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Church Services on-line

St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Catholic Church (<https://www.facebook.com/groups/215332349572015/>)

Groton Christian & Missinary Alliance Church (<https://www.facebook.com/GrotonCMA/>)

St. John's Lutheran Church (<https://www.facebook.com/stjohnsgroton/>)

Emmanuel Lutheran Church:

(<https://www.facebook.com/Emmanuel-Lutheran-Church-GrotonSD-ELCA-636505039852208/>)

United Methodist Church: (<https://www.facebook.com/grotonsdumc>)

Buffalo Lake Lutheran Church, rural Eden, has resumed services at 10:30 a.m. People will stay in their vehicles and listen to the service on their FM radio.

Heaven Bound Ministries of Pierpont / Buffalo Lake Lutheran Church, rural Eden - will have a podcast posted. <https://anchor.fm/paul-irvin-kosel>

OPEN: Recycling Trailer in Groton

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

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Sunday Extras



THE ILLUSTRATED BIBLE

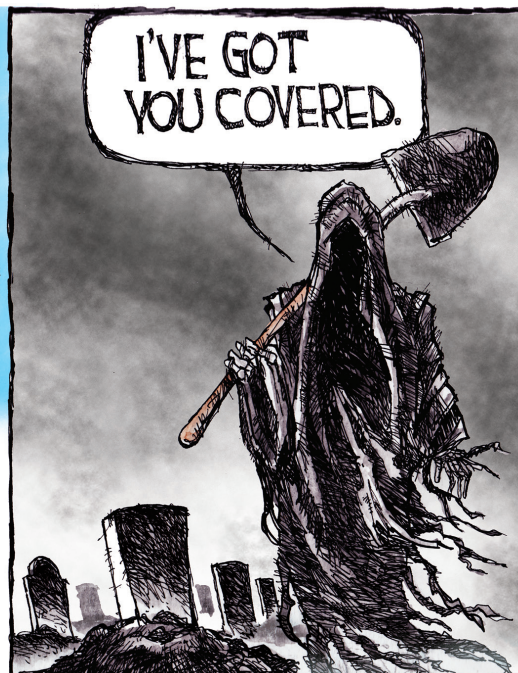
Pure and undefiled religion before God and the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their trouble, and to keep oneself unspotted from the world.

JAMES 1:27 



"Mothers" by Kathe Kollwitz (1919)

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BIBLE TRIVIA

by Wilson Casey

1. Is the book of 1 Samuel in the Old or New Testament or neither?

2. Whose hairs were grown like eagles' feathers, and his nails like birds' claws? *Daniel, Matthew, Luke, Nebuchadnezzar*

3. "All things are possible to him that believeth" is from what book's 9:23? *Psalms, Malachi, Mark, Ephesians*

4. Jesus most-often referred to Himself as? *Son of Man, Lamb of God, Bread of Life, Son of God*

5. From Judges 14, who called his wife a heifer? *Saul, Elijah, Samson, Peter*

6. What was the Hebrew name of Paul? *Simon Peter, Andrew, Haggai, Saul*

ANSWERS: 1) Old; 2) Nebuchadnezzar; 3) Mark; 4) Son of Man (about 81 times); 5) Samson; 6) Saul.

Comments? More Trivia? Gift ideas? Visit www.TriviaGuy.com

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Comfort foods

Made fast and healthy



by Healthy Exchanges

Strawberry Lovers' Pie

It's May — and that means strawberry pie time! We've waited nearly a year for the most magnificent fruit of all to be in season again. And what better way to celebrate than with this scrumptious pie!

- 4 cups sliced fresh strawberries
- 1 (6-ounce) graham cracker pie crust
- 1 (4-serving) package sugar-free vanilla cook-and-serve pudding mix
- 1 (4-serving) package sugar-free strawberry gelatin
- 1½ cups water
- 1 cup reduced-calorie whipped topping
- 1/2 teaspoon vanilla extract
- 3–4 drops red food coloring

1. Evenly arrange strawberries in pie crust. In a large saucepan, combine dry pudding mix, dry gelatin and water. Cook over medium heat until mixture thickens and starts to boil, stirring often. Spoon hot sauce evenly over strawberries.


2. Refrigerate for at least 2 hours. Cut into 8 servings. In a small bowl, combine whipped topping, vanilla extract and red food coloring. Top each piece with a full tablespoon of topping mixture. Serves 8.

• Each serving equals: 157 calories, 5g fat, 2g protein, 26g carb., 225mg sodium, 2g fiber; Diabetic Exchanges: 1 Starch, 1 Fat, 1/2 Fruit.

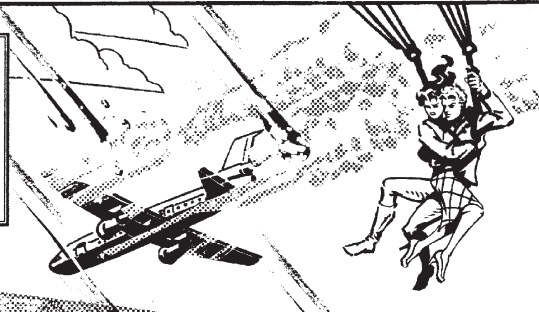
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Character Profile:
Dale Arden



AN AIRPLANE IS TORN ASUNDER BY A FREAK METEOR SHOWER!

THAT FATEFUL FLIGHT BRINGS RAVEN-HAIRED BEAUTY DALE ARDEN INTO THE ARMS OF WORLD-RENOWNED ATHLETE FLASH GORDON.

SINCE THEN THEIR LIVES HAVE BEEN BOUND TOGETHER... FACING ADVENTURES UNDREAMED OF IN THE HOPES OF SAVING A WORLD ON THE BRINK OF DESTRUCTION!



4-26
BY JIM KEEFE

BACK ON EARTH:
NIGHT FALLS OUTSIDE A COVERT GOVERNMENT RESEARCH FACILITY.

WHAT'S YOUR STATUS, X-9?

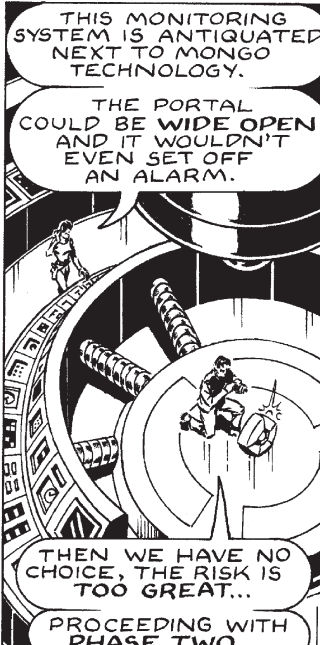
WE'VE REACHED THE INNER CHAMBER...




...THE DEVICE HAS BEEN CLASSIFIED AS INACTIVE, SO SECURITY'S A JOKE.

THEN WE'RE ALL IN MORE DANGER THAN INITIALLY SUSPECTED.

WHAT'S DALE'S ASSESSMENT?



THIS MONITORING SYSTEM IS ANTIQUATED NEXT TO MONGO TECHNOLOGY.

THE PORTAL COULD BE WIDE OPEN AND IT WOULDN'T EVEN SET OFF AN ALARM.

THEN WE HAVE NO CHOICE, THE RISK IS TOO GREAT...

PROCEEDING WITH PHASE TWO.




PREPARING EXPLOSI...

ZASK!

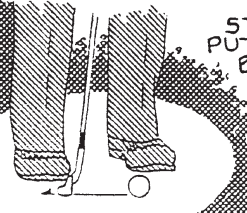
RRRAH!

TO BE CONT'D


Play Better Golf with JACK NICKLAUS




HERE ARE SOME THOUGHTS THAT HAVE HELPED ME OVER THE YEARS WHEN MY PUTTING HAS GONE SOUR. FIRST, HOLD THE PUTTER LIGHTLY THROUGHOUT THE STROKE. SECOND, START THE PUTTERHEAD BACK FROM THE BALL SLOWLY AND SMOOTHLY.



JM



THIRD, KEEP THE PUTTERHEAD LOW TO THE GROUND ON BOTH THE BACKSWING AND THROUGH-SWING. FOURTH, STRIKE THE BALL WITH THE PUTTERHEAD ACCELERATING.



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“Have You Ever Smoked?”

DEAR DR. ROACH: I have a question that I'd love to see answered in your column sometime. My husband recently had major surgery. Before the surgery, they asked if he has ever smoked. (Husband is 77.) He answered that when he was 9, he smoked a cigarette. He is now in the computer as an ex-smoker, and the nurse told us she is “required by law” to provide him with information on quitting.

When physicians ask, “Have you ever smoked?” do they really want to hear about one cigarette, smoked almost 70 years ago? Is this meaningful information, in medical terms? — S.S.

ANSWER: There are very important reasons to know a person's smoking history, especially when someone is about to undergo surgery. Current smokers should know that quitting well before surgery can reduce risks of surgical complications. The anesthesiologist can be extra-vigilant for breathing issues. Some of these points are valid for ex-smokers who have recently quit or who were very heavy smokers.

Of course, one cigarette at age 9 is meaningless, and anytime I hear “required by law” I wonder if it's really true. In this case, I doubt it: Why give ex-smokers information on quitting? It makes no sense.

Primary care providers like me ask about smoking because a significant history of smoking increases heart disease risk, so I might be more likely to recommend treatment to reduce that risk (for example, in a person with elevated blood pressure or cholesterol who

otherwise doesn't quite meet criteria for drug treatment). Also, people who smoked more than 1 pack per day for 30 years, or the equivalent, should have a discussion about whether screening for lung cancer is appropriate.

Finally, it's easier to answer if you have never been a smoker. Some people who smoke socially don't consider themselves smokers but would still benefit from advice to stop.

DEAR DR. ROACH: I took a sleep study and slept on my back all night because I was wired up and couldn't sleep on my side. After a couple of hours, I was told that I have moderate sleep apnea. I snore when I'm on my back, but not when I'm on my side. Do you think I really have sleep apnea? — T.M.

ANSWER: Obstructive sleep apnea very often goes unrecognized. It is caused by the soft tissue in the neck obstructing the airway; the muscles relax while you are asleep, closing the airway. This is indeed much more likely to happen when lying on the back (we use the anatomical term “supine”), and generations of spouses have learned that turning a snorer on the side is a good way to get him or her to quit snoring. Snoring is caused by the very same process that leads to sleep apnea; in fact, snoring is a significant risk factor, with up to a third of snorers having the condition.

I believe the sleep study. While I am sure you would have demonstrated less obstruction if you could sleep on your side, you still are likely to have some obstruction during the night, especially since we frequently change position while sleeping without knowing it. However, there are many different treatments for sleep apnea, and you should talk with your doctor about which is right for you. You need not jump to the most aggressive treatments.

Dr. Roach regrets that he is unable to answer individual questions, but will incorporate them in the column whenever possible. Readers may email questions to ToYourGoodHealth@med.cornell.edu.

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1. Name the '50s rocker who married his first cousin.

2. What was the first band to be censored on “American Bandstand”?

3. Which singer wrote and released “Uptown Girl”?

4. Who wrote and released the trucker anthem “Willin’” and when?

5. Name the song that contains this lyric: “As pretty as you are, you know you could have been a flower, If good looks was a minute, you know that you could be an hour.”

Answers

1. Jerry Lee Lewis, in 1958. Her name was Myra and she was only 13. Lewis married her before the divorce from his second wife was final. He'd also married his second wife before divorcing the first one.

2. The Beastie Boys, in 1989. Legend has it that they also got banned from a famous hotel chain for cutting a hole in the floor.

3. Billy Joel, in 1983. The music video featured supermodel Christie Brinkley as the title character. Joel married her two years later.

4. Lowell George, before he formed Little Feat. The song appeared on their first album in 1971.

5. “The Way You Do the Things You Do,” by the Temptations, in 1964. The song started as a way to pass time on a bus ride, stringing together pickup lines.

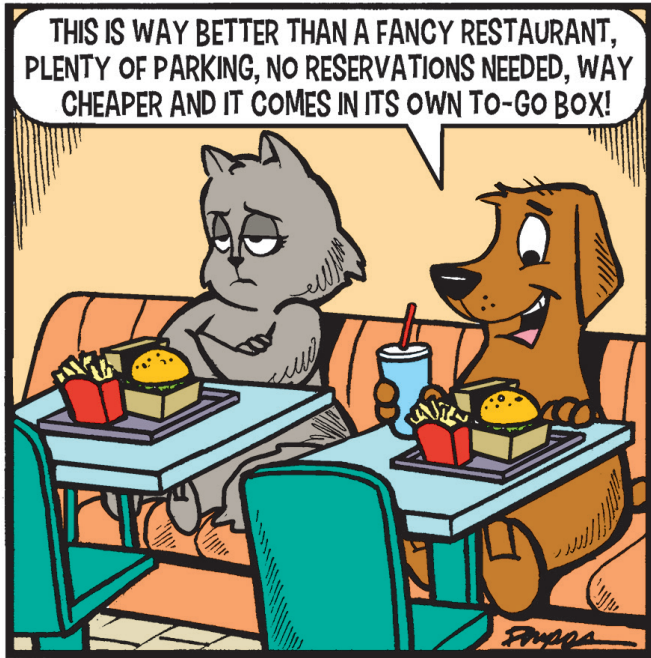
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Just Like Cats & Dogs

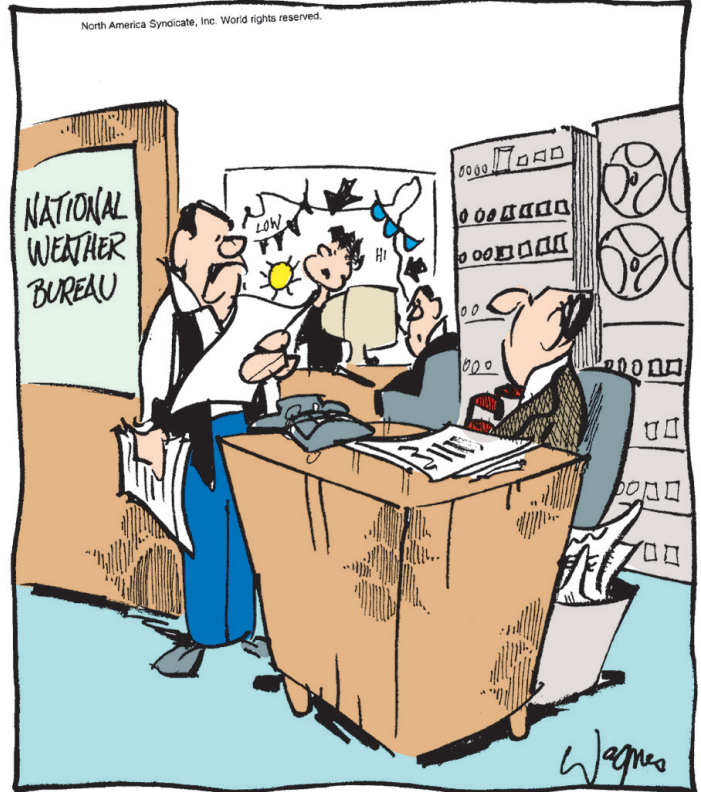
by Dave T. Phipps



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GRIN and BEAR IT

Wagner

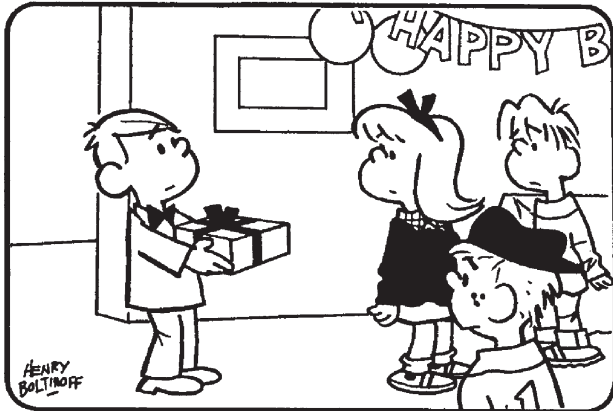


“El Nino has been fooling around with La Nina!”

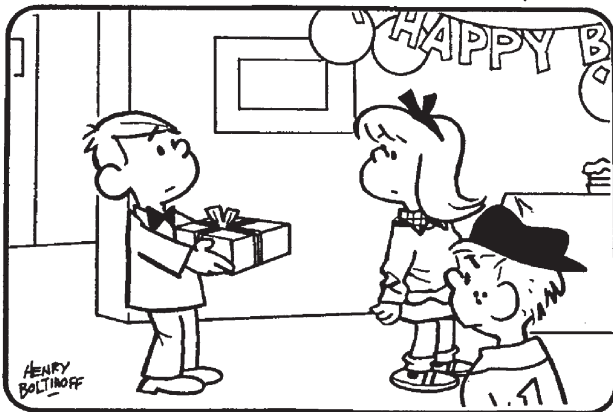
Wagner

HOCUS-FOCUS

BY HENRY BOLTINOFF



Find at least six differences in details between panels.



Differences: 1. Door is added. 2. Balloon is added. 3. Girl's sweater is different. 4. Boy is missing. 5. Cake is added. 6. Gift bow is different.

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- “If you seal your jelly jars with wax, here’s a good tip: Place a small piece of string into the wax before it hardens. Then, you’ll be able to pull on the string to remove the wax when you are ready to enjoy your home-made goodies!” — *U.L. in Maine*

- Get your charcoal grill to light quickly by sacrificing a handful of Doritos in a paper bag. Light the bag and get ready to BBQ!

- “I had a pair of tights that had a run, so I was getting ready to toss them, but I cut off the leg and tied a travel size bar of soap in the middle, right about where the knee would be. I knotted it on either side so the soap would stay in place. I use it as a self-foaming back scrubber, and it really works well.” — *P.B. in North Dakota*

- “If you have an item that must be cooked in the oven, see if there’s any other foods you can prep cook with

it. Better to have the oven on a couple days of the week instead of every day, and you can reheat a quick dinner another night.” — *B.J. in Pennsylvania*

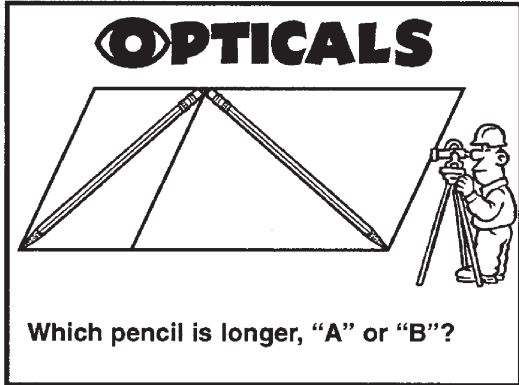
- Use melted ice cream in place of cream in recipes for sweets. I use it as my own secret weapon when making frosting for cupcakes.

- “My husband just loves homemade meatballs, because they are juicier than bagged and frozen ones, which can turn out very dry. To hold the moisture, I use lightly ground oatmeal in place of breadcrumbs. I just toss a cup of oatmeal in the blender and give it a whirl. It doesn’t need to be fine. The oatmeal really retains moisture and makes them so good!” — *J.J. in Florida*

Send your tips to Now Here’s a Tip, 628 Virginia Drive, Orlando, FL 32803.

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OPTICALS

Which pencil is longer, "A" or "B"?

Answer: They are both the same length.

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Junior Whirl

by Charles Barry Townsend

SQUARE A

1		N	
2		I	
3		N	
4		E	

SQUARE B

1			
2			
3	L	I	S
4			

DOUBLE TROUBLE!

Illustrated by David Coulson

KIDS PLAY! The three blocks shown here give us the number "631." Can you rearrange them so that the three-digit number formed can be evenly divided by 7? **ANSWER:** Turn the "6" block upside down, giving you the number "931." This can be evenly divided by 7 ($931/7 = 133$).



Let's make two "Magic Word Squares"! Listed below are the sixteen words you'll be able to read, left-to-right, top-to-bottom, when you've correctly filled in the squares. We've already filled in two of these words. The rest is up to you. Solve the puzzle using trial and error.

- | | | |
|------|------|------|
| AMID | EATS | MATS |
| AMIR | EDGY | NEST |
| AREA | LANE | NINE |
| ARIA | LAST | SING |
| BALM | LIST | TREY |
| BANE | | |

LINK-UPS! Here's a list of 12, one-syllable words, divided into two columns. Turn them into six longer words by linking them together. To do this, draw a line from one word in the left column to one word in the right.

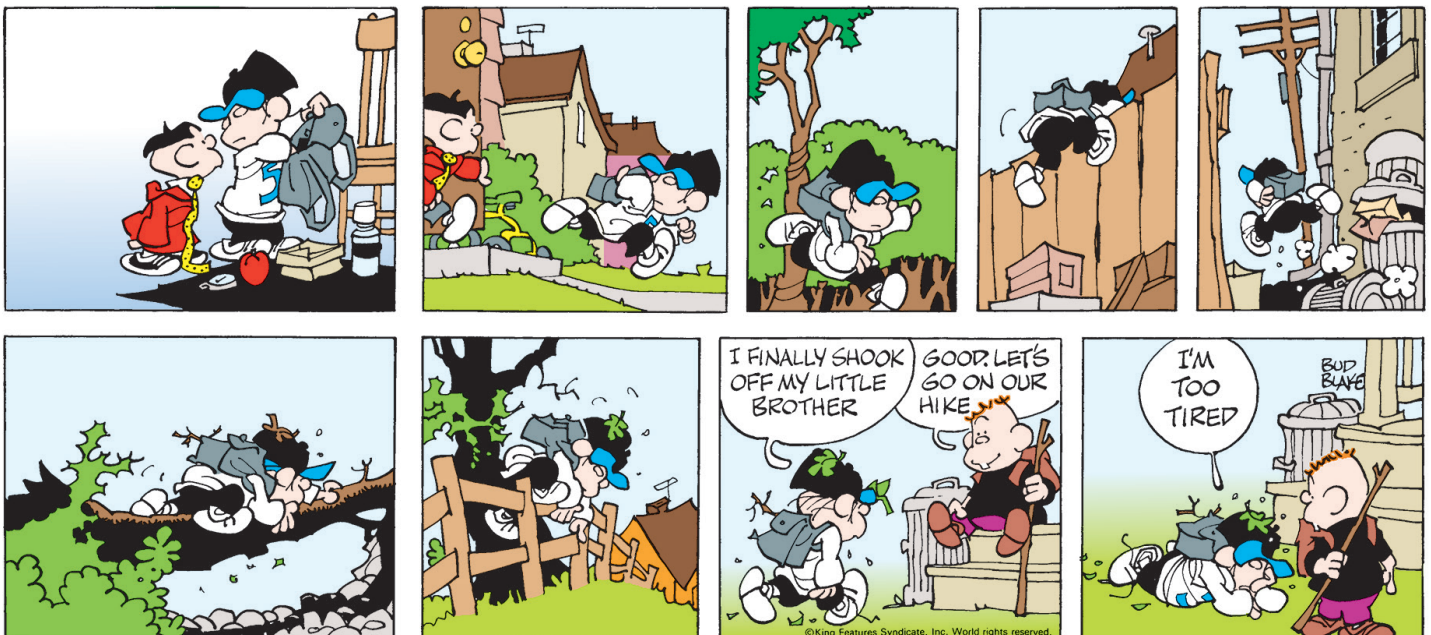
- | | |
|---------|------|
| 1. ASP | EYED |
| 2. GRIM | RATE |
| 3. NIT | ACES |
| 4. PANE | ANT |
| 5. LACK | LED |
| 6. RAMP | HALT |

Answers: Asphalt, grimaces, nitrated, paneled, nitrate, grimey, lackeyed, rampant.

The answer: Square A: 1. Lane. 2. Amid. 3. Sing. 4. Trey. Square B: 1. Bane. 2. Area. 3. List. 4. Mats.

TIGER

by BUD BLAKE



I FINALLY SHOOK OFF MY LITTLE BROTHER

GOOD. LET'S GO ON OUR HIKE

I'M TOO TIRED

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King Crossword

ACROSS

- 1 Kills, slangily
- 5 Make up your mind
- 8 Padlock fastener
- 12 Polio vaccine pioneer
- 13 Born
- 14 Sheltered, at sea
- 15 Reacted to sun glare
- 17 Hot dog holder
- 18 Sugar suffix
- 19 Charged bit
- 20 Chin indentation
- 21 Kreskin's claim
- 22 Montana or Namath

1	2	3	4		5	6	7		8	9	10	11
12					13				14			
15				16					17			
18				19				20				
			21				22					
23	24	25				26				27	28	29
30					31				32			
33				34				35				
			36				37					
38	39	40				41				42	43	44
45					46				47			
48					49				50			
51					52				53			

- 23 Baghdad resident
- 26 Feast
- 30 Frill for Fonteyn
- 31 Bear hair
- 32 Radius neighbor
- 33 In need of laundering
- 35 Bishop's headdress
- 36 Present
- 37 Corral
- 38 Engine
- 41 Fish's flipper
- 42 Fire residue
- 45 Pinnacle
- 46 Hotel chain
- 48 Enticement

- 49 Ostrich's kin
 - 50 A bit too tight
 - 51 Doctrines
 - 52 "Gosh!"
 - 53 Skillets
- DOWN**
- 1 — buco
 - 2 Webpage list, often
 - 3 Chimney channel
 - 4 Tackle the slopes
 - 5 Winning
 - 6 Hammerhead part
 - 7 Slugger Williams
 - 8 Buffoon
 - 9 Lotion additive
 - 10 Ego
 - 11 Hide
 - 16 Unless, in law
 - 20 Opposed
 - 21 They occur in March and September
 - 22 Pickle container
 - 23 "Monty Python" opener
 - 24 Trench
 - 25 — standstill
 - 26 Unopened flower
 - 27 Last: Abbr.
 - 28 Away from WSW

- 29 Pitch
- 31 Only a small number
- 34 Neither mate
- 35 Carte
- 37 Fit of resentment
- 38 Neighbor of Niger
- 39 Piece of work
- 40 Expression
- 41 Notoriety
- 42 Actress Paquin
- 43 Dazzle
- 44 Cronos
- 46 Journey segment
- 47 AOL, for instance

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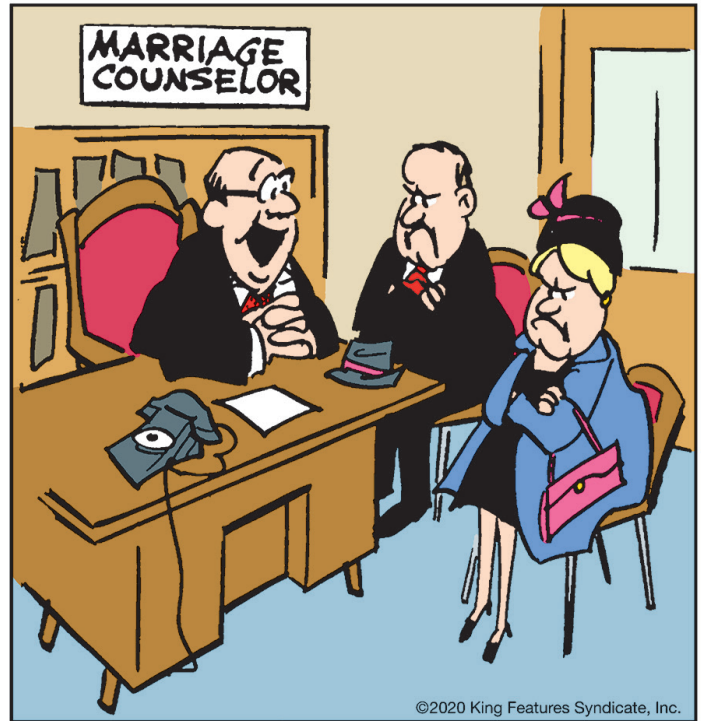
— King Crossword —

Answers

Solution time: 21 mins.

