

Groton Daily Independent

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Flihs celebrates 92nd birthday

Janice Flihs recently celebrated her 92nd birthday. Her family went together to get lawn decorations for her big day. (Courtesy photo by Bridget Flihs)

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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**STATE OF SOUTH DAKOTA
OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR
EXECUTIVE ORDER 2020-26**

Whereas, An outbreak of the severe acute respiratory disease, COVID-19, which is caused by the person-to-person spread of the novel coronavirus, has been declared a public health emergency and pandemic by the World Health Organization and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC); and,

Whereas, The President of the United States of America declared that the COVID-19 outbreak constitutes a national emergency; and,

Whereas, The CDC has issued guidance to all state and local governments and all citizens recommending preparedness, response, and mitigation to prevent community spread and guard against the COVID-19 outbreak; and,

Whereas, The State Emergency Operations Center and the National Guard have been activated to support the State's response to COVID-19, along with the activation of local emergency operations centers in several South Dakota counties and in the City of Sioux Falls; and,

Whereas, The impending threat of COVID-19 is a public health emergency requiring the State to deploy substantial resources, to involve every state agency to help mitigate the impact of COVID-19 on our state, and to implement the emergency powers of the governor to protect the health and safety of South Dakotans; and,

Whereas, A State of Emergency was declared by Executive Order 2020-04 to exist in all counties in the State of South Dakota on March 13, 2020 and was extended by Executive Order 2020-15 on April 9, 2020 which such declaration expires on May 31, 2020, unless extended in writing; and,

Whereas, This emergency continues to pose a danger to the public health and safety in all of South Dakota and impacts the daily lives of our citizens, health care systems, businesses, and the function of state and local governments; and,

Whereas, The CARES Act and federal law requires a State of Emergency to be in place to establish the Coronavirus Relief Fund and to make payments for specified purposes and expenditures related to COVID-19 for states and local governments:

NOW, THEREFORE, I, KRISTI NOEM, Governor of the State of South Dakota, by the authority vested in me by the Constitution and the Laws of this State, including but not limited to SDCL 34-48A, do hereby declare that a state of emergency continues to exist within the State of South Dakota and hereby order and direct the following:

Section 1 Declaration. I do hereby declare that a State of Emergency continues to exist in all counties in the State of South Dakota, and I direct the plans and procedures of the State Emergency Operations Plan continue to be implemented. State agencies and departments are directed to utilize state resources and to do everything reasonably possible to assist efforts to respond to and recover from this emergency.

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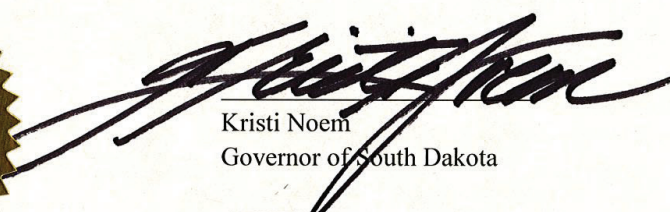
Section 2 Oversight. I direct and order that the South Dakota Department of Health, by and through the secretary, has continuing authority and oversight of measures to control and contain the spread of COVID-19, and other agencies to identify and utilize appropriate state personnel and resources for conducting necessary and ongoing incident related assessments.

Section 3 Resources. I direct and order the Department of Health and any other agency of the State of South Dakota to continue to seek and accept any funding or other resources from any entity, governmental or private, to treat, control, and stop the spread of COVID-19.

BE IT FURTHER ORDERED, This Executive Order shall be in effect immediately and shall continue until expiration on December 30, 2020, unless sooner terminated or extended.

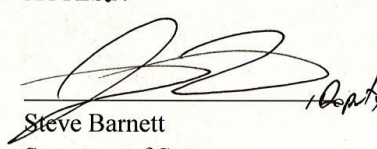
Dated in Pierre, South Dakota this 26th day of May, 2020.





Kristi Noem
Governor of South Dakota

ATTEST:



Steve Barnett
Secretary of State

STATE OF SOUTH DAKOTA
OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR
EXECUTIVE ORDER 2020-25

Whereas, An outbreak of the severe respiratory disease, COVID-19, which is caused by the person-to-person spread of the novel coronavirus, started in late 2019 and has currently been detected across the world, including the United States; and,

Whereas, The World Health Organization and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (“CDC”) have declared the COVID-19 outbreak a public health emergency and pandemic; and,

Whereas, The CDC has issued guidance to all state and local governments and all citizens recommending preparedness, nonessential travel, social distancing, and other mitigation strategies impacting many sectors of daily life to prevent the spread and guard against the COVID-19 outbreak; and,

Whereas, South Dakota has confirmed cases of COVID-19, making this a public health emergency posing a danger to public health and safety in all of South Dakota; and,

Whereas, A state of emergency has been declared by Executive Order 2020-04 on March 13, 2020, which has been extended by Executive Order 2020-15, and continues to currently exist within the State of South Dakota until its expiration on May 31, 2020, unless sooner terminated or extended; and,

Whereas, Strict compliance with the statutory and regulatory requirements for health care provider applicants to submit proof of completing examination requirements prior to licensure by their respective state licensing Board will prevent, hinder or delay necessary actions to cope with this emergency in all counties of our state, as the exam are being delayed or cancelled; and

Whereas, Strict compliance with the statutory and regulatory requirements for social work and behavioral health care provider applicants to submit proof of completing examination requirements prior to licensure by their respective state licensing Board will prevent, hinder or delay necessary actions to cope with this emergency in all counties of our state, as the exam are being delayed or cancelled;

NOW, THEREFORE, I, KRISTI NOEM, Governor of the State of South Dakota, by the authority vested in me by the Constitution and the Laws of this State, including but not limited to SDCL 34-48A-5(4), do hereby order and direct the following:

Section 1 Proof of Passing Examination. I temporarily suspend the statutory provisions of SDCL 36-4-11, 36-4-17, 36-4-17.1, 36-4A-8, 36-6A-44, 36-6A-44.2, 36-10-30, 36-10-35.1, 36-24-17.3, and 36-31-6, and the regulatory provisions of ARSD 20:47:03:03 and 20:84:03:01 requiring applicants to submit proof of completing examination requirements to prevent delaying licensure during the emergency. Physicians, physician assistants, dentists, dental hygienists, physical therapists, physical therapist assistants, audiologists, occupational therapists, occupational therapy assistants, and medical assistants who are granted a license without having submitted the proof of examination pursuant to this Executive Order shall submit proof of examination to their respective state licensing Board by November 30, 2020.

Section 2 Proof of Passing Examination. I temporarily suspend the statutory provisions of SDCL 36-26-14, 36-26-15, 36-26-15.1, 36-26-16, 36-32-42 and the regulatory provisions of ARSD 20:59:01:02.01, 20:71:05:02, and 20:80:07:01 requiring applicants to submit proof of completing examination requirements to prevent delaying licensure during the emergency. Effective July 1, 2020, I temporarily suspend the statutory provisions of SDCL 36-32-65 requiring applicants to submit proof of completing examination requirements to prevent delaying licensure during the emergency. Certified social workers, social workers, social work associates,

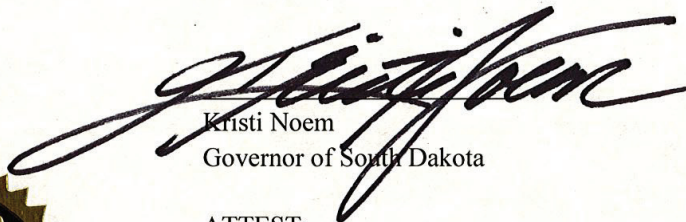
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...nified addiction counselor, licensed addiction counselor, certified prevention specialist, licensed professional counselors-mental health, and licensed marriage and family therapists who are granted a license or plan of supervision without having submitted the proof of examination pursuant to this Executive Order shall submit proof of examination to their respective state licensing Board by November 30, 2020.

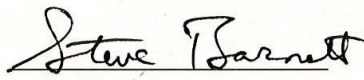
BE IT FURTHER ORDERED, This Executive Order shall be in effect immediately and shall continue for the duration of the state of emergency declared by Executive Order 2020-04 and extended by subsequent Executive Order 2020-15, unless sooner terminated or extended.

Dated in Pierre, South Dakota this 26th day of May 2020.



Kristi Noem
Governor of South Dakota

ATTEST:



Steve Barnett
Secretary of State



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Covid-19 Update: by Marie Miller

We're still showing progress.

We're at 1,688,600 cases in the US. New case numbers declined today, once again under 20,000. NY leads with 368,669 cases with new cases down, showing decline for a third consecutive day. NJ has 155,764 cases, a decline in new cases and holding below 1000. Remaining top-10 states are as follows: IL – 113,486, CA – 99,902, MA – 93,693, PA – 72,873, TX – 57,529, MI – 55,040, FL – 52,247, and MD – 48,290 These ten states account for 66% of US cases. 2 more states have over 40,000 cases, 4 more states have over 30,000 cases, 5 more states have over 20,000 cases, 9 more have over 10,000, 8 more + DC over 5000, 7 more + 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, MI, IL, MD, CA, LA, TX, and OH. States where new case reports are increasing include FL, TN, GA, WI, VA, AL, NC, and SC. States where new case reports are decreasing include NJ, IN, MA, CO, PA, WA, CT, and RI. We'll watch the states showing increases and hope those with decreases continue the decline.

There have been 98,933 deaths in the US. Today the number of new deaths increased slightly, but remains below 1000. NY has 29,241, NJ has 11,191, MA has 6473, MI has 5266, PA has 5175, IL has 4960, CA has 3856, and CT has 3769. All but one of these states is reporting fewer than 100 new deaths today. There are 5 more states over 2000 deaths, 5 more states over 1000 deaths, 8 more over 500, 14 more + DC and PR over 100, and 10 + GU, VI, and MP under 100. Things are still going our way.

I read a paper from a research group in China which addressed the question of how big a role asymptomatic people play in transmission of Covid-19. Here, we are talking not about presymptomatic individuals who go on to develop symptoms within a few days, but folks who never develop them, so-called carriers.

The study reported here focused on just one such carrier, an individual who came into the hospital for problems unrelated to Covid-19, but who tested positive. They tracked virtually every contact this person had over an extended period of time—the patient's family and extended family, other patients in the hospital ward where she spent three weeks, and health care staff of all kinds who worked with or near her during her hospitalization. This was a total of 455 contacts with a median contact time of 4 days.

On the patients, they collected detailed information on symptoms, imaging and laboratory data, and diagnostic tests (PCR) for SARS-CoV-2; since some patients had symptoms that could be attributable to Covid-19, they received multiple diagnostic tests to rule out that as a cause for their symptoms. Patients were quarantined for observation. Everyone was followed for 14 days after their last contact with the case.

Family members were, likewise, quarantined for observation and medical isolation. Median contact time was 5 days. Each had at least two diagnostic tests, and one who developed respiratory symptoms had four additional diagnostic tests to rule out Covid-19 as their cause. Hospital personnel were screened using imaging, laboratory data, collection of symptom reports, and two diagnostic tests each.

While all of those under observation in this study did wear face masks, it was observed that those not working in health care frequently wore them incorrectly; and of course, they were removed to eat and drink even while sharing space with the case. Interestingly, none of the diagnostic tests in any of the groups were positive despite contacts in what the researchers described as a "relatively dense space."

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We know that asymptomatic individuals frequently show viral loads as high as those in the ill. They speculated that perhaps this individual had a lower viral load and/or the transmission was lowered because, being asymptomatic, she was not expelling virus via coughs and sneezing. They also noted the potential role of the face mask in limiting spread. They are concluding that for at least some asymptomatic carriers, infectiousness is weak.

Now there are obvious problems with a single case study, but these results are intriguing. They suggest transmission from asymptomatic carriers may be less an issue than feared and also that face mask wearing may play an important role in interrupting potential transmission. I'll be watching for more work on this topic.

I read an interesting round-up of the current state of knowledge about how this infection manifests itself in patients. We know a large majority of cases show up as pneumonia, sometimes progressing to respiratory failure and, in some, multi-organ failure and that much of this can be attributed either directly to the effects of the virus in tissue or to a cytokine storm, an overreaction of the immune system we've discussed a couple of times over the past few weeks.

Here's the short version of the other kinds of things we're seeing showing up in some patients. Turns out many of these things are seen in other viral diseases as well, and they're not always well understood even in diseases that have been around for years, much less in something as new as Covid-19. Do remember most of these are fairly uncommon and some actually rare.

(1) Cardiac injury – When your lungs aren't working so well, they get less efficient at supplying oxygen to your bloodstream. This virus also inflames the linings of blood vessels, which can narrow them and interfere with efficient oxygen supply to tissues. When tissues are deprived of adequate oxygen, the heart responds by working harder to get more oxygen moving around, which can lead to stress on the organ. So that's one problem. Additionally, we are seeing myocarditis, inflammation of the heart muscle which can weaken it, making it pump less efficiently. We're trying to work out whether the virus is able to actually infect cells in the heart, but there is no direct evidence of that at this time. This damage could be a result of the cytokine storm, or it could be related to damage to the heart's lining as well.

(2) Abnormal blood clotting – There are several reasons abnormal clots can happen, and it is possible any or all of those are operating here. There is also some thought that cytokine storms are exacerbating the same inflammatory conditions that exist in people with preexisting vascular disease, which would explain how that is a risk factor for severe Covid-19 outcomes. A picture that is emerging with some frequency is the formation of large numbers of tiny clots throughout various organs.

(3) Strokes – Young people who do not have cardiac risk factors are showing up with strokes, and that is most unusual. A stroke happens when the blood, that is, oxygen, supply is interrupted to some portion of the brain. Your brain is, by far, the heaviest user of oxygen in your body, and its tissues can survive only an extremely short period without adequate oxygen, so strokes can have devastating effects. There are basically two ways the blood supply to your brain gets interrupted. One is when a clot plugs up a blood vessel that supplies the tissue, cutting off the supply of oxygen. The other is when a weak spot in a blood vessel causes it to break open, spilling blood into the brain. Because your skull doesn't have a lot of extra space inside and, being bone, doesn't have any give, when a lot of blood builds up in there, there's no room for it. That's going to put pressure on the brain, and that pressure can squeeze a blood vessel closed, giving the same sort of effect as a clot does when it plugs a vessel, shutting off the oxygen supply. We think both kinds of strokes are occurring in Covid-19 patients. There is some suspicion there may be deaths due to both kinds of strokes in patients after they've gone home or even in those who had

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mild or no symptoms at all before the stroke; those would not be reflected in any estimates of how often this is happening. No one's too sure how common this is.

(4) Encephalitis – inflammation of the brain. This can range from relatively mild to very serious. We're not too sure what's going on in patients who develop encephalitis. We are also seeing cases of Guillain-Barre syndrome, a neurologic disorder that occurs following other viral infections too; this is a result of an abnormal immune response and has occurred only a small number of times in Covid-19 patients. This disorder is not well understood any time it happens, whether following Covid-19 or another viral infection.

(5) Skin rashes – There is a handful of things showing up here. We're seeing a variety of rashes, and some people are developing painful red lesions on the toes called Covid toe. We're not even sure these are related to the virus and not just a coincidence because there is no pattern of characteristic rash as you would see with measles or chicken pox. We talked a while back about this inflammatory syndrome we've seen in children; that also frequently is accompanied by a rash. While this can be very serious, it has been extremely rare.

A couple of days ago, we talked about outbreaks in the meatpacking industry and the lack of transparency from the industry. I read a further piece on this issue today, and the magnitude of the problem appears to be worse than I mentioned the other day. The estimates I was working from then were that 10,000 workers had tested positive and 35 had died; an analysis by the nonprofit Food and Environment Reporting Network produced a new estimate last week that the numbers are more in the line of 17,000 infected and 66 deaths. This is a significant problem. It is compounded by the fact that the companies have not always been very cooperative with public health authorities in terms of disclosing these numbers or in undertaking mitigation efforts. Sometimes, a company will list measures they are taking to protect workers, but workers will report that these things aren't really happening in the plant. Most local governments have no authority to force the issue; some push and others, perhaps fearing to upset their relationship with a major employer, don't. A greater problem is that plant management is not always disclosing to workers when there are cases in the plant or where they are occurring; this makes it impossible for workers to fairly assess their own risks. And cases seen in meatpacking employees will not remain confined to that employee group; they're going to circulate in the community as those workers go home to families and visit stores and gas stations and parks. I try not to dip into policy issues here, but I have grave concerns about this situation. It is true that these plants are a critical part of our food supply chain in the US, but I am not sure we should feel at all comfortable sitting down to a nice dinner each night if we have to wonder whether it was produced at the expense of workers' and their communities' health—and apparently this is precisely what we should be wondering. Time for this industry to step up and become better corporate citizens.

I read a story today about a woman who knows a thing or two about hard times, having survived the Holocaust as a child. Dr. Cornelia Vertenstein, 92, has been using her Ph.D. in music to teach piano in her Denver home for over 50 years. When the pandemic hit and it was no longer safe to have children coming to her home, she decided the lessons must go on, so using cell phones and FaceTime, camera positioned to show the children's hands on the keyboard, she is teaching, starting each lesson promptly at the regular time on the scheduled day of the week.

She even held her spring recital on schedule after her students' parents introduced her to Zoom. The young children performed to a crowd on one Sunday afternoon, and the older ones performed for another crowd on the next. Programs were distributed by email. Plato was quoted at the top: "Music is a moral law. It gives soul to the universe, wings to the mind, flight to the imagination and charm and gaiety to life and to everything." Dr. Vertenstein opened the recital with this: "With great pride I introduce my students who prepared themselves with discipline and determination in difficult circumstances. When I was a little

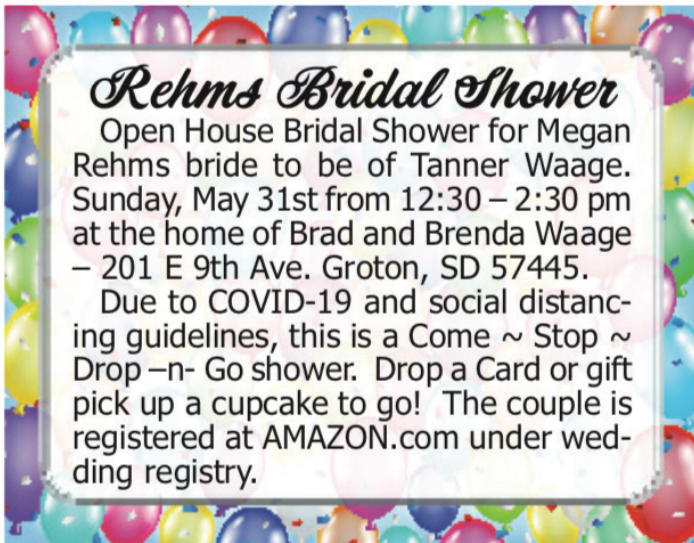
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girl I couldn't go to public schools because of my religion. And they created a little school in the basement of an old building which sometimes had heat and sometimes didn't. Great minds and achievements came out of that school. Which taught me in any situation you can strive, learn, look ahead and have dreams."

And so we can strive, learn, look ahead, and have dreams. This is no time to give up and sit around feeling sorry for ourselves. If a 92-year-old Holocaust survivor still has cheerful service to offer, then the rest of us should be able to step up too. Moral law, indeed.

Stay well, and we'll talk tomorrow.



Rehms Bridal Shower
Open House Bridal Shower for Megan Rehms bride to be of Tanner Waage. Sunday, May 31st from 12:30 – 2:30 pm at the home of Brad and Brenda Waage – 201 E 9th Ave. Groton, SD 57445.
Due to COVID-19 and social distancing guidelines, this is a Come ~ Stop ~ Drop –n- Go shower. Drop a Card or gift pick up a cupcake to go! The couple is registered at AMAZON.com under wedding registry.



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Area COVID-19 Cases

	May 20	May 21	May 22	May 23	May 24	May 25	May 26
Minnesota	17,029	17,670	18,200	19,005	19,845	20,573	21,315
Nebraska	10,846	11,122	11,425	11,662	11,989	12,134	12,355
Montana	471	478	479	479	479	479	479
Colorado	22,482	22,797	23,191	23,487	23,964	24,174	24,269
Wyoming	583	596	608	608	615	638	644
North Dakota	1,994	2095	2229	2317	2365	2418	2457
South Dakota	4,085	4177	4250	4356	4468	4563	4586
United States	1,528,661	1,551,853	1,577,758	1,602,148	1,622,670	1,643,499	1,662,768
US Deaths	91,938	93,439	94,729	96,013	97,087	97,722	98,223
Minnesota	+657	+641	+530	+805	+840	+728	+742
Nebraska	+221	+276	+303	+237	+327	+145	+221
Montana	+1	+7	+1	0	0	0	0
Colorado	+280	+315	+394	+296	+477	+210	+95
Wyoming	+6	+13	+12	0	+7	+23	+6
North Dakota	+63	+101	+134	+88	+48	+53	+39
South Dakota	+58	+92	+73	+106	+112	+95	+23
United States	+20,493	+23,192	+25,905	+24,390	+20,522	+20,829	+19,269
US Deaths	+600	+1,501	+1,290	+1,284	+1,074	+635	+501
	May 27						
Minnesota	21,960						
Nebraska	12,619						
Montana	479						
Colorado	24,565						
Wyoming	648						
North Dakota	2422						
South Dakota	4653						
United States	1,681,418						
US Deaths	98,929						
Minnesota	652						
Nebraska	264						
Montana	0						
Colorado	+296						
Wyoming	+4						
North Dakota	-----						
South Dakota	+67						
United States	+18,650						
US Deaths	+706						

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May 26th COVID-19 UPDATE

Groton Daily Independent from State Health Lab Reports

Beadle, Minnehaha, and Brown counties have reported double digit increases in COVID-19. Overall, Brown County and the state of South Dakota are reporting increases in the percentage of people who have recovered from COVID-19.

There are no new deaths in the Dakotas.

Brown County:

Active Cases: -4 (82)
Recovered: +14 (177)
Total Positive: +10 (259)
Ever Hospitalized: +1 (11)
Deaths: 0
Negative Tests: +37 (1362)
Percent Recovered: 68% (+ 3 percentage points)

South Dakota:

Positive: +67 (4,653 total) (44 more than yesterday)
Negative: +1688 (32,385 total)
Hospitalized: +8 (378 total) - 106 currently hospitalized (7 more than yesterday)
Deaths: 0 (50 total)
Recovered: +113 (3528 total)
Active Cases: 1075 (46 less than yesterday)
Percent Recovered: 76% (+1 percentage point)

Counties with no positive cases report the following negative tests: Bennett -4 (21), Brule +6 (123), Butte +4 (168), Campbell +3 (23), Custer +16 (138), Dewey +26 (313), Edmunds +4 (59), Gregory +4 (63), Haakon +3 (33), Hanson +4 (56), Harding +23 (29), Jones 8, Kingsbury +2 (129), Mellette +13 (57), Perkins 21, Potter +4 (60), unassigned +99 (1056).

Beadle: +18 positive, +6 recovered (32 of 150 recovered)
Brown: +10 positive, +14 recovered (177 of 259 recovered)
DemKota in Brown County has 115 of 147 recovered
Clark: -1 recovered (3 of 4 recovered)
Codington: +1 positive, +1 recovered (18 of 33 recovered)
Davison: +1 positive (9 of 10 recovered)
Day: +1 recovered (10 of 12 recovered)
Fall River: +1 recovered (3 of 4 recovered)
Grant: +1 positive (5 of 11 recovered)
Hughes: +1 recovered (14 of 19 recovered)
Hutchinson: +1 positive (3 of 4 recovered)
Jackson: +1 positive (0 of 2 recovered)
Jerauld: +1 positive, +1 recovered (11 of 29 recovered)
Lake: +1 recovered (5 of 6 recovered)
Lincoln: +7 positive, +5 recovered (191 of 233 recovered)
Lyman: +1 recovered (4 of 12 recovered)
Minnehaha: +15 positive, +70 recovered (2758 of 3289 recovered)
Oglala Lakota: +1 recovered (3 of 17 recovered)

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Pennington: +6 positive, +2 recovered (30 of 162 recovered)
Roberts: +1 recovered (17 of 35 recovered)
Sanborn: +1 recovered (5 of 11 recovered)
Todd: +2 recovered, +1 recovered (14 of 20 recovered)
Turner: +1 recovered (19 of 23 recovered)
Union: +7 recovered, +2 recovered (56 of 86 recovered)
Yankton: +1 recovered (34 of 51 recovered)

Fully recovered from positive cases (added Clark, lost Davison, Hutchinson): Clark 4-4, Deuel 1-1, Faulk 1-1, Hand 1-1, Hyde 1-1, Lawrence 9-9, McPherson 1-1, Miner 1-1, Spink 4-4, Sully 1-1, Walworth 5-5, Ziebach 1-1.

The N.D. DoH & private labs report 976 completed tests today for COVID-19 with 43 new positive cases, bringing the statewide total to 2,422.

State & private labs have reported 85,479 total completed tests.

1,701 ND patients are recovered.

RACE/ETHNICITY OF SOUTH DAKOTA COVID-19 CASES

Race/Ethnicity	# of Cases	% of Cases
Asian, Non-Hispanic	529	11%
Black, Non-Hispanic	893	19%
Hispanic	801	17%
Native American, Non-Hispanic	416	9%
Other	599	13%
White, Non-Hispanic	1415	30%

COVID-19 DEATHS IN SOUTH DAKOTA BY COUNTY

County of Residence	# of Deaths
Beadle	2
Jerauld	1
McCook	1
Minnehaha	43
Pennington	3

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County	Positive Cases	Recovered Cases	Negative Cases
Aurora	22	2	102
Beadle	150	32	327
Bennett	0	0	21
Bon Homme	8	4	195
Brookings	15	14	612
Brown	259	177	1362
Brule	0	0	123
Buffalo	9	1	130
Butte	0	0	168
Campbell	0	0	23
Charles Mix	13	5	184
Clark	4	4	109
Clay	15	12	308
Codington	33	18	957
Corson	4	3	50
Custer	0	0	138
Davison	10	9	501
Day	12	10	125
Deuel	1	1	113
Dewey	0	0	313
Douglas	3	1	66
Edmunds	0	0	59
Fall River	4	3	150
Faulk	1	1	42
Grant	11	5	121
Gregory	0	0	63
Haakon	0	0	33
Hamlin	4	3	130
Hand	1	1	42
Hanson	0	0	56
Harding	0	0	29
Hughes	19	14	538
Hutchinson	4	3	171

Hyde	1	1	32
Jackson	2	0	29
Jerauld	29	11	64
Jones	0	0	8
Kingsbury	0	0	129
Lake	6	5	232
Lawrence	9	9	478
Lincoln	233	191	2465
Lyman	12	4	164
Marshall	4	1	86
McCook	5	4	190
McPherson	1	1	37
Meade	10	4	590
Mellette	0	0	57
Miner	1	1	37
Minnehaha	3289	2758	12883
Moody	18	15	200
Oglala Lakota	17	3	126
Pennington	162	30	2742
Perkins	0	0	21
Potter	0	0	60
Roberts	35	17	314
Sanborn	11	5	55
Spink	4	4	176
Stanley	9	8	81
Sully	1	1	23
Todd	20	14	383
Tripp	6	3	126
Turner	23	19	265
Union	86	56	509
Walworth	5	5	114
Yankton	51	34	1245
Ziebach	1	1	47
Unassigned****	0	0	1056

Age Range	# of Cases	# of Deaths
0-19 years	435	0
20-29 years	875	0
30-39 years	1053	2
40-49 years	822	1
50-59 years	779	7
60-69 years	437	7
70-79 years	124	5
80+ years	128	28

SEX OF SOUTH DAKOTA COVID-19 CASES

Sex	# of Cases	# of Deaths
Female	2171	27
Male	2482	23

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Vold Auctioneers & Realty Lenling Inventory Liquidation Sale, Claremont, SD ONLINE ONLY SALE May 22-27, 2020



Trailers, Vehicle, Lawn Mower, Scooter

Enclosed 8'x20' Roadmaster Specialty Trailer (Has lighting and outlets inside)
18' Dressen Custom Trailer with ramps • John Deere 116 lawn mower • Honda Express Scooter
1981 Mercury cougar XR-7 • C1500 truck for parts only

Plumbing Supplies

Plastic sump pump hose • PVC pipe of many sizes and lengths • Urinal (NEW)
3 toilets (2 new, 1 used) • 3 toilet seats • Pipe insulation • Flexible tubing
Many various PVC connectors (too many to count) • Porcelain sink
Misc. fittings and shut off valves • 3 hydrants (1 new, 2 used) • Many faucets and drains
Homeguard sump pump • Many brass fittings of various sizes • Hose clamps (too many to count)
Ritchie waterer parts

Electrical and Heating Supplies

Thermador wall heater (NEW) • Energy-Mate wood burner for boiler
Various types and sizes of electrical wire (several partial roles and several new roles)
Homemade wire unwinders • Approximately 30 to 40 breaker boxes (some used, some new)
Glass insulators • Gear for climbing electrical poles • Fuses (too many to count)
Outlets (too many to count) • Light switches (too many to count) • Electrical boxes (too many to count)
• Light bulbs • Electric motors • Duct work and stove pipe (many pieces)

Tools, Garage and Shop supplies

Milwaukee right angle drill • Black and decker cordless drill • Black and Decker bench grinder
5 ton hydraulic bottle jack • Makita grinder • 2 Milwaukee heavy duty rotary hammer drills
Black and Decker electric drill • Watsco vacuum pump • Drill bits • 40 pc tap and die set
Circular saw • Pipe threaders • Cable crimper • Acetylene tank and torch
Rockwell Jawhorse (new) • Echo Chainsaw • 2 wooden saw horses • 8' wooden A frame ladder
2 wheel dolly cart • Appliance cart • 2 wood storage bins • Red Devil Paint shaker
Plastic tub • Wood carts with wheels • Small chain bind • Ball hitches
Hard hats and welding mask • Portable air compressor • Metal storage bin
Empty oil barrel with hand pump • Insulation blower with hose • Many yard tools
Arrow wood burning stove • Metal shelving • Wood tool box • Many wood storage bins
Several metal work benches with top half shelving

Collectibles, Neon Beer Signs, Pepsi Cola Pop Machine

3 large wooden crates • Wood crate with dividers • 2 copper wash tubs
Fuller-Warren wood burning stove • Vintage scale • 2 collectible hardware scales
Singer sewing machine (treadle machine) • 4 neon beer signs • 7up light up sign
Zima electric reflective display • Water filter crock • Window shade cutter and shades
Many collectible tins • 2 wooden barrels • Vintage folding chairs
Pepsi Cola Pop Machine for glass bottles • National Cash Register

Boat, Outdoors and Sporting/Fishing

Slick Craft Boat and Shoreland'r trailer • 3 sets of cross country skis • Earthquake garden tiller
Go cart (needs work, comes with many spare parts) • 3 bikes • Brinkman Propane Grill
Coleman folding table • Tent (3 room, believe all poles and stakes are there)
Coleman air mattress • Fishing reels • Fish cleaning board • Fishing net
Several fishing rods and reels • Tackle boxes • Ice fishing poles • Minnow buckets

Store Displays and Office Equipment

2 glass display cases • Several display/work benches • 2 office desks
Several metal filing cabinets • Maytag dryer • Microwave • Hot dog cooker



Register and Bid
at HiBid.com



Auctioneer's Note:
Gary Lenling has passed away and Marian is selling the business inventory. Take advantage of this opportunity to stock up on plumbing and electrical supplies for your business, home, office, or farm!
Call for viewing. Pick up dates are Friday, May 29th and Saturday, May 30th, 2020 from 1-4 p.m. both days.

