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"REMEMBER THAT STRESS DOESN'T COME FROM WHAT'S GOING ON IN YOUR LIFE. IT COMES FROM YOUR THOUGHTS ABOUT WHAT'S GOING ON IN YOUR LIFE."

-ANDREW BERNSTEIN



Congratulations Groton Area Graduates and Families from the Groton Lions & Leos Clubs... To help you celebrate this milestone, we invite you to Summer Fest 2020 in the Groton City Park, Sunday, July 12th. Summer Fest may help you with a fun place for your guests to spend some time between graduation events. See our flyer below or go to Summer Fest 2020 on Facebook.



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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#124 in a series

Covid-19 Update: by Marie Miller

We're on a roll: worse every day. We are now at 2,482,900 cases in the US. There were 50,100 new cases reported today, which is an increase for the fifth consecutive day and our fourth consecutive day over 30,000 new cases; but never mind that—we blew right past 40,000 and 50,000 in a single day, to another record. This is a 2.1% increase in total cases since yesterday, also higher than yesterday's 1.7%.

125,010 people have died, 666 of them reported today. After the big jump yesterday due to some statistical adjustment, this is more in line with the numbers we've been seeing lately, higher than we'd been getting accustomed to—we'd been clocking in under 500 per day for some time; but under 1000. The sub-500 days look to be gone for now.

I have 24 states reporting percentage increases in total cases greater than the overall US percentage increase of 2.1%. Omitting a couple of states with small overall numbers, we're at 22 of particular interest. These are as follows: WI (12.5), FL (7.8), WY (6.7 – 2 days' reporting), ID (5.8), AZ (5.4), OR (4.9), SC (4.5), TX (4.1), CA (3.9), KS (3.9), AR (3.8), UT (3.4), OK (3.3), NC (3.1), NV (3.1), TN (2.9), AL (2.9), MO (2.9), GA (2.6), LA (2.5), MS (2.2), and OH (2.1). All of them except one show R_e over 1. (Remember that R_e is reproduction number; this shows evidence of a worsening outbreak when over 1, steady numbers at 1, and declines under 1.) Overall, 33 states are showing R_e at or over 1, same as last night. I will say, now that I've been tracking individual states, I am seeing some wild swings in percentage increase from day to day for some states; I suspect this has something to do with reporting procedures or with test results coming back in clusters. I intend to do a weekly look-back for each state over the weekend; that should smooth out some of those peaks and valleys and give us a stronger idea just what we're seeing there. There are states, however, who come in with high numbers day after day, and those are of particular concern. And frankly, none of this looks good. At all.

The eight states whose two-week rolling averages show largest increases in case numbers are CA, TX, FL, GA, AZ, LA, OH, and TN. The eight showing the least change are NY, NJ, MA, PA, MI, NC, CT, and IN. The eight showing the greatest declines are IL, MD, VA, NE, RI, DC, PR, and SD. Thirteen states set records for seven-day rolling average of new cases, Washington, California, Idaho, Utah, Arizona, Oklahoma, Texas, Missouri, Mississippi, Tennessee, Georgia, South Carolina, and Florida.

Florida reported over 8900 cases today, topping Wednesday's previous record of 5500 cases by a large amount, and pushed its total over 120,000. Some individual municipalities have imposed restrictions on residents, and the governor banned drinking in bars, which will now be open only for takeout and, where applicable, food. As we discussed last night, bars have been the source of many outbreaks. Other states with record numbers of new cases today were Idaho, Utah, Tennessee, Georgia, and South Carolina.

California reported almost 7700 new cases, putting them over 200,000 total cases. Hospitalizations, ICU admissions, and the positivity rate have all been increasing as well, so this is a sign of actual infection rates increasing. The governor points to private parties held at homes as a source of outbreaks; there have been several rather large outbreaks associated with these sorts of events. Cases here, too, are skewing younger. Some municipalities have been re-imposing restrictions in response.