O	F	F	S		O	P	T		H	A	S	P	
S	A	L	K		N	E	E		A	L	E	E	
S	Q	U	I	N	T	E	D		R	O	L	L	
O	S	E		I	O	N			C	L	E	F	T
			E	S	P			J	O	E			
I	R	A	Q	I		B	A	N	Q	U	E	T	
T	T	U			F	U	R		U	L	N	A	
S	T	A	I	N	E	D			M	I	T	E	R
			N	O	W			P	E	N			
M	O	T	O	R			F	I	N		A	S	H
A	P	E	X			L	A	Q	U	I	N	T	A
L	U	R	E			E	M	U		S	N	U	G
I	S	M	S			G	E	E		P	A	N	S

LAFF - A - DAY



"Who wants to scream first?"

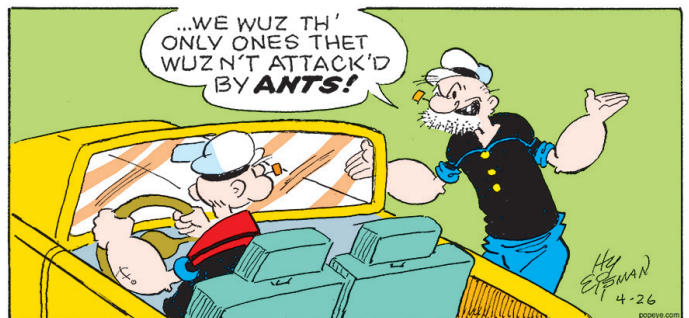
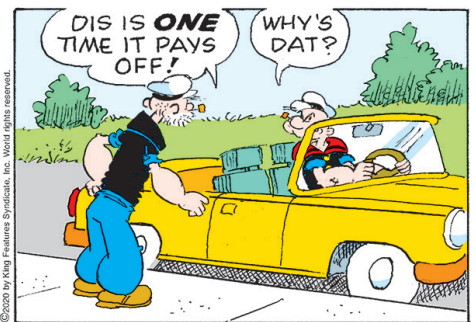
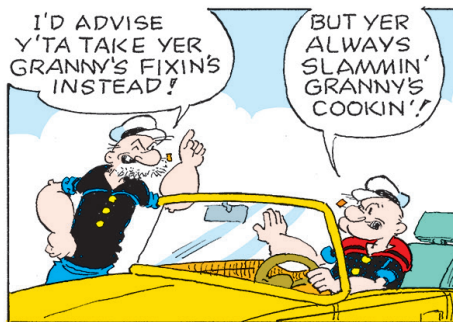
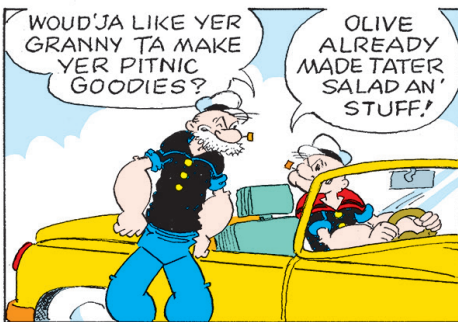
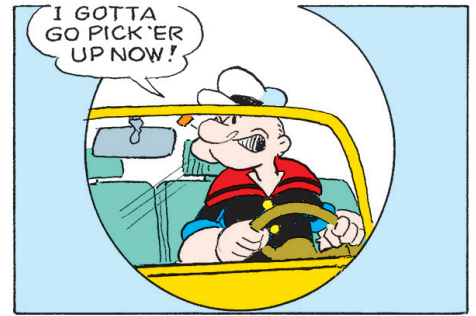
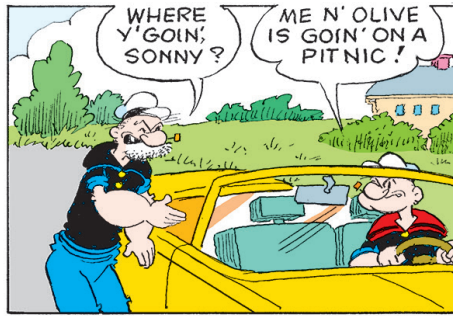
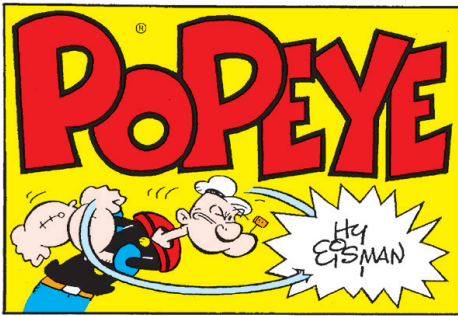
Out on a Limb

by Gary Kopervas



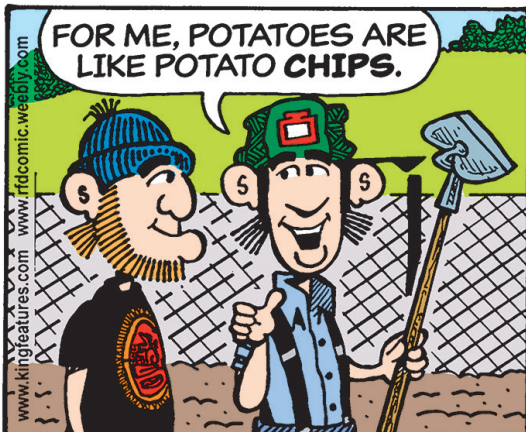
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R.F.D.

by Mike Marland



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Hal Foster's **Prince Valiant**
BY GIANNI AND SCHULTZ

Our Story: THE GENTRIFICATION OF NUDDER, BUP AND IG CONTINUES.

ALETA HAS DECIDED THAT IF THE THREE REFUGEES ARE TO BE PRESENTED TO CAMELOT AS PROPER GENTLEMEN, THEY MUST DO SO MOUNTED.

WITH THAT GOAL IN MIND, SHE LEADS THEM TO TINTAGEL'S ROYAL STABLES. AT HER BEHEST, A GROOM BRINGS FORTH THREE FINE PALFREYS, BUT BEFORE LESSONS CAN BEGIN ...

...THE THREE BEASTMEN BEGIN AN EAGER AND THOROUGH INSPECTION OF THIS STRANGE NEW CREATURE. FINALLY, IN RUDIMENTARY ENGLISH, NUDDER ADDRESSES THE GROOM ...

...VERY NICE, GOOD SIR, BUT NOT HUNGRY NOW. EAT LATER, YES?"

3760

IT IS DECIDED THAT IT WOULD BE BEST TO ALLOW THE GENTLEMEN-IN-TRAINING TO WALK TO CAMELOT.

NEXT:
Home free

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The Spats

by Jeff Pickering

WE SHOULD CHANGE OUR LAST NAME TO "TURNER."

WHAT ABOUT OUR FIRST NAMES?

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CHANGE MINE TO "HEAD" AND YOURS TO "STOMACH."

PICKERING

SENIOR NEWS LINE

by Matilda Charles

Are We Bored Yet?

Being bored isn't good, especially for seniors. We need to keep our brain cells active, even if we can't get out of the house for any mental stimulation due to the coronavirus. And we need to find ways to move each day, even if it's just for 10 minutes at a time, to keep our muscles strong.

Look at YouTube.com for mild in-place exercises for seniors. Go online to find a kids' basketball hoop and soft ball you can hang over the door. Look for a dartboard with magnetic darts. If you have an old Nintendo Wii console, hook it up and get some exercise with the bowling and tennis.

If you have an indoor hobby, call your closest store and ask if they have curbside pickup or can mail supplies to you. Put "online craft tutorials" in your internet browser for new ideas. Tune up your guitar and order new strings. Find your old piano books if you have a piano.

you have a piano.

To keep your brain stretched, if you get a newspaper, do the puzzles, even the ones you normally don't try. Go online for other puzzles you can print out or complete online.

Go to puzzles.usatoday.com for a wide variety of online games. With the crossword puzzles you can choose your skill level (hints versus no hints). Use your keyboard to type in each letter. Try jigsaw puzzles, spelling games, backgammon (play against an opponent or the computer) or mahjong. Also look at Boatload Puzzles (www.boatloadpuzzles.com) for 40,000 crossword puzzles. For real brain stretchers look to Merriam-Webster (www.merriam-webster.com/word-games) or AARP (games.aarp.org). For short-term memory games, look at BrainCurls.com.

Meanwhile, here's a puzzle for you. What is the next letter in this sequence? O T T F F S S _

The answer will be at the end of my

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1. In what sports event is the winner awarded the Coupe des Mousquetaires (The Musketeers' Trophy)?

2. What actor and TV personality from Brooklyn, N.Y., achieved a record of 9-3 with 9 knockouts in a pro boxing career that spanned from 1976-79?

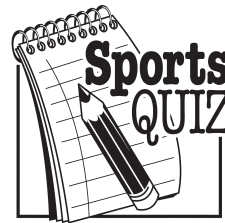
3. In 2010, what Los Angeles Angels first baseman broke his ankle while celebrating his walk-off grand slam?

4. Who spun out Darrell Waltrip on the final lap of NASCAR's all-star race, The Winston, in 1989, igniting an infield brawl between the teams?

5. What star French player was ejected for head-butting Italy's Marco Materazzi in the championship game of the 2006 FIFA World Cup soccer tournament?

6. In 1993, American-born sumo wrestler Akebono Tar made history by becoming the first non-Japanese competitor to achieve what rank?

7. In what year did racing legend



Mario Andretti win his first and only Indianapolis 500?

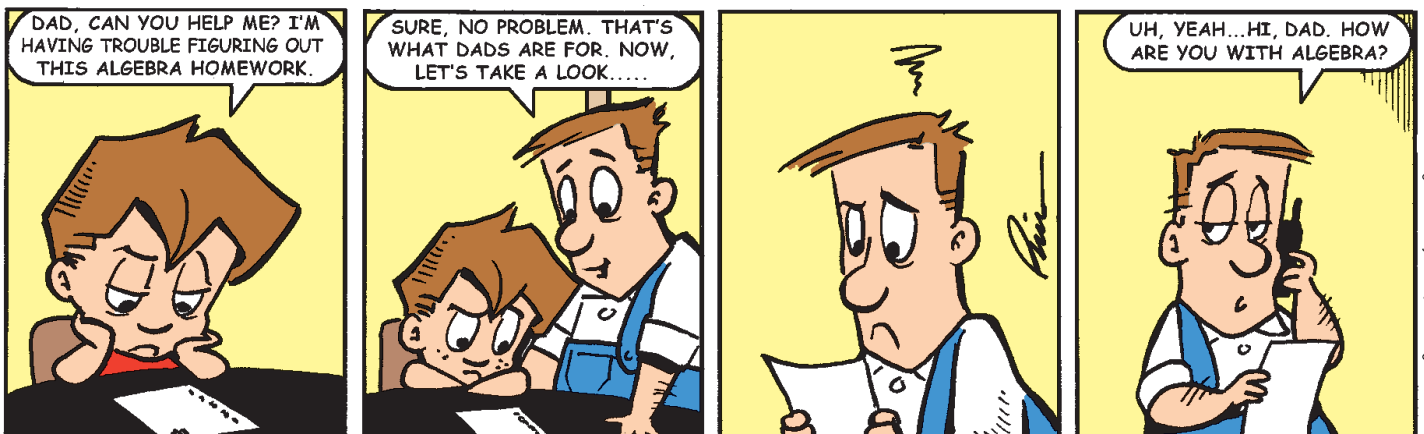
Answers

1. The French Open tennis tournament men's singles event.
2. Tony Danza.
3. Kendrys Morales.
4. Rusty Wallace.
5. Zinedine Zidane.
6. Yokozuna, sumo's highest rank.
7. 1969.

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Amber Waves

by Dave T. Phipps



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CONGRESSMAN
DUSTY JOHNSON
Representing **SOUTH DAKOTA** at large



Thank you to the Moms

Mother's Day will look differently this year. Families will have their Sunday brunch at home and our kids won't be bringing back handmade crafts orchestrated by their gracious teachers who have saved many a dad throughout the years. Friendly reminder dads – Mother's Day is a few days out.

I'd be remiss if I didn't highlight a special mother in my life, my wife Jacquelyn. Those of us with young children have had to take on the role of teacher as schools have been forced to close across the country because of COVID-19. The school's doors may be closed, but the learning hasn't stopped.

Jacquelyn is my hero. She's balanced running a business while taking on the load of homeschooling our three young boys. I help too, of course, but I would be lying if I tried to take half the credit.

Parenting has always been a full-time job, but in the stay-home era of COVID-19, it's a 24/7 deal. No play dates, no school hours, and no babysitters. I'm so grateful for South Dakota's moms – they continue to step up to the plate, especially during times of crisis.

Our moms wear many hats – with many of these moms on the front lines of this pandemic. They're doctors, nurses, bankers, farmers, reporters, grocery clerks – and governors. South Dakota's moms are more than a three-letter word, they are our leaders.

As we look ahead to Mother's Day, I want to say thank you. Thank you to the moms working full-time and teaching their kids at home, to the moms watching kids who aren't their own, and to the frontline mothers putting their own safety at risk to help others. Our state couldn't get through this without you.

3 Weeks Ago

2 Weeks Ago

Last Week

This Week

Confirmed Cases by Country/Region/Sovereignty
312,245 US
126,168 Spain
124,632 Italy
96,092 Germany
90,853 France
82,574 China

Confirmed Cases by Country/Region/Sovereignty
530,006 US
163,027 Spain
152,271 Italy
130,730 France
125,452 Germany
83,096 China

Confirmed Cases by Country/Region/Sovereignty
735,287 US
195,944 Spain
175,925 Italy
152,978 France
143,724 Germany

Confirmed Cases by Country/Region/Sovereignty
1,133,069 US
216,582 Spain
209,328 Italy
183,500 United Kingdom
168,518 France

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Keeping Food Supply Chain Running during COVID-19 Pandemic is Critical

Maintaining a steady, stable supply of food at the grocery stores is an important part of our nation's supply chain that can be easy to take for granted. Because agriculture is South Dakota's number one industry, we are more closely aware of some of the struggles in the food supply chain – particularly for our farmers and ranchers – that can occur. The past several years of low commodity prices, trade disputes and market disparity are prime examples. Despite this, most of us do not question there will be a steady supply of meat, produce and other food stocked on our grocery shelves at all times. Then the COVID-19 pandemic hit, creating new and unprecedented challenges for all sectors of our economy, including our food supply chain.

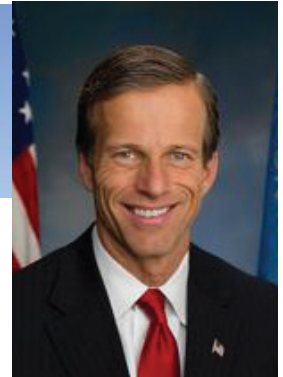
Because of COVID-19 outbreaks, many meat processing facilities have closed down. The Smithfield pork processing plant in Sioux Falls received national attention after a severe COVID-19 outbreak infected hundreds of employees and caused the plant to shut down. And there are examples just like this across the country. As of May 1, approximately 25 percent of our nation's beef packing capacity and 40 percent of our nation's pork packing capacity is idle, with a risk of getting worse. The supply of market-ready cattle, hogs and poultry on farms and ranches has been rapidly building to a breaking point. Producers are doing everything they can to manage the animals in their care during this emergency. They are changing feed rations to slow growth, they are moving animals to other lots and barns and they are slowing the breeding of new livestock, but the clock has run out. As livestock continues to grow, producers are facing a difficult decision of what to do with them if processing facilities are not operating, and unfortunately some of these animals will have to be euthanized.

Fortunately, some action has been taken to help keep the meat supply chain moving. Following a letter I sent to President Trump, the president invoked the Defense Production Act (DPA) to declare meat processing plants as critical infrastructure. Under the Executive Order, the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) is directed to make certain America's meat and poultry processors continue operations uninterrupted to the maximum extent possible. This means that the industry will be able to re-engage employees, working closely with the guidance of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, to make sure these processing plants can be opened safely and efficiently. This should help our farmers and ranchers by eliminating a chokepoint in the food supply system.

I've also been working with administration officials to address the on-farm and on-ranch crisis for producers who are unable to process all of their livestock. On April 26, I wrote to Vice President Mike Pence, who is leading the administration's COVID-19 response, urging him to implement an incident command structure to allow for safe and efficient euthanization of excess livestock.

Our agriculture sector is feeling the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic just like the rest of our economy. They need help, and we've got to continue to work closely with the entire food processing chain to make certain we can continue to put food on the table for American families. I'll continue to work with the administration and stakeholders to protect the health of our food processing workers, and get idle plants up and running as quickly as possible. And I'll continue working to develop a plan to help livestock producers address the crisis on their farms and ranches.

John Thune
U.S. SENATOR - SOUTH DAKOTA



Helping Small Businesses Weather This Storm

The COVID-19 pandemic has had devastating consequences for small businesses. Small business layoffs soared by 1,000 percent in March, with roughly 2 million employees losing their jobs, and that number is rising. Some businesses have closed, while others have been forced to cut employee hours drastically to stay afloat.

To help small businesses weather this storm, Congress created the Paycheck Protection Program as part of the coronavirus response bill we passed at the end of March. And I'm pleased to report that the Senate led the way to make approximately \$300 billion in additional funding available for the program.

The Paycheck Protection Program is simple. It provides low-interest loans to small businesses to help them retain workers during this difficult time. Seventy-five percent of the loans must be used for worker salaries and benefits, while the remaining amount can be used for other expenses such as mortgage interest, rent, and utilities. The portion of the loan spent on salaries and other qualifying expenses can be forgiven completely, again, as long as at least 75 of the loan is used to cover payroll obligations.

A majority of businesses will likely not have to pay back any of their loan. I like to remind business owners to document how they spend their loans to ensure they can maximize the forgiveness.

We've already seen tremendous use of this program. More than 1.6 million small businesses, including thousands throughout South Dakota, immediately took advantage of these loans — so many, in fact, that the \$349 billion originally appropriated for the program ran out completely. Republicans quickly moved to appropriate additional money, but Democrats dragged their heels, forcing the program to go without funding for a week. But Democrats finally agreed to a deal, and the president signed legislation appropriating approximately \$300 billion in additional funding. This has already enabled nearly 1 million additional small businesses to take advantage of the Paycheck Protection Program.

The application process for the loans is simple: Businesses just need to fill out a Paycheck Protection Program borrower form, which can be found at www.sba.gov, and submit it to a lender — likely the bank or credit union they already use. A list of Small Business Administration-approved lenders is also available at www.sba.gov. Approval for the loan usually takes just a few days, and businesses should see the funds within 10 days. For small businesses that don't qualify for the Paycheck Protection Program, or who would prefer another option, there are multiple other relief measures available.

The same legislation that created the Paycheck Protection Program also created the Employee Retention Credit, a refundable tax credit that helps COVID-affected businesses keep employees on the books by reimbursing employers for part of the qualified wages they pay employees, up to \$5,000 per employee. Congress also implemented an employment tax deferral, which allows employers to postpone payment of certain payroll taxes for the remainder of the year. Half of these deferred payroll taxes would be due in December 2021, and the other half would be due in December 2022.

Finally, small businesses can take advantage of the Small Business Administration's Economic Injury Disaster Loan Program, which provides low-interest loans to small businesses that have suffered economic injury as the result of a disaster. The legislation the president signed included funding to replenish this program, which also recently ran out of funding as a result of the pandemic. Small business owners can search "Economic Injury Disaster Loan Program advance" at www.sba.gov for more information on how to apply.

If you have trouble locating information for any of the assistance programs I've outlined, please contact one of my offices for additional guidance or visit www.thune.senate.gov/COVID19.

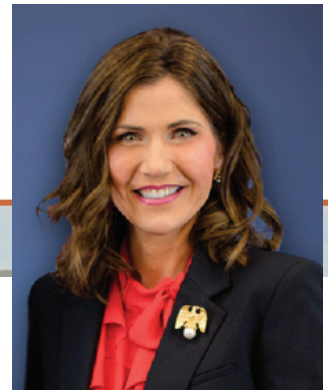
The past few weeks have been a time of unprecedented difficulty for small businesses. Hopefully, the loans and tax relief Congress has made available will provide a lifeline during this challenging period. Small businesses are key to the American economy, creating a substantial number of the new jobs in this country. Before the coronavirus pandemic, small businesses around the country were thriving — and my Republican colleagues and I are committed to ensuring that they thrive once again. We will continue to look for ways to help small businesses weather the rest of the pandemic and get back to doing what they do best — growing and creating jobs.

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SOUTH DAKOTA GOVERNOR
KRISTI NOEM



Getting Back to Normal

I know everyone is eager to get back to their daily routines and dive back into what they love doing. But it's important to remember that some people will never get to return to normal. I lost my Dad at a very young age. That experience greatly changed the path that I was on. Similarly, this COVID-19 pandemic has greatly changed the path so many South Dakotans were on as well.

We knew this virus would be deadly, no matter what we did. But that doesn't change the fact that COVID-19 stole husbands, wives, sons, daughters, and friends from their families and loved ones. These people and their families will never be the same. My heart breaks for them, and Bryon and I will continue to lift them up in our prayers.

What has also been stolen from so many is perhaps our most precious commodity – time. For weeks, the most vulnerable, moms and dads, brothers and sisters, grandparents have been in isolation – separated from friends and loved ones.

Then there are students. Though the vast majority of schools and teachers have been doing well, we also know that there are kids who have totally lost contact with their teachers and schools.

My point is that in addition to the health costs, the social costs of this virus are historic in the worst way.

Since day one, I have pledged to let the science, the facts, and the data on the ground in South Dakota drive all my decision-making. I have been very clear that our people need to take their responsibility for health and safety seriously – that they should be practicing good public hygiene and social distancing. The people of South Dakota have done a tremendous job.

Our initial projections on March 10 showed our hospitalization capacity at an unmanageable place. We took specific, targeted steps to alter our path. We pushed our peak off into the future. We cut it by more than 75%. And today, our hospital capacity greatly exceeds our needs.

In South Dakota, an unprecedented situation like this revealed publicly a principle we hold dear: It's our people that make us great, not our government.

Our state motto is a beautiful one: "Under God, the people rule." That is what our system of government is all about – the people of South Dakota are the source of the power and legitimacy of our government – not the media, not politicians and not political parties. That's a healthy perspective for any elected official to keep in mind.

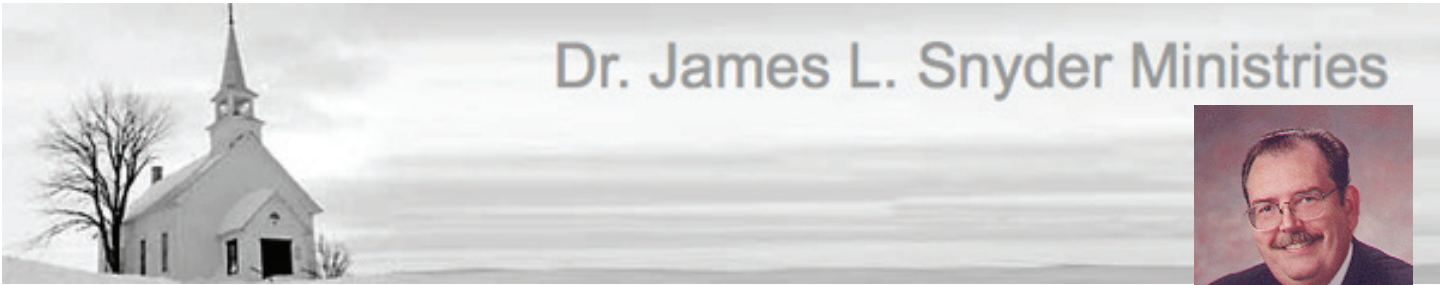
If you've not read it yet, our "Back to Normal" plan doesn't include new government programs, more red tape, proscriptive phases, tight controls, or anything of the like. That's not South Dakota.

Rather, our plan continues to put the power of decision-making into the hands of the people – where it belongs. I trust South Dakotans to continue to exercise common sense, reasonableness, innovation and a commitment to themselves, their families, and – in turn – their communities.

We're not out of the woods yet, but there's a path to get Back to Normal, together. To read the full plan, visit COVID.sd.gov.