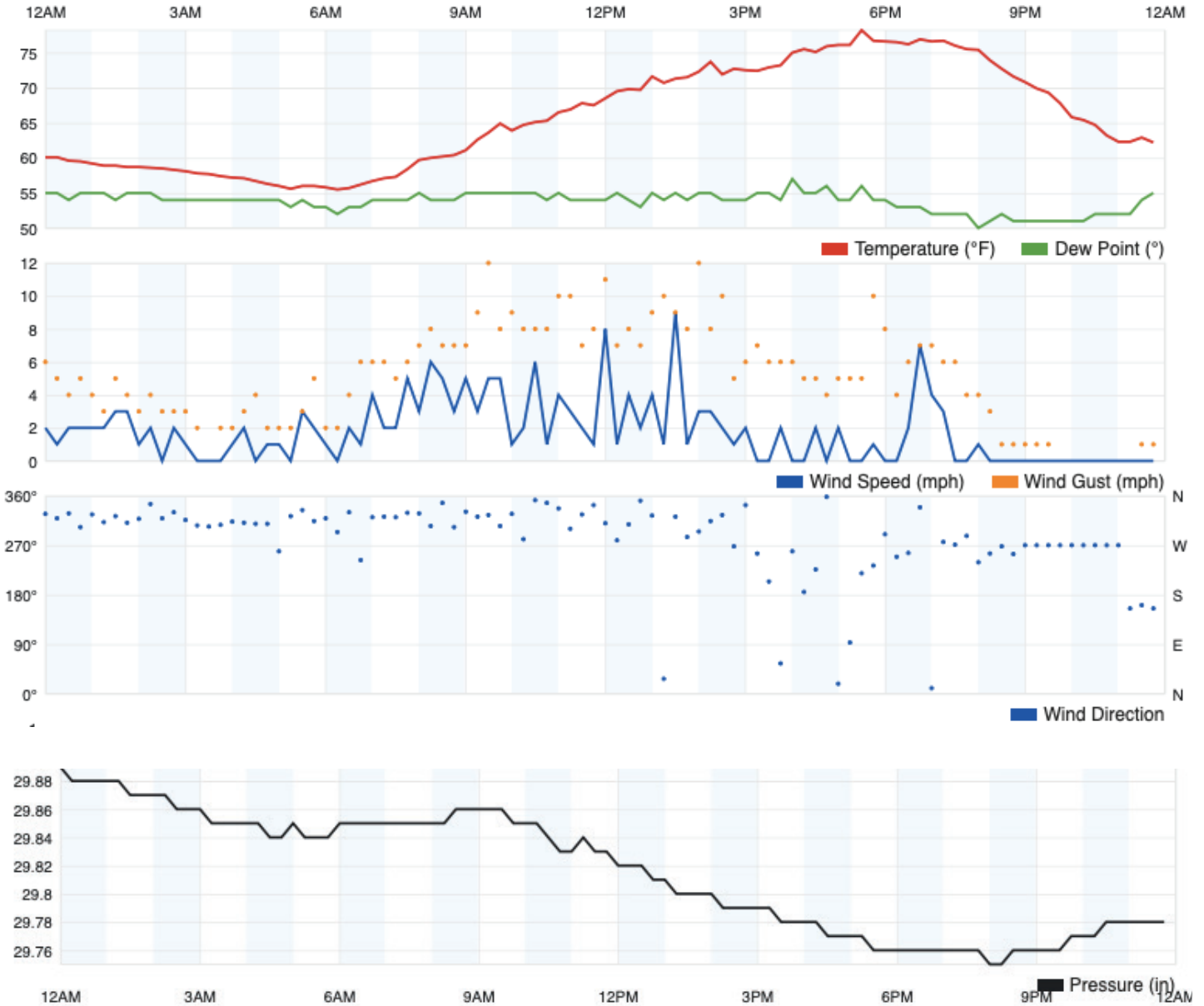
TERMS: Payment of cash, check, or CC must be made before removal of items. Nothing removed before settlement.
Statements made sale day take precedence over all advertising. Printed material was taken from sources believed to be correct but is not warranted. Any warranties are between seller and buyer. Sellers or Vold Auctioneers are not responsible for accidents. Subject to additions and deletions.

Vold Auctioneers & Realty, Inc.
Bill Jensen, Auctioneer
PO Box 31 – Britton, SD 57430
605-448-0048
www.voldrealty.com – www.ag4bid.com

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Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs



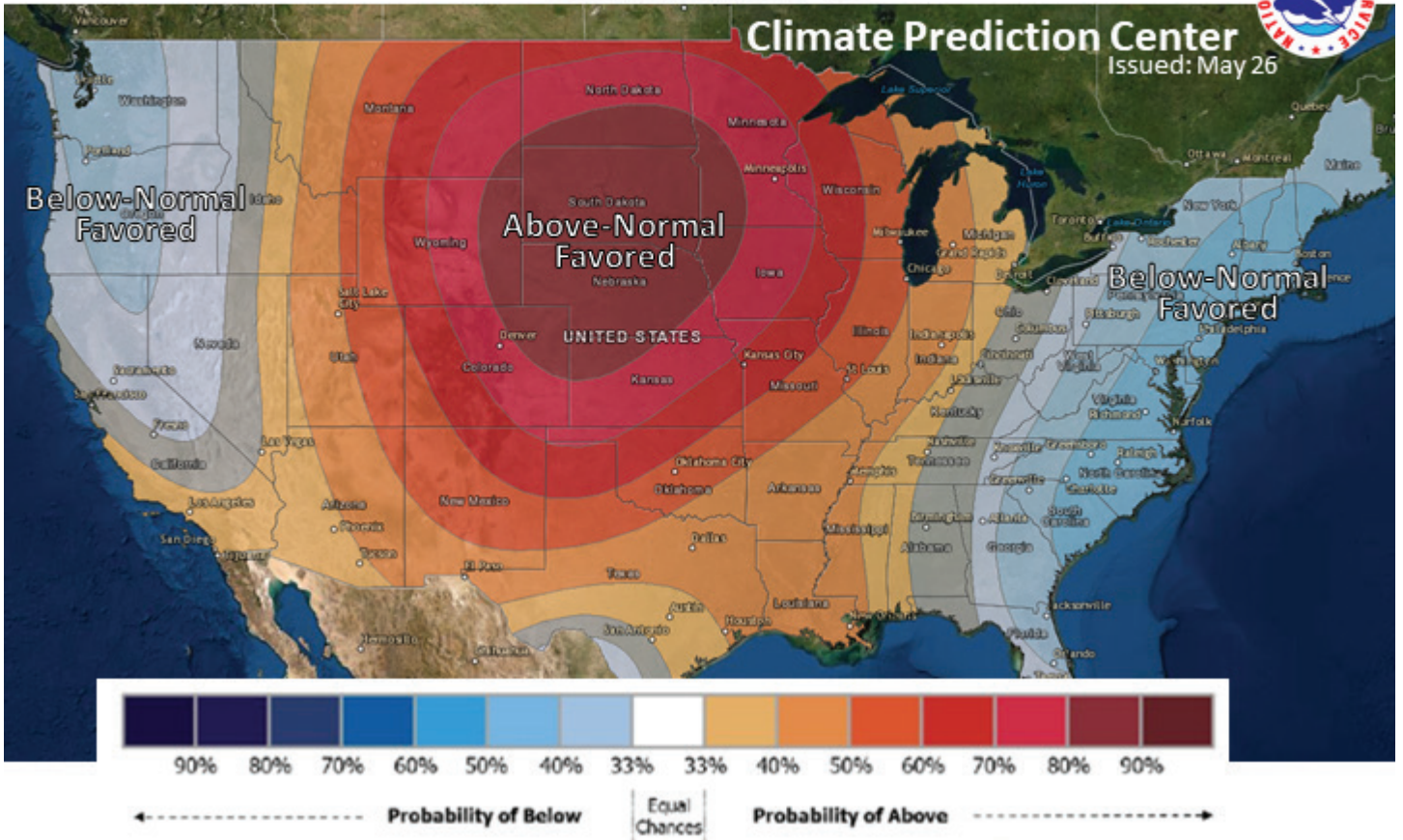
6–10 Day Temperature Outlook

Valid: June 1–5



Climate Prediction Center

Issued: May 26



Some above average/summer-like temperatures are likely on the way next week (first week of June)! Outlooks are from the NWS Climate Prediction Center: cpc.ncep.noaa.gov

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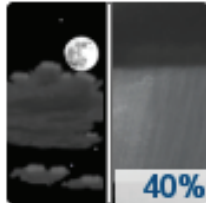
Today



Sunny

High: 83 °F

Tonight



Partly Cloudy
then Chance
Showers

Low: 55 °F

Thursday



Sunny then
Sunny and
Breezy

High: 73 °F

Thursday
Night



Mostly Clear

Low: 46 °F

Friday





Sunny

High: 70 °F




NATIONAL WEATHER SERVICE
OCEANIC AND ATMOSPHERIC ADMINISTRATION

Today
Wed, May 27th
78-85°

 → 

Light rain possible this evening/
tonight, mostly across central SD

3-Day Outlook

THU	FRI	SAT
		
70-75°	66-72°	64-70°

Near to below-average
temperatures, until next week
when summer-like air arrives

Updated: 5/27/2020 3:34 AM Central

Sunny skies will give way to increasing clouds and possible rain showers this evening/tonight (chances are highest across central South Dakota). Expect above average temperatures today, but more seasonable to slightly below average temperatures for the rest of the week.

Today in Weather History

May 27, 1942: A short estimated F2 touchdown uprooted 27 trees on the western edge of Bryant in Hamlin County. One barn was destroyed.

May 27, 1996 On May 26th, anywhere from 4 to 6 inches of rain fell in a 24 hour period over the lower Bad River Basin. Also, 3 to 5 inches of rain fell over much of Western South Dakota. This runoff caused the Bad River at Fort Pierre to crest at 26.25 feet or about 5 feet above flood stage late on the 27th before falling back below flood stage on the 30th. The entire length of the Bad River Road from U.S. Highway 83 near Fort Pierre to U.S. Highway 14 near Midland was closed to all except local traffic on the 27th. Twenty-five to 35 volunteers were filling sandbags all day on the 27th around two homes along the river. Most of the damage was associated with flooding of agricultural land and some county roads. One resident along the river said the river was the highest it has been in 32 years.

1771: In Virginia, a wall of water came roaring down the James River Valley following ten to twelve days of intense rain. As water swept through Richmond, buildings, boats, animals, and vegetation were lost. About one hundred fifty people were killed as the River reached a flood stage of forty-five feet above normal. A monument to the flood was inscribed by Ryland Randolph, of Curles, in 1771-72: " ... all the great rivers of this country were swept by inundations never before experienced which changed the face of nature and left traces of violence that will remain for ages."

1896: A massive tornado struck Saint Louis, Missouri killing 306 persons and causing thirteen million dollars damage. The tornado path was short but cut across a densely populated area. It touched down six miles west of Eads Bridge in Saint Louis and widened to a mile as it crossed into East Saint Louis. The tornado was the most destructive of record in the U.S. at that time. It pierced a five-eighths inch thick iron sheet with a two by four-inch pine plank. A brilliant display of lightning accompanied the storm.

1987 - Severe thunderstorms in West Texas produced baseball size hail at Crane, hail up to three and a half inches in diameter at Post, and grapefruit size hail south of Midland. Five days of flooding commenced in Oklahoma. Thunderstorms produced 7 to 9 inches of rain in central Oklahoma. Oklahoma City reported 4.33 inches of rain in six hours. Up to six inches of rain caused flooding in north central Texas. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1988 - Sunny and warm weather prevailed across much of the nation to kick off the Memorial Day weekend. Afternoon thunderstorms in southern Florida caused the mercury at Miami to dip to a record low reading of 69 degrees. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1989 - Unseasonably hot weather prevailed in the southeastern U.S. Ten cities reported record high temperatures for the date as readings soared into the 90s. Lakeland, FL, reported a record high of 99 degrees, and Biloxi, MS, reported a temperature of 90 degrees along with a relative humidity of 75 percent. (The National Weather Summary)

1990 - Thunderstorms produced severe weather from north central Texas to the Central Gulf Coast Region. Severe thunderstorms spawned four tornadoes, and there were eighty-one reports of large hail or damaging winds. Late afternoon thunderstorms over southeast Louisiana produced high winds which injured twenty-seven persons at an outdoor music concert in Baton Rouge, and high winds which gusted to 78 mph at the Lake Ponchartrain Causeway. (Storm Data) (The National Weather Summary)

1997: An F5 tornado killed 27 people in Jarrell, Texas. Although tornado warnings were issued 30 minutes in advance and local sirens were sounded, there were few places to go for safety. Most homes were on slabs, with no basements. Houses were swept clean off their foundations, with little debris left behind. Total damage was \$20 million. The same thunderstorm complex produced a wind gust to 122 mph at Kelly Air Force Base in San Antonio.

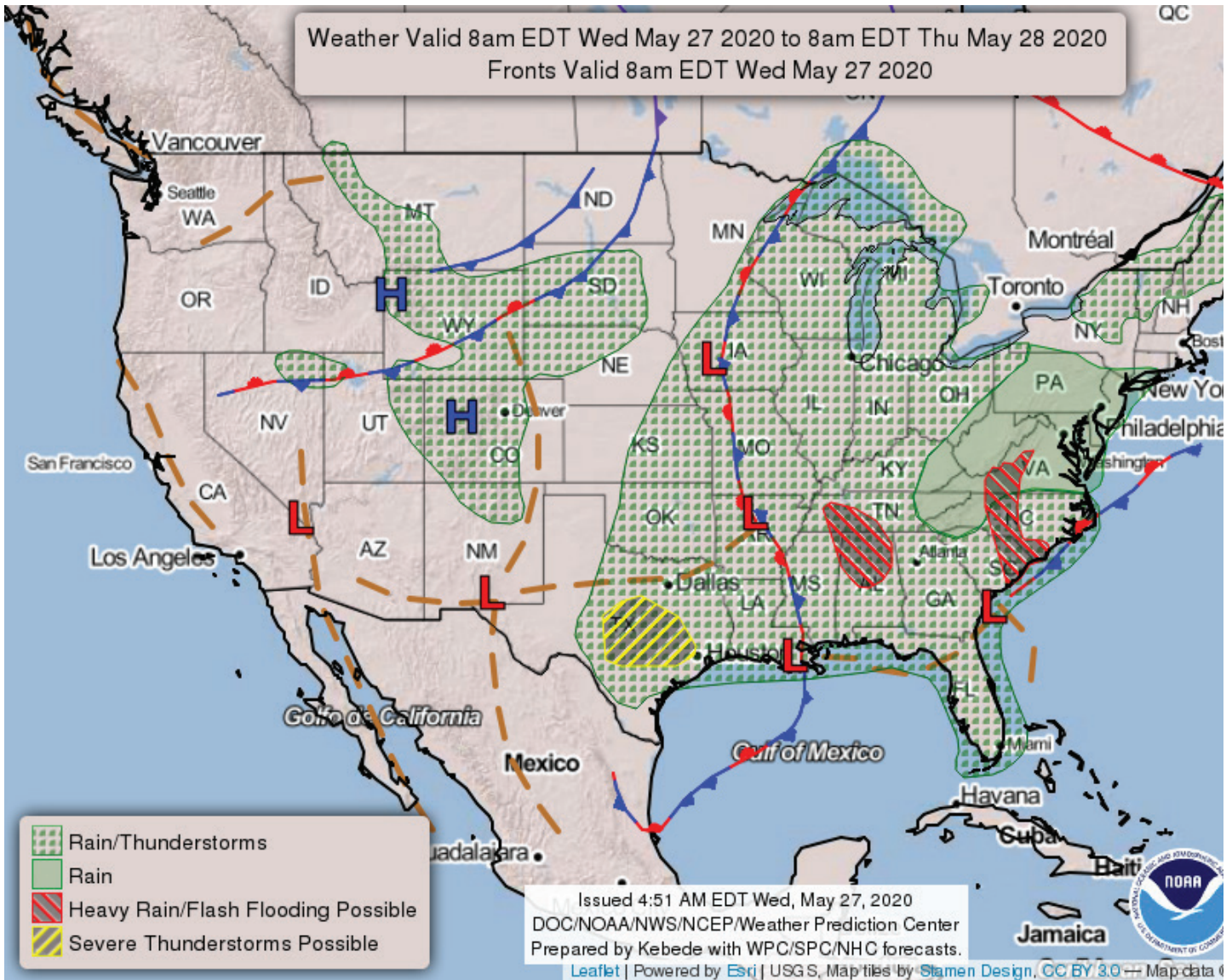
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Yesterday's Groton Weather Today's Info

High Temp: 78 °F at 5:28 PM
Low Temp: 56 °F at 5:16 AM
Wind: 12 mph at 9:24 AM
Precip: .00

Record High: 101° in 2018
Record Low: 28° in 1907
Average High: 72°F
Average Low: 48°F
Average Precip in May.: 2.62
Precip to date in May.: 2.73
Average Precip to date: 6.65
Precip Year to Date: 4.63
Sunset Tonight: 9:11 p.m.
Sunrise Tomorrow: 5:51 a.m.



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SEEING THE LIGHT

An astronomy professor asked his class, "When can you see the farthest - at night or in the daytime?" Unanimously, the class answered, "In the daytime."

"Wrong," corrected the teacher. "In the day time, you see the sun. But at night you can see the stars, and the star are millions of times farther away than the sun."

What do you do when you are trapped in unpleasant situations? Withdraw? Think impossible thoughts? Blame someone else for where you are? Have a pity-party? Get angry and resentful? We all have developed ways to deal with uncomfortable, seemingly unchangeable situations. It's something that most of us do to escape unbearable surroundings. Why not try to escape reality for a moment. Are there other options for bad times and horrible places?

When King Uzziah died, Isaiah "saw the Lord sitting on a lofty throne." What he saw was his commission to be God's messenger to His people. For some that might have been a dream come true. Others may have seen it as a responsibility more than they could handle. Being God's messenger has always had its difficult moments - even for the most qualified.

But Isaiah's mission and his situation looked difficult from the beginning. He had to tell people who believed they were blessed by God that they were going to be destroyed by God because they were disobedient to God. His response? "I'll go. Send me! I'll do whatever You ask!"

Now, more than ever, we need Isaiah's view of God. He has called us to serve Him wherever He has placed us. We are where we are because He has a mission for us. We dare not fail Him!

Prayer: Grant us, Lord, a vision of Your greatness that matches Isaiah's and empower us to serve You at all costs. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: Isaiah 6 Then I heard the Lord asking, "Whom should I send as a messenger to this people? Who will go for us?" I said, "Here I am. Send me."

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2020 Groton SD Community Events

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

News from the Associated Press

SD Lottery

By The Associated Press

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

Mega Millions

34-52-58-59-62, Mega Ball: 4, Megaplier: 3

(thirty-four, fifty-two, fifty-eight, fifty-nine, sixty-two; Mega Ball: four; Megaplier: three)

Estimated jackpot: \$313 million

Powerball

Estimated jackpot: \$114 million

Task force on missing Native Americans resumes sessions

FLAGSTAFF, Ariz. (AP) — A presidential task force charged with coming up with ways to address missing and slain Native Americans will resume tribal listening sessions Wednesday.

The task force held a handful of sessions in person with tribes and tribal organizations before the coronavirus hit. It's now turning to teleconferences and webinars to update tribes on its work and get feedback.

Four sessions are scheduled through June 3.

The task force will develop protocols to apply to new and unsolved cases in Indian Country and create a multi-jurisdictional team to review cold cases. The task force made up of seven federal officials says it's on track to submit a progress report to the White House in November. A final report is due in November 2021.

"As all of these pieces of the puzzle come together, including that data collection, I think we're really going to make an impact, make a difference," said Katie Sullivan, who represents the Office of the Attorney General on the task force.

Various states have formed similar groups to look at what has become an epidemic in Indian Country.

The National Institute of Justice estimates that 1.5 million Native American women have experienced violence in their lifetime, including many who are victims of sexual violence. On some reservations, federal studies have shown women are killed at a rate over 10 times the national average.

An Associated Press investigation in 2018 found that nobody knows precisely how cases of missing and murdered Native American women happen nationwide because many cases go unreported, others aren't well documented and no government database specifically tracks them.

Noem previews plan to spend \$1.25 billion coronavirus relief

By STEPHEN GROVES Associated Press

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — South Dakota Gov. Kristi Noem on Tuesday previewed her plan to disburse the \$1.25 billion the state has received from the federal government for coronavirus relief following a push from President Donald Trump's administration to share the money with local governments.

The Republican governor said she will be putting the funds toward health care, small businesses, education and local governments, while holding some back in the hope she gets the go-ahead from the federal government to use it to make up for revenue loss. Vice President Mike Pence told governors on a call Tuesday that sharing the money with city and county governments is a "great priority of the administration."

Noem did not go into many details on her spending plan, saying she would release more soon. She said two weeks ago she planned to allow local governments to tap into the funds but has held onto the \$1.25 billion while she lobbied the White House to allow her to use it to fill gaps in the state budget.

"We'd like to deploy some of those funds as soon as possible because we know that counties and cities are incurring costs," she told reporters on Tuesday.

The governor emphasized that the federal government is not requiring her to share the money with local

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governments. She said that schools in the state, from elementary to private colleges, will receive about \$68 million in federal funding to help respond to the coronavirus crisis.

Updated tax figures will be released next week, giving state lawmakers a better idea of how much economic damage the coronavirus pandemic has caused. Noem said she didn't think a special legislative session in June to adjust this year's budget would be needed but signaled it might be necessary to call legislators to Pierre later to adjust next year's budget.

Meanwhile, South Dakota health officials reported 67 new cases of COVID-19 but no new deaths in the state tied to the coronavirus pandemic.

The new cases bring the state's total to 4,653 cases, and about 75% of those have recovered. Health officials have warned the actual number of infections is higher because many people may not display symptoms or have not sought testing for mild symptoms.

While Minnehaha County, the state's most populated area, has accounted for the bulk of cases statewide and an outbreak at a Smithfield pork processing plant that infected over 800 employees, several other counties have seen a significant number of cases in recent days. Beadle County reported the highest number of cases Tuesday with 18.

Outbreaks at other meat processing plants have fueled the rise in cases in some of those counties.

The DemKota Ranch Beef plant in Aberdeen has reported 147 cases among employees, and 58 employees of a Jack Link's plant in Alpena have tested positive for the coronavirus. Employees at the Dakota Provisions poultry plant in Huron have also tested positive, but the Department of Health does not release case counts for a specific employer until they reach over 40.

So far, 50 people statewide have died from COVID-19. 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.

Displaced by sinkhole, abandoned mine, residents in limbo

BLACK HAWK, S.D. (AP) — Dozens of Black Hawk residents are dealing with the emotional and financial fallout after a sinkhole exposed an abandoned mine underneath their neighborhood.

Fifteen families have been forced from homes, and it's unclear if they'll ever be able to reside in them..

Allison Ireland evacuated with her husband, two children and two dogs after the April 27 discovery. Ireland said her family had to "completely uproot" in the middle of the coronavirus pandemic.

The financial impact has been "devastating," Ireland told the Rapid City Journal. Her family is paying their mortgage plus rent, renter's insurance, a pet deposit, storage fees and other unexpected costs.

John Trudo, 40, is paying for storage, fuel and food costs after his family was forced to evacuate the day the massive sinkhole opened in his front yard.

"A person doesn't really realize how much eating out costs until you don't have the ability to cook a meal in your own kitchen," he said.

Trudo, his wife, two children and their dog have been living with his parents in Belle Fourche but plan to move into a rental home at the end of the month.

The evacuees are waiting to see if they will be given a FEMA grant that would cover 75% of their home value before the sinkhole emerged.

Those who remain in the Hideaway Hills neighborhood are fearful their homes could collapse as they wait to see if the state or Meade County will pay for an engineer to study the safety of the area.

Spike in South Korea virus cases shows perils of reopening

By KIM TONG-HYUNG, JILL LAWLESS and ELAINE KURTENBACH Associated Press

SEOUL, South Korea (AP) — As Mediterranean beaches and Las Vegas casinos lay out plans to welcome tourists again, South Korea on Wednesday announced a spike in new infections and considered reimposing social distancing restrictions, revealing the setbacks ahead for others on the road to reopening.

The European Union was unveiling a massive stimulus package for the bloc's ailing economies later

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Wednesday, as European nations scrambled to emulate South Korea's widely praised strategy of tracing, testing and treating that tamed its outbreak and made it a model for the world.

The EU's economics commissioner, Paulo Gentiloni, called the 750 billion-euro (\$825 billion) recovery fund "a European turning point to face an unprecedented crisis."

Across the Atlantic, the pandemic was claiming new victims as the confirmed U.S. death toll approached 100,000 — the highest by far in the world — and nations from Mexico to Chile to Brazil struggled with surging cases and overwhelmed hospitals.

In South Korea, 40 newly confirmed cases — the biggest daily jump in nearly 50 days — raised alarms as millions of children returned to school Wednesday.

All but four of the new cases were in the densely populated Seoul region, where officials are scrambling to stop transmissions linked to nightclubs, karaoke rooms and a massive e-commerce warehouse. All were reopened last month when social distancing measures were relaxed.

The country's top infectious disease expert said South Korea may need to reimpose social distancing restrictions because it's becoming increasingly difficult for health workers to track the spread of COVID-19 amid warmer weather and eased attitudes on distancing.

"We will do our best to trace contacts and implement preventive measures, but there's a limit to such efforts," said Jeong Eun-kyeong, director of South Korea's Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

"Young people have a very broad range of activity, so at the point of diagnosis, there's already a lot of exposure ... the number of people or locations we have to trace are increasing geometrically," he added.

Seoul and nearby cities had restored some control in recent weeks by reclosing thousands of bars, karaoke rooms and other entertainment venues to slow the spread of the virus.

Britain, which has recorded more deaths than any other European country — over 37,000 — was announcing details of its own "test and trace" plans, which will send 25,000 workers to find the contacts of anyone who tests positive for the virus. Germany said it would extend pandemic-related restrictions on interpersonal contact until June 29 as it cautiously lifts lockdown measures.

As many countries in Asia and Europe make progress in containing the pandemic, reversing its devastating economic fallout becomes a top priority.

The 27-nation EU was unveiling a massive coronavirus recovery plan worth hundreds of billions of euros to help countries rebuild. But the bloc remains deeply divided over what strings should be attached to the funds, with frugal members such as Austria, Denmark, the Netherlands and Sweden pushing for loans rather than grants to form the backbone of the package.

Cyprus announced Wednesday that tourists would be welcomed back on June 9. To make them feel safe, Cyprus said would cover all costs — lodging, food, drink and medication — for anyone testing positive for the coronavirus and their family members while on vacation in the east Mediterranean island nation.

But welcoming tourists was far from the concerns of other nations.

India saw another record single-day jump, reporting 6,387 new cases on Wednesday as the government prepared new guidelines for the next phase of a 2-month-old national lockdown that ends Sunday.

Mexico's health department reported 501 deaths from the coronavirus — a new one-day high.

A U.S. travel ban took effect for foreigners coming from Brazil, where President Jair Bolsonaro has raged against state and local leaders who are enforcing stay-at-home measures. Brazil has about 375,000 coronavirus infections — second only to the 1.6 million cases in the U.S. — and has counted over 23,000 deaths, but many fear its true toll is much higher.

Worldwide, the virus has infected nearly 5.6 million people and killed over 350,000, including about 170,000 in Europe, according to a tally by Johns Hopkins University that health experts say does not show the entire scope of the pandemic.

Flags were flying at half-mast Wednesday on more than 14,000 public buildings in Spain as it held the first of 10 days of national mourning for coronavirus victims.

In the U.S., President Donald Trump several months ago likened the coronavirus to the flu and dismissed worries that it could lead to so many deaths. The administration's leading scientists have since warned

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that as many as 240,000 Americans could die in the country's outbreak.

The White House said the president was committed to holding a Fourth of July celebration in the nation's capital even as local officials warned that the region — one of the hardest hit by the coronavirus — will not be ready to hold a major event so soon.

U.S. officials are pushing hard to reopen even as more than a dozen states are still seeing increasing new cases.

Nevada Gov. Steve Sisolak announced Tuesday night that casinos can reopen after a 10-week shutdown on June 4, welcoming tourists to the gambling mecca of Las Vegas. Sisolak had planned to make the announcement at a news conference but scrapped the live event after he learned he was potentially exposed to the virus at a workplace visit.