Texas reported over 5600 new cases today; the state set several records for single-day new case reports this week. Bars there have been closed except for takeout as well. The CEO of a large hospital in Houston said today that the patient load has shifted there from 60% over age 50 to 60% under 50. That, along with the surge in diagnoses in younger people should give us pause; with hospitals as full as they've been, only the sickest are getting admitted. That these sickest people are younger is a big worry. Cities are limited in Texas in the restrictions they can impose, but the mayor of Houston did issue a stay-at-home advisory, the strongest measure she is permitted to take. She reported the number of Covid-19 patients in county hospitals has doubled since June 13 and there is danger the system will be overwhelmed. Test positivity rates in Texas are over 10%, a sign of serious problems.

With the country sort of blowing up around us, it is reasonable to wonder what things will look like going

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forward as we attempt to wrestle this pandemic into submission in the US. Today, I read remarks made by Dr. Scott Gottlieb, former FDA Commissioner on the subject, and the news isn't great there either. He points out the lag time between exposure to the virus and a case being added to the case counts; the time for the infected person to develop symptoms, go for testing, and receive results can be as long as three weeks; so this means the spiking case numbers we're seeing today reflect people who became infected between June 5 and last week. It also means any control measures we implement today will take a similar amount of time to work their way through the system and show up in reduced new case counts. So, even in a best-case scenario—which we absolutely should be striving to bring into being—cases are going to rise for a while yet—likely two to three weeks. We saw this in New York City as cases were spiking: The stay-at-home order was issued on March 20, but the peak in cases didn't occur until April 6, some 17 days later. While the concerns are great right now in populous states with big numbers—Florida, Texas, California—there are also many states with smaller populations and, therefore, smaller case counts, which are also showing serious increases and need attention as well. Instead of the mess we had in March and April, primarily confined to densely-populated areas in the Northeast (New York, New Jersey, Massachusetts, Connecticut) and a few large midwestern industrial areas (Michigan, Illinois, Ohio), the mess we have now comprises little brush fires as well as some gigantic conflagrations all over the South and West. He warned against some decreases he's seen lately in testing in places like Florida, saying, "If you don't want to shut down the economy, you've got to decide what you're for and if you're going to be against universal masking, and against testing, against tracing and you don't want to shut down the economy, you're going to have to tolerate then a very large epidemic." Nope, not good news at all.

We've been seeing the disparity in case numbers, occurrence of serious disease, and deaths in minority communities throughout this pandemic across the country. Asked on Tuesday whether systemic racism plays a role in these outcomes, Dr. Anthony Fauci acknowledged that it certainly does. Here's an example from Indianapolis: When it became clear in the spring that black people were suffering disproportionately from Covid-19, health officials in the city promised to set up testing sites in hotspot neighborhoods. A site set up in late April in Arlington Woods, a primarily black neighborhood, was consistently busy and expected to be open for several months, but then it closed a few weeks later, leaving residents without access to testing. A Side Effects Public Media analysis of testing sites, both those operated by health departments and those run by hospitals and private companies, found that only three of the 30 testing sites in the county were placed in neighborhoods with the highest percentages of black residents; most were concentrated in neighborhoods with primarily white residents.

The director of Indiana University's Center for Research and Inclusion and Social Policy, Breanca Merritt, said, "Time and time again, we see that these neighborhoods are consistently under-resourced, whether it's home values, school quality. So, you know, it's definitely a trend that persists across a variety of issues." Members of minority groups are not constitutionally more susceptible to SARS-CoV-2; but they have a higher chance for exposure, working disproportionately in essential jobs that are public-facing and living in denser neighborhoods, disproportionately using public transit, and suffering disproportionately from co-morbidities that increase the risk for serious disease and death. Because access to transportation is also more likely to be an issue for these residents, they are less able to make their way to testing sites outside their neighborhoods. If there is a significant base of undetected infections in these neighborhoods, this base poses public health risks to those residents and to the general public as governments struggle to bring this pandemic under control.

