represents 1.3 million food and retail workers, said last week that 13 U.S. food-processing and meatpacking union workers in the U.S. have died and that an estimated 5,000 are sick or have been exposed to the virus while working near someone who tested positive.

Marc Perrone, the union president, said 13 plants in Indiana, Iowa, Minnesota, Missouri, Pennsylvania, South Dakota and Wisconsin and Alberta, Canada, have been closed at least temporarily because of the pandemic. Those union plants represent about 10 percent of beef production and 25 percent of pork production, the union said.

The union is urging state and federal officials to ensure that workers have access to protective equipment, mandate social distancing at work and halt federal waivers that allow faster line speeds.

Many employees of the meatpacking plants fear going to work, said Margarita Heredia, who has worked at the JBS pork processing plant in Marshalltown, Iowa, for 11 years. She joined a UFCW union call with reporters to discuss the pandemic's effects on workers.

Heredia credited the company with improving sanitation, including treating hallways and common areas with bleach and placing hand sanitizer stations around the plant. JBS also now takes workers' temperatures and encourages those who are sick to stay home. But she said the company increased pay by \$4 an hour from April 20 through May as an incentive for healthy employees to go to work.

"Even then, we're still shorthanded, but we are trying to do our best," she said.

The national slowdown in meat processing has surfaced in federal statistics. The daily cattle slaughter for the week of April 13 fell nearly 24 percent from the same period a year ago. Pig slaughter was down 13 percent. And given the most recent plant closures, those figures have likely fallen further.

So far, the meat-processing industry has been able to shift production to open plants to keep a stream of meat moving through the supply chain, said Little, of the meat institute. Some plants that closed have reopened after deep cleanings.

"When one plant goes off-line, the others in the region can try and pick up the slack," Little said.

The situation would be more dire if not for record amounts of meat in cold storage, though much of the meat was intended for restaurants that now are largely closed.

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, April 28, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 290 ~ 24 of 78

The USDA last week reported 921 million pounds of chicken in storage and 467 million pounds of boneless beef, including hamburger, roasts and steaks. Before much of that meat could be sold at markets, it would need to be repackaged because restaurants buy in greater bulk than individuals. Some of the meat would need to be cut by grocery store meat cutters and packaged for customers to take home.

In late March, the USDA eased restrictions to allow for meat that had been intended for commercial food use to be diverted into the grocery store channels for consumers. The industry sought these changes in mid-March after brief meat shortages caused by the coronavirus panic sent people scurrying to grocery stores.

Industry reports indicate that fresh pork purchases surged 102 percent for the week ending March 22 compared with the same period a year earlier. Beef sales were up 91 percent. Chicken purchases grew by about 71 percent earlier in March before slowing. Still, chicken, pork and beef purchases are still about 30 percent above year ago levels in recent reports.

"By and large, there's been enough food," said Jayson Lusk, an economist at Purdue University. "You might not get your exact variety that you want or the exact type you want, but there's been food available if you have the money to buy it."

US seeks return of wetlands permit nixed in pipeline case

By **MATTHEW BROWN** Associated Press

BILLINGS, Mont. (AP) — U.S. government attorneys on Monday sought to put on hold a recent court ruling that canceled a permitting program used to approve oil and gas pipelines and other utility work through wetlands and streams across the nation.

The attorneys said letting the April 15 ruling stand would hamper thousands of construction projects overseen by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

U.S. District Judge Brian Morris in Great Falls declared the permitting program, known as Nationwide Permit 12, had been reauthorized in 2017 without sufficient consideration of its potential environmental harm. That prompted Army Corps officials last week to suspend the program.

The case before Morris involved the disputed Keystone XL crude oil pipeline from Canada. But pipeline and electric utility industry representatives said it could affect both construction and maintenance on potentially thousands of projects.

That includes major pipelines like the Mountain Valley natural gas pipeline in Virginia and power lines from wind turbines and generating stations in many parts of the U.S.

The Army Corps has broad jurisdiction over U.S. waterways. It uses the blanket permit to approve qualifying pipelines and other utility projects after only minimal environmental review. Environmentalists say that allows projects to skirt water protection laws and ignores the cumulative harm caused by thousands of stream and wetlands crossings.

U.S. Justice Department attorneys argued in a court filing that Morris had overstepped by applying his ruling not just to Keystone but to the entire program.

"The Court has eliminated Nationwide Permit 12 for use by any utility line project anywhere in the country, which has extraordinary and immediate implications for numerous projects," the attorneys wrote.

Since the blanket permit was renewed three years ago it has been used more than 37,000 times, according to federal officials.

Judge sides with tribes, limits distribution of virus relief

By **FELICIA FONSECA** Associated Press

FLAGSTAFF, Ariz. (AP) — A judge has ruled in favor of tribal nations in their bid to keep Alaska Native corporations from getting a share of \$8 billion in coronavirus relief funding — at least for now.

In a decision issued late Monday, U.S. District Judge Amit Mehta in Washington, D.C., said the U.S. Treasury Department could begin disbursing funding to 574 federally recognized tribes to respond to the

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, April 28, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 290 ~ 25 of 78

coronavirus but not to the corporations.

The ruling comes in a case brought by at least 15 tribes against the Treasury Department. The tribes allege that Congress intended the funding to go only to tribal governments and that the corporations don't fit within the definition of "Indian Tribe" in the Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security Act.

Mehta said the tribes easily showed they would suffer irreparable harm unless he limited the funding temporarily to tribal governments while he awaited more argument on the question of eligibility of Alaska Native corporations.

"These are monies that Congress appropriated on an emergency basis to assist tribal governments in providing core public services to battle a pandemic that is ravaging the nation, including in Indian Country," Mehta said.

The Treasury Department and the U.S. Justice Department representing the Treasury did not immediately respond to requests for comment Monday.

Justice Department attorney Jason Lynch had argued that the Treasury Department's decision to include Alaska Native corporations wasn't subject to judicial review because the funding is for a public health emergency. Mehta rejected the argument.

The Treasury Department has said it could start sending payments to tribes Tuesday — two days past the deadline in the coronavirus relief bill. But it has not said how it would determine who gets what.

Harry Pickernell, Sr., the chairman of the lead plaintiff tribe, the Confederated Tribes of the Chehalis Reservation in Washington state, said he was pleased with the judge's decision.

"This ruling will help tribal governments to lead in the aid and recovery of their people," he said in a statement.

Alaska Native corporations are unique to Alaska and own most of the Native land in the state under a 1971 settlement known as the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act. Mehta said neither the corporations nor the Treasury Department showed the corporations are providing public services comparable to the tribes to combat the coronavirus.

The corporations, which are not parties to the lawsuit, have said they support Alaska Natives economically, socially and culturally.

Two associations representing some of the corporations — the ANCSA Regional Association and the Alaska Native Village Corporation Association — said they believe the corporations ultimately will be deemed eligible for funding.

"This will mean a delay in necessary resources and economic assistance for Alaska Native people in our communities and our state," the groups said. "However, Alaska Native people have a history of resilience and strength. Together we will prevent the spread of COVID-19, care for those who get sick, and repair our economies."

For most people, the coronavirus causes mild or moderate symptoms, such as fever and cough. For some, especially older adults and people with existing health problems, it can cause more severe illness and death. The vast majority of people recover.

Girl, 15, dies in ATV crash near Selby

SELBY, S.D. (AP) — A 15-year-old girl has died after she lost control of the ATV she was riding on and crashed southeast of Selby, in central South Dakota.

The state's Highway Patrol says the girl was riding on a gravel road on Sunday afternoon when she lost control and was thrown from the ATV.

She was not wearing a helmet and was pronounced dead at the scene. Her name hasn't been released pending notification of family.

South Dakota's Highway Patrol continues to investigate the crash.

Doubts about testing remain in spite of Trump's assurances

By ZEKE MILLER, JILL COLVIN and JONATHAN LEMIRE Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The White House released new guidelines aimed at answering criticism that America's coronavirus testing has been too slow, and President Donald Trump tried to pivot toward a focus on "reopening" the nation.

Still, there were doubts from public health experts that the White House's new testing targets were sufficient.

Monday's developments were meant to fill critical gaps in White House plans to begin easing restrictions, ramping up testing for the virus while shifting the president's focus toward recovery from the economic collapse caused by the outbreak. The administration unveiled a "blueprint" for states to scale up their testing in the coming week — a tacit admission, despite public statements to the contrary, that testing capacity and availability over the past two months have been lacking.

The new testing targets would ensure states had enough COVID-19 tests available to sample at least 2.6% of their populations each month — a figure already met by a majority of states. Areas that have been harder hit by the virus would be able to test at double that rate, or higher, the White House said.

The testing issue has bedeviled the administration for months. Trump told reporters on March 6 during a visit to the CDC in Atlanta that "anybody that wants a test can get a test," but the reality has proved to be vastly different.

The initial COVID-19 test developed by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention was contaminated, and early kits operated only on platforms able to perform a small number of tests per day. While the rate of testing increased as tests developed for higher-capacity platforms, they were still limited by shortages of supplies, from nasal swabs to the reagents used to process the samples.

Administration officials maintained Monday that the limiting factor now is actually the availability of samples from people who have been tested — either because guidelines on who could be tested are too stringent or because there are not enough health workers able to take nasal swab samples from them.

The CDC moved to address one of those concerns Monday, expanding the list of people to be prioritized for virus testing to include those who show no symptoms but are in high-risk settings like nursing homes. And Trump met with leaders of businesses including CVS, Walmart and Kroger, who said they were working to expand access to tests across the country.

"Testing is not going to be a problem at all," Trump said later in the Rose Garden.

However, many of the administration's past pledges and goals on testing have not been met.

Jeremy Konyndyk, a disaster preparedness expert who helped lead the Obama administration response to Ebola, said the administration's testing plans are well short of what is needed.

Researchers at Harvard have estimated the country needs to be testing a minimum of 500,000 people per day, and possibly many more. Konyndyk said the aim should be 2 million to 3 million per day. Trump said the current total, up sharply in recent days, is over 200,000 per day.

Konyndyk said: "Over the past month, we've doubled or if you want to be really generous tripled the testing capacity in this country. We need to take where we are now and expand it tenfold."

The testing blueprint for states provides details missing from the administration's guidelines for them to return to normal operations, which were released more than a week ago. It includes a focus on surveillance testing as well as "rapid response" programs to isolate those who test positive and identify those with whom they had come in contact. The administration aims to have the market "flooded" with tests for the fall, when COVID-19 is expected to recur alongside the seasonal flu.

Trump and administration medical experts outlined the plan on a call with governors Monday afternoon, before unveiling them publicly in a Rose Garden press conference.

The White House announcements came as Trump sought to regain his footing after weeks of criticism and detours created in part by his press briefings.

Days after he set off a firestorm by publicly musing that scientists should explore the injection of toxic disinfectants as a potential virus cure, Trump said he found little use for his daily task force briefings,

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, April 28, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 290 ~ 27 of 78

where he has time and again clashed with medical experts and reporters. Trump's aides had been trying to move the president onto more familiar and, they hope, safer, ground: talking up the economy in more tightly controlled settings.

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.

On Monday, the White House initially announced there would be a Trump briefing, but canceled it as Trump's greatest asset in the reelection campaign — his ability to dominate headlines with freewheeling performances — was increasingly seen as a liability.

But hours later, Trump it became clear Trump had other ideas. He held court in the Rose Garden for a bit less than an hour.

Spokeswoman Kayleigh McEnany said briefings would be held later in the week but "they might have a new look to them, a new focus to them."

Trump said he hoped that virus deaths would end up no more than 60,000 to 70,000, slightly revising upward his public estimate of recent days as the U.S. toll neared 56,000 on nearly 1 million cases. Still, he claimed a victory given dire, tenfold-higher predictions if the U.S. hadn't adopted restrictive social distancing measures.

On his conference call with governors, Trump suggested that many states should consider reopening schools before the end of the academic year, easing the way for parents to go back to work.

"Some of you might start thinking about school openings because a lot of people are wanting to have the school openings," Trump told the governors. The Associated Press obtained an audio recording of the call.

Meanwhile, the CDC was beginning to release more detailed guidelines on reopening schools, restaurants and other establishments. Draft guidelines sent by the CDC to Washington include a long list of recommendations for organizations as they begin to reopen, such as closing break rooms at offices, spacing desks six feet apart at schools and using disposable plates and menus at restaurants. The draft guidance was obtained by The Associated Press from a federal official who was not authorized to release it.

Some states have started to ease closure orders, and Trump is expected to spend coming days highlighting his administration's efforts to help 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 an additional recovery package.

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

The shift toward the economy 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 continue to haunt the country at least until a vaccine is developed. And they say the risk of a severe second wave is high if social distancing measures are relaxed too quickly or if testing and contact tracing schemes aren't developed before people return to normal behaviors.

Lemire reported from New York. Associated Press writers Michelle Smith in Providence, R.I., Mike Stobbe in New York, Darlene Superville in Washington and Alan Suderman in Richmond, Va., contributed to this report.

Washington mental hospital staff call virus testing unsafe

By MARTHA BELLISLE Associated Press

SEATTLE (AP) — Workers who had been exposed to the coronavirus at Washington state's largest psychiatric hospital were herded into a small building to be tested. Inside, few wore masks. They were given test kits by people without gloves and told to swirl a swab inside their noses.

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, April 28, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 290 ~ 28 of 78

The method was designed only for people showing symptoms, but the staffers said none of them did. Many told The Associated Press that the flawed testing process this month likely produced inaccurate results and exposed them to the virus again.

"I absolutely feel it was a misuse of the testing materials," said Dr. Lauren Smith, a forensic psychologist at the hospital. "In addition to that, the manner in which they did it put us all at risk."

Employees say it's another example of the state's failure to protect staff and patients at Western State Hospital. The 850-bed facility south of Seattle has been the target of multiple state and federal investigations, including one launched when a man accused of torturing a woman to death escaped. There's a pattern of violent attacks by patients and a failure to meet health and safety requirements.

The violations led the facility to lose its accreditation and federal funding, and staffers say mismanagement during the pandemic could cost lives. They fear a repeat of the Seattle-area nursing home that became the first U.S. cluster of COVID-19 deaths, with 43.

"I'm afraid this could become another tragedy similar to what happened at Life Care Center of Kirkland," said Justin Lee, a spokesman for the hospital employee union.

A 400-member nurses union is calling for top administrators at the Department of Social and Health Services, which oversees the hospital, to be removed over their handling of the outbreak.

Department Secretary Cheryl Strange said she's disappointed and has been working to address the union's concerns.

"There is always much work to do in a hospital this large, and we will continue our efforts to restore the faith of the membership," she said.

At least 29 workers at the psychiatric hospital have tested positive for the virus, while six patients have confirmed cases and one has died. Psychiatric hospitals in other states also have struggled with COVID-19, including a facility in Michigan where more than 100 patients and workers tested positive.

At the Washington hospital, most patients are severely mentally ill. They're either a danger to themselves or others or have committed a crime and are being treated to restore their mental competency to face charges. Some are old and many have compromised immune systems because of their medications, putting them at greater risk if they catch the virus. But they aren't inclined to wear masks or take other precautions.

"If you give patients Purell, they'll drink it," said Ben LaLiberte, a forensic evaluator. Masks could be used to choke so are distributed carefully and usually ignored.

Unlike nursing homes, which are particularly susceptible to COVID-19, psychiatric wards can be chaotic and sometimes violent, requiring staff to make physical contact with patients.

"The 6-foot rule isn't possible," LaLiberte said. "I easily come into close contact with 20 people every day."

On April 6, staffers who had worked on the ward housing criminal offenders were told two infected employees had exposed them to the coronavirus and they needed tests. What they thought would be drive-thru testing that isolates people in their cars instead was held inside a small building, a half-dozen workers told the AP.

They jammed into a crowded hallway, and only a few had masks. They were called two at a time to a small office and given tests by two hospital staff members. Neither wore gloves and one took his mask off and on.

Smith, the forensic psychologist, said the person testing her was coughing and not wearing protective gear. She expected a typical test where a medical worker collects a sample from deep in the nasal canal and was concerned when she was told to swab just inside her nose.

State health officials began recommending the shallow self-test after a study by the Everett Clinic and the University of Washington said it 90% was accurate on people with COVID-19 symptoms. The study prompted the U.S. Food and Drug Administration to change its guidelines to allow the method for sick people.

Department of Social and Health Services spokeswoman Kelly Von Holtz defended the shallow swab, saying it's "FDA approved" and has proven as accurate as a deep nasal test.

But the FDA doesn't approve testing methods, just sets guidelines for how they should be done, a

spokesperson said. And Dr. Yuan-Po Tu, who co-authored the study, said that because his research was done only on patients with symptoms, the FDA limits the shallow nasal test to those people.

The hospital staff didn't have symptoms.

Workers also questioned why none of the patients on the ward where they were exposed had been tested.

State officials have reported conflicting numbers on patient testing throughout the facility. On April 14, Von Holtz said only two had been tested that month. The next day, she said 38 had been tested.

Staffers don't believe official reports because infections in workers have more than doubled since March, while cases among patients haven't changed this month.

"I have a lot of suspicion about the information we're getting," said LaLiberte, the forensic evaluator. "It ends up putting people at risk."

Poll: Cost makes nearly 1 in 10 leery of seeking COVID care

By RICARDO ALONSO-ZALDIVAR Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — As states gear up to reopen, a poll finds a potential obstacle to controlling coronavirus: nearly 1 in 10 adults say cost would keep them from seeking help if they thought they were infected.

The Gallup-West Health Healthcare Costs Survey out Tuesday finds that 9% of those age 18 and over would avoid seeking treatment because of concerns about the cost of care, even if they thought they were infected with the coronavirus.

A significantly higher number — 14% — would avoid seeking treatment because of pocketbook worries if they had fever and a dry cough, two widely publicized symptoms of COVID-19.

Although Congress and President Donald Trump have made coronavirus testing free to patients, and some insurers are waiving copays and deductibles for treatment within their networks, the survey suggests such messages may not be getting to the public.

The survey delivers "important and distressing information," said John Auerbach, head of the nonpartisan Trust for America's Health. "I hope that policy makers take note."

With so many reluctant to seek care, "it could pose problems in testing people," Auerbach added. "Without widespread testing, it will be problematic to lift the restrictions." Auerbach's group works with government at all levels to strengthen public health, and was not involved with the poll.

Experts say that to succeed, the nation's reopening has to be based on three pillars: testing, tracing those who came in contact with infected people, and treatment for those who become ill.

If people who may be sick are reluctant to come forward, that could create a blind spot for governors and public health officials trying to calibrate reopening plans to quickly contain potential virus flare-ups.

The survey found that members of minority groups, younger people, those with less than a college degree, and people making less than \$40,000 a year were more likely to say they would avoid treatment for economic reasons.

Fourteen percent of nonwhite poll respondents said they would avoid treatment even if they suspected they had the coronavirus, compared with 6% of whites citing costs. Yet COVID-19 has proven to be more lethal among blacks and Hispanics, a grim phenomenon linked to higher rates of underlying diseases such as diabetes, and lower rates of health insurance coverage.

Among age groups, the survey found those 18-29 were the most likely to avoid treatment. Although COVID-19 claims a disproportionately high share of victims among older people, there's plenty of evidence that seemingly healthy young adults are can also get seriously sick.

In the poll 12% of those 18-29 said they would avoid treatment because of cost worries. Adults ages 50-64 were the least likely to avoid care, with only 3% citing pocketbook issues as a barrier. Surprisingly, 7% of those 65 and older said cost would be an issue for them. Virtually all U.S. seniors are covered by Medicare, and many have additional protection for out-of-pocket expenses.

The poll also found income was a dividing line in Americans' attitudes. Only 3% of those making \$100,000 or more cited cost as a barrier to COVID care, compared with 14% of those earning under \$40,000.

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, April 28, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 290 ~ 30 of 78

"A pretty substantial chunk of the population could remain hidden from view because of the U.S. health care cost crisis," said Dan Witters, research director for the poll.

The Gallup-West Health Healthcare Costs Survey was based on telephone interviews conducted April 1-14, with a random sample of 1,017 adults, ages 18 and older, living in all 50 U.S. states and Washington. For results based on the entire sample the margin of error is plus or minus 3.7 percentage points

Fears of virus seem far away as stores reopen in rural US

By **MATTHEW BROWN** and **AMY BETH HANSON** Associated Press

ROUNDUP, Mont. (AP) — Traffic got a little busier along Main Street, but otherwise, it was hard to tell that coronavirus restrictions were ending in the tiny Montana town of Roundup.

That's because it's largely business as usual in the town of 1,800 people. Nonessential stores could reopen as a statewide shutdown ended this week, but most shops in Roundup — the pharmacy, the hardware store, two small grocers — were essential and never closed.

A florist and a thrift shop reopened Monday, apparently two of the only stores that had to shut down at all. Bars and restaurants remain shuttered and getting takeout is still the only option until May 4, when they can open with restrictions.