Around the globe, eagerness to get life back to normal is offset by nervousness about what might come next.

Greece, which has seen only 173 coronavirus deaths, will let international tourists return to its sun-dappled islands beginning June 15.

While many island residents depend on tourism for their livelihoods, they have also taken comfort in their isolation during the pandemic and worry about opening up to outsiders.

"So far things have gone well," said Katerina Vikeli on the island of Milos. "Now with the people who will come, what will happen?"

In New Zealand, which is still banning foreign arrivals, the Ministry of Health said there were no COVID-19 patients in the country's hospitals. The nation took aggressive, early action to stop transmissions and has reported only 21 deaths.

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

By The Associated Press

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

1. 'THIS IS THE RIGHT CALL' Four officers were fired a day after George Floyd's death, a stunning and swift move by the Minneapolis chief with the mayor's full backing.
2. PROTESTERS MASS IN HONG KONG Thousands of demonstrators are shouting pro-democracy slogans and insults at police before lawmakers debate a bill criminalizing abuse of the Chinese national anthem.
3. LETTER DOESN'T EXPLAIN WHY TRUMP FIRED WATCHDOGS Republican Sen. Chuck Grassley made clear he was dissatisfied with the White House's explanation for the recent upheaval of the inspector general community.
4. CALIFORNIA SUES 'CRIMINAL MINDS' MAKERS The lawsuit against CBS, Disney and producers of the long-running series alleges that the show's cinematographer engaged in rampant sexual misconduct against crew members for years.
5. WOMAN AT CENTER OF VIRAL VIDEO FIRED The video of a verbal dispute between a white woman walking her dog off a leash and a black man bird watching in Central Park sparked accusations of racism.

Protesters mass in Hong Kong as anthem law is debated

By ZEN SOO Associated Press

HONG KONG (AP) — Thousands of protesters shouted pro-democracy slogans and insults at police in Hong Kong on Wednesday as lawmakers debated a bill criminalizing abuse of the Chinese national anthem in the semi-autonomous city.

Police massed outside the legislative building ahead of the session and warned protesters that if they did not disperse, they could be prosecuted.

In the Central business district, police raised flags warning protesters to disperse before they shot pepper balls at the crowd and searched several people. More than 50 people in the Causeway Bay shopping district were rounded up and made to sit outside a shopping mall, while riot police with pepper spray

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patrolled and warned journalists to stop filming.

Nearly 300 people were arrested across Hong Kong for unauthorized assembly, according to Facebook posts by the Hong Kong police force.

Separately, at least 17 people, mostly teenagers, were arrested for possessing items that could be used for unlawful purposes, such as gasoline bombs or screwdrivers, or for driving slowly and blocking traffic, police said.

The bill would make it illegal to insult or abuse the Chinese national anthem, "March of the Volunteers" in semi-autonomous Hong Kong. Those guilty of the offense would face up to three years in prison and a fine of 50,000 Hong Kong dollars (\$6,450).

Opponents of the bill say it is a blow to freedom of expression in the city, while Beijing officials say it will foster a patriotic spirit and socialist values.

"Western democracies all have laws to protect their national flags, national anthems and emblems. Any insulting acts toward these symbols would also be criminal," pro-Beijing lawmaker Tony Tse said in the legislative debate.

Tse said the bill would not affect human rights or force people to love the country or support any political power. "The purpose of this is to protect the dignity of a country," he said.

Pro-democracy lawmaker Charles Mok disagreed, saying the legislation would not help gain the respect of people and was an excuse to control freedom, speech and ideas of people.

"We oppose the second reading of the national anthem bill, not because we don't respect the national anthem. The national anthem is a symbol of the country's dignity. If it wants to be respected, then let this government first respect the rights and freedoms of its people first," Mok said.

The bill was proposed in January 2019 after spectators from Hong Kong jeered at the anthem during high-profile international soccer matches in 2015. Last year, FIFA fined the Hong Kong Football Association after fans booed the national anthem at a World Cup qualifying game.

Hong Kong was returned to China from British colonial rule in 1997 under a "one country, two systems" framework that promised freedoms not found on the mainland. Anti-China sentiment has risen as residents see Beijing moving to erode those rights.

Mass protests in 2014, known as the Umbrella Revolution, followed the Chinese government's decision to allow direct election of the city leader only after it screened candidates. In the end, the plan for direct elections was dropped.

Legislation proposed in Hong Kong last year that would have allowed Hong Kong residents to be sent to mainland China for trials set off months of demonstrations that at times involved clashes between protesters and police. The legislation was withdrawn.

China's ceremonial parliament now meeting in Beijing has moved to enact a national security law for Hong Kong aimed at forbidding secessionist and subversive activity, as well as foreign interference and terrorism. Hong Kong's own government has been unable to pass such legislation due to opposition in the city, and Beijing advanced the law itself after the protests last year.

Asked about possible U.S. retaliation over the security legislation, Chinese foreign ministry spokesperson Zhao Lijian said in Beijing that China would take necessary steps to fight back against what he called "erroneous foreign interference in Hong Kong's affairs."

Swift firings for Minneapolis officers in death of black man

By AMY FORLITI and JEFF BAENEN Associated Press

MINNEAPOLIS (AP) — To the general public, the video of a white police officer pressing his knee into the neck of a shirtless black man prone on the street, crying out for help until he finally stopped moving, was horrifying.

Four officers were fired a day after George Floyd's death, a stunning and swift move by the Minneapolis chief with the mayor's full backing. But despite their dismissal, whether the incident will be considered criminal, or even excessive force, is a more complicated question that will likely take months to investigate.

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The officers were dismissed soon after a bystander's video taken outside a south Minneapolis grocery store Monday night showed an officer kneeling on the handcuffed man's neck, even after he pleaded that he could not breathe and stopped moving.

Mayor Jacob Frey announced the firings on Twitter, saying: "This is the right call."

The FBI and state law enforcement were investigating Floyd's death, which immediately drew comparisons to the case of Eric Garner, an unarmed black man who died in 2014 in New York after he was placed in a chokehold by police and pleaded for his life, saying he could not breathe.

But in the Garner case, local prosecutors, the NYPD's internal affairs unit, and the Justice Department all finished investigations into the case before the officer was ultimately fired. Garner's family and activists spent years begging for the officer to be removed.

The officers in the Minneapolis incident haven't even been publicly identified, though one defense attorney has confirmed he is representing Derek Chauvin, the officer seen with his knee on Floyd's neck. The attorney, Tom Kelly, declined to comment further.

The police union asked the public to wait for the investigation to take its course and not to "rush to judgment and immediately condemn our officers." Messages left with the union after the firings were not returned.

Police Chief Medaria Arradondo said the department would conduct a full internal investigation, and prosecutors will decide whether to file criminal charges against the officers involved. The Hennepin County Attorney's Office said it was "shocked and saddened" by the video and pledged to handle the case fairly. Part of that investigation will likely focus on the intent of the officers, whether they meant to harm Floyd or whether it was a death that happened in the course of police work. The FBI was investigating whether the officers willfully deprived Floyd of his civil rights.

News accounts show Chauvin was one of six officers who fired their weapons in the 2006 death of Wayne Reyes, whom police said pointed a sawed-off shotgun at officers after stabbing two people. Chauvin also shot and wounded a man in 2008 in a struggle after Chauvin and his partner responded to a reported domestic assault. Police did not immediately respond to a request for Chauvin's service record.

In Minneapolis, kneeling on a suspect's neck is allowed under the department's use-of-force policy for officers who have received training in how to compress a neck without applying direct pressure to the airway. It is considered a "non-deadly force option," according to the department's policy handbook.

A chokehold is considered a deadly force option and involves someone obstructing the airway. According to the department's use-of-force policy, officers are to use only an amount of force necessary that would be objectively reasonable.

But two use-of-force experts told The Associated Press that the officer clearly restrained the man too long. They noted the man was under control and no longer fighting. Andrew Scott, a former Boca Raton, Florida, police chief who now testifies as an expert witness in use-of-force cases, called Floyd's death "a combination of not being trained properly or disregarding their training."

"He couldn't move. He was telling them he couldn't breathe, and they ignored him," Scott said. "I can't even describe it. It was difficult to watch."

In a post on his Facebook page, the mayor, who is white, apologized Tuesday to the black community for the officer's treatment of Floyd, 46, who worked security at a restaurant.

"Being Black in America should not be a death sentence. For five minutes, we watched a white officer press his knee into a Black man's neck. Five minutes. When you hear someone calling for help, you're supposed to help. This officer failed in the most basic, human sense," Frey posted.

Police said the man matched the description of a suspect in a forgery case at a grocery store, and that he resisted arrest.

The video starts with the shirtless man on the ground, and does not show what happened in the moments prior. The unidentified officer is kneeling on his neck, ignoring his pleas. "Please, please, please, I can't breathe. Please, man," said Floyd, who has his face against the pavement.

Even in the coronavirus pandemic that has killed nearly 100,000 people in the U.S. and prompted police departments around the country to change how they're doing work, the officers in the video aren't wear-

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ing masks. In some cities, low-level arrests such as attempted forgery are skipped right now.

Floyd also moans. One of the officers tells him to "relax." Floyd calls for his mother and says: "My stomach hurts, my neck hurts, everything hurts ... I can't breathe." As bystanders shout their concern, one officer says, "He's talking, so he's breathing."

But Floyd slowly becomes motionless under the officer's restraint. The officer does not remove his knee until the man is loaded onto a gurney by paramedics.

Several witnesses had gathered on a nearby sidewalk, some recording the scene on their phones. The bystanders become increasingly agitated. One man yells repeatedly. "He's not responsive right now!" Two witnesses, including one woman who said she was a Minneapolis firefighter, yell at the officers to check the man's pulse. "Check his pulse right now and tell me what it is!" she said.

At one point, an officer says: "Don't do drugs, guys." And one man yells, "Don't do drugs, bro? What is that? What do you think this is?"

The Hennepin County medical examiner identified Floyd but said the cause of death was pending.

Floyd had worked security for five years at a restaurant called Conga Latin Bistro and rented a home from the restaurant owner, Jovanni Thunstrom.

He was "a good friend, person and a good tenant," the restaurateur told the Star Tribune. "He was family. His co-workers and friends loved him."

Protesters filled the intersection Tuesday evening in the street where Floyd died, chanting and carrying banners that read, "I can't breathe" and "Jail killer KKKops." They eventually marched about 2 1/2 miles to a city police precinct, with some protesters damaging windows, a squad car and spraying graffiti on the building.

A line of police in riot gear eventually confronted the protesters, firing tear gas and projectiles. Some protesters kicked canisters back toward police. Some protesters stacked shopping carts to make a barricade at a Target store across the street from the station, and though steady rain diminished the crowd, tense skirmishes stretched late into the evening.

Ben Crump, a prominent civil rights and personal injury attorney, said he had been hired by Floyd's family.

The death came amid outrage over the death of Ahmaud Arbery, who was fatally shot Feb. 23 in Georgia after a white father and son pursued the 25-year-old black man they had spotted running in their subdivision. More than two months passed before charges were brought. Crump also represents Arbery's father.

Hypocrisy gone viral? Officials set bad COVID-19 examples

By THOMAS ADAMSON and SYLVIE CORBET Associated Press

PARIS (AP) — "Do as I say, but not as I do" was the message many British saw in the behavior of Prime Minister Boris Johnson's key aide, who traveled hundreds of miles with coronavirus symptoms during the country's lockdown.

While Dominic Cummings has faced calls for his firing but support from his boss over his journey from London to the northern city of Durham in March, few countries seem immune to the perception that politicians and top officials are bending the rules that their own governments wrote during the pandemic.

From U.S. President Donald Trump to Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, global decision-makers have frequently set bad examples, whether it's refusing to wear masks or breaking confinement rules aimed at protecting their citizens from COVID-19.

Some are punished when they're caught, others publicly repent, while a few just shrug off the violations during a pandemic that has claimed more than 350,000 lives worldwide.

Here are some notable examples:

NEW ZEALAND HEALTH MINISTER CALLS HIMSELF AN "IDIOT"

In April, New Zealand's health minister was stripped of some of his responsibilities after defying the country's strict lockdown measures. David Clark drove 19 kilometers (12 miles) to the beach to take a walk with his family as the government was asking people to make historic sacrifices by staying at home.

"I've been an idiot, and I understand why people will be angry with me," Clark said. He also earlier ac-

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knowledgeable driving to a park near his home to go mountain biking.

Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern said normally she would fire Clark but that the country couldn't afford massive disruption in its health sector while it was fighting the virus. Instead, she stripped Clark of his role as associate finance minister and demoting him to the bottom of the Cabinet rankings.

MEXICO'S LEADER SHAKES HANDS

Mexican President Andrés Manuel López Obrador said it pained him not to embrace supporters during tours because of health risks, but he made a remarkable exception in March, shaking hands with the elderly mother of imprisoned drug kingpin Joaquin "El Chapo" Guzmán. Asked about shaking her hand when the government was urging citizens to practice social distancing, López Obrador said it would have been disrespectful not to.

"It's very difficult humanly," he said. "I'm not a robot."

AMERICA'S PANDEMIC POLITICS

The decision to wear a mask in public is becoming a political statement in the U.S. It's been stoked by Trump — who didn't wear a mask during an appearance at a facility making them — and some other Republicans, who have questioned the value of masks. This month, pandemic politics shadowed Trump's trip to Michigan as he toured a factory making lifesaving medical devices. He did not publicly wear a face covering despite a warning from the state's top law enforcement officer that refusing to do so might lead to a ban on his return.

Presumptive Democratic nominee Joe Biden, meanwhile, wore a mask along with his wife, Jill, as they laid a wreath Monday at a Delaware veterans' memorial — his first public appearance since mid-March. Trump later retweeted Fox News analyst Brit Hume's criticism of Biden for wearing a mask in public.

Vice President Mike Pence was criticized for not wearing a mask while on a visit to the Mayo Clinic.

NETANYAHU'S PASSOVER HOLIDAY

While the rest of Israel was instructed not to gather with their extended families for traditional Passover Seder in April, Netanyahu and President Reuven Rivlin hosted their adult children for the festive holiday meal, drawing fierce criticism on social media. Israeli television showed a photo of Avner Netanyahu, the premier's younger son, attending the Seder at his father's official residence.

Benjamin Netanyahu later apologized in a televised address, saying he should have adhered more closely to the regulations.

THE FRENCH EXCEPTION

French President Emmanuel Macron also has been inconsistent with masks, leaving the French public confused. Although Macron has sometimes appeared in a mask for visits at hospitals and schools, it's a different story in the Elysee presidential palace and for speeches. During a visit to a Paris hospital on May 15, Macron initially wore a mask to chat with doctors but then removed it to talk with union workers.

Interior Minister Christophe Castaner also faced criticism this month for huddling with dozens of mask-makers in a factory for a photo where everyone removed their masks.

PUTIN'S DIFFERENT APPROACH

The only time Russian President Vladimir Putin wore protective gear in public was on March 24, when he visited a top coronavirus hospital in Moscow. Before donning a hazmat suit, Putin shook hands with Dr. Denis Protsenko, the head of the hospital. Neither wore masks or gloves, and a week later, Protsenko tested positive for the virus. That raised questions about Putin's health, but the Kremlin said he was fine.

Putin has since held at least seven face-to-face meetings, according to the Kremlin website. He and others didn't wear masks during those meetings, and Putin also didn't cover his face for events marking Nazi Germany's defeat in World War II.

When asked why Putin doesn't wear a mask during public appearances, spokesman Dmitry Peskov said the Kremlin has a different approach to protecting the president's health.

"When it comes to public events, we ask medical workers to test all the participants in advance," Peskov told reporters.

PUERTO RICO OFFICIAL'S INCONSISTENT MESSAGE

Puerto Rico Gov. Wanda Vázquez was criticized for not always wearing a mask despite holding new

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conferences ordering people to cover their face outside their homes and inside businesses. A member of the opposition Popular Democratic Party also filed a police complaint last week against members of Vázquez's New Progressive Party, alleging they violated a curfew by gathering to inaugurate the party's new headquarters. Police are investigating the incident, which angered many Puerto Ricans.

SCOTTISH MEDICAL OFFICIAL TAKES THE LOW ROAD

Scotland's chief medical officer, Dr. Catherine Calderwood, broke her own rules and traveled to her second home during lockdown in April. She faced blowback after photos emerged of her and her family visiting Earlsferry in Fife, which is more than an hour's drive from her main home in Edinburgh. She apologized and resigned.

"I did not follow the advice I'm giving to others," Calderwood said. "I am truly sorry for that. I've seen a lot of the comments from ... people calling me a hypocrite."

JAPAN'S GAMBLING SCANDAL

A top Japanese prosecutor was reprimanded and later resigned this month after defying a stay-at-home recommendation in a gambling scandal.

Hiromu Kurokawa, the country's No. 2 prosecutor who headed the Tokyo High Prosecutors' Office, acknowledged that he wasn't social distancing when he played mahjong for money at a newspaper reporter's home twice in May. Japan didn't enforce a stay-at-home recommendation, but his case outraged the public because many were following social distancing measures.

ITALIAN PRESS CONFERENCE CRITICISM

At a March news conference to open a COVID-19 field hospital in Milan's old convention center, photographers and video journalists were pushed into corners that did not allow proper spacing. Only text reporters were given seating in line with regulations. The Codacons consumer protection group announced it would file a complaint with prosecutors in Milan.

"What should have been a moment of great happiness and pride for Lombardy and Italy was transformed into a surreal event, where in violation of the anti-gathering rules, groups of crowds formed," Codacons said.

SOUTH AFRICA'S RULE-BREAKING DINNER

In April, Communications Minister Stella Ndabeni-Abrahams was placed on special leave for two months and forced to apologize by President Cyril Ramaphosa after she violated stay-at-home regulations. Ramaphosa directed police to investigate after a photo emerged on social media of Ndabeni-Abrahams and several others having a meal at the home of former deputy minister of higher education Mduzuzi Manana.

SPANISH HOSPITAL CEREMONY INVESTIGATED

Madrid's regional and city officials sparked controversy when they gathered on May 1 for a ceremony shuttering a massive field hospital at a convention center. Eager to appear in the final photo of a facility credited with treating nearly 4,000 mild COVID-19 patients, dozens of officials didn't follow social distancing rules. Spain's restrictions banned more than 10 people at events like the one that honored nurses and doctors. The central government opened an investigation, and Madrid regional chief Isabel Díaz Ayuso apologized. She said officials "got carried away by the uniqueness of the moment."

Former Prime Minister Mariano Rajoy also defied strict stay-at-home orders, with a television station filming him power walking around in northern Madrid. The Spanish prosecutor's office is investigating whether Rajoy, who was premier from 2011 to 2018, should be fined.

INDIAN CRICKET GAME CRITICIZED

In India, a top leader of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Bharatiya Janata Party drew flak last weekend after playing a game of cricket. Manoj Tiwari, also a member of India's parliament, said he followed social distancing rules during the game. Videos circulating on social media showed Tiwari without a mask. He was also seen taking selfies with people.

LEADERS WHO FOLLOW THE RULES

Some leaders are setting a good example, including Portuguese President Marcelo Rebelo de Sousa. Media jokingly called him the most relaxed politician in the world after he was photographed queuing at a supermarket this month, wearing a mask and following social distancing measures. The photo was

widely shared on social media.

Another rule-follower is Dutch Prime Minister Mark Rutte, who did not visit his ill 96-year-old mother in a nursing home during the last eight weeks of her life because of coronavirus restrictions. He only came to her bedside during her final hours this month.

"The prime minister has respected all guidelines," according to a statement read by a spokesman. "The guidelines allow for family to say goodbye to dying family members in the final stage. And as such the prime minister was with her during her last night."

American virus deaths at 100,000: What does a number mean?

By TED ANTHONY AP National Writer

The fraught, freighted number of this particular American moment is a round one brimming with zeroes: 100,000. A hundred thousands. A thousand hundreds. Five thousand score. More than 8,000 dozen. All dead.

This is the week when America's official coronavirus death toll reaches six digits. One hundred thousand lives wiped out by a disease unknown to science a half a year ago.

And as the unwanted figure arrives — nearly a third of the global pandemic deaths in the first five months of a very trying year — what can looking at that one and those five zeroes tell us? What does any number deployed in momentous times to convey scope and seriousness and thought really mean?

"We all want to measure these experiences because they're so shocking, so overwhelming that we want to bring some sense of knowability to the unknown," says Jeffrey Jackson, a history professor at Rhodes College in Tennessee who teaches about the politics of natural disasters.

This is not new. In the mid-1800s, a new level of numerical precision was emerging in Western society around the same time the United States fought the Civil War. Facing such massive death and challenges counting the dead, Americans started to realize that numbers and statistics represented more than knowledge; they contained power, according to historian Drew Gilpin Faust.

"Their provision of seemingly objective knowledge promised a foundation for control in a reality escaping the bounds of the imaginable," Faust wrote in "This Republic of Suffering," her account of how the Civil War changed Americans' relationship with death.

"Numbers," she wrote, "represented a means of imposing sense and order on what Walt Whitman tellingly depicted as the 'countless graves' of the 'infinite dead.'"

Today's Americans have precedents for visualizing and understanding 100,000 people — dead and alive. They have numerous comparisons at hand.

For example: Beaver Stadium, seen often on TV as the home to Penn State football and one of the country's largest sports venues, holds 106,572 people when full. The 2018 estimated population of South Bend, Indiana, was 101,860. About 100,000 people visit the Statue of Liberty every 10 days.

The total amount of U.S. Civil War deaths — combat and otherwise — was 655,000. For World War I it was more than 116,000, for World War II more than 405,000 and for the Korean and Vietnam wars more than 36,000 and more than 58,000 respectively. Those don't include non-U.S. deaths.

Gun violence killed more than 37,000 people a year on average between 2014 and 2018 in the United States. And 9/11 took exactly 2,996 lives, a figure that the U.S. coronavirus tally passed in early April.

At some point with numbers, though, things start feeling more abstract and less comprehensible. This has informed the methodology of remembering the Holocaust by humanizing it: Six million dead, after all, is a figure so enormous that it resists comprehension.

"It's really hard for people to grasp statistics when it comes to numbers after a certain scale," says Lorenzo Servitje, an assistant professor of literature and medicine at Lehigh University.

"Can you picture 30,000 people Or 50,000 people? And when you get into the millions, what do you even do with that?" he says. "It's so outside of our everyday life that it's hard to grasp meaning from them."

The New York Times tried to address that problem Sunday, dedicating its entire front page to naming the virus dead — an exercise that, even in a tiny typeface, only captured 1% of those now gone. "A count," the newspaper said, "reveals only so much."

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Adding to the complexity is how different coronavirus deaths are from, say, a 9/11, a mass shooting or a cataclysmic natural disaster. Unlike those, the COVID saga unfolds gradually over time, growing steadily more severe, and resists the time-tested American appetite for loud and immediate storylines.

"Each day we've become accustomed to the new reality that we don't realize how far we've traveled from what normal is," says Daryl Van Tongeren, an associate professor of psychology at Hope College in Michigan who studies how people find meaning in suffering.

Our brains, he says, are wired to be empathetic to suffering — to a point.

"With too much suffering over time, it's overwhelming and we begin to become callous. And our empathy essentially runs out," Van Tongeren says. "We're so accustomed to death right now, at 100,000, that our empathy has become lower."

Finally, there are numbers living within the round 100,000 number that cry out for their own interpretations. The disproportionate number of dead Americans of color, for example. Or the systematic way the disease is ravaging places where older Americans live, taking them in numbers that — if they were dying in mass shootings — might provoke a very different kind of reaction.

Don't focus so much on the numbers, some admonish. Others criticize official counts, calling them inflated and inaccurate. More likely, because of spotty testing and undiagnosed cases, the number 100,000 falls significantly short.

But whether 100,000 has already happened or is yet to come, the meaning of this numerical milestone — human-imposed though it may be — raises fundamental questions.

Have we decided to live with death, at least to a point? What would it mean if, around Labor Day, we reconvened in this space to discuss the 200,000th dead American? What would that number cause us to contemplate?

In the 14th century, the Black Death ravaged humanity, taking many millions. No one knows how many died. Today, when the dead are counted, some coherence is reached. The thinking is this: If the virus can't be stopped, at least it can be quantified by human effort — far more palatable than a society where we couldn't even establish who was no longer among us.

"As humans we like clean stories," says Roland Minton, a mathematics professor at Roanoke College in Virginia. "And classifying things by number of digits can be a nice, clear way of classifying things."

So when Whitman wrote of "countless graves," he was not merely being poetic. Then, the idea of uncounted dead was more than metaphor; it was a direct description of what had happened.

Replacing that situation with accurate numbers, as society grew more sophisticated, did not solve everything. But it was something. Just as 100,000 means something this week in American life. Maybe not everything — not a vaccine, not a treatment — and maybe not clarity, exactly. Not yet. But something.

South African bans on tobacco, liquor amid virus stir debate

By **ANDREW MELDRUM** and **NQOBILE NTSANGASE** Associated Press

JOHANNESBURG (AP) — A soccer mom in one of Cape Town's posh suburbs drops off a cardboard box of blankets to a neighbor. Inside the box are several bottles of red wine.

In Johannesburg's Alexandra township, two men in face masks greet each other on a sunny street. One has surreptitiously sold the other a pack of cigarettes.

A bootlegging culture has sprung up across South Africa in response to the government's nearly 8-week-old ban on the sale of tobacco and alcohol, part of its strict lockdown to combat the spread of the coronavirus.

"They've banned the sale of cigarettes but we're still able to buy them," said street vendor Mluleki Mbhele. "We buy cigarettes in the streets in the black market. The officials know about it because they themselves continue to smoke."

Critics describe the prohibitions imposed by President Cyril Ramaphosa as puritanical, hypocritical and unrealistic. Around the world, only Panama and Sri Lanka are reported to be prohibiting the sale of liquor during the pandemic, while India and Thailand temporarily banned it.

South African government officials say the number of admissions to hospital emergency rooms from

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alcohol-related crimes and vehicle accidents have been reduced significantly. Supporters of the ban on cigarette sales say smoking weakens the respiratory system, which is attacked by the virus.

South Africa has the continent's highest number of confirmed coronavirus cases with over 24,000. The virus has spread relatively slowly across Africa, whose 54 countries with a population of 1.3 billion have reported a total of over 115,000 cases.

More than 230,000 South Africans have been arrested for breaking the lockdown regulations, including the bans on alcohol and tobacco sales, said national police minister Bheki Cele.

"We have also observed an increase in smuggling of contraband (liquor and tobacco) between South Africa's land borders with Botswana, Eswatini, Lesotho, Mozambique and Zimbabwe, as well as the sale of these products in the black market," Cele said on May 22, adding that officials seized alcohol and cigarettes worth Rand 2.67 million (about \$148,000) in March and April.

At first, South African vineyards were prohibited from transporting or exporting their wine, causing a loss in international sales. That restriction was lifted May 1 but the winemakers are still being hurt on lost domestic sales.

That will improve June 1, when South Africa further eases its lockdown by allowing the sale of alcohol for home consumption on limited days per week. Pubs and bars will remain closed, prompting criticism that they also should be allowed to sell for home consumption.

The sale of cigarettes will remain banned. An illegal trade in cigarettes is thriving, even though the price of a contraband pack can be the equivalent of \$6, nearly three times what it cost before the ban. South Africa has long had a problem of criminal gangs illegally selling cigarettes, estimated to be in the millions of dollars.

Critics of the bans say the government is losing sales tax revenue for cigarettes and alcohol. The country's revenue service told lawmakers recently that it had lost more than \$86 million in tax revenue from the sale of cigarettes and alcohol since the lockdown started in March.

In Cape Town, the Woodstock Brewery has adapted to the ban by using its large vats to cook meals for the city's poor.

The Disoufeng Pub, once a popular Soweto watering hole, has not sold any liquor for nearly eight weeks.

"It's really sad to be feeling the pain," said owner Tobogo Phiri, who reopened its kitchen two weeks ago to sell takeaway food.

Some of his high-roller customers have tried to get him to break the regulations by selling them liquor, promising to spend the equivalent of more than \$500.

"You couldn't even entertain it," said Phiri, adding he would not break the law. "So it's been very, very, very hard. But one had to be disciplined and just decline every sale. So we are feeling the pain."

Other South Africans say they favor the restrictions.

"Without alcohol, serious crime has gone down," said Mphumelelo Mdunge, a Soweto resident. "And in the hospitals, there are less people injured from drunken driving and from people beating their wives and arguments. All those disagreements have gone down because there's less alcohol. So I see it as a good thing."

With test results lost, an Afghan family fell to virus

By TAMEEM AKHGAR, RAHIM FAIEZ and LEE KEATH Associated Press

KABUL, Afghanistan (AP) — As in many Afghan households, dinner at Dr. Yousuf Aryubi's home meant the whole family — his mother, his siblings, their children — sitting on the floor together around a mat laid with food on the carpet.

During one recent dinner, Aryubi confided to his youngest brother that he was worried. A patient he'd seen that morning had a cough and high fever.

Within two weeks, Aryubi and two of his siblings were dead, and dozens of family members were infected with the coronavirus. Most crushing for them: they assumed the symptoms spreading among them were just a bad flu because the hospital never told them the results of their coronavirus tests, Aryubi's

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youngest brother, Behtarin Paktiawal told The Associated Press.

The trajectory of the family's tragedy points to how a broken-down health system, slow government response and public attitudes have left Afghanistan deeply vulnerable to the global pandemic.

After billions of dollars in international money, much of it from the U.S., the Afghan capital barely has a hospital that works. Amid the ongoing war, massive government corruption has left resources depleted, institutions dysfunctional, and the health care system ill-equipped to deal with even basic ailments.

Afghans have become increasingly poor, with 54% of the population earning less than \$1.9 a day in 2019, a rate likely mounting amid the pandemic. The country has had more than 11,000 confirmed coronavirus infections and more than 219 deaths, but the numbers are likely higher.