There is worrying news about the effects of Covid-19 on survivors. It is looking very much like at many as one in five patients who need intensive care treatment for the infection show permanent lung damage as a result of the illness; we are seeing evidence of irreversible lung scarring, called fibrosis, in these people. They may need life-long management. We are also seeing damage due to the formation of abnormal blood clots. When a blood vessel is occluded by a clot, new blood vessels can grow around the obstruction, but these can be disorganized, leading to high blood pressure in the lungs. These complications can occur in people who are not sick enough to need ICU care.

Some experts are expecting an unusual side effect of the pandemic, fewer births, as many as 300,000

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to 500,000 fewer. The researchers evaluated data from previous economic studies on fertility during epidemics and natural disasters and factors like job losses. The 1918 flu epidemic was associated with a significant decline in births, as have been many natural disasters; this is a phenomenon associated with times of uncertainty or crisis. At this time, the uncertainty and anxiety people feel about their safety or health, as well as their jobs and income are expected to influence people's decision making about having children. The researchers also note reproductive care physicians are reporting more demand for family planning as well. They also point out that a drop of this magnitude in births could have serious negative impacts on the economy in both the near and long term.

If you're a hiking enthusiast, here's something to consider this summer as you are looking for ways to get out of the house without risking exposure to Covid-19: It is the potential you will expose search-and-rescue (SAR) teams to Covid-19. No matter how experienced and fit you are, it is possible to be injured or become ill on a rigorous hike, and if that occurs in a remote, mountainous area, you could require rescue. If you consider the risks of exposure for SAR teams who might bring you out of difficult terrain with no way to distance themselves or practice good hand hygiene, you will see the problem.

Current SAR protocols for dealing with this coronavirus include the use of surgical masks for the hike in and N95s when there is a patient experiencing respiratory issues or mentioning possible exposure, as well as limiting a SAR team to the minimum head count possible to reduce the number who might have to quarantine in case of an exposure. I cannot imagine how much more difficult it would be to hike into a location to rescue someone, carrying a 70-pound pack, if you were also wearing a mask. It is suggested you limit your hiking excursions this summer to lowland destinations and safer, easier terrain to reduce the chance you will require rescue and the accompanying potential exposure of these hardy volunteers. Scaling back hiking plans for the duration of this pandemic is a way to reduce the risk for everyone—you and the SAR teams. Most locales in the US have excellent hiking opportunities close to home; maybe try those this summer.

Moderna, developer of the farthest-ahead (for now) vaccine has contracted with a manufacturing firm to produce an initial 100 million doses of its vaccine starting next month. This is without any assurance the vaccine will "pass" its final clinical trials or receive FDA approval. We've talked in the past few weeks about the number of vaccine developers doing this on spec with backing from the federal government, a case of putting a lot of eggs in a lot of baskets, hoping at least some baskets' eggs make it to the finish line unbroken. This vaccine has been shown to produce protective antibodies in small phase 1 trials, is currently in phase 2 with a larger group of volunteers and is scheduled to begin phase 3 next month in around 30,000 people. Moderna has also struck a deal with a Swiss manufacturer to produce 500 million doses a year with ramp-up to one billion doses beginning next year. This is a gargantuan effort. Let's all hope it pays off.

With this sort of news on the horizon, it's probably time to talk about the various vaccines currently in development around the world. We don't have time to discuss each of the more than 100 candidates here, but we can lay out some general information that will be useful as we navigate the coming news on this front.

We have discussed how vaccines work: that they present your immune system with a harmless version or a piece of the pathogen being immunized against. This is the antigen, the thing intended to elicit an immune response, and antigens are typically protein in nature. When cells of your immune system encounter this antigen, they mount a response, just as they would if you were infected with the pathogen itself, only because this version can't make you sick, you have time to build a good response without risk. Then, because immune responses have memory, next time you encounter this antigen in the wild, so to speak, you're ready.