Parts of the U.S. are starting to lift closures, and some of the quickest to do so have been rural states like Montana, Vermont and Alaska. The effects of the pandemic in small towns can seem a world away from cities grappling with overwhelmed hospitals, packed morgues and economies pushed to the brink.

The consequences of easing restrictions in rural communities won't be fully known for some time, and health officials said they will be watching closely for a resurgence of infections.

But for now, there's little doubt in places like Roundup that it was the right thing to do after weeklong stay-at-home orders.

"We don't have the fear of the virus. It's been more concern about our shut-ins and older people who can't come out," said Shannon Thompson, who works at the IGA supermarket.

The coronavirus is largely a distant threat that so far has touched few people here directly. Face masks are a novelty, and greetings often still come with a handshake.

Despite some grumbling that the lockdown was too harsh, most people cooperated, county commissioner Adam Carlson said.

Thompson said she practices social distancing and "we're all doing what we're supposed to do."

By contrast, in some rural parts of states where stay-at-home orders remain in place, local leaders have pledged defiance. The mayor of Grants, New Mexico, population 9,000, led a rally Monday attended by dozens of people urging nonessential businesses to reopen.

Only a fraction of people in the state have been infected by COVID-19, and it doesn't make sense to keep small businesses closed, Mayor Martin "Modey" Hicks said. New Mexico has more than 2,800 confirmed cases of the virus and 104 deaths.

"The governor is killing the state over a little bug," he said before heading to the city-owned golf course, where about 20 people were playing despite a warning by state police for the facility to close.

For most, the coronavirus causes mild or moderate symptoms, such as fever and cough. For some, especially older adults and people with existing health problems, it can cause more severe illness, including pneumonia and death.

In small Alaska towns, some restaurants resumed dine-in service on Friday, while shops, personal care services and other nonessential businesses reopened with limits. Rules still restrict how many people can be in a shop at once, and no waiting is allowed in salons.

In Vermont, people can shop at outdoor retailers, and five people can work at the same outdoor work-site. Manufacturing and indoor construction also can expand.

Mike MacLeod, who owns a garden center just south of the resort town of Stowe, said the phone began ringing within minutes of the governor's announcement Friday loosening the restrictions.

"People are getting into their gardens," he said. "One of the things they can do is work on the gardens

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, April 28, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 290 ~ 31 of 78

and beautify their houses.”

Being remote and sparsely populated helps towns avoid infections, said Dr. Marc Mentel, president of the Montana Medical Association.

Yet a rural ZIP code is no magic shield and carries its own disadvantage: fewer medical resources. That can make outbreaks difficult to contain, such as the infections that swept through an assisted living facility in recent weeks in another remote Montana area, Toole County, that has led to six deaths.

“No matter where you are, this is a dangerous virus,” Mentel said. “The risk is low, but if something takes off in rural America, it could be devastating.”

Gov. Steve Bullock credits the lockdown with pushing down Montana’s infection rate and helping it re-open before other states.

“That’s what got us to this point, more than the rural nature of our state,” the Democratic governor said Monday.

Confirmed cases have declined since peaking at 124 new infections in the last full week of March. The state had just 15 new cases last week, health officials said.

But not every business is throwing open its doors.

In Montana’s capital of Helena, the Lasso the Moon toy store was open, but its doors were locked. Customers had to knock to be let in, up to four at a time, as long as they were wearing masks.

Owner Amy Barrett said the door is locked to give employees a chance to don masks. Her wariness reflected the uncertainty of many small-business owners who have been allowed to reopen.

“We’re still unsure quite how open to be,” Barrett said. “I don’t know how many people are going to want to come in.”

Hanson reported from Helena. Associated Press writers Wilson Ring in Montpelier, Vermont, and Russell Contreras in Grants, New Mexico, contributed to this report.

As virus cases rise, UAE adjusts to a new normal in pandemic

By JON GAMBRELL Associated Press

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates (AP) — In a Dubai industrial park, workers weld, drill and build what one entrepreneur sees as key to the near future of this desert city-state amid the coronavirus pandemic: disinfection gates.

Husam Zammar’s company builds such gates for government and commercial clients. He believes the new safety measures will find wide acceptance, just as metal detectors did after the 9/11 terror attacks. “If we consider two people, one has a knife and one has coronavirus, the second one is a hundred times dangerous than the first one,” he said.

Fear of the virus is palpable in Dubai and elsewhere in the the United Arab Emirates, a federation of seven sheikhdoms where foreigners make up 90% of the population. Yet even as confirmed coronavirus cases spike, the UAE is opening up its cavernous malls and restaurants in a gamble to stimulate its economy while still trying to fight off the pandemic.

That’s led to a new normal here of temperature checks, social distancing monitors at supermarkets and marked-off empty seats on the city’s driverless Metro. But crowds already have come to the malls and others are leaving their homes after weeks of a lockdown, eager to party in a city known for its nightlife and increasing the risk of the virus spreading.

In lifting more stringent restrictions, the UAE cited the holy Muslim fasting month of Ramadan, which began late last week. Dubai also lifted a weeklong quarantine order on a neighborhood along the Dubai Creek that’s home to many low-wage workers late Sunday, saying it had detected no new coronavirus cases there for two days.

But the detection rate for cases continues to spike due to mass testing. Authorities say more than 1 million tests have been administered — a number expected to rise. On Monday, Abu Dhabi’s Department of Economic Development ordered companies outside of free zones to test all their employees.

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, April 28, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 290 ~ 32 of 78

So far, the UAE has reported over 10,800 confirmed cases of the virus with 82 deaths. Recent days have seen numbers rise around 500 daily, in part as the testing reaches the UAE's population of low-paid laborers, who remain particularly at risk as they can live with up to 10 people in a single room like in other Gulf Arab countries.

The UAE isn't yet like Wuhan, China, from which the first cases of the virus emerged. There, biosecurity checkpoints are everywhere that spray people with disinfectant or have them walk through a box of grey decontaminant gas like an airlock. Similar gates or tunnels have been constructed in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Turkey, Kenya and elsewhere, aimed at killing traces of the virus on people's clothes or their body.

Hoping to fill an anticipated demand in the UAE, Zammar's firm Guard ME constructs the gates out of metal frames, galvanized steel and temperature-checking equipment from China. Someone trying to enter a business or office with such a gate first must undergo a temperature check, then walk through a fog of disinfectant created ultrasonically.

While that won't detect an asymptomatic carrier of the coronavirus, it still will offer people peace of mind, said Zammar, a Syrian entrepreneur based in Dubai.

"In the next two or three months, we will (feel) that if they didn't check your temperature, there is some problem in this building," he said.

In all of China, each person also has a "health code" that uses geolocation and other mobile phone data to assign an infection risk by color, with red resulting in a 14-day, closely monitored quarantine. In the UAE, such mobile phone apps remain voluntary.

However, images from Zammar's gate or a helmet-based temperature checker now used by Dubai police could be fed into a facial-recognition database. The UAE already has such a database from its national ID card system, which residents use for fast immigration clearance at Dubai International Airport. That fuels worries about privacy and surveillance in the UAE, which has been internationally criticized for targeting journalists and human rights activists and was linked to a suspected spying app.

Still, the country is slowly opening up as people in masks and gloves now go to the mall. Barber shops have also reopened, with scissors and hair clipper attachments individually sterilized and wrapped like surgical tools.

What this all means for Dubai's nightlife and bar scene, a crucial economic driver, remains in question. A famed Irish bar chain in the city-state called McGettigan's quietly opened its main location in Dubai's Jumeirah Lakes Towers neighborhood on Friday, but soon saw a line of people queuing up to enter. The bar closed early, before a 10 p.m. nightly curfew.

And like other bars in Dubai, it hasn't been serving alcohol since the 24-hour, police-enforced lockdown lifted. Signs out front tell customers that masks "must be appropriately worn at all times."

The company told The Associated Press in a statement that it's complying with the guidance from local authorities.

"The health and safety of our customers is the priority – from temperature checks to social distancing of tables, sanitization of the venue and all other regulations," it said.

Associated Press writers Sam McNeil in Beijing and Fay Abuelgasim in Dubai, United Arab Emirates, contributed to this report.

Follow Jon Gambrell on Twitter at www.twitter.com/jongambrellAP.

Russian doctors, nurses face more risks as virus cases grow

By **DARIA LITVINOVA** Associated Press

MOSCOW (AP) — A patient who had routine surgery at a hospital in St. Petersburg suddenly developed a fever after an operation. Doctors insisted on testing him for coronavirus and results showed that he had it.

And so did the Russian doctors, nurses and other patients who had unwittingly come in contact with him. "It just snowballed from there," said Dr. Dmitry Ptashnikov, head of the spinal surgery ward at the Vreden

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, April 28, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 290 ~ 33 of 78

Institute for Traumatology and Orthopedics and one of the many medical workers who became infected. More than half of its staff and patients — dozens in all — eventually tested positive for COVID-19.

Reports of infected medical workers are emerging almost daily as Russia copes with the virus. Last week alone, more than 200 doctors in Moscow and St. Petersburg were reported to have it, with some turning to social media to make their plight known.

It's unclear how many Russian doctors and nurses overall have been infected. The Health Ministry did not respond to requests for comment but news reports from a dozen regions in the past two weeks suggest at least 450 medical workers have had COVID-19, with 11 doctors and five nurses dying.

The number is likely to be much higher because hospital officials often hide such infections, said Semyon Galperin, head of the Doctors Defense League.

"I know of cases of hospital administrations not reporting medics getting infected because it may lead to sealing off the facility for quarantine and halting its operations," Galperin told The Associated Press.

The number of coronavirus cases in Russia has risen quickly to more than 87,000 with nearly 800 deaths, although some in the West question the accuracy of those reports. Most of Russia's big cities have been locked down since March 30 under measures set to expire Thursday.

Of 285 virus hot spots in the country, medical facilities account for more than half, said Deputy Prime Minister Tatyana Golikova.

As cases rise, widespread shortages of personal protective equipment and questionable infection control procedures are becoming the biggest challenges in Russia. The Kremlin insists there are only isolated shortages.

"We only had regular surgical gowns, masks, gloves," Ptashnikov told the AP. "Later we received proper protective equipment, but it was, unfortunately, a bit too late."

Russia inherited a robust health care network from Soviet times — about 5,300 hospitals and 1.1 million beds, the third largest amount of both in the world, according to the Organization of Economic Cooperation and Development. That provided a big head start when the outbreak was still in its early stages.

By late March, about 80,000 beds were available. A little over half were occupied as of last week, officials said, and more beds are being prepared.

"To Russia's credit, so far, except in a couple of the most overloaded hospitals in Moscow, we're not hearing stories of inadequate capacity," said Judy Twigg, a professor at Virginia Commonwealth University and senior associate at the Center for Strategic and International Studies.

"We worry a lot about shortages of personal protective equipment, distribution of that equipment to the right places at the right time. And we worry about infection control procedures within health care facilities," she told the AP.

Since the outbreak began, Russian health officials have been dividing hospitals into those treating coronavirus patients and those that aren't. In Moscow, which has almost 52% of confirmed cases, 29 hospitals out of almost 100 have been repurposed and 24 more are being prepared. In St. Petersburg, 12 hospitals out of more than 30 are being converted.

The hospitals get protective gear, and wards with virus patients are divided into "dirty" and "clean" zones, with patients and staff tested regularly.

Yelena Sibikina, head of internal medicine in a coronavirus ward at Moscow's Vinogradov Hospital No. 64, said the staff rehearsed protocols for two weeks before infected patients were admitted. Its 280 beds -- including 36 in the intensive care unit -- filled up in days. It is adequately stocked with protective suits, face masks, goggles, gloves and shoe covers.

But doctors say the hospitals not treating virus patients lack proper procedures or supplies, putting those workers at risk if an infected person is admitted.

"There are no protocols in place for dividing patients, there is no special protective equipment for medics. ... The chances of getting sick are very high," Dr. Alexei Erlikh, a Moscow cardiologist, told the AP.

Five wards at Moscow City Hospital No. 29, which is not yet ready for coronavirus patients, had to be shut down for quarantine, Erlikh said. The cardiac ICU he heads was sealed off last week after about a

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, April 28, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 290 ~ 34 of 78

third of its staff got infected.

St. Petersburg's Pokrovsky hospital was initially repurposed for treating pneumonia cases, but staff there immediately complained about needing protective equipment. City officials responded they didn't need such gear for treating pneumonia - yet four days later, six patients were diagnosed with coronavirus. Only after a series of media appearances and videos sent to the government did workers get what they wanted. Now the hospital officially treats coronavirus patients.

"It was hard. Only us joining forces helped," Sergey Sayapin, an ICU specialist at the hospital, told the AP. He and four colleagues are being treated for COVID-19 that they caught at work.

As more Russian doctors speak out, it is difficult to keep the problem under wraps. Such complaints have grown in recent weeks, with social media filled with messages of outrage and videos of doctors pleading for help.

On Monday, about 50 workers at the Mariinsky hospital in St. Petersburg were reported to have been infected, and workers at two hospitals in the Moscow suburbs lodged complaints last week after dozens of doctors and nurses also got COVID-19.

Ptashnikov's hospital was quarantined April 9 and many medical workers and patients are still locked inside. "Cynical as this may sound, we should first and foremost take care of doctors and medical personnel, not the patients," he said, "because if they are out of commission, then no one will be able to treat anyone."

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

Virus tamed in New Zealand, while Brazil emerges as hot spot

By NICK PERRY and DAVID BILLER Associated Press

WELLINGTON, New Zealand (AP) — Surfers in New Zealand hit the waves at dawn, builders returned to construction sites and baristas fired up their espresso machines as the nation eased a strict lockdown Tuesday amid hopeful signs the coronavirus has been all but vanquished Down Under — at least for now.

But elsewhere, Brazil was emerging as a potential new hot spot for infections, and fresh doubts were raised over whether Japan would be able to host the already postponed Olympic Games next year.

Europe and some U.S. states were also continuing to gradually ease limits on movement and commerce as they tried to restart their economies.

But in a reminder of the virus's increasing toll, President Donald Trump said the numbers of deaths could reach 70,000 in the U.S., after putting the number at 60,000 several times earlier this month.

With the number of new cases waning, New Zealand's government loosened its lockdown, which for more than a month had shuttered schools and most businesses, and only allowed people to leave their homes for essential work, to get groceries or to exercise.

Most students will continue studying from home and workers are still required to work from home if they can, while everyone is required to maintain social distancing. But restaurants can now reopen for takeaway orders, construction can restart, and golfers and surfers can play.

New Zealand reported just three new infections on Tuesday and the country's health authorities said they're winning the battle against the virus. Nevertheless they cautioned people not to get complacent and to maintain social distancing.

Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern said people had done an incredible job to break the chain of transmission, but cautioned they needed to remain vigilant. Quoting a microbiologist, Ardern said "there may still be some smoldering ashes out there, and they have the potential to become a wildfire again, if we give them the chance."

In Australia, authorities reopened Sydney's iconic Bondi Beach to swimmers and surfers on Tuesday and hundreds returned to the water as soon as the restrictions were lifted. People can only use the beach during daylight hours, cannot linger on the sand and are counted to ensure social distancing.

In Japan, a top medical expert said he thinks it will be difficult to hold the Olympics in 2021 without an

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, April 28, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 290 ~ 35 of 78

effective coronavirus vaccine.

"I hope vaccines and drugs will be developed as soon as possible," said Yoshitake Yokokura, the president of the Japan Medical Association.

Japan and the International Olympic Committee agreed to postpone the Tokyo 2020 Summer Games until July next year due to the pandemic. Japan is under a monthlong state of emergency amid a rapid increase of infections throughout the country, where hospitals are overburdened.

In Brazil, President Jair Bolsonaro has insisted COVID-19 is just a "little flu" and that there is no need for the type of restrictions that have slowed the infection's spread in Europe and the U.S.

Brazil has reported 4,600 deaths and 67,000 confirmed infections. But the true numbers are believed to be vastly higher given the lack of testing and the many people without severe symptoms who haven't sought hospital care.

Medical officials in Rio de Janeiro and at least four other major cities have warned that their hospital systems are on the verge of collapse or are too overwhelmed to take any more patients.

There are also signs that a growing number of victims are now dying at home. Brazil is Latin America's biggest country, with 211 million people.

"We have all the conditions here for the pandemic to become much more serious," said Paulo Brandão, a virologist at the University of Sao Paulo.

Bolsonaro has disputed the seriousness of the coronavirus and said people need to resume their lives to prevent an economic meltdown. But most state governors in the country have adopted restrictions to slow the spread and pushed people to stay at home.

In other developments, British Prime Minister Boris Johnson returned to work after a bout with the virus and warned strongly against easing his own country's lockdown too soon: "I refuse to throw away all the effort and the sacrifice of the British people and to risk a second major outbreak and huge loss of life."

And New York canceled its Democratic presidential primary, set for June 23, since Bernie Sanders has already conceded the nomination to Joe Biden. The state reported 337 deaths for the lowest daily count this month, down from nearly 800 almost three weeks ago.

The number of confirmed infections in the U.S. has risen to nearly 1 million, according to a tally by Johns Hopkins University, although the true number is likely much higher because not everybody who contracts the virus is tested.

Worldwide, the death toll topped 210,000. The number of dead in the U.S. surpassed 56,000. Italy, Britain, Spain and France accounted for more than 20,000 deaths each.

Billier reported from Rio de Janeiro. Associated Press journalists around the world contributed to this report.

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

The US reopening is coming, but 'normal' is still a ways off

By SARAH DiLORENZO Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Everyone wants to know: When, oh when, will it go back to normal?

As some governors across the United States begin to ease restrictions imposed to stop the spread of the coronavirus, hopes are soaring that life as Americans knew it might be returning. But plans emerging in many states indicate that "normal" is still a long way off.

White House adviser Dr. Deborah Birx says social distancing will be with Americans through the summer. Louisiana Gov. John Bel Edwards warns of a "different way of life" until there is a widely available vaccine — maybe not until next year. New York Gov. Andrew Cuomo says: "There is no return to yesterday in life."

From the beginning, the pandemic forced impossible choices: physical health or mental health? Economic well-being or medical safety? Most states joined the world and turned the dial down hard, closing shops

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, April 28, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 290 ~ 36 of 78

and restaurants, factories and schools. Asking people to largely keep to their homes. Now, the dial is beginning to inch in the opposite direction.

In Georgia, Gov. Brian Kemp is pushing one of the most aggressive reopening plans in the United States. Barbershops, gyms and nail salons were allowed to reopen Friday, and dine-in restaurant service and movie screenings were freed to resume Monday — despite warnings that, without sufficient testing, the state could see a surge in infections.

Even there, though, life was far from normal Monday. Patrons went to restaurants with X's on some tables, chatted across the room to one another and gave orders to servers whose faces were covered by masks.

Draft guidance for reopening from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention provided more evidence Monday that "normal" would not be on the menu — at restaurants or anywhere else. No break rooms for employees and no field trips for school children, the guidelines recommended. Children should eat in their classrooms, not the cafeteria, and congregants should stay 6 feet apart in church.

In Maryland, Gov. Larry Hogan envisions a phased reopening — something the federal government also advocates. First small shops could open, and some outdoor recreation could resume, then perhaps restaurants and bars. Phase three, which the administration cautions it has no realistic time frame for reaching, would allow larger social gatherings and high-capacity bars, restaurants and entertainment venues could reopen.

You know, the stuff that two months ago might have just been called "city life."

Even with strict rules in place, it's a delicate dance, as Dennis McKinley learned this weekend. He had planned to open two of the three branches of his restaurant, The Original Hot Dog Factory, for dine-in service in the Atlanta area. He reversed himself Monday after getting about 40 calls from politicians, community leaders and customers urging him to keep diners out.

"Ultimately, The Original Hot Dog Factory can't make it without the community's support, so I felt it was important to hold back and wait," McKinley said.

What he calls community support, economists might refer to as confidence. Economies run on that, especially the American one, in which consumer spending accounts for 70% of all activity. When people are scared or times uncertain, they tend not to shell out.

"After an initial pop to growth, when businesses do reopen, it's going to be a slog until there's a vaccine," said Mark Zandi, chief economist at Moody's Analytics. "I think there's going to be a lot of cautious people and therefore a lot of cautious businesses."

For most people, the new coronavirus causes mild or moderate symptoms. For some, especially older adults and people with existing health problems, it can cause more severe illness and death. And while many point to a vaccine as the surest path to normal, public health experts see another way that's no less daunting: millions more tests, 100,000 or more health workers to track and isolate those exposed to COVID-19, and a seamless data network to coordinate the effort.

The U.S. is far from implementing any of this. So in the absence of a vaccine or other reassuring measures — and in the face of a threat that is largely invisible — how will Americans believe that it's safe to go out again?

"You know when a flood is there and when it's gone," says Steven Taylor, a professor at The University of British Columbia who wrote "The Psychology of Pandemics." He predicts confidence will return when people see others hugging, shaking hands and crowding into elevators — and not getting sick.