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Dr. James L. Snyder Ministries



Casual Is Not Always Appropriate

If confession is good for the soul, I would like to give my soul a little treat.

During this "stay-at-home" phenomenon, the Gracious Mistress of the Parsonage and Yours Truly, have been enjoying our time alone. We certainly have taken advantage of it.

Not too long ago, my wife came up with something to make our time a little more memorable. She called it, casual pajama time.

After breakfast, we would wear our morning casual pajamas. After lunch, it would be our afternoon casual pajamas. And, after supper, it would be our evening casual pajamas.

I never heard of this before, but I joined in with the fun. I knew what time of the day it was by the pajamas I was wearing at that time. There is always something good in everything.

It was early in the afternoon, and my wife took a nap. It was at that time I remembered something she said earlier that morning. For some reason, she forgot to get milk and eggs at the grocery store yesterday. Thinking about that, I had a thought. You would think of all the times I have had thoughts, I would realize that they never come out with anything good.

However, I thought this would be an opportunity to get one over on her. I would sneak out, go to the grocery store, get some milk and eggs, sneak back into the house and put them in the refrigerator. Then, when she woke up, I would say, "Honey, I thought you said we didn't have milk or eggs?"

That would be something I could live with forever and a day.

Being as quiet as I possibly could, I went out to my vehicle and headed for the grocery store. I was chuckling all the way to the store. I could not wait to pull this one over on her.

I got at the store, parked, and began walking towards the entrance. There seem to be quite a few people in the parking lot, and for some reason, everybody was looking at me and smiling or even laughing.

I thought something was happening making people happy. Maybe I just forgot how happy people really are in real life. I joined them in smiling and laughing.

Going into the store, I walked to where the milk and eggs were, and as I was walking, people stopped, looked at me and some smiled, some pointed a finger, and some even laughed. I thought to myself, what a wonderful world we live in when people are always happy and laughing.

I even wore one of those masks that my wife made. Someone was looking at me and smiling I said,

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"My wife made this mask. Doesn't it look wonderful?" To which they laughed almost hysterically. I could not keep from laughing either.

Whatever this thing happening in our world today is, at least some people are taking it on the lighter side. It is wonderful when people are not all bent out of shape, sad, and discouraged. I love to see people smile and laugh.

I knew I did not have much time in the store and had to get home before my wife woke up so I could pull this trick on her. Every time I thought of this, I was smiling on both the inside and the outside. I cannot believe I am actually going to get one over on her.

Walking up to the cashier, I noticed people were still smiling and laughing, and some were even pointing at me. I knew it had to be the mask because it was a great mask that my wife had made.

The cashier greeted me with a very hesitant smile and rang up my items, and I was to pay with my credit card. I made conversation with the cashier and then stuck my hand in my pocket to pull out my wallet.

The problem was, I could not find my pocket. This has never happened before because I always know where my pockets in my pants are. I chuckled a little bit and then happened to look down and discovered I was wearing my casual afternoon pajamas.

Having no pockets in my pajamas, I had no wallet on me and therefore had no way to pay for those items. At this point, I was not laughing, but the people behind me seemed to be laughing even louder.

I begin to understand why people were smiling and laughing and pointing at me. It was not that they were happy so much as it was I looked ridiculous in my afternoon casual pajamas. I have never worn pajamas out in public before, and I promised myself I would never do it again.

I did not know how to pay for those two items. Trying to figure out what to do, someone came up behind me and told the cashier, "Put his items on my card because the entertainment has been worth it."

Everybody behind me was laughing, and I did not know exactly what to do. I looked at the lady and said, "Thank you for this."

"No," she said, "thank you for the entertainment."

Driving out of the parking lot, I could not help but think of a verse of Scripture, "And as ye would that men should do to you, do ye also to them likewise" (Luke 6:31).

Being generous sometimes is a little act of kindness.

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Covid-19 Update: by Marie Miller

Things continue to hold.

We're at 1,137,900 cases in the US. The increase, both in raw number and percentage, is well below yesterday. NY leads with 318,134 cases, holding steady. NJ, with 123,717 cases, is holding about steady in its rate of growth. Remaining top-10 states are as follows: MA – 66,263, IL – 58,505, CA – 53,589, PA – 51,071, MI – 43,191, FL – 35,455, TX – 31,227, and CT – 29,287. These ten states account for 73% of US cases. 3 more states have over 20,000 cases, 7 more have over 10,000, 12 more over 5000, 13 more + DC, PR, and GU over 1000, 5 more over 100, and VI + MP under 100.

Here's the latest on movement in new case reports. Those with substantial numbers of cases which are not showing much change include NY, LA, CA, GA, PA, CO, MI, and WA. States where new case reports are increasing include IL, VA, TX, TN, MD, NC, IN, and IA. States where new case reports are decreasing include NJ, OH, MA, AR, FL, SD, CT, and ID. We'll watch the states showing increases and hope those with decreases continue the decline.

There have been 66,424 deaths in the US. The growth in percentage and raw number showed declines. NY has 24,035, NJ has 7742, MI has 4020, MA has 3846, PA has 2794, IL has 2576, CT has 2436, CA has 2212, and LA has 1950. There are 5 more states over 1000 deaths, 4 more over 500, 18 more + DC over 100, and 14 + PR, GU, VI, and MP under 100.

There's been talk about a class of commonly-used blood pressure medicines raising the risk of serious Covid-19. The drugs are known as ACE-2 inhibitors (ACEIs) and angiotensin-receptor blockers (ARBs); and both are thought to increase expression of ACE-2 receptors on your cells. Since ACE-2 is the part of the cell that SARS-CoV-2 uses to bind to cells in order to initiate infection, there have been concerns these drugs would give the virus more sites for binding and increase the likelihood the cell would become infected. That seemed like a logical leap because it is also apparent that people with high blood pressure are at risk for serious disease, so it would be reasonable to question whether perhaps the problem wasn't the high blood pressure itself, but the medications people take for it.

The ACEIs have names like lisinopril, captopril, and others ending in -pril; the brand names often end in -il Zestril and Prinivil, for example). The ARBs include losartan, valsartan, and others ending in -sartan with brand names like Cozaar and Atacand. I've been reading about this possibility for a couple of weeks now, but have not mentioned it because the last thing I wanted to do is lead someone to stop taking an essential medication without discussing with their physician, certainly not because of something I've said. This is also one of the reasons I recently recommended that, if you read something about a medication you're taking creating risk for you, that you really should discuss with your physician and not simply stop taking it.

There is now news on that front: Papers were published last week in the Journal of the American Medical Association and yesterday in the New England Journal of Medicine from researchers in both China and the US on this subject. The NEJM paper presents the results of a study of more than 20,000 patients in Asia, Europe and North America and indicate there's nothing to worry about for people taking these medications. The drugs had no effect on susceptibility to this infection or to the course of the disease. The China study concurs. So if you've seen warnings about your blood pressure medications, you can relax; they are not placing you at risk. If I had to guess, the reason people with high blood pressure are at risk for serious Covid-19 disease is going to turn out to be the damage the condition does to the linings of blood vessels. Given we know inflammation of this lining (endotheliitis) is a feature of infection, that seems like a reasonable hypothesis as to why high blood pressure is a risk factor.

Slow news day, which is typical of a weekend. Remember that case reporting is a bit wonky on weekends too, so we'll get through tomorrow and then see what Monday brings when the reports catch up. It is a bit difficult to accept that this is the ninth weekend we've been getting together to talk viruses. There are a hundred old jokes about how we have to stop meeting like this; I'm hoping the day comes when we don't need to. It's a way off, I think. Much as I wish that weren't true, let's make good use of the time between now and then to consider what we want things to look like when we're finished with this and then to do something to bring that world about. Today's a good day to start on that project.

In the meanwhile, have a restful Sunday, take care of someone who needs it, and keep yourself healthy. We'll talk tomorrow.

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Area COVID-19 Cases

	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	1542	1635	1685	1755	1858	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

	Apr. 28	Apr. 29	Apr. 30	May 1	May 2
Minnesota	4,181	4,644	5,136	5,730	6,228
Nebraska	3,374	3,784	4,281	4,838	5,326
Montana	451	451	453	453	455
Colorado	14,316	14,758	15,284	15,768	16,225
Wyoming	396	404	415	420	429
North Dakota	991	1,033	1,067	1,107	1,153
South Dakota	2,313	2,373	2,449	2,525	2,588
United States	1,012,583	1,040,488	1,070,032	1,104,161	1,133,069
US Deaths	58,355	60,999	63,019	65,068	66,385

Minnesota	+365	+463	+492	+594	+498
Nebraska	+16	+410	+497	+557	+488
Montana	+2	0	+2	0	+2
Colorado	+437	+442	+526	+484	+457
Wyoming	+7	+8	+11	+5	+9
North Dakota	+49	+42	+34	+40	+46
South Dakota	+68	+60	+76	+76	+63
United States	+24,394	+27,905	+29,544	+34,129	+28,908
US Deaths	+2,100	+2,644	+2,020	+2,049	+1,317

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May 2nd COVID-19 UPDATE

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from Dept. of Health Lab records

No one died in South Dakota from the COVID-19 yesterday, but Brown and Day counties are seeing spikes in their positive cases. Brown County seen nine more positive cases and Day County doubled its positive cases with four more.

In the other counties, Minnehaha had 34, Union 6, Hughes 4, Lincoln 3 and having 1 each were Davison, Roberts and Todd counties

South Dakota:

Positive: +63 (2588 total) (13 less than yesterday)

Negative: +665 (15,503 total)

Hospitalized: +8 (187 total) - 71 currently hospitalized (2 more than yesterday)

Deaths: 0 (21 total)

Recovered: +74 (1759 total) (down 41 from yesterday)

Active Cases: 808 (10 less than yesterday)

Counties with no positive cases report the following negative tests: Bennett +1 (13), Brule 58, Butte +4 (58), Campbell +1 (9), Custer +3 (45), Edmunds +1 (25), Grant +2 (45), Gregory 34, Haakon +2 (17), Hanson +1 (30), Harding 1, Jackson 9, Jones 5, Kingsbury +1 (70), Mellette +1 (12), Perkins 5, Potter +1 (33), Tripp 56, Ziebach +2 (5), unassigned +308 (923).

Brown: +9 positive, +2 recovered (25 of 51 recovered)

Buffalo: +1 recovered (1 of 1 recovered)

Davison: +1 positive (6 total)

Day: +4 (8 total - doubled from yesterday)

Douglas: +1 recovered (1 of 1 recovered)

Hughes: +4 positive (13 total)

Lincoln: +3 positive, +5 recovered (102 of 156 recovered)

Minnehaha: +34 positive, +61 recovered (1446 of 2123 recovered)

Roberts: +1 positive (9 total)

Todd: +1 positive (3 total)

Union: +6 positive, +2 recovered (13 of 27 recovered)

Fully recovered from positive cases (Gained Buffalo, Douglas; lost Davison): Aurora, Bon Homme, Buffalo, Clay, Clark, Corson, Deuel, Douglas, Fall River, Faulk, Hamlin, Hutchinson, Hyde, Lawrence, Marshall, McPherson, Meade, Miner, Oglala Lakota, Sanborn, Spink, Sully, Walworth.

COVID-19 IN SOUTH DAKOTA

Active Cases	808
Currently Hospitalized	71
Recovered	1759
Total Positive Cases*	2588
Total Negative Cases*	15503
Ever Hospitalized**	187
Deaths***	21

The N.D. DoH & private labs report 2,022 completed tests today for COVID-19 with 46 new positive cases, bringing the statewide total to 1,153. NDDoH reports one new death (24 total).

State & private labs have reported 31,547 total tests & 30,394 negatives.

510 ND patients are recovered.

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County	Positive Cases	Recovered Cases	Negative Cases
Aurora	1	1	41
Beadle	21	19	192
Bennett	0	0	13
Bon Homme	4	4	106
Brookings	13	12	364
Brown	51	25	628
Brule	0	0	58
Buffalo	1	1	16
Butte	0	0	58
Campbell	0	0	9
Charles Mix	5	4	88
Clark	1	1	56
Clay	6	6	139
Codington	14	13	496
Corson	1	1	22
Custer	0	0	45
Davison	6	5	308
Day	8	1	58
Deuel	1	1	81
Dewey	1	0	37
Douglas	1	1	26
Edmunds	0	0	25
Fall River	1	1	52
Faulk	1	1	19
Grant	0	0	45
Gregory	0	0	34
Haakon	0	0	17
Hamlin	2	2	70
Hand	1	0	22
Hanson	0	0	30
Harding	0	0	1
Hughes	13	7	251
Hutchinson	3	3	97

Hyde	1	1	17
Jackson	0	0	9
Jerauld	6	5	38
Jones	0	0	5
Kingsbury	0	0	70
Lake	4	3	136
Lawrence	9	9	173
Lincoln	156	102	1484
Lyman	3	2	36
Marshall	1	1	43
McCook	4	3	92
McPherson	1	1	16
Meade	1	1	157
Mellette	0	0	12
Miner	1	1	22
Minnehaha	2123	1446	6577
Moody	5	1	95
Oglala Lakota	1	1	44
Pennington	13	10	757
Perkins	0	0	5
Potter	0	0	33
Roberts	9	4	113
Sanborn	3	3	39
Spink	3	3	97
Stanley	8	1	42
Sully	1	1	13
Todd	3	1	61
Tripp	0	0	56
Turner	17	11	150
Union	27	13	178
Walworth	5	5	49
Yankton	27	21	452
Ziebach	0	0	5
Unassigned****	0	0	923

SEX OF SOUTH DAKOTA COVID-19 CASES

Sex	# of Cases	# of Deaths
Female	1232	6
Male	1356	15

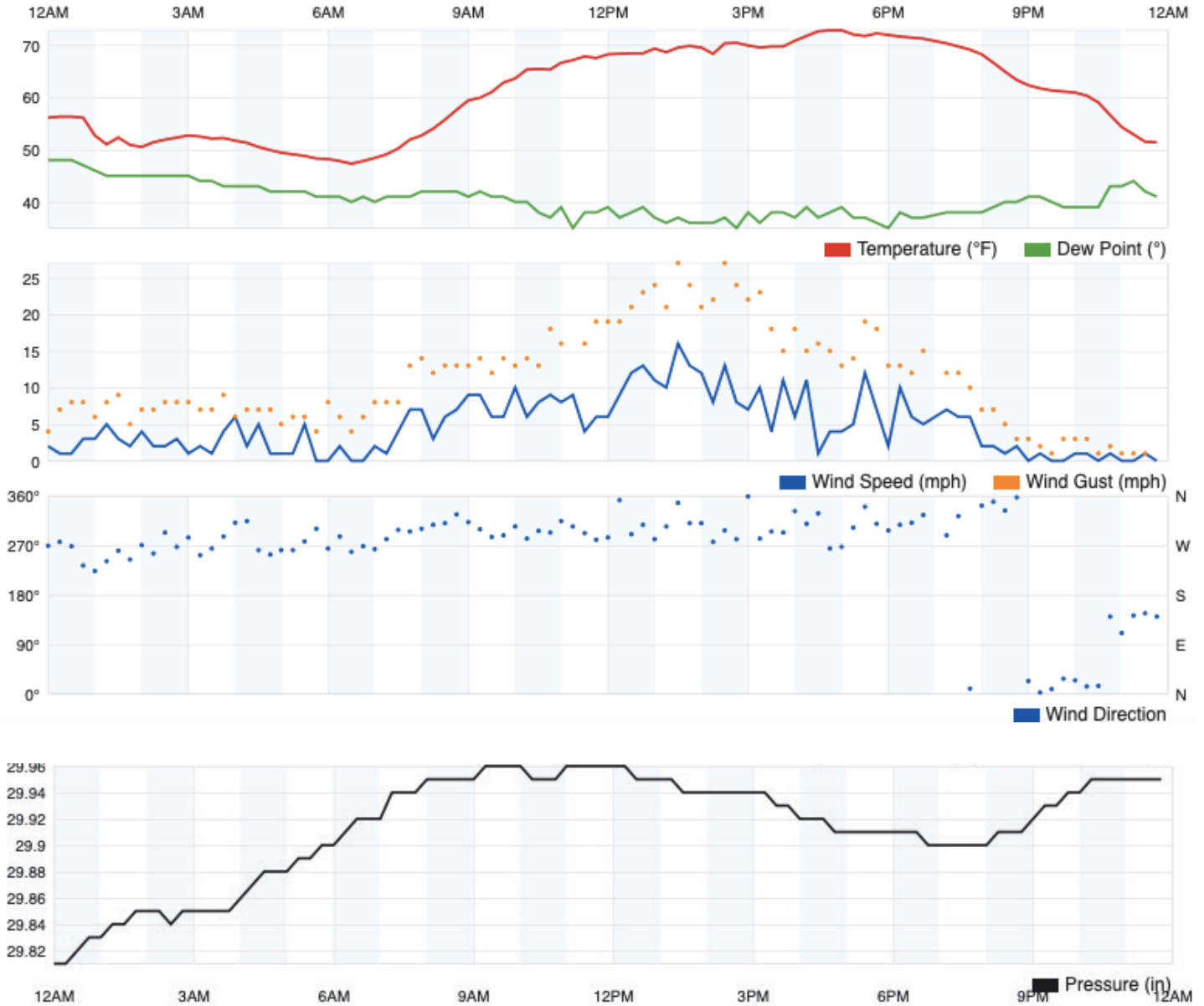
COVID-19 DEATHS IN SOUTH DAKOTA BY COUNTY

County of Residence	# of Deaths
Beadle	2
Jerauld	1
McCook	1
Minnehaha	16
Pennington	1

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Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs



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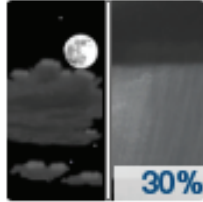
Today



Sunny

High: 66 °F

Tonight



Partly Cloudy
then Chance
Showers

Low: 44 °F

Monday



Showers and
Breezy

High: 57 °F

Monday
Night



Chance
Showers

Low: 40 °F

Tuesday



Mostly Sunny
then Chance
Showers

High: 64 °F

Today:
Partly Cloudy & Mild
Highs 57-77°F

Tonight/Monday:
Mostly Cloudy with a
Good Chance of Rain
and Isolated Tstorms.
Turning Cooler.
Lows 40-54°F
Highs 50-67°F

ISSUED: 3:10 AM - Sunday, May 3, 2020, NWS Aberdeen SD

Today will prove mild and dry, but a system will approach from the west for tonight and Monday. Widespread rain is expected late tonight and through Monday. Amounts up to around a half inch or so are possible. Temperatures will also turn cooler for Monday because of all the clouds and precipitation.

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Today in Weather History

May 3, 1895: A tornado moved northeast from 3 miles northwest of Redfield through Ashton. It was estimated to be on the ground for about 5 miles. Several homes were unroofed and barns destroyed. Tornadoes were spotted in Minnehaha and Bon Homme Counties in South Dakota.

May 3, 1907: The low temperature at Watertown fell to 16 degrees, making this coldest May temperature ever recorded Watertown.

May 3, 1960: Late season snowfall of 3 to 7 inches covered Perkins, Corson, and Campbell Counties. Lemmon reported 7 inches, and 6 miles SE of McIntosh had 6.5 inches. Main roads were very slippery and some rural roads impassable for about one day.

May 3, 1999: Two to four inches of rain fell across southeastern Dewey County causing flash flooding south of La Plant, mainly on Willow Creek. As a result of the flash flooding, several roads were underwater. Highway 212 south of La Plant was flooded for a few hours along with Highway 8, 15 miles south of La Plant. The flash flooding resulted in some road and bridge damage.

May 3, 2002: With low humidity, dry vegetation, and increasing South winds, embers from a day old controlled burn initiated a large grassland fire in the early afternoon hours west of Claremont. South winds of 30 to 40 mph gusting to 50 mph caused the fire to spread quickly. The fire extended to 4 miles wide and spread 4 miles north before it was contained late in the evening. Many trees along with a mobile home, an abandoned house, and an old barn burned. Seven miles of road had to be closed due to poor visibility from smoke. Eleven fire departments with nearly 150 firefighters extinguished the fire. The fire was completely put out during the afternoon hours of the 4th. This fire was one of the largest grassland fires in Brown County history.

1761: Large tornadoes swept through the harbor at Charleston, South Carolina when a British fleet of 40 sails was at anchor. The tornadoes raised a wave 12 feet high, leaving many vessels on their beam ends. Four people drowned.

1868: A tornado traveled 15 miles across Warren and Knox Counties, northwest of Galesburg, Illinois. The small town of Ionia, in Warren County, was destroyed. 16 homes and two churches in the city were leveled, along with 30 homes elsewhere. The tornado killed six people and injured 40 others. Many of the casualties occurred during a church service when the church roof was torn off and dropped onto the congregation.

1895: In Sioux County, Iowa an exceptionally violent tornado, at times 1,000 yards wide packing winds estimated at over 250 mph moved from three miles north of Ireton to two miles southwest of Hull hitting four schools. Two school houses several miles apart were leveled, killing teachers and students. Sibling teachers were killed at two different schools. Adjoining farms were also destroyed with several deaths in homes.

1999: There were 63 tornadoes in Oklahoma, making this the worst outbreak ever to strike the state. In Central Oklahoma alone, eight individual supercell thunderstorms produced 57 tornadoes. Bridge Creek, Moore and southern parts of the Oklahoma City Metro area were hit the hardest. When it was near Moore, Oklahoma, a truck-mounted Doppler radar measured a wind speed of 318 mph, the highest ever observed in a tornado. Forecasters at the Storm Prediction Center in Norman, OK were faced with the unprecedented situation of a major tornado on the ground threatening their location. As a major F5 tornado was approaching the Oklahoma City metro area from the southwest, the SPC notified its backup, the Air Force Weather Agency at Offutt AFB in Omaha, Nebraska that they might have to assume operational responsibility if the tornado approached Norman. The storm remained several miles west of the facility but was visible from the SPC roof. Damage from this single tornado was around one billion dollars, making it the most costly tornado in history. Estimated damage from the entire tornado outbreak was \$1.485 billion, making this the most expensive tornado outbreak ever. 2,314 homes were destroyed, and another 7,428 were damaged. To the north in Kansas, an F4 tornado tracked 24 miles through Sumner and Sedgwick Counties, killing 6, injuring 154, and causing \$146 million in damages. Haysville and Wichita suffered severe damage. A total of 8,480 buildings and homes were damaged or destroyed with, 109 destroyed.

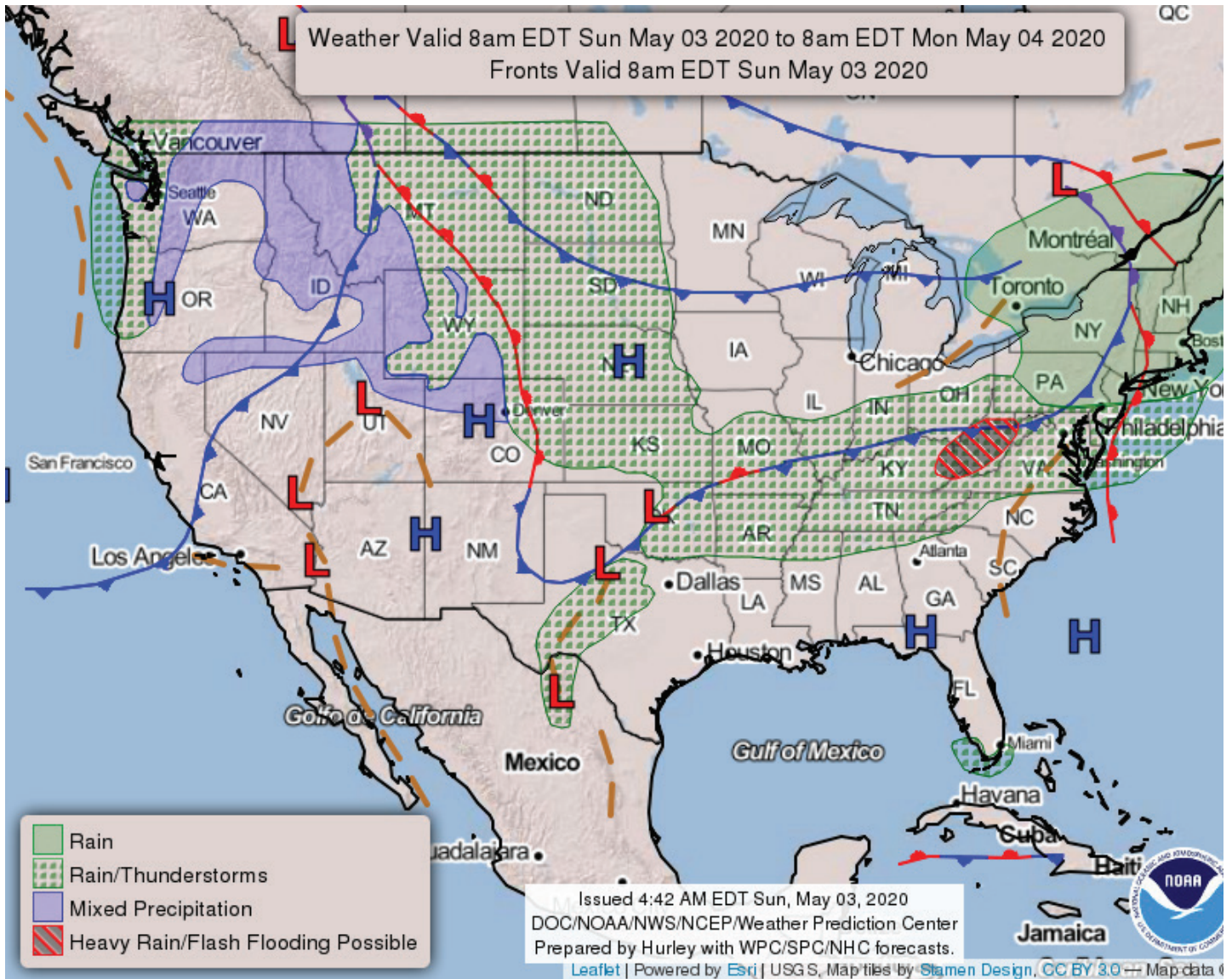
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Yesterday's Groton Weather Today's Info

High Temp: 73 °F at 5:06 PM
Low Temp: 47 °F at 6:30 AM
Wind: 27 mph at 1:24 PM
Precip: .00

Record High: 90° in 1952
Record Low: 13° in 2005
Average High: 65°F
Average Low: 39°F
Average Precip in May.: 0.20
Precip to date in May.: 0.00
Average Precip to date: 4.23
Precip Year to Date: 1.90
Sunset Tonight: 8:44 p.m.
Sunrise Tomorrow: 6:17 a.m.