The Aryubi family lives in a single building in a middle-class district of Kabul — Dr. Aryubi, a 53-year-old pediatrician, with his wife and two of his four children; his four brothers and a sisters with their families; and their 70-year-old mother. Three of the brothers work in the family company, importing cars and car parts from Dubai and Germany.

Aryubi felt a light fever on March 30, a Monday, a day after he met with the patient.

By Wednesday, he was worse, and his youngest daughter, 21-year-old Mariam, also had a fever. Paktiawal drove him and Mariam — all three of them wearing masks and gloves — to the Afghan-Japan Communicable Disease Hospital, one of Kabul's two facilities for coronavirus testing and treatment.

"The hospital promised to call us within 24 hours if the result comes positive and then to send an ambulance to isolate them," Paktiawal said.

Thursday passed with no word from the hospital, so they assumed the tests were negative, Paktiawal said. Aryubi and Mariam went to a private clinic, where the doctor diagnosed them with the flu and gave them paracetamol.

At dinner, they were all together again, Aryubi, his mother and the male relatives around the carpet in one room, Mariam and the female relatives in the other, laughing and eating as normal.

Over the next days, Aryubi's sister, his brothers, his wife and his mother, one by one, started coughing or fell into fevers.

On Monday, April 6, with everyone in the family sick and Aryubi worsening, Paktiawal went back to the Afghan-Japan Hospital. After several hours of asking around in vain, he found a long list of test results tacked on a wall. There on the list were his brother and niece, both positive.

"I was shocked, like doomsday struck," he said. "I didn't know what to do. I had tears in my eyes." He called home and told everyone — all 34 family members — to come immediately to the hospital for testing.

They brought Aryubi and tried to admit him to the hospital, but the staff refused. In an ensuing argument, a doctor hit Aryubi in his face, breaking a tooth, Paktiawal and another brother said.

The Afghan-Japan Hospital, built in 2014 with funding from the Japanese government, typifies the health system's woes, though it is better off than many other facilities. In the early weeks of the pandemic, suspected coronavirus patients complained of being turned away or of tests lost. It took weeks for staff to get enough protective gear, leaving them afraid to treat patients.

The hospital sees up to 600 patients a day for testing but can only analyze 150 tests a day. With better gear, it has taken in more coronavirus patients — around 80 currently. In the provinces, many under-supplied health workers still fear suspected virus patients, refusing to admit them and telling them to buy an oxygen tank in the market and stay home.

Sayed Massi Noori, a doctor in the Afghan-Japan Hospital's public relations department, estimated 10-15% of tested patients don't receive their results on time. He said inexperienced staffers sometimes write names incorrectly on tests or code samples wrong.

"Medical workers on the front line in the fight against COVID-19 don't have enough experience which causes us to face bigger challenges," he said. The hospital has gotten no new funding since it was dedicated to coronavirus treatment. Many of its staff have not been paid for the past two months, he said.

Just going to the hospital risks contagion.

On a recent day when an AP team visited, hundreds of people, including suspected COVID-19 cases,

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massed outside. Staff shouted at them to self-distance, but no one listened. Some had slept for days outside the hospital waiting for word on relatives' tests or treatment.

A university student, Mohammed Parwiz, had been coming to the hospital daily for more than a week, trying to find out the test results for his mother. Every day, the staff told him to come back the next morning.

"I might get sick here one day, and still I don't have my mother's results," he said.

The government's response to the pandemic was slow, even as more than 200,000 Afghans flowed in from Iran, where the virus was raging. Herat in western Afghanistan, which received the bulk of returnees, was not equipped with testing facilities until April.

Political infighting between President Ashraf Ghani and his rival Abdullah Abdullah, both of whom insist they won last year's presidential polls, seemed to push pandemic measures to the back burner.

The government closed schools and universities on March 14., then put Kabul under lockdown two weeks later. Residents are allowed to leave their homes only for medical needs or groceries. But the rules are widely flouted.

After being tested, the Aryubi family immediately quarantined themselves at home and another building. Their neighbors fled, moving out of their homes. Grocery stores refused to deliver to the Aryubis.

"People ran from us like we were monsters," Paktiawal said.

Desperate for help, the family called relatives in Paktia province. Four cousins came with their wives and children and stayed with them. Soon they too were showing symptoms — bringing the total number infected in the family to 46.

On April 10, Aryubi's sister Gul Khomar died. More relatives came from the village to attend her funeral at a Kabul graveyard. Police had to push them back, pleading with them to keep a distance from her body and the family.

On April 11, Dr. Aryubi died, followed three days later by one of his brothers, Fazil Rahman.

The rest of the family languished in quarantine. Paktiawal tried to be admitted to the Afghan-Japan Hospital, but the staff fled from him after he showed a high temperature, he said.

His brother Hayat Khan posted a YouTube video from inside the home, saying they had no help and accusing government corruption of wrecking services. "The government doesn't give a damn about us. Everyone has forgotten us," he said.

It took weeks but the family's symptoms faded with no further deaths. Paktiawal now puts out YouTube videos to educate the public on how to deal with COVID-19.

"I never believed in this disease, I used to say, it is a lie, it is a propaganda," he told the AP. "We have realized ... it's a huge danger, and for those who neglect it, it can cost them their lives."

AP-NORC poll: Half of Americans would get a COVID-19 vaccine

By LAURAN NEERGAARD and HANNAH FINGERHUT Associated Press

Only about half of Americans say they would get a COVID-19 vaccine if the scientists working furiously to create one succeed, according to a new poll from The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research.

That's surprisingly low considering the effort going into the global race for a vaccine against the coronavirus that has sparked a pandemic since first emerging from China late last year. But more people might eventually roll up their sleeves: The poll, released Wednesday, found 31% simply weren't sure if they'd get vaccinated. Another 1 in 5 said they'd refuse.

Health experts already worry about the whiplash if vaccine promises like President Donald Trump's goal of a 300 million-dose stockpile by January fail. Only time and science will tell -- and the new poll shows the public is indeed skeptical.

"It's always better to under-promise and over-deliver," said Dr. William Schaffner, an infectious disease specialist at Vanderbilt University Medical Center.

"The unexpected looms large and that's why I think for any of these vaccines, we're going to need a large safety database to provide the reassurance," he added.

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Among Americans who say they wouldn't get vaccinated, 7 in 10 worry about safety.

"I am not an anti-vaxxer," said Melanie Dries, 56, of Colorado Springs, Colorado. But, "to get a COVID-19 vaccine within a year or two ... causes me to fear that it won't be widely tested as to side effects."

Dr. Francis Collins, who directs the National Institutes of Health, insists safety is the top priority. The NIH is creating a master plan for testing the leading COVID-19 vaccine candidates in tens of thousands of people, to prove if they really work and also if they're safe.

"I would not want people to think that we're cutting corners because that would be a big mistake. I think this is an effort to try to achieve efficiencies, but not to sacrifice rigor," Collins told the AP earlier this month.

"Definitely the worst thing that could happen is if we rush through a vaccine that turns out to have significant side effects," Collins added.

Among those who want a vaccine, the AP-NORC poll found protecting themselves, their family and the community are the top reasons.

"I'm definitely going to get it," said Brandon Grimes, 35, of Austin, Texas. "As a father who takes care of his family, I think ... it's important for me to get vaccinated as soon as it's available to better protect my family."

And about 7 in 10 of those who would get vaccinated say life won't go back to normal without a vaccine. A site foreman for his family's construction business, Grimes travels from house to house interacting with different crews, and said some of his coworkers also are looking forward to vaccination to minimize on-the-job risk.

The new coronavirus is most dangerous to older adults and people of any age who have chronic health problems such as diabetes or heart disease. The poll found 67% of people 60 and older say they'd get vaccinated, compared with 40% who are younger.

And death counts suggest black and Hispanic Americans are more vulnerable to COVID-19, because of unequal access to health care and other factors. Yet the poll found just 25% of African Americans and 37% of Hispanics would get a vaccine compared to 56% of whites.

Among people who don't want a vaccine, about 4 in 10 say they're concerned about catching COVID-19 from the shot. But most of the leading vaccine candidates don't contain the coronavirus itself, meaning they can't cause infection.

And 3 in 10 who don't want a vaccine don't fear getting seriously ill from the coronavirus.

Over 5.5 million people worldwide have been confirmed infected by the virus, and more than 340,000 deaths have been recorded, including nearly 100,000 in the U.S., according to a tally kept by Johns Hopkins University. Experts believe the true toll is significantly higher.

And while most people who get COVID-19 have mild cases and recover, doctors still are discovering the coronavirus attacks in far sneakier ways than just causing pneumonia — from blood clots to heart and kidney damage to the latest scare, a life-threatening inflammatory reaction in children.

Whatever the final statistics show about how often it kills, health specialists agree the new coronavirus appears deadlier than the typical flu. Yet the survey suggests a vaccine would be no more popular than the yearly flu shot.

Worldwide, about a dozen COVID-19 vaccine candidates are in early stages of testing or poised to begin. British researchers are opening one of the biggest studies so far, to test an Oxford University-created shot in 10,000 people.

For all the promises of the Trump administration's "Operation Warp Speed," only 20% of Americans expect any vaccine to be available to the public by year's end, the poll found. Most think sometime next year is more likely.

Political divisions seen over how the country reopens the economy are reflected in desire for a vaccine, too. More than half of Democrats call a vaccine necessary for reopening, compared to about a third of Republicans. While 62% of Democrats would get the vaccine, only 43% of Republicans say the same.

"There's still a large amount of uncertainty around taking the vaccine," said Caitlin Oppenheimer, who leads NORC's public health research. "There is a lot of opportunity to communicate with Americans about

the value and the safety of a vaccine.”

Global pandemic: Through the eyes of the world’s children

By MARTHA IRVINE Associated Press

CHICAGO (AP) — These are children of the global pandemic.

In the far-north Canadian town of Iqaluit, one boy has been glued to the news to learn everything he can about the coronavirus. A girl in Australia sees a vibrant future, tinged with sadness for the lives lost. A Rwandan boy is afraid the military will violently crack down on its citizens when his country lifts the lockdown.

There is melancholy and boredom, and a lot of worrying, especially about parents working amid the disease, grandparents suddenly cut off from weekend visits, friends seen only on a video screen.

Some children feel safe and protected. Others are scared. And yet, many also find joy in play, and even silliness.

Associated Press reporters around the world asked kids about living with the virus and to use art to show us what they believe the future might hold. Some sketched or painted, while others sang, danced ballet, built with LEGOs. A few just wanted to talk.

In the remote forests of northern California, one boy, a Karuk Indian, wrote a rap song to express his worries about how his tribe of just 5,000 will survive the pandemic.

Their worries are matched in many places by resilience and hope, for a life beyond the virus.

This is life under lockdown, through the eyes of children.

LILITHA JIPHETHU, 11, SOUTH AFRICA

Lilitha Jiphethu has made a ball out of discarded plastic grocery bags to keep her amused during the lockdown. She and her four siblings play with that makeshift ball almost every day in a small scrub of ground that they’ve fenced off outside their home.

The 11-year-old screams as her brothers throw the ball at her. Then she laughs, picks up the ball and throws it back at them. This happens again and again.

Lilitha’s house is like hundreds of others in this informal settlement of families just outside Johannesburg, South Africa’s biggest city. It’s made of sheets of scrap metal nailed to wooden beams.

Like many children under lockdown, she misses her friends and her teachers and especially misses playing her favorite game, netball. But she understands why school is closed and why they are being kept at home.

“I feel bad because I don’t know if my family (can catch) this coronavirus,” Lilitha says. “I don’t like it, this corona.”

She prefers singing to drawing and chooses to sing a church song in her first language, Xhosa, as her way of describing the future after the pandemic. She misses her choir but takes comfort in the song’s lyrics.

She smiles as she begins. Her sweet voice drifts through the one-room home.

“I have a friend in Jesus,” she sings. “He is loving and he’s not like any other friend.

“He is not deceitful. He is not ashamed of us.

“He is truthful, and he is love.”

—Bram Janssen and Gerald Imray

HUDSON DRUTCHAS, 12, UNITED STATES

Hudson Drutchas waited and worried as his mom and sister recovered from coronavirus, quarantined in their rooms. Just a few weeks earlier, he was a busy sixth-grader at Lasalle II, a public elementary school in Chicago. Then the governor issued a stay-at-home order.

Now, the soft-spoken 12-year-old receives school assignments by computer and looks to dog Ty and cat Teddy for comfort.

“Since I don’t get to see my friends a lot, they’re kind of my closest friends,” he says. He giggles when Teddy, now 9, snarls. “He sometimes gets really grumpy because he’s an old man. But we still love him

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a lot.”

When not doing schoolwork, Hudson jumps and flips on his trampoline and lifts himself around a door-frame outfitted so he can practice climbing, something he usually does competitively.

He knows he’s fortunate, with a good home and family to keep him safe, but it’s difficult to be patient. “It makes me feel sad that I am missing out on a part of my childhood,” he says.

When he draws his version of the future, Hudson makes a detailed pencil sketch showing life before the coronavirus and after.

The world before looks stark and full of pollution in the drawing. In the future, the city is lush with clear skies and more wildlife and trees.

“I think the environment might kind of, like, replenish itself or maybe grow back,” Hudson says.

Still, he feels uncertain: “I’m worried about just how life will be after this. Like, will life change that much?”

—Martha Irvine

ALEXANDRA KUSTOVA, 12, RUSSIA

Hard times can have a silver lining. Alexandra Kustova has come to understand this during this pandemic.

Now that all her studies are conducted online, she has more time for her two favorite hobbies -- ballet and jigsaw puzzles. The 12-year-old also able to spend more time with her family and help her grandmother, who lives in the same building, two floors down at their apartment in Yekaterinburg, a city in the Urals, a mountain range that partly divides Europe and Asia.

Together, they take time to water tomato plants and enjoy one another’s company. Time has slowed down.

“Before that I would have breakfast with them, rush out to school, come back, have dinner, go to ballet classes, come back -- and it would already be time to go to bed,” Alexandra says.

Ballet has been her passion since she was 8. Now she does classes at home and sends videos of her drills to the trainer, who gives her feedback.

The dance she shows for an AP reporter begins slowly and finishes with leaps in the air.

Just like the pandemic, Alexandra says, it is “sad in the beginning and then it becomes joyful.”

“I believe the end is joyful because we must keep on living, keep on growing,” she says.

—Yulia Alekseeva

TRESOR NDIZIHIWE, 12, RWANDA

No school. No playing with friends. Soldiers everywhere. That’s life during the coronavirus pandemic for Tresor Ndizihwe, a 12-year-old boy who lives in Rwanda, one of seven brothers and sisters.

Their mother, Jacqueline Mukantwari is paid \$50 a month as a schoolteacher, but she used to earn extra money giving private lessons. That business has dried up, and the family gets food parcels from the government twice a month.

The only regular outside time Tresor has is in a small courtyard next to his home.

“The day becomes long,” he says in his native tongue, Kinyarwanda. “(You) can’t go out there” — he indicates the world outside his house — “and it makes me feel really uncomfortable.”

Tresor draws a picture of the future that shows soldiers shooting civilians who are protesting, he says. He adds dabs of red paint next to one of those who has fallen.

“There is blood,” he says, “and some are crying, as you can see.”

It’s a stark image for a boy to produce. Rwanda was the first country in Africa to enforce a total lock-down because of the virus. It’s also a place where the security forces meant to be helping keep people safe have been accused of serious abuses of power.

Yet he wants to be a soldier.

Jacqueline says her son is a good student — “so intelligent.” She struggles to reconcile his own desire to join the military with the picture he has drawn.

—Daniel Sabiiti and Gerald Imray

JEIMMER ALEJANDRO RIVEROS, 9, COLOMBIA

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Life in Colombia's countryside has become even more difficult for the family of Jeimmer Alejandro Riveros. The price of herbs and vegetables his single mom and siblings cultivate on a farm in Chipaque have declined. A spotty internet connection makes virtual classes difficult, and a nationwide quarantine means less time outdoors.

"Here is a mountain with a river," Jeimmer, 9, says, pointing at each item in his drawing. In his mind, the future doesn't look so different. "Here I am. Here's my mommy. Here is my brother. Here is my house. Here is the sun and here is the sky."

The family recently launched a YouTube channel with videos showing how to grow and propagate plants that now has more than 420,000 followers. Their first video, introducing the Jeimmer's mom, older brother and dog, has garnered, by now, more than 1 million views.

"Let's make this go viral!" Jeimmer says, as birds chirp in the background.

Colombia is one of Latin America's most unequal countries, and poverty abounds in rural areas where many still lack basic utilities like safe drinking water. Jeimmer's family often walks 40 minutes a day to get fresh milk.

Capital city Bogota — about an hour from the family's farm — has the highest number of coronavirus cases in Colombia. But cases are increasingly being identified in rural areas with few hospitals. Chipaque reported its first case earlier this month.

Despite the obstacles, Jeimmer maintains an upbeat outlook on life under quarantine. He feels safe from the virus with his mom and brother. And he imagines a future with more time spent outdoors and one day, a grown-up job.

"It doesn't matter that we're in lockdown," he says. "We can be happy."

—Christine Armario

ISHIKIIHARA E-KOR, 11, UNITED STATES

Ishikiihara E-kor misses all the normal kid things during the pandemic: playing baseball, hanging out with friends and having a real party for his 11th birthday, which he instead celebrated with relatives on a Zoom call. The internet periodically goes out for hours, making it hard for him to complete his school work, so he plays with his dog, Navi Noop Noop.

But Shikii, as his friends call him, also has bigger things on his mind. He's a Karuk Indian, a member of California's second-largest tribe, and has been reading about how the pandemic is rampaging through the Navajo Nation, another tribe hundreds of miles away.

The virus can feel far away in the tribe's tiny outpost of Orleans, California, where the crystal clear lower Klamath River winds through densely forested mountains south of the Oregon-California border. But in a rap Shikii wrote, he urged fellow tribal members not to get complacent.

"Stay away, man, 6 feet at least. Social distancing, it's a thing that could save us. What? Like 5,000 of us left, Karuk tribe, man, that's it."

Ishikiihara, whose full name means "sturgeon warrior" in the Karuk language, later adds, "If we even just lost a few people, that would be really sad."

Rapping about his worries isn't new for him. He has a song about how his tribe lost its tradition fishing salmon runs on the Klamath River, pondering in verse why the Karuk "needed permission to go fishin'."

—Gillian Flaccus

BANEEN AHMED, 10, JORDAN

Despite the harshness she has experienced, the quiet, studious girl is brimming with hard-won optimism. Her family's suffering in war-time Iraq has taught Baneen Ahmed that outside events can turn life upside down in an instant. In the chaotic aftermath of the 2003 U.S.-led invasion of Iraq, an uncle was kidnapped, and a great-uncle was killed by armed militias, forcing her family to seek refuge in Jordan.

By comparison, the coronavirus pandemic seems manageable, the 10-year-old says. Scientists will find a vaccine, she says, speaking in halting but vocabulary-rich English, her favorite subject of study at a private school in the Jordanian capital of Amman.

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"It's going to take a year or a little bit to find a cure, so it's going to end," says Baneen, who prefers to talk and show how she's studying at home under lockdown, rather than drawing a picture.

"In Iraq, it's not going to end," she continues. "It's like so hard to end it, the killing and the kidnapping."

In the future, she sees herself studying abroad, maybe in the United States or Turkey. She's thought about a career in medicine, but is excited by any opportunity to learn. For her, school represents hope.

"I want to go somewhere else because they will let us study good things," Baneen says. "And my future is going to be good."

—Karin Laub

ELENA MORETTI, 11, ITALY

For Elena Moretti, the pandemic is not some faraway threat. Italy was the first European country to be hit by COVID-19, and her mother is a doctor in the public health system that has seen 27,500 personnel infected and more than 160 doctors dead nationwide.

Elena, 11, is afraid of the coronavirus. Whenever a package arrives in the mail, she brings it out onto the terrace and disinfects it with a spray-bottle soap solution she made herself.

It's a bottle, too, in Elena's drawing, capturing the virus inside.

"The virus wanted to attack us, so instead of bringing us down, we counterattack and imprison it," she said of her drawing.

That fighting spirit has helped Elena get through more than two months of lockdown. After an initial spell of sleeping late because her teachers hadn't transitioned to remote learning, Elena now does schoolwork, karate and hip-hop lessons online.

Sometimes the internet connection goes out. But she's still managed to keep in touch with friends, with some video chats lasting for hours. She's also discovered a new hobby, baking sweets — apple tort, cupcakes and cream-filled pastry.

Now that Italy's lockdown has begun to ease, Elena is starting to go out again, but the fear remains.

"I'm afraid it might spread even more and take all of us," she said.

—Paolo Santalucia

NIKI JOLENE BERGHAMRE-DAVIS, 11, AUSTRALIA

When she doesn't move enough, she doesn't sleep well. So, Niki Jolene Berghamre-Davis tries to go hiking in the forest whenever possible during this global pandemic. Even in the best of times, that's where the 11-year-old from Port Melbourne, Australia, feels most at home.

"She is our nature girl," says her mother, Anna Berghamre.

Her mom wasn't surprised when Niki Jolene drew a self-portrait of herself facing a grove of trees. Within the drawing, there are signs of caution.

"I have a face mask in my hand," she says holding up the drawing, "because, well, I've just kind of taken it off, and I'm still aware."

She says that falling leaves she included in the sketch symbolize the lives that have been lost in this pandemic.

Yet the roots of the trees — wide and prominent like those of the flowering red gum trees near her family's townhome — represent "possibilities," says the bubbly girl, known as "Snickers" to some of her friends. She smiles often, showing a full set of braces on her teeth.

"After this corona pandemic, after this will end, I think it will be much more full of life," she says, throwing her arms up for emphasis. She hopes, for instance, that people will walk more and drive less because she's noticed how people in her neighborhood have often done without their cars during the shutdown.

"I think people won't take things for granted anymore."

—Martha Irvine

DANYLO BOICHUK, 12, UKRAINE

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Danylo Boichuk envies his cat, Kari, who is able to escape from the family home in a Kyiv suburb and run free. Because of the pandemic, his family had to cancel a summer camp in Bulgaria, and 12-year-old Danylo worries a lot about closed borders.

Sitting on his back porch, he has used his LEGO blocks and figures to create his version of the future — a situation at the border.

"Here is a vessel en route to Copenhagen, and border guards are inspecting it," Danylo explains, pointing to particular pieces and holding up others. "This crew member shows medical evidence that everyone on board is healthy, except for one man in an isolation cell."

The plastic figure makes a rattling sound after he drops it into the makeshift jail.

"There is a security guard restricting contact with the man," he continues. "There are IT specialists at work. There are also people who lost their jobs — musicians, farmers, showmen."

The boy wonders if authorities in some countries will use the coronavirus crisis to tighten their grip on people's lives. "For example, they may implant chips to track (people's) whereabouts ...," Danylo surmises.

His parents say he has an analytical mind. Already, he wants to become a businessman in the future and create a start-up to develop online games. He's been reading books about Steve Jobs, the founder of Apple, and other famous entrepreneurs, during self-isolation.

After the pandemic, he says people will invest more in internet products and games.

"This is an opportunity one should use," he says.

—Dmitry Vlasov

ANA LAURA RAMÍREZ LAVANDERO, 10, CUBA

Her drawing depicts a simple enough dream for a 10-year-old — "Viaje a la Playa," a trip to the beach. On the page, she has colored a palm tree with three brown coconuts, a boat floating in the distance and a shining yellow sun.

It is a scene representative of life on her island country, known for its white sand and aqua-blue waters. For now, however, Ana Laura Ramírez Lavandero can only dream of the beach. Under lockdown, she finds herself confined to the fourth-floor apartment she shares with her parents and grandmother. On the balcony, she watches life through a rusted iron trellis. It can seem like a jail.

"My life changed," says the girl, who's accustomed to playing on the streets of her working and middle-income neighborhood in Havana.

The only time she's been able to go out in nearly two months has been for an emergency trip to the dentist. Schools are closed, and because many people in Cuba don't have internet, the education ministry is broadcasting lessons on state television.

Ana Laura dreams of becoming a famous drummer. This was her first year at a highly selective institute for students identified early on as musically talented. She is continuing with classes in math, history and Spanish, but not music.

Her children's chorus also can't meet right now. Usually, her own choir meets alongside another one, with boys and girls of all ages.

"People feel united in the chorus," she says wistfully. She can't wait to see them again.

—Andrea Rodríguez

SANWERIA BROTHERS, 8 AND 9, INDIA

Advait Vallabh Sanweria, age 9, grins as his younger brother lists all the things they've been doing during India's extended shutdown.

"We get spanked, scolded, watch movies, cook, sweep floors and use the phone and make Skype calls," Uddhav Pratap Sanweria, age 8, says in Hindi.

At times the brothers are a bit of a comedy routine, or at least a danger to the furniture in their home. They've turned one room into a cricket pitch, with one brother bowling, or pitching, the ball, while the other bats. Other times, they play quieter games, such as chess or Uno.

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Excited at first about school shutting down indefinitely, the brothers missed being able to go outside. "It is frustrating to stay locked inside our homes," Advait Vallabh, the 9-year-old says of the lockdown, which have since eased a little. "When I get frustrated, sometimes I read a book. Sometimes I cry." Recently, the brothers were excited to see a rainbow arching across blue skies outside their home. "The weather has changed so much," says Advait Vallabh, noting the visibly fresh air in New Delhi, as pollution in the otherwise choked city has cleared drastically during the lockdown. Even with the ups and downs, the brothers believe the lockdown should continue for a year. "They shouldn't reopen until the time there are zero cases left," the younger Uddhav Pratap says. —Rishi Lekhi and Rishabh Raj Jain

OWEN WATSON, 12, CANADA

Dressed in a puffy parka made by his mom and with cellphone in hand, Owen Watson gives a tour of his town, Iqaluit, in the far-north Canadian territory of Nunavut. There's still snow on the ground in May, though the days are getting longer in this place known for its spectacular views of the northern lights.

"That light blue place is the school that I used to go to," 12-year-old Owen says of the shuttered structure behind him. Then he turns to a playground. "It's not supposed to be played with right now."

Surrounded by rivers, lakes and the ocean, filled with Arctic char, his dad, Aaron Watson, says the name of their town means "fishes" in Inuktitut, the language spoken by this region's Inuit people, which includes Owen and his mom and sister. Dad is originally from Stratford, Ontario, and works in the tourism industry in Nunavut.

Under nationwide shutdown, Owen has kept busy with packets of work from his teachers. He rides his bike around the even-quieter-than-usual town – and tries not to worry too much.

His dad observes how much Owen has been watching news about the coronavirus and wonders if they're raising a future scientist.

So far, there have been no documented cases of the coronavirus in the town of about 8,000 people, many of whom work for the federal government and the city. When flights are running, they can fly to the Canadian capital, Ottawa, in three hours.

So young Owen thinks it's only a matter of time before the virus arrives. "If it gets here," he says, "I'll be more afraid."

He waits and watches. The sun sets to the west, as clouds reflect soft shades of pink and purple. It's a lot for a boy to think about.

—Martha Irvine

World watches as South Korea cautiously returns to life

By HYUNG-JIN KIM Associated Press

SEOUL, South Korea (AP) — The baseball league is on. Students have begun returning to school. And people are increasingly dining out and enjoying nighttime strolls in public parks.

As South Korea significantly relaxes its rigid social distancing rules as a result of waning coronavirus cases, the world is paying close attention to whether it can return to something that resembles normal — or face a virus resurgence. Already, a mini-outbreak linked to nightclubs in Seoul has tested South Korea's widely praised method for dealing with the disease — essentially a combination of rapid tracing, testing and treatment, along with stringent social distancing practices.

"Other countries must be wondering whether our nation will continue to make good progress," said Jin Yong Kim, a doctor at Incheon Medical Center near Seoul who confirmed South Korea's first patient on Jan. 20 and has since treated more than 100 others. "But I can't predict with authority what will happen here from now on."

South Korea once had the world's largest number of coronavirus cases outside mainland China, but its daily caseload has since dropped to around 10-30 and occasionally has hit single digits in recent weeks. South Korea on Wednesday still reported 40 new cases, its biggest daily jump in about 50 days.

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The recent uptick in fresh infections linked to nightclubs in Seoul's Itaewon entertainment district has raised fears of another big outbreak. Since the first patient was associated with the nightclubs on May 6 — the same day social distancing policy was officially eased — South Korea has confirmed more than 250 related cases.

It's unclear how things will play out, but so far the outbreak hasn't grown, unlike what happened in late February and early March when hundreds of new patients were reported each day, many of them tied to a controversial church gathering in the country's southeast.

The tried and tested methods of aggressive tracing, testing and treatment and the widespread public use of masks again played a major role in preventing the outbreak in Itaewon from exploding, said Hyukmin Lee, a professor at Yonsei University of College of Medicine in Seoul.

South Korean officials previously said their nation was approaching its economic and social limits. But Lee said the government now has to think about whether it can tolerate small outbreaks and let the economy operate smoothly, or if it should restore strict social distancing rules.

Meanwhile, daily life — of a sort — has resumed.

Long-delayed baseball and soccer seasons began without fans in the stands. Public parks, museums and outdoor leisure facilities have reopened. High school seniors returned to class last week, and younger students will do the same in phases by June 8.

These days, during lunch time, restaurants in downtown Seoul are crowded with office workers, and many have stopped working from home. During evening rush hours, subways are packed with commuters wearing masks. At night, in a park in western Seoul, it's easy to find young couples strolling without masks.

South Korea's quarantine campaign is often compared with that of the U.S., U.K. and Italy, some of the hardest-hit countries. They all noticed their first cases in late January.

South Korea launched widespread testing fairly early, and in early February it had open public testing, which was available to asymptomatic people, and pursued contact tracing for all confirmed patients. Italy's testing increased much more slowly. In the case of the U.K., despite its early head start on testing, there were signs that it wasn't able to keep up with the outbreak. Testing in the United States began in earnest in mid-March, according to a recent analysis in Our World in Data, a nonprofit online scientific publication based at the University of Oxford.