While Taylor believes most people will adapt quickly to returning to normal or the "new normal," he notes that some calamities like the Great Depression have caused lasting changes to habits.

What will fade and what will survive after the coronavirus? Friday nights in restaurants where the tables are just a few inches apart, jostling for space in sweaty nightclubs, a peck-on-the-cheek hello? What about sleepaway camp and freshmen bunking together in dorms and the ever-shrinking seats in economy class?

Historian Francis Bremer can't help but wonder whether the new normal will ever mean an end to "doing history from my dining room." Like many others, the professor emeritus of history at Pennsylvania's Millersville University has found that much can be done from a distance — in his case, through the rapidly

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, April 28, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 290 ~ 37 of 78

expanding online availability of historical documents.

Clues lie in places that are weeks, even months ahead of the United States in this collective global experience.

In China, where the virus emerged late last year, people proven healthy can generally move around within their own cities now — tracked by mobile apps and monitored with temperature checks in public. Germany has seen far fewer deaths than its European neighbors, but life remains curtailed: While it allowed smaller shops to reopen last week, it stuck to strict social-distancing guidelines and continued widely requiring face masks in public.

As spring blooms, Americans look to a whole new set of activities they hope they won't be barred from. Californians flooded beaches and river fronts this past weekend as temperatures soared, prompting warnings that they might lose the few privileges they have.

But in Pennsylvania, the dial is turning the other way. Gov. Tom Wolf announced Monday he would lift some restrictions on outdoor recreation. Not just because the virus was starting to be contained, but also because people simply needed it.

"As the weather warms and daylight lengthens," Wolf said, "enjoying time outdoors is an important way to manage stress."

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

'Infecting our dreams': Pandemic sabotages sleep worldwide

By GILLIAN FLACCUS Associated Press

For millions of people around the world dealing with the coronavirus pandemic, sleep brings no relief.

The horrors of COVID-19, and the surreal and frightening ways it has upended daily life, are infecting dreams and exposing feelings of fear, loss, isolation and grief that transcend culture, language and national boundaries.

Everyone from a college teacher in Pakistan to a mall cashier in Canada to an Episcopalian priest in Florida is confronting the same daytime demon. Each is waking up in a sweat in the dead of night.

Experts say humanity has rarely experienced "collective dreaming" on such a broad scale in recorded history — and certainly never while also being able to share those nightmares in real time.

"It's that alarming feeling of when you wake up and think, 'Thank heavens I woke up,'" said Holly Smith, an elementary school librarian in Detroit. "Once it hits your dreams, you think, 'Great, now I can't even escape there.'"

The psychological toll is staggering, particularly for health care workers whose dreams show similarities to those of combat veterans and 9/11 responders, said Deirdre Barrett, a Harvard University professor who is surveying COVID dreamers worldwide. She has collected 6,000 dream samples from about 2,400 people.

So many people are sharing accounts of dreams online that there's a Twitter account dedicated to gathering them in a virtual library under the handle "I Dream of COVID."

"As far as I know, no one has dream samples from the flu pandemic of 1918 — and that would probably be the most comparable thing," said Barrett, who has studied the dreams of 9/11 survivors and British prisoners of war in World War II. "Now we just all have our smartphones by our bed, so you can just reach over and speak it or type it down. Recording our dreams has never been easier."

The dreams are also exposing what is bothering us the most about the pandemic. The themes seem universal.

Dreams of a safe place suddenly overtaken by the virus speak to contagion's terrifying invisibility, says Cathy Caruth, a professor at Cornell University who has studied trauma for 30 years. Pandemic dreams, she says, are reminiscent of the experience of Hiroshima survivors, who worried about invisible radiation exposure, and also of some nightmares described by Vietnam veterans.

"They seem to be in part about things that are hard to grasp, what it means that anybody can be a threat and you can be a threat to everybody," Caruth said.

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, April 28, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 290 ~ 38 of 78

Episcopalian priest Mary Alice Mathison dreamed 500 people showed up for a funeral in her church and wouldn't go home. Other dreams underscore that no one knows how the pandemic will end. In those, the dreamer wakes with a start before learning how it turned out.

Ashley Trevino is still trying to process one terrifying dream. The 24-year-old barista is out of work due to the pandemic and was spooked when officials announced the first COVID-19 death in her central Texas county.

A few days later, she dreamed she and her girlfriend were in line to enter a dark, metal warehouse where they'd be injected with the new coronavirus by government workers wearing Hazmat suits. Fluorescent lights in the parking lot cast an eerie glow as she watched her partner get the shot and gasp for breath. Then she got the shot, too.

"I watched her kind of collapse against the wall and while I was trying to fight the effects of it and not pass out myself, I was like ... 'Is she dead now?'"

Trevino woke up whimpering. She immediately felt an impulse to share her nightmare with someone — anyone — and tweeted it to the world from her bed.

In Pakistan's Punjab province, a college literature teacher described dreaming she was one of only 100 people left on the planet who didn't have COVID-19. The infected population had gained political control and was chasing the uninfected "so the world would become the same for everyone," said Roha Rafiq, 28.

Rafiq is terrified for her elderly father, who insists on going to prayers every day despite a cough and a stay-at-home order. "I think," she said in a Twitter direct message, "this anxiety has given me this dream."

According to Barrett, many people dream they are sick with COVID-19 or of being overcome by what seem to be stand-ins for the virus: swarms of bugs, slithering worms, witches, grasshoppers with fangs. Others dream of being in crowded public places without a mask or proper social distancing.

Still others dream of losing control. In one such dream, the dreamer was held down by infected people who coughed on her. In another, the dreamer came across bands of people shooting at random strangers.

Most are lower-level anxiety dreams, not trauma-induced nightmares. But that changes dramatically for frontline health workers, Barrett says.

"The health care providers are the ones who look like a trauma population. They are having flat-out nightmares that reenact the things they're experiencing and ... they all have the theme that 'I am responsible for saving this person's life and I'm not succeeding and this person is about to die,'" she said.

"And when they dream about their child or parent getting it, for the care providers there's always the next step in the dream where they realize ... 'I gave it to them.'"

Even the simple, unadorned dreams — far from the drama of the ICU — seem poignant right now. Some people dream of getting a hug, attending a party, getting a haircut, going to the library.

Lauren Nickols, 30, an avid reader, stocked up on library books before Ohio's stay-at-home order. Now her supply is running low. She recently dreamed her dresser was piled with books. She found the dream reassuring, but a reminder of the mundane things that have been lost.

"I guess it's a bit of a sense of shared community, but it's also really sad that we're all missing things. It really shows you all the things you do without realizing it," she says. "And now that you can't, it's a shock to the system."

Follow Gillian Flaccus on Twitter at <http://twitter.com/gflaccus>

A look at past disappearances of NKorean leaders, officials

By KIM TONG-HYUNG Associated Press

SEOUL, South Korea (AP) — While Kim Jong Un's two-week absence has inspired speculation and rumors that he is gravely ill, he is not the first member of North Korea's ruling elite to disappear from public view.

Some absences were caused by real trouble, including deaths, illness or purges. But frequently the so-called disappearances have simply shown the disconnect between insatiable curiosity about what's happening inside the isolated, nuclear-armed nation and the thick cloak of secrecy surrounding its leadership.

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, April 28, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 290 ~ 39 of 78

A look at past cases of missing North Korean officials and when reports about the demise of leaders were premature:

KIM IL SUNG

Before his death in 1994, there was arguably no person South Koreans hated and feared more than North Korea's state founder Kim Il Sung. His forces launched a surprise attack on the South in June 1950, triggering a devastating war that drew massive intervention by the United States and China and killed and injured millions of people before an armistice halted fighting three years later.

He also dispatched commandos in a failed attempt to assassinate the South Korean president in 1968 and sent agents to plant bombs that killed 21 people, including several South Korean cabinet ministers, during a presidential visit to Myanmar in 1983.

When South Korean newspapers reported him as dead in November 1986, the public, at least for a few hours, was overwhelmed with euphoria but also panic about instability on the border.

The reports began circulating on Nov. 16 when the Chosun Ilbo published a short story by its Tokyo correspondent who reported rumors in Japan that Kim Il Sung had died. Things took a strange turn the next day when South Korea's military spokesman announced that the North Koreans used loudspeakers on the mine-strewn border to announce that he was shot to death.

Chosun released an extra edition to report the story on Nov. 17 — a Monday when newspapers hadn't usually published — before using seven pages to describe Kim Il Sung's assassination on Nov. 18, under the now infamous front-page headline "Kim Il Sung shot dead."

Other newspapers wrote similar stories, adding to a frenzy that abruptly ended hours later when Kim Il Sung appeared alive and well at an airport in Pyongyang, North Korea's capital, to greet a visiting Mongolian delegation.

Chosun, South Korea's biggest newspaper by circulation, never published a correction. But it formally apologized over the story last month while marking the 100th anniversary of its founding.

The newspaper also apologized over a 2013 report that said North Korean singer and senior ruling party member Hyon Song Wol had been executed. Hyon reappeared in public in May 2014 and is now considered as one of the most powerful women in North Korea, accompanying Kim Jong Un to several international summits.

KIM JONG IL

Kim Jong Il, the famously reclusive father of the current ruler, also was the subject of countless reports and rumors about his demise.

In 2004, a massive explosion at a North Korean train station on its border with China inspired rumors of an assassination attempt as he had passed through hours earlier on his way back from Beijing. The collision of two fuel-carrying trains reportedly killed and injured thousands of people, but a link to the leader's travel was never confirmed.

Chatter about Kim Jong Il's death following his 2008 stroke became so frequent that it prompted South Korea's financial regulator in 2009 to investigate whether the rumors were being deliberately spread to manipulate stock markets.

When Kim Jong Il did die in December 2011, following years of deteriorating health and diminishing public appearances, the outside world had no clue until the North's state media announced it two days later.

His once-powerful sister, Kim Kyong Hui, has had her own share of premature reports about her death. CNN on May 2015 cited a North Korean defector to report that Kim Jong Un had her poisoned to death. The 73-year-old made her first public appearance in about six years in January, sitting near her nephew during a concert.

KIM JONG UN

Conflicting reports over the past week have said Kim is either "gravely ill," "in a vegetative state" or

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, April 28, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 290 ~ 40 of 78

“perfectly fine” following heart surgery that may or may not have happened.

In 2014, Kim vanished from the public eye for nearly six weeks before reappearing with a cane. South Korea’s spy agency said he had a cyst removed from his ankle.

In 2016, South Korean media quoted intelligence officials as saying Kim had had a former military chief executed for corruption and other charges. But months later, North Korea’s state media showed Ri Yong Gil alive and serving in new senior posts.

Kim Jong Un was last seen in public on April 11 when he presided over a ruling party meeting on coronavirus prevention. He even missed the April 15 birthday celebration for his late grandfather Kim Il Sung for the first time since taking power in 2011. State media have since reported his engagement in routine, but non-public activities. They say he’s sent greetings to the leaders of Syria, Cuba and South Africa and expressed gratitude to citizens of merit, including workers building tourist facilities in the coastal town of Wonsan, which is where some speculate he is staying.

While it’s possible that Kim could pop up anytime, continuing a family tradition of media resurrections, some experts say that his health will become an increasing factor in years ahead, considering his weight, smoking habits and other supposed health problems.

Barr to prosecutors: Look for unconstitutional virus rules

By MICHAEL BALSAMO Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Attorney General William Barr on Monday ordered federal prosecutors across the U.S. to identify coronavirus-related restrictions from state and local governments “that could be violating the constitutional rights and civil liberties of individual citizens.”

The memo to U.S. attorneys directs the head of the Justice Department’s civil rights division and the U.S. attorney for the Eastern District of Michigan to coordinate the department’s efforts to monitor state and local policies and take action if needed.

“If a state or local ordinance crosses the line from an appropriate exercise of authority to stop the spread of COVID-19 into an overbearing infringement of constitutional and statutory protections, the Department of Justice may have an obligation to address that overreach in federal court.”

Barr’s memo comes about two weeks after the Justice Department filed a statement of interest in a civil case in Mississippi, siding with a Christian church where local officials had tried to stop Holy Week services broadcast to congregants sitting in their cars in the parking lot.

The directive also comes as many stay-at-home orders are set to expire and governors eager to rescue their economies are moving to ease restrictions meant to control the spread of the coronavirus, even as new hot spots emerge and experts warn that moving too fast could prove disastrous.

At the same time, protesters have staged demonstrations against stay-at-home orders, and in recent weeks, President Donald Trump has urged supporters to “liberate” three states led by Democratic governors.

Trump was asked at Monday’s coronavirus briefing about the strategy behind the decision by the Justice Department.

“Well, you’d have to ask Attorney General Barr, but I think he wants to see — like everybody, he wants to see people get back and he wants to see people get back to work,” Trump said. “He doesn’t want people to be held up when there’s no reason for doing it. In some cases, perhaps it’s too strict. He wants to make sure people have the rights and they maintain the rights, very importantly.”

The Justice Department argued in the Mississippi filing that officials in Greenville appeared to be targeting religious conduct by singling churches out as the only essential service, as designated by the state of Mississippi, that may not operate despite following all Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and state recommendations regarding social distancing.

In an interview with radio host Hugh Hewitt last week, Barr said the Justice Department could support legal action against states that impose strict measures as the number of coronavirus cases begins to subside.

"The idea that you have to stay in your house is disturbingly close to house arrest," Barr said. "I'm not saying it wasn't justified. I'm not saying in some places it might still be justified. But it's very onerous, as is shutting down your livelihood."

Barr said he believes there is a sufficient basis for social distancing rules that have been put in place, but he has cautioned that there may be concern if the restrictive measures continue too long. He has said the U.S. must find a way to allow business to adapt and reopen.

"I think we have to allow people to figure out ways of getting back to work and keep their workers and customers safe," Barr said in an interview with Fox News earlier this month. "I'm not suggesting we stop social distancing overnight. There may come a time where we have to worry less about that."

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.

Milwaukee police find 5 dead in house; suspect in custody

By TODD RICHMOND Associated Press

Police found five people shot to death Monday inside a Milwaukee home and arrested the man who dialed 911 to report the slayings, the city's police chief said.

The police department received a call around 10:30 a.m. from a man who said his family was dead, Chief Alfonso Morales said during a brief news conference. When officers arrived at the house on the city's north side they found five victims ranging in age from 14 to 41, the chief said.

The Milwaukee Journal Sentinel reported Mayor Tom Barrett told reporters at the house that a baby was found alive in the house. Investigators believe the shooter decided to spare the infant.

Morales said investigators recovered a weapon and believe the shooter acted alone, adding that there's no threat to the public.

The man who called authorities to the house has been taken into custody, and detectives were trying to determine the relationship between the caller and the victims, Morales said. No names have been provided.

Morales called the shooting "a very tragic event."

The Journal Sentinel, citing three unidentified police sources, reported the suspect was a 43-year-old Milwaukee man with a lengthy criminal record in Milwaukee County.

Online court records show he was convicted in 2002 of misdemeanor battery. He was sentenced to probation, ordered to attend domestic abuse counseling and prohibited from possessing firearms.

He pleaded guilty in 2007 to felony battery, felony bail jumping and felony intimidation of a witness. He was sentenced to four and a half years in prison, prohibited from possessing firearms and ordered to complete a batterers' intervention course.

Five years later, in 2012, he pleaded guilty to misdemeanor battery with a domestic abuse modifier, and drew 18 months in prison with another gun ban. In 2017, he pleaded guilty to misdemeanor disorderly conduct and was sentenced to a month in jail with work-release privileges.

The state Department of Workforce Development filed a warrant against him in 2016 seeking \$13,304 in unemployment compensation that still hasn't been paid. The online records don't offer any further details. DWD spokesman Ben Jedd said such cases are confidential under state law.

Asked for confirmation of the suspect's identity and more details on the shooting, Milwaukee Police spokeswoman Sheronda Grant said only that the department "will provide additional information regarding this incident in the upcoming days."

The attack is the second mass shooting in Milwaukee this year. Molson Coors brewery worker Anthony Ferrill gunned down five co-workers on Feb. 26 before turning his gun on himself. His motive remains unknown.

White supremacist Wade Michael Page killed seven people at a Sikh temple in suburban Oak Creek before a police officer killed him in a firefight in 2012. That incident is the worst mass shooting in the Milwaukee area since 2005, when Terry Michael Ratzmann killed seven fellow congregants at the Living Church of

God in suburban Brookfield before killing himself. Prosecutors never determined an exact motive, although they said he blamed the church for his depression and financial problems.

Follow Todd Richmond on Twitter at <https://twitter.com/trichmond1>

Virus spreads fear through Latin America's unruly prisons

By EVA VERGARA and MARIA VERZA Associated Press

SANTIAGO, Chile (AP) — The spreading specter of the new coronavirus is shaking Latin America's notoriously overcrowded, unruly prisons, threatening to turn them into infernos.

The Puente Alto prison in downtown Santiago, Chile, had the largest of Latin America's largest prison virus outbreaks so far, with more than 300 reported cases. The prison's 1,100 inmates are terrified. Social distancing is hard to practice in jail.

"They are all in contact with each other," said prison nurse Ximena Graniffo.

Any efforts at reducing contact were blown away in El Salvador over the weekend when authorities crammed prisoners — albeit wearing masks — tightly together in prison yards while searching their cells. President Nayib Bukele ordered the crackdown after more than 20 people were murdered in the country Friday and intelligence suggested the orders came from imprisoned gang leaders.

Latin America's prisons hold 1.5 million inmates, and the facilities are often quasi-ruled by prisoners themselves because of corruption, intimidation and inadequate guard staffs. Low budgets also create ideal conditions for the virus to spread: There is often little soap and water and cell blocks are crowded.

So far, national officials have reported close to 1,400 confirmed cases of COVID-19 among inmates and prison staff. The worst hit has been Peru, with 613 cases and at least 13 deaths, though the extent of testing to determine the full scale of infections differs from country to country. When the Dominican Republic tested more than 5,500 inmates at the La Victoria prison, which has been producing protective face masks for the public, officials reported at least 239 tested positive.

Perhaps the most complete testing appears to be taking place in Puerto Rico, where the Department of Corrections said Friday it will test all the nearly 9,000 inmates being held across the U.S. territory, as well as 6,000 employees, including prison guards.

Fear of the virus itself already has proven deadly. There have been 23 deaths in prison riots in Colombia since the pandemic started. More than 1,300 inmates have escaped prisons in Brazil after a temporary release program was cancelled due to the outbreak, and more than 1,000 have been on hunger strikes in Argentina.

All over the region, the demands are the same: protection against contagion. With most family visits cancelled, inmates feel exposed, vulnerable, alone — and exploited.

Inmates report that prices at informal and formal prison stores have increased during the pandemic, and relatives can no longer bring them food and hygiene items from the outside.

"Right now, a bag of soap powder costs 29 pesos (\$1.20), when before it was 20 (80 cents)" said a prisoner in Mexico, who lives in a 12 foot by 12 foot (4 meters by 4 meters) cell with a dozen others. He spoke on condition of anonymity because he was using a banned cellphone.

Human Rights Watch says conditions are even worse in countries like Haiti, Bolivia or Guatemala.

U.N. Human Rights High Commissioner Michelle Bachelet, the former president of Chile, has called sanitary conditions in the region "deplorable" and called for releases of less dangerous inmates.

Countries like Chile and Colombia have already released about 7,500 inmates and Mexico's Senate last week approved a measure to free thousands, though Brazil has not yet acted.

Regional security analyst Lucia Dammert says releasing a few thousand inmates won't significantly reduce the threat of contagion, however, and some urge more sweeping releases.

"Prisoners have been sentenced to loss of liberty, not to death, and the state has to take measures at its disposal," said José Miguel Vivanco, Americas director for Human Rights Watch. And in many countries, such as Bolivia, most of those behind bars have not yet been sentenced or are awaiting trial.

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, April 28, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 290 ~ 43 of 78

In Chile, the head of the prison guard system, Cristián Alveal, said the prisoners' fears "are totally reasonable," and he said officials are working "to minimize the worries of the inmates."

Some prisons have tried to do that by allowing prisoners more calls to relatives, and Argentina, with 13,000 prisoners, has allowed videocalls. Buenos Aires has even allowed prisoners to use cellphones, which are normally banned because they are sometimes used in extortion schemes.

Inmates at the San Pedro prison in Bolivia's capital, La Paz, have taken their own measures against contagion. While inmates elsewhere have rioted over bans on family visits, the Bolivian inmates themselves decided on such a ban. And they turned what are normally punishment cells into 14-day quarantine lockups for newly arrived prisoners.

Ximena Graniffo, the nurse at Puente Alto, seemed resigned to a struggle. "You do what you can with what you have," she said.

Maria Verza reported from Mexico City.

Riots, escapes and pepper spray: Virus hits juvenile centers

By MARGIE MASON and ROBIN McDOWELL Associated Press

Nicole Hingle wasn't surprised when the call came. Frustrations had been building inside juvenile detention centers nationwide as the number of coronavirus cases continued to climb. Now, her 17-year-old son Jace, was on the phone telling her around 40 kids had rioted at his facility in Louisiana — the same state where more than a dozen youths escaped during two breakouts at another site this month.