Vaccines can present their antigens in various ways. Here are the main types:

Inactivated virus: This is an old style of vaccine. The first polio vaccine developed in the '50s was this type. If you heat a virus or treat it with certain chemicals, you can inactivate it so it is harmless but still presents the antigens to which you want to elicit a response. These are very safe vaccines and well-understood, making them more of a sure bet, but because the inactivated virus degrades pretty quickly in

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your body, it doesn't always hang around long enough to give you time for a strong response. There are five Chinese vaccine candidates of this type in development by the Wuhan Institute of Biological Products, Beijing Institute of Biological Products, Chinese Academy of Medical Sciences, and Sinovac Research and Development. There are also candidates from Japan, Europe, and Kazakhstan.

Live attenuated virus: This is also a fairly old vaccine style that uses virus whose virulence (ability to cause disease) is weakened. [I know we discussed a long time ago the fact that viruses are really not ever "alive," so "live" virus vaccine is sort of a misnomer. The difference, for the record between a "killed" or inactivated virus (as above) and a "live" attenuated virus like this one is that live viruses are still capable of infecting cells; they're just not as capable of replicating in large numbers and damaging tissue, so they generally don't make you sick.] Attenuation can be accomplished in a variety of ways: (1) By passing—passing the virus through a series of tissue cultures from a non-preferred species. As the virus adapts to living in, say, monkey cells or chick embryos, it loses its ability to cause disease in humans. (2) By using temperature-sensitive or cold-adapted virus. If we grow a virus under sub-optimal conditions of temperature (either too high or too low), it may eventually adjust to and prefer that temperature, making it harder for it to do well inside a human. (3) By using recombinant DNA or RNA technology to modify or delete virulence genes, yielding a virus that can infect, but not cause disease in humans. (4) By using a naturally weak strain that contains common antigens with the pathogen, but does not have the ability to cause disease in humans. Because attenuated virus can persist in cells and replicate to some extent, the duration of antigen exposure is extended, more reliably eliciting a hearty response. There are only three candidates of this type from Codagenex in India, Indian Immunologicals, and DZIF of the German Center for Infection Research.

Non-replicating viral vector: This involves making copies of the genes that code for antigenic viral proteins and introduce them to the recipient's cells where copies of the protein can be made to provide a fairly strong and prolonged antigenic stimulus to the immune system. We get those genes into your cells using recombinant technology to introduce them to a different virus that is able to infect our cells, but unable to establish disease. We can further modify this harmless virus so it is unable to replicate once it has delivered its payload to your cells; that way, we eliminate the possibility of that virus going rogue and causing trouble. Once the viral gene is inside your cells, you make the copies of the protein needed to elicit the response. The University of Oxford vaccine candidate we've talked about before is of this type, and CanSino Biologics also has a candidate that works like this. In total, I saw 20 candidates of this type on the WHO's candidate vaccine list.

Replicating viral vector: This is pretty much the same sort of thing as the non-replicating viral vector vaccines we just discussed except that in this one, the virus used as a vector to get pathogen genes into your cells is capable of replicating in your cells. That keeps the cells producing viral proteins longer, which should provide longer-term immunity due to long-term antigenic stimulus. There is an Ebola vaccine of this type that Merck has on the market now, and the company is now working on a Covid-19 vaccine using the same technology. I count 16 such candidates on the WHO's list today.

Virus-like particle: This is a collection of the proteins found in a virus (which is where the antigens are found) with none of the viral nucleic acid that enables it to replicate in or cause trouble for a human host. This is designed to provide antigenic stimulus with no risk of infection. There are 10 such on the WHO list.

RNA: This is a strand of viral RNA that contains the gene that codes for spike protein, that protein we've talked about many times that enables the virus to bind to host cells to initiate infection. If we make antibody which can neutralize that protein, the viruses will be unable to get inside our cells and make us sick. So we introduce the RNA to the host. Interestingly, so-called naked RNA is taken up quite well by target cells, so getting it inside the host cells turns out not to be a big challenge; and once inside, the host cell will start translating that RNA to make spike protein, which elicits an immune response. RNA is fairly subject to rather rapid degradation when it's floating free, so complexing agents are often used to slow that degradation process down. The Moderna candidate we just discussed is of this type; so are the Pfizer and Sanofi candidates we've talked about in the past. An advantage of the RNA vaccine is that it is quick to make; this is undoubtedly why there are so many candidates of this type already in trials; a disadvantage

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is that there have been no successful vaccines in this category for any disease before; new technologies always carry a somewhat greater risk of failure. Nonetheless, WHO lists 19 of these.