Of the 5.6 million people infected worldwide, the United States tops the list with about 1.6 million while both the U.K. and Italy have more than 230,000 cases respectively. South Korea has recorded a total of 11,265 cases with 269 deaths.

Jaehun Jung, a professor at Gachon University College of Medicine, said lifting restrictions in the United States, U.K. and Italy will likely cause a second wave of COVID-19 that he said could be "much bigger and more severe."

In South Korea, officials said the reopening of schools will likely be a major yardstick for whether authorities can maintain the relaxed restrictions. The French government said last week that about 70 virus cases had been linked to schools, one week after a third of French schoolchildren went back to school in an easing of the coronavirus lockdown.

There is a sense that South Korea's hard-won gains could be reversed without vigilance.

"South Korea will face a second virus wave, too. Whether there are outbreaks that are 10 times bigger than what happened in Itaewon or smaller ones, we'll continue to see them," said Kim, the doctor at Incheon Medical Center. "If we consider our high population density ... we are rather more vulnerable to the virus than (even the U.S.)."

Venezuela's apparent respite from COVID-19 may not last long

By SCOTT SMITH Associated Press

CARACAS, Venezuela (AP) — Defying dire predictions, Venezuela so far seems to have avoided the coronavirus wave striking much of South America.

But experts warn that while the virus may have been slow to spread here, due in large part to Venezu-

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ela's isolation, the number of daily illnesses could soon climb high enough to severely test the country's already dilapidated health system.

President Nicolás Maduro's government says the nation of roughly 25 million people has done widespread testing while recording just over 1,200 virus cases, along with 11 deaths, since the first case was diagnosed in mid-March.

The low figures raise doubt among some critics about the accuracy of the testing program and government reporting. Other independent health experts, however, don't think Maduro could conceal a significant surge in cases.

"If things were worse than they are now, we would have seen a lot coming out from social media — people talking about the increase of cases, hospitals being overrun," said Dr. Gerardo de Cosío, the Caracas-based head of the Venezuela office of the Pan American Health Organization and the World Health Organization.

Neighboring Brazil has seen more than 270,000 cases and nearly 20,000 deaths so far, while Peru, Chile and Ecuador have each had tens of thousands of cases. There have been thousands of deaths in Peru and Ecuador and hundreds in Chile.

In Venezuela, officials had been reporting under a dozen new illnesses daily. But that's started creeping upward, and new illnesses now exceed 100 some days.

The rise is worrying many observers.

New York-based Human Rights Watch and Johns Hopkins University's Center for Public Health and Human Rights and Center for Humanitarian Health reported Tuesday that Venezuela's health care system is "grossly unprepared" for the pandemic's arrival.

A main concern is a lack of running water.

The report cited a hospital that officials identified as needing better water services. However, human rights investigators found that nearly a year after work began in mid-2019, the hospital still doesn't have consistent running water or access to potable supplies — despite being designated as one of 46 hospitals in Venezuela to treat coronavirus patients.

At another hospital, investigators said, health care workers wash their hands with condensation that drips from the air conditioner. Some of its patients are told to bring their own water to drink and flush toilets.

José Miguel Vivanco, Americas director of Human Rights Watch, said these conditions create a "time bomb" in Venezuela.

"Maduro's statistics are absolutely absurd," Vivanco said. "They are not credible in a country where doctors do not even have water to wash their hands."

Venezuela was wealthy two decades ago from the world's largest oil reserves. It's since fallen on hard times as crude oil production has fallen to a 76-year low. Critics of the socialist government blame its interference in the economy. Maduro blames what he calls economic war being waged on Venezuela by the U.S. and others.

An estimated 5 million Venezuelans have fled poverty, blackouts, sporadic running water, shortages of food, medicine and gasoline, and high inflation. Thousands of doctors and nurses have joined the exodus.

The Academy of Sciences, Physics, Mathematics and Nature of Venezuela, a Caracas-based institution, said mathematical models based on the first six weeks of infections forecast a big surge in new cases in the coming months.

"The country must prepare for the peak of the epidemic, as has happened in other Latin American countries," said the academy's president, Mireya Goldwasser.

That report drew a threat from Diosdado Cabello, the socialist party leader who is Venezuela's second most powerful official after Maduro. Cabello called the scientists politically motivated on his weekly TV show and accused them of generating alarm.

"This is an invitation for state security agencies to come calling on these people," Cabello said. "They're saying the government lied."

Skeptical Venezuelans distrust the government's claims that so few coronavirus cases exist, given its history of hiding basic figures. Still, no obvious signs indicate the coronavirus has spun out of control.

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Maduro's government took quick action after the first cases were diagnosed March 13, which is credited for the low numbers so far. He ordered one of the region's first nationwide lockdowns. Health workers go house-to-house screening people in poor hillside barrios, tracing cases to stomp out its spread, experts and residents say.

Maduro and his deputies appear on state TV nightly to provide an update of each new case. The president also announces each new aid shipment of medical supplies from allied nations as well as the promise of 1 million test kits from China.

"We'll go on a radical offensive to hunt down the coronavirus wherever it is," Maduro said in a recent state TV address. "More work, more perseverance, more diagnostic tests, more house-to-house visits, more quarantine. This is our response."

The government says it has done over 865,000 coronavirus tests, but the majority are less reliable rapid tests, raising the possibility that people are mistakenly found healthy when they are infected and could spread the virus.

Jose Manuel Olivares, a physician and opposition lawmaker, said Maduro's government has concealed at least four COVID-19 deaths from the 10 it has made public.

Aside from face masks, there is little outward sign of concern about the coronavirus on the crowded streets of Catia, a poor neighborhood of Venezuela's capital. Vendors push carts of potatoes and onions or stand shoulder to shoulder hawking bags of rice and cornmeal.

Staying home to protect yourself is no option, said auto mechanic José Blanco, who was navigating through pedestrians on a motorcycle. People have no choice but to go out to work so their families can eat, he said.

"To tell you the truth, I'd rather get sick and die than let my family go hungry," Blanco said. "Here, the pandemic isn't stopping anybody."

Maira Chávez, a life-long Catia resident standing in line to drop off her 15-year-old daughter's homework at a school closed in the lockdown, said she worries about the virus, so she wears a mask and gloves and frequently washes her hands.

"We have to take care of ourselves, because if we don't something bad could happen, we could be infected," she said. "We hope that this just passes. God is the only one who knows."

California sues over sex misconduct on 'Criminal Minds' set

By ANDREW DALTON AP Entertainment Writer

LOS ANGELES (AP) — The state of California filed a lawsuit Tuesday against CBS, Disney and producers of the long-running series "Criminal Minds," alleging that the show's cinematographer engaged in rampant sexual misconduct against crew members for years.

The suit filed in Los Angeles Superior Court by the California Department of Fair Employment and Housing says the show's production team knew of and condoned the behavior of cinematographer Gregory St. Johns throughout the 14 years he spent on "Criminal Minds," and fired more than a dozen men who resisted his unwanted groping and sexual harassment.

"With the aid of defendants, St. Johns created an unchecked intimidating, hostile, and offensive work environment on the set of Criminal Minds," the lawsuit alleges.

The popular crime procedural, which ran on CBS from 2005 until earlier this year, was co-produced by CBS and the Disney-owned ABC Signature Studios.

Those three entities along with production company Entertainment Partners, several of the show's producers and St. Johns himself are named as defendants in the suit, which seeks back pay and other damages for the crew members who were fired.

ABC Signature Studios said it intends to vigorously defend against the claims.

"The company works hard to maintain a work environment free from discrimination, harassment, or retaliation," the studio said in a statement late Tuesday.

Emails sent to representatives for the other defendants were not immediately returned.

The state agency began an investigation in March 2019 and found that St. Johns had engaged in a pat-

tern of unwanted sexual touching including the groping of men's genitals and buttocks and kisses and caresses on their necks and shoulders. "St. Johns' conduct was rampant, frequent, and in the open," the suit states.

He unfairly criticized, socially ostracized and publicly shamed those who resisted him, the suit alleges, and executives overseeing the show routinely approved of the retaliatory firings he recommended.

Complaints to human resources did not result in meaningful discipline against St. Johns, and investigations by the corporate defendants were toothless and designed to hide the misconduct, the suit says.

ABC Signature Studios disagrees.

"The company took corrective action," the ABC statement said. "We cooperated with the Department of Fair Employment and Housing during its investigation, and we regret that we were unable to reach a reasonable resolution."

St. Johns was fired in 2018 after a story in Variety that detailed complaints from crew members.

Can Trump feel your pain? US nears haunting virus milestone

By CALVIN WOODWARD Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — In the rubble of buildings and lives, modern U.S. presidents have met national trauma with words such as these: "I can hear you." "You have lost too much, but you have not lost everything." "We have wept with you; we've pulled our children tight."

As diverse as they were in eloquence and empathy, George W. Bush, Bill Clinton and Barack Obama each had his own way of piercing the noise of catastrophe and reaching people.

But now, the known U.S. death toll from the coronavirus pandemic is fast approaching 100,000 on the watch of a president whose communication skills, potent in a political brawl, are not made for this moment.

Impeachment placed one indelible mark on Donald Trump's time in the White House. Now there is another, a still-growing American casualty list that has exceeded deaths from the Vietnam and Korean wars combined. U.S. fatalities from the most lethal hurricanes and earthquakes pale by comparison. This is the deadliest pandemic in a century.

Actual deaths from COVID-19 are almost certainly higher than the numbers show, an undercount to be corrected in time.

At every turn Trump has asserted the numbers would be worse without his leadership. Yet the toll keeps climbing. It is well beyond what he told people to expect even as his public-health authorities started bracing the country in early April for at least 100,000 deaths.

"I think we'll be substantially under that number," he said April 10." Ten days later: "We're going toward 50- or 60,000 people." Ten days after that: "We're probably heading to 60,000, 70,000." Though critics have said the toll shot up because he was slow to respond, he contended Tuesday it could have been 25 times higher without his actions.

The scale and swiftness of the pandemic's killing are unlike anything that confronted Trump's recent predecessors. Yet the calamity offers no where-were-you moment — no flashpoint turning blue skies black, no fusillade at an elementary school. Instead the toll unfolds in stages of sickness.

The pandemic is playing out in a divided country under a president who thrives on rousing his supporters and getting a rise out of those who don't like him, whether that means forgoing a mask, playing golf while millions hunker down or thrashing opponents on Twitter. He lowered flags to half staff to recognize those who have died from the virus but had them back up days before the 100,000 marker was reached.

His feelings on Tuesday? He tweeted to "all the political hacks out there" that without his leadership the lives lost would be far worse than the "100,000 plus that looks like will be the number."

Early on, when only a few hundred had died, Trump was asked at a briefing what message he had for Americans who were scared. "You're a terrible reporter, that's what I say," he responded. "I think it's a very nasty question."

In the 1995 Oklahoma City bombing, the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks, the 2012 mass shooting at Sandy Hook school and other national nightmares that brought flags to half staff, presidents found more

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soothing words for the frightened and grieving than Trump's boilerplate line that one death is too many. Empathy was Clinton's wheelhouse. The rhetorically fumbly Bush grabbed eloquence by the bullhorn. The cool and controlled Obama cried.

Trump? "I've never seen a president with less capacity for empathy," said Andrew J. Polsky, a political science professor at Hunter College, City University of New York, who has studied such leadership traits for decades. "He doesn't even try. ... It's way outside his emotional comfort zone."

Clinton's touchy-feely ways are forever symbolized by his assurance that "I feel your pain," which did not come from a tragic moment at all but rather an epic smackdown of a heckler. Challenged by an AIDS activist in New York in 1992 who said the Democratic candidate was more about ambition than achievement, Clinton told the man "I know how it hurts ... I feel your pain" but "quit talking to me like that."

"I'm sick and tired of all these people who don't know me, know nothing about my life ... making snotty-nosed remarks about how I haven't done anything in my life," Clinton told the crowd and the activist.

But Clinton's remarks as president at the memorial service for the victims of the Oklahoma City domestic terrorist attack in 1995 exemplified compassionate leadership and helped dig him out of a political hole.

"You have lost too much, but you have not lost everything," he told the bereaved families. "And you have certainly not lost America, for we will stand with you for as many tomorrows as it takes."

Henry Cisneros, his housing secretary, told the University of Virginia's Miller Center that Clinton that day and Bush at smoldering ground zero six years later did what presidents are called to do.

"There are moments when — and I think 9/11 was that for President Bush — you realize this is not about politics and this is not about momentary victories and this is not about your own legacy," he said. "It's about the burden you're carrying for the people."

Bush, in off-the-cuff words through a bullhorn to New York firefighters straining to hear him, bellowed: "I can hear you, the rest of the world hears you, and the people who knocked these buildings down will hear all of us soon." That was three days after Islamic terrorism laid waste to the World Trade Center and a chunk of the Pentagon.

Three days after that, Bush visited a mosque to make common cause with American Muslims facing hate on the streets because of the extremists from abroad. "Islam is peace," he said. "Women who cover their heads in this country must feel comfortable going outside their homes. Moms who wear cover must be not intimidated in America."

Masterful oratory brought Obama to national prominence, and measured calm marked his demeanor as president. Unlike his emotional vice president, Joe Biden, Obama practiced his own kind of social distancing, to the point of aloofness.

The murder of 20 "beautiful little children" and six adults at Sandy Hook brought a different Obama to the podium the day of the attack, as he swiped at his tears a half dozen times in a brief statement and spoke of hugging America's children and his own "a little tighter" than before.

He told mourners at Newtown's prayer vigil two days later that "all across this land of ours, we have wept with you, we've pulled our children tight." He talked about the teacher who told terrified kids in a barricaded room, "show me your smile," and about the child who told terrified teachers: "I know karate. So it's OK. I'll lead the way out."

Obama spoke admiringly during his presidency of "the incredible strength and resolve" of Bush's bullhorn speech, despite their differences over the Iraq war and other matters of policy. In the midst of a catastrophe or when looking back on it, presidents cite the words of predecessors to project continuity and grace.

This, too, is not Trump's way. He attacks Obama and snorts at Bush's appeal from retirement for empathy and unity at a time of national emergency.

"He's a human being with certain qualities," Polsky said of Trump. In this crisis, "these qualities haven't been useful because they don't unite people, they don't express concern for people's well-being."

Trump came to power mirroring the grievances, anger and resentment of those who felt forgotten, Polsky said, and he remains angry, resentful and aggrieved — you could say true to himself.

Biden knocks Trump for 'this macho stuff' in shunning masks

By WILL WEISSERT Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Joe Biden said Tuesday that wearing a mask in public to combat the spread of the coronavirus is a sign of leadership and called President Donald Trump a "fool" who was "stoking deaths" for suggesting otherwise.

The presumptive Democratic presidential nominee's comments came a day after he wore a black face mask while making his first public appearance in more than two months. Biden has remained at his Delaware home amid a pandemic that has frozen the presidential campaign, but he marked Memorial Day by laying a wreath at a nearby veterans' memorial with his wife, Jill.

Trump later retweeted a post that appeared to make fun of a photo of Biden in his mask, though he later said he didn't mean to be critical. In an interview with CNN, Biden responded, "He's a fool, an absolute fool, to talk that way."

"He's supposed to lead by example," Biden said. The former vice president also noted that nearly 100,000 Americans have been killed by the virus and suggested that as many as half of those deaths were avoidable but for Trump's "lack of attention and ego."

Federal officials have recommended that people cover their nose and mouth in public when other measures, such as practicing social distancing of at least 6 feet (1.8 meters), aren't possible. But the issue has become increasingly politically charged, with Trump refusing to wear a mask and polls finding that conservative Americans are more likely to forgo them as well.

Biden didn't wear a mask during the CNN interview, which was conducted outside his house, but he sat 12 feet (3.6 meters) from the reporter.

"It's just absolutely this macho stuff," Biden said of Trump bristling at wearing a mask in public, a practice the former vice president called being "falsely masculine." "It's cost people's lives."

Biden added that the president is politicizing the issue and "it's stoking deaths. That's not going to increase the likelihood that people are going to be better off."

After Biden wore the mask on Memorial Day, Trump retweeted a post by a political commentator that featured an image of a masked Biden over the comment, "This might help explain why Trump doesn't like to wear a mask in public." Asked about that during a subsequent event in the White House Rose Garden, the president responded, "Biden can wear a mask."

"But he was standing outside with his wife, perfect conditions, perfect weather," Trump said. "They're inside, they don't wear masks and so I thought it was very unusual that he had one on. But I thought that was fine. I wasn't criticizing him at all. Why would I ever do a thing like that?"

Trump then asked the reporter who was following up with a second question to remove the mask he was wearing, complaining he couldn't hear him. When the reporter instead said he would speak louder, the president replied: "Oh, OK, 'cause you want to be politically correct."

Federal guidance does not recommend that people wear masks when at home. Still, White House press secretary Kayleigh McEnany used the same line of argument on Tuesday. She noted that Biden has foregone a mask while appearing for frequent online events from his home, something he did during a virtual fundraiser held Tuesday night.

"It is a bit peculiar," McEnany said. "That in his basement, right next to his wife, he's not wearing a mask. But he's wearing one outdoors when he's socially distant. So I think that there was a discrepancy there."

For his part, Biden changed his Twitter profile picture to one of him in the black face covering, and he tweeted Tuesday night: "Wear a mask."

Meanwhile, the former vice president has continued to face fallout from a remark he made Friday on "The Breakfast Club," a radio program influential and popular in the black community. He had commented, "If you've got a problem figuring out whether you're for me or for Trump, then you ain't black."

That sparked criticism from some African American activists, and Biden made a previously unscheduled appearance on a U.S. Black Chamber of Commerce conference call hours later to say that he "should not have been so cavalier."

He went further Tuesday, telling CNN, "I shouldn't have done that. It was a mistake."

"When I say something that is understandably, in retrospect, offensive to someone, and legitimately offensive — making it look like taking them for granted — I should apologize," Biden said. "I don't apologize for every mistake I make because a lot of them don't have any consequences."

Spread of coronavirus fuels corruption in Latin America

By JOSHUA GOODMAN Associated Press

MIAMI (AP) — Even in a pandemic, there's no slowdown for swindlers in Latin America.

From Argentina to Panama, a number of officials have been forced to resign as reports of fraudulent purchases of ventilators, masks and other medical supplies pile up. The thefts are driven by price-gouging from manufacturers and profiteering by politically connected middlemen who see the crisis as an opportunity for graft.

"Whenever there's a dire situation, spending rules are relaxed and there's always someone around looking to take advantage to make a profit," said José Ugaz, a former Peruvian prosecutor who jailed former President Alberto Fujimori and was chairman of Transparency International from 2014-17.

Coronavirus clusters are still spreading in Latin America, fueling a spike in deaths, swamping already-precarious hospitals and threatening to ravage slumping economies.

Against this backdrop, reports of fraud have proliferated.

On Tuesday, police in Rio de Janeiro raided the governor's residence as part of a widening probe into the alleged embezzlement of part of the \$150 million in public funds earmarked for building field hospitals.

In Colombia, 14 of 32 governors are under investigation for crimes ranging from embezzlement to unlawfully awarding no-bid contracts. In Argentina's capital of Buenos Aires, prosecutors are probing a politically connected crony for buying 15,000 N95 surgical masks that, despite having expired, cost the city 10 times their listed price.

Perhaps the biggest fallout is in Bolivia, where the health minister was arrested amid allegations that 170 ventilators were bought at inflated prices. The breathing machines were purchased for nearly \$28,000 each. But their Spanish manufacturer said it sold them to a distributor for only 6,000 euros (\$6,500). Making matter worse, the machines aren't suitable for longer-term care.

The probe threatens to derail the presidential candidacy of interim leader Jeanine Anez. She assumed power in November, promising a clean break from 13 years of leftist rule by Evo Morales, who resigned amid vote-rigging allegations.

Similar accusations of over-billing have shaken Panama, where a top aide to President Laurentino Cortizo quit and his vice president is under pressure to resign after prosecutors last month began investigating the planned purchase of 100 ventilators at nearly \$50,000 each.

In Brazil, which has the world's second-highest number of confirmed cases, police in one state created a task force to investigate pandemic-related crimes. Its nickname, "Corona Jato," is a nod to the region's biggest recent corruption scandal, the "Lava Jato," or "Car Wash," probe that uncovered billions stolen from state-run companies.

Tuesday's surprise search of the governor's mansion and 10 other addresses in Rio has rattled Brazil's political establishment because Gov. Wilson Witzel is a fierce critic of President Jair Bolsonaro, accusing him of undermining state measures to fight the virus. Witzel denied any wrongdoing and accused Bolsonaro of ordering the raid as political retribution.

To be sure, disasters breed corruption all over the world, not just in Latin America. Spain, Italy and other countries also have been rocked by revelations of impropriety during the pandemic. In the U.S., an estimated 16% of \$1 billion in aid spent after Hurricane Katrina was lost in potentially fraudulent payments. In one example, the Federal Emergency Management Agency paid one individual rental assistance as well as \$8,000 to stay 70 nights at a hotel — in Hawaii.

But stealing state funds is especially vexing in Latin America because of gaping poverty and a tattered social safety net. More than half its workers toil in the informal sector without health care or social security.

"That's the real scandal," said Argentine writer Martín Caparrós, co-editor of a book about the region's most shameless stories of graft called "We Lost: Who Won the Americas Cup of Corruption?" (Spoiler alert: An Argentine vice president convicted of buying a stake in a money-printing company while overseeing its bankruptcy proceedings was voted the worst offender by readers).

Acceptance of corruption dates to the Spanish conquest, when powerful viceroys gave extensive land holdings to friends, and forgiveness of sins could literally be bought from the Roman Catholic church, Caparrós said.

Roberto de Michele, the top transparency expert at the Washington-based Inter-American Development Bank, disagrees, saying that even in normal conditions, an estimated 10% to 25% of global spending on health care is lost to corruption — hundreds of billions of dollars every year.

But abuse multiplies in emergencies like natural disasters. He said the risks are even higher in the pandemic, as officials compete for limited supplies, disrupting established price mechanisms.

"If you don't stop at the red light, and nothing happens, or you can bribe the policeman and get away with it, then more people will have incentives not to stop at the red light," said de Michele. "That's institutional design, not culture."

Latin America countries consistently rank among the most corrupt. The latest survey by Berlin-based Transparency International found that more than half of the region's residents think the problem is getting worse, with 1 in 5 admitting to paying a bribe to public officials in the past year. Scandals involving officials caught stealing from school lunch programs, passing briefcases full of cash or placing lovers in cushy jobs are frequently in the news.

Still, de Michele is optimistic that social pressure will bring change.

A turning point came in 2016, when Brazilian construction giant Odebrecht admitted to paying \$788 million in bribes across Latin America over more than a decade. That led to the jailing of former presidents in Peru and Brazil.

Technology can also help protect state funds, de Michele said.

He cited Paraguay, which unveiled a platform allowing users to track in almost real time the status of 110 emergency contracts worth \$26 million in spending tied to COVID-19. Finance Minister Benigno López said the platform will empower citizen groups to monitor how resources are spent.

"The solution to corruption is punitive justice," López told The Associated Press. "But at least this tool puts all public officials on notice that our actions will be under the microscope."

Four Minneapolis officers fired after death of black man

By AMY FORLITI and JEFF BAENEN Associated Press

MINNEAPOLIS (AP) — Four Minneapolis officers involved in the arrest of a black man who died in police custody were fired Tuesday, hours after a bystander's video showed an officer kneeling on the handcuffed man's neck, even after he pleaded that he could not breathe and stopped moving.

Mayor Jacob Frey announced the firings on Twitter, saying "This is the right call."

The man's death Monday night was under investigation by the FBI and state law enforcement authorities. It immediately drew comparisons to the case of Eric Garner, an unarmed black man who died in 2014 in New York after he was placed in a chokehold by police and pleaded for his life, saying he could not breathe.

In a post on his Facebook page, Frey apologized Tuesday to the black community for the officer's treatment of the man, who was later identified as 46-year-old George Floyd, who worked security at a restaurant.

"Being Black in America should not be a death sentence. For five minutes, we watched a white officer press his knee into a Black man's neck. Five minutes. When you hear someone calling for help, you're supposed to help. This officer failed in the most basic, human sense," Frey posted.

Police said the man matched the description of a suspect in a forgery case at a grocery store, and that he resisted arrest.

The video starts with the shirtless man on the ground, and does not show what happened in the moments prior. The unidentified officer is kneeling on his neck, ignoring his pleas. "Please, please, please, I

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can't breathe. Please, man," said Floyd, who has his face against the pavement.

Floyd also moans. One of the officers tells him to "relax." The man calls for his mother and says: "My stomach hurts, my neck hurts, everything hurts ... I can't breathe." As bystanders shout their concern, one officer says, "He's talking, so he's breathing."

But Floyd stops talking and slowly becomes motionless under the officer's restraint. The officer does not remove his knee until the man is loaded onto a gurney by paramedics.

Several witnesses had gathered on a nearby sidewalk, some recording the scene on their phones. The bystanders become increasingly agitated. One man yells repeatedly. "He's not responsive right now!" Two witnesses, including one woman who said she was a Minneapolis firefighter, yell at the officers to check the man's pulse. "Check his pulse right now and tell me what it is!" she said.

At one point, an officer says: "Don't do drugs, guys." And one man yells, "Don't do drugs, bro? What is that? What do you think this is?"

The Hennepin County medical examiner identified Floyd but said the cause of death was pending.

Floyd had worked security for five years at a restaurant called Conga Latin Bistro and rented a home from the restaurant owner, Jovanni Thunstrom.

He was "a good friend, person and a good tenant," the restaurateur told the Star Tribune. "He was family. His co-workers and friends loved him."

Ben Crump, a prominent civil rights and personal injury attorney, said he had been hired by Floyd's family. He called firing the officers "a good first step on the road to justice" for Floyd but said the city must "fix the policies and training deficiencies that permitted this unlawful killing to occur."

Minneapolis Police Chief Medaria Arradondo said the department would conduct a full internal investigation. Police did not identify the officers, but attorney Tom Kelly confirmed he is representing Derek Chauvin, the officer seen with his knee on Floyd's neck. Kelly declined to comment further.

Police did not immediately respond to a request for Chauvin's service record. News accounts show he was one of six officers who fired their weapons in the 2006 death of Wayne Reyes, whom police said pointed a sawed-off shotgun at officers after stabbing two people. Chauvin also shot and wounded a man in 2008 in a struggle after Chauvin and his partner responded to a reported domestic assault.

Protesters filled the intersection Tuesday evening in the street where Floyd died, chanting and carrying banners that read, "I can't breathe" and "Jail killer KKKops." They eventually marched about 2 1/2 miles to a city police precinct, with some protesters damaging windows, a squad car and spraying graffiti on the building.

A line of police in riot gear eventually confronted the protesters, firing tear gas and projectiles. Some protesters kicked canisters back toward police. Some protesters stacked shopping carts to make a barricade at a Target store across the street from the station, and though steady rain diminished the crowd, tense skirmishes stretched late into the evening.

Experts on police use of force told The Associated Press that the officer clearly restrained the man too long. They noted the man was under control and no longer fighting. Andrew Scott, a former Boca Raton, Florida, police chief who now testifies as an expert witness in use-of-force cases, called Floyd's death "a combination of not being trained properly or disregarding their training."

"He couldn't move. He was telling them he couldn't breathe, and they ignored him," Scott said. "I can't even describe it. It was difficult to watch."

The New York City officer in the Garner case said he was using a legal maneuver called "the seatbelt" to bring down Garner, whom police said had been resisting arrest. But the medical examiner referred to it as a chokehold in the autopsy report and said it contributed to his death. Chokehold maneuvers are banned under New York police policy.

A grand jury later decided against indicting the officers involved in Garner's death, sparking protests around the country. The New York Police Department ultimately fired the officer who restrained Garner, but it was five years later, after a federal investigation, a city prosecutor's investigation and an internal misconduct trial.

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In Minneapolis, kneeling on a suspect's neck is allowed under the department's use-of-force policy for officers who have received training in how to compress a neck without applying direct pressure to the airway. It is considered a "non-deadly force option," according to the department's policy handbook.

A chokehold is considered a deadly force option and involves someone obstructing the airway. According to the department's use-of-force policy, officers are to use only an amount of force necessary that would be objectively reasonable.

Before the officers were fired, the police union asked the public to wait for the investigation to take its course and not to "rush to judgment and immediately condemn our officers." Messages left with the union after the firings were not returned.

The Hennepin County Attorney's Office, which would handle any prosecution of police on state criminal charges, said in a statement that it was "shocked and saddened" by the video and pledged to handle the case fairly. The FBI is investigating whether the officers willfully deprived Floyd of his rights. If those federal civil rights charges are brought, they would be handled by the U.S. Attorney's Office in Minnesota, which declined comment.

The death came amid outrage over the death of Ahmaud Arbery, who was fatally shot Feb. 23 in Georgia after a white father and son pursued the 25-year-old black man they had spotted running in their subdivision. More than two months passed before charges were brought. Crump also represents Arbery's father.

In a first, Twitter adds fact-check warnings to Trump tweets

By BARBARA ORTUTAY and DINO HAZELL Associated Press

For the first time, Twitter has flagged some of President Donald Trump's tweets with a fact-check warning. On Tuesday, Twitter added a warning phrase to two Trump tweets that called mail-in ballots "fraudulent" and predicted that "mail boxes will be robbed," among other things. Under the tweets, there is now a link reading "Get the facts about mail-in ballots" that guides users to a Twitter "moments" page with fact checks and news stories about Trump's unsubstantiated claims.

Until now, the president has simply blown past Twitter's half-hearted attempts to enforce rules intended to promote civility and "healthy" conversation on its most prominent user. Trump frequently amplifies misinformation, spreads abuse and uses his pulpit to personally attack private citizens and public figures alike — all forbidden under Twitter's official rules.

In a statement, Twitter said Trump's vote-by-mail tweets "contain potentially misleading information about voting processes and have been labeled to provide additional context around mail-in ballots."