Hingle said her son described whirring helicopters above the Bridge City facility just outside New Orleans. Juveniles kicked down their doors, a SWAT team swarmed in, kids were pepper-sprayed and a staffer was injured during the melee.

"It's a real mess," the teen told his mother. "Everything is destroyed."

Due to coronavirus lockdown measures, it's been more than two months since Hingle has been able to visit her son. She has accused administrators of keeping her in the dark, and said she was growing increasingly upset by the lack of a clear plan to protect or release those held inside. Ten youths have tested positive at Bridge City in recent weeks.

"This could be life or death for my child," said Hingle, adding that her son was among a group transferred to the Acadiana Center for Youth after the brawl, where they were pepper-sprayed twice over the weekend by parole officers brought in to help due to short staffing.

"I don't want condolences from the state. I don't want condolences from the governor," she said. "I do not want sympathy. I want them to do what is right on behalf of our kids because they cannot save themselves nor can we save them without the help of these politicians."

As more and more state and local officials announce the release of thousands of at-risk inmates from the nation's adult jails and prisons, parents along with children rights' groups and criminal justice experts say vulnerable youths should be allowed to serve their time at home. But they say demands for large-scale releases have been largely ignored. Decisions are often not made at the state level, but instead carried out county by county, with individual judges reviewing juvenile cases one by one.

Such legal hurdles have resulted in some kids with symptoms being thrown into isolation for 23 hours a day, in what amounts to solitary confinement, according to relatives and youth advocates. They say many have been cut off from programs, counselors and school. Some have not been issued masks, social distancing is nearly impossible and they have been given limited access to phone calls home. One mother reported that her daughter was so cut off from the outside world — with no TV and staff not wearing any protective gear — that the girl had no idea a deadly virus was even circulating in America. In some states, authorities have been shuttling kids between facilities, trying to make sure sick and healthy young people are kept apart.

Growing fears and frustrations have led to violence and mayhem not just in Louisiana, but at juvenile centers in other coronavirus hot spots such as New York. Young people are calling their parents to say

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, April 28, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 290 ~ 44 of 78

they're scared and desperate to escape. Sheriff's deputies responded to a facility in Portland, Oregon, this month after a "disturbance" broke out, but no injuries were reported.

"The department has maintained essential staff at the juvenile detention center in accordance with national standards throughout the COVID-19 outbreak, and is working hard to balance the social and emotional needs of youth in our care during this extraordinary time," the Multnomah County Juvenile Services Division said in a statement.

Vincent Schiraldi, co-director at Columbia University Justice Lab and a former correctional administrator, said he hoped these problems would serve as a warning to other juvenile facilities, especially those that have not yet been hit by the virus.

"If this storm is coming in your direction, don't wait until you have 100 mile-an-hour winds to put the boards up on the windows," he said. "Deal with it now. Come up with your COVID plan now. Get everybody out of your facility that can be gotten out, start training your staff, start developing your lines of communication, so that if people start getting sick and staff start calling in sick, then you can manage it as best you can."

As of Monday, 150 juveniles and 283 staff had tested positive for COVID-19 at facilities nationwide, according to an unofficial log being kept by Josh Rovner at the Washington, D.C.-based nonprofit The Sentencing Project. He said because testing has been so limited, it's likely the real numbers are "much, much higher."

New York is one of the few cities that operates two juvenile facilities. At the first sign of illness there, the city agency that oversees the sites decided to put healthy kids at the Crossroads Juvenile Center in Brooklyn, while moving all of the infected residents to the Horizon Juvenile Center in the Bronx.

Fernando Cabrera, a Bronx council member, said he saw the potential danger of suddenly ripping kids away from familiar staff and routines, especially during a time of crisis.

"You transfer all these kids to another borough, they are going to be anxious," he said after dozens of police responded when a fight broke out in Crossroads about two weeks ago. "They are in self-preservation mode."

The city's Administration for Children's Services provided few details about the brawl, but said some staff suffered minor injuries, including one who needed offsite medical treatment.

A similar situation occurred at two branches of the Swanson Center for Youth in Louisiana. Its facility in Columbia had been designated for healthy youths, while its Monroe site was reserved for the infected, resulting in kids being transferred back and forth. So far, at least 17 have tested positive for the coronavirus in the two facilities, according to The Sentencing Project. In addition, two escapes occurred this month at Monroe involving 13 youths, according to a statement from the Louisiana Office of Juvenile Justice.

One of the main obstacles to monitoring the spread of the coronavirus in youth lockups is that so few tests are being administered. In addition, some juvenile justice agencies, citing privacy concerns, have refused to release even basic information, including the number of people infected.

Virginia's Department of Juvenile Justice initially didn't release figures. But on April 17, it revealed that more than two dozen kids had tested positive at the Bon Air Juvenile Correctional Center outside Richmond, accounting for a quarter of all reported cases at youth facilities nationwide at that time, according to The Sentencing Project. On Monday, the Tennessee Department of Children's Services said 26 youths have tested positive at the Memphis Center for Success and Independence.

No severe cases were reported at Bon Air, and the majority were asymptomatic, according to a statement from Christopher Moon, the department's chief physician.

But Rachael Deane, of the Legal Aid Justice Center's Just Children Program, accused the department in a letter of not providing proper medical care to kids housed at Bon Air. She said one client with symptoms was not tested and another whose swab came back positive was never examined by a doctor. Deane also alleged that the department wasn't communicating with parents when their kids became infected and that some clients had been denied access to counseling for weeks. She charged that legal rights were also being violated.

"Our clients report they are kept in their rooms for at least 23 hours per day. Although they are supposed to receive one hour per day outside their rooms, this is not always honored," the letter said. "Even when

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, April 28, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 290 ~ 45 of 78

their free hour is made available, residents are sometimes forced to choose between using it for essential activities, like taking a shower, instead of exercise and recreation.”

Valerie Boykin, director of the Virginia department, said in a statement that Bon Air residents’ parents and loved ones are kept informed in a timely manner.

More than 2.2 million people are incarcerated in the United States — more than anywhere in the world. But the threat posed by COVID-19 extends well beyond the prison walls. Even though most personal visits have been stopped, hundreds of thousands of guards, wardens and other correctional facility administrators go in and out every day, potentially carrying the virus home to their families and communities.

The juvenile population behind bars has been decreasing over the past couple of decades and stood at around 43,000 in 2017, the last available count. Roughly 70% were accused of low-level crimes.

It’s unclear exactly how many kids have been released due to the coronavirus, but a new survey by the Baltimore-based Annie E. Casey Foundation looked at a snapshot of juvenile justice agencies in 30 states housing more than 3,700 youths. The survey found the number of young people in local secure detention centers — where they are held until a court decides whether to confine them until their hearings or allow them to wait at home — dropped 24% from March to April, mostly due to fewer admissions. However, the data only represents about one-tenth of counties nationwide.

Nate Balis, director of the foundation’s juvenile justice strategy group, said far more young people should be released to home confinement to prevent the spread of COVID-19, especially given that the overall population is only a fraction of the number of adults behind bars.

“Whether or not kids are being released has to do with who’s calling the shots and that is very different from state to state,” he said. “We’re talking about states that may have a couple hundred young people in custody or less.”

The Pennsylvania Supreme Court denied a petition earlier this month asking it to limit new admissions and allow for the immediate release of some detained youths to prevent the spread of the virus in juvenile facilities.

Maryland’s Court of Appeals denied a similar petition but offered guidance to administrative judges, saying the health and well-being of the juveniles should be taken into consideration during the public health crisis. Since the filing, 164 juveniles have been released, according to the public defender’s office. There are now about 450 kids remaining in the system.

The coronavirus doesn’t typically hit young people hard, but it has been shown to attack anyone with underlying health problems. Locked-up children face much higher rates of asthma and other respiratory ailments, along with substance abuse issues.

Up to 70% have mental health problems and many have learning disabilities or are illiterate, with more than half placed in a grade level below their age, according to the nonprofit Center for Prisoner Health and Human Rights.

Seven youths and 11 staff have tested positive in juvenile detention centers in Connecticut.

Jibrelle Milner said her 17-year-old son is only getting out of his two-person room at the Manson Youth Institution in New Haven County for one or two hours a day. She said he’s supposed to graduate high school this year, but he’s a special education student who’s only receiving learning packets to complete on his own.

She said he suffers from allergies and asthma and is still recovering from injuries after being shot twice last year. She worries about the virus but is equally concerned about his mental health.

“There’s no visitation, there’s no school going on,” Milner said. “I feel like it’s incarceration on top of incarceration.”

Follow Robin McDowell @robinmcdowell and Margie Mason @MargieMasonAP on Twitter.

Questions over Kim's health highlight intelligence limits

By KIM TONG-HYUNG Associated Press

SEOUL, South Korea (AP) — North Korean leader Kim Jong Un's prolonged public absence has led to rumors of ill health and worries about how it could influence the future of what one analyst calls Northeast Asia's "Achilles' heel," a reference to the North's belligerence and unpredictable nature.

But there's a basic question debated by the media and government intelligence services: Are the rumors even true?

The exact state of Kim's health matters because it could determine the stability of the dynastic government in Pyongyang and the security of nuclear weapons that the nation has repeatedly threatened to use on its neighbors and the United States.

It's a problem that outside nations have faced for decades. Gathering intelligence on perhaps the world's most secretive, suspicious and difficult-to-read country is incredibly difficult. And there's probably nothing North Korea guards more closely than information on Kim's health, which is only likely shared among a small portion of the elite, including his powerful sister, Kim Yo Jong.

At the heart of the intelligence shortcomings about North Korea is its extremely closed nature. But there is also plenty of blame leveled in South Korea at efforts there.

Supporters of South Korea's liberal government, which remains eager for inter-Korean engagement, lament the previous decade of conservative rule, when exchanges between diplomats, government and business leaders, aid groups and others stopped under hard-line policies toward North Korea's nuclear ambitions. This, they say, deprived spies of high-quality information sources.

Conservatives, meanwhile, blame liberals for supposedly downsizing espionage operations while pursuing inter-Korean rapprochement. They say such networks have been difficult to rebuild.

South Korea's government has repeatedly played down unconfirmed media reports that Kim is in fragile health following heart surgery, saying it has detected no unusual activity in North Korea or any emergency preparation by its ruling Workers' Party, military and Cabinet. Without specifying its sources, South Korea's presidential office said it believes Kim is handling state affairs normally at an unspecified site outside the capital, Pyongyang.

U.S. President Donald Trump told reporters Monday that he has a "very good idea" about Kim's health but couldn't talk about it and wished him well.

"I do know how he's doing, relatively speaking," Trump said at the White House. "You'll probably be hearing in the not-too-distant future."

Some experts say South Korea, as well as its regional neighbors and ally Washington, must begin preparing for high-level instability that could come if Kim is sidelined by health problems or even dies. That could include North Korean refugees flooding South Korea or China or military hard-liners letting loose nuclear weapons.

Planning for those are worst-case scenarios is crucial because nobody knows for sure what's happening, said Nam Sung-wook, a North Korea expert at Seoul's Korea University who termed the situation the "Achilles' heel of international politics in Northeast Asia."

"He could very well be OK and reappear in North Korean state media again, but considering his weight and worsening shape, the risks linked to his health will sharply increase as he gets older," said Nam, a former director of a think tank affiliated with South Korea's main spy agency.

Kim is overweight, reportedly smokes heavily and has other health problems.

Questions about Kim's health have been raised since he missed the birthday celebration of his late grandfather and state founder Kim Il Sung on April 15, the country's most important holiday.

Kim, who is in his mid-30s, was last seen in public on April 11, when he presided over a meeting discussing coronavirus prevention and electing his sister as an alternate member of the political bureau of the ruling Workers' Party. State media have since reported that he sent greetings to Syrian President Bashar Assad, Cuban President Miguel Díaz-Canel and South African President Cyril Ramaphosa.

On Monday, the official Rodong Sinmun newspaper said Kim sent a message of gratitude to workers

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, April 28, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 290 ~ 47 of 78

building tourist facilities in the coastal town of Wonsan, which is where some speculate he is staying. No photos of him were published.

South Korean intelligence and North Korean state media reports suggest that Kim could have suffered some sort of medical setback but likely not a life-threatening one, said Du Hyeogn Cha, a senior researcher at Seoul's Asan Institute for Policy Studies.

The root problem may be the shaky nature of South Korean intelligence.

"Even after decades of work, South Korea has yet to build a reliable intelligence network to gather information on the North," said Cha, an ex-intelligence secretary to former South Korean President Lee Myung-bak. "It's clear our government has some level of information on the North, but not enough to make a confident statement about where he is and whether he's fully healthy."

Finding out is important because incapacity at the top could lead to bogged-down decision-making that could boost the hard-liners who emerged following the collapse of Kim's second summit with Trump in February last year. The Americans at that summit rejected North Korean demands for major sanctions relief in exchange for a partial surrender of the North's nuclear capabilities.

The National Intelligence Service, Seoul's spy agency, has said it can't confirm whether Kim had surgery. If Kim emerges well in state media, he would join past North Korean officials who were incorrectly reported incapacitated by outside media.

"Kim Il Sung shot dead" remains perhaps the most famous newspaper headline in South Korean history. The 1986 Chosun Ilbo story was initially backed by a South Korean military statement that North Korea had announced the demise of its founder over loudspeakers at the mine-strewn border between the rival nations. But hours later, Kim Il Sung appeared at Pyongyang's airport to greet a Mongolian delegation.

Another big problem is that for decades South Korea didn't have a strong grip on the location and health of North Korea's top leadership, according to Cheon Seong Whun, a presidential secretary during the South's previous conservative government.

"Anybody who says they know something for certain is just writing a novel," Cheon said.

Brazil edges toward being next big coronavirus hot spot

By DAVID BILLER, MARCELO DE SOUSA and ADAM GELLER Associated Press

RIO DE JANEIRO (AP) — Brazil is emerging as potentially the next big hot spot for the coronavirus amid President Jair Bolsonaro's insistence that it is just a "little flu" and that there is no need for the sharp restrictions that have slowed the infection's spread in Europe and the U.S.

As some U.S. states and European countries moved gradually Monday to ease their limits on movement and commerce, the intensifying outbreak in Brazil — Latin America's biggest country, with 211 million people — pushed some hospitals to the breaking point, with signs that a growing number of victims are now dying at home.

"We have all the conditions here for the pandemic to become much more serious," said Paulo Brandão, a virologist at the University of Sao Paulo.

Brazil officially reported about 4,500 deaths and almost 67,000 confirmed infections. But the true numbers there, as in many other countries, are believed to be vastly higher given the lack of testing and the many people without severe symptoms who haven't sought hospital care.

Some scientists said over 1 million in Brazil are probably infected. The country is heading into winter, which can worsen respiratory illnesses.

Worldwide, the death toll topped 210,000, according to a tally by Johns Hopkins University. The number of dead in the U.S. surpassed 55,000 — close to the 58,000 U.S. troops killed during the Vietnam War. Italy, Britain, Spain and France accounted for more than 20,000 deaths each.

In other developments:

— U.S. President Donald Trump said Monday that deaths in the United States from the coronavirus could reach as high as 70,000, after putting the number at 60,000 several times earlier this month.

— The Trump administration worked to draw up new guidelines for how restaurants, schools, churches

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, April 28, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 290 ~ 48 of 78

and businesses can safely reopen. The administration also unveiled a "blueprint" for states to scale up their virus testing in the coming week. Still, there were doubts from public health experts that the new testing targets were sufficient.

— The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention expanded the list of people to be prioritized for virus testing to include those who show no symptoms but are in high-risk settings such as nursing homes.

— British Prime Minister Boris Johnson returned to work after a bout with the virus and warned strongly against easing his own country's lockdown too soon: "I refuse to throw away all the effort and the sacrifice of the British people and to risk a second major outbreak and huge loss of life."

— New York canceled its Democratic presidential primary, set for June 23, since Bernie Sanders has already conceded the nomination to Joe Biden. In a bit of encouraging news, the state reported 337 deaths for the lowest daily count this month, down from nearly 800 almost three weeks ago.

— Massachusetts recorded its 3,000th known death from the virus. The state is "still in the surge and very much in the fight against COVID-19," Gov. Charlie Baker said.

In Brazil, Bolsonaro has disputed the seriousness of the coronavirus and said people need to resume their lives to prevent an economic meltdown. But most state governors in the country have adopted restrictions to slow the spread and pushed people to stay at home.

In mid-April, Bolsonaro fired his popular health minister after a series of disagreements over efforts to contain the virus, replacing him with an advocate for reopening the economy. Residents protested, leaning out their windows to bang pots and pans.

Medical officials in Rio de Janeiro and at least four other major cities have warned that their hospital systems are on the verge of collapse or too overwhelmed to take any more patients.

Officials in Sao Paulo — the largest city in South America, a tightly packed metropolitan area of over 21 million residents, many living in poverty — have issued death certificates over the past two weeks for 236 people who succumbed at home, double the number before the outbreak, according to the SAMU paramedic service.

Manaus, an Amazon city of 1.8 million, recorded 142 deaths on Sunday, the most yet, including 41 who died at home. In the main cemetery, workers have been digging mass graves. Brazil's funeral industry warned last week that the city was running out of coffins and "there could soon be corpses left on corners."

In the U.S., the governors of Nevada and Colorado announced their states will join California, Oregon and Washington state in coordinating their reopenings. The governors of all five states are Democrats.

In Georgia, where Republican Gov. Brian Kemp has let businesses reopen, restaurants received the go-ahead to resume dine-in service as long as they follow certain restrictions, including keeping tables 6 feet (2 meters) apart.

At Plucked Up Chicken & Biscuits in Columbus, Georgia, eight regulars showed up in the morning to have their coffee and breakfast and "chatted at each other across the room," manager Alesha Webster said. But only 10 customers could be inside at a time, well below the capacity of 45.

Alex Brounstein, owner of the Atlanta-based chain Grindhouse Killer Burgers, had no plans to reopen right away. "You're talking about people putting their mouths on things in your restaurant. You now have dirty dishes going back into your kitchen. To me, it's just completely illogical," he said.

Texas Gov. Greg Abbott on Monday outlined a slow reopening, allowing restaurants, retailers, movie theaters and malls to start letting customers trickle into their establishments starting Friday. The state has one of the world's largest economies.

Technology is likely to play an important role in helping countries ease their restrictions. Many countries, including Italy, France, Switzerland and Britain, are working on virus-tracking apps and other means of reducing the labor-intensive task of tracing infected people's contacts.

In Australia, with about 80 COVID-19 deaths, 1.1 million of the country's 26 million people downloaded a new contact-tracing app within 12 hours of its becoming available.

Billler and De Sousa reported from Rio de Janeiro and Geller from New York. Associated Press journalists

around the world contributed to this report.

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

Federal agency releasing report on Missouri duck boat deaths

By MARGARET STAFFORD Associated Press

LIBERTY, Mo. (AP) — Nearly two years after 17 people died when a tourist boat sank on a Missouri lake, federal transportation safety investigators on Tuesday will release the results of an investigation into the tragedy.

The National Transportation Safety Board has been investigating what caused the Ride the Ducks vehicle to sink at Table Rock Lake near Branson, killing 17 of the 31 people on board. The boat, known as Stretch Duck 7, was unable to make it back to shore when a severe storm hit in July 2018.

The boat's owner, Ripley Entertainment, has settled 31 lawsuits filed by survivors or relatives of those who died. The dead included nine members of one family from Indianapolis. Other victims were from Missouri, Illinois and Arkansas.

The refurbished amphibious duck boats were a major tourist attraction in Branson for nearly 50 years, and Ripley purchased the attraction in 2017. The boats started out on land and then entered the water for a brief tour around the lake. Ripley suspended operations of the boats after the accident and it remains unclear if they will ever return to the lake.

In November, the NTSB criticized the U.S. Coast Guard for ignoring its recommendations to improve the boats since a duck boat accident in Arkansas killed 13 people in 1999. The board said it has repeatedly urged the Coast Guard to require that the boats be upgraded to better stay afloat when flooded, and to remove barriers to escape, such as canopies.

That report found that a fixed canopy and closed side curtain on the Branson boat prevented passengers from escaping and likely caused more deaths.

The boat's captain and two company executives were indicted after the sinking. Curtis Lanham, the general manager at Ride the Ducks Branson, and Charles Baltzell, the operations supervisor, are charged with misconduct and neglect.

The boat's captain, Kenneth Scott McVee, of Verona, is charged with 17 counts of misconduct, negligence or inattention to duty. Investigators contend he did not tell the boat's passengers to don life jackets or help them abandon ship even after water started swamping the boat.

Trump says virus testing 'not a problem,' but doubts persist

By ZEKE MILLER, JILL COLVIN and JONATHAN LEMIRE Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The White House released new guidelines Monday aimed at answering criticism that America's coronavirus testing has been too slow, and President Donald Trump tried to pivot toward a focus on "reopening" the nation.