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DID GOD REALLY CAUSE THE FIRE?

Shortly after a new nightclub was opened near a church, the members decided to call an all-night prayer meeting. While they were praying, a powerful thunderstorm engulfed the city, and lightning struck the club and burned it to the ground.

The owner of the club became angry and decided to sue the church. At the hearing, however, the church denied any responsibility for the destruction of the club.

Confused, the judge exclaimed, "I'm not sure where the guilt may lie. On one hand, the nightclub owner believes in prayer, but – strangely - the members of the church don't."

On one occasion when Jesus was teaching His followers and disciples about eternal life, someone asked, "But who can be saved?" He replied, "Humanly speaking, it is something man cannot do. But with God, all things are possible."

Prayer is asking and receiving. It is not hoping or wishing or wondering. It is receiving God's blessings – whatever they may be. Yet, it is not unusual for Christians to pray, and then be amazed, even surprised, when God answers a prayer that exceeds their faith. How interesting.

Perhaps that's why Jesus made that statement when talking about salvation. Consider this: if God can redeem us from our sinful nature, make us "new creations" and grant us eternal life, can He not do anything else we ask in His name and for His glory?

Prayer: Help us, Father, to have a faith that exceeds our doubts, is stronger than the attacks of Satan, and stronger than any temptation that could ever defeat us. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: Mark 10:27 But Jesus looked at them and said, "With men it is impossible, but not with God; for with God all things are possible."

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2020 Groton SD Community Events

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

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News from the  Associated Press

SD Lottery

By The Associated Press

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) _ These South Dakota lotteries were drawn Saturday:

Dakota Cash

01-03-31-32-33

(one, three, thirty-one, thirty-two, thirty-three)

Estimated jackpot: \$50,000

Lotto America

01-37-40-48-51, Star Ball: 4, ASB: 2

(one, thirty-seven, forty, forty-eight, fifty-one; Star Ball: four; ASB: two)

Estimated jackpot: \$2.4 million

Mega Millions

Estimated jackpot: \$215 million

Powerball

13-16-33-58-68, Powerball: 24, Power Play: 5

(thirteen, sixteen, thirty-three, fifty-eight, sixty-eight; Powerball: twenty-four; Power Play: five)

Estimated jackpot: \$51 million

Active cases of the coronavirus drop by 10 in South Dakota

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — The number of active COVID-19 cases reported in South Dakota dropped by 10 and the state reported no new deaths after eight deaths in the previous two days, health officials said Saturday.

The state reported 63 positive cases of the coronavirus in the last day, raising the total to 2,588. However, the active cases dropped to 818 after 73 patients recovered, the report said. A total of 71 people are currently being treated in hospitals.

Minnehaha County, the state's most populous area, reported 34 new cases for a total of 2,123. The next closest county in the number of COVID-19 patients is Lincoln, with 156. Brown County was up nine cases on Saturday, for a total of 51.

The state had four confirmed deaths in each of the last two days before Saturday's report.

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.

Desert or sea: Virus traps migrants in mid-route danger zone

By LORI HINNANT and ISABEL DEBRE Associated Press

Thousands of desperate migrants are trapped in limbo and even at risk of death without food, water or shelter in scorching deserts and at sea, as governments close off borders and ports amid the coronavirus pandemic.

Migrants have been dropped by the truckload in the Sahara Desert or bused to Mexico's desolate border with Guatemala and beyond. They are drifting in the Mediterranean Sea after European and Libyan authorities declared their ports unsafe. And about 100 Rohingya refugees from Myanmar are believed to have died in the Bay of Bengal, as country after country pushes them back out to sea.

Many governments have declared emergencies, saying a public health crisis like the coronavirus pandemic requires extraordinary measures. However, these measures are just the latest efforts by governments to clamp down on migrants, despite human rights laws.

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"They just dumped us," said Fanny Jacqueline Ortiz, a 37-year-old Honduran travelling with her two daughters, aged 3 and 12.

Ortiz reached the U.S., but American authorities expelled her to Mexico. The Mexican government in turn abandoned the family on March 26 at the lonely El Ceibo border crossing with Guatemala. Ortiz and other migrants on the two-bus convoy were told to avoid the Guatemalan soldiers guarding the border, which was closed due to the pandemic.

"They told us to go around through the mountains, and we slept in the woods," she recalled.

Over the next few weeks, an activist helped Ortiz and others in her group of 20 find a ride to the next border, in Honduras.

This story was produced with the support of the Pulitzer Center on Crisis Reporting.

Since the aftermath of World War II, international and some national laws have protected refugees and asylum-seekers. Even if states have the right to close themselves off for national security, they cannot forcibly return migrants to countries where they will face violence and other dangers, according to Dr. Violeta Moreno-Lax, professor of migration law at Queen Mary University of London.

Yet that is exactly what is happening.

"This is blatantly discriminatory and never justified," said Moreno-Lax. "The pandemic provides the perfect excuse."

The desert deportations have been happening for years in North Africa and beyond, and Europe has been deadlocked on how to handle migration on the Mediterranean since the 2015 migration crisis. In the United States, President Donald Trump made migration a central issue of his winning 2016 campaign and has unsuccessfully promised to put an end to border crossings from Mexico ever since taking office.

But this year, coronavirus has shifted the dynamic and allowed governments to crack down even harder, even as the desperation of those on the move remains unchanged.

In the United States, Trump is using a little-known 1944 public health law to set aside decades-old American immigration law. For the first time since the U.S. asylum system was created in 1980, Mexicans and Central Americans who cross the border illegally no longer even get the chance to apply for asylum. Instead, they are whisked to the nearest border crossing and returned to Mexico within hours; asylum-seekers at official crossings are also blocked.

Nearly 10,000 Mexicans and Central Americans were "expelled" to Mexico less than three weeks after the new rules took effect March 21, according to U.S. Customs and Border Protection. U.S. authorities say the decision was not about immigration but about public health.

Mexico then pushes the migrants further south. Mexico denies that it leaves migrants to fend for themselves, saying it coordinates with their home governments.

The very day Ortiz left El Ceibo, Mexico's secretary for foreign affairs, Marcelo Ebrard, told The Associated Press: "No Central American is put anywhere in southern Mexico.... We are helping them return to their countries, when their countries and the migrant accept return."

But the U.N. High Commissioner for Human Rights last week cited a cascade of borders from Mexico to Panama where thousands of migrants are caught out "in improvised camps, on the streets, or in shelters that have not always implemented health protocols to protect them."

Migrants have also been left stranded in similarly makeshift conditions in the Sahara, after being expelled without warning from detention centers in Algeria and Libya. The expulsions aren't new but have risen sharply as borders closed with the coronavirus.

Groups of dozens are walking 10 to 15 kilometers (6 to 10 miles) through the desert from a desolate no-man's-land called Point Zero to the dusty frontier village of Assamaka in neighboring Niger. There, new arrivals must remain in makeshift quarantine for 14 days. After the quarantine, those from Niger can go home but foreigners are taken to U.N. transit centers in Niger, where they are stuck because air travel is suspended in and out of the country.

At the end of March, more than 800 people arrived in Niger in a single expulsion. Even after Algeria

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announced expulsions would be suspended because the border was closed, more people kept arriving every day under the punishing sun, including 100 earlier last week, according to the U.N.'s International Organization for Migration. More than 2,300 migrants are now stranded in Niger, unable to return home or anywhere else.

In Libya, the migrant detention center in Kufra expelled nearly 900 men and women from April 11 to 15, taking them by truck or bus across hundreds of miles of sand and leaving them either in a remote town in Chad or at a Sahara border post in Sudan, according to Lt. Mohamed Ali al-Fadil, the center's director. Hundreds more came the following week.

Al-Fadil said the center is expediting operations, "deporting more people faster than ever before." He said the expulsions are an attempt to shield migrants from the coronavirus, including those at the shelter. It's not clear if there have been any virus outbreaks at the shelter. Libya, which is embroiled in internal warfare, has limited testing capacity.

"We fear for the migrants inside these shelters," he said. "We must protect them."

Yet the large groups of migrants forced out are in danger not only of the coronavirus but of midday temperatures that can rise to 50 degrees Celsius (120 degrees Fahrenheit) this time of year.

Al-Fadil said the center coordinates with authorities in Chad and Sudan so the migrants aren't abandoned in the desert. But the IOM has said those in Chad lack enough food, water and shelter and must quarantine in an open lot in Ounianga Kébir, a town in northern Chad hardly equipped for mass arrivals.

Tayeb Saleh, a 26-year-old migrant, was expelled from the Kufra detention center in Libya back home to Sudan. He said he and hundreds of other African migrants had languished for weeks at Kufra without clean water or food, awaiting deportation in the desert.

"The situation was unbearable," he said. "I kept thinking if one of us had coronavirus, we would all die."

Saleh was forced in late March into the back of a crowded truck, which then got stuck in the soft sand that swallowed its axle. After three to four days, he arrived in Sudan's capital, Khartoum, where he recently emerged from quarantine in a jam-packed camp. He said he saw a dozen people left in the empty desert zone in Sudan.

Even for migrants who agree to go home and can reach their own borders, there's no guarantee their home countries will accept them. Dozens of Egyptians deported from Libya were abandoned in the desolate border zone because they lacked identity papers, according to Ibrahim Larbid, the director of the Department for Combating Irregular Migration in the eastern Libyan city of Tobruk.

"The Egyptians won't take them back in," he said. "They must be left in neutral territory until they can retrieve their papers." As far as he knows, they're still there, awaiting paperwork that may not come for weeks, if ever.

Tunisia also blocked its own citizens from coming back from coastal Libya, leaving around 900 stranded and sleeping outside near an arid frontier post for weeks until they finally stormed the gates. Red Crescent officials said they expect the issue to flare again as more Tunisians try to return home for the Muslim holiday of Ramadan.

Hundreds of migrants are stuck not only in the desert but also at sea in the Mediterranean and the Bay of Bengal.

As of last week, the Mediterranean is going unpatrolled by rescue boats operated by aid groups. The last two such vessels are lashed together off the coast of Italy along with a ferry holding 180 migrants rescued in April, all of them in a 14-day waterborne quarantine within sight of the Italian town of Palermo.

The boats will ultimately dock. But no country has agreed to take in the migrants, who will stay on the ferry until their fate is decided.

"We've never seen states committing crimes of non-assistance in such a blatant light," said Lorenzo Pezzani, a researcher for Forensic Oceanography, which investigates abuses in migrant rescues. "They've done it before but in a more covert way. But now there's a total disrespect of any kind of humanitarian or legal framework. ... It's really worrying and troubling."

The Libyan coast guard and the Maltese navy both suspended rescues in their own maritime zones, and

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Italy and Libya this month declared their own ports unsafe — meaning any commercial ship that picks up migrants at sea has few places to take them. The best hope for thousands of migrants trying to leave Libya's squalid detention centers or cramped smuggler's warehouses for Europe now lies with commercial vessels that are likely to be reluctant to risk their profits during a global economic crisis.

"Libya is a slow death," said Mohamed Abdullah, a 16-year-old from the war-ravaged Sudanese province of Darfur who lives in a one-room apartment in Tripoli after three years in detention centers. "It's a gradual death of waiting. Yes, there are dangers at sea and then the virus in Europe...but at least death by sea is quick."

That calculation may be wrong for migrants trapped in the Mediterranean with no shelter or hope of rescue, said Marco Martinez, captain of the quarantined Aita Mari rescue ship.

"In winter, in 48 hours you are dead," he said. Now, with gentle winds and warmer weather, "you can make it 4 or 5 days, and you will not have water, no food."

Half a world away, hundreds of Rohingya refugees are also stuck at sea in the Bay of Bengal. Weeks ago, they boarded at least two fishing trawlers, and are now stranded off the coast of Bangladesh.

Fishermen spotted the boats on April 20, and the United Nations refugee agency, UNHCR, said they may have been at sea for weeks without enough food and water. But the Bangladeshi government said it cannot sustain more refugees and still keep a handle on the coronavirus crisis.

Bangladesh's foreign minister, A.K. Abdul Momen, said Bangladesh has already taken in 1.2 million Rohingya and won't take any more.

"The countries whose coasts touch the sea where these boats are have equal responsibility to take care of them, since this is a humanitarian disaster," he said last week. "They only ask Bangladesh, not anyone else, to take the responsibility."

A group of at least 29 managed to land on an island in southern Bangladesh, officials said Sunday. The survivors who made it to Bhasan Char island on Saturday included 15 women and six children, said Tonmoy Das, local chief government official in Noakhali district.

Malaysia has also denied entry to several other boats, each with dozens on board. Survivors of another drifting boat that ultimately made it to shore told the aid group Médecins Sans Frontières that around 100 people died waiting.

In her tiny bamboo home in the giant Rohingya refugee camp at Cox's Bazar in Bangladesh, Rahima Khatun has been sleepless since her daughter left with her grandchildren on an arduous boat journey more than 50 days ago to join her son-in-law in Malaysia. The 60-year-old has not had any contact with her daughter, Nur Begum, since.

"I don't even know whether they're dead or alive," said Khatun, who fled violence in Myanmar.

Though Khatun is not sure which boat her daughter and grandchildren are on, she has heard about the stranded trawlers who were turned back by Malaysia and are being refused entry into Bangladesh.

"If I had wings I would fly and go see where they are," Khatun said, weeping on the phone. "They are not being allowed to enter either Bangladesh or Malaysia — just floating in the middle with no one to help them out."

Many lockdowns ease but Russia, India, UK still struggling

By **FRANCES D'EMILIO, PABLO GORONDI and KEN MORITSUGU** Associated Press

ROME (AP) — From the United States to Europe to Asia, the easing of some coronavirus lockdowns brought millions out of their homes to enjoy the outdoors and warm spring temperatures. Yet the global pandemic is still slicing through the defenses of other nations, causing infections and deaths to march relentlessly higher.

India on Sunday reported more than 2,600 infections, its biggest single-day jump, and new coronavirus cases in Russia exceed 10,000 for the first time. The confirmed virus death toll in Britain was creeping up near that of Italy, the epicenter of Europe's outbreak, even though the U.K. population is younger than Italy's and Britain had more time than Italy to prepare before the pandemic hit.

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There was also worrying news from Afghanistan, where nearly a third tested positive in a random test of 500 people in Kabul, the capital city.

China, which reported two only new cases, is seeing a surge in visitors to newly reopened tourist spots after domestic travel restrictions were relaxed ahead of a five-day holiday that runs through Tuesday.

Nearly 1.7 million people visited Beijing parks on the first two days of the holiday, and Shanghai's main tourist spots welcomed more than 1 million visitors, according to Chinese media. Many spots limited daily visitors to 30% of capacity or less to keep some social distancing in place.

Italians are counting down the hours until Monday, when parks and public gardens were re-opening nationwide for strolling, jogging or bike riding. But with sunshine and warm temperatures across the country, many were outside in force Sunday, walking down streets and chatting on sidewalks. Many had masks, but in Rome, some lowered them to talk with friends or neighbors.

Despite the easing, Italians will still have to stay a meter apart, picnics are not allowed and playgrounds will remain closed. Prime Minister Giuseppe Conte has warned that if the rate of contagion starts rising again, such freedoms will be curtailed.

In Spain, many ventured out this weekend for the first time since its lockdown began on March 14.

"I feel good, but tired. You sure notice that it has been a month and I am not in shape," runner Cristina Palomeque said in Barcelona.

In Britain, Prime Minister Boris Johnson is under pressure to reveal how the country will leave the lockdown that began March 23. The restrictions are due to last at least until through Thursday, but with hundreds of deaths still being reported daily, it's unclear how the country can safely loosen the restrictions. Britain over the last two days reported double the number of deaths that both Spain and Italy reported.

While Johnson has said Britain is past the peak of its coronavirus outbreak, his Conservative government is facing sharp criticism as it becomes clear that Britain will have one of the highest number of confirmed COVID-19 deaths in the world. British medical workers have also denounced what they call is a shortage of protective equipment.

Masks were worn widely around the world, from runners in Spain to beach-goers in the southern United States. In New York City's Central Park, joggers moved past each other and a steady stream of folks left tips for a trio working their way through a set of jazz standards.

"It's great to have an audience after all these weeks," saxophonist Julia Banholzer said. "All my dates have been canceled through September, and I don't know if any will come back this year."

Neighboring New Jersey reopened state parks, though several had to turn people away after reaching a 50% limit in their parking lots. Margie Roebuck and her husband were among the first on the sand at Island Beach State Park.

"Forty-six days in the house was enough," she said.

The divide in the United States between those who want lockdowns to end and those who want to move more cautiously extended to Congress.

The Republican-majority Senate will reopen Monday in Washington, D.C., while the Democrat-controlled House of Representatives is staying shuttered. Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell's decision to convene 100 senators gives President Donald Trump, a Republican, the imagery he wants of America getting back to work, despite health worries and a lack of testing.

In India, air force helicopters showered flower petals on hospitals in several cities Sunday to thank doctors, nurses and police who have been at the forefront of the battle against the pandemic. U.S. Navy and Air Force fighter jets flew over Atlanta, Baltimore and Washington on Saturday in honor of health care workers.

The number of confirmed cases in India neared 40,000 as the country of 1.3 billion people marked the 40th day of a nationwide lockdown that has upended lives, cost millions of jobs and left millions of day laborers in a desperate search for food and shelter. The official death toll reached 1,323.

Afghanistan's health ministry said Sunday that 156 people were confirmed positive out of 500 randomly tested in Kabul, the capital. Spokesman Wahid Mayar called the results concerning and said more cases would surely be found if the government was able to conduct more tests.

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Russia announced 10,633 new infections on Sunday, nearly double the new cases reported a week ago. More than half of Russia's new cases were in Moscow, where concern is rising about whether the capital's medical facilities will be overwhelmed.

A Russian epidemiologist, however, said the sharp increase in coronavirus cases reflected increased testing. Alexander Gintsburg of the Gamaleya Research Center for Epidemiology and Microbiology was quoted by the Interfax news agency as saying the increasing number of infections does not indicate a deepening pandemic, noting that testing has doubled over the past 10 days.

Russia has reported 1,222 virus deaths among 124,000 infections, numbers that health experts widely believe undercount the true toll of its outbreak.

The virus has infected 3.4 million people and killed more than 244,000 worldwide, including leaving more than 66,000 dead in the United States, according to a count by Johns Hopkins University. Europe has seen more than 139,00 confirmed virus deaths, with more than 28,000 each in Italy and Britain and around 25,000 each in France and Spain.

Health experts warn that a second wave of infections could hit unless testing is expanded dramatically. But there are enormous pressures to ease lockdowns, since the weeks-long shutdown of businesses around the world has plunged the global economy into its deepest slump since the 1930s and has wiped out millions of jobs.

The Latest: Swedish agency says EU studying remdesivir

By The Associated Press

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

TOP OF THE HOUR:

— A Swedish agency says the European Union is studying on a rapid schedule whether the drug remdesivir could be used for treatment.

— Italy counts down until restrictions are loosened after two months of nationwide lockdown, while South Korea and Spain will further loosen measure this coming week.

— Pope Francis calls for international cooperation on the finding a vaccine.

STOCKHOLM — The Swedish national drug and medicine supervision agency says the European Union is investigating on a rapid schedule whether the use of the drug remdesivir could be allowed for treating the coronavirus within the 27-nation bloc following a similar decision in the United States.

The Swedish Medical Products Agency's infection department director, Charlotta Bergqvist, told Swedish broadcaster TV4 that the introduction of remdesivir with is now being studied with a high priority within the EU and a decision may be reached "in a few days."

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration recently authorized emergency use of remdesivir on people hospitalized with severe COVID-19. The drug was originally developed for treatment of Ebola and produced by the California-based Gilead Sciences Inc.

Clinical trials have showed the drug has helped to shorten the recovery time for people who were seriously ill.

ROME — Italians are counting down the hours until they regain some measures of personal freedom after two months of nationwide lockdown to contain Europe's first outbreak of COVID-19.

Starting Monday, parks and public gardens can reopen for strolling, jogging or biking. But people will have to stay a meter apart, ruling out picnics and playgrounds.

Italians were already outside in large numbers Sunday, walking down streets and chatting on sidewalks. Many were equipped with masks, but in Rome, some lowered them to talk.

Experts advising the government have warned citizens against lowering their guard, and Premier Giuseppe

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Conte cautioned that freedoms could be curtailed if the rate of contagion starts rising again.

Restaurants and cafes will be allowed to offer customers takeout. Takeout coffee in Italy never really caught on in a big way, since knocking down a tiny espresso at the cafe's counter is a time-honored social tradition. So bars might have to scramble to order more plastic cups.

Brief funerals services are now allowed, but no more than 15 masked mourners can attend.

In Milan, some seats on trams had stenciled warnings saying they must be left open. Cash-strapped transit systems are pleading for aid from the central government to ensure enough drivers and vehicles to meet safety distancing rules.

SEOUL, South Korea — South Korea says it'll further relax its social distancing guidelines amid a continued slowdown of new coronavirus cases there.

Health Minister Park Neung-hoo said Sunday the government will allow public facilities to reopen in phases starting Wednesday.

He says public parks, outdoor sports and leisure facilities and museums will reopen earlier than welfare centers, public theaters and concert halls.

Park says schools will have students back to their classrooms in phased steps. Currently, South Korean students are taking classes online.

Earlier Sunday, South Korea reported 13 additional cases, taking the country's total to 10,793 with 251 deaths.

VATICAN CITY — Pope Francis is calling for international collaboration in the search for a vaccine and treatment for COVID-19.

Speaking from the Apostolic Palace library on Sunday after delivering his blessing, Francis stressed the importance of guaranteeing "universal access to the essential technologies that allow every infected person, in every part of the world, to receive the necessary health care."

Some cross-country research is already underway to develop a safe, effective vaccine, and scientists and doctors in various nations have been sharing experiences in using different drugs to treat patients.

The pope also invited faithful of all religions to spiritually unite in prayer, fasting and works of charity on May 14 to "implore God to help humanity to overcome the coronavirus pandemic."

MADRID — Spaniards are enjoying their second day of outdoor exercise while preparing for further loosening of lockdown measures.

Spanish health officials reported the lowest daily death toll in six weeks on Sunday and new confirmed infections dropped to a low not seen since a state of emergency was declared March 14.

Government expert Fernando Simón says Spain now has the lowest number of new cases among Europe's seven hardest-hit countries, but insists the virus isn't defeated.

Barcelona's beachfront promenade was again packed, making it impossible in some spots to maintain the 2-meter social distancing rule.

Spain will majorly rollback lockdown measures Monday. Eateries will be able to serve customers who have placed takeaway orders. Shops under 400 square meters can reopen for appointments as long as there is always a 1-to-1 ratio of customer to worker. Face masks will be obligatory on public transport.

In total, Spain has reported more than 217,400 cases and more than 25,260 deaths.

BANGKOK — Residents of the Thai capital Bangkok strolled in its parks, booked haircuts and stocked up on beer as they enjoyed their first day of eased restrictions that were imposed weeks ago to combat the spread of COVID-19.

The top perk in a city famous for its eateries may have been the reopening of restaurants. But it was not clear how many were actually serving seated customers again, since guidelines would make it hard for many to turn a profit.

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There was also a partial lifting on the sale of beer and other alcoholic drinks that will allow takeaway purchases, even while bars remain closed.

KABUL, Afghanistan — Afghanistan's public health ministry announced Sunday that 500 random coronavirus tests in the capital revealed more than 150 positive results, raising fears that the virus may be spreading faster than originally thought.

Ministry spokesman Wahid Mayar called the results from Kabul "concerning" and said people must remain in their homes to slow the spread. He said the country's actual infection rate would likely increase as testing becomes more available.

Afghanistan has thus far taken close to 12,000 samples, of which more than 2,700 have been positive, and 85 people have died.

Kabul and most other cities are in lockdown.

Afghanistan has also received more than 250,000 refugees who have returned from Iran, the country hardest hit by coronavirus in the region. There are growing fears that the country's health care system, devastated by four decades of war, will be woefully unprepared for a major outbreak.

MOSCOW — Russia reported more than 10,000 new cases of coronavirus infections on Sunday, the first time the country's daily tally reached five figures.

More than half of the 10,633 new cases reported were in Moscow, where concern is rising about whether the capital's medical facilities will be overwhelmed.

A Russian epidemiologist says the sharp increase in coronavirus infection cases reflects increased testing.

Alexander Gintsburg of the Gamaleya Research Center for Epidemiology and Microbiology was quoted by the Interfax news agency as saying the case increase does not indicate a deepening pandemic, noting that testing has doubled over the past 10 days.

Russia has recorded more than 134,000 coronavirus infections overall and 1,420 deaths.

AMMAN, Jordan — The U.N. children's agency on Sunday urged six Middle East countries to greenlight special polio and measles vaccination campaigns put on hold because of the coronavirus pandemic.

UNICEF says the polio campaigns are on hold in Syria, Sudan, Yemen and Iraq, while measles vaccinations are suspended in Iraq, Lebanon, Yemen and Djibouti.

UNICEF says nearly 10.5 million children under the age of five risk missing their polio vaccinations. Nearly 4.5 million children under 15 could miss their measles vaccinations.

Routine vaccinations for other diseases like rubella and diphtheria are continuing, but special campaigns were put on hold because of overwhelmed health systems or governments wanting to avoid crowding at clinics.