DNA: In most organisms' cells, including ours, DNA carries genes. (This RNA virus is the exception.) The way those genes are expressed is that the DNA is used in a separate cell compartment called the nucleus as a template to make complementary RNA, and then the RNA leaves the nucleus, going into the main body of the cell, where it is used as a template for production of proteins. RNA viruses skip the DNA step and directly operate in protein production. When you make a DNA vaccine for an RNA virus, you "back" copy the RNA to make complementary DNA in the lab, then introduce that DNA into the host's cells. The host, just as it does with any respectable set of DNA instructions, makes RNA using that template, then produces the protein. The vector for getting the DNA into host cells is generally a bacterial plasmid, a very small, circular piece of DNA that can freely replicate in the cell; recombinant technology is used to insert the viral gene we want into the plasmid, and then the plasmid is injected, frequently accompanied by some sort of jolt, for example, an electrical pulse, to the cells at the injection site to get them to take up the plasmids. This is also a very new technology, and there are no human DNA vaccines on the market at present, although there are a couple of animal vaccines of this type. WHO lists 12 of these.

Protein subunit: This contains copies of the protein (antigen) to which you want to elicit the immune response. It is an old and frequently used technology; several current human vaccines are of this type. They usually package an adjuvant with the antigen; this is a substance intended to prolong the exposure and enhance the immune response. The WHO list contains 50 candidates of this type.

This is quite an array of possibilities, from tried-and-true to cutting-edge technologies. You might wonder why we're trying all these new things when there are so many reliable old techniques around. There are probably a lot of answers to that question: the quest to improve on what is already available, simple human curiosity, new ideas made possible by the latest technology. Whatever the motivations, it is a very good thing there are so many projects underway. Vaccine development is a tricky business, and most candidates never make it to the end of the approval process; so the more we have in development, the higher the chance some of them will one day be available for use. According to the WHO's vaccine development website, 16 vaccine candidates are currently in clinical evaluation. Since we are aware a vaccine is our best chance to put this nightmare behind us, we should all be cheering these folks on in their efforts to secure a safe and effective vaccine.

We all deal with misfortune in different ways; many of us turn to food. This is true for Michelle Brenner, who was working at a retail store in Washington three months ago when she was laid off due to the pandemic; she went home and cooked up a big old pan of her Italian grandmother's lasagna. It was so satisfying that she posted on her community Facebook page that nothing beats the real, homemade, Italian kind. She extended an offer to the community too, "If any of you want some fresh homemade, no calorie counting lasagna, please let me know and I will gladly prepare it."

That generated a fair amount of interest, so she spent her stimulus check for ingredients and just kept cooking. It started out with friends and neighbors, but soon strangers were showing up at her door in need of comfort food and connection. She's been cooking eight hours a day, seven days a week, ever since. When the stimulus check ran out early on, she started a fundraiser that brought in more than \$10,000, and people now donate what they can when they pick up their lasagna. She's handed out 1200 pans of lasagna since March, and she has enough money to keep making lasagna for people even after she returns to work. Brenner says the connections she's made with her community through this effort keep her going. "A lot of the people I make lasagna for have lost their jobs, and this is my way of saying, 'I understand and I'm here for you.' It's a pan of love."

There are so many ways to offer some caring to others and to build community. Find one. Do it. You'll get something out of it too.

And keep yourself healthy. We'll talk again.