Trump has never previously faced Twitter sanctions on his account. The husband of a woman who died by accident two decades ago in an office of then-GOP Rep. Joe Scarborough recently demanded that Twitter remove the president's baseless tweets suggesting that Scarborough, now a fierce Trump critic, killed her. Twitter issued a statement expressing its regret to the husband but so far has taken no action on those tweets.

Over the weekend, the president issued several tweets calling into question the legality of mail-in-ballots. The storm of tweets followed Facebook and Twitter posts from Trump last week that wrongly claimed Michigan's secretary of state mailed ballots to 7.7 million registered voters. Trump later deleted the tweet and posted an edited version that still threatened to hold up federal funds.

Twitter policy forbids sharing "false or misleading information intended to intimidate or dissuade people from participating in an election or other civic process." While it has previously flagged tweets conveying misinformation about the COVID-19 pandemic, it has never before put warnings on tweets for any other reason.

Trump replied on Twitter, accusing the platform of "interfering in the 2020 Presidential Election" and insisting that "as president, I will not allow this to happen." His 2020 campaign manager Brad Parscale said Twitter's "clear political bias" had led the campaign to pull "all our advertising from Twitter months ago." Twitter has banned all political advertising since last November.

Trump's Scarborough tweets offer another example of the president using Twitter to spread misinforma-

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tion — in this case, about an accidental death that Trump persists in linking to the co-host of MSNBC's "Morning Joe" show.

"My request is simple: Please delete these tweets," Timothy J. Klausutis wrote to Twitter CEO Jack Dorsey last week.

The body of Lori Kaye Klausutis, 28, was found in Scarborough's Fort Walton Beach, Florida, congressional office on July 20, 2001. Trump has repeatedly tried to implicate Scarborough in the death even though Scarborough was in Washington, not Florida, at the time.

There is no mystery to the death of Lori Klausutis. Medical officials ruled that the aide, who had a heart condition and told friends hours earlier that she wasn't feeling well, had fainted and hit her head. Foul play was not suspected.

Klausutis wrote in his letter that he has struggled to move on with his life due to the ongoing "bile and misinformation" spread about his wife on the platform, most recently by Trump. His wife continues to be the subject of conspiracy theories 20 years after her death.

Klausutis called his wife's death "the single most painful thing that I have ever had to deal with" and said he feels a marital obligation to protect her memory amid "a constant barrage of falsehoods, half-truths, innuendo and conspiracy theories since the day she died."

Trump's tweets violate Twitter's community rules and terms of service, he said. "An ordinary user like me would be banished," he wrote.

At Tuesday's White House briefing, press secretary Kayleigh McEnany repeatedly refused to say why Trump was pressing the unfounded allegations or whether he would stop tweeting about them. Instead, she focused on remarks that Scarborough made about the case that she said were inappropriate and flippant.

Dorsey did not reply directly to Klausutis' letter and has not taken any action on the president's tweets. In a statement, Twitter said it was "deeply sorry about the pain these statements, and the attention they are drawing, are causing the family."

Scarborough has urged the president to stop his baseless attacks.

NHL moves ahead with 24-team playoff format if play resumes

By **STEPHEN WHYNO** and **JOHN WAWROW** AP Hockey Writers

The NHL will abandon the rest of the regular season and go straight into the playoffs with 24 teams instead of 16 — if it is able to resume play.

The decision, announced Tuesday by Commissioner Gary Bettman, is no guarantee that games are coming back. The NHL and the NHL Players' Association must still figure out health and safety protocols and solve other issues.

"This is a meaningful start, I think, but it's only a start," NHLPA executive director Don Fehr told The Associated Press after the announcement. "We have to make sure that we can actually implement all the things which are necessary in order to protect the health and safety of the players and all the rest of the staff."

Still, ironing out the format and narrowing down its two potential playoff host cities to a list of 10 represents significant progress since global sports were largely shut down in March as the coronavirus outbreak turned into a pandemic. Play could resume in late July or early August, with the Stanley Cup Final in September or even later.

"Realistically if we're in training camp mid-July, that would be a good thing, and if we can be playing by the end of July or the beginning of August, that would be a good thing too," Bettman said. "But if it has to slide more, then it'll slide. There's a reason that we're not giving you dates now because anybody who gives you a date is guessing, and we think we'd rather take a more holistic approach to doing this."

Groups of 12 teams representing each of the two conferences will be limited to playing in two cities, yet to be determined, with three-week training camps opening no earlier than July 1. Voluntary workouts could begin in early June.

"We hope this is a step back toward normalcy," Bettman said. "We think we've been able to work very

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collaboratively with the Players' Association and the players to come up with a framework that is fair and has integrity and should result in a terrific, competitive playoffs and the awarding of the best trophy in all of sports."

Earlier this week, the league and NHLPA issued extensive protocols once players are allowed to return to their facilities. They include a maximum of six players on the ice at a time, no contact and no coaches for voluntary workouts.

Teams will be responsible for testing during those workouts and training camp, with the league taking over when games begin. Deputy commissioner Bill Daly said players would be tested for COVID-19 daily.

Instead of limiting the Cup chase to the usual 16 teams that qualify for the playoffs, the league and players agreed to expand the field to 24 of its 31 teams because of the unusual circumstances.

This means the likes of the Montreal Canadiens are still alive despite being nine points out of a playoff spot when hockey was halted March 12. But not all teams will have the same path to hockey's storied trophy.

The top four teams in each conference ranked by points percentage — Boston, Tampa Bay, Washington and Philadelphia in the East and St. Louis, Colorado, Vegas and Dallas in the West — will play separate round-robin tournaments to determine seeding.

The remaining 16 teams will be seeded by conference, setting up best-of-five series in the East of No. 5 Pittsburgh vs. No. 12 Montreal, No. 6 Carolina vs. No. 11 New York Rangers, No. 7 New York Islanders vs. No. 10 Florida and No. 8 Toronto vs. No. 9 Columbus. In the West, it would be No. 5 Edmonton vs. No. 12 Chicago, No. 6 Nashville vs. No. 11 Arizona, No. 7 Vancouver vs. No. 10 Minnesota and No. 8 Calgary vs. No. 9 Winnipeg.

These games will be played without fans.

"It's completely different than what the norm is," Minnesota Wild general manager Bill Guerin said. "I think we all understand how unique this year is and how crazy it's been. We've just kind of got to roll with it a little bit."

Games are expected to be played in two hub cities and Bettman said 10 are in the running: Chicago, Columbus, Ohio, Dallas, Las Vegas, Pittsburgh and Minneapolis/St. Paul in the U.S. and Edmonton, Toronto and Vancouver in Canada. The Canadian government's mandatory 14-day quarantine could force the NHL to pick two U.S. locales.

"The interpretation of the quarantine consistent with our players' ability to travel in and not have to do a strict self-quarantine in a hotel room, we won't be in a position to use any of the Canadian cities as a hub city," Daly said. "We're faced with having to find a solution to that. Hopefully we can."

While there are still details to work out, including whether the first two rounds are best of five or seven, Bettman said he expects the best-of-seven Stanley Cup Final to be played in full in one of the two hub cities. Each team would be limited to a total of 50 people in the city it plays in.

"It's not easy getting everybody on board with all the different countries, the players, the teams that were in the playoffs, teams that may not be in the playoffs and getting that all agreed upon with the union," Buffalo Sabres owner Kim Pegula told The AP. "For us to even finish the season and award (the Stanley Cup), I know a lot of work went into it. But I know how important it was for our players, our fans, our league to make sure that we conclude it."

The decision to call off the 189 regular-season games that were not played ends the season for Buffalo, New Jersey, Anaheim, Los Angeles, San Jose, Ottawa and Detroit.

Those seven teams will now prepare for one of potentially two draft lotteries to determine the top 15 selections. The lottery will be held June 26, with another scheduled later depending on which of the remaining eight teams qualify for the 16-team playoff.

The NHL is still planning for a full 82-game 2020-21 season, though Bettman acknowledged the start could be as late as early January. It could mean nine months or more without game action for players on non-playoff teams.

"Among the long list of things that we haven't come to grips with is that," Fehr said. "There are a lot of things that have yet to be talked about."

US closes probes into 3 senators over their stock trades

By MARY CLARE JALONICK and ERIC TUCKER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Justice Department has closed investigations into stock trading by Sens. Dianne Feinstein of California, Kelly Loeffler of Georgia and Jim Inhofe of Oklahoma, according to people familiar with notifications sent to the senators. The senators came under scrutiny for transactions made in the weeks before the coronavirus sent markets downhill.

The developments indicate that federal law enforcement officials are narrowing their focus in the stock investigation to Sen. Richard Burr, R-N.C., the former Senate Intelligence Committee chairman. Agents showed up at his Washington-area home about two weeks ago with a warrant to search his cellphone.

Senate records show that Burr and his wife sold between roughly \$600,000 and \$1.7 million in more than 30 transactions in late January and mid-February, just before the market began to dive and government health officials began to sound alarms about the virus. Burr has denied any wrongdoing.

Loeffler, Inhofe and Feinstein were notified Tuesday that they are no longer under investigation, according to three people familiar with the contacts but not authorized to speak about them. A spokesman for Loeffler, who is in a competitive reelection race, said in a statement that the Justice Department's decision "affirms what Senator Loeffler has said all along — she did nothing wrong."

The spokesman, Stephen Lawson, said that scrutiny of the trades was a "politically motivated attack" by her political opponents and the news media. Loeffler, a Republican who became a senator in January, and her husband dumped substantial portions of their portfolio and purchased new stocks around the time Congress was receiving briefings on the seriousness of the pandemic. Loeffler's husband, Jeffrey Sprecher, is chairman of the New York Stock Exchange, and she has said the accounts were managed by third-party advisers.

Feinstein reported that her husband sold off between \$1.5 million and \$6 million worth of stock in Allogene Therapeutics before the market drop. The San Francisco-based biotech company researches and develops cures for cancer. Inhofe sold anywhere between roughly \$395,000 and \$850,000 worth of stock he held in multiple companies in late January and early February, according to a disclosure.

Like Loeffler, both Inhofe and Feinstein denied any wrongdoing or involvement in the trades. Inhofe, a Republican, tweeted in March that he had asked his financial adviser to move him out of stocks and into mutual funds in 2018, shortly after he became chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee.

Both Loeffler and Feinstein had acknowledged contacts with the Justice Department. A spokesman for Feinstein said earlier this month that the Democratic senator was asked "some basic questions" by law enforcement about sales her husband made and had voluntarily answered questions.

A Loeffler spokesperson had said that the senator forwarded documents to the department, the Securities and Exchange Commission and the Senate Ethics Committee "establishing that she and her husband acted entirely appropriately and observed both the letter and the spirit of the law."

Meanwhile, Burr temporarily stepped aside as chairman of the intelligence panel during the probe, saying he didn't want it to be a distraction. He also called for the Senate Ethics Committee to investigate his actions.

A spokeswoman for Alice Fisher, Burr's attorney, said Fisher would have no comment. The attorney has previously said that the senator has been "actively cooperating" with investigators.

"From the outset, Senator Burr has been focused on an appropriate and thorough review of the facts in this matter, which will establish that his actions were appropriate," Fisher said in a statement earlier this month.

Burr has acknowledged selling the stocks because of the coronavirus but said he relied "solely on public news reports," specifically CNBC's daily health and science reporting out of Asia, to make the financial decisions.

What you need to know today about the virus outbreak

By The Associated Press undefined

As Brazil and India struggle with surging coronavirus cases, a top health expert is warning that the world is still smack in the middle of the pandemic, dampening hopes for a speedy global economic rebound and renewed international travel.

"Right now, we're not in the second wave. We're right in the middle of the first wave globally," said Dr. Mike Ryan, the World Health Organization's executive director.

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

WHAT'S HAPPENING TODAY:

— Georgia's governor is offering his state as the host of the Republican National Convention — a day after President Donald Trump threatened to pull the convention out of North Carolina if that state's Democratic governor didn't assure Trump that the August gathering can go forward despite coronavirus fears. Georgia Gov. Brian Kemp, a Republican, sent an open plea to Trump on Tuesday to consider his state as an alternate site for the convention, which is set to gather more than 2,500 delegates and thousands more guests, press and security officials.

— The author of a U.S. government report that found U.S. hospitals faced severe shortages of coronavirus test supplies says she is not intimidated by criticism from President Donald Trump. Christi Grimm, who has served as acting inspector general of the Department of Health and Human Services since January, told a House panel that there was no "chilling effect" from Trump's criticism of her and his move to replace her.

— The New York Stock Exchange reopened for in-person trading for the first time in two months. The trading floor in lower Manhattan opened with plastic barriers, masks and a reduced number of traders to adhere to the 6-foot social-distancing rule.

— Blood clots that can cause strokes, heart attacks and dangerous blockages in the legs and lungs are increasingly being found in COVID-19 patients, including some children. Even tiny clots that can damage tissue throughout the body have been seen in hospitalized patients and in autopsies, confounding doctors' understanding of what was once considered mainly a respiratory infection.

— Congress is wrestling over whether to "go big," as House Speaker Nancy Pelosi wants for the next relief bill, or hit "pause," as Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell insists. It's a defining moment for the political parties heading toward the election and one that will affect the livelihoods of countless Americans suddenly dependent on the federal government. Billions of dollars in state aid, jobless benefits and health resources are at stake.

— Sweden's government defended its response to the COVID-19 global pandemic on Tuesday despite the Scandinavian country now reporting one of the highest mortality rates in the world with 4,125 fatalities, or about 40 deaths per 100,000 people.

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW:

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

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

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

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

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

ONE NUMBER:

— 3,015: The S&P 500 was up 2% to 3,015 points on Tuesday. It's the first time the benchmark index has been above the 3,000-point mark since March 5, before the widespread business shutdowns aimed at slowing the spread of the outbreak sent the U.S. economy into a sharp skid.

IN OTHER NEWS:

— STRANDED TOURISTS: Colleen and Marvin Hewson, retirees from Michigan, were first in line when the ancient ruins of Pompeii reopened to the public Tuesday following Italy's coronavirus lockdown. Their long-delayed visit capped an unlikely adventure that had stranded them in the small tourist town of modern Pompeii since early March.

— EID IN CONFINEMENT: Instead of mass prayers and family gatherings, millions of Moroccan Muslims celebrated Eid Al-Fitr indoors.

Big Oil loses appeal, climate suits go to California courts

BRIAN MELLEY Associated Press

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Big Oil lost a pair of court battles Tuesday that could lead to trials in lawsuits by California cities and counties seeking damages for the impact of climate change.

The 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals rejected arguments by energy companies and ruled state courts are the proper forum for lawsuits alleging producers promoted petroleum as environmentally responsible when they knew it was contributing to drought, wildfires, and sea level rise associated with global warming.

The lawsuits claim Chevron, Exxon Mobil, ConocoPhillips, BP, Royal Dutch Shell and other companies created a public nuisance and should pay for damage from climate change and help build sea walls and other infrastructure to protect against future impact — construction that could cost tens of billions of dollars.

The ruling overturned a decision by one federal judge, who had tossed out lawsuits brought by the cities of San Francisco and Oakland.

"It is time for these companies to pay their fair share," San Francisco City Attorney Dennis Herrera said in a statement applauding the ruling. "They should not be able to stick taxpayers with the bill for the damage they knew they were causing. We will continue to hold these companies accountable for their decades-long campaign of public deception about climate change and its consequences."

While the rulings were victories for the coastal counties and cities — all in the San Francisco Bay Area except for the tiny city of Imperial Beach in San Diego County — and cheered by environmental groups, it could take years before they ever get to a jury, if they make it that far.

The 3-0 rulings are expected to meet continued challenges that could include a review by a larger 9th Circuit panel and, eventually, review by the U.S. Supreme Court.

An appeals court in Virginia ruled that a similar case brought by Baltimore belonged in Maryland courts and lower federal courts in other cities have issued similar decisions.

A group that is a project of the National Association of Manufacturers issued a statement saying climate liability lawsuits should be resolved by the Supreme Court to prevent years of court proceedings.

Chevron did not say how it would proceed but said the cases involve issues of national law and policy and do not belong in state courts.

"In whichever forum the cases are ultimately determined, these factually and legally unsupported claims do nothing to sensibly address the significant national economic, legal and policy issues presented by climate change," said Sean Comey, a Chevron spokesman.

Ann Carlson, an environmental law professor at the University of California, Los Angeles, said the rulings move the cases closer to the discovery process and requesting potentially damaging documents.

"This means they can depose top executives about what they knew and when they knew it and what oil companies did to fund a campaign to dissuade the American public that climate change was happening," said Carlson, who has provided free counsel to cities in the cases. "The oil companies' strategy is to keep the light from shining on their own behavior. This gets closer to allowing plaintiffs to shine that light."

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The ruling written by Judge Sandra Ikuta, picked for the court by President George W. Bush, move the cases back to state courts, where they were initially filed. The other judges on the panel were nominated by Presidents Barack Obama and Donald Trump.

Oil companies got the cases transferred to San Francisco federal court, where two judges reached different conclusions.

After holding a unique five-hour "tutorial" by top researchers on the science of climate change, U.S. District Judge William Alsup in 2018 threw out the Oakland and San Francisco litigation. He ruled Congress and the president — not the courts — were best suited to address the contribution of fossil fuels to global warming.

"The problem deserves a solution on a more vast scale than can be supplied by a district judge or jury in a public nuisance case," Alsup wrote.

In cases brought by the the counties of San Mateo, Marin and Santa Cruz, and the cities of Richmond and Imperial Beach, Judge Vincent Chhabria ruled the cases belonged in state court, but he allowed the oil companies to appeal.

The companies had argued that federal law controls fossil fuel production, and Congress has encouraged oil and gas development. They said the harm claimed was "speculative" and part of a complex chain of events that includes billions of oil and gas users and "environmental phenomena occurring worldwide over many decades."

Stocks rise on Wall Street, but US braces for 100,000 deaths

By **MATT OTT, TED SHAFFREY and LISA MARIE PANE** Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Stocks surged on Wall Street to their highest levels since the business shutdowns took hold in the U.S. over two months ago, climbing on optimism Tuesday about the reopening economy even as the nation's official death toll from the coronavirus closed in on 100,000, a number President Donald Trump once predicted the country would never see.

With infections mounting rapidly in places like Brazil and India, a top global health official warned that the crisis is far from over.

In a largely symbolic move, the New York Stock Exchange trading floor in Manhattan reopened for the first time in two months, with plexiglass barriers, masks and a reduced number of traders to adhere to 6-foot (2-meter) social distancing rules. Those entering the NYSE will have their temperatures taken and were asked to avoid public transportation.

The S&P 500 closed 1.2% higher, and the Dow Jones Industrial Average gained nearly 530 points, or 2.2%. Markets worldwide also rose.

"These little baby steps that we start to see different states reopening, different policies that are being allowed that weren't allowed two weeks ago — these are all clear signals that we're moving in the right direction," said Jonathan Corpina, senior managing partner at Meridian Equity Partners.

New York Gov. Andrew Cuomo, who has presided over the state with the highest death toll from the scourge, rang the bell to set off trading at the NYSE.

Several thousand brokers and others used to crowd the trading floor as recently as the 1990s. But in the years since, the rise of electronic trading from computer terminals grew to dominate the action on Wall Street. These days, there are about 500 floor traders at the NYSE.

The rally took place as the government reported that U.S. consumer confidence inched up this month, showing signs of stabilizing. Still, it remains near a six-year low in the face of the widespread business shutdowns that have sent the economy into recession and driven unemployment to levels last seen during the Great Depression.

Over the past few days, rental car giant Hertz and South America's biggest airline, Latam, filed for bankruptcy, joining the likes of J. Crew, J.C. Penney and Neiman Marcus.

Worldwide, the virus has infected more than 5.5 million people and killed over 348,000, according to a tally by Johns Hopkins University. Europe has recorded about 170,000 deaths, while the U.S. was approaching 100,000 in a span of less than four months, more than the number of Americans killed in the

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Vietnam and Korean wars combined.

The true death toll is widely believed to be significantly higher, with experts saying many victims died of the virus without ever being tested for it.

Trump several months ago likened the coronavirus to the flu and dismissed worries it could lead to so many deaths. The administration's leading scientists have since warned that as many as 240,000 could perish from the virus.

In hard-hit New York, Cuomo reported a one-day total Tuesday of 73 deaths, the lowest figure in months, and down from a peak of nearly 800.

"In this absurd new reality, that is good news," he said.

Still, even the GOP convention in August is up in the air, with Republicans talking about pulling it out of North Carolina because of concerns authorities there might not allow such a large gathering. Georgia and Florida — both led by Republican governors — have offered to host the convention.

In Italy, where the crisis is easing but the death toll is a staggering 33,000, the ancient ruins at Pompeii were reopened to the public Tuesday, and the Colosseum in Rome, one of the world's biggest tourist attractions, will begin receiving visitors again on June 1, though entrance times will be staggered to reduce crowding and tickets must be bought online.

Italian tenor Andrea Bocelli revealed that he has recovered from COVID-19 and went to a hospital in Pisa on Tuesday to donate plasma for research about coronavirus treatments.

The World Health Organization said that the world remains mired in only the first stage of the pandemic, putting a damper on hopes for a speedy global economic rebound.

"Right now, we're not in the second wave. We're right in the middle of the first wave globally," said Dr. Mike Ryan, WHO's executive director.

"We're still very much in a phase where the disease is actually on the way up," Ryan said, pointing to South America, South Asia and other parts of the world.

India, with a population of over 1.3 billion, saw a record single-day jump in new cases for the seventh straight day. It reported 6,535 new infections Tuesday, raising its total to over 145,000, including almost 4,200 deaths.

Chilean authorities said Tuesday that 95% of its 2,400 intensive care beds are occupied even after doubling capacity from March levels. An average of 4,000 new infections are being reported daily.

In Brazil, where President Jair Bolsonaro has raged against state and local leaders enforcing stay-at-home measures, WHO warned that before reopening the economy, authorities must have enough testing in place to control the spread of the virus.

Brazil has about 375,000 coronavirus infections — second only to the 1.6 million cases in the U.S. — and has counted over 23,000 deaths, but many fear Brazil's true toll is much higher.

Ryan said that because of Brazil's "intense" transmission rates, it should keep some stay-at-home measures in place, regardless of the damage to the economy.

"You must continue to do everything you can," he said.

A U.S. travel ban was set to take effect Tuesday for foreigners coming from Brazil.

In Europe, Russian's Vladimir Putin announced that the postponed military parade marking the 75th anniversary of Nazi Germany's defeat in World War II will take place on June 24. Victory Day has become the most important holiday in Russia, traditionally marked on May 9 with a show of armed might in Red Square.

Russia reported a record one-day spike Tuesday of 174 deaths, bringing the country's confirmed death toll to over 3,800. Russia's coronavirus caseload surpassed 360,000 — third-highest in the world — with almost 9,000 new infections registered.

The country's comparatively low mortality rate has raised questions among experts. Russian officials deny manipulating the figures and attribute the low numbers to the effectiveness of the country's lockdowns.

Trump's convention demand comes amid Charlotte virus surge

By JONATHAN DREW, SARAH BLAKE MORGAN and GARY D. ROBERTSON Associated Press

CHARLOTTE, N.C. (AP) — President Donald Trump's demand for a full-capacity Republican convention in August is putting pressure on North Carolina health officials — and local Republicans — as coronavirus cases surge in the host county and statewide.

Democratic Gov. Roy Cooper's administration has refused to give in, though, responding with a letter demanding a written safety plan from organizers of the Republican National Convention, slated for August in Charlotte. Even local Republican officials note that Trump doesn't have the power to unilaterally move the event scheduled to start in 90 days after two years of planning.

Asked about Trump's tweets threatening to move the convention, Cooper said Tuesday he's "not surprised at anything that happens on Twitter," without mentioning the president by name. He said discussions with RNC organizers are continuing.

"We have asked them to present a plan on paper to us laying out the various options that we've already discussed," Cooper said. "They know we're talking about a time that's three months from now, so we have to have options regarding how this convention is going to be run depending on where we are with the virus in August."

State Health and Human Services Secretary Mandy Cohen's letter signed Monday asks Republican convention organizers for a written COVID-19 safety plan "as soon as possible," noting that Cohen and Cooper discussed various scenarios with GOP officials by phone Friday. She wrote that it's important to plan for multiple options because the "status of COVID-19 infections in our state and in the Charlotte area continues to rapidly evolve."

By Tuesday, Mecklenburg County had at least 3,400 COVID-19 cases — more than twice the next-highest county — and 73 deaths, also the most in the state, according to state health officials. A third of the cases were tallied in the past two weeks. County officials said hospitalized patients with COVID-19 dropped from more than 100 in April to 75 by Monday.

Statewide, there were 24,000 cases as part of an upward trend that included 1,100 new cases Saturday, the state's largest daily increase yet. Nearly 800 people have died, according to data from Johns Hopkins University, giving the state the 21st highest death count.

Trump threatened Monday to move the convention if Cooper didn't immediately agree to a full-capacity gathering. Pre-pandemic, Republicans estimated the convention would draw 50,000 visitors.

Cooper has gradually eased business restrictions, with restaurants now allowed to offer limited indoor dining. But entertainment venues, bars and gyms remain closed under his current order that also caps indoor mass gatherings at 10 people.

Trump complained again Tuesday that Cooper hasn't committed yet to a full-capacity convention.

"We have a governor who doesn't want to open up the state," Trump said, suggesting Cooper's decisions were politically motivated. "He's been acting very, very slowly and very suspiciously."

Trump said he hopes to have the convention in Charlotte but needed certainty "within a week" or he would be forced to consider relocating.

Republican governors in Georgia and Florida say they would welcome the convention if North Carolina falls through.

But Charlotte-area Republicans noted the RNC would have to break its contract to relocate.

"I don't know exactly what legal authority the president has over the party and therefore, whether he is in a position to give them an order to seek the cancellation of the contract," City Councilman Ed Driggs, a Republican, said by phone. "He's not a party to the contract himself."

Sarah Reidy-Jones, vice chair of the Mecklenburg County Republican Party, said in an interview that she believes the convention will remain in Charlotte because of all the logistics already settled during two years of planning.

"I'm not so concerned about the tweet. He doesn't have the authority to change the convention," she said.

She said that although she “doesn’t envy” Cooper on his decision-making, she also doesn’t want friction over the convention to become a rallying cry for Democratic donors. Cooper, who was narrowly elected in 2016, faces a challenge from Republican Lt. Gov. Dan Forest this year.

Driggs said he’s heard mixed feelings from constituents about holding a convention — scaled back or not — during the pandemic.

“There’s a full spread of opinion,” Driggs said. “So I get e-mails saying, ‘call it off, call it off,’ and I get others from my own supporters saying ‘stand firm, stand tall.’”

Mike Mulligan, a 66-year-old registered Charlotte Republican, said he agrees with Trump that North Carolina should hold a full convention or risk losing it to another state. Mulligan, who retired from the financial services industry, said he would be comfortable with attending convention events even though, at his age, he’s in a high-risk group. He said he thinks a full convention can proceed if attendees are screened for symptoms.

“The economy can’t withstand losing the RNC,” he said. “With proper screening, I think they can pull this off.”

Watchdog who found hospital shortages unfazed by Trump barbs

By **MATTHEW DALY** Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The author of a federal report that found U.S. hospitals faced severe shortages of coronavirus test supplies says she is not intimidated by criticism from President Donald Trump, even after he moved to replace her as chief watchdog of the Department of Health and Human Services.

Christi Grimm, who has served as acting inspector general since January, told a House panel that there was no “chilling effect” from Trump’s criticism of her last month and his subsequent move to replace her.

“We are plowing ahead” with 14 new reports and audits on the health department’s response to the virus, Grimm said during a videoconference briefing Tuesday with the House Oversight Committee.

Democratic Rep. Jackie Speier of California asked Grimm if she believes there was a “chilling effect” from Trump’s criticism: “If you say something or do something that is offensive to the president that you will be removed from office?”

Grimm said no, adding: “I personally and professionally cannot let the idea of providing unpopular information drive decision-making in the work that we do.”

Congress can be assured that 14 pending reports and audits of health spending related to the virus outbreak will continue unfettered “to protect people, to protect funds, to protect infrastructure and to ensure effectiveness,” Grimm said. “We are operating as we did on May 1” when Trump nominated a new inspector general to replace Grimm.

Jason Weida, an assistant U.S. attorney in Boston, must be confirmed by the Senate before assuming the position. Grimm remains in charge of the office as principal deputy inspector general while Weida’s nomination is pending.

With coronavirus cases skyrocketing, the inspector general’s office reported April 6 that a shortage of tests and long waits for results were at the root of mounting problems faced by hospitals.

Trump called the report, based on a late March survey of 323 hospitals nationwide, “just wrong” and suggested that its conclusions were skewed by politics.

“Give me the name of the inspector general,” Trump told reporters. “Could politics be entered into that?” Trump later dismissed the report on Twitter as “Another Fake Dossier!”

Democratic Rep. Carolyn Maloney of New York, who chairs the Oversight panel, said Tuesday that Grimm “should not have had to endure these senseless personal attacks just for doing her job.” Maloney thanked Grimm for “tolerating” Trump’s attacks “with dignity while she continues serving the American people.”

Grimm, a career government manager who has served under four presidents, told lawmakers that as acting IG, she has long been aware that she can be replaced at any time and does not let that fact affect her work.

“I do think independence is the cornerstone of what any office of inspector general does,” Grimm said.

"That allows us to be impartial in the work we do ... letting the facts take us where they may."

Grimm called the report "a snapshot in time," but said it offered "quick and reliable data from the ground" to document the nation's response to the novel coronavirus, which has killed nearly 100,000 Americans.

Grimm also pushed back on a theory advanced by some critics that hospitals may have intentionally reported inaccurate COVID-19 data in an effort to win more federal money or equipment.

"I do not believe hospitals were being misleading in providing us with this information," Grimm said. Investigators did not "independently go behind and verify" the hospitals' claims, she added.

Ohio Rep. Jim Jordan, the panel's top Republican and a close Trump ally, lamented what he said was the report's "flawed methodology" and noted that investigators did not ask hospitals to specify actions the Trump administration had taken to help them respond to the crisis.