Still, there were doubts from public health experts that the White House's new testing targets were sufficient.

Monday's developments were meant to fill critical gaps in White House plans to begin easing restrictions, ramping up testing for the virus while shifting the president's focus toward recovery from the economic collapse caused by the outbreak. The administration unveiled a "blueprint" for states to scale up their testing in the coming week — a tacit admission, despite public statements to the contrary, that testing capacity and availability over the past two months have been lacking.

The new testing targets would ensure states had enough COVID-19 tests available to sample at least 2.6% of their populations each month — a figure already met by a majority of states. Areas that have been harder hit by the virus would be able to test at double that rate, or higher, the White House said.

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, April 28, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 290 ~ 50 of 78

The testing issue has bedeviled the administration for months. Trump told reporters on March 6 during a visit to the CDC in Atlanta that "anybody that wants a test can get a test," but the reality has proved to be vastly different.

The initial COVID-19 test developed by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention was contaminated, and early kits operated only on platforms able to perform a small number of tests per day. While the rate of testing increased as tests developed for higher-capacity platforms, they were still limited by shortages of supplies, from nasal swabs to the reagents used to process the samples.

Administration officials maintained Monday that the limiting factor now is actually the availability of samples from people who have been tested — either because guidelines on who could be tested are too stringent or because there are not enough health workers able to take nasal swab samples from them.

The CDC moved to address one of those concerns Monday, expanding the list of people to be prioritized for virus testing to include those who show no symptoms but are in high-risk settings like nursing homes. And Trump met with leaders of businesses including CVS, Walmart and Kroger, who said they were working to expand access to tests across the country.

"Testing is not going to be a problem at all," Trump said later in the Rose Garden.

However, many of the administration's past pledges and goals on testing have not been met.

Jeremy Konyndyk, a disaster preparedness expert who helped lead the Obama administration response to Ebola, said the administration's testing plans are well short of what is needed.

Researchers at Harvard have estimated the country needs to be testing a minimum of 500,000 people per day, and possibly many more. Konyndyk said the aim should be 2 million to 3 million per day. Trump said the current total, up sharply in recent days, is over 200,000 per day.

Konyndyk said: "Over the past month, we've doubled or if you want to be really generous tripled the testing capacity in this country. We need to take where we are now and expand it tenfold."

The testing blueprint for states provides details missing from the administration's guidelines for them to return to normal operations, which were released more than a week ago. It includes a focus on surveillance testing as well as "rapid response" programs to isolate those who test positive and identify those with whom they had come in contact. The administration aims to have the market "flooded" with tests for the fall, when COVID-19 is expected to recur alongside the seasonal flu.

Trump and administration medical experts outlined the plan on a call with governors Monday afternoon, before unveiling them publicly in a Rose Garden press conference.

The White House announcements came as Trump sought to regain his footing after weeks of criticism and detours created in part by his press briefings.

Days after he set off a firestorm by publicly musing that scientists should explore the injection of toxic disinfectants as a potential virus cure, Trump said he found little use for his daily task force briefings, where he has time and again clashed with medical experts and reporters. Trump's aides had been trying to move the president onto more familiar and, they hope, safer, ground: talking up the economy in more tightly controlled settings.

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.

On Monday, the White House initially announced there would be a Trump briefing, but canceled it as Trump's greatest asset in the reelection campaign — his ability to dominate headlines with freewheeling performances — was increasingly seen as a liability.

But hours later, it became clear Trump had other ideas. He held court in the Rose Garden for a bit less than an hour.

Spokeswoman Kayleigh McEnany said briefings would be held later in the week but "they might have a new look to them, a new focus to them."

Trump said he hoped that virus deaths would end up no more than 60,000 to 70,000, slightly revising upward his public estimate of recent days as the U.S. toll neared 56,000 on nearly 1 million cases. Still, he claimed a victory given dire, tenfold-higher predictions if the U.S. hadn't adopted restrictive social

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, April 28, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 290 ~ 51 of 78

distancing measures.

On his conference call with governors, Trump suggested that many states should consider reopening schools before the end of the academic year, easing the way for parents to go back to work.

"Some of you might start thinking about school openings because a lot of people are wanting to have the school openings," Trump told the governors. The Associated Press obtained an audio recording of the call.

Meanwhile, the CDC was beginning to release more detailed guidelines on reopening schools, restaurants and other establishments. Draft guidelines sent by the CDC to Washington include a long list of recommendations for organizations as they begin to reopen, such as closing break rooms at offices, spacing desks six feet apart at schools and using disposable plates and menus at restaurants. The draft guidance was obtained by The Associated Press from a federal official who was not authorized to release it.

Some states have started to ease closure orders, and Trump is expected to spend coming days highlighting his administration's efforts to help 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 an additional recovery package.

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

The shift toward the economy 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 continue to haunt the country at least until a vaccine is developed. And they say the risk of a severe second wave is high if social distancing measures are relaxed too quickly or if testing and contact tracing schemes aren't developed before people return to normal behaviors.

Lemire reported from New York. Associated Press writers Michelle Smith in Providence, R.I., Mike Stobbe in New York, Darlene Superville in Washington and Alan Suderman in Richmond, Va., contributed to this report.

Trump urges states to consider opening schools before summer

By COLLIN BINKLEY AP Education Writer

President Donald Trump says states should "seriously consider" reopening their public schools before the end of the academic year, even though dozens already have said it would be unsafe for students to return until the summer or fall.

Trump made the comments Monday in a call with governors discussing how to reopen their economies, among other topics.

"Some of you might start thinking about school openings, because a lot of people are wanting to have the school openings. It's not a big subject, young children have done very well in this disaster that we've all gone through," he said. While addressing Vice President Mike Pence, Trump added that it's something "they can seriously consider, and maybe get going on."

None of the governors on the call responded to the suggestion, according to a recording obtained by The Associated Press.

Trump made the comments as the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention worked to finalize guidelines for reopening the economy. For schools, that included putting students' desks 6 feet apart, serving meals in the classroom instead of the cafeteria and closing playgrounds.

Reopening schools is considered key to getting the economy moving again. Without a safe place for their kids, many parents would have difficulty returning to work.

But some education officials say opening schools quickly would bring major risk and little reward, especially since the end of the school year is approaching.

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, April 28, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 290 ~ 52 of 78

"Are they going to reopen for two weeks? Three weeks?" said Daniel Domenech, executive director of the American Association of School Administrators, "It's not the right thing to do. Particularly when we're involving the safety and welfare of our students."

At a White House news conference Monday, Trump acknowledged that there's little time left in the school year, even as he said many states are thinking about getting kids back into the classroom.

"I think you'll see a lot of schools open up even if it's for a very short period of time," he said. "In terms of what this vicious virus goes after, young people seem to do very well. Young people seem to do very well so I know that there are some governors that aren't necessarily ready to open up states, but they may be ready to open up the school systems."

Schools across the nation have closed during the pandemic, and dozens of states have ordered their schools to remain closed through the rest of this academic year. Only a few have publicly discussed earlier openings, including Montana, which says school districts can resume classroom instruction on May 7.

In many districts, officials have said it's still unclear whether students will be able to return to the classroom by next fall. And even if they do, many are planning for social distancing measures that could make school look radically different from the past.

Los Angeles Mayor Eric Garcetti said on CNN that it's "way too early" to reopen his city's schools, adding that "you don't get a lot of credit for moving too quickly to reopen."

Responding to Trump's comments, one of the nation's largest teachers unions said there's still much work to be done before schools can open safely. The American Federation of Teachers said there needs to be better testing and tracking for the virus, and schools must have access to personal protective equipment.

"It's good the president understands that reopening society and the economy hinges on successfully and safely reopening schools," said Randi Weingarten, the union's president. "But the question should not be whether we open schools, but how we do it safely. COVID-19 is a terrible virus that has already taken too many lives, and, in the absence of a vaccine, there is no magic wand or magic elixir as the president would have us believe."

If schools reopen too quickly and end up spreading the coronavirus, schools could find be held legally liable, said Francisco Negrón, chief legal officer for the National School Boards Association. And while coronavirus cases have been mild among U.S. children, many schools have students with medical conditions that could make them vulnerable, he said.

"The foremost concern for schools is going to be safety of their students and safety of their employees," Negrón said.

In the CDC's draft guidelines for schools, the agency suggested a three-phase reopening process for schools in communities with "low levels of COVID-19 spread and those with confidence that the incidence of infection is genuinely low."

The guidance encourages schools to create isolation areas for students who develop symptoms. And if anyone with COVID-19 is found to have been in the building, it advises schools to shut down for one or two days to clean and disinfect.

Domenech, of the school administrators association, said the guidelines pose significant logistical hurdles. Trying to keep younger students 6 feet apart could prove to be impossible, he said, and many schools have so many students they would violate suggested limits on large gatherings.

Still, schools are looking for ways to limit student interaction as they reopen, including plans to bring only a portion of the students in at once. Schools might bring half the students in for the morning, for example, and rotate in the other half for the afternoon. While they're at home, students could keep taking classes online, Domenech said.

"Everybody wants to have the kids back," he said. "We understand the impact that this has on the economy. You have working parents and they need their kids to be safe and in a school environment so they can go back to work. Sooner or later schools will have to reopen. The question is how."

Federal inmates battle mixed messages on home confinement

By MICHAEL BALSAMO and COLLEEN LONG Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — She never thought her husband's punishment for selling drugs would be a death sentence. But as the new coronavirus rips through the U.S. prison system and into the facility where he is serving eight years, she fears it could be.

The 24-year-old inmate suffers from severe asthma at the medium-security South Carolina prison. He has tried and failed to get released to home confinement, while his wife on the outside watches high-profile inmates go free.

"He is at a way higher risk and it's not fair," said the woman, who spoke to The Associated Press on condition of anonymity because she feared her husband would suffer retaliation. "I don't want to lose my husband for something he did years ago, to an illness he can't help."

The Bureau of Prisons has given contradictory and confusing guidance how it is deciding who is released to home confinement in an effort to combat the virus, changing requirements, setting up inmates for release and backing off and refusing to explain how it decides who gets out and when.

And it's unclear who is getting released, aside from high-profile inmates like Michael Cohen and Michael Avenatti. More than 1,500 inmates have been placed on home confinement so far, but prisons officials will not give out any demographic information.

Advocates fear the same inequalities at play in the criminal justice system are also a factor now. Most white-collar defendants get lighter sentences in less-secure facilities, making them better eligible for release in the pandemic.

"These releases of the wealthy, of the white, are just a continuation of an institutional injustice that really begins more or less at the time of arrest," said Ron Kuby, a longtime New York criminal defense attorney who represented one of the men wrongly convicted in the Central Park jogger case.

More than 1,100 inmates out of about 153,000 incarcerated in federal prisons nationwide have tested positive for COVID-19, though it's not clear how many total inmates have been tested. As of Monday, 28 inmates had died.

Attorney General William Barr ordered the increased use of home confinement and the expedited release of eligible inmates by the Bureau of Prisons, with priority for those at low- or medium-security prisons — starting with virus hot spots.

In a statement, the Bureau of Prisons said case managers were "urgently reviewing all inmates to determine which ones meet the criteria established by the Attorney General."

Some, like Cohen and Avenatti, have access to private attorneys who can help them go around the federal officials and seek a judge's order to set them free. The request by Cohen, President Donald Trump's former lawyer, had been denied by a judge, but the Bureau of Prisons eventually agreed to let him out. Avenatti, an attorney and frequent Trump critic, is free for 90 days from a federal jail as he awaits a fraud trial.

Former U.S. Rep. Corrine Brown was released last week after serving just over two years of a five-year sentence. Dean Skelos, the former New York state Senate leader, tested positive and was also set for release.

Nonprofit groups are mustering pro bono lawyers, and at least 1,400 prisoners have requested help. But most inmates must rely on the Bureau of Prisons to review their case files and determine who might be eligible. A spokeswoman said all inmates in custody were being reviewed but those who believe they are eligible could also request home confinement.

The asthmatic in South Carolina told his family he's been turned away multiple times when he asked if there was even a form he could fill out to be considered for release, according to his wife. With five kids at home, he'd be unable to afford a lawyer to try to plead his case to a judge.

"I have seen high-profile (inmates) get out right away," she said. "Myself and my husband cannot afford the \$20,000 for a lawyer to file a motion."

Nearly 40% of the estimated 10,000 inmates who are considered higher risk for COVID-19 — older, and suffering certain medical ailments — are serving sentences for violent crimes or sex offenses, making them ineligible for home confinement, according to Justice Department statistics.

But for the other 60%, there is confusion and mixed messages. Staff members have been given contradictory guidelines that change frequently.

And the agency canceled the early release of about 200 inmates. Many were already separated to undergo a 14-day quarantine before they could be sent home, and were abruptly returned to their cells and told they no longer qualified because the guidelines had changed. They wouldn't be released unless they served 50 percent of their sentence, they were told.

The DOJ stepped in and officials said after receiving clarity they would "expeditiously transfer all inmates to home confinement who were previously referred for home confinement."

The Bureau of Prisons now says the agency will prioritize the release of those who have served half of their sentence or inmates who have 18 months or less left and who served at least 25% of their time.

Kevin Ring, president of Families Against Mandatory Minimums, a prison reform group advocating for release that is helping find pro bono lawyers, said starting with low-level offenders made sense, and high-profile inmates are grabbing headlines because of their notoriety. But others, like Rufus Rochell, a 68-year-old incarcerated for three decades on drug crimes, have also been released.

One entire facility — a low-security prison camp that often houses white-collar criminals in New York — is being essentially shut down. Officials moved all inmates into quarantine for release. That included Cohen.

In the confusion, some federal judges have been stepping in.

Haena Park was ordered freed after serving about half of a three-year sentence for cheating 40 people out of \$23 million. The Bureau of Prisons approved home confinement but said it needed another week.

U.S. District Judge Ronnie Abrams said she feared that leaving Park locked up could "convert a three-year prison sentence into a death sentence."

Associated Press writers Larry Neumeister and Michael R. Sisak in New York contributed to this report.

AP-NORC poll: Rising support for mail voting amid pandemic

By NICHOLAS RICCARDI and HANNAH FINGERHUT Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Americans' support for mail-in voting has jumped amid concerns about the safety of polling places during the coronavirus pandemic, but a wide partisan divide suggests President Donald Trump's public campaign against vote by mail may be resonating with his Republican backers.

A new poll from The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research finds Democrats are now much more likely than Republicans to support their state conducting elections exclusively by mail, 47% to 29%.

In 2018, about half as many Democrats were in favor, and there was little difference in the views of Democrats and Republicans on the question.

The survey also found a partisan divide on support for no-excuse absentee voting, the system in place in most states, including almost all the top presidential battlegrounds, even as a majority of Americans say they favor that practice.

The increased partisanship in the debate over how America votes comes just as that question has been thrust into the forefront of American politics. As health officials warn about the risk of spreading the coronavirus at polling places, some in the Republican Party have tried to limit the expansion of mail voting, with Trump and others openly fretting that it may enable too many people to cast their ballots for the GOP to win in November.

All states conduct elections differently, and only five states automatically mail ballots to every voter. But in response to the virus, some states — including Ohio on Tuesday — have shifted their primaries to virtually all-mail elections. On Monday, New York Democrats canceled their presidential primary, which had already been delayed until June 23.

The Republican National Committee has been fighting some of those moves. Republicans successfully petitioned a New Mexico court to block the state from holding its June primary exclusively by mail, forcing the state to open some polling places and only send applications for absentee ballots to voters.

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, April 28, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 290 ~ 55 of 78

The Republican Attorney General in Texas argued unsuccessfully in a legal case that the coronavirus should not be an automatically accepted excuse for people seeking absentee ballots in that state.

Most prominently, the Republican-controlled Wisconsin legislature rebuffed a last-minute request to hold that state's April 7 primary and state court election by mail. Democrats won a contested Supreme Court race, but not before shuttered polling locations left voters in long lines at polling places in Green Bay and Milwaukee, where only five of 183 stations were open.

But the debates over the primaries may only be a preview of the partisan battles ahead if the virus is still forcing stay-at-home orders and social distancing in November.

The poll finds that 39% of Americans favor conducting all-mail elections, up from 19% in 2018. Another 40% are opposed. But even more, 48%, favor a move to voting only by mail if the coronavirus outbreak is ongoing in November.

The poll also shows 60% of Americans support allowing people to vote via absentee ballot without requiring them to give a reason if the outbreak is still happening. That includes 73% percent of Democrats and 46% of Republicans. Some 40% of Republicans are opposed.

The partisan differences could have a strong impact across the presidential battleground states. Five of the top seven swing states — Michigan, New Hampshire, North Carolina, Pennsylvania and Wisconsin — have divided government, and skirmishes over voting have already broken out in several. In some, there are signs that Democratic areas are moving faster than GOP ones to embrace mail voting.

In Wisconsin, Democrats have already started to bolster their mail voting operations for November. Reliably Democratic Milwaukee, the state's largest city, will send every one of its 300,000 voters a request for an absentee ballot. Republicans, who have resisted a similar step statewide, acknowledge that Milwaukee's move would put them at a disadvantage. "It makes winning Wisconsin harder," said Andrew Hitt, chair of the state Republican Party, calling for intervention to "level the playing field."

In Pennsylvania, Democratically-led areas are eager to expand absentee voting, but Republicans seem less so. The second-most populous county in the state, the Democratic bastion of Allegheny, which includes Pittsburgh, is sending absentee ballot requests to all its voters in its June primary.

The poll found roughly two-thirds of Republicans worried that voter fraud would be a major problem with all-mail voting. Two months ago, about as many described voter fraud as a major problem in U.S. elections in general. Widespread voter fraud in mail-in voting is uncommon.

Brynn Alexander, 36, who just moved with her husband to military housing in Alabama, is one of those who worries about security.

"How do you even identify that the mail got to the right person?" Alexander asked. She added that she favored exceptions for some, like her 70-year-old mother, but preferred votes at the polls.

"It's going to be better to make everybody feel confident with the results," she said of in-person voting in the presidential election. "You don't want one party or the other saying the other side cheated."

Meanwhile, only 29% of Democrats were worried about fraud being a major problem in an all-mail election, though another 41% described it as a minor problem. Rick Reinesch, a 59-year-old IT technician in Austin, Texas, said Republicans needlessly pump up worries about voter fraud. "It's trying to kill a gnat with a sledgehammer," he said.

Paul Miller, 81, of Carlisle, Pennsylvania, is wary of voting by mail. He's accustomed to going to the polls on Election Day. "I'm just not sold on mail-in voting," the Republican and retired factory worker said.

But Miller may bow to the reality that he shouldn't be face-to-face with poll workers anytime soon and cast his vote by absentee.

"I'm not dead set against mail," Miller said. "I could be persuaded."

Riccardi reported from Denver.

The AP-NORC poll of 1,057 adults was conducted April 16-20 using a sample drawn from NORC's probability-based AmeriSpeak Panel, which is designed to be representative of the U.S. population. The margin

of sampling error for all respondents is plus or minus 4 percentage points.

Online:

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

'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.

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.

After COVID-19 recovery, first responders get back to work

By STEFANIE DAZIO, MICHAEL R. SISAK and JAKE BLEIBERG Associated Press

The new coronavirus doesn't care about a blue uniform or a shiny badge. Police, firefighters, paramedics and corrections officers are just a 911 call away from contracting COVID-19 and spreading it.

With N95 masks hanging off their duty belts and disposable blue gloves stuffed in their back pockets, they respond to radio calls, make arrests and manage prisoners. But their training never covered something quite like this — what has been called an "invisible bullet."

It's sickened thousands of America's first responders and killed dozens more.

But many have recovered, and they're going back to work — back to the crime scene, back into the ambulance, back to the jail. Going back to this deadly pandemic's front lines.

They go with a lingering cough and lost weight. They toss and turn at night, wondering if the claims of

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, April 28, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 290 ~ 58 of 78

immunity are true. They fear that picking up extra overtime shifts may expose them, and their families, to additional risks.

And then they pull on their uniforms and go back to work.

Some of their stories:

THE RISK

HOUSTON — In Deputy Ravin Washington's squad car, risk rides shotgun. The threats she faces on her solo patrols are usually more immediate than reports of some new unseen virus.

On the beat in northwest Houston, Washington, 28, has been in fights and drawn her gun. In 2017, three months after she finished the police academy, her partner at the time was shot in the leg.

But last month, she was following up on a robbery call when it suddenly felt like someone was sitting on her chest. By the time she navigated her cruiser to her sister's apartment, she could barely keep her hands on the wheel. She had no idea what was wrong.

Certainty came a few days later after a nasal swab that felt like it poked her brain. On March 25, Washington tested positive — one of the first of about 180 Harris County Sheriff's Office employees to be sickened.

In lonely isolation, her temperature spiked. Her stomach roiled. She lost her sense of taste and could barely rise from bed for days.

"People don't want to be around you," she said. "People don't want to touch you."