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Groton Jr. Teeners 28 - 7 Webster 14u

📍 Away 🎪 Exhibition 📅 Thursday June 25, 2020

	1	2	3	R	H	E
GRTN	10	2	16	28	21	0
WBST	3	0	4	7	6	5

BATTING

Groton Jr. Te	AB	R	H	RBI	BB	SO	LOB
B Althoff (1B	4	3	4	4	1	0	0
C Dunker (3B	3	3	2	2	1	0	2
K Kucker (...	1	0	0	0	0	0	1
R Groebing...	4	1	3	1	1	0	2
K Hoover (SS	2	3	0	0	2	0	3
B Flihs (2B...	3	3	2	5	1	0	2
L Ringgenb...	4	4	4	3	0	0	0
K Antonsen...	3	3	3	2	1	0	0
J Zak (LF	3	3	1	1	1	0	3
C Mcinern...	0	1	0	0	0	0	0
T Diegel (CF	3	2	0	1	1	0	4
D Abeln	3	2	2	3	1	0	1
Totals	33	28	21	22	10	0	6

2B: K Antonsen, B Flihs 2, **TB:** J Zak, B Althoff 4, D Abeln 2, K Antonsen 4, C Dunker 2, L Ringgenberg 4, B Flihs 4, R Groebinghoff 3, **SB:** B Althoff, K Antonsen, L Ringgenberg, K Hoover, **LOB:** 6

PITCHING

Groton Jr. Te	IP	H	R	ER	BB	SO	HR
B Imrie	2.0	6	7	7	4	3	0
L Ringgenb...	1.0	0	0	0	1	1	0
Totals	3.0	6	7	7	5	4	0

P-S: L Ringgenberg 15-8, B Imrie 67-34, **WP:** L Ringgenberg 2, B Imrie 4, **BF:** L Ringgenberg 4, B Imrie 16

Webster 14u	AB	R	H	RBI	BB	SO	LOB
B Amdahl (C	2	1	2	0	0	0	0
C Williams (...	2	1	1	0	0	0	2
G Baumgar...	2	1	1	0	0	1	1
B Snaza (SS...	1	2	1	1	1	0	0
B Bearman...	0	1	0	0	2	0	0
T Donse (RF	2	1	1	3	0	0	1
J Shoemake...	1	0	0	0	0	0	1
T Kurkows...	1	0	0	1	0	0	0
D Snaza (CF	0	0	0	0	2	0	0
S Schmig (LF	2	0	0	0	0	2	3
K Kwasnew...	2	0	0	0	0	1	3
Totals	15	7	6	5	5	4	4

TB: G Baumgarn, T Donse, B Snaza, B Amdahl 2, C Williams, **SB:** B Amdahl, **LOB:** 4

Webster 14u	IP	H	R	ER	BB	SO	HR
B Bearman	0.0	3	6	6	3	0	0
C Williams	2.1	6	8	8	6	0	0
J Shoemaker	0.0	10	12	9	0	0	0
T Kurkowski	0.2	2	2	2	1	0	0
Totals	3.0	21	28	23	10	0	0

P-S: T Kurkowski 14-8, B Bearman 17-4, J Shoemaker 38-25, C Williams 59-24, **WP:** J Shoemaker 2, C Williams 5, **BF:** T Kurkowski 6, B Bearman 6, J Shoemaker 12, C Williams 19

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Groton Jr. Teeners 12 - 1 Webster 14u

📍 Away 🎪 Exhibition 📅 Thursday June 25, 2020

	1	2	3	R	H	E
GRTN	4	7	1	12	8	0
WBST	0	0	1	1	2	0

BATTING

Groton Jr. Te	AB	R	H	RBI	BB	SO	LOB
K Hoover (C	2	0	1	0	1	0	0
B Althoff (3B	2	1	2	1	0	0	0
K Antonsen...	2	1	0	1	1	0	2
J Zak (P	3	2	1	1	0	0	3
B Flihs (P	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
C Mcinerne...	1	2	0	0	1	1	1
L Ringgenb...	2	2	2	3	0	0	0
K Kucker (CF	1	0	1	2	1	0	0
B Imrie (2B	1	0	0	0	1	0	1
D Abeln (SS	2	1	1	0	0	0	1
C Dunker	1	1	0	0	0	0	0
CR: R Groe...	0	2	0	0	0	0	0
Totals	17	12	8	8	5	1	3