Rep. Gerry Connolly, D-Va., asked Grimm to investigate the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, saying the agency failed to develop coronavirus tests in a timely fashion, and then saw its early tests plagued by a series of problems and false results.

"Clearly lives were lost because of that failure," Connolly said, adding that a report on the CDC should be "a primary focus" of the inspector general's work.

Grimm said the office is reviewing CDC's role in approving, producing and distributing test kits. Her office also is looking at the Food and Drug Administration's role in approving the test, Grimm said.

Dangerous blood clots pose a perplexing coronavirus threat

By LINDSEY TANNER AP Medical Writer

First came a high fever, drenching sweats and muscle aches. Then, almost a month later, a weird numbness that spread down the right side of her body.

Darlene Gildersleeve thought she had recovered from COVID-19. Doctors said she just needed rest. And for several days, no one suspected her worsening symptoms were related — until a May 4 video call, when her physician heard her slurred speech and consulted a specialist.

"You've had two strokes," a neurologist told her at the hospital. The Hopkinton, New Hampshire, mother of three is only 43.

Blood clots that can cause strokes, heart attacks and dangerous blockages in the legs and lungs are increasingly being found in COVID-19 patients, including some children. Even tiny clots that can damage tissue throughout the body have been seen in hospitalized patients and in autopsies, confounding doctors' understanding of what was once considered mainly a respiratory infection.

"I have to be humble and say I don't know what's going on there, but boy we need to find that out because unless you know what the pathogenic (disease-causing) mechanism is, it's going to be tough to do intervention," Dr. Anthony Fauci, the nation's top infectious disease expert, remarked during a medical journal interview last month.

Doctors and scientists at dozens of hospitals and universities around the globe are seeking answers while trying to measure virus patients' risks for clots and testing drugs to treat or prevent them.

Gildersleeve said health authorities "need to put out an urgent warning about strokes" and coronavirus. Not knowing the possible link "made me doubt myself" when symptoms appeared, she said.

Some conditions that make some COVID-19 patients vulnerable to severe complications, including obesity and diabetes, can increase clot risks. But many authorities believe how the virus attacks and the way the body responds both play a role.

"COVID-19 is the most thrombotic (clot-producing) disease we've ever seen in our lifetime," said Dr. Alex Spyropoulos, a clot specialist and professor at Feinstein Institutes for Medical Research in Manhasset, New York.

Clotting has been seen in other coronavirus infections, including SARS, but on a much smaller scale, he said.

Scientists believe the coronavirus enters the body through enzyme-receptors found throughout the body, including in cells lining the inside of blood vessels. Some theorize that it may promote clotting by somehow

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injuring those vessels as it spreads. That injury may cause a severe immune response as the body tries to fight the infection, resulting in inflammation that may also damage vessels and promote clotting, said Dr. Valentin Fuster, director of Mount Sinai Heart hospital in New York.

It's unclear how many COVID-19 patients develop clots. Studies from China, Europe and the United States suggest rates ranging from 3% to 70% of hospitalized COVID-19 patients; more rigorous research is needed to determine the true prevalence, the National Institutes of Health says.

Prevalence in patients with mild disease is unknown and the agency says there isn't enough evidence to recommend routine clot screening for all virus patients without clotting symptoms, which may include swelling, pain or reddish discoloring in an arm or leg.

Some hospitals have found 40% of deaths in COVID-19 patients are from blood clots. Spyropoulos said that's been true at his 23-hospital system in the New York City area, Northwell Health, which has treated over 11,000 COVID-19 patients.

Cases there have dropped by almost half in the past month, allowing more time for research before an expected second and maybe third wave of infections, he said, adding: "We're racing against time to answer the key clinical questions."

Patients hospitalized with any severe illness face increased risks for clots, partly from being bedridden and inactive. They commonly receive blood-thinning drugs for prevention. Some doctors are trying higher-than-usual doses for prevention in hospitalized coronavirus patients.

A few have used powerful clot-busting medicines typically used to treat strokes, with mixed results. In guidance issued May 12, the NIH said more research is needed to show whether that approach has any benefits.

Fuster was involved in preliminary research on nearly 2,800 COVID-19 patients at five hospitals in the Mount Sinai system. A look at their outcomes suggests slightly better survival chances for virus patients on ventilators who received blood thinners than among those who didn't. Although the results are not conclusive, all COVID-19 patients at Mount Sinai receive blood thinners for clot prevention unless they are at risk for bleeding, a potential side effect, Fuster said.

Some COVID-19 patients, like Gildersleeve, develop dangerous clots when their infections seem to have subsided, Spyropoulos said. Patients treated at Northwell for severe disease are sent home with a once-a-day blood thinner and a soon to be published study will detail their experiences. Spyropoulos has been a paid consultant to Janssen Pharmaceuticals, makers of Xarelto, the drug's brand name.

In addition, Northwell is taking part in a multi-center study that will test using blood thinners for clot prevention in COVID-19 patients not sick enough to require hospitalization.

In a small study published May 15, University of Colorado doctors found that combined scores on two tests measuring clotting markers in the blood can help determine which patients will develop large dangerous clots. One test measures a protein fragment called D-dimer, a remnant of dissolved clots. High levels sometimes indicate dangerous clots that form deep in leg veins and travel to the lungs or other organs.

Dr. Behnood Bikdeli of Columbia University's Irving Medical Center, said D-dimer levels in many of his COVID-19 patients have been alarmingly high, as much as 50 times higher than normal.

Concerns about blood clots in COVID-19 patients prompted a recent 30-page consensus statement from an international group of physicians and researchers. Bikdeli is the lead author.

It says that testing to find clots that require treatment includes X-rays or ultrasound exams, but poses a risk for health care workers because the virus is so contagious. Bikdeli said he fears when protective gear was more scarce, some dangerous clots were undiagnosed and untreated.

Social distancing may make people more sedentary and more vulnerable to clots, particularly older adults, so doctors should encourage activity or exercises that can be done in the home as a preventive measure, the statement says.

Warnell Vega got that advice after collapsing at home April 19 from a large clot blocking a lung artery. Doctors at Mount Sinai Morningside think it was coronavirus-related. Vega, 33, a lunch maker for New York City school children, spent a week in intensive care on oxygen and blood thinners, which he's been told to continue taking for three months.

"I just have to watch out for any bleeding, and have to be careful not to cut myself," Vega said. Gildersleeve, the New Hampshire stroke patient, was also sent home with a blood thinner. She gets physical therapy to improve strength and balance. She still has some numbness and vision problems that mean driving is out, for now.

Doctors are unable to predict when or whether she'll regain all her abilities.

"I'm trying to remain positive about recovering," she said. "I just have to be patient and listen to my body and not push too hard."

Weather better for historic SpaceX launch of NASA astronauts

By **MARCIA DUNN AP Aerospace Writer**

CAPE CANAVERAL, Fla. (AP) — With the weather looking up, SpaceX and NASA officials vowed Tuesday to keep crew safety the top priority for the nation's first astronaut launch to orbit in nearly a decade.

Veteran NASA astronauts Doug Hurley and Bob Behnken were set to make history Wednesday afternoon, riding SpaceX's Falcon 9 rocket and Dragon capsule to the International Space Station on a test flight.

SpaceX was on the cusp of becoming the first private company to put astronauts in orbit, something achieved by just three countries — Russia, the U.S. and China.

On the eve of the launch, NASA Administrator Jim Bridenstine said from Kennedy Space Center that both the space agency and SpaceX have been diligent about making sure everyone in the launch loop knows they're free to halt the countdown if there's a concern.

President Donald Trump and Vice President Mike Pence are expected at Kennedy for the planned 4:33 p.m. liftoff, but "our highest priority" will remain the astronauts' safety, according to Bridenstine.

Bridenstine said he texted the two astronauts Monday and told them, "'If you want me to stop this thing for any reason, say so. I will stop it in a heartbeat if you want me to.' They both came back and they said, 'We're go for launch.'"

Hans Koenigsmann, a SpaceX vice president, said Monday evening that he and other company workers have imagined themselves in the astronauts' shoes on launch day — "or their helmets."

"That changes the equation pretty dramatically," he said.

SpaceX has been launching cargo capsules to the space station since 2012.

"It's a huge step, obviously, going from cargo ... to launching two people that are dads as we call them and have families, kids, wives,," Koenigsmann added.

NASA will have input throughout the countdown, but in the end, it will be SpaceX giving the final go — with NASA's concurrence.

"SpaceX is controlling the vehicle, there's no fluff about that," Norm Knight, a NASA flight operations manager, said Monday.

The odds of acceptable launch weather improved Tuesday to 60%. But that didn't factor in conditions along the Dragon's route to orbit.

SpaceX needs relatively calm waves and wind up the U.S. and Canadian seaboard and across the North Atlantic to Ireland, in case astronauts Hurley and Behnken need to make an emergency splashdown.

If SpaceX does not launch during Wednesday's split-second window, the next try would be Saturday. Liftoff is set for 4:33 p.m. EDT.

The last time astronauts launched from Florida was on NASA's final space shuttle flight in July 2011. Hurley was the pilot of that mission.

NASA hired SpaceX and Boeing in 2014 to transport astronauts to the space station, after commercial cargo shipments had taken off. Development of SpaceX's Dragon and Boeing's Starliner capsules took longer than expected, however, and the U.S. has been paying Russia to launch NASA astronauts in the interim.

Virtual 7th-inning stretch brings ballpark feeling home

By JIMMY GOLEN AP Sports Writer

BOSTON (AP) — It's 3 o'clock, about the time they'd be getting ready for the seventh-inning stretch at an afternoon Red Sox game. Josh Kantor settles onto the bench of the Yamaha Electone organ in his living room and clicks on his wife's iPhone to begin another show.

Each afternoon since what would have been opening day, the Fenway Park organist has been livestreaming concerts of ballpark music and other fan requests on Facebook in an attempt to recreate the community feeling baseball fans might be missing during the sport's shutdown.

"Part of the experience of going to a ballgame is chatting with your neighbors. And we're in a time right now where there aren't necessarily opportunities for people to have that," Kantor said. "For half an hour a day, ideally people can just forget all their stresses and be a little bit refortified to then go face those stresses afterwards."

A 47-year-old part-time library assistant and gig musician, Kantor has been playing the organ at Red Sox games since 2003, filling the Fenway air with players' walk-up music and keeping things light during replay reviews and rain delays. After this year's baseball season was put on hold because of the coronavirus outbreak, a friend suggested that Kantor put on a livestream concert to mark what would have been the Red Sox opener on March 26.

"I didn't know how to do a livestream, but we watched a little video tutorial and made a very, kind of crude setup," he said. "I figured it would be a one-time thing."

The first show began awkwardly, with Kantor taking 100 or so song requests and playing about 40 of them, including not just the seventh-inning stretch standard, "Take Me Out to the Ball Game," which he features every episode, but also, fittingly, "Don't Stand So Close to Me"; the March 26 video has since drawn more than 5,300 views. At its peak, 19,000 have tuned in for the afternoon concerts.

"As soon as we finished, we kind of knew that we had to do it because we enjoyed it so much," Kantor said. "We figured as long as people need it — as long as we need it — we'll do it."

Telltale signs of COVID-19 isolation are scattered throughout the room behind him, from the jigsaw puzzles on the coffee table to Kantor's increasingly bushy beard. His wife, Mary Eaton, an ecumenical pastor who works with the homeless community, pops onto the screen from time to time; she monitors the Facebook chat for requests and passes them to him on sticky notes.

And that's where Kantor's extraordinary musical ear comes in: He can perform any song he's familiar with, even if he's never played it before, humming a few bars to himself first to get the melody down.

"It's a great gift," said Nancy Faust, the 41-year Chicago White Sox organist who has been a mentor to Kantor and whose bobblehead sits above his keyboard. "He struggles through them and he lets you see what the process is, which most musicians would do alone."

Kantor will sometimes stump for donations to food banks; a sign for FeedingAmerica.org, sits on the bookshelf behind him. He can't estimate how much he's helped raise, though one viewer offered to donate \$500 if Kantor would do a 10-minute Grateful Dead jam.

"They're very authentic people and they're providing a lot of joy when it's most needed," Faust said. "The show just brings a lot of delight into a person's day. For a half hour, there's no negativity."

Hong Kong leader says security law not a threat to freedoms

By ZEN SOO Associated Press

HONG KONG (AP) — Hong Kong's leader said Tuesday that national security legislation proposed by China's legislature will not threaten the semi-autonomous territory's civil rights, despite widespread criticism of the move as an encroachment on freedom of speech and assembly.

The city's chief executive, Carrie Lam, told reporters that there was "no need for us to worry" over the move being considered by China's ceremonial National People's Congress.

"Hong Kong has proven that we uphold and preserve those values," Lam said. "Hong Kong needs this piece of legislation for the bigger benefit of the great majority of Hong Kong people."

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Lam also said that transit service would resume at Hong Kong's international airport on June 1, but that foreigners would still be banned from entering the city as part of measures to prevent a new wave of coronavirus infections.

In Washington, White House press secretary Kayleigh McEnany said Tuesday that President Donald Trump is "displeased with China's efforts and that it's hard to see how Hong Kong can remain a financial hub, if China takes over." She declined to elaborate when asked to explain the statement further.

The move by China to pass the legislation signals the central government's determination to take greater control of Hong Kong after months of pro-democracy protests last year. Beijing has appointed new representatives in Hong Kong who follow the hard line laid down by Chinese President Xi Jinping, who is also the head of the ruling Communist Party.

Such a move has long been under consideration and was hastened by last year's street protests in the former British colony, which was returned to Chinese rule in 1997. Beijing promised that the territory could retain its own relatively liberal civil, legal and economic systems that contrast starkly with the much more centrally controlled and authoritarian system in mainland China.

Some "foreign politicians" have "expressed untrue opinions" about the plan to impose the law on Hong Kong, Lam said, without giving details.

She repeated claims that the law would only target "a minority," citing concerns about terrorism and subversion.

Protesters have returned to Hong Kong's streets to oppose the legislation, with thousands turning out on Sunday as police fired tear gas and deployed a water cannon to disperse the crowds. On Tuesday, over 100 protesters gathered at a luxury shopping mall in Hong Kong's Central business district, condemning Lam and her administration.

The protests are a continuation of a monthslong pro-democracy movement that began last year and has at times descended into violence between police and demonstrators.

Hong Kong's government is bound by Article 23 of the Basic Law — its mini-constitution — to enact laws to prohibit any act of treason, secession, sedition or subversion against China. It proposed legislation to do so in 2003, but withdrew it after hundreds of thousands of people came out to protest.

Beijing has increasingly pushed for measures such as punishment for disrespecting the Chinese national flag or anthem — as often seen at soccer games — along with a boost to pro-China patriotic-themed education in schools. However, opposition in Hong Kong's Legislative Council makes it unlikely a national security bill could pass at the local level, prompting Beijing to utilize what some describe as dubious legal grounds to force the measures through at the national level.

The Chinese public is largely seen as backing Xi's tough approach to foreign policy challenges, including criticism from the U.S., Australia and others. Xi has made an unswerving line on national interests a key signature of his rule since taking over leadership of the ruling party in 2012.

Abroad, however, that policy has further bolstered concerns about China's intentions to dominate markets and assert its influence in the Asia-Pacific region. That may ultimately add to Xi's difficulties in reviving economic growth and jobs at a time when global markets are partly shut due to the coronavirus pandemic and skepticism toward China runs high.

What are the symptoms of COVID-19?

The Associated Press undefined

What are the symptoms of COVID-19?

The most common symptoms of the coronavirus are fever, a dry cough, shortness of breath and fatigue. But as the virus spreads around the world, additional symptoms are being identified.

Those include loss of taste or smell, sore throat, pink eye, vomiting and diarrhea.

Most recently, doctors have reported a variety of skin problems, including red, sore and itchy swelling on the fingers or toes, a symptom dubbed "COVID toes."

Compared with the flu or a common cold, COVID-19 symptoms may appear more slowly — between

two and 14 days after exposure.

Some people never feel sick or notice any symptoms, even though they're infected and can still spread it to other people.

For mild symptoms, like a slight cough or a mild rash, health experts say you may not need to rush to the emergency room. They recommend self-isolating and monitoring your symptoms to see if they become more severe.

Anyone experiencing difficulty breathing or pain or pressure in the chest should seek immediate emergency medical care.

From sock feats to leapfrog, Guinness crowns record holders

By PAT GRAHAM AP Sports Writer

Usain Bolt ran the 100 meters in 9.58 seconds. Dr. Vikas Saini recently put on 10 socks in an official time of 9.23.

Both have the same title: world record holder.

From sock feats to fancy footwork using rolls of toilet paper, records are still being set even with many sports on hold due to the coronavirus pandemic. Guinness World Records receives about 1,000 applications each month from would-be record breakers throughout North America. The company has long been known as the keeper of accomplishments ranging from the fascinating (longest fingernails) to the far-out (most body piercings) and of course the "give-it-a-whirl" possibilities (walking on hands, anyone?).

But their recent online challenges have been soaring in popularity with many sheltering at home. Wind up as the top leapfrogger, pyramid can-stacker or one-handed, crisscross LEGO builder and, if adjudicated, earn the label: "Guinness World Records title holder."

"We're inside, but we still want to be able to inspire creativity, lift people's spirits and just continue to provide an outlet for people to learn about and explore world records," records manager Chrissy Fernandez said.

The online challenges are designed to be performed with minimal equipment and in a way to adhere to stay-at-home mandates. There are also kid-friendly contests.

As for the book, who didn't scroll through the pages growing up in search of records to possibly attempt? The Guinness database contains more than 50,000 unique marks. A sampling:

- The fastest hole of golf by an individual is listed at 1 minute, 29.62 seconds.
- The quickest time to run the 100-meter hurdles while wearing swim fins is 14.82 seconds for a male and 18.523 for a female.
- The most basketball bounces in one minute: 656 (using two basketballs).

The notion of collecting intriguing records was put in motion by Sir Hugh Beaver in the 1950s when he was managing director of Guinness Brewery. As the story goes: He was attending a shooting party in Ireland when he and his companions began to squabble over Europe's fastest game bird. There was no quick way to solve the dispute.

He asked twins Norris and Ross McWhirter, who were fact-finding researchers, to compile a record book featuring topics that would help solve bar debates.

The first volume was published in 1955 and by 1964 a million copies had been sold. Later, a TV series was added.

Guinness also features a Hall of Fame. Among the inductees was Robert Wadlow, the world's tallest man who was measured at 8 feet, 11.1 inches (2.72 meters) in 1940. Another Hall of Famer is Lee Redmond, whose fingernails famously measured more than 28 feet (8.65 meters).

In a typical year, Guinness receives about 47,000 record inquiries from 178 countries. Of those, around 8,000 are approved.

David Rush of Boise, Idaho, recently became the record holder through the online challenge in the category of "fastest to put on 10 T-Shirts." His winning time was 15.61 seconds. He practiced so much he bruised his wrist from knocking it against his head.

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Rush is no stranger to world records. He already holds many marks, including most juggling catches on a unicycle while blindfolded (30), longest duration balancing a bicycle on his chin (6 minutes, 1.07 seconds) and most baseball bat spins in a minute (94).

"I loved watching the specials on TV and thumbing through the book occasionally," said Rush, who's a senior product manager at a technology company. "I was fascinated by it and would be like, 'Hey, I wish I could do that.'"

Jed Hockin is renowned for his soccer skills and trick-shot artistry. Last month, he set a record by juggling a roll of toilet paper with his foot as part of an online challenge. This was his fourth Guinness record.

Next on his radar: Most soccer (football) touches in an hour. The mark stands at 11,901.

"I am looking to break heaps more Guinness World Records," Hockin wrote in an email from Toowoomba, Australia.

Then there's Saini, who proved lightning quick while putting on 10 different socks as he sat on the floor in his home in India. His strategy: Have fun with it.

"Amazing in the sense that it was not thought even in the dreams that on one fine morning I will be having such a prestigious title for exercising (a) tiny effort," Saini wrote in an email.

His burst of speed with socks made him appreciate the quickness of Bolt all the more. The iconic sprinter from Jamaica lowered his 100 time to 9.58 at the 2009 world championships.

"We can't imagine the all-out effort made by him," Saini wrote.

Since the COVID-19 outbreak, Guinness officials have noticed more record attempts from homes and gardens. They've received applications for records ranging from "most sticky notes stuck on the body in 30 seconds" to "tallest cotton plant" to "most jumping jacks in one minute."

Fernandez is among the Guinness records managers tasked with authenticating world marks.

Last fall, she attended record attempts by the Harlem Globetrotters. The legendary exhibition basketball squad set six marks that day, including farthest behind-the-back shot and most bounced basketball figure-eight maneuvers blindfolded in one minute.

These days, records are corroborated online.

"We're just adapting (record breaking) to this time," Fernandez explained. "We want to keep people engaged and having fun because being inside can be a little boring."

Parties target control of state legislatures, redistricting

By DAVID A. LIEB Associated Press

JEFFERSON CITY, Mo. (AP) — Drowned out by the coronavirus and national politics, Republican and Democratic operatives are quietly preparing for a battle of state legislative supremacy later this year that could have a profound effect on political power for the next decade.

The November ballot will feature more than 5,000 elections for state House and Senate members in 35 states who will play a significant role in crafting or passing new voting districts for Congress and state legislative chambers based on census results.

Republicans, who currently control a majority of state legislative chambers, generally will be on defense against a well-funded Democratic effort. But Republicans are trying to change that narrative.

The national Republican State Leadership Committee on Tuesday rolled out a target list focused on a dozen states where it hopes to strengthen Republican redistricting power or dent that of Democrats. The targets include 115 state legislative seats held by Democrats in districts won by Republican President Donald Trump in 2016.

"The best way for us to play defense is to go on offense and flip these seats," said Austin Chambers, president of the GOP legislative organization.

Trump could be a big factor in the down-ballot races. National surveys of voters from 2006-2018 have shown that presidential approval carries nearly three times as much impact in determining voters' choices for state legislative candidates as their approval of the legislature itself, said Steven Rogers, a political scientist at Saint Louis University who studies elections with a focus on state legislatures.

That's likely to remain the case this year, Rogers said, though there's a chance that voters could be

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more attuned to state elections because of the attention given to governors who have been leading their states' coronavirus response.

National Democratic groups have compiled similar target lists focused on Republican-held seats, with a goal of flipping control of several closely divided chambers to their favor. Democrats are focusing not only on districts that Hillary Clinton carried in the 2016 presidential election, but also on some Trump-won districts where they think likely Democratic nominee Joe Biden may fare better.

"After the coronavirus and with Biden at the top of the ticket, our map now expands back out to districts that had Democratic DNA, that have voters that thought Trump might turn around the economy in working-class Rust Belt towns across the Midwest," said Jessica Post, president of the Democratic Legislative Campaign Committee.

In 2010, the first midterm election of Democrat Barack Obama's presidency, Republicans scored big victories in state legislatures across the country as the Republican State Leadership Committee outspent its Democratic rival by a 3-to-1 ratio. The next year, Republicans used their enhanced power in some states to draw voting districts that have benefited their legislative and congressional candidates for much of the past decade.

"Democrats have been paying the price since 2010 for their lack of success that year," Rogers said.

Democrats have since ratcheted up their state legislative efforts. Obama and his former attorney general, Eric Holder, have spearheaded a new Democratic group focused solely on state redistricting. Various Democratic-aligned interest groups also have begun pouring money into state legislative contests.

Democrats and Republicans have set their sights on some of the same places.

Republican-led legislatures in Florida, Georgia, Iowa, Kansas, North Carolina, Pennsylvania, Texas and Wisconsin appear on both of their redistricting target lists. So does Minnesota, the only state where Republicans control one legislative chamber and Democrats the other.

Some North Carolina state legislative candidates are running in newly redrawn districts this year after a state court tossed out the old ones drawn by the GOP-led Legislature as illegal partisan gerrymanders. But Democrats could face an uphill climb in states such as Texas and Wisconsin, where they will be running in the same districts that have favored Republicans.

Nationwide, 2020 may be "a more pro-Democratic year, but the payoff in redistricting may be a little bit less, just due to what they can probably actually pick up," Rogers said.

Texas looms especially large because Democrats have made gains in recent legislative elections. Continued Republican control of both chambers and the governor's office would give the GOP great sway in shaping a large number of congressional districts.

Texas ranks second to California with 36 U.S. House seats and is likely to gain more following the census because of its population growth. Democrats hold full control in California, but an independent citizens commission is responsible for redistricting.

Some of the most hotly contested legislative elections are likely to occur in the Dallas and Houston suburbs.

"It would be a huge blow for the Republican Party if we lost Texas," Chambers said. "We're going to make sure that never happens."

North Carolina is another big target. It's expected to be a battleground for president, U.S. Senate, U.S. House and the governorship. The state legislative elections also matter more than in most states, because the North Carolina governor has no veto power over the voting districts that lawmakers will draw. Republicans currently hold modest majorities in both the state House and Senate.

Kansas may appear to be one of the most surprising states on the target lists because of its solidly Republican legislative majorities. But Democratic Gov. Laura Kelly will have veto power over any redistricting plans passed by the Legislature. The battle focuses on whether Republicans will have the two-thirds majority needed to override a veto.

New parent charged in admissions case, agrees to guilty plea

A Pennsylvania man pleaded guilty Tuesday to bribing Georgetown University's former tennis coach \$50,000 to get his daughter admitted as a fake athletic recruit.

Robert Repella, 61, of Ambler, Pennsylvania, entered a plea to one count of conspiracy to commit mail fraud and honest services mail fraud. Prosecutors are recommending a sentence of 10 months in prison and a \$40,000 fine. In a statement, Repella said he sincerely regrets his actions.

"My family, and most importantly, my daughter, knew nothing about this," he said. "A Georgetown University review determined that the academic and athletic qualifications my daughter submitted in her application were factual and truthful, and she remains a student in good standing at Georgetown."

Repella is the 55th person to be charged in the college admissions bribery scandal, but prosecutors say he was not involved with William "Rick" Singer, the alleged mastermind behind the sweeping nationwide scheme.

Charging documents released Tuesday allege that Repella paid Georgetown tennis coach Gordon Ernst \$50,000 in 2017 to get his daughter admitted as an athlete. Ernst listed Repella's daughter as one of his recruits, prosecutors say, and she was admitted in 2018. She went on to compete on the women's tennis team during her freshman year, according to the university's website.

Ernst, who is accused of taking \$2.7 million in bribes, has pleaded not guilty. He left Georgetown in 2017 after an internal investigation found he violated university admissions rules. He was later hired at the University of Rhode Island but resigned last year.

A Georgetown University spokeswoman declined to comment on the case.

Repella is the 26th parent to plead guilty in the case. Others include "Full House" actress Lori Loughlin and her fashion designer husband, Mossimo Giannulli, who agreed to plead guilty last week. A judge has yet to decide whether he'll accept deals they made with prosecutors.

Afghan government releases hundreds of Taliban prisoners

By KATHY GANNON and TAMEEM AKHGAR Associated Press

KABUL, Afghanistan (AP) — The Afghan government released hundreds of Taliban prisoners Tuesday, its single largest prisoner release since the U.S. and the Taliban signed a peace deal earlier this year that spells out an exchange of detainees between the warring sides.

The government announced it would release 900 Taliban prisoners as a three-day cease-fire with the insurgents draws to an end. The Taliban had called for the truce during the Muslim holiday of Eid al-Fitr that marks the end of the Islamic holy month of Ramadan.

There were expectations that the prisoner release could lead to new reductions in violence, and Taliban officials were considering an extension of the cease-fire, a senior Taliban figure confirmed to The Associated Press.

"If these developments, like the announcement of prisoner releases, continues, it is possible to move forward with decisions like extending the brief cease-fire and to move in a positive direction with some minor issues," the Taliban official said.

The prisoners were being released from Bagram prison, where the U.S. still maintains a major military base north of Kabul, and from Pul-e-Charkhi prison on the eastern edge of the Afghan capital.

By late afternoon, the AP witnessed scores of men pouring out of the Bagram compound, presumably released prisoners. It wasn't immediately possible to verify their numbers or whether they were all Taliban members. They were transported on six buses parked outside the prison.

An official at Bagram said 525 men were to be released but he spoke on condition of anonymity because he wasn't authorized to speak to the media.

No number was given for how many prisoners would be released from Pul-e-Charkhi.

In a tweet late Tuesday, Taliban political spokesman Suhail Shaheen in Doha said the insurgent group planned to release "a remarkable number" of government prisoners. He called the Afghan government's release of 900 "good progress."

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The prisoner release is part of the U.S. deal with the Taliban, signed on Feb. 29, to allow for the eventual withdrawal of U.S. and NATO troops from Afghanistan, bringing to an end the country's protracted war and America's longest military involvement.

When the deal was signed, it was touted as Afghanistan's best chance for peace after decades of war. But political feuding in Kabul and delays in prisoner exchanges have slowed the deal's progress toward intra-Afghan negotiations, considered the second and most critical phase of the accord.

Under the deal, Kabul is to release 5,000 Taliban prisoners while the insurgents are to free 1,000 captives, mostly government officials and Afghan forces, before intra-Afghan negotiations can begin.

Afghan President Ashraf Ghani had welcomed the Taliban cease-fire announcement during the Muslim holiday.

Javid Faisal, a national security spokesman in Kabul, urged the Taliban to extend the cease-fire and said the government would release 900 prisoners Tuesday. That would bring to 2,000 the number of Taliban prisoners released so far under the U.S.-Taliban deal. The Taliban say they have released 240 captives.

However, the Taliban have yet to confirm whether those released so far by the government were among the 5,000 names the insurgents had given U.S. negotiator Zalmay Khalilzad, the architect of the Feb. 29 deal.

A second Taliban official told the AP that those released so far were on the Taliban list, including the uncle of Taliban chief Hibatullah Akhundzada. Key in deciding which names would appear on the list was Mullah Nooruddin Turabi, a senior figure who had recently recovered from COVID-19, the illness caused by the coronavirus.

Turabi was the much feared vice and virtue minister during the Taliban rule, known for beating men who were found listening to music or not attending mosque. He once slapped a Taliban commander who spoke with a woman journalist.