UNICEF's Ted Chaiban says immunization is "absolutely critical" and possible if safety measures are taken.

The agency says the needed vaccines are available and that it's providing protective equipment.

NEW DELHI — The Indian Air Force on Sunday conducted flypasts and showered flower petals on hospitals across different cities including the capital of New Delhi as part of the Armed Forces' efforts to thank doctors, nurses and police personnel who have been at the forefront of the country's battle against the pandemic.

Coronavirus cases in India have neared the 40,000 mark as the country of 1.3 billion enters the 40th day into a nationwide lockdown. The country's official death toll has exceeded 1,300.

For almost six weeks, Indian officials have sealed state borders, halted transportation and shut airspace and most businesses.

The lockdown was supposed to end Monday, but has been extended another two weeks with a few relaxations. While the spread of the virus has slowed, the lockdown has come at the enormous cost of upending lives and millions of lost jobs.

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BEIJING — China residents are flocking to tourist sites, many newly reopened, during a five-day holiday that runs through Tuesday.

Nearly 1.7 million people visited Beijing parks on the first two days of the holiday, and Shanghai's main tourist spots welcomed more than a million visitors, according to Chinese media reports.

The surge comes after a relaxation of domestic travel restrictions as the coronavirus outbreak slows in mainland China and the government tries to reboot the economy. China reported just three new cases in the last two days.

The number of people traveling and visiting sites remains lower than an average year. Many sites are requiring advance reservations and limiting the number of daily visitors to 30% of capacity or less. Popular destinations such as the Forbidden City, the ancient imperial palace in Beijing, are sold out.

BEIJING — Chinese health authorities say two new coronavirus cases were confirmed Saturday, continuing a downward trend since the government took steps to cut the number of people arriving from overseas.

One new case was in the inland Shanxi province, west of Beijing, and the other was an imported one in Shanghai. China's official confirmed case count stands at 82,877. Most of the patients have recovered and been discharged from hospitals.

China reported no new deaths Saturday and has recorded just one in the past two weeks. The country's official death toll has reached 4,633.

The government has blocked virtually all foreigners from entering the country and sharply curtailed the number of international flights, making it difficult for Chinese citizens to return from overseas too.

North and South Korean troops exchange fire along border

By HYUNG-JIN KIM Associated Press

SEOUL, South Korea (AP) — North and South Korean troops exchanged fire along their tense border on Sunday, the South's military said, the first such incident since the rivals took unprecedented steps to lower front-line animosities in late 2018.

Violent confrontations have occasionally occurred along the border, the world's most heavily fortified. While Sunday's incident is a reminder of persistent tensions, it didn't cause any known casualties on either side and is unlikely to escalate, observers said.

The Joint Chiefs of Staff in Seoul said in a statement that North Korean troops fired several bullets at a South Korean guard post inside the border zone. South Korea responded with a total of 20 rounds of warning shots on two occasions before issuing a warning broadcast, it said.

South Korea suffered no casualties, the military said. Defense officials said it's also unlikely that North Korea had any casualties, since the South Korean warning shots were fired at uninhabited North Korean territory. The North's official Korean Central News Agency, or KCNA, did not immediately report about the incident.

A preliminary South Korean analysis showed that North Korea's firing wasn't likely a calculated provocation, though Seoul will continue examining whether there was any motivation for the action, a South Korean defense official said. He spoke on condition of anonymity, citing department rules.

Farming activities around the North Korean area where the firing occurred continued throughout Sunday and North Korea's military didn't display any other suspicious activities after the gunfire, the official said. He said there was a thick fog in the area at the time of the incident.

Later Sunday, South Korea sent a message to North Korea to try to avoid an escalation, but the North did not immediately reply, according to South Korea's military.

The exchange of fire came a day after North Korea broadcast video of its leader, Kim Jong Un, reappearing in public after a 20-day absence amid intense speculation about his health.

KCNA said Kim attended Friday's ceremony marking the completion of a fertilizer factory near Pyongyang along with senior officials. State TV showed Kim smiling and walking around factory facilities.

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Kim earlier vanished from the public eye after presiding over a Politburo meeting of the ruling Workers' Party on April 11 to discuss the coronavirus. Speculation about his health began swirling after he missed an April 15 event commemorating the birthday of his grandfather and state founder, Kim Il Sung, something he had never done since inheriting power upon his father Kim Jong Il's death in late 2011.

The Korean Peninsula remains split along the 248-kilometer (155-mile) -long, 4-kilometer (2.5-mile) -wide border called the Demilitarized Zone. It was originally created as a buffer after the end of the 1950-53 Korean War. But unlike its name, an estimated 2 million mines are peppered inside and near the DMZ, which is also guarded by barbed wire fences, tank traps and combat troops on both sides.

Under a set of agreements to reduce border tensions reached in September 2018, the two Koreas destroyed some of their front-line guard posts and began removing mines from the DMZ later that year. But the efforts stalled amid a deadlock in negotiations between Kim and President Donald Trump meant to convince North Korea to give up its nuclear arsenal. The diplomacy hasn't made any headway since the second Kim-Trump summit in Vietnam in early 2019 broke down due to disputes over U.S.-led sanctions on North Korea.

Earlier this year, North Korea carried out a slew of missile and other weapons tests, but they were short-range and none posed a direct threat to the U.S. mainland.

The last time there was gunfire along the Korea border was in November 2017, when North Korean soldiers sprayed bullets at a colleague fleeing to South Korea. The defector was hit five times, but survived and is now living in South Korea. South Korea didn't return fire.

Previously, the two Koreas traded gunfire along the DMZ numerous times, but no deadly clashes have occurred in recent years. A 2015 land mine blast that maimed two South Korean soldiers pushed the Koreas to the brink of an armed conflict. South Korea blamed North Korea for the explosion.

Scrub Hub to the rescue: 4 women succeed where UK stumbled

By DANICA KIRKA Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — They just wanted to help. But they created a movement.

Four women from London's Hackney Wick neighborhood responded to the coronavirus pandemic by organizing volunteers who so far have churned out more than 3,800 sets of scrubs for health care workers after Britain's National Health Service was unable to provide enough of the pajama-like garments.

More importantly, they helped organize a nation, putting together a template for making basic personal protection equipment, or PPE, with organizational ideas and a pattern for the scrubs so others could do the same. Now some 70 "Scrub Hubs" with more than 2,200 volunteers are busily sewing away from Scotland to Wales.

"Very quickly, we discovered that Hackney was not just the (only) place where PPE was needed," said one organizer, Brooke Dennis, 33. "It was needed all across the land."

The story of how four women used social media to create and deliver desperately needed medical supplies around the U.K. began with a request from a single doctor: I need scrubs to do my job. Can anyone help?

That surprised charity worker Maya Ilany, 29. The idea that the NHS might not have enough of something so basic startled her. She googled the doctor. "I thought: It's a joke," she recalled.

It wasn't.

Medical staff across the world have struggled to obtain enough personal protective equipment, including face shields, gloves and masks, to protect themselves from the virus as they work to save lives. As the crisis deepened, the situation only got worse, even as the British government insisted it had done all it could amid international shortages and disrupted supply lines.

Simple cotton scrubs are in short supply as COVID-19 patients stretch hospital resources and doctors who don't normally wear scrubs don the baggy garments because it's easier to toss them into laundry bags before heading home on public transport to their families.

Scrub Hub responded. A decade of government austerity following the global financial crisis led to cut-backs at Britain's NHS, hurting its ability to respond to the coronavirus outbreak. In addition, when warnings

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about the pending pandemic hit Britain early this year, the government's top policy planners were focused on preparations for the country's historic Jan. 31 exit from the European Union.

"I think they had their blinkers on," said Mark Johnson, an expert on the NHS and supply chains at Warwick Business School.

Scrub Hub, on the other hand, could focus on a single thing: making scrubs.

"Small is beautiful because you don't have to coordinate a bunch of different departments and a bunch of different trusts and a bunch of different people," Johnson said. "And it's far, far easier to coordinate on that scale locally."

Scrub Hub's founders, none of whom knew each other five weeks ago, made contact during the early days of the crisis by using WhatsApp message groups to see if anyone in Hackney Wick needed help.

Many of the requests were random. Can anyone deliver groceries? Does anyone have a skateboard? And then there was the request for scrubs.

Ilany, who knew how to organize campaigns, teamed up with Annabel Maguire, 31, who had expertise in buying fabric in bulk. The group soon included Rebecca Zehr, 47, a creative pattern cutter, and Dennis, who runs Make Town, a textiles and craft studio in east London that has morphed into the beating heart of Scrub Hub.

Designers, costume assistants and other creative types with time on their hands after the government ordered non-essential workers to stay home stepped forward to help. Crowdfunding paid for the materials.

Scrub Hub went a step further, putting all this organization into an easy-to-follow open source document that showed others how to do what they had done. Word spread. Scrub Hub figured the government would step in and take responsibility.

They are still waiting.

"The one little group spawned into many, many, many others, and it's created a fantastic little community," Maguire said. "But it's really, really bad news that we were ever in a situation where the NHS ... didn't have the supplies it needed at such a critical time."

The volunteers are glad to help, but they are frustrated.

Ilany said just one request from a local hospital could use up the Hackney Wick group's entire production capacity of about 100 sets of scrubs a week. But then what about the individual doctors or hospice workers who ask for help?

"How do you decide?" Ilany said. "Do you prioritize a hospital that wants to have 100 scrubs or do you go for a doctor who writes you a single email saying, 'I'm really desperate. Can you help me?'"

Cycle power: Bikes emerge as a post-lockdown commuter option

By ARITZ PARRA Associated Press

MADRID (AP) — Halfway through his 30-minute bike ride to work, police ordered Juan Pasamar to dismount, accusing him of breaking Spain's coronavirus lockdown rules by exercising in public. The officers were not buying his explanation he was commuting to his job outside of Zaragoza, the northern city where he lives.

"You have a car, don't you? Why don't you use that?" he said he was asked.

Pasamar eventually had to hire a lawyer to convince police that the government had not banned cycling during the lockdown.

As countries seek to get their economies back on track after the devastation wrought by the coronavirus pandemic, bicycle use is being encouraged as a way to avoid unsafe crowding on trains and buses.

Cycling activists from Germany to Peru are trying to use the moment to get more bike lanes, or widen existing ones, even if it's just a temporary measure to make space for commuters on two wheels.

The transition to more bike-friendly urban environments "is necessary if we want our cities to work," said Morton Kabell, who co-chairs the European Cyclists' Federation.

"A lot of people will be afraid of going on public transportation, but we have to get back to work someday. Very few of our cities can handle more car traffic," he said.

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In addition to bike lanes separated by curbs, Kabell backs subsidizing electric bicycles, which could encourage commuters who have longer or hilly journeys.

The benchmarks are Copenhagen, the capital of Denmark, where half of the daily commuters are cyclists, and the Netherlands, with its vast network of bike lanes.

Still, countries around the world are catching up at different speeds.

The French government asked cycling activist Pierre Serne to draw up a plan for when its lockdown ends May 11. His recommendations, including bicycle lanes separated from other vehicles at an estimated cost of 50,000 euros per kilometer (\$32,000 per mile), have been submitted to the Transportation Ministry.

For now, France has said it will subsidize riders up to 50 euros (nearly \$55) for repairs so the French can get their bicycles ready for post-lockdown rides.

In Berlin, the Friedrichshain-Kreuzberg council simply painted yellow lines on the some roads to take space from car lanes. This bike infrastructure builds on what is called "tactical urbanism" — low-cost changes that are technically simple and reversible, and they can make an immediate difference.

Similar initiatives are popping up elsewhere. Officials in Lima, Peru; Barcelona, Spain; and Milan, Italy, are speeding up plans to expand bike paths or take space from cars or current parking sites.

In Bogota, where bicycles are used mostly by Colombia's blue-collar workers, Mayor Claudia López has urged everybody returning to work this week to cycle instead of using public transportation, which is now operating at 35% of capacity.

With many U.S. nonessential businesses closed, there is little point now in cycling that isn't recreational. But cities like Oakland, San Francisco and New York are closing some streets to traffic to allow room for runners and cyclists.

Pedro Díaz, a member of Pedalibre, a Madrid cycling club, sees this as a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to take over space from cars and resist giving it back when the pandemic ends.

"If we wait for proper infrastructure for bicycle lanes, we'll need a municipal plan, which will take at least four years to be designed and get approved," Díaz said. "This way, it's just a matter of putting a fence and stopping cars from using a lane. Then it will be a fait accompli."

If arguing for environmentally friendly transportation was a key factor for activists before, the economic fallout from the virus is adding momentum, said Laura Vergara, head of Spain's ConBici advocacy group.

With tourism accounting for nearly 15% of the GDP in Spain, outdoor vacations — whether on two wheels or not, but away from crowded beaches and resorts — could keep the industry afloat, she said.

"In Australia, bicycle sales have already skyrocketed," Vergara said. "Why couldn't that happen here?"

Despite having sunny days the year round, car-loving Spaniards seem to be decades behind northern Europe when it comes to commuting by bicycle.

Environment Minister Teresa Ribera, in charge of post-confinement planning, says the changes "must overcome resistance derived from habits and conceptions that are well-established."

Ribera said she has asked mayors to extend bike lane coverage, reduce car speed limits and provide for bike parking. But it wasn't clear if the government would fund it.

"We can, and we should, take advantage of this impulse to advance towards a new paradigm of sustainable mobility," she said in a statement to The Associated Press.

Beyond infrastructure, cycling advocates say many minds must still be changed, noting that many officials have called for prioritizing the use of private vehicles in the lockdown.

That's where differences by country are sharper. In Britain, where people are still allowed to leave home to exercise, cycle shops stayed open during the lockdown that began March 23. In Spain, gas stations were considered essential, but not bicycle repair shops.

And while bike-sharing in London and Paris was made free to health care workers, most Spanish cities rushed to shut down the services, saying they would be a source of contagion. Madrid's hugely successful bicycle sharing operation reopened only last week, the sixth of Spain's strict lockdown. Bikes are disinfected nightly and riders must wear gloves.

Many riders have been fined. The French Federation of Bicycle Users has received more than 800 reports

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from cyclists stopped by police, and dozens had to pay a 135 euro (\$146) fine for violating restrictions.

"The attitude of the police is the attitude that many people show in the streets," said Pasamar, who keeps riding despite the risks of being stopped again. Unfortunately, he said, "bicycles are for many just a nuisance."

IS extremists step up as Iraq, Syria, grapple with virus

By QASSIM ABDUL-ZAHRA, BASSEM MROUE and SAMYA KULLAB Associated Press

BAGHDAD (AP) — The man wearing an explosive vest emerged from a car and calmly marched toward the gates of the intelligence building in Iraq's northern city of Kirkuk. When he ignored their shouts to halt, guards opened fire, and he blew himself up, wounding three security personnel in the first week of Ramadan.

Days later, a three-pronged coordinated attack killed 10 Iraqi militia fighters in the northern province of Salahaddin — the deadliest and most complex operation in many months.

The assaults are the latest in a resurgence of attacks by the Islamic State group in northern Iraq. The first was a brazen suicide mission not seen in months. The second was among the most complex attacks since the group's defeat in 2017. In neighboring Syria, IS attacks on security forces, oil fields and civilian sites have also intensified.

The renewed mayhem is a sign that the militant group is taking advantage of governments absorbed in tackling the coronavirus pandemic and the ensuing slide into economic chaos. The virus is compounding longtime concerns among security and U.N. experts that the group would stage a comeback after its "caliphate," which once encompassed a third of Iraq and Syria, was brought down last year.

In Iraq, militants also exploit security gaps at a time of an ongoing territorial dispute and a U.S. troop drawdown.

"It's a real threat," said Qubad Talabani, deputy prime minister of the northern Kurdish region of Iraq. "They are mobilizing and killing us in the north and they will start hitting Baghdad soon." He said IS was benefiting from a "gap" between Kurdish forces and federal armed forces caused by political infighting.

Intelligence reports say the number of IS fighters in Iraq is believed to be 2,500-3,000.

In northeast Syria, Kurdish-dominated police have become a more visible target for IS as they patrol the streets to implement anti-virus measures, said Mervan Qamishlo, a spokesman for U.S.-allied Kurdish-led forces.

IS fighters in late March launched a campaign of attacks in government-held parts of Syria, from the central province of Homs all the way to Deir el-Zour to the east, bordering Iraq.

Some 500 fighters, including some who had escaped from prison, recently slipped from Syria into Iraq, helping fuel the surge in violence there, Iraqi intelligence officials said.

IS is shifting from local intimidation to more complex attacks, three Iraqi military officials and experts said. Operations previously focused on assassinations of local officials and less sophisticated attacks. Now the group is carrying out more IED attacks, shootings and ambushes of police and military. The officials spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to talk to the media.

Multiple factors help the militants. The number of Iraqi military personnel on duty has dropped 50% because of virus prevention measures, the military officials said.

Also, territorial disputes between Baghdad and authorities from the northern Kurdish autonomy zone have left parts of three provinces without law enforcement. The rugged landscape is difficult to police.

The uptick also coincides with a pullout of U.S.-led coalition forces from bases in western Iraq, Nineveh and Kirkuk provinces in line with a drawdown conceived in December.

"Before the emergence of the virus and before the American withdrawal, the operations were negligible, numbering only one operation per week," said a senior intelligence official. Now, he said, security forces are seeing an average of 20 operations a month. He spoke on condition of anonymity because he was not authorized to brief the media.

Coalition spokesman Col. Myles B. Caggins III said IS attacks were increasing in reaction to operations

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against its hideouts in the mountains and rural areas of north-central Iraq.

Iraqi military officials believe the improved, organized nature of the attacks serves to cement the influence of new IS leader Abu Ibrahim al-Hashimi al-Quraishi, who was named after his predecessor was killed in a U.S. raid late last year. One military official said more operations are expected during Ramadan to demonstrate the new leader's strength.

In Syria, one of the most significant attacks occurred April 9, when IS fighters attacked government positions in and near the town of Sukhna. The government brought in reinforcements for a counterattack backed by Russian airstrikes.

Two days of fighting left 32 troops and 26 IS gunmen dead, according to the Britain-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, which tracks the country's nine-year war.

Days later, the government said that because of the security situation in the desert several gas wells in the fields of Shaer and Hayan were damaged, leading to a 30% drop in electricity production.

Back in Iraq, the green pastures of the northern village of Kujalo conceal a hidden enemy that keeps resident Nawzad up at night. His farming community lies in a disputed territory that has witnessed a sharp increase in attacks, including a nearby ambush earlier this month that killed two peshmerga officers.

He said the militants have local collaborators. "They know everything about each farm in Kulajo and they know to whom each house belongs," he said, asking to be identified only by his first name, fearing reprisals.

The militants also receive shelter, supplies, food and transport from local sympathizers, said Kurdish Brig. Kamal Mahmoud. His peshmerga forces are based on part of the front lines there, but can't operate in other parts run by government troops — and there, he said, the overstretched security forces control only main roads with no presence in villages and towns.

On April 1, a federal police officer was killed, and a battalion commander and brigadier general wounded in a security operation in the Makhoul mountain range in Diyala. Two days later, an IED attack targeted a patrol of a commando regiment of the Diyala Operations Command in the outskirts of Maadan village.

Sartip, a Kujalo resident, said he fears the militants' improved capabilities.

"IS has been carrying out attacks in Kurdish areas for a long time, but now they are more organized and have more people," he said.

Reade: 'I didn't use sexual harassment' in Biden complaint

By ALEXANDRA JAFFE, DON THOMPSON and STEPHEN BRAUN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Tara Reade, the former Senate staffer who alleges Joe Biden sexually assaulted her 27 years ago, says she filed a limited report with a congressional personnel office that did not explicitly accuse him of sexual assault or harassment.

"I remember talking about him wanting me to serve drinks because he liked my legs and thought I was pretty and it made me uncomfortable," Reade said in an interview Friday with The Associated Press. "I know that I was too scared to write about the sexual assault."

Reade told the AP twice that she did not use the phrase "sexual harassment" in filing the complaint, but at other points in the interview said that was the behavior she believed she was describing. She said: "I talked about sexual harassment, retaliation. The main word I used — and I know I didn't use sexual harassment — I used 'uncomfortable.' And I remember 'retaliation.'"

Reade described the report after the AP discovered additional transcripts and notes from its interviews with Reade last year in which she says she "chickened out" after going to the Senate personnel office. The AP interviewed Reade in 2019 after she accused Biden of uncomfortable and inappropriate touching. She did not raise allegations of sexual assault against Biden until this year, around the time he became the presumptive Democratic presidential nominee.

The existence of the Senate report has become a key element of the accusations against Biden, which he has flatly denied. Reade says she doesn't have a copy of the report, and Biden said Friday that he is not aware that any complaint against him exists. He asked the Senate and the National Archives to search their records to try to locate a complaint from Reade.

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But Reade is suggesting that even if the report surfaces, it would not corroborate her assault allegations because she chose not to detail them at the time.

According to a transcript of her 2019 interview with the AP, Reade said: "They have this counseling office or something, and I think I walked in there once, but then I chickened out." She made a similar statement in a second interview with AP that same day, according to written notes from the interview.

On Friday, Reade said she was referring to having "chickened out" by not filing full harassment or assault allegations against Biden. In multiple interviews with the AP on Friday, Reade insisted she filed an "intake form" at the Senate personnel office, which included her contact information, the office she worked for and some broad details of her issues with Biden.

On Saturday, Reade told the AP there may have been a box to check on the form noting a sexual harassment complaint, but she couldn't remember and wouldn't know for sure until she saw the form. Reade also said she canceled a planned television interview with "Fox News Sunday" because of security concerns.

Reade was one of eight women who came forward last year with allegations that Biden made them feel uncomfortable with inappropriate displays of affection. Biden acknowledged the complaints and promised to be "more mindful about respecting personal space in the future."

During one of the April 2019 interviews with the AP, she said Biden rubbed her shoulders and neck and played with her hair. She said she was asked by an aide in Biden's Senate office to dress more conservatively and told "don't be so sexy."

She said of Biden: "I wasn't scared of him, that he was going to take me in a room or anything. It wasn't that kind of vibe."

The AP reviewed notes of its 2019 interviews with Reade after she came forward in March with allegations of sexual assault against Biden. But reporters discovered an additional transcript and notes from those interviews on Friday.

A recording of one of the interviews was deleted before Reade emerged in 2020 with new allegations against Biden, in keeping with the reporter's standard practice for disposing of old interviews. A portion of that interview was also recorded on video, but not the part in which she spoke of having "chickened out."

The AP declined to publish details of the 2019 interviews at the time because reporters were unable to corroborate her allegations, and aspects of her story contradicted other reporting.

In recent weeks, Reade told the AP and other news organizations that Biden sexually assaulted her, pushing her against a wall in the basement of a Capitol Hill office building in 1993, groping her and penetrating her with his fingers. She says she was fired from Biden's office after filing a complaint with the Senate alleging harassment.

The accusation has roiled Biden's presidential campaign, sparking anxiety among Democrats. Republicans have accused Biden backers of hypocrisy, arguing that they have been quick to believe women who have accused President Donald Trump and other conservatives of assault. Trump has faced multiple accusations of assault and harassment, all of which he denies.

Reade says she was reluctant to share details of the assault during her initial conversations with reporters over a year ago because she was scared of backlash, and was still coming to terms with what happened to her.

Two of Reade's associates said publicly this past week that Reade had conversations with them that they said corroborated aspects of her allegation. One, a former neighbor, said Reade told her about the alleged assault a few years after Reade said it happened. The other, a former coworker, said Reade told her she had been sexually harassed by her boss during her previous job in Washington.

The AP has also spoken to two additional people, who spoke on condition of anonymity to protect their families' privacy, who said Reade had told them about aspects of her allegations against Biden years ago.

One friend, who knew Reade in 1993, said Reade told them about the alleged assault when it happened. The second friend met Reade more than a decade after the alleged incident and confirmed that Reade had a conversation with the friend in 2007 or 2008 about experiencing sexual harassment from Biden while working in his Senate office.

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 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."

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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 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

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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."

County has highest rate of COVID-19 cases on West Coast

By NICHOLAS K. GERANIOS Associated Press

SPOKANE, Wash. (AP) — The highest rate of coronavirus cases of any county on the U.S. West Coast is in Washington state's Yakima County.

Health experts point to a large number of essential workers, a large number of cases in long-term care facilities and a large agricultural workforce living and working in close quarters as the causes. The county has about 250,000 residents.

"We just haven't been as much down as the rest of the state because our workforce is going to work," said Lilian Bravo, a spokeswoman for the Yakima Health District. "Physically going to work every day is going to put you at a higher risk than others."

As of Friday, Yakima County had 1,203 positive cases, a rate of 455 cases per 100,000 residents, the highest in the state. Second was Franklin County at 326 cases per 100,000. The statewide average was 185 cases per 100,000 residents.

Yakima County, 140 miles (225 kilometres) southeast of Seattle, also had a relatively high number of deaths from coronavirus with 47. Bravo said people in long-term care facilities account for about a third of cases and most of the deaths from COVID-19 in the county.

Bravo said the health district is involved with testing staff and residents at long-term care facilities.

State health officer Dr. Kathy Lofy said Washington Department of Health officials were sent to Yakima

to help the long-term care facilities deal with the outbreaks.

"I think what we're seeing in some of these outbreaks, whether it's a long-term care facility or a food processing plant, is that you get a lot of people together, there's a lot of transmission, and then all these individuals go home and back to their own communities and infect others in their family and others in their community," Lofy said.

Meanwhile, nearly 73,000 of the 115,000 Yakima County jobs, or 63%, are in essential industries such as agriculture, health care and wholesale trade, according to the Yakima County Development Association.

"We're not as shut down as some areas in the state," Bravo said.

The county has a large number of people in the agriculture and food processing industries. Many live and work in close quarters, which can spread the disease.

With the harvest season just getting underway, Bravo said the health district is wary that the infection rate will continue to grow, especially in housing for migrant workers that tends to be cramped.

The state recently issued new guidelines to protect agriculture workers against COVID-19.