2B: L Ringgenberg, K Hoover, K Kucker, **TB:** L Ringgenberg 3, B Althoff 2, J Zak, K Hoover 2, D Abeln, K Kucker 2, **HBP:** B Althoff, C Dunker, **SB:** L Ringgenberg, B Althoff 2, J Zak, R Groeblichhoff, K Kucker 2, **LOB:** 3

PITCHING

Groton Jr. Te	IP	H	R	ER	BB	SO	HR
J Zak	2.0	1	1	1	3	1	0
B Flihs	1.0	1	0	0	1	2	0
Totals	3.0	2	1	1	4	3	0

P-S: J Zak 36-19, B Flihs 15-9, **BF:** J Zak 10, B Flihs 5

Webster 14u	AB	R	H	RBI	BB	SO	LOB
B Amdahl (...	1	0	0	0	1	0	1
C Williams (...	2	0	0	0	0	1	2
G Baumgarn	1	0	0	0	1	1	1
B Snaza (3B	2	0	1	1	0	0	1
S Schmig (P	2	0	1	0	0	1	2
T Donse (LF	1	0	0	0	0	0	1
J Shoemake...	0	0	0	0	1	0	0
T Kurkowski...	1	0	0	0	0	0	2
J Mccreary...	1	0	0	0	0	0	2
K Kwasnew...	0	1	0	0	1	0	0
Totals	11	1	2	1	4	3	5

2B: B Snaza, **TB:** S Schmig, B Snaza 2, **SB:** T Donse, **LOB:** 5

Webster 14u	IP	H	R	ER	BB	SO	HR
T Kurkowski	1.0	3	7	7	2	1	0
S Schmig	2.0	5	5	5	3	0	0
Totals	3.0	8	12	12	5	1	0

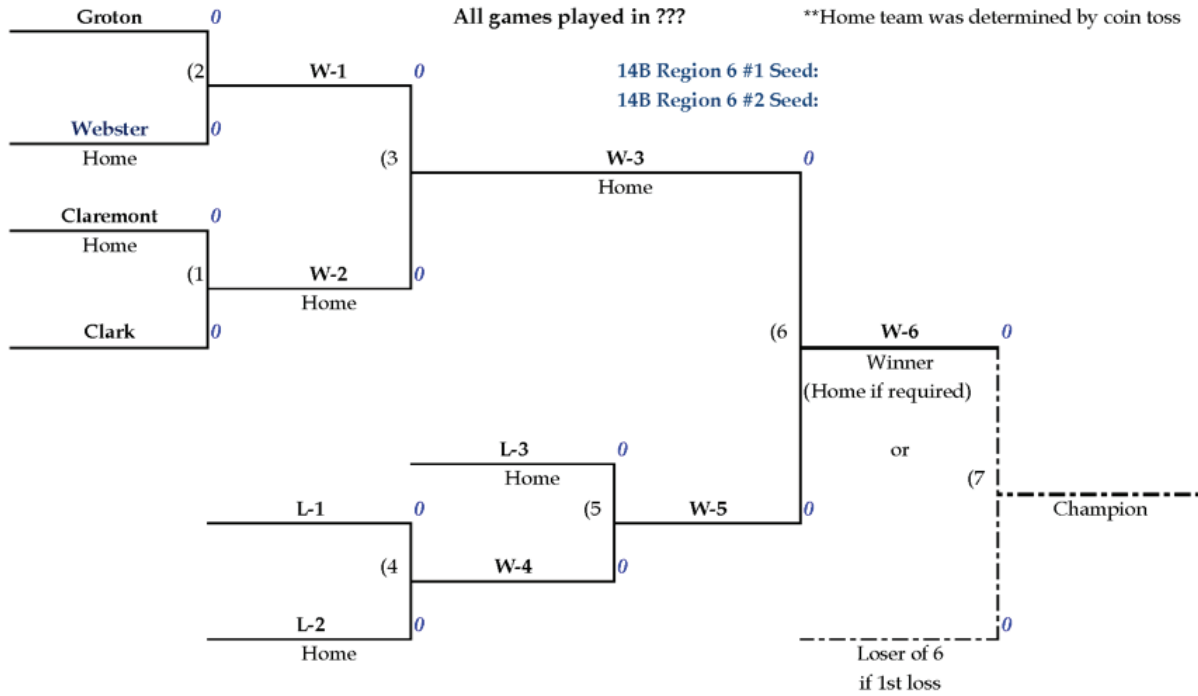
P-S: T Kurkowski 33-15, S Schmig 32-15, **WP:** T Kurkowski 4, **HBP:** T Kurkowski 2, **BF:** T Kurkowski 11, S Schmig 13