When she finally healed, she worried about getting sick again — about whether her colleagues would want her back.

She returned to patrol this month and found the situation suddenly reversed. Her colleagues gave her hugs. "People feel like, 'Hey, you have the antibodies. You're the cure,'" she said.

Back on patrol, Washington has the familiar weight on her hips of a Taser, handcuffs and gun. But her safety also depends on gloves and a mask.

"It's like you're risking your life even more now."

GUILT

NEW YORK — Paramedic Alex Tull of the New York Fire Department feels out of breath after walking up a few flights of stairs and has a cough that just won't quit. After some recent chest pains, an X-ray showed lingering inflammation in his lungs.

As he goes about his days treating coronavirus patients in the Bronx, he thinks about his own battle with the disease and his rush to return to duty late last month before he was fully healed.

At the height, about a quarter of the city's 4,300 EMS workers were out sick. Nearly 700 fire department employees have tested positive for the coronavirus and eight have died, including three EMS workers.

Tull, 38, says he felt guilty convalescing at home for two weeks, flipping through Netflix and Hulu between naps as his colleagues risked their lives. He wondered: "Why did this have to happen to me? I want to be out there. I want to get out there and help."

But it wasn't just a matter of loyalty for the 10-year fire department veteran. A policy put in place as the virus ravaged the ranks mandated that personnel who no longer showed symptoms return to work as soon as possible.

"I definitely went back to work earlier than maybe I should have," Tull said.

Without definitive proof that he's immune from spreading or contracting the disease, Tull fears his nagging cough might infect his partner or their patients. And with little more than a face mask and gloves for protection, he worries he'll come down with the virus again.

"Is my body ready for round two? I don't know. It is scary," Tull said.

THE HOTBOX

AURORA, Ill. — Chief Kristen Ziman spent hours in a cramped conference room strategizing on ways to keep her 306 police officers safe from the coronavirus.

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, April 28, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 290 ~ 59 of 78

Digital roll calls, solo squad cars, detectives running cases remotely — anything to keep them out of headquarters and away from each other.

Turns out, they needed to stay away from the chief.

Ziman, a patrol commander, her wife — a detective on the force -- and Aurora's mayor all contracted COVID-19 around the same time. They most likely passed the virus during those planning meetings.

The rank-and-file, however, is fine.

"If we had to be the sacrificial lambs," Ziman said, "putting these plans in place to keep our officers safe, then I will gladly take it any day."

The chief recorded videos from her home, sending them to the officers as part of routine operations plans. She wanted them to comprehend the pandemic's reality on the streets of Illinois' second-largest city.

"This wasn't one of those abstract concepts that's happening to someone else," she said. It was happening to some of their own.

The officers responded with text messages of well-wishes, and a new nickname for the station's third floor — the home of her office and the infamous conference room — that makes Ziman laugh even through all this.

They're calling it "The Hotbox" — and avoiding it altogether.

ON THE SIDELINES

NEW YORK — Sgt. Cary Oliva was frustrated watching the news of his coronavirus-stricken city from his sick bed. The 31-year-old New York Police Department officer longed to be back at work helping with what was fast becoming one of the deadliest disasters in its history.

"I felt like I was on the sidelines," he said. "I was pretty eager to come back as soon as possible, as long as it was safe."

In all, more than 4,600 employees at the nation's largest police department have tested positive for the coronavirus. Nearly 2,900 have recovered and returned to full duty. At least three dozen died.

Oliva went back April 6 and immersed himself in a new police mission: educating the public about social distancing measures that experts say are vital to reducing the spread of infection. Protective mask on his face and hand sanitizer nearby, Oliva spends his afternoons cruising by takeout restaurants and other businesses looking for gaps in social distancing protocols.

"I dove right back into it," he said.

THE LINE

LOS ANGELES — In jail-speak, it's called "the line."

For correction officers, it means any duty that requires working directly with inmates. Custody assistant Sonia Munoz's line is a 184-bed inmate hospital ward at the Twin Towers jail, with its beige walls and powder blue doors. It's where she most likely contracted the coronavirus. And passed it along to her younger sister and her father.

Right now, Munoz, 38, is safe. She's 10 pounds lighter, her thick uniform belt is tightened to the last notch, but she's been transferred to an office gig, where she can line up three bottles of hand sanitizer on her desk and work alone.

Still, the line is there.

Any overtime shift could bring Munoz back. Her mother, 3-year-old nephew and 94-year-old grandmother escaped illness last time, but they may not be so lucky again.

It's something her 27-year-old partner, Christopher Lumpkin, worries about.

On March 18, he became the first member of the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department, which oversees the nation's largest jail system, to test positive for COVID-19. He likely passed it to Munoz and three other custody assistants. More than 60 sheriff's personnel county-wide and at least 28 inmates have tested positive for the virus.

Using Facebook Messenger, Lumpkin and Munoz traded stories and symptoms, bedridden in their quar-

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, April 28, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 290 ~ 60 of 78

antined homes as the virus spread outside.

"I will pray for you guys as well," Lumpkin wrote.

Now, Lumpkin is recovered and back on the line. He changes his gloves and sanitizes his hands each time he works with an inmate and keeps an extra mask hanging off his duty belt.

Munoz takes similar precautions in her office, separate from the inmates.

But she can't avoid the line forever.

"I have to go back to the lion's mouth."

Associated Press videojournalist Allen G. Breed in Raleigh, North Carolina, and senior videojournalist John L. Mone in Houston contributed to this report.

Census says restart to field operations will be in phases

By **MIKE SCHNEIDER** Associated Press

ORLANDO, Fla. (AP) — The U.S. Census Bureau's return to field operations for the 2020 national head count will take place in phases based on a region's lockdown orders and the availability of protective gear against the new coronavirus, bureau officials told lawmakers late last week.

Census Bureau officials told members of the House Committee on Oversight and Reform last Friday that there would be a phased start to the resumption of field operations on June 1. The spreading virus, and subsequent stay-at-home orders, forced the bureau in mid-March to halt field operations such as hiring and training, reaching out to college students in off-campus housing and dropping off paper questionnaires to households without traditional addresses.

The bulk of the field operations in which hundreds of thousands of census takers knock on the doors of homes where people haven't yet answered the questionnaire isn't starting until August, after the pandemic forced a delay from a May start.

The briefing with lawmakers comes as the Census Bureau is asking Congress for permission to push back timetables for releasing data used by states to draw congressional and legislative districts. Census Bureau director Steven Dillingham had been scheduled to update lawmakers a week ago but canceled at the last minute, according to lawmakers, upsetting some Democrats on the committee who wanted further details about the request.

The 2020 count will be used to determine how many congressional seats each state gets and the distribution of \$1 billion in federal funding.

On Monday, during a conference call to motivate New Yorkers to participate in the 2020 census, U.S. Rep. Carolyn Maloney, the chair of the oversight committee, said she was on board with the request but wanted a written plan from the bureau before moving ahead. The needed legislation authorizing the deadline changes will either be a stand-alone bill or a part of another round of coronavirus relief, she said.

"It's necessary, given what we are confronted with," said Maloney, a Democrat from New York.

Because the coronavirus has caused the cancellation of in-person outreach efforts, the Census Bureau is increasing the paid media budget from \$240 million to \$320 million, expanding the number of languages in paid media from 14 to 40 languages, and launching "hyper local" media outreach, Ali Ahmad, associate director for communications, told lawmakers.

The bureau also pushed back the deadline for finishing the once-a-decade head count from the end of July to the end of October. But further delays in field operations haven't been ruled out, bureau officials told lawmakers.

Bureau officials also told lawmakers that fewer people than expected are answering the census questionnaire by telephone — just 0.6% compared to the expected 6.8%. The bureau has acknowledged increased call wait times because of the need to socially distance at call centers set up to help people fill out the form.

As of Sunday, 53% of households had responded to the 2020 census, mostly via the Internet. Earlier this month, those who haven't yet responded were mailed paper questionnaires.

Follow Mike Schneider at: <http://twitter.com/MikeSchneiderAP>

Health officials ready new guidelines as restrictions ease

By KEVIN FREKING and MIKE STOBBE Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Businesses should close break rooms. Restaurants should consider disposable menus and plates. Schools should have students eat lunch in their classrooms.

These are some of the recommendations offered in new federal plans designed to help restaurants, schools, churches and businesses safely reopen as states look to gradually lift their coronavirus restrictions.

The draft guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has been sent to Washington but still could be revised before the Trump administration unveils it to the public. The recommendations were obtained from a federal official who was not authorized to release them publicly.

The CDC put together so-called "decision trees" for at least seven types of organizations: schools, camps, childcare centers, religious facilities, mass transit systems, workplaces, and bars/restaurants.

White House officials previously released a three-phase reopening plan for the nation that mentioned schools and other organizations that come back online at different points. But it hadn't previously offered more specific how-to guidelines for each kind of entity.

The new guidance still amounts to little more than advice. State and local officials will be the ones to adopt and enforce them. Some state and local governments have already put rules in place for businesses that are operating. For example, Michigan requires businesses to limit how many customers can be in a store at one time.

New York Gov. Andrew Cuomo on Sunday said that each business that wants to reopen will have to submit a plan to the state on how to do that.

The new guidance could give state officials cover if their requirements for businesses are challenged in the courts, said Lindsay Wiley, an American University public health law expert.

"It allows the state to say 'well the CDC said to do it this way,' and the judge then is very happy to say 'well yes you consulted CDC and that's the appropriate body,' and then uphold the restrictions and say they're appropriately evidence based."

Some examples from the guidance:

—In the initial reopening phases, schools should space desks six feet apart, nix any field trips and school assemblies, and have students eat lunch in their classrooms instead of the cafeteria.

—Churches should hold services through video streaming or at drive-in or outdoor venues as much as possible. They should also encourage everyone to wear cloth face masks, use a stationary collection box, and schedule extra services if necessary to make sure church pews are not packed and congregants stay at least six feet from each other.

—Restaurants should consider using throwaway menus, single-service condiments, and disposable forks, knives, spoons, and dishes. They should install sneeze guards at cash registers, limit the number of employees on a shift, and avoid having buffets, salad bars, and drink stations.

The guidance for religious groups includes providing congregants spiritual and emotional care "on a flexible or virtual basis or refer them to other available resources."

Allen Fagin, executive vice president of the Orthodox Union, said that as much as worship in synagogues is "one of the most fundamental aspects of Jewish life," his faith also believes that "the sanctity of life is more important than any other aspect of observance."

Application of any guidelines are likely to have significant regional and demographic variation, Fagin added. "There's going to have to be a great deal of both training and soul-searching in particular communities to make certain the guidelines are understood and will in fact be adhered to, to the letter," he said.

Various trade groups have also started coming out with their own recommendations. For example, the National Restaurant Association last week put out guidance to restaurants considering reopening. The association said restaurants should clean and sanitize reusable menus, while the CDC suggests using disposable menus. And the CDC recommends that employees use cloth masks when interacting with customers,

but the association doesn't. But some guidance is similar. The association and the CDC both recommend seating dining parties at least 6 feet apart.

Larry Lynch, a senior vice president at the trade group, said the restaurant industry is already heavily regulated in order to prevent foodborne illnesses. So he doesn't think additional guidelines from the CDC are onerous.

"The fact is we're probably already 80% of the way there with the mandates coming out of the food code," he said.

Lynch said the biggest concern for restaurant owners isn't federal guidelines, but convincing people that it's safe to return to restaurants.

Many companies, especially those with strong remote work capabilities, are already drawing up plans that go beyond the CDC's guidelines, said Bhushan Sethi, global people and organization leader at PwC, a consulting firm. He said many companies are considering keeping their employees working from home well after authorities lift stay-at-home orders.

"It's a bare minimum compared to the playbook that many firms are putting in place," Sethi said of the CDC guidelines on workplaces. "Firms are acknowledging that people are going to be fearful."

About 65% of companies recently surveyed by PwC are planning to reconfigure work sites to allow physical distancing. Some 52% are planning staggered shifts or alternating crews, according to the April 18-22 survey of chief financial officers at 305 U.S. companies.

Stobbe reported from New York. AP staff writers Alexandra Olson and Elana Schor contributed to this report from New York, and Dee-Ann Durbin contributed from Ann Arbor, Michigan.

Small business loan program restarts, runs into snags

By JOYCE M. ROSENBERG AP Business Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — The second round of loan applications for the government's small business relief program has been slowed by computer issues at the Small Business Administration.

Lenders complained Monday that they couldn't get their applications into the SBA system known as ETran that processes and approves loans. The agency said it notified lenders Sunday that it was limiting the number of applications any lender could submit at once.

The SBA began accepting applications at 10:30 a.m. Eastern time for \$310 billion in funding. The program's initial \$349 billion was exhausted in less than two weeks after more than 1.7 million loans were approved. That first round was also slowed by computer issues at the SBA,

Banks had thousands of applications ready to go Monday. Richard Hunt, president of the trade group Consumer Bankers Association, said the SBA's announcement on application limits was too last-minute — bankers had already sent large batches of applications to the agency, not knowing that a new procedure was being planned.

"We learned at the 11th hour that SBA had changed its process. They could have told us well ahead of time," Hunt said. He said the agency's computers weren't able to accept even the reduced number of applications per hour that it had planned.

The ETran system normally handles under 60,000 applications in a year and wasn't built to handle the volume of applications it has been receiving this month.

The fresh round of funding was expected to go quickly because banks already had thousands of applications in hand and were accepting more as they waited for Congress to approve the additional money. If the new funds do get depleted, it's feared that many companies will be shut out unless lawmakers are willing to approve a third round.

The loans offer forgiveness for the money owners spend on workers' pay. Millions of workers lost their jobs as companies such as restaurants, retailers, gyms and entertainment venues were forced to close to curb the spread of the virus.

On Monday, bankers around the country were having trouble getting into the SBA's system, said Paul

Merski, a vice president at the Independent Community Bankers of America.

"Some have been trying all day since it opened," Merski said. "It's not different from what happened in the original launch."

President Donald Trump was asked about the computer issues during a White House news conference.

"I heard there was a glitch. We'll find out whether or not that's so. Certainly it did work out very well for the original amount of money. This is the second amount," Trump said. "We're relying on the banks to go out and do an accurate job."

Carol Wilkerson, a spokeswoman for the SBA, said that the agency had created a mechanism that slowed the pace of applications from any one lender at a time.

"If a lender goes above the pacing limit they will get timed out," she said.

Kevin Freking contributed to this report from Washington.

Asian celebs work to combat racist attacks amid pandemic

By ALICIA RANCILIO Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Actress Olivia Cheng was recently volunteering in Vancouver when she says she witnessed a man drive up to an elderly Chinese woman, roll down his window and yell, "This is your fault!" before throwing trash at her.

The incident enraged Cheng, and also served as another reason why she feels it's so important for celebrities of Asian descent to use their voices and speak up against anti-Asian attacks, which authorities say are increasing during the coronavirus pandemic.

"I don't think we can pretend that this isn't happening," Cheng, who stars in "The Stand" on CBS All Access, said in a recent interview with The Associated Press. "For now, it would not be unwise to be a little more careful, to maybe have buddy systems when possible to go get your groceries if you're not feeling safe."

The FBI reports there has been an uptick in hate crimes and harassment against Asian Americans since the outbreak of COVID-19, which first appeared in Wuhan, China, late last year.

Some people have blamed China and Asians in general for the spread of coronavirus; President Donald Trump at times has called it the "Chinese virus."

In New York, state Attorney General Letitia James has set up a hotline to report harassment or other targeted crime. Some of those incidents have been filmed and posted online.

"Tigertail" star Tzi Ma says he's been a victim of such harassment. He was entering a grocery store in Pasadena, California, recently when he was confronted by a man in a car.

"He looked at me straight in the eye and said, 'You should be quarantined' and took off," said the veteran actor, who was born in Hong Kong but moved to the United States as a child.

"I got very angry obviously, flush with this kind of cold in your body. And I started screaming at him, but he was way too far away for him to hear me."

Actor Alain Uy, a star of the upcoming Hulu series "Marvel's Helstrom," worried early on that such incidents would occur after the virus' spread.

"Once this outbreak happened in Wuhan, we all kind of went, 'OK, we know what this is gonna mean,'" said the actor, who was born in the Philippines.

"Crazy Rich Asians" director Jon M. Chu said he's been feeling more cautious than usual.

"It's very sad when I feel a little bit weird when I'm going to go for a walk around the block," he said.

"The Real" co-host, Jeannie Mai, who is half-Vietnamese and half-Chinese, revealed recently that for the first time, she needed someone to monitor her social media posts to delete racist comments.

"The Good Doctor" actor Will Yun Lee is even nervous about taking his baby son to the grocery store: "My wife is Caucasian, but my son is half Korean and half white. But he looks very Asian."

But Ma and other stars are speaking up and working to combat the ignorance and harassment. Ma joined actress Celia Au and other celebrities and influencers in the recent campaign called "Wash the

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, April 28, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 290 ~ 64 of 78

Hate, " created by IW Group, an Asian American-focused marketing agency. The PSA features Ma, Au and others washing their hands and reminding people that hygiene, not xenophobia, is the way to help combat the virus.

"If I can start the conversation, why not?" said Au, who was also born in Hong Kong. "If we don't talk about it, then it's not going to be talked about at all."

For Cheng, the recent wave of anti-Asian sentiment brought back painful memories of her childhood growing up in Edmonton, Canada, where she was the victim of a bias attack as a teen.

She went down an internet rabbit hole of attacks posted online. "I had to stop watching," she said. "It brought up all those feelings again from being a kid and not being able to do anything."

Mai says that it's not only important for Asian stars to speak out against these attacks, but people of other races as well.

"These are the conversations you need to be having with your kids in your house. You need to, even if you're not Chinese. You should be explaining that this is terrible, that racism is coming out of this pandemic," she said. "So, have that talk with your kid. Have that talk with your friends. If one of your friends says, 'Yo, this 'Chinese Virus' is crazy.' Say, 'No. Actually, man it's called COVID-19. It's not the 'Chinese Virus.' Just check them."

Earlier this month, Bill Maher, host of HBO's "Real Time with Bill Maher," defended calling coronavirus the "Chinese Virus," comparing it to the Spanish flu.

"While people say it's innocuous and that it came from China, it's the undertones," Lee said. "Certain people will grab those undertones and attach to it."

There's also a worry that anti-Asian American sentiment could translate to a regression in Hollywood after recent success of telling Asian stories.

This year, the South Korean film "Parasite" won the best picture Oscar, and Chinese-American director Lulu Wang took home the Independent Spirit Award for her film, "The Farewell." "Crazy Rich Asians" was a hit at the box office in 2018 and last year, Sandra Oh became the first Asian woman in 39 years to win the best leading TV actress Golden Globe for "Killing Eve."

"I worry, is this going to impact our chances so soon after it feels like we finally made inroads?" Cheng said. "Is this going to regress us and put us however many steps back?"

Ma says the only way to proceed is to keep putting out diverse stories.

"There's no relenting. We'll keep moving forward. And hopefully one day, people are going to say, 'You know what? I not only accept the differences, but I also accept the fact that we're very much alike.'"

This story has been corrected to show the name of Bill Maher's show is "Real Time with Bill Maher," instead of "The Real."

Texas, Ohio among many states to take steps toward reopening

By ANITA SNOW Associated Press

Restaurants opened up to dine-in patrons in at least three states Monday and the governor of Texas allowed movie theaters, malls and eateries to start letting customers trickle into their establishments later this week.

Across the country, an ever-changing patchwork of loosening stay-home orders and business restrictions took shape Monday.

Texas Gov. Greg Abbott outlined a slow reopening of one of the world's largest economies amid the coronavirus pandemic. Restaurants in Tennessee, Georgia and Alaska's biggest city began opening their doors to dine-in customers, with new rules such as temperature checks at the door and logging of customer information for possible contact tracing.

Construction workers are being allowed back on the job in Vermont and other states. Ohio Gov. Mike DeWine's first steps toward reopening will require masks for workers and shoppers.

"No masks, no work, no service, no exception," DeWine said.

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, April 28, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 290 ~ 65 of 78

Here's a look at what's happening in the individual states and their shutdown orders.

NEW MOVES

TEXAS: Abbott's plan allows restaurants, retailers, movie theaters and malls to let in customers up to 25% of capacity as long as they follow social distancing guidelines. Abbott also said he will let his monthlong stay-at-home order expire on Thursday. Bars, barbershops, hair salons and gyms remain closed.

ALASKA: Republican Gov. Mike Dunleavy on Friday began allowing the limited reopening of restaurants, stores, hair and nail salons and other businesses. It wasn't until Monday that the state's main population center, Anchorage, allowed those businesses to open. The strict restaurant rules require reservations and only family members to share tables.

COLORADO: Democratic Gov. Jared Polis' stay-at-home order expired Monday. A "Safer at Home" plan encourages continued telecommuting and allows non-essential retailers to offer drive-up and home delivery. On May 4, non-essential business offices can reopen with half the usual staff to allow for social distancing.