The new Department of Labor and Industry rules require growers and operators to have procedures for a suspected or confirmed case of the virus, to educate workers on health recommendations, and to have employees stay home if they are sick. They are also required to ensure social distance and physical barriers between workers, to have hand-washing stations and to increase sanitation.

But two farmworker groups filed lawsuits in Skagit County Superior Court seeking tougher rules and immediate oversight.

Yakima-based advocacy group Latino Civic Alliance is demanding the state adopt enforceable standards to protect agricultural workers from exposure. The organization noted 96% of the state's agricultural workers are Latinos, with many living below poverty levels and without health care benefits.

Despite the high number of cases, the health care system in Yakima County is not overwhelmed, Bravo said.

"We do have the capacity to serve individuals," she said. "The community has done a great job."

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

The Latest: Hundreds protest Oregon's stay-at-home order

By The Associated Press undefined

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

TOP OF THE HOUR:

- Hundreds protest Oregon's stay-at-home order.
- Pelosi, McConnell decline COVID-19 tests.
- French lawmakers to consider 14-day quarantine for returning travelers.

SALEM, Ore. -- Hundreds opposed to Oregon's stay-at-home order demonstrated at the state Capitol on Saturday as health officials announced dozens more cases and five additional deaths from COVID-19.

Most of the protesters did not wear face masks, but they waved American flags and Trump campaign signs in the rain. Other signs read "Reopen Oregon" and "Let me earn a living."

A group of healthcare workers demonstrated at the top of the Capitol steps, urging a phased plan to ease the state's social distancing requirements. Most of the other protesters ignored them.

Public health officials say stay-at-home orders are essential for slowing the transmission of the novel coronavirus. But protest organizers told The Oregonian/OregonLive that they view the social distancing mandates issued by Gov. Kate Brown as government overreach.

Since mid-March, Brown's orders have closed many businesses, put some parks and campgrounds off

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limits, and required public schools to adopt distance learning programs.

"You can't just place citizens under house arrest and enforce those orders," event organizer Adam Elifritt said.

ANTIOCH, Calif. — A Northern California city official has been ousted after he suggested on social media that sick, old and homeless people should be left to meet their "natural course in nature" during the coronavirus pandemic.

City council members in Antioch, a city of about 110,000 people 35 miles east of Oakland, voted unanimously Friday night to remove Ken Turnage II from his post as chairman of the city's planning commission.

NBC Bay Area reports there was a swift uproar after Turnage characterized people with weak immune systems as a drain on society.

He wrote on Facebook: "the World has been introduced to a new phrase Herd Immunity which is a good one. In my opinion we need to adapt a Herd Mentality. A herd gathers it ranks, it allows the sick, the old, the injured to meet its natural course in nature."

As for homeless people, he added that the virus would "fix what is a significant burden on our society and resources that can be used."

Turnage later deleted the post but refused to resign or back down from his comments. During the two-hour council meeting held on Zoom, Turnage said his personal opinion had no bearing on his duties as a planning commissioner and that removing him would violate his freedom of speech.

But city officials countered that his posting caused a loss in confidence and created a disruption to the city.

SPOKANE, Wash. — The highest rate of coronavirus cases on the U.S. West Coast is in Washington's Yakima County, an agricultural giant that has more than double the state average of cases.

Health experts point to a large number of essential workers, a large number of cases in long-term care facilities, and a large agricultural workforce living and working in close quarters as the causes.

"We just haven't been as much down as the rest of the state because our workforce is going to work," said Lilian Bravo, a spokeswoman for the Yakima Health District. "Physically going to work every day is going to put you at a higher risk than others."

As of Friday, Yakima County had 1,203 positive cases, a rate of 455 cases per 100,000 residents. Second was Franklin County at 326 cases per 100,000. The statewide average was 185 cases per 100,000 residents.

LOUISVILLE, Ky. — A federal appeals court on Saturday declined to block the Kentucky governor's temporary ban on mass gatherings from applying to in-person religious services.

The three-judge panel did clear the way for Maryville Baptist Church to hold drive-in worship services while adhering to public health requirements. That's an alternative that Democrat Gov. Andy Beshear has strongly encouraged throughout the coronavirus pandemic.

But the panel stopped short of applying its order to in-person worship services.

The ruling came soon after the church asked the 6th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals for an emergency order stopping Beshear's mass gathering ban from being enforced against religious services.

CAIRO — Yemeni health authorities say there are three new coronavirus cases in the southern city of Aden and the western city of Taiz, bringing the total number of cases to 10 with two deaths.

Saturday's announcement comes as the U.N. health agency has warned of the invisible outbreak of the virus, saying that it's "actively circulating throughout the country." The agency says testing and resources to detect the virus are "grossly insufficient."

A cluster of cases was found in Aden, where residents said several hospitals shut their doors as medical staffers feared contracting the virus because of a lack of personal protective equipment. The port city is in the midst of political infighting between the internationally recognized government and southern separatists who declared self-rule last week, leaving health authorities in disarray.

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Yemen has been embroiled in civil war for more than five years and has a fragile health system, with half of the health facilities not properly functioning.

WASHINGTON — The top Republican and Democrat in Congress say they are respectfully declining an offer of quick COVID-19 tests offered by President Donald Trump's administration.

Limited testing for lawmakers has become an issue in decisions about when they should return to Washington.

Health and Human Services Secretary Alex Azar had tweeted Friday that three rapid-testing machines and 1,000 tests were being sent for the Senate to use next week.

Trump also tweeted that "tremendous" testing capacity is available for senators returning on Monday, and for the House.

But Speaker Nancy Pelosi and Senate leader Mitch McConnell said Saturday in a statement that they want the equipment to go to front-line facilities instead.

Pelosi decided against having her members join the Senate in returning next week because the Washington area remains a virus hot spot.

PARIS — French Health Minister Olivier Veran said people traveling into France, including French citizens returning home, will be placed in a 14-day quarantine as part of new extended proposals to limit the spread of the new coronavirus.

Entering France is currently very restricted to essential travel, and a travel certificate is required for everyone entering the country. The proposals are being sent to Parliament next week.

Veran said that "the compulsory quarantine will concern anyone entering the national territory, an overseas territory or Corsica."

It's not clear if the quarantine would apply only to travelers from beyond the Schengen border and Britain. The Schengen Area includes 26 countries and encompasses most of the European Union nations.

ATLANTA — People across metro Atlanta went on roofs and patios, to parks and even cemeteries, or stopped on the side of a usually busy interstate to watch a military flyover Saturday afternoon.

The Air Force Thunderbirds and the Navy Blue Angels flew to honor first responders and medical teams. They passed over downtown and midtown, where major hospitals are located, and were loudly cheered.

People outside at historic Oakland Cemetery generally adhered to social distancing guidelines but few wore masks. Some carried lawn chairs and beverages while others pushed strollers, while many tried to capture the moment with phones or cameras.

Georgia has already allowed businesses like hair and nail salons, restaurants and gyms to open with social distancing restrictions.

LONDON — Britain's Department of Health says a total of 28,131 people have died in hospitals, care homes and the wider community after testing positive for the new coronavirus in the United Kingdom, an increase of 621 from the previous tally.

The figures include deaths as of 5 p.m. on Friday.

Prime Minister Boris Johnson on Thursday told the nation that Britain had passed its peak in the COVID-19 outbreak and said he has plans to reveal a "road map" outlining how lockdown steps might be eased in the coming week.

ISTANBUL — Turkey's health minister has announced 78 new deaths in the past 24 hours, bringing the death toll from COVID-19 to 3,336.

The minister tweeted Saturday that an additional 1,983 had been infected, increasing the total to 124,375. "For the first time since March 30, the daily case number has fallen below 2,000," he tweeted.

The new number leaves Turkey ranked seventh in the world for highest infection rate from the novel coronavirus. Russia's confirmed infections of 124,054 had briefly surpassed Turkey's.

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The minister also tweeted that 58,259 people have recovered from COVID-19, including 4,451 since Friday.

LANSING, Mich. — Michigan's agriculture department says the state's animal agriculture industries are making adjustments due to the coronavirus pandemic.

Gary McDowell, director of the Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development, said Saturday in a release that the changes will strengthen the supply chain and make workers safer but could "lead to some near-term speedbumps." He was responding to concerns of food shortages due to national shutdowns of beef and pork producers.

Mary Kelpinski, chief executive officer of the Michigan Pork Producers Association, says there's plenty of meat in cold storage around the state but advised shoppers to resist panic buying of meat products in the weeks ahead.

ROME — The number of beds treating COVID-19 patients continued to decline as Italy prepared to ease its strict lockdown measures on Monday.

The Civil Protection Agency said that there were 212 fewer people hospitalized with the virus and 39 fewer in intensive care in the past 24 hours, numbers that have been consistently easing in recent weeks. That has given authorities confidence to be able to cope with any new spike in cases as more businesses reopen and individuals are allowed more freedom to move around their towns and cities of residence.

At the same time, the number of dead nudged up the most in 11 days — by 474 — and the number of people who have recovered from the virus was the lowest in more than two weeks. Italy has registered the most deaths after the United States, at 28,710.

PARIS — France hopes to extend the health emergency put in place to fight the coronavirus crisis until July 24.

French Health Minister Olivier Veran made the announcement on Saturday, arguing that the extension of the measures that began March 24 is required to prevent a new flare-up of infections.

The proposal, which will be put to the French Parliament next week and is expected to pass, is centered on the notion that a "premature" relaxing the state of emergency "could see a risk of the outbreak" increasing.

France is among countries most affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, having recorded some 24,594 deaths and 167,346 confirmed cases so far.

The new proposals include a data system for those that have contracted the virus, that will function for up to a year.

ISTANBUL — The Turkish trade ministry lifted export restrictions and a requirement to obtain advance permission for private companies to export medical equipment needed in treating COVID-19.

The decision, published in the Official Gazette, rescinded restrictions on exporting ventilators, intubation tubes and ICU monitors, among other equipment.

The trade ministry lifted restrictions on the export of ethanol, cologne, disinfectants and hydrogen peroxide.

Turkey also announced a military plane delivered medical supplies, including locally produced ventilators, to Somalia. Ankara has so far shipped needed supplies to at least 55 countries, including to the United States.

Turkey, a country of 83 million, has more than 122,000 cases and more than 3,200 deaths, according to a tally by Johns Hopkins University.

ATHENS, Greece — Greek authorities have announced three deaths from COVID-19 in the past 24 hours.

That raises the total to 143 — 106 men 37 women. The average age of the victims is 74.

There have been eight more confirmed infections for a total of 2,620 cases.

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BARCELONA, Spain — Spaniards filled the streets to exercise for the first time after seven weeks of confinement to fight the coronavirus.

People ran, walked or rode bicycles under a sunny sky in Barcelona, where many flocked to the maritime promenade to get close to the still off-limits beach. Others jogged around parks and along sidewalks across the nation.

"Some people think it may be too early, as I do, but it is also important to do exercise for health reasons," says 36-year-old Cristina Palomeque in Barcelona.

Spain has 24,824 confirmed deaths from the COVID-19 virus and 215,216 infections. The lockdown has helped reduce daily increases of infections.

What you need to know today about the virus outbreak

By The Associated Press undefined

Spaniards have filled the streets to exercise outside in gorgeous spring weather for the first time in seven weeks and German children rushed to playgrounds as countries in Western Europe gradually relax coronavirus lockdown restrictions.

Russia and Pakistan, however, reported their biggest one-day spikes in new infections, a sign the pandemic is far from over. And in the U.K., the death toll from COVID-19 surpassed 28,000.

In the United States, gun-carrying protesters have become a common sight at some demonstrations calling for public health restrictions to be lifted.

As warmer temperatures tempt New Yorkers to come out of quarantine, police dispatched 1,000 officers this weekend to enforce social distancing and a ban on congregating in public spaces.

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

WHAT'S HAPPENING TODAY:

An Associated Press analysis shows that as more states begin to relax their coronavirus lockdowns, most are falling short of the minimum levels of testing suggested by the federal government.

In the U.S., farmers, growers and operators of open-air markets are heading into one of their busiest times of year while facing the added challenge of the coronavirus.

Texas has topped 1,000 new cases for the third day in a row, numbers that coincide with the expiration of the state's "stay at home" order, and shoppers began to return to stores and restaurants.

The coronavirus is upending life for Morocco's medical workers, who enjoy better medical facilities than in much of Africa but are often short of the equipment available in European hospitals.

For Muslims in the United States, there is no other time more centered around gathering in congregation than the holy month of Ramadan. But the coronavirus pandemic is presenting obstacles - and opportunities.

The top Republican and Democrat in Congress say they are respectfully declining an offer of quick COVID-19 tests offered by President Donald Trump's administration.

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 viral spread 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.

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FACT CHECK:

President Donald Trump, responding to a Harvard University study that 5 million tests per day would be needed to safely reopen the country, said Tuesday that the country was "getting very close" to that benchmark. Dr. Brett Giroir, the federal health official overseeing U.S. testing, said "there is absolutely no way on Earth" to do that many.

ONE NUMBER:

— 79: The coronavirus has infected residents in 79 nursing homes and assisted care facilities in the state of Missouri.

IN OTHER NEWS:

— STRANGERS ASSIST WITH FUNERAL: Strangers in New York responded to a call for contributions to the funeral of elderly woman who died without relatives nearby.

— BIRD-WATCHING SOARS: With coronavirus restrictions dragging on, interest in bird-watching has risen sharply as bored Americans notice a fascinating world just outside their windows.

Sun draws many out in US, Europe; Russia virus numbers grow

By DAVID PORTER, JEFFREY COLLINS and JOSEPH WILSON Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Gorgeous spring weather across the United States and Europe on Saturday drew people cooped up inside for weeks outside to soak in the sun, even as additional coronavirus hot spots in Russia and Pakistan emerged.

Though grateful to be outdoors, people were still wary — masks were worn everywhere, even on southern U.S. beaches and by some joggers in Spain. A New York City farmer's market enforced the familiar 6 feet (2 meters) of space between people waiting to buy spring flowers. Mothers in Central Park reminded their kids to give people space. And small groups of picnickers kept their safe distances, while joggers moved past each other without a glance.

Retired New York attorney Stan Neustadter pulled down his mask to say it's been important to his spirit to get out. "Why live like a rabbit? Plus I'm approaching 78, I've had a great run," Neustadter said.

Police and park officials were spread out across New York City, which sent out 1,000 officers to enforce social distancing on the warmest day since mid-March. But they were more likely to break up large groups, leaving the nuisances of social distancing and hanging out safely outside to New Yorkers themselves.

"Go for a walk, but respect the social distancing and wear a mask," New York Gov. Andrew Cuomo said.

With gigs drying up at clubs and concert halls, German native Julia Banholzer, a saxophonist, said she has taken to playing al fresco in Central Park for whoever happens by. On Saturday that was a steady stream of folks, most wearing masks, who left tips for her trio as they worked their way through a set of jazz standards.

"It's great to have an audience after all these weeks," she said. "All my dates have been canceled through September, and I don't know if any will come back this year. New York is a tough place, but this is just another tough period we need to get through."

Meanwhile, fighter jets from the U.S. Navy Blue Angels and U.S. Air Force Thunderbirds drew people outside as they flew over Atlanta, Baltimore and Washington in honor of health care workers. In Atlanta, motorists stopped on a major highway while other people found open places to look to the sky on rooftops or a cemetery.

New Jersey reopened state parks Saturday. Limited to 50% capacity in their parking areas, several had to turn away additional arrivals by the afternoon. But nearly everyone followed the rules on social distancing and Gov. Phil Murphy said "so far, so good" at his daily briefing.

Margie Roebuck and her husband were among the first people on the sand at Island Beach State Park. "Forty-six days in the house was enough," she said.

Elsewhere in the world, the pandemic's danger was still evident. Russia and Pakistan reported their big-

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gest one-day spikes in new infections.

Overall, Russia has reported around 125,000 cases and more than 1,200 deaths. True numbers are believed to be much higher because not everyone is tested. In the far northeast, 3,000 of 10,000 workers at a vast natural gas field tested positive, Russian news agencies reported.

Moscow's mayor said this week that officials are considering establishing temporary hospitals at sports complexes and shopping malls to deal with the influx of patients. Infection cases have reached the highest levels of government, with both the prime minister and the construction minister contracting the virus.

Pakistan appears to be joining Russia with rapidly increasing case counts. On Saturday, Pakistan announced nearly 1,300 new cases, raising the total in the country of 220 million people to about 18,000.

Newspaper photos showed large numbers of the faithful at Pakistani mosques and only some practicing social distancing. Prime Minister Imran Khan's government said it might ease controls, but doctors have pleaded for stricter lockdowns, warning an explosion of infections would overwhelm hospitals with only 3,000 intensive care beds nationwide.

The virus has killed more than 238,000 people worldwide, including more than 65,000 in the United States and more than 24,000 each in Italy, Britain, France and Spain, according to a count kept by Johns Hopkins University. Health experts warn a second wave of infections could hit unless testing is expanded dramatically.

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

There are economic factors to consider as well. In some areas of the United States, reopening is being urged to ease the shutdown of businesses that plunged the global economy into its deepest slump since the 1930s and wiped out millions of jobs.

It has created a patchwork of rules across the 50 states. In South Carolina, where about 20% of the state's revenue comes from tourism, beach hotels were allowed to reopen Friday. Webcams showed dozens of people on the beach Saturday, but pools still closed. South Carolina also hasn't reopened dine-in restaurants, unlike neighboring Georgia. Some U.S. states have yet to start the reopening process.

Business owners have also been left wondering if customers will return. On a postcard-perfect spring day, Detroit's Eastern Market had far fewer customers and vendors than normal at the farmer's market.

Jill and Mark Thomas said they felt safe selling bottles of homemade wine from their Unwined Winery, but it wasn't the same in the COVID-19 world.

"It's easier when you can get samples to people," said Jill Thomas. "We're not allowed to do that now."

In Spain, where COVID-19 has caused more than 25,100 deaths, people ventured out Saturday for the first time since a March 14 lockdown.

"I feel good, but tired. You sure notice that it has been a month and I am not in shape," 36-year-old Cristina Palomeque said in Barcelona. "Some people think it may be too early, as I do, but it is also important to do exercise for health reasons."

Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez said Spaniards deserved relief after weeks of confinement, but he asked citizens to remain vigilant.

"Until we have a vaccine, we are going to see more outbreaks," Sánchez said. "What we need to guarantee is that these outbreaks do not put our national health system in danger."

Back in session: Senate risks a return but House stays away

By LISA MASCARO AP Congressional Correspondent

WASHINGTON (AP) — Weighing the risks, the Senate will reopen on Monday as the coronavirus crisis rages and the House stays shuttered, an approach that leaves Congress as divided as the nation.

Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell's decision to convene 100 senators at the Capitol during a pandemic gives President Donald Trump the imagery he wants of America getting back to work, despite health worries and a lack of testing.

Yet, the Washington region remains under stay-at-home orders as a virus hot spot. Gathering senators

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for the first time since March risks lawmakers as well the cooks, cleaners, police officers and other workers who keep the lights on at the Capitol complex.

"We will continue to stand together for the American people — even as we stand 6 feet apart," McConnell said ahead of the opening.

Trump himself offered Congress access to the instant virus test system used to screen visitors to the White House. But in an extraordinary rebuff, McConnell and House Speaker Nancy Pelosi said in a statement Saturday that they would "respectfully decline" the offer and instead direct resources to the front lines "where they can do the most good."

For Senate Republicans, returning to session is an attempt to set the terms of debate as Democrats push for another pricey coronavirus relief bill. Frustrated after Pelosi boosted Democratic priorities in earlier aid packages, an unprecedented \$3 trillion in emergency spending, they are resisting more. Republicans are counting on the country's reopening and an economic rebound as their best hope to limit a new round of big spending on virus aid.

As the Senate gavel in and the 430-member House stays away on the Capitol physician's advice, the Congress provides a snapshot of divided America struggling to confront the COVID-19 crisis. Some states are reopening, others are staying closed and questions abound.

Senators face few new rules for operating in the pandemic beyond the recommendations that they wear masks — blue face coverings will be available for free — keep their distance and leave most staff at home. Hand sanitizer is back in stock. But public access will be limited, including at public hearings. The Capitol itself remains closed to visitors and tours.

Democrats complain they are returning to a noticeably light agenda, packed with confirmation hearings for Trump's judicial and executive branch nominees, but with little emphasis on the pandemic and Great Depression-level economic collapse.

"Democrats are going to fight like hell," Senate Democratic leader Chuck Schumer said on a conference call with Latino leaders. "We're going to make sure people have enough money to live and get back on their feet."

In making his snap decision to return, McConnell said the Senate cannot "sit on the sidelines." He compared the senators to the essential work force of grocery clerks, truck drivers and others keeping Americans fed during the crisis.

But Capitol Hill erupted in the days after the attending physician, facing questions from top GOP officials, said the health office did not have the means to perform instant virus tests on returning lawmakers.

On Saturday, Trump stepped in.

"There is tremendous CoronaVirus testing capacity in Washington for the Senators returning to Capital Hill on Monday," Trump tweeted.

Ninety minutes later, Health Secretary Alex Azar tweeted that the administration would be sending three machines and 1,000 virus tests to Capitol Hill.

In the rare joint statement, the congressional leaders said Congress will use the existing protocols from the Capitol physician "until these speedier technologies become more widely available."

Hours later Trump tweeted a response that insulted Pelosi but didn't mention McConnell: "No reason to turn it down, except politics. We have plenty of testing. Maybe you need a new Doctor over there. Crazy Nancy will use it as an excuse not to show up to work!"

The haphazard approach — to testing, health guidelines and the broader reopening — is what Democrats say is inadequate in the Republican response to the crisis.

With more than 65,000 U.S. deaths due to the virus and 30 million Americans suddenly unemployed, Democratic senators say the focus needs to be singular — to ease this crisis and prevent a second wave of infections.

"If we're going to go back, let's do something about COVID," Schumer said.

Instead, the agenda is focused on the president's nominees. Among them is Justin Walker, a conservative, McConnell-backed pick to be a federal judge on the U.S. Courts of Appeal in the District of Columbia

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Circuit, which is seen as a stepping stone to the Supreme Court.

A nomination hearing also is scheduled for John Ratcliffe, the Texas Republican congressman who is Trump's choice to lead the Office of the Director of National Intelligence.

Several committees will meet to debate issues related to the virus outbreak, including the nominee for a new oversight commission. The Health Committee will hold a session on potential cures and the Commerce Committee a hearing on the airline industry.

Yet as much as the world has changed during the global pandemic, the Senate remains a place of traditions.

Republican senators still plan to sit down for their regular luncheons, though the physician's social distancing guidance limits them to three to a table. It was after one of their lunches in March that several senators went into self-quarantine because of their exposure to fellow GOP Sen. Rand Paul of Kentucky, who tested positive.

Democrats, who will meet for lunch over conference call, are assessing whether to appear in person for the committee hearings or dial in remotely.

The physician's office sent guidelines late Friday encouraging Senate offices to minimize staff presence and reschedule any visitors who are visibly ill with "shaking chills" or "vomiting."

Politically, operating the Senate even in a diminished capacity aligns with Trump's effort to return to a sense of normalcy.

It also draws a stark contrast with Pelosi's House, its return date uncertain. Trump has mocked House Democrats as enjoying a "vacation."

Republicans worry that support for Trump is drifting as he responds to the coronavirus, a drag on the GOP that threatens McConnell's majority. Confronting his own reelection in fall, McConnell is eager to show the Senate is working.

Drawing GOP senators back to Washington, McConnell can more directly involve them in the new round of deliberations.

"I look forward to seeing my colleagues on Monday," he said in a statement.

Man arrested trying to quarantine on private Disney island

ORLANDO, Fla. (AP) — Florida deputies arrested a man who had been living out his quarantine on a shuttered Disney World island, telling authorities it felt like a "tropical paradise."

Orange County Sheriff's deputies found Richard McGuire on Disney's Discovery Island on Thursday. He said he'd been there since Monday or Tuesday and had planned to camp there for a week, according to an arrest report.

The 42-year-old said he didn't hear numerous deputies searching the private island for him on foot, by boat and by air because he was asleep in a building. He told the deputy he didn't know it was a restricted area, despite there being numerous "no trespassing" signs.

"Richard stated that he was unaware of that and that it looked like a tropical paradise," according to the arrest report.

Orange County Marine deputies on Bay Lake used a public address system to tell McGuire he was not allowed to be on the property, but he remained on the island, anyway, according to the arrest report.

A security representative for Disney said she saw McGuire using a company boat Thursday, noting that the area had several "no trespassing" signs and two closed gates. She asked the agency to press charges.

McGuire was arrested on a trespassing charge and taken to jail without incident. It was not immediately clear whether he had an attorney who could comment.

Previously called Treasure Island, Discovery Island had been the site of a zoological park before the island was closed to the public in 1999.

1 Houston police officer killed, 1 injured in copter crash

HOUSTON (AP) — A Houston police helicopter crashed early Saturday, killing one of the two officers on board and critically injuring the other, while assisting a call to search for bodies in a nearby bayou, officials said.

A pilot and tactical flight officer were aboard a police helicopter when it crashed at an apartment complex around 2 a.m. They were flown to a hospital where the tactical flight officer died, police Chief Art Acevedo said hours after the crash during a news conference where he was joined by the city's mayor, Sylvester Turner.

The department the officer who died as Tactical Flight Officer Jason Knox. He is survived by a wife and two young children, who were at the hospital along with his parents and in-laws, Acevedo said.

"We're going to miss him," Acevedo said. "He had a heart of gold, integrity second to none."

No cause for the crash was given and Acevedo said the National Transportation Board and the Federal Aviation Administration would investigate while Houston police conduct a separate homicide investigation.

Acevedo noted that shots rang out across the street from the scene at around 3 a.m. and six people were taken into custody.

The crash investigation would explore whether the helicopter was struck by gunfire, Acevedo said, noting instances in his previous work in Austin and California when police helicopters were fired upon.