Both Taliban officials spoke to the AP on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to talk to reporters.

Many Afghans have expressed frustration at the slow and often stalled peace process. Many have known only conflict in their homeland for the past several decades.

"If both sides stop this war and sit at the negotiating table ... maybe my youngest children will experience a good life, which we never experienced," said Sayed Agha, a truck driver from eastern Logar province.

Agha, 45, was wounded in April, caught in cross-fire during a battle between the Taliban and Afghan soldiers.

"I have spent my whole life in war," he said.

JK Rowling publishes first chapters of new story online

LONDON (AP) — J.K. Rowling is publishing a new story called "The Ickabog," which will be free to read online to help entertain children and families stuck at home during the coronavirus pandemic.

The "Harry Potter" author said Tuesday she wrote the fairy tale for her children as a bedtime story over a decade ago. Set in an imaginary land, it is a stand-alone story "about truth and the abuse of power" for children from 7 to 9 years old and is unrelated to Rowling's other books.

Rowling said the draft of the story had stayed in her attic while she focused on writing books for adults. She said her children, now teenagers, were "touchingly enthusiastic" when she recently suggested retrieving the story and publishing it for free.

"For the last few weeks I've been immersed in a fictional world I thought I'd never enter again. As I worked to finish the book, I started reading chapters nightly to the family again," she said.

"The Ickabog's first two readers told me what they remember from when they were tiny, and demanded the reinstatement of bits they'd particularly liked (I obeyed)."

The first two chapters were posted online Tuesday, with daily instalments to follow until July 10.

The book will be published in print later this year, and Rowling said she will pledge royalties from its sales to projects helping those particularly affected by the pandemic.

Worry, haste, retail therapy: What have we bought and why?

By LEANNE ITALIE Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Between technical glitches and food worries, retail therapy and sheer amnesia, something has happened to shopping during the pandemic that can be summed up thusly: rubber chickens.

Melissa Jean Footlick bought some while sheltering at home in San Diego with her husband and three dogs. She's a kidney transplant patient so she's been taking extra care. She's among millions who have helped online retail sales surge as consumer spending fell off rapidly when businesses shut down.

"I spent two hours trying to find a Funfetti cake mix and frosting. No reason, I just wanted it. I also got a game where you throw rubber chickens at a target. I misread the description and thought it was like badminton with rubber chickens," she explained.

Said husband and dogs have yet to agree to a game.

For others, shopping madness has been about the essentials, only super-sized: 10-pound bags of rice; 25-pound sacks of flour; 50 pounds worth of sugar; pickles and pancake mix for a crowd.

For some, it's impulse shoe purchases, with nowhere to go. And mistaken multiple pounds of blueberries when a single container was the goal.

Remember the toilet paper scare? George Pav found some in an unlikely place in Berlin, Germany.

"When the mayor of Berlin announced the lockdown, I knew that I wouldn't have the chance to drink a cup of coffee from a cafe for quite some time. My first thought was to find a cafe and enjoy an espresso. Alas, most of them were already shut," he recalled.

He ventured into one, but a woman there said they were closed.

"No coffee. Then I looked behind her. There was a pile of toilet paper. She said she was selling them for 50 cents per piece," Pav said.

He bought four squares.

For Beth Wilson of New York, it was a bistro table and chairs to match the ones at a Paris cafe where she and her husband "ate every morning for breakfast on our honeymoon." The chairs, she said, look great, "but the table came broken."

The panic buying, the over-buying, the emotional buying aren't unique to this extraordinary world-shaking event, but it's the kind of world-shaking event that sent the world home with plenty of anxiety and few shopping options other than the online kind.

In the U.S., retail sales tumbled by a record 16.4% from March to April as business shutdowns caused by the coronavirus kept shoppers away, threatened stores and weighed down a tanking economy. The Commerce Department reported that a long-standing migration toward online purchases accelerated, posting an 8.4% monthly gain.

Measured year over year, online sales surged 21.6%.

"It's panic on lots of levels," said Wendy Liebmann, CEO of WSL Strategic Retail, a global consulting firm specializing in retail strategy and shopper insights. "All of the traditional buying patterns are tossed up in the air."

She called it "shopping chaos" with no anchors. And the chaos has come with some unique calculus.

One couple got to skip their last preschool payment due to lockdown and purchased the couch of their dreams. The refund on their son's lunch program bought a matching ottoman. Christine Alonzo Carlisle, 45, was awash in refunds in Carmel, Indiana, where she's sheltering with her husband and two teenage daughters.

"My big family spring break trip, that I'd spent a year planning, was canceled and refunded. All of my kids' summer camps were refunded. Concerts were refunded. Club sports were refunded. Random refunds were just popping up like crazy on my credit card account," she said.

"Then, I got an email that the super fancy European coffee machine I'd been dreaming of was on sale. Still ridiculous, but a pretty good sale. So I bought it. I had a moment of buyer's regret, and then I had a perfectly brewed cappuccino, or 10, and instantly felt better," Carlisle added.

That "instant" feeling is key to much of the coronavirus shopping, said Jeff Galak, associate professor of

marketing at Carnegie Mellon University's Tepper School of Business.

"Shopping as therapy has been shown to reduce negative moods and boost overall happiness," he said. "The big downside, however, is that such relief is very short-lived. That good feeling very quickly dissipates."

Galak said some research points to "shopping while bored" as a variation with less emotional payout.

"Browsing for things that one doesn't need fills the time and then clicking 'buy now' just naturally follows," he said. "Consumers may find themselves on page 20 of a search result for a new pair of shoes, a place that when engaged and not bored, they would never reach."

Jennifer Salgado, 42, in Bloomfield, New Jersey, is a shopper with many heads these days.

"Resourceful me has purchased a pasta roller and drying rack, because now I'm Ina Garten, stuff to make hand sanitizer, because I'm now a chemist, and dog nail clippers that my 76-pound bulldog noped out of real fast and is now looking like Snookie from 'The Jersey Shore,'" she said.

There's also "luxurious me," Salgado said, snapping up 96 macarons from a bulk-buying store, along with the Jennifer who needed 24 pounds of frozen peas.

"Most of the time, I forget what's coming," she said, echoing others who accepted long delivery dates out of fear. "And most of the time, I realize I never really needed these things in the first place."

Kellie Flor-Robinson in Silver Spring, Maryland, just may be a combination of all of the above.

"I ordered a case of Moet," she said. "I'm not sure that it was an accident, though. This thing has me buggy."

VIRUS DIARY: Finding a surprising source of support in an ex

By HOLLY RAMER Associated Press

CONCORD, N.H. (AP) — Embarrassing to admit but oddly comforting: My ex-husband's husband and I share a slight crush on our state epidemiologist.

Frankly, I never thought I'd have an ex-husband, let alone one who has a new husband. And I certainly never imagined he'd become a main source of support during a global pandemic.

True, we've come a long way since divorcing four years ago. Attending his wedding last fall with a boyfriend of my own, I'd felt happy and hopeful for all of our futures. But three months later I got dumped, and I was still struggling with that when the coronavirus crisis hit.

So now it's my ex who listens to my parenting and work woes, saves magazines for me to read, and delivers not only grocery staples but cakes, cookies and pies from a favorite bakery. Sweet, on multiple levels.

Like other divorced parents, we've had to weigh the risk of sending our 15-year-old son back and forth between our homes during a pandemic — a topic that wasn't covered in the excruciatingly awkward, mandatory co-parenting class we took when we split up. Initially, we stuck to our 50-50 custody schedule, and I even spent a day at his house when a snowstorm knocked out power to mine. Later, we decided it was safer for our son to stay with me, which lasted for a long, challenging month. I was both reluctant and relieved when my ex suggested I send him back.

More recently, the four of us have gotten together for virtual games of trivia and Pictionary and made plans to celebrate the Fourth of July in person at the cabin we co-own but since the divorce have only visited separately. I teared up when he texted that he'd make fried chicken — my favorite. Crying without really knowing why seems to have become a habit these days, but that's OK.

When I'm not working, I've been sewing dozens and dozens of fabric masks to donate to hospitals, social service agencies and my brave colleagues. I've sent them to family and friends, too, including my ex-husband. I knew he'd pick the green one and give the blue to his husband. They texted me an action shot from Home Depot, shopping for supplies to spruce up the yard that used to be mine.

Foolishly, I also sent a mask to the man who broke my heart in January. Did I expect he'd show up outside my window like John Cusack in that perfectly socially distanced scene from "Say Anything," holding a boombox and wearing his mask? Not really, and I wasn't surprised by the polite thank-you note that arrived in my mailbox. But it did hurt, which just goes to show that sometimes, the mask does protect the wearer more than it protects others.

For that moment of weakness, I blame New York Gov. Andrew Cuomo, whose tweet about reaching out hit me hard. ("Three-word sentences can make all the difference: 'I miss you.' 'I love you.'") Thankfully, my own governor isn't so sappy. "Coffee and chocolate, that's how I'm getting through a lot of this. I probably need to start exercising a little bit more," Gov. Chris Sununu said during a recent news conference, taking the words right out of my mouth.

Coffee, chocolate and the surprising return of a friendship I thought I'd lost forever. I'll get back to my kickboxing workouts eventually. But until then, this will do just fine.

Shunned by his party, Iowa's Steve King fights for his seat

By THOMAS BEAUMONT Associated Press

DES MOINES, Iowa (AP) — Rep. Steve King is fighting for his political life — but not because he's compared immigrants crossing the border illegally to cattle. His Republican opponents in next week's primary aren't raking him over the coals for making light of rape and incest. His chief rival's ads don't mention the time he wondered when the term "white supremacist" became offensive.

Instead, the nine-term congressman known for his nativist politics is fighting to prove he can still deliver for Iowa's 4th Congressional District. Since Republican leaders stripped him of his committee assignments, in a rare punishment, King has been dogged by questions over whether he's lost all effectiveness. Some longtime supporters are turning away, not because of his incendiary remarks but because they think he can no longer do the job.

"We all want to feel that we're being represented in Washington, D.C., that we have a voice," said Iowa state Sen. Annette Sweeney, a former King supporter.

Establishment Republicans in Iowa and Washington, some of whom share King's policy views and have long tolerated his provocative remarks, have largely abandoned the congressman, throwing their weight behind Randy Feenstra, a conservative state senator.

That sets up the June 2 primary, a five-way fight in a GOP-heavy district, as a test of whether the establishment can effectively police the party and distance itself from racist and far-right voices who critics say have been amplified in recent years.

But Republican activists in King's district, a sprawling swath of corn, soybeans and towering wind turbines, haven't been quick to accept the influence from outsiders.

"He's not what he's portrayed to be by certain media outlets," said Barb Clayton, a leading GOP activist in the district. Clayton says she "respects" King and believes his comments about white supremacy were taken out of context. Still, she's backing one of his four opponents, though she won't say whom, because she's worried King's diminished influence would cost him in November.

"My primary issue is being able to hold the seat. It makes it more difficult to do that when he's lost his committees," she said.

Sweeney, who has endorsed Feenstra, offered only glancing criticism of King.

"His comments at times were just off the cuff," she said. "Sometimes some of them might have been him trying to be funny or cute, though some weren't. In fact, some were repulsive."

Still, Sweeney hosted two fundraisers at her home for King in 2012, when he faced what was expected to be a competitive challenge from former Iowa first lady Christie Vilsack, a Democrat. King won decisively.

By then, King had a reputation for controversial statements about race, immigration and religion.

In 2006, King proposed electrifying the U.S.-Mexico border fencing to curb illegal border crossings, saying, "We do that with livestock all the time."

In 2013, he said for every one well-intended "Dreamer," immigrants brought to the U.S. illegally as children, 100 more "weigh 130 pounds and they've got calves the size of cantaloupes" from hauling drugs across the desert.

In recent years, King received scrutiny for his overtures to foreign, right-wing extremists. The outreach prompted the House campaign committee to pull its financial backing in 2018. King was stripped of his membership on the House judiciary and agriculture committees the following January after he was quoted

in the New York Times seeming to defend white nationalism.

The punishment sidelined King from defending President Donald Trump during the impeachment hearings, a spotlight King would have relished. It also silenced him on agriculture policy, a blow in a district that ranks second nationally in agricultural production, according to federal statistics.

But it hasn't muted King. He's continued to defend his hard-right abortion stance with provocative comments. Asked in August about his opposition to abortion in cases of rape and incest, he wondered whether there would be "any population of the world left" if not for births stemming from rape and incest.

Feenstra has called the comments "bizarre" but hasn't made them the focus of his critique of King. Instead, the 51-year-old former candy company executive promotes his work in the statehouse on big issues such as tax cut legislation and attacks King for a lack of sway on farming and agribusiness issues.

"Steve King, the congressman who couldn't," the narrator says in Feenstra's television ads. "Steve King couldn't protect our farmers and couldn't protect President Trump from impeachment."

It's a tack Iowa Republicans say is working, in part because it doesn't shame Iowans who have long defended King.

"You move away from the argument that he's an embarrassment and into an argument of effectiveness — when you get into that zone, people say this matters," said Iowa Republican strategist John Stineman, who's unaffiliated with any campaign in the race.

King argues that establishment Republicans have targeted him for being such an effective defender of conservative causes.

"It's no single thing," King said. "But it gets back to their argument that this is part of a pattern with me they are uncomfortable with."

But Feenstra's focus on King's diminished role also appears to have hit a nerve. In recent candidate forums, King started telling voters he has struck a deal with House leaders to resume his committee posts if he wins reelection.

King told The Associated Press that Minority Leader Kevin McCarthy said he would vouch for him when King appeals to his GOP colleagues for reinstatement.

McCarthy has dismissed King's claim.

"Congressman King's comments cannot be exonerated, and I never said that," McCarthy told reporters last week. "He'll have the opportunity to make his case, talking to the members of the Steering Committee. I think he'll get the same answer that he got before."

If King pulls out a primary win, McCarthy could have another headache on his hands. Some fear mainstream Republicans might leave the ballot empty rather than vote for King, allowing Democrat J.D. Scholten, who lost by 2 percentage points in 2018, to win.

The National Republican Congressional Committee, the GOP's congressional campaign arm, declined Friday to say whether it would support King in November or opt for a second time to withhold support.

Death and denial in Brazil's Amazon capital

By RENATA BRITO Associated Press

MANAUS, Brazil (AP) — As the white van approached Perfect Love Street, one by one chatting neighbors fell silent, covered their mouths and noses and scattered.

Men in full body suits carried an empty coffin into the small, blue house where Edgar Silva had spent two feverish days gasping for air before drawing his last breath on May 12.

"It wasn't COVID," Silva's daughter, Eliete das Graças insisted to the funerary workers. She swore her 83-year-old father had died of Alzheimer's disease, not that sickness ravaging the city's hospitals.

But Silva, like the vast majority of those dying at home, was never tested for the new coronavirus. The doctor who signed his death certificate never saw his body before determining the cause: "cardiorespiratory arrest."

His death was not counted as one of Brazil's victims of the pandemic.

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Manaus is one of the hardest hit cities in Brazil, which officially has lost more than 23,000 lives to the coronavirus. But in the absence of evidence proving otherwise, relatives like das Graças are quick to deny the possibility that COVID-19 claimed their loved ones, meaning that the toll is likely a vast undercount.

As ambulances zip through Manaus with sirens blaring and backhoes dig rows of new graves, the muggy air in this city by the majestic Amazon River feels thicker than usual with such pervasive denial. Manaus has seen nearly triple the usual number of dead in April and May.

Doctors and psychologists say denial at the grassroots stems from a mixture of misinformation, lack of education, insufficient testing and conflicting messages from the country's leaders.

Chief among skeptics is President Jair Bolsonaro, who has repeatedly called COVID-19 a "little flu," and argued that concern over the virus is overblown.

Asked by a reporter about the surging number of deaths on April 20, Bolsonaro responded, "I'm not a gravedigger, OK?"

He has resisted U.S. and European-style lockdowns to contain the virus' spread, saying such measures aren't worth the economic wreckage. He fired his first health minister for supporting quarantines, accepted the resignation of a second after less than a month on the job, and said that the interim minister, an army general with no background in health or medicine, will remain in charge of the pandemic response "for a long time." In a cabinet meeting last month, a visibly enraged Bolsonaro insulted governors and mayors enforcing stay-at-home measures.

The president's political followers are receptive to his dismissal of the virus, as determined as he is to proceed with life as usual.

On a recent Saturday in Manaus, locals flocked to the bustling riverside market to buy fresh fish, unaware of the need for social distancing, or uninterested. As swamped intensive-care units struggled to accommodate new patients airlifted from the Amazon, the faithful returned to some of the city's evangelical churches. Coffins arriving by riverboat did nothing to dampen the enthusiasm of young people at clandestine dance parties. And in the streets, masks frequently covered chins and foreheads rather than mouths and noses.

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

The new sickness made its way to Manaus in March, in the middle of the rainy season. At least that's when health officials first became aware of it in the capital of Amazonas state, which is at once remote and international. One precarious road connects the city to the rest of Brazil, and other municipalities are hours away by boat. But tropical fauna and flora normally draw tourist cruises up the Amazon, and business people fly in from around the world to visit its free-trade zone. Just last October, Manaus sent a delegation to China looking for investors.

The city's first virus fatality was reported on March 25 and deaths have surged since then. But due to a lack of testing, just 5% of the more than 4,300 burials performed in April and May were confirmed cases of COVID-19, according to city funeral statistics.

To accommodate its swelling number of coffins, the public Nossa Senhora Aparecida cemetery razed an area of tropical forest to dig dozens of trenches in the rust-colored soil for burials.

These mass graves sparked anger toward city officials among families of the deceased. Why did their loved ones' bodies have to be buried in such a way, they asked, if there was no evidence the deaths were caused by COVID-19?

Das Graças was among those who had hoped that her father could have a proper sendoff. But it wasn't to be. The white-suited men informed her that his coffin would be sealed, a precaution taken now regardless of cause of death. He would be sent to the public cemetery's refrigerated container to await burial.

"A person can't even die with dignity," das Graças, 49, said through tears. "He's going to spend the night in the freezer when we could be doing his wake at home!"

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Home wakes are no longer permitted. But workers from SOS Funeral, which provides free coffins and funeral services to those who can't afford them, have found homes packed with relatives touching the bodies of loved ones, hugging each other and wiping away tears with ungloved hands — a potentially contagious farewell.

Overwhelmed emergency services have encountered similar reluctance to acknowledge viral risk. Ambulance doctor Sandokan Costa said patients often omit the mention of COVID-19 symptoms, putting him and his colleagues at greater risk. "What has most struck me is people's belief that the pandemic isn't real."

Costa fell ill with the virus in late March but has worked non-stop since recovering and is astonished to see his fellow citizens on the streets acting as though nothing is going on. There is a stigma attached to the new disease, he said. "Coronavirus has become something pejorative."

Health care officials attribute much of that to Bolsonaro's handling of the pandemic.

Rather than take precautions, Bolsonaro has supported the use of chloroquine, the predecessor of an antimalaria drug that U.S. President Donald Trump has advocated for treatment of coronavirus and is taking himself to ward it off. Bolsonaro ordered the Army's Chemical and Pharmaceutical Laboratory to boost its chloroquine production despite a lack of clinical proof that it is effective. A large study recently published in the Lancet medical journal suggests that the malaria drugs not only do not help, but are tied to a greater risk of death in coronavirus patients.

In Manaus, scientists stopped part of a study of chloroquine after heart rhythm problems developed in a quarter of people given the higher of two doses being tested.

Visiting the hard-hit Amazon capital was a priority for Bolsonaro's second health minister, Nelson Teich, who donned a body suit to tour several hospitals. But he resigned days later after disagreeing with the president's demand that the ministry recommend chloroquine be prescribed to patients with mild coronavirus symptoms.

Amazonas Gov. Wilson Lima, a Bolsonaro ally, downplayed the virus at first. "There's huge hysteria and panic," Lima said March 16, three days after the first virus case in Manaus was confirmed in a woman who had traveled from Europe. That same day he declared a state of emergency, but his first measures were limited — cancellation of events organized by the state, suspension of classes and prison visits. For the rest, he recommended avoiding crowds and good hand washing.

It was only on March 23, when his state had 32 cases, including local transmissions, that he ordered the suspension of non-essential services. But the restrictions were never imposed on the city's industrial zone.

A month later, hospitals in Manaus were overwhelmed with thousands of cases and hundreds of dead.

In late April, the governor announced plans to progressively reopen commerce, but backed down as the death toll continued to climb. This month, he told The Associated Press in an interview that the unusual surge in deaths can only be explained by the outbreak.

"There's no doubt that the majority (have died) because of COVID-19," Gov. Lima said as he sat in a vast but empty meeting room in the state government headquarters in Manaus. "We don't have any other explanation for this if not COVID."

He admitted lack of testing makes it nearly impossible to have a clear idea how many people in the state are infected.

But even with vast under-reporting, Amazonas state has the highest number of deaths by COVID-19 per capita in the country with more than 1,700.

Poor and crowded neighborhoods have been particularly affected. Unable to afford private consultations and fearing the chaos of the public health system, many only sought medical help when it was too late. Others preferred to die at home rather than alone at a hospital.

Lima's administration has come under fire for spending half a million dollars (2.9 million Brazilian reais) to buy 28 ventilators at quadruple the market price from a wine importer and distributor. The breathing machines were deemed inadequate for use on coronavirus patients after inspections by the regional council of medicine and Manaus' health surveillance office.

Lima denies any wrongdoing. Asked if he would have done anything differently to confront the virus,

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the governor shook his head.

"Even if I had stopped it (the economy), if I had closed the city for 30 days, no one goes in and no one goes out. At some point I would have had to open and at some point the virus would have gotten here," he said.

The virus has, in the meantime, spread upriver from Manaus, creeping into remote towns and territories to infect indigenous tribes. The sparsely populated but vast rainforest region is completely unprepared to cope. Some towns can't get oxygen tanks refilled or don't have breathing machines, forcing nurses to manually pump air into lungs. When they do have machines, power cuts frequently shut them down.

Many patients are being airlifted to Manaus, the only place in the state of 4 million people with full intensive care units.

Although health experts warn that the pandemic is far from over in the Amazon region, or the rest of the country, national polls show adherence to lockdowns and quarantines falling, and a growing number of Brazilians are neglecting local leaders' safety recommendations.

"Every day there are different messages coming from the federal government that clash with measures by the cities and states, and with what science says" said Manaus-based physician Adele Benzaken.

A public health researcher who until last year led the HIV/AIDS department at the Health Ministry, Benzaken already has lost four colleagues in the pandemic.

Meanwhile, misinformation and disinformation about the virus is swirling, some of it shared by the president himself. On May 11, Instagram labeled one of his posts as fake news after he falsely claimed a state had seen a drop in respiratory disease this year. Facebook also blocked one of his posts in March that showed him praising the healing powers of chloroquine to supporters.

One false claim circulating on social media said the death rate in Manaus plummeted the day after the health minister's visit. Another purported to show an empty coffin being unearthed at Manaus' cemetery, implying the city was inflating its death toll. But the photo was taken in Sao Paulo three years ago.

Still, the messages take root and spread like jungle foliage.

"My opinion is that they're making this up and trying to make money from it" Israel Reis, 54, said outside Manaus' fish market. He didn't specify who "they" might be.

Reis, who recently lost his job in an electronics maintenance company due to the pandemic, spoke without a mask and said he "of course" agrees with Bolsonaro the severity of the pandemic is exaggerated and death toll inflated.

He recently advised his nephew against seeking help at the local health clinic for an earache. "Any dizziness and they'll say it's that thing," he said, referring to the virus.

One recent late afternoon, a group of paunchy middle-aged men seated in plastic chairs on the sidewalk debated measures to fight the virus. The street bar, a few blocks from a police station in downtown Manaus, was operating in violation of state COVID-19 restrictions, yet officers in a passing squad car didn't even slow down to reprimand them.

Icy beer provided relief from the sweltering heat, and tropical insects had begun sounding their pre-dusk drone. The men, too, were getting worked up.

"Put on your mask!" yelled one friend.

"I don't need one!" screamed another, Henrique Noronha.

Noronha, 52, argued that only the elderly and those with health problems should stay home – as Bolsonaro affirms -- and the fit should return to normal. Despite his age and full figure, Noronha didn't believe he's at risk.

"This virus came to clean things up," he said. "But I'll be fine."

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Today in History By The Associated Press

Today in History

Today is Wednesday, May 27, the 148th day of 2020. There are 218 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On May 27, 1935, the U.S. Supreme Court, in *Schechter Poultry Corp. v. United States*, unanimously struck down the National Industrial Recovery Act, a key component of President Franklin D. Roosevelt's "New Deal" legislative program.

On this date:

In 1199, King John of England was crowned in Westminster Abbey nearly two months after the death of his brother, Richard I ("The Lion-Hearted").

In 1861, Chief Justice Roger Taney, sitting as a federal circuit court judge in Baltimore, ruled that President Abraham Lincoln lacked the authority to suspend the writ of habeas corpus (Lincoln disregarded the ruling).

In 1896, 255 people were killed when a tornado struck St. Louis, Missouri, and East St. Louis, Illinois.

In 1912, golf legend Sam Snead was born in Ashwood, Va. Author John Cheever was born in Quincy, Mass.

In 1933, the Chicago World's Fair, celebrating "A Century of Progress," officially opened. Walt Disney's Academy Award-winning animated short "The Three Little Pigs" was first released.

In 1941, the British Royal Navy sank the German battleship *Bismarck* off France with a loss of some 2,000 lives, three days after the *Bismarck* sank the HMS *Hood* with the loss of more than 1,400 lives. Amid rising world tensions, President Franklin D. Roosevelt proclaimed an "unlimited national emergency" during a radio address from the White House.

In 1942, Doris "Dorie" Miller, a cook aboard the USS *West Virginia*, became the first African-American to receive the Navy Cross for displaying "extraordinary courage and disregard for his own personal safety" during Japan's attack on Pearl Harbor.

In 1968, the U.S. Supreme Court, in *United States v. O'Brien*, upheld the conviction of David O'Brien for destroying his draft card outside a Boston courthouse, ruling that the act was not protected by freedom of speech.

In 1993, five people were killed in a bombing at the Uffizi museum of art in Florence, Italy; some three dozen paintings were ruined or damaged.

In 1994, Nobel Prize-winning author Alexander Solzhenitsyn returned to Russia to the emotional cheers of thousands after spending two decades in exile.

In 1995, actor Christopher Reeve was left paralyzed when he was thrown from his horse during a jumping event in Charlottesville, Virginia.

In 1998, Michael Fortier (FOR'-tee-ur), the government's star witness in the Oklahoma City bombing case, was sentenced to 12 years in prison after apologizing for not warning anyone about the deadly plot. (Fortier was freed in January 2006.)

Ten years ago: On the defensive more than five weeks into the nation's worst-ever oil spill, President Barack Obama insisted his administration, not oil giant BP, was calling the shots in the still-unsuccessful response. The Senate Armed Services Committee and the full House approved measures to repeal the 1993 "don't ask, don't tell" law that allowed gay people to serve in the armed services provided they hid their sexual orientation. Activist Lori Berenson walked out of a prison in Peru after serving three-quarters of a 20-year term for aiding leftist rebels. (Under her parole, Berenson had to remain in Peru until December, 2015; she then returned to New York.)

Five years ago: The U.S. government launched an attack on what it called deep-seated and brazen corruption in soccer's global governing body, FIFA, indicting 14 influential figures on charges of racketeering and taking bribes. Former Pennsylvania Senator Rick Santorum, an aggressive advocate for conservative family values, launched a 2016 Republican White House bid. Nebraska's Legislature abolished the death penalty over the objections of Gov. Pete Ricketts, a Republican supporter of capital punishment.

One year ago: Meeting in Japan with Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, President Donald Trump said he was

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"personally not" bothered by North Korea's recent short-range missile tests, which had rattled Japan. Forty inmates were killed in riots at three prisons in Manaus in northern Brazil, a day after 15 inmates died during fighting among prisoners at a fourth prison in the same city. Former baseball All-Star and batting champion Bill Buckner died at the age of 69; he had become best known for allowing a ground ball to roll through his legs in the 1986 World Series, won by the New York Mets over Buckner's Boston Red Sox.

Today's Birthdays: Former Secretary of State Henry Kissinger is 97. Former FBI Director William Sessions is 90. Author John Barth is 90. Actress Lee Meriwether is 85. Musician Ramsey Lewis is 85. Actor Louis Gossett Jr. is 84. Rhythm and blues singer Raymond Sanders (The Persuasions) is 81. Actor Bruce Weitz is 77. Former Sen. Christopher Dodd (D-Conn.) is 76. Singer Bruce Cockburn (KOH'-burn) is 75. South Carolina Gov. Henry McMaster is 73. Singer-actress Dee Dee Bridgewater is 70. Actor Richard Schiff is 65. Singer Siouxsie Sioux (The Creatures, Siouxsie and the Banshees) is 63. Rock singer-musician Neil Finn (The Finn Brothers) is 62. Actress Peri Gilpin is 59. Actress Cathy Silvers is 59. Comedian Adam Carolla is 56. Actor Todd Bridges is 55. Rock musician Sean Kinney (Alice In Chains) is 54. Actor Dondre Whitfield is 51. Actor Paul Bettany is 49. Rock singer-musician Brian Desveaux (Nine Days) is 49. Country singer Jace Everett is 48. Actor Jack McBrayer is 47. Rapper Andre 3000 (Outkast) is 45. Rapper Jadakiss is 45. TV chef Jamie Oliver is 45. Alt-country singer-songwriter Shane Nicholson is 44. Actor Ben Feldman is 40. Actor Michael Steger is 40. Actor Darin Brooks is 36. Actor-singer Chris Colfer is 30. Actor Ethan Dampf is 26. Actress Desiree Ross (TV: "Greenleaf") is 21.

Thought for Today: "Great wisdom is generous; petty wisdom is contentious. Great speech is impassioned, small speech cantankerous." — Chuang-Tzu, Chinese essayist (c.369-c.286 B.C.)

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