GEORGIA: Restaurants resumed dine-in service and movie theaters were allowed to reopen Monday under Republican Gov. Brian Kemp's controversial reopening order. Gyms, hair and nail salons, bowling alleys and tattoo parlors opened Friday with restrictions.

OHIO: The much anticipated return to normalcy in Ohio will happen slowly, with the reopening of many health care offices on Friday. Retail stores will need to wait two weeks before they can open, the governor said Monday. He also imposed a strict mask requirement.

LOUISIANA: Gov. John Bel Edwards announced Monday he is extending Louisiana's stay-at-home order through May 15, saying some regions of the state haven't shown enough progress to lessen widespread restrictions on businesses and public gatherings. But if the state's rate of infections continues to decrease, the Democratic governor said he expects he will begin to loosen constraints on May 16, with churches and more retailers allowed to open statewide at that time, including hair and nail salons and some restaurant dine-in services.

RHODE ISLAND: Gov. Gina Raimondo said Monday her goal is still to lift the state's stay-at-home order on May 8 and the next day start a "slow and methodical and careful" economic recovery from the coronavirus pandemic.

FLORIDA: Republican Gov. Ron DeSantis has asked his state coronavirus task force for recommendations for the first phase of reopening. He says the state should look at risk factors as it starts to reopen for business, and not just what's essential. Over the past couple of weeks, many municipalities have reopened beaches and parks to allow recreation under social distancing rules — a key exemption to a state safer-at-home order running through Thursday.

MONTANA: Churches resumed Sunday services and retailers closed for a month cautiously reopened Monday with social distancing and disinfecting guidelines under a plan announced earlier by Democratic Gov. Steve Bullock. Schools have the option to return to in-classroom instruction May 7, but several districts decided to end the academic year with remote instruction.

OKLAHOMA: Republican Gov. Kevin Stitt allowed non-elective surgeries to resume and hair and nail salons, barbershops, spas and pet groomers to reopen last Friday, by appointment only and if they adhere to social distancing and strict sanitation. Restaurant dining rooms, movie theaters, gyms and places of worship can open starting this coming Friday as long as businesses follow social distancing and sanitation protocols.

SOUTH CAROLINA: Republican Gov. Henry McMaster has begun to gradually allow more businesses to reopen. On Tuesday, nonessential businesses such as flea markets, department stores and boutiques could reopen and local governments were allowed to remove barricades to beaches. McMaster said the timing for additional steps depends on reports from state health officials.

TENNESSEE: Many restaurants were allowed dine-in service again Monday as part of Republican Gov. Bill Lee's directive to begin reopening the economy. The plan comes just a day after the state reported its biggest one-day jump in confirmed coronavirus cases. One restaurant was checking the temperature of customers at the door.

UTAH: Restaurants could begin reopening to dine-in customers Friday in parts of Utah, with social distancing measures in place. Republican Gov. Gary Herbert has already allowed elective surgeries to resume

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, April 28, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 290 ~ 66 of 78

and reopened state parks to all residents in one of the few states with a voluntary statewide shelter-in-place order.

VERMONT: Republican Gov. Phil Scott has taken steps toward loosening restrictions on nonessential businesses. Still, many of the altered provisions remain strict, including five construction workers per job site on the condition that they stay 6 feet apart.

MORE GRADUAL:

ALABAMA: Republican Gov. Kay Ivey has said she is eager to reopen but urged people to continue following the order. The order, in place through April, disallows dine-in restaurant service and closes nonessential businesses such as salons and entertainment venues.

ARIZONA: Republican Gov. Doug Ducey will allow hospitals to resume elective surgeries Friday, but is waiting for more data on the virus before he decides whether to extend his current stay-at-home order when it expires Thursday.

ARKANSAS: Republican Gov. Asa Hutchinson's ban on elective surgeries was eased starting Monday. Hutchinson has said he hopes to begin lifting some other restrictions May 4. Arkansas does not have a broad stay-at-home order but has imposed other rules.

HAWAII: Democratic Gov. David Ige's stay-home order is in effect until Wednesday and could be extended, but Honolulu Mayor Kirk Caldwell has extended the stay-at-home order for the state's largest city through May 31. Caldwell announced some initial steps to ease rules starting with allowing people to walk and jog in city parks beginning Saturday, April 25.

IDAHO: Republican Gov. Brad Little's stay-home order restricting nonessential businesses expires Thursday. Last week, he allowed more businesses to reopen if they could offer curbside service and ensure social distancing.

INDIANA: Republican Gov. Eric Holcomb lifted elective medical procedures beginning Monday, and the statewide stay-at-home order is in effect until Friday. Holcomb has said he may announce steps relaxing restrictions on some businesses and major changes will be made in collaboration with neighboring states.

KANSAS: Democratic Gov. Laura Kelly supports a phased economic reopening following widespread testing and contact testing. She's under increasing pressure from the Republican-controlled Legislature to outline such a plan and the Kansas Chamber of Commerce to start reopening the economy.

KENTUCKY: Democratic Gov. Andy Beshear has announced plans to ramp up coronavirus testing with new sites in Louisville and Lexington, the state's two largest cities, along with Owensboro and Bowling Green. The Democratic governor also announced an initial phase of resuming hospital services such as diagnostic and radiology procedures.

MICHIGAN: Democratic Gov. Gretchen Whitmer has said she will extend the state's stay-at-home order when it expires Thursday, but also hopes to relax some restrictions that to start reopening some sectors of the economy. Some has hinted that the elderly and people with chronic lung problems may face restrictions longer than others.

MISSISSIPPI: Republican Gov. Tate Reeves favors gradual reopening, but has not set a timeline. He has allowed some nonessential businesses like florists and clothing stores to start delivery or curbside pickup. The statewide state-at-home order has ended, replaced with an order for just medically vulnerable people to stay home.

MISSOURI: Republican Gov. Mike Parson said Monday all Missouri businesses and social events will be allowed to reopen next week as long as residents and business owners continue to practice proper social distancing requirements. He said as of next Monday, residents will be able to return to all businesses, such as restaurants, manufacturing plants, gyms and hair salons, along with churches, sporting events and social gatherings. Parson said local governments can impose stricter limitations if their officials believe it is necessary. Kansas City's stay-at-home order is scheduled to continue through May 15. St. Louis, which has had a majority of the state's cases, has not yet said when it will lift its order.

NEW HAMPSHIRE: Republican Gov. Chris Sununu has appointed a bipartisan group of lawmakers, business leaders and state officials to examine how the state can begin to re-open its economy. The state's stay-at-home order expires May 4, but Sununu said there likely will be further extensions.

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, April 28, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 290 ~ 67 of 78

NORTH CAROLINA: Democratic Gov. Roy Cooper has extended a statewide stay-at-home order until May 8 and closed schools for the rest of the semester. He has released details on testing, contact tracing and case rate goals that must be met before easing business and movement restrictions. His three-phase proposal could not be fully achieved until mid-June at the earliest.

OREGON: Democratic Gov. Kate Brown has circulated Oregon's own version of a three-phase plan to lift restrictions amid the coronavirus pandemic, including allowing childcare facilities to reopen in phase one and possibly restaurants. But Oregon's plan contains no time frame for reopening certain areas of the economy, and Brown has listed no specific end date for her social-distancing directives.

PENNSYLVANIA: Democratic Gov. Tom Wolf has shut schools for the academic year and shuttered tens of thousands of businesses. But he is allowing construction statewide to resume on Friday, and a week later plans to lift his stay-at-home order and ease other restrictions in the least-impacted parts of the state. Wolf says the shutdown can be loosened once the number of new cases falls below one new infection for every 2,000 people over a two-week period.

WASHINGTON: Democratic Gov. Jay Inslee has said easing the stay-at-home order in effect through May 4 will be gradual with decisions based on markers including adequate testing and the pace of new cases. But there are mounting calls for easing restrictions in the state that had the first major deadly outbreak, including a sheriff who says he won't enforce the stay-home order because it violates constitutional rights.

WEST VIRGINIA: Republican Gov. Jim Justice announced Monday that as long as the state's positive test rate stays below 3% for three consecutive days, he's allowing hospital elective procedures, outpatient health care, primary care, dentistry, and psychological and mental health services. Next week would involve the reopening of small businesses, outdoor seating at restaurants, barber shops, nail salons, and church and funeral services. In subsequent weeks, offices, hotels, casinos, restaurants and other remaining businesses could reopen.

NO STAY-HOME ORDER

IOWA: Republican Gov. Kim Reynolds said Monday she would partially reopen businesses and churches in 77 of Iowa's 99 counties, even as the state experiences increased numbers of coronavirus-related cases and deaths. Reynolds said restaurants, fitness centers, retail stores and malls could reopen Friday at 50 percent of their operating capacity in those mostly rural countries. Reynolds will allow church services to resume. Tougher restrictions remain for counties with Iowa's largest cities, including Des Moines and Cedar Rapids.

NEBRASKA: Republican Gov. Pete Ricketts didn't impose a stay-at-home order but required schools to close and imposed a 10-person limit on gatherings, including at businesses. Ricketts last week announced he will relax coronavirus restrictions in 59 of Nebraska's 93 counties, including the Omaha area, and will allow in-person church services to resume with some limitations. The changes go into effect May 4 and will allow restaurants in the affected counties to reopen their dining rooms but require them to keep crowds at or below half of their rated occupancy.

NORTH DAKOTA: Republican Gov. Doug Burgum ordered most businesses closed until at least Thursday and hasn't signaled when he would lift the restrictions. Burgum last week said the state plans to increase testing and contact tracing to protect residents and meet White House guidelines to put people back to work.

SOUTH DAKOTA: Gov. Kristi Noem, a Republican, has resisted calls to shut down businesses or issue a stay-at-home order, even amid criticism after an outbreak infected hundreds of workers at a Sioux Falls pork plant that had to be shuttered. Noem has instead called on gatherings to be limited to 10 or fewer people and on businesses and individuals to practice safe distancing.

WYOMING: Wyoming is among a handful of states that never implemented a statewide stay-at-home order. Testing capacity for the coronavirus remains limited but Republican Gov. Mark Gordon considers the state already essentially in Phase One of the White House reopening guidelines. Gordon has ordered schools and many types of businesses to remain closed until Thursday.

NOT ANYTIME SOON

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, April 28, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 290 ~ 68 of 78

CALIFORNIA: Democratic Gov. Gavin Newsom last week allowed hospitals to resume scheduled surgeries in the first significant change to the stay-at-home order in the nation's most populous state. But Newsom said the state's broader stay-at-home order won't be lifted until the state can dramatically increase its testing capacity. Newsom said Monday that California may be just weeks away from "meaningful changes" to its stay-at-home order, but warned progress will be jeopardized if people crowd beaches as they did in some places over the warm spring weekend. Some rural counties are seeking to ease restrictions and some in the San Francisco Bay Area are extending them through the end of May.

CONNECTICUT: Democratic Gov. Ned Lamont has said he'll start thinking about reopening Connecticut's economy on May 20, when when his order shutting down schools and nonessential businesses is due to expire. But he says before that happens they must be 14 days of declining hospitalizations, much greater testing capability and more masks and other personal protective equipment for workers who interact with the public.

DELAWARE: Democratic Gov. John Carney has indicated state officials will develop a plan for reopening Delaware's economy based on guidance from the CDC, including 14 days of declining cases. Carney also says extensive testing and contract tracking programs must be in place before economic restrictions are loosened.

ILLINOIS: Democratic Gov. J.B. Pritzker last week extended his stay-at-home order, which also closed all nonessential businesses, to May 30. Beginning Friday, face coverings must be worn in public when 6-foot distancing is not possible. Also, surgeries that were delayed may now be rescheduled, retail stores not on the essential-business list can start providing pickup and delivery service and state parks will reopen for activities such as hiking and fishing. Schools remain closed through the semester with remote learning.

MARYLAND: Republican Gov. Larry Hogan has called for a gradual reopening of the state that will be guided by the rate of hospitalizations due to the virus and number of patients admitted to intensive care. Still in effect is the state-at-home order, which would be lifted under the state's first phase of the reopening process. It would also enable some small shops and certain small businesses to resume service.

MASSACHUSETTS: Republican Gov. Charlie Baker has said it's too early to begin reopening the state's economy. Baker says new hospitalizations is a key data point, and a modest increase continues statewide. The governor says the question will be less what businesses are essential or nonessential and more about what are the rules everyone will need to follow.

MINNESOTA — The state's stay-at-home order runs through May 4, and it's not clear when Democratic Gov. Tim Walz will announce whether it will be extended. Walz gave the green light for people who work at some 20,000 industrial, manufacturing and office settings that don't face the public to begin returning to work Monday.

NEVADA: Nevada joined a western regional pact Monday to help fight the virus outbreak while moving closer to reopening businesses and modifying stay-at-home orders. Democratic Gov. Steve Sisolak has not given a date for easing restrictions. He said the Western States Pact including Colorado, California, Oregon and Washington has a shared vision that puts science ahead of politics. Sisolak said millions of people from the U.S. West visit Nevada every year so the partnership will be vital to the state's immediate recovery and long-term economic comeback.

NEW MEXICO: Democratic Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham has said the state is likely to extend major social distancing and business restrictions through May 15 as it convenes mayors and business leaders to help with economic recovery plans. The state has no deadline or date for starting its first phase of reopening the economy.

NEW JERSEY: Democratic Gov. Phil Murphy Monday unveiled a plan setting the stage for reopening the state's economy. The governor said any lifting of restrictions will require two weeks' worth of a drop in positive cases, expanded testing, increased contact tracing, and safe places for positive people to isolate.

NEW YORK: At the epicenter of the outbreak in the U.S., Democratic Gov. Andrew Cuomo says he has enlisted former New York City Mayor Mike Bloomberg to help create a "tracing army" to find people infected with the coronavirus and get them into isolation. New York will work on the massive effort with neighboring New Jersey and Connecticut.

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, April 28, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 290 ~ 69 of 78

VIRGINIA: Democratic Gov. Ralph Northam has said state's stay-at-home order in effect through June 10 could be changed and has not outlined a specific timeline for reopening businesses. Northam has said he generally agrees with federal guidelines recommending a phased-in approach starting after 14 days of declining cases.

WISCONSIN: The health secretary for Democratic Gov. Tony Evers has extended the state's stay-at-home order closing most nonessential businesses until May 26. It originally was to end April 24 and Republican legislative leaders on April 21 asked the state Supreme Court to block the order, calling it constitutional overreach. Evers Monday loosened an earlier stay-at-home order to allow reopening of all nonessential businesses that can offer curbside service, like dog groomers and lawnmower repair shops. He previously allowed golf courses to open and permitted libraries to offer curbside book pickup.

MAINE: Democratic Gov. Janet Mills has said her administration is planning a phased reopening but the timing remains uncertain because of a lack of adequate testing.

What you need to know today about the virus outbreak

By The Associated Press undefined

Brazil is emerging as potentially the next big hot spot for the new coronavirus amid President Jair Bolsonaro's insistence that it is just a "little flu."

The intensifying outbreak in Brazil — Latin America's biggest country, with 211 million people — has pushed hospitals to the breaking point, leaving victims to die at home.

Here are some of AP's top stories Monday 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:

— Brazil is emerging as potentially the next big hot spot for the new coronavirus amid President Jair Bolsonaro's insistence that there's no need for the sharp restrictions that have slowed the infection's spread in Europe and the U.S.

— Computer issues at the U.S. Small Business Administration have slowed the second round of loan applications for the small business relief program. Banks had thousands of applications ready to go Monday.

— Stocks around the world rose as governments prepare to gradually lift restrictions they imposed on businesses to slow the sweep of the coronavirus pandemic.

— Texas Gov. Greg Abbott outlined a slow reopening of the state's economy, allowing restaurants, retailers, movie theaters and malls to start letting customers trickle into their establishments starting Friday.

— 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. The economies of all the Arab Gulf oil exporters are expected to contract this year.

— The spreading specter of the new coronavirus is shaking Latin America's notoriously overcrowded, unruly prisons, threatening to turn them into an inferno.

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW:

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

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

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

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

TRACKING THE VIRUS: Drill down and zoom in at the individual county level, and you can access numbers

that will show you the situation where you are, and where loved ones or people you're worried about live.

ONE NUMBER:

— 0: The number of hospitalized patients in Wuhan, the city at the center of China's coronavirus outbreak, after the last 12 were discharged Sunday, according to the Hubei province health commission.

IN OTHER NEWS:

— BIRTHDAY PARADE: A fire truck blared its sirens, police cruisers flashed lights and dozens of families in cars decorated with balloons honked horns, raised signs and yelled: "Happy Birthday, Jessiah!" None of them knew him but they were all there for him on his special day.

— VIRTUAL PROMS: High schoolers are heading online for isolation proms as they try to salvage at least one slice of fun and tradition for the Class of 2020.

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

Pelosi, top House progressive give Biden twin endorsements

By **BILL BARROW** Associated Press

ATLANTA (AP) — Democratic presidential candidate Joe Biden renewed his party unification efforts Monday with bookend endorsements from Speaker Nancy Pelosi and the leader of the House progressive caucus that sometimes battles the speaker from the left.

The twin announcements from Pelosi and Washington Rep. Pramila Jayapal highlight Biden's effort to avoid a repeat of the 2016 presidential election, when tensions between establishment Democrats and the party's progressive flank hobbled Hillary Clinton in her loss to President Donald Trump.

Pelosi, a longtime friend of Biden's, is a face of the Democratic establishment and boasts perhaps the widest network across the party's wealthiest donors. Jayapal, who had previously backed Bernie Sanders for president, is co-chair of the Congressional Progressive Caucus, whose members want sweeping expansion of the federal government's role in the economy, notably through a single-payer "Medicare for All" insurance plan that Biden and Pelosi do not favor.

The two women reflected those varied approaches Monday as they explained their common conclusion that a Biden administration is the best chance for Democrats to advance a liberal agenda, even if in degrees.

Pelosi, speaking in a video, said Biden offers "hope and courage, values, authenticity and integrity." She said he'd be a "voice of reason and resilience" amid the coronavirus pandemic.

The 80-year-old speaker also cited Biden's work as President Barack Obama's vice president during the 2010 health care overhaul and the economic recovery acts after the 2008 financial collapse.

Jayapal, in her own statement, noted she has "not always agreed with Vice President Biden on matters of policy." Yet she struck a pragmatic bottom line about the prospects of a second Trump term.

"Any progress toward a better future requires defeating him this November," Jayapal, 54, said.

Further, the congresswoman echoed a claim Biden has repeated often amid his recent outreach to progressives. She framed his agenda as "the most progressive" for any Democratic nominee "in history."

In particular, the 77-year-old Biden touts his preferred health care path, a "public option" government plan to compete with private insurers but not outlaw them, as a major leap forward. He's also moved toward the progressive flank, though not all the way to Sanders and Jayapal, with proposals to ease student loan debt and waive public college tuition for poor, working-class and many middle-class households. Sanders proposed forgiving all student loan debt and making all public college tuition-free.

Pelosi's support wasn't unexpected now that Biden is the presumptive Democratic nominee. Her backing nonetheless reinforces Biden's contention that he is the party's best chance to keep the House majority and regain Senate control from Republicans.

As House minority leader in 2018, Pelosi spearheaded Democrats' midterm House victories. The party won more than 40 Republican-held seats to take the majority and hand Pelosi a second turn as the first

female speaker in U.S. history.

Most of the party's gains came in battleground districts anchored by suburbs and exurbs, places where the Biden campaign believes he can outpace Trump in November.

Biden campaigned for many of the current House freshmen, and he often cited their victories during his primary campaign against progressive presidential rivals. He argued that Democrats succeeded in the 2018 midterms because they did not move too far to the left in historically Republican-leaning districts. Pelosi has said repeatedly that Democrats win when they recruit candidates who "fit their district."

Biden's alliance with Pelosi, paired with his ongoing outreach to progressives, is not without political irony and risk.

The former vice president has worked for decades to cultivate his image as a working-class ally born in Scranton, Pennsylvania. Meanwhile, Pelosi, though mistrusted by the left as an establishment figure, has been a favorite target of Republicans who caricature the wealthy San Francisco Democrat as out of touch with most Americans.

Republicans have doubled down with a similar strategy on Biden as he's picked up more endorsements from progressives, including Sanders. Ultimately, those dynamics will test what is more persuasive to voters: the Republican contention that Biden's proposals are a government expansion that threatens taxpayers or Biden's contention that a liberal agenda is what would boost the middle class and overall economy.

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

Firefighters, police join huge birthday parade for young boy

By **LUIS ANDRES HENAO** and **JESSIE WARDARSKI** Associated Press

Jessiah Lee smiled and watched the parade. His parade.

A fire truck blared its sirens. Police cruisers flashed their lights. Dozens of families in cars decorated with balloons honked horns, raised handmade signs and yelled: "Happy Birthday, Jessiah!"

None of them knew this 6-year-old boy, but they were all there for him on his special day. The surprise drive-by birthday party in an Arlington, Virginia, neighborhood was organized on social media by Ashley Johnson, an accountant who met him while volunteering at a homeless shelter in Washington, D.C., four years ago.