The pilot, Senior Police Officer Chase Cormier, was "very banged up," and had serious injuries, but was conscious Saturday afternoon. There were no injuries to anyone on the ground at the apartment complex, a masked Acevedo told reporters.

The helicopter was supposed to assist with a search for bodies in a nearby bayou, which was prompted by a tip that the police chief characterized as "probably a bogus call — we don't know."

"No evidence to date of any bodies in the bayou," Acevedo said.

The officers were trapped in "mangled" wreckage and it took firefighters about an hour to cut them out, Acevedo said. The helicopter did not catch fire and avoided striking occupied apartment buildings. It did clip the Biscayne at Cityview apartment complex's clubhouse.

The police department is shutting down flights until it has a chance to reassess in the coming days, and will be relying on the Texas Department of Public Safety and Harris County Sheriff's Office for flight support in the interim.

Acevedo identified the helicopter as "75 Fox."

"It's pretty ironic that yesterday we graduated a class and we had Fox fly out because we had COVID, so we couldn't do your traditional graduation so we wanted to do something special," Acevedo said. "And if somebody had told me that a few hours later that we had an aircraft down and we'd lose a really good man, I would have said 'No way.'"

Turner, the mayor, called on the people of the city "to continue to lift up, number one, both families, but especially lift up the family of the police officer who has died this morning. And then at the same time lift up the entire HPD family."

The week that was: Lockdowns ease, and choices are complex

By The Associated Press

Around the world, lockdowns are starting to ease as some places get coronavirus outbreaks under control and others decide the economic pain of keeping businesses closed is too much to bear.

The piecemeal reopenings are leaving people to make their own choices about what they should and shouldn't do to protect themselves and others. Is it safe to go to a restaurant? Visit elderly family members? Experts don't have definitive answers.

Beijing's ancient Forbidden City, along with the city's parks and museums, is open to the public for the first time in months. In the U.S., more than a dozen states are allowing stores, restaurants and other businesses to open, but with restrictions meant to keep the virus from spreading. In Spain, people are allowed outside to exercise for the first time in seven weeks, while German children can return to playgrounds.

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The U.S. Senate is set to convene Monday, but without tests that can quickly make sure senators and staffers are healthy.

In some places, unrest is brewing as people push back against continued restrictions. Protesters in Michigan, Wisconsin and Arizona have brought guns to rallies outside state capitol buildings. In Brazil, residents egged on by President Jair Bolsonaro are defying social distancing. In Japan, known for conformity and consensus, many are going out even though the government has asked them to stay in.

And in Hong Kong, where the virus has slowed, the pro-democracy movement has re-emerged, with protesters defying a ban on public gatherings to chant slogans at a luxury mall.

But in many places, people remain mostly in their homes. In a series of breathtaking images, AP photographers documented a world on pause.

As restrictions relax, there is sure to be a reckoning over what went wrong in places with high death tolls. In Italy's hard-hit Lombardy region, the AP found that a perfect storm of failures combined to expose residents to the effects of the virus in ways unseen elsewhere. State and federal officials in Massachusetts are trying to figure out how nearly 70 people died at a home for veterans. That was the deadliest known outbreak at a long-term care facility in the U.S. until Friday, when a New York City nursing home reported the deaths of 98 residents. Yet in a sign that things were not as bad as they could have been in many places, dozens of field hospitals meant to relieve the strain on emergency rooms have gone largely unused.

Meanwhile, sports teams are working on how to get baseball, basketball and hockey going again, but testing remains a major hurdle. And there are more questions than answers about the Tokyo Olympics, which have now been rescheduled for July and August 2021.

Here is a guide to some of AP's best coverage this week across the globe:

HEALTH AND SCIENCE

The promise of an experimental drug that seems to help coronavirus patients recover faster has unleashed a flurry of interest — and a clamor to know how soon it might be available. Here are some questions and answers about remdesivir.

For doctors and nurses treating critically ill patients, their work puts them inches away from where the new coronavirus lives. Hundreds of times each week during this pandemic, they steel themselves for a procedure that remains anything but routine.

And here are some tips if you find yourself laid off from your job and need to find new health insurance.

ECONOMY

As some businesses start to reopen, hopes for an economic recovery in the second half of the year are starting to rise. But economists caution that a quick rebound is unlikely. The U.S. economy shrank 4.8 percent from January through March, and 30 million Americans have applied for unemployment aid since the virus hit.

The economic outlook is similarly bleak in Europe, but unemployment there has edged up only slightly, thanks to government programs that are helping to keep businesses afloat and preventing millions from losing their jobs and incomes — for now.

Business bankruptcies in the U.S. were already up in March, and attorneys who work with struggling companies expect to see a flood of them in the coming months. In Japan, many are struggling to work from home in a country that's not set up for it. In Russia, desperate business owners are pleading with the Kremlin for help. But some businesses have found ways to survive, and even thrive, in a time of crisis.

Several big meatpacking plants where hundreds of workers tested positive for the virus are preparing to reopen after President Donald Trump ordered them to go back online to prevent a possible meat shortage. But with many plants not operating at full capacity, the industry remains under pressure.

GOVERNMENT RESPONSE

Widespread testing is one key to emerging from the pandemic. But an Associated Press analysis finds that most states in the U.S. are not meeting the minimum levels of testing suggested by the federal government and recommended by public health researchers, even as many begin to reopen their shattered economies.

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In states where governors have started allowing businesses to reopen, some Americans are facing a tough choice: Return to work and risk infection, or stay home and risk losing unemployment payments.

The surge in unemployment has another side effect — it's starting to push some state jobless funds toward insolvency. At least a half-dozen states already have notified the federal government that they could need to borrow billions to pay benefits because their own trust funds are running out of money.

INEQUALITY

Essential workers have continued to show up to their jobs in the U.S. during the coronavirus shutdowns. An AP analysis shows they are disproportionately women, people of color, immigrants and the poor. "They are calling us heroes but it's like they are sending us to World War II with wooden pistols," a truck driver said.

The virus' toll has torn through the black community in Detroit, where hundreds of people have died, while the economic toll has many workers struggling to meet their expenses.

Scenes of tragedy were mirrored across the world. A UK mosque that should be celebrating Ramadan is instead dealing with scores of the dead. The lockdown in France is casting a light on the struggling communities in the nation's poor regions. And in Latin America, poorly paid maids are being summarily laid off or forced to lock in with their employers.

RIPPLES

It's clear that life in the coming weeks will be nowhere near normal as Americans try to navigate through a landscape of invisible threats. Many are dreaming like never before — and sharing their experiences. Even the nature of friendship is being recast in the virus era.

But what was it like before? We talked to people around the world about their last normal moments before the virus changed everything.

Meanwhile, among those struggling with the impact of the virus is the comic book industry, which is on hold and wondering if its independent retailers will survive. Even colleges and universities are facing a possible existential crisis as campuses turn into ghost towns and students wonder what the fall will look like.

ONE GOOD THING

Kindness, joy and maintaining old routines have been helping people around the world cope with the "new normal" created by the pandemic. AP's "One Good Thing" highlights the stories of people bringing happiness to others, just because they can.

This week, we tell the story of a Bangkok hairstylist offering her talents to hard-hit medical staffers. Pornsupa Hattayong said she was almost embarrassed to offer at first because hair cuts seemed trivial in the face of the fight against COVID-19. But she has been overwhelmed by the response — she's swarmed by desperate, shaggy-haired doctors, nurses and support staff when she takes her team of stylists into hospitals.

And Associated Press photographers tasked with chronicling the heartache and anxiety of the crisis have found that joy is still visible too, just not with the usual, recognizable facial cues.

GROUND GAME

The pandemic has claimed the lives of more than 230,000 people worldwide. They were more than just statistics — they were mothers and fathers, sons and daughters, accomplished professionals, brave workers on the front lines. This week, AP's "Ground Game: Inside the Outbreak" podcast featured a discussion with Digital Storytelling Editor Raghu Vadarevu and Western U.S. News Director Peter Prengaman, who are working to tell their stories through the Lives Lost series. And AP correspondents Angela Charlton in Paris and Aritz Parra in Madrid talked about the steps France and Spain are taking to reopen.

VIRUS DIARY

AP correspondents around the world are sharing their experience as they live through — and cover — the coronavirus saga. This week they wrote about dealing with loneliness in New York City, finding hope in the form of an apple seed planted in Pennsylvania, and coping with a quarantine in Mumbai.

AP FACT CHECK: Testing 'czar' rebuts Trump; vet care hyped

By HOPE YEN and CALVIN WOODWARD Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Diagnostic testing for the coronavirus is bound to go down in history books as one of the most consequential failures of the U.S. response to the pandemic. Seemingly blindered on the subject, President Donald Trump persists in bragging about it.

For weeks, the daily White House briefings were a platform where Trump spread misinformation, sometimes corrected by the public health officials with him or at least put in a more scientific context by them. Those briefings have ended, at least for now. But Trump still has his say on what's going on and familiar falsehoods are still being heard, including on veterans' health care, as well as new ones.

To review:

TESTING

TRUMP, responding to a Harvard University study that 5 million tests would be needed to safely reopen the country: "It will increase, and it'll increase by much more than that in the very near future. We're way ahead of everyone on testing. ... We're going to be there very soon. If you look at the numbers, it could be that we're getting very close." — remarks Tuesday on aid for small businesses.

THE FACTS: Actually, Trump is nowhere close in his prediction of providing 5 million tests a day, according to his own federal "testing czar."

"There is absolutely no way on Earth, on this planet or any other planet, that we can do 20 million tests a day, or even 5 million tests a day," Dr. Brett Giroir, the federal health official overseeing U.S. testing, told Time magazine the same day.

Trump was addressing a Harvard study that said to ensure a safe reopening of the U.S., 5 million tests a day would be needed by June, and 20 million a day by late July.

Giroir told Time those numbers couldn't be supported by current technology. The U.S. recently tested as many as 300,000 a day, and Giroir said he plans to hit 8 million per month by next month.

Asked again about it the following day, Trump backtracked, saying the U.S. could hit 5 million tests perhaps eventually. He said "we are going to be there at a certain point."

TRUMP: "I've told you that we inherited a very broken test — a broken system and a broken test." — remarks Tuesday.

THE FACTS: He's repeating a false assertion that he inherited a "broken" COVID-19 test from the Obama administration. The novel coronavirus did not exist until late last year, so there was no test to inherit.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention instead struggled to develop its own test for the coronavirus in January, later discovering problems in its kits sent to state and county public health labs in early February.

It took the CDC more than two weeks to come up with a fix to the test kits, leading to delays in diagnoses through February, a critical month when the virus took root in the U.S. Not until Feb. 29 did the Food and Drug Administration decide to allow labs to develop and use their own coronavirus diagnostic tests before the agency reviews them, speeding up the supply. Previously, the FDA had only authorized use of a government test developed by the CDC.

Meantime the U.S. bypassed a test that the World Health Organization quickly made available internationally. Trump has said that test was flawed; it wasn't. The U.S. has strikingly lagged a variety of countries in its ability to test people widely and quickly, despite increasing its capacity after a first chapter that public health officials acknowledged was a failure.

More than 6 million people have been tested in the U.S. More than 1 million have been sickened by the virus and more than 60,000 have died. The U.S. has experienced roughly 1 in 4 reported deaths from the virus worldwide.

VETERANS

TRUMP, on the administration's health care efforts during the coronavirus outbreak: "We also acted

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swiftly to secure our veterans' health care facilities. ... And we're being helped very greatly by the passage of all the things that we got passed, Robert, especially Choice, so that people can go and see their doctor when they have to." —remarks Thursday, with Veterans Affairs Secretary Robert Wilkie in attendance.

THE FACTS: Trump is way off the mark on two fronts. He didn't pass the Veterans Choice program, and that program has had little impact during the virus outbreak. In fact, since March, the VA suspended the program's key provisions that granted veterans the option to see private doctors if they endured long waits for care at the government-run VA.

Congress first approved the program in 2014, and President Barack Obama signed it into law. Trump expanded it.

The program allows vets to see a private doctor for primary or mental health care if their VA wait is 20 days (28 for specialty care) or their drive is only 30 minutes or more.

But since the program's expansion in June 2018, the VA has not seen a major increase in veterans seeking care outside the VA, partly because wait times in the private sector are typically longer than at the VA.

The VA also took steps in late March to restrict veterans' access to private care, citing the added risks of coronavirus exposure and limited capacity at private hospitals.

Under the temporary restrictions, the VA is reviewing referrals for nonemergency care "on a case-by-case basis for immediate clinical need and with regard to the safety of the veteran when being seen in-person, regardless of wait time or drive time eligibility," said VA spokeswoman Christina Noel.

Republican lawmakers and conservatives such as Fox News host Pete Hegseth, a close ally of Trump's who was considered for the VA secretary job in 2018, have argued that his signature program has been rendered ineffective during the coronavirus outbreak — not excelled as a model of care.

"This is a time when the VA should do everything possible to expand health care choices for veterans, not arbitrarily restrict them," said Nate Anderson, executive director of the conservative Concerned Veterans for America.

In 2019, 35% of all VA appointments were with outside physicians, slightly lower than the 36% in 2017.

WILKIE, when asked how many VA employees have been tested for the coronavirus: "Well, we've tested well over 60,000." — MSNBC interview on April 22.

THE FACTS: He overstated it by double. The VA actually has tested 32,155 out of 390,000 total employees, according to department figures provided Friday to Congress.

Wilkie was responding to concerns about shortages of personal protective equipment at VA medical centers, such as masks and gloves. He argued that VA staff is doing fine because of low infection rates, but VA nurses who spoke last month to The Associated Press said it's been difficult to get a test from the department to know if they have the virus.

According to the VA, employees who have been exposed to patients with COVID-19 and show symptoms may be tested "at a VA medical center, local health departments, or community resources, depending on what resources for testing are available." The department said Friday that all employees at its nursing homes had now been tested, and it would expand testing to other "vulnerable" employees next week.

To date, about 2,000 staff at VA facilities have tested positive for COVID-19, and an additional 3,500 have been quarantined and are unable to work out of concerns they are infected, according to agency documents. About 20 staff have died.

The VA has pointed in part to the Federal Emergency Management Agency for not supplying it with enough medical supplies. More than a dozen Democrats led by Sen. Jon Tester, the top Democrat on the Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee, have called on Trump to invoke the Defense Production Act to ensure that VA employees get an adequate supply of protective equipment.

TRAVEL RESTRICTIONS

TRUMP: "I did something that the experts thought I shouldn't have done: I closed down our country and our borders. I did a ban on China." — remarks Tuesday.

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THE FACTS: This is one of Trump's most frequent exaggerations. Trump didn't "ban" all the people infected with coronavirus from entering the U.S. from China. There were in fact many gaps in containment and initial delays in testing, leading to the U.S. rising to No. 1 globally in the number of people infected by COVID-19. It hit the 1 million mark in infections this past week.

Nor did Trump decide on his own or against the advice of experts to impose travel restrictions on China. He followed a consensus recommendation by his public health advisers.

His order in late January temporarily barred entry by foreign nationals who had traveled in China within the previous 14 days, with exceptions for the immediate family of U.S. citizens and permanent residents as well as American citizens.

TRUMP: "How do you keep American citizens — you say they're coming in from China, they want to come back to their country. There is a tremendous problem in China; they want to come back. Are we supposed to say to an American citizen, 'You can't come back into your country'? And we did do testing." — remarks Tuesday with Florida's governor.

THE FACTS: He's incorrect that Americans returning from China were tested for the coronavirus as part of Trump's travel restrictions imposed in late January.

Americans returning from China were allowed back after enhanced screening at select ports of entry, which could include a temperature check and observations for symptoms.

That's not the same as getting a test, which was in short supply in February due to problems with the CDC diagnostic kits. U.S. scientists say screenings can miss people who don't yet show symptoms of COVID-19. While symptoms often appear within five or six days of exposure, the incubation period is 14 days.

St. Jude music therapists organize backyard jams for kids

By LEANNE ITALIE Associated Press

Amy Love had to leave the Memphis hospital where she brings music to severely ill children — she and other support staff couldn't take the risk of spreading COVID-19 to these frail patients.

But she was determined: The music must not stop.

So her house became a recording studio, and Love, fellow music therapist Celeste Douglas and intern Abigail Parrish became video stars for kids at St. Jude Children's Research Hospital who feed on their energy, their melodies, their love.

"Let's get moving!" Love cries, as she sits cross-legged on a blanket in her backyard.

They play guitars and little drums, shakers and tambourines, and Love's dog joins in on the fun — even as a lawn-mowing neighbor seems a bit puzzled.

"We're really excited to be with you today, even if we can't be there in person," Douglas tells their early childhood group from afar.

No instruments? No problem. Love urges their viewers: "Just move around with us!"

The familiar tunes they choose to help the kids with fine and gross motor skills, body awareness and other trouble areas they'd usually take on in the hospital include "If You're Happy and You Know It" and "Old MacDonald Had a Farm."

For older patients, Love left behind some ukuleles with easy instructions and song selections from Twenty One Pilots and Selena Gomez.

Entertainer Danny Thomas opened the pediatric treatment and research hospital for children with catastrophic diseases in 1962. Care is free for all. Since many of the patients are immune deficient, Love and other support staff are working remotely.

The hospital's two resident therapy dogs are on hiatus off campus, as well.

"What we're doing is finding new ways to support our kiddos and keep them safe at the same time," Love said.

In the hospital, the team holds the early childhood music group once a week for kids up to 3 years old.

"That's one thing I've really missed," Love said. "We'd all get together and play tons of music and were

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super loud.”

Switching gears was a bit of a learning curve, she said. Like the ukuleles. Asking kids to teach themselves the instrument could have gone either way, but Love was optimistic.

“It’s a really easy instrument to feel really successful with,” she said. “You can mark up different parts of the ukulele and play it pretty easy. Even with one finger you can be successful and play a chord.”

Love can’t wait for the day she can return to the hospital. In the meantime, she has a mission.

“Music is not canceled,” she said. “We’re going to continue playing music until we can all get back together again.”

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 Associated Press continuing series reflecting these acts of kindness.

AP: Most states fall short of coronavirus testing thresholds

By CHRISTINA A. CASSIDY, MATTHEW PERRONE, JASON DEAREN

and NICKY FORSTER Associated Press

ATLANTA (AP) — As more states begin to relax their coronavirus lockdowns, most are falling short of the minimum levels of testing suggested by the federal government and recommended by a variety of public health researchers, an Associated Press analysis has found.

Three months into an unprecedented public health emergency, the White House has largely resisted calls for a coordinated plan to conduct the millions of tests experts say are needed to contain the virus. What federal officials outlined recently isn’t even an official benchmark, and AP’s analysis found that a majority of states are not yet meeting it.

With no specific guidelines, states are left to figure out what a successful testing program should be while they simultaneously try to reopen their shattered economies. If states don’t have robust testing, public health experts say they will be unable to detect outbreaks quickly enough to contain them, which could lead to more shutdowns.

“It’s dangerous and irresponsible,” said Lawrence Gostin, a public health specialist at Georgetown University.

In many states, testing has been limited to hospitalized patients, high-risk individuals and front-line workers. But most public health experts agree that containing the virus will require a massive expansion of testing that eventually includes millions of patients without symptoms, which is not happening now.

A testing blueprint released Monday by the Trump administration lacked any metrics state officials could use to make informed decisions. Instead, the document made clear that states are responsible for testing, saying the federal government is the “supplier of last resort.”

The closest the White House has come to issuing a benchmark does not actually appear in the document. At a recent briefing, senior administration officials said the government would provide each state with enough tests, swabs and related materials to screen at least 2.6% of their populations in May and June. Those hit harder by the outbreak would be eligible for additional assistance.

It was unclear how the 2.6% figure was reached. When asked about it, officials with the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services described it as 2% of state populations per month without explaining the discrepancy. Officials also did not respond to questions about whether the administration has a target for how many daily tests should be done nationwide or when it would issue more details.

Only about 40% of states currently meet even the 2% testing threshold, according to AP’s analysis. The percentage is expected to rise as states increase their testing capabilities. The AP based the monthly testing rate for each state on the average number of new daily tests over the most recent 7 days. The data is from the COVID Tracking Project and includes counts up to April 30th.

A White House spokesman said Friday that the administration’s testing threshold is only a suggestion and that states are ultimately responsible for deciding how to reopen in a “safe and responsible manner.”

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The administration says it is working to expand testing and has been highlighting plans first announced in March for additional testing sites at retail pharmacy chains.

States that do not meet the administration's testing guidance, based on their current screening rates, include some that have been moving into the early stages of reopening, such as Colorado, South Carolina and Texas. Georgia, which has moved aggressively to ease restrictions and lift its stay-at-home order, is just under the 2% threshold.

Louisiana and Kansas, where Republican lawmakers have been putting pressure on Democratic governors to reopen, are falling short, according to the AP analysis. In Kansas, the governor and top health administrator expect to reach the 2% mark this month.

Florida, which announced its first phase of reopening will start next week, also falls short but has said it will be able to test 30,000 to 40,000 people a day if needed. Michigan, where the Republican-led legislature has sued the Democratic governor over the state's stay-at-home order, is on track to test 2.2% of its population.

Former health officials and experts were critical of the testing blueprint and said the 2.6% or 2% population metric was too vague and didn't take into account guidelines from the Centers for Disease Control on who should be tested.

"Why don't they say, 'We'll test everybody with any symptoms of coronavirus and all their contacts?'" said Dr. James Curran, a former assistant U.S. surgeon general who worked at CDC for 25 years. "If that amounts to 2% that's fine, but the guidelines are not to test 2%. The guidelines are to test who needs it."

Many experts already say the national testing rate falls short of what is needed to safely ease social distancing guidelines.

Researchers at Harvard have calculated that the U.S. needs to be testing roughly 500,000 people per day before considering easing restrictions this month. That's a nearly 150% increase from the recent daily tally of approximately 200,000 tests.

"I've described it and I still describe it as an absolute bare minimum," said Ashish Jha, director of the Harvard Global Health Institute.

More than half of states are not testing their populations at the daily rate recommended by Jha and his colleagues. The Harvard team developed their statistics in mid-April and noted that projections for U.S. cases have increased since then.

Many states hardest hit by the crisis failed to reach the team's testing recommendations, even if they were already testing more than 2% of their populations, according to an AP analysis using state-by-state figures provided by Harvard. States falling short of the Harvard numbers include many of the epicenters of the outbreak, including New York, New Jersey and Massachusetts.

Jha and his colleagues based their testing targets, in part, on the number of tests needed to screen enough people to push positive results below 10%, the level that the World Health Organization considers sufficient to contain the outbreak. More than 16% of U.S. tests nationwide are positive for the virus, according to figures compiled by the COVID Tracking Project website. That compares with a rate of about 3% in South Korea, a country praised for its aggressive testing.

Former CDC director Tom Frieden has recommended double the current testing levels. He said the U.S. should be testing at minimum 400,000 people a day.

Officials in at least 20 states have indicated their testing capacity is not adequate and said they are taking steps to address this, according to a review by the AP. But there is little consensus among states on how many people should be tested or whether that should include those with no symptoms.

Georgia, where in-person dining at restaurants is now permitted with restrictions, has not said how many people it would like to test but recently touted its ability to test over 20,000 people on a single day and has encouraged more people to get tested. New Jersey, which has a slightly smaller population and a higher number of COVID-19 cases, has said it would need to conduct 20,000 to 30,000 tests a day to reopen.

Ohio wants to increase testing from 7,200 per day to 22,000 by May 27. Washington state, which has seen one of the largest U.S. outbreaks, has reported averaging 4,650 tests a day and wants to do more

than 22,000 but lacks the necessary supplies.

Most states have convened advisory panels to help in setting guidelines, but they run the gamut in terms of expertise and will result in a patchwork of policies that experts say may be ineffective in containing a virus that doesn't respect state borders.

"Treading water on testing is not going to get us out of this," said Jeremy Konyndyk, a disaster preparedness expert who helped lead the Obama administration response to Ebola.

Bird-watching soars amid COVID-19 as Americans head outdoors

By GILLIAN FLACCUS Associated Press

Conner Brown, a 25-year-old law student at Stanford University, spent the early days of the pandemic following his brother as he spotted and collected characters in the Pokemon Go mobile game.

Then, Brown noticed the birds.

"I thought, 'Why don't I take up birding?' It's like real-life Pokemon Go. It's super addicting because you can start logging them and you get a little collection. It's really cool," Brown said. He paused, then added, "They should really game-ify it."

Brown, who's living near Annapolis, Maryland, can now identify 30 different bird species. He can recognize the calls of the brown-headed cowbird and cardinal and tell male birds from females. He bought a special set of binoculars that attaches to his iPhone camera, downloaded bird identification and bird-logging apps, and is giving birding advice on Twitter.

"The world of birds is so much more vibrant and active than I'd ever realized, and once I paid attention, it just hit me in the face," Brown said. "It's given me a reason to get out of the house, it's motivated me."

With coronavirus restrictions dragging on, interest in bird-watching has soared as bored Americans notice a fascinating world just outside their windows. Downloads of popular bird identification apps have spiked, and preliminary numbers show sales of bird feeders, nesting boxes and birdseed have jumped even as demand for other nonessential goods plummets.

The trend coincides with peak migration for hundreds of species and nesting season, giving newfound birders a front-row seat to some of nature's biggest shows. Birds are their most active — and noisy — now, and like Brown, many Americans no longer in an office or classroom all day are taking notice.

"The birds don't know that there's a pandemic. They're migrating, building nests and laying eggs, just like they always have," said Michael Kopack Jr., who put up a birdhouse at his home in Angier, North Carolina, and is watching a pair of bluebirds hatch their eggs.

"It kind of takes us back to a magical time six or eight weeks ago when there was no pandemic," he said. "It lets me decompress and get away from everything that's going on in the world, at least for a little while."

Downloads of the National Audubon Society's bird identification app in March and April doubled over that period last year, and unique visits to its website are up by a half-million. The prestigious Cornell Lab of Ornithology in Ithaca, New York, has seen downloads of its free bird identification app, Merlin ID, shoot up 102% over the same time last year, with 8,500 downloads on Easter weekend alone.

Visits to Cornell's live bird cams have doubled, and uploads of bird photos and calls have increased 45% and 84%, respectively, on Cornell's crowdsourced bird-logging app, eBird.

Even retailers seem to be cashing in despite the crashing economy. Preliminary marketing data shows overall sales rising 10% to 15% this spring in the "birding category," according to data from Panacea Products Corp., which makes bird-feeding products.

Amid the surging interest, spring bird counts nationwide are getting some adjustments for social distancing. The counts are critical for understanding how migratory birds are faring and are a high point for avid birders each year.

In Portland, Oregon, those participating in the Birdathon — a fundraiser for the Audubon Society of Portland — will go bird-watching individually over a period of weeks instead of heading out in teams for a day or a weekend. They will report their sightings by virtual check-in, ending with a Zoom celebration on May 9, said Sarah Swanson, the fundraiser's coordinator.

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"Birds are everywhere now. They're singing, they're migrating, they're nesting," she said. "They're busy every minute of the day doing all these interesting behaviors — and I think that's what draws people in."

Even people who loved the outdoors before the pandemic have discovered — or rediscovered — birding in new ways.

Phillip Torres, host of Discovery Channel's Expedition X, knows a lot about nature but hadn't paid much attention to birds, preferring to study insects, snakes and plants. When the virus postponed travel to exotic destinations and forced his show into hiatus, Torres moved from New York City to Seattle. He noticed birds in his new backyard, watching robins pluck worms from the ground "just like in the cartoons."

With his professional video gear still in New York, Torres put up hummingbird feeders and invested in a spotting scope and clamps to attach his iPhone to the feeders. He recorded stunning slow-motion video of an Anna's hummingbird coming to his feeder that he shared on Twitter.

"I managed to get something pretty spectacular that's flying around us all the time, but we don't get the change to stop and appreciate it," Torres said.

"I'm really reconnecting with what's immediately around me," he said. "Everybody dreams about seeing lions in the wild or tigers in the wild, but we've got some pretty amazing stuff right out our window — and it's really good for the soul."

In US, a virus-era Ramadan presents obstacles, opportunities

BY NOREEN NASIR, MARIAM FAM and AROUN DEEN Associated Press

For Jamilah Shakir, the first week of Ramadan has been an adjustment. She typically spends every night of the month at the Atlanta Masjid of Al-Islam or another mosque nearby. Now Ramadan has come, and mosques are closed to worshippers to prevent spread of the coronavirus. So Shakir and her family have had to improvise.

"It feels a little weird," she says. "Not praying in community has been very, very different."

For Muslims in the United States, there is no other time more centered around gathering in congregation than the holy month of Ramadan. In every corner of the country, believers attend community iftar meals to break the fast and then pack neatly into tight rows for nightly prayers at the mosque. On weekends, especially, some may linger longer as they catch up, share in the pre-dawn suhoor meal and line up again for the fajr, dawn, prayers.

"The mosque plays a more significant role in being also a community center for American Muslims," says Feryal Salem, associate professor of Arabic and Islamic studies at American Islamic College. "Because Muslims are a minority, they have to go the extra mile to create that unique communal experience that's unique to Ramadan."

But this year, Ramadan falls during a global pandemic. In the U.S., with the world's highest COVID-19 death toll, that means being forced to mark the month in different, more virtual and sometimes solitary ways.

As they re-imagine some of the spiritual and social rituals, many are relying on a mix of at-home worship and a myriad of online religious programming. Virtual iftar options have sprung up so the devout don't have to break their fast alone. But not all moments can be recreated on a screen. There will be dishes not shared, prayers not lifted together, hugs not given.

Hugs and congregational prayers are the two things Shakir misses the most.

But she looks for the blessings. She lives in a close-knit community in South Atlanta with dozens of other Muslim families. She still plans to catch her neighbors — at a distance — on the days she and her sons might be grilling meat for iftar outside.

"Although it's very different from how we normally gather, I'm still so grateful that Allah put us in this Islamic community during this time."

Around the country, Muslims are adapting to the unprecedented challenges. From a recent convert observing his first Ramadan to a respiratory therapist balancing her faith with a job on the frontline of the battle, The Associated Press follows a few of their journeys.

HOUSTON: RICARDO RAMIREZ, 28

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Ricardo Ramirez became a Muslim before a crowd of believers.

As soon as he uttered the shahada, the Islamic testimony of faith, the faithful broke into chants of "Allahu Akbar." He was told that day that "all of these brothers and sisters are your brothers and sisters." There were handshakes, pats on the back and hugs. So many hugs.

Since then, he says, the community has been there for him. But Ramirez is experiencing a milestone in his faith journey — his first Ramadan as a Muslim — as the virus disrupts worship and mosques close.

"It's going to be really difficult," he said before Ramadan started. "I do have a lot of questions, and there's a lot I want to observe and ask about."

It was a conversation about Ramadan that sparked Ramirez's interest in Islam. In 2017, he noticed a co-worker wouldn't eat during the day. She told him she was fasting. Something resonated.

"I've never seen anybody speak about their religion the way she did," he says. "Even with everything going on in the world negatively toward Muslims, she was still very excited to tell me."

Born in Texas to parents of Mexican descent, Ramirez was baptized Catholic. But growing up, he experienced Catholicism as largely confined to culture and celebrations.

His mom was upset when he told her he was considering Islam. "A lot of people seem to have that same conversation with their parents," he says. Eventually, she came around. While on work trips to Saudi Arabia, she got him a prayer mat, a copy of the Quran, prayer beads and some dates. He has been saving the dates for breaking his fast during Ramadan.

The first day of the Islamic holy month left him feeling "accomplished." But he also missed being around others observing it. Attending virtual iftars — "being able to share that moment with other people" — has helped.

And in the compulsory solitude, he's determined to find strength. "The more I think about it, I think this is the path that Allah has set for me as a challenge ... to know that this religion is for me."

CHICAGO: JUMANA AZAM, 33

On the first night of Ramadan, respiratory therapist Jumana Azam stayed up through suhoor and only slept after making the prayer at dawn. She had come home at 2 a.m. from an odd shift in the ICU of Rush University Medical Center.

Just weeks ago, Azam's own mortality weighed heavy. She worried that while caring for dying patients, she could contract the new coronavirus herself and end up on the very ventilators she was operating nonstop.

"I was upset and confused, and I didn't know if I was physically or mentally strong enough to be a frontliner," she says. At times, she says, her faith wavered.

As Chicago experienced a surge of COVID-19 patients in early April, Azam's days quickly turned into 16-hour shifts, with barely a break to eat or make one of the five daily prayers.

The physical demands of the job have taken a toll on her, and while abstaining from any food or drink for 15-hour Ramadan fasts, Azam worries she won't be able to keep up. She started observing the holy month at about age 10, she recalls. For the first time since then, she considered not fasting as the month approached.

"Emotionally and spiritually, this was really hard for me to even reflect on," she says.

Azam looks forward to this month every year, saying her struggle with hunger, especially while at work, gives her day meaning and purpose.

Last year, Azam, like many other professional Muslims observing the month, decreased her working hours slightly to make the days more manageable. This year, she knows that won't be possible. Still, Azam is planning to wake up each morning to eat before dawn and try.

"I'm going to take it in stages and try to fast while I'm at work," she says. "But if I feel like I'm getting light-headed, I'm going to have to break it."

NEW YORK CITY: IMAM MUFTI MOHAMMED ISMAIL, 38

The An-Noor Cultural Center and masjid is located blocks from Elmhurst Hospital Center in Queens, where patients have been dying from COVID-19 at an alarming rate.

The immigrant-rich neighborhood has been deemed one of New York City's hardest-hit areas. Imam Mufti

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Mohammed Ismail is the principal of the religious school at An-Noor. Most who are part of the center are Bangladeshi.

"We have lost a lot of Muslim brothers and sisters in my community," Imam Ismail says.

A prayer of "protection from diseases" is printed in Arabic and English on a paper posted to the mosque wall, and Ismail says the Bangladeshi community has lost "close to 150 people" to COVID-19 across New York City, many from this neighborhood.

As deaths rise, Imam Ismail is trying to serve community members suffering in other ways. With mosques shuttered as the city reels, volunteers from An-Noor Cultural Center are preparing food boxes for those who would have relied on the center for iftar every evening. With so many from this immigrant community losing jobs, the demand has increased.

"I'm receiving so many phone calls from families who are saying, 'We are not poor, but the situation has (made) it so hard, so we need a food box,'" Imam Ismail says.

On this day, volunteers, including the imam's son, help him sort food in the prayer area. When the time for afternoon prayer arrives, the men break and pray amid half-assembled food boxes filled with dates, cooking oil, vermicelli and potatoes, standing with a little extra room between them.

They load the items into a car and head off to begin deliveries. Imam Ismail says this gives the center the opportunity to fulfill one of Ramadan's tenets — to serve those less fortunate, regardless of religion. "Once we receive a call asking for help, we never question about the caller's faith. It's just a family," he says. "A human being. We are ready to serve them."

MINNEAPOLIS: IMAM SHARIF MOHAMED

For all the things Muslims are doing without this year, one community in Minneapolis has gained a new voice during the holy month: the call to prayer.

Throughout Ramadan, the azan, or adhan — which summons the faithful for prayers five times a day — will be broadcast over loudspeakers for the first time at the Dar Al-Hijrah Mosque.

Mayor Jacob Frey facilitated the noise permit after community leaders requested the service. For Muslims feeling isolated at home, the sound of the azan will offer connection, says Imam Sharif Mohamed. It will also alert observant Muslims when it's time to break fast or start abstaining from eating and drinking.

"It's calming and soothing for them," he says. "The emotional and spiritual connection, I think, is beyond our imagination."

Mohamed walked around the neighborhood as the azan blared out from the mosque and into the streets and buildings surrounding it. Hearing that, he says, took him back to when he was in Somalia.

For non-Muslims, the imam says, this can be an educational experience. And for Muslims, it can be deeply moving.

"I am happy. I am going to cry," Mohamed Salah, who lives near the mosque, said about hearing the azan from home. "Something is better than nothing."

WHEELING, ILLINOIS: SHAHEEN KHAN, 54

Over the last six weeks, Shaheen Khan has gotten a little more comfortable sitting in front of the camera and conducting online Islamic lessons.

"Salam-alaikum, boys and girls," she recites in a cheerful voice before launching into reading a storybook, "Allah Gives Us Food," with an image of mosaic tiles from the Blue Mosque in Tabriz, Iran, as her Zoom background.

The 54-year-old mother of four teaches at the Hadi School, a Montessori Islamic school in Schaumburg, Illinois, that provides Islamic teachings according to the Shia tradition.

Khan arrived in the U.S. from India in 1990 and has been teaching ever since. But in 30 years, she's never had to face the challenge of connecting with her students remotely day after day. Now, she's trying to figure out how to offer new lessons about an unprecedented Ramadan, as she tries to make sense of the unique challenges herself.

She's realizing the increased time at home could be used as an opportunity for reflection "to come back to our roots."

"Maybe," she says, "this is Allah's way of resetting a button for us."

A referendum election in November? Trump allies see risks

By JULIE PACE AP Washington Bureau Chief

WASHINGTON (AP) — Six months from Election Day, President Donald Trump's prospects for winning a second term have been jolted by a historic pandemic and a cratering economy, rattling some of his Republican allies and upending the playbook his campaign had hoped to be using by now against Democrat Joe Biden.

Trump's standing has slumped as the nation's focus on him has intensified during the coronavirus outbreak, revealing an erratic and often self-absorbed approach to the crisis. The result: He's losing ground in some battleground states with key constituencies, including senior citizens and college-educated men — all without his Democratic challenger having devoted much energy or money to denting the president.

"It's Donald J. Trump versus the coronavirus and the recovery," said Scott Reed, the senior political strategist for the U.S. Chamber of Commerce. "Biden is a sideshow."

For some Republicans, the prospect of an election that is almost wholly a referendum on Trump is unnerving. Though the president's base remains loyal, a significant portion of GOP voters view him skeptically on a range of personal qualities. He pulled many of those voters to his side in the 2016 election by drawing an aggressive contrast with Democrat Hillary Clinton. He planned to do the same in 2020 with Biden, with the added tailwind of a surging American economy.

Now, that economy is crumbling around Trump. A staggering 30 million Americans have lost their jobs in the past six weeks as businesses have shuttered due to stay-at-home restrictions aimed at containing the pandemic. One of the president's own economic advisers predicted nationwide unemployment could reach 20% by June.

When his back is against the wall, Trump often responds by lashing out at a political opponent, hoping to expose flaws that detract from his own. But with Americans consumed by the pandemic and economic uncertainty, Republicans close to the president and his campaign say Trump's team will struggle to break through with any attacks on Biden for some time. Instead, the public's focus remains squarely on Trump and his handling of the health and economic crises.

"Trump is completely dominating the public's attention, and it's not helping him," said Alex Conant, a Republican strategist who advised Sen. Marco Rubio's 2016 presidential campaign.

In public polling, the president's approval rating hasn't dropped significantly since the fast-moving virus swept through parts of the U.S. According to a poll from The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research conducted in late April, 42% of Americans approved of Trump's job performance. That's about where it's been for the past few months.

But both Democratic and Republican pollsters and strategists say they are seeing signs of weakness in critical states and demographic groups. Those findings are confirmed by some of the Trump campaign's own data. When briefed on campaign polling in recent days, Trump erupted in anger, according to several people with knowledge of the conversation.

Private polling shows Trump in a weaker position in several pivotal states, including Michigan, Florida and Wisconsin. He's also sagging with senior citizens and college educated men, according to GOP operatives who have viewed recent polling. Some pollsters said they've seen signs that lower-educated women are also drifting away from the president.

Independents are largely irrelevant, the operatives said, but only because they had already abandoned the president before the pandemic. A half-dozen operatives and pollsters spoke on condition of anonymity in order to discuss private data.

Trump's campaign argues the dynamic will reset after the president and his team can unleash a full array of attacks on Biden, who became the presumptive Democratic nominee just as the pandemic began bearing down on the United States. Trump campaign aides say they see vulnerabilities in Biden's previous dealings with China and on his support for free trade agreements. The campaign is also eager to cast the

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77-year-old Biden, who is four years older than Trump, as frail and past his prime.

"We have yet to begin to define him and we have six months to do that," said Tim Murtaugh, Trump's campaign spokesman.

Biden has played far more of a supporting role in the nation's politics since the crisis, appearing in news interviews, virtual fundraisers and online town halls from a television studio in the basement of his home in Delaware. Most of the attention on him in recent days has focused on a nearly three-decade old sexual assault allegation brought forward by a former Senate staffer, a charge Biden has vigorously denied.

Given Biden's uneven performance as a campaigner throughout the Democratic primary, some in the party are content to have the former vice president keeping a lower profile for now, though they know it's not a dynamic that can sustain itself as the Nov. 3 election nears.

"It's hard to break through right now when you're campaigning from your home," said Geoff Garin, a Democratic pollster. "But we're at the end of April, not at the end of September and right now the focus rightfully is on Trump."

Biden advisers insist their slow, but steady strategy is working. They point to a boost in fundraising and increased visibility for the campaign's digital platforms, which has badly lagged Trump's operation. Biden campaign aides also say they are bullish on the prospects of winning states Trump carried in 2016, including Florida and Arizona, and see the current conditions in the country putting more states into play.

"I am certain that states will be battleground states that haven't been battleground states before," Biden campaign manager Jen O'Malley Dillon said during a fundraiser Friday night.

Yet some Democrats, who have been eagerly anticipating this election since the day after Trump's 2016 victory, are frustrated that their party's presumptive nominee isn't more of a constant presence during this moment of national crisis.

Yvette Simpson, the CEO of Democracy for America, a progressive political action committee, said she wondered why Biden wasn't more engaged in leading the discussions about what Democrats' priorities should be in congressional rescue bills or what American health care coverage should look like at a time when many are losing employer-based insurance.

"There's a great opportunity for our presumptive nominee and his team to step up and take the reins," Simpson said. "He's supposed to be able to lead on day one. Day one is today."

Solar, wind energy struggle as coronavirus takes toll

By CATHY BUSSEWITZ, JOHN FLESHER and PATRICK WHITTLE Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — The U.S. renewable energy industry is reeling from the new coronavirus pandemic, which has delayed construction, put thousands of skilled laborers out of work and sowed doubts about solar and wind projects on the drawing board.

In locked-down California, some local agencies that issue permits for new work closed temporarily, and some solar companies furloughed installers.

In New York and New Jersey, SunPower CEO Thomas Werner halted installation of more than 400 residential solar systems, fearing for his workers' safety.

As many as 120,000 jobs in solar and 35,000 in wind could be lost, trade groups say.

"There are many smaller companies going out of business as we speak," said Abigail Ross Hopper, president of the Solar Energy Industries Association. "Up to half our jobs are at risk."

Leaders are confident the future is bright. But the worldwide slowdown is delaying a transition to cleaner energy that scientists say is not happening quickly enough to curtail climate change.

Even as some states move toward reopening, executives fear diminished incomes and work disrupted by layoffs and social distancing will do lasting damage.

The wind industry is plagued by slowdowns in obtaining parts from overseas, getting them to job sites and constructing new turbines.

"The industry was on a tremendous roll right up until the last month or two," said Tom Kiernan, CEO of the American Wind Energy Association. "That reversal is stunning and problematic."

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Residential solar business has been hit especially hard, Hopper said, with door-to-door sales no longer feasible and potential customers watching their wallets. Deals with commercial buyers also have slumped.

New solar installations could be 17% lower worldwide than expected this year, and wind turbine manufacturing could fall up to 20%, according to consulting firm Wood Mackenzie.

"Pre-pandemic, there were great dreams and aspirations for a record-setting year," said Paul Gaynor, CEO of Longroad Energy, a utility-scale wind and solar developer. "I'm sure we're not going to have that."

Fossil fuels such as natural gas and coal remain the leading providers of the nation's electricity, with nuclear power another key contributor, according to the U.S. Energy Information Administration.

But renewable sources — wind, solar, hydroelectric, biomass and geothermal — have jumped in the last decade as production costs have fallen and many states have ordered utilities to make greater use of renewable energy to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Renewables produced nearly one-fifth of the country's energy last year.

The EIA predicts renewable energy, despite recent setbacks, will grow 11% this year — an indication of the sector's strong surge before the economy tanked. Meanwhile, coal-fired power is expected to decline 20% and gas generation to grow just 1%.

The setback for renewable energy still has been painful — even in California, where residential solar demand took off due to frequent blackouts and state laws requiring to new homes to produce as much energy as they consume.

"A lot of companies are just trying everything they can to just limp along and keep their workforce," said Bernadette Del Chiaro, executive director of the California Solar and Storage Association.

All 20 employees were temporarily furloughed at Cinnamon Energy Systems, which sells residential and commercial solar systems in Northern California.

"I'm sure we'll bounce back, just smaller," CEO Barry Cinnamon said, adding that people might not spend as much as they once did, because their income will likely be down. "Whether that's months or years, nobody knows."

Luminalt, a San Francisco solar company, furloughed most of its 40 employees. And when work resumes, CEO Jeanine Cotter expects that projects will take longer and cost more to keep installers safe.

"Think about working on a roof with a mask," Cotter said. "And think about not being able to pass a power tool to somebody unless you disinfect it before you pass it on."

Since his furlough in mid-March, Luminalt solar technician Tom Hicks has been collecting benefits but no salary — and he's worried about mortgage payments.

"My 401k got crushed by 30% just like everyone else," said Hicks, 55. "How much time do I have to recover?"

Still, there are hopeful signs. The Boston-based developer Longroad recently began a utility-scale solar project in California and secured new financing for another in Texas.

Sunnova Energy International, a Houston-based residential solar and energy storage service provider, is doing more videoconferencing and fewer in-person dealings with customers. But CEO John Berger said, "Our installations are still moving ahead, service is still moving ahead, we still see customers paying us."

In eastern Kansas, construction has continued at Southern Power's 200-megawatt Reading Wind Facility despite delayed parts shipments, company spokeswoman Helen Northcutt White said. Sixty-two turbines are planned for the facility, scheduled to go online in mid-May.

The wind and solar industries have asked lawmakers and federal agencies for help, including an extension of their four-year deadlines for completing projects without losing tax benefits. Similar assistance was granted during the 2008-09 recession.

The renewable energy industry's health is crucial to improving the climate and to a strong economic recovery, said Matthew Davis, legislative director for the League of Conservation Voters.

"These businesses, these workers deserve immediate relief," Davis said.

It's important to push for more responsible energy use as the economy reopens worldwide, said Andrew Pershing, chief scientific officer with Gulf of Maine Research Institute in Portland, Maine, which studies climate change and oceans.

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"My hope is that we would use this as an opportunity to build toward an economy that doesn't depend on burning coal and oil and that is more resilient to the climate impacts that are heading our way," Pershing said.

Today in History By The Associated Press

Today in History

Today is Sunday, May 3, the 124th day of 2020. There are 242 days left in the year.

Today's Highlights in History:

On May 3, 1802, Washington, D.C. was incorporated as a city.

On this date:

In 1913, Clorox had its beginnings as five entrepreneurs agreed to set up a liquid bleach factory in Oakland, Calif.

In 1916, Irish nationalists Padraic Pearse, Thomas Clarke and Thomas MacDonagh were executed by a British firing squad; they were among 16 people put to death for their roles in the Easter Rising.

In 1937, Margaret Mitchell won the Pulitzer Prize for her novel, "Gone with the Wind."

In 1948, the Supreme Court, in *Shelley v. Kraemer*, ruled that covenants prohibiting the sale of real estate to blacks or members of other racial groups were legally unenforceable.

In 1978, spam email was born as Gary Thuerk (thurk), a marketing executive for the Digital Equipment Corp. of Maynard, Massachusetts, transmitted an unsolicited sales pitch for a new line of computers to 400 prospective customers on ARPANET, a precursor to the internet; the stunt generated some business, as well as complaints. "Sun Day" took place on a Wednesday as thousands of people extolling the virtues of solar energy held events across the country.

In 1979, Conservative Party leader Margaret Thatcher was chosen to become Britain's first female prime minister as the Tories ousted the incumbent Labour government in parliamentary elections.

In 1984, Michael Dell founded Dell Computer Corp. while a student at the University of Texas in Austin.

In 1987, The Miami Herald said its reporters had observed a young woman spending "Friday night and most of Saturday" at a Washington townhouse belonging to Democratic presidential candidate Gary Hart. (The woman was later identified as Donna Rice; the resulting controversy torpedoed Hart's presidential bid.)

In 1999, some 70 tornadoes roared across Oklahoma and Kansas, killing 46 people and injuring hundreds.

In 2006, a federal jury in Alexandria, Virginia, rejected the death penalty for al-Qaida conspirator Zacarias Moussaoui (zak-uh-REE'-uhs moo-SOW'-ee), deciding he should spend life in prison for his role in 9/11; as he was led from the courtroom, Moussaoui taunted, "America, you lost."

In 2007, British girl Madeleine McCann vanished during a family vacation in Portugal nine days before her fourth birthday; her disappearance remains unsolved.

In 2009, Mexican President Felipe Calderon told state television that a nationwide shutdown and an aggressive informational campaign appeared to have helped curtail an outbreak of swine flu in Mexico.

Ten years ago: BP declared it would pay all "legitimate and objectively verifiable" claims related to the Gulf of Mexico oil spill. Faisal Shahzad (FY'-sul shah-ZAHD'), who later admitted to an attempted car bombing in Times Square, was apprehended aboard a flight preparing to depart New York for Dubai. Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad (ah-muh-DEE'-neh-zahd) and U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton exchanged heated words at the United Nations, the site of a monthlong debate over nuclear weapons. An Indian court convicted a Pakistani man (Mohammed Ajmal Kasab) of murder and other charges for his role in the 2008 terror attacks in Mumbai that left 166 people dead.

Five years ago: Two gunmen were shot and killed by a police officer in Garland, Texas, after they opened fire outside a purposely provocative contest for cartoon depictions of the Prophet Muhammad. Aboard the International Space Station, Italian astronaut Samantha Cristoforetti fired up the first espresso machine in orbit, then posted a photo of herself on Twitter sipping from a cup designed for use in zero-gravity.

One year ago: In their first known phone call since the release of special counsel Robert Mueller's report,

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President Donald Trump and Russia's Vladimir Putin discussed what Trump again dismissed as the "Russian Hoax." A chartered jet ran off a runway and into a river at a military base in Jacksonville, Florida; none of the 143 people onboard had serious injuries, but a dog and two cats died in the cargo hold.

Today's Birthdays: Actor Alex Cord is 87. Singer Frankie Valli is 86. Former Idaho Gov. Butch Otter is 78. Sen. Jim Risch, R-Idaho, is 77. Sports announcer Greg Gumbel is 74. Sen. Ron Wyden, D-Ore., is 71. Pop singer Mary Hopkin is 70. Singer Christopher Cross is 69. Country musician Cactus Moser (Highway 101) is 63. Rock musician David Ball (Soft Cell) is 61. Former Sen. David Vitter, R-La., is 59. Country singer Shane Minor is 52. Actress Amy Ryan is 52. Actor Bobby Cannavale (ka-nuh-VAL'-ee) is 50. Music and film producer-actor Damon Dash is 49. Country musician John Driskell Hopkins (Zac Brown Band) is 49. Country-rock musician John Neff is 49. Country singer Brad Martin is 47. Actress Marsha Stephanie-Blake is 45. TV personality Willie Geist (TV: "Today") is 45. Actress Christina Hendricks is 45. Actor Dule (doo-LAY') Hill is 45. Country singer Eric Church is 43. Actress Tanya Wright is 42. Dancer Cheryl Burke is 36. Soul singer Michael Kiwanuka is 33. Actress Jill Berard is 30. Actress Zoe De Grand Maison is 25. Rapper Desiigner (cq) is 23.

Thought for Today: "Each day, and the living of it, has to be a conscious creation in which discipline and order are relieved with some play and pure foolishness." — May Sarton, American poet (born this date in 1912, died in 1995).

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