The relationship did not end after the shelter closed, and Jessiah's family found a home. Johnson took Jessiah to museums, parks and on a trip to New York City for the Macy's Thanksgiving Day parade. This year, she wanted to throw him a Lego-themed party — but then, COVID-19 intervened.

"Birthdays are such a big thing at any age," Johnson said. "It's such a celebration, life is so fragile, and so I felt I couldn't accept the defeat of 'we'll do nothing.'"

Her idea was inspired by drive-by birthday celebrations that have brought joy to children and adults across the U.S. during the quarantine. She wanted something similar for Jessiah. But bigger.

Recalling his love of firetrucks, she passed by a fire station and asked for help. No response.

Then the day before the day she had planned for Jessiah's party, the phone rang. A firefighter on the other line — Johnson calls him her angel -- asked if his station could join the parade.

She had 24 hours to plan, so she went on Nextdoor, the neighborhood social media site, and asked other people to join.

"In need of a MAJOR favor from all who are willing!" she wrote in an April 9 post also shared on Facebook. "I have a sweet sweet kid I met while volunteering ... His 6th birthday is today and sadly I didn't get to host a party this year BUT I just got a last minute reply from the fire station, and they're willing to do a drive by and lead the way for a mini birthday parade ..."

That night, she blew up balloons, prepared signs and made decorations. She barely slept.

The next day, she took Jessiah to fly a kite, just in case no one showed up. Then, at 5:29 p.m., the fire truck, police cruisers and dozens of cars turned the a corner. Some neighbors shook pom poms; others offered gifts, all from a safe distance.

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, April 28, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 290 ~ 72 of 78

Jessiah's favorite? A man who played "Happy Birthday" on an accordion.
"E-veryyyybody came!" Jessiah said.
His mother, Melissa Jones, was moved to tears.
"It really just touched my soul," the single mother of six said in a video conference.
"It goes to show the kindness that's still in people's hearts as far as just making that day happy for him, making that day memorable for him."

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

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

Religious freedom attorneys pick their battles amid pandemic

By ELANA SCHOR undefined

NEW YORK (AP) — As states grapple with when and how to reopen establishments amid the pandemic, religious freedom remains a legal flashpoint — particularly for the conservative nonprofits that have taken a leading role in representing churches which have challenged stay-home orders.

At least a dozen state or federal suits filed since the virus outbreak started have focused partly or fully on freedom to worship in person, according to an Associated Press analysis.

Those lawsuits break primarily into two strategies. Both camps -- which include legal nonprofits with significant experience in court battles over religious liberty -- see an opportunity to advance their cause by taking on some state and local faith gathering limits ordered during the pandemic.

But while some suits are framed as full-throated defenses of the right of religious assembly, others have employed narrower strategies. While a few pastors have grabbed headlines by defying public health orders with large services, some of the nonprofits have found success defending a less polarizing practice: drive-in worship designed to gather the faithful in person, at a distance.

First Liberty Institute President Kelly Shackelford, whose conservative nonprofit has represented churches challenging drive-in service limits in Kentucky and Mississippi, said his group has discouraged other attorneys from taking virus-related cases that may set unwelcome precedents. The institute has focused on actions that specifically target religious entities, not actions that are being imposed more universally, he said.

The 23-year-old group's website on coronavirus notes that short-term gathering limits which cover religious as well as secular meetings "are okay," so long as they don't become permanent. It also represents a trio of churches that won approval of drive-in services in their home New York county without filing a suit.

Shackelford said success hinges on finding the balance between public health and religious freedom: "When is the government going too far? What's appropriate, how does a religious entity navigate this?"

Another nonprofit that's taken on multiple religious freedom cases during the pandemic, the Alliance Defending Freedom, also has targeted restrictions on drive-in worship. The alliance, a legal advocate representing Christian conservative issues, is a powerful force: It reported spending more than \$54 million on its most recent tax return.

The alliance notched two victories in one week this month on behalf of churches it represented. Mayors of Greenville, Miss., and Chattanooga, Tenn., eased restrictions on drive-in services after the alliance stepped in. In a third virus-related case it filed after Easter, a federal judge granted a temporary exemption from Kansas' 10-person limit on religious gatherings to two churches the alliance represents.

"Whether you're religious or not, you should be a champion for religious freedom, because it's going to protect your freedom to believe or your freedom not to believe," David Cortman, vice president of U.S. litigation at the alliance.

Religious liberty has long been a political as well as legal battleground. President Donald Trump has

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, April 28, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 290 ~ 73 of 78

embraced the issue as he courts evangelical votes, and both the alliance and First Liberty have aligned with his administration's moves to boost protections for faith. Trump's Justice Department has sent its own supportive message to the alliance, siding with its Mississippi client in its suit against drive-in worship limits.

The organizations involved in the current battles are part of the larger legal battleground. In particular, the 26-year-old alliance has argued landmark religious freedom cases, including a Supreme Court case that challenged the Affordable Care Act's contraception mandate.

Columbia University law professor Katherine Franke described the alliance's lawyers in particular as "very smart" and well-funded. She added that "their longer game" in terms of burnishing protections for religious liberty long-sought by conservatives is bolstered by choosing church clients which "are behaving relatively responsibly" amid the virus.

But other nonprofits working on religious freedom have taken different approaches to the virus.

Liberty Counsel, a conservative Christian group, is calling for churches to begin reopening on a broader scale later this week while heeding social distancing standards, in line with the Trump administration's three-phase plan to reopen the U.S. economy while battling the virus.

That group represents a second Kentucky church that has challenged statewide limits on religious gathering, which lost its push for a restraining order from a federal judge earlier this month in the ongoing suit.

The Becket Fund for Religious Liberty, a veteran of freedom to worship cases that represents multiple faiths, filed a brief supporting a New Mexico church's challenge to the state's religious gathering limits. A federal judge last week denied that church's bid for a temporary restraining order in the ongoing suit.

"When you have a widespread, fast-moving health crisis like this, there are inevitably going to be examples of government overreach," said Luke Goodrich, a vice president at Becket who addressed legal questions raised by virus orders in a piece for the Southern Baptist Convention's public policy arm.

"Sometimes that could be the result of a malicious intent to restrict religious freedom," he added. "But more often, it's result of a well-intentioned but perhaps overeager effort to protect public health, combined with limited time, information, expertise dealing with a pandemic."

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

US review: Airstrike in Somalia killed, injured civilians

By LOLITA C. BALDOR Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — An American military airstrike in Somalia more than a year ago killed two civilians and injured three others, U.S. Africa Command acknowledged in a new report on Monday.

The deaths, confirmed by an internal investigation, mark only the second time Africa Command has determined that civilians were killed in a military strike in Somalia. The decision comes even as U.S. airstrikes against the al-Qaida linked al-Shabab extremist group this year are increasingly outpacing 2019 totals. Already there have been 39 airstrikes in 2020, compared to last year's total of 63.

Maj. Gen. William Gayler, director of operations for Africa Command, told The Associated Press in an interview that the strike on Feb. 23, 2019, in Kunyon Barrow, targeted and killed two members of al-Shabab.

When online allegations of civilian casualties in that strike were received soon afterward, the command investigated, but the review dragged on for more than a year. After another similar allegation about that strike came in early this year from a non-governmental organization, the military continued its assessment, and it finally determined that at least one other person was killed or injured.

Gayler said the command could see video showing a person — an apparent civilian — being carried from the site.

"We didn't see the other individual or the wounded individuals. But because we're trying to be transparent and as open as we can, when we know that we've more likely than not killed the one male, why would we dispute the other killed and three wounded," he said. So, officials decided to substantiate the

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, April 28, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 290 ~ 74 of 78

allegations in total.

He said the deaths and injuries were likely due to secondary explosions from munitions stored at the site by al-Shabab. The extremist group controls parts of central and southern Somalia and often targets the capital, Mogadishu, with suicide bombings.

Asked why the investigation took so long, Gayler said it was an effort to be thorough and "some of the means we use to assess don't normally happen quickly." He did not provide details but noted information is gathered through classified means.

He added, however, that there's no reason it should take that long. And he said Gen. Stephen Townsend, head of Africa Command, is adamant that investigations must be wrapped up more quickly in the future. Townsend also ordered quarterly reports on civilian casualty allegations, much like U.S. Central Command does for Middle East military operations.

"While we follow very precise and rigorous standards, in instances where we fail to meet our expectations, we will admit the mistake," Townsend said. "We have the highest respect for our Somali friends, and we are deeply sorry this occurred."

Africa Command's first civilian casualty report, released Monday, covers the time period from February 1, 2019, to March 31, 2020. According to a copy reviewed early by the AP, there were 91 airstrikes in Somalia and Libya during that time. The command has completed reviews of 20 alleged incidents of civilian casualties during that time and substantiated only the February 2019 one.

In many of the claims the command found that the U.S. military had conducted no airstrikes on the day in question. In other cases, it determined that those killed or injured were only al-Shabab targets.

Gayler also said that al-Shabab and its backers often make false claims on social media sites. And, like many militant groups, al-Shabab also often blends in with local citizens, using civilians as shields or including members that also masquerade as regular business people.

Civilian deaths, however, have been a persistent problem for the military in war zones around the world. And watchdog organizations routinely complain that the U.S. and other militaries don't acknowledge civilian deaths as quickly or completely as needed.

The Eastern Africa deputy director for Amnesty International, Seif Magango, called the report a "welcome glimmer of transparency" after more than a decade of military operations.

"Now there must be accountability and reparation for the victims and their families," he said.

In a report early this month, Amnesty International said two airstrikes in Somalia in February killed two civilians and injured three others. The group said that one airstrike, on Feb. 2, struck a home in the Middle Juba region, killing an 18-year-old woman and wounding her two sisters and her grandmother. The second strike, on Feb. 24 near Jilib, killed a farmer who also worked for Hormuud Telecom, Somalia's largest telecom company.

Gayler said those two are among seven other cases still being investigated.

The only other substantiated instance of civilian casualties in Somalia was acknowledged by the command last year and occurred on April 1, 2018. In that case, two civilians were mistakenly killed by a strike near El Buur.

"The growing threat in Africa from terrorist networks is significant and impacts not only Africans but also the U.S. and our international allies," said Townsend, adding that the strikes "follow a strict, disciplined and precise process."

There are between 6,000 and 7,000 U.S. forces on the continent at any time, including about 4,000 who are at the U.S. base in Djibouti. Other forces train and advise local forces and conduct counterterrorism missions against militants, such as al-Shabab in Somalia and other al-Qaida-linked groups and Islamic State affiliates in west and north Africa.

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, April 28, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 290 ~ 75 of 78

'The Rise of Skywalker' to hit Disney Plus on May 4

NEW YORK (AP) — "Star Wars: The Rise of Skywalker" will begin streaming on Disney Plus on May 4, about two months earlier than scheduled.

The Walt Disney Co. said Monday that "The Rise of Skywalker" will land on the streaming service timed to what's referred to as "Star Wars Day" after the slogan of "May the Fourth be with you." The release will give fans the option of streaming the full nine-part saga on the annual "Star Wars" holiday.

"The Rise of Skywalker" was released for digital rental and video-on-demand in March, so the timing of its streaming arrival isn't unusual. The film, directed by J.J. Abrams, was the worst reviewed of the nine "Star Wars" installments, with a 52% fresh score on Rotten Tomatoes. It grossed more than \$1 billion in its theatrical run begun on Dec. 20.

During the pandemic, Disney has diverted several of its titles to its streaming service early for house-bound viewers. It also sent "Frozen 2" and "Onward" to Disney Plus early, and plans to premiere "Artemis Fowl" on the streaming platform in May in place of a theatrical release. Disney Plus has accrued about 50 million subscribers since launching late last year.

VIRUS DIARY: My new life felt small. Then came coronavirus.

By SARAH DiLORENZO Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — "Home is wherever I'm with you," the song rang out from the speaker. And the tears streamed down my face. In Edward Sharpe and the Magnetic Zeros' jaunty tune lay my deepest pain. That after the end of my nearly seven-year relationship, I didn't belong anywhere or to anyone anymore.

Have you noticed how this lockdown life has a way of holding up a magnifying glass to whatever you were dealing with before coronavirus?

In the B.C. era, I was lonely. Now isolation is mandated. My life felt small. Now I am largely confined to 500 square feet. I disliked New York. Now it's the only place I have.

When the relationship ended, I moved back to the United States after 10 years abroad. While it seemed wise to go "home," it was not quite voluntary, and I struggled. I had truly enjoyed but also romanticized my life overseas. It felt expansive: new territories explored, new languages learned, the possibility of adventure around every corner, even (no, especially) at the grocery store.

Then I found myself trying to slot back in with old friends whose lives had spun in new directions. In the city of my birth, I often felt foreign.

Clearly, others are enduring far greater hardships than I. And yet, perhaps because we are all apart, I have that teenage, no-one-has-ever-felt-like-this-before feeling.

I am not alone, of course. We have been discovered as a cohort reflective of our times, all us women living alone. But, my brain shouts, let me explain to you why my circumstances are unique.

I have sought out friends who are also alone; it feels good to talk about this. But I find myself becoming angry if I find out they are not quite so alone as I am.

I don't envy friends who are juggling working from home while wrangling small children. But a hug from a 4-year-old would be nice once in a while. It occurs to me that I will not touch another person until this is over. Hadn't I read something about babies who fail to thrive because they are not touched enough? Are adults like that, too?

I don't envy my friends whose partners have become their co-workers. But I wouldn't mind a glass of wine at the end of the day with someone. A few weeks ago, when the restrictions in New York seemed to increase every day, I fretted about whether I needed to leave the city. I wished then that someone else was implicated in that decision, that we could make it together.

Everyone is in this together, I read all the time. Yes, sort of. But not really. No one is in it with me.

We are all struggling, that is true. But most of what I read is about how people are struggling with too much. For me, it is the opposite. Though we may shake our heads at our busy lives, we still valorize abundance. Emptiness is embarrassing.

There are places I can go. Each of my sisters has offered refuge in the suburbs. I may yet seek it. I know

that staying is a choice, but it doesn't feel like one. So little feels like a choice these days.

Just when it seems I can't take it anymore, an old friend texts to ask if I am eating regularly and getting enough vitamin D. And there are Zoom cocktails and text-message chains with friends who should have already been on text-message chains. And I talk about intimate things with colleagues who were only casual friends before.

And I make a sourdough starter, maybe just to have something alive to take care of. It is expanding. Slowly. Maybe my life is, too. Maybe it had to get very small before it could grow again.

"Virus Diary," an occasional feature, will showcase the coronavirus saga through the eyes of Associated Press journalists around the world. Follow New York-based AP editor Sarah DiLorenzo at <http://twitter.com/sdilorenzo>

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 the terms of a Riyadh peace deal and share control of the port city of Aden with 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.

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.

Emirati Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Anwar Gargash said on Twitter that his nation had "absolute confidence" in Saudi Arabia's desire to formalize the power-sharing agreement.

"Frustration over delaying implementation of the agreement should not be a reason to unilaterally change the status quo," he wrote.

The Yemeni Foreign Ministry on Monday urged the transitional council to heed the coalition's statement, warning on Twitter that its "reckless" move "undermined not only the the Riyadh agreement but the peace process in Yemen."

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, April 28, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 290 ~ 77 of 78

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 Brussels, European Commission spokesman Peter Stano told reporters on Monday that the EU has taken note of the developments in southern Yemen, which he said undermine the Riyadh agreement, a key to de-escalation.

"What Yemen needs right now is peace," he said, calling on the separatists "to implement the provisions that were agreed under the auspices of Saudi Arabia in this agreement."

In a separate development, Yemeni tribal leaders and security officials said Monday that two suspected U.S. drone strikes killed at least six al-Qaida militants in Yemen's southern province of Shabwa in recent days. The CIA declined to comment and the U.S. military, which also has launched drone strikes in Yemen, did not respond to a request for comment.

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 writers Ahmed al-Haj in Sanaa, Yemen; Lorne Cook in Brussels and Maggie Michael in Cairo contributed to this report.

Today in History By The Associated Press undefined

Today in History

Today is Tuesday, April 28, the 119th day of 2020. There are 247 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On April 28, 1967, heavyweight boxing champion Muhammad Ali was stripped of his title after he refused to be inducted into the armed forces.

On this date:

In 1788, Maryland became the seventh state to ratify the Constitution of the United States.

In 1789, there was a mutiny on the HMS Bounty as rebelling crew members of the British ship, led by Fletcher Christian, set the captain, William Bligh, and 18 others adrift in a launch in the South Pacific. (Bligh and most of the men with him reached Timor in 47 days.)

In 1918, Gavrilo Princip, 23, the assassin of Archduke Franz Ferdinand of Austria and the archduke's wife, Sophie, died in prison of tuberculosis.

In 1945, Italian dictator Benito Mussolini and his mistress, Clara Petacci, were executed by Italian partisans as they attempted to flee the country.

In 1958, the United States conducted the first of 35 nuclear test explosions in the Pacific Proving Ground as part of Operation Hardtack I. Vice President Richard Nixon and his wife, Pat, began a goodwill tour of Latin America that was marred by hostile mobs in Lima, Peru, and Caracas, Venezuela.

In 1963, at Broadway's Tony Awards, "Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?" was named best play while "A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum" won best musical.

In 1967, U.S. Army Gen. William C. Westmoreland told Congress that "backed at home by resolve, confidence, patience, determination and continued support, we will prevail in Vietnam over communist aggression."

In 1980, President Jimmy Carter accepted the resignation of Secretary of State Cyrus R. Vance, who had opposed the failed rescue mission aimed at freeing American hostages in Iran. (Vance was succeeded by Edmund Muskie.)

In 1986, the Soviet Union informed the world of the nuclear disaster at Chernobyl.

In 1988, a flight attendant was killed and more than 60 persons injured when part of the roof of an Aloha Airlines Boeing 737 tore off during a flight from Hilo (HEE'-loh) to Honolulu.

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, April 28, 2020 ~ Vol. 28 - No. 290 ~ 78 of 78

In 1994, former CIA official Aldrich Ames, who had passed U.S. secrets to the Soviet Union and then Russia, pleaded guilty to espionage and tax evasion, and was sentenced to life in prison without parole.

In 1998, In a breakthrough for the government's tobacco investigation, cigarette maker Liggett and Myers agreed to tell prosecutors whether the industry had hidden evidence of health damage from smoking.

Ten years ago: Coast Guard Rear Adm. Mary Landry said a massive oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico was worse than officials had believed, and that the federal government was offering to help industry giant BP contain the slick threatening the U.S. shoreline.

Five years ago: Urging Americans to "do some soul-searching," President Barack Obama expressed deep frustration over recurring black deaths at the hands of police, rioters who responded with senseless violence and a society that would only "feign concern" without addressing the root causes. Nigerian troops rescued nearly 300 girls and women during an offensive against Boko Haram militants in the northeast Sambia forest; those rescued did not include any of the schoolgirls kidnapped a year earlier from Chibok. Jack Ely, the singer known for "Louie Louie," the low-budget recording that became one the most famous songs of the 20th century, died in Redmond, Oregon, at age 71.

One year ago: Former Republican Sen. Richard Lugar of Indiana, a leading voice on foreign policy during his 36 years in the Senate, died at a hospital in Virginia at the age of 87. A shooting in Topeka, Kansas, killed a Washburn University football player, Dwayne Simmons, and wounded a former team member, Corey Ballentine, who had been drafted just hours earlier by the New York Giants; authorities said they were "in the wrong place at the wrong time" when they were shot outside an off-campus house party. (Francisco Alejandro Mendez has pleaded not guilty to charges including first-degree murder.) "Avengers: Endgame" shattered the record for biggest opening weekend with an estimated \$350 million in ticket sales domestically and \$1.2 billion globally, on its way to becoming the highest-grossing film ever.

Today's Birthdays: Former Secretary of State James A. Baker III is 90. Actress-singer Ann-Margret is 79. Actor Paul Guilfoyle is 71. Former "Tonight Show" host Jay Leno is 70. Rock musician Chuck Leavell is 68. Actress Mary McDonnell is 68. Rock singer-musician Kim Gordon (Sonic Youth) is 67. Actress Nancy Lee Grahn is 64. Supreme Court Justice Elena Kagan is 60. Rapper Too Short is 54. Actress Bridget Moynahan is 49. Actor Chris Young is 49. Rapper Big Gipp is 48. Actor Jorge Garcia is 47. Actress Elisabeth Rohm is 47. Actress Penelope Cruz is 46. Actor Nate Richert is 42. TV personalities Drew and Jonathan Scott are 42. Actress Jessica Alba is 39. Actor Harry Shum Jr. is 38. Actress Jenna Ushkowitz is 34. Actress Aleisha Allen is 29.

Thought for Today: "We have two lives... the one we learn with and the life we live with after that." — Bernard Malamud, American author (1914-1986).

Copyright 2020, The Associated Press. All rights reserved.