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Groton to host VFW Region Jr. Teener Tournament on July. 6

Department of SD VFW Baseball
14U Class B Region 6 Bracket



Game Dates and Times

Date: ??
Game 1 - ??
Game 2 - ??

Game Dates and Times

Date: ??
Game 3 - ??
Game 4 - ??
Game 5 - ??

Game Dates and Times

Date: ??
Game 6 - ??
Game 7 - ?? If required

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STAY SAFE IN THE HEAT

WEATHER.GOV/NYC

H2O TO GO
take a bottle of cold water with you.



PETS
watch out for hot pavement & provide plenty of water.



ENJOY
cold foods & fruits are more refreshing & contain more water.



BE COOL
make use of fans or air-conditioners to stay cool.



OUTDOORS
limit strenuous outdoor activities.



WEAR
light-colored, loose fitting clothing.

SHADE
wear a hat, or use an umbrella



AVOID
alcohol, coffee, tea and salty foods can make dehydration worse.

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Area COVID-19 Cases

	June 17	June 18	June 19	June 20	June 21	June 22	June 23
Minnesota	30,882	31,296	31,675	32,031	32,467	32,920	33,227
Nebraska	17,031	17,226	17,415	17,591	17,707	17,810	17,957
Montana	614	630	655	666	698	717	734
Colorado	29,442	29,673	29,901	30,187	30,349	30,539	30,705
Wyoming	866	884	906	927	930	947	974
North Dakota	3124	3166	3193	3226	3251	3288	3313
South Dakota	5966	6050	6109	6158	6225	6297	6326
United States	2,137,731	2,163,290	2,191,200	2,222,600	2,255,119	2,280,969	2,312,302
US Deaths	116,963	117,717	118,435	119,131	119,719	119,977	120,402

Minnesota	+129	+414	+379	+356	+436	+453	+307
Nebraska	+180	+195	+189	+176	+116	+103	+147
Montana	+5	+16	+25	+11	+32	+19	+17
Colorado	+143	+231	+228	+286	+162	+190	+166
Wyoming	+10	+18	+22	+21	+3	+17	+27
North Dakota	+23	+42	+27	+33	+25	+37	+25
South Dakota	+38	+84	+59	+49	+67	+72	+29
United States	+26,109	+25,559	+27,910	+31,400	+32,519	+25,850	+31,333
US Deaths	+849	+754	+718	+696	+588	+258	+425

	June 24	June 25	June 26	June 27
Minnesota	33,469	33,763	34,123	34,616
Nebraska	18,092	18,221	18,346	18,524
Montana	743	766	803	829
Colorado	30,893	31,155	31,479	31,796
Wyoming	992	1016	1052	1079
North Dakota	3320	3362	3393	3421
South Dakota	6353	6419	6479	6535
United States	2,347,102	2,381,369	2,422,312	2,467,837
US Deaths	121,225	121,979	124,415	125,039

Minnesota	+242	+417	+360	+493
Nebraska	+135	+129	+125	+178
Montana	+9	+23	+37	+26
Colorado	+188	+262	+324	+317
Wyoming	+18	+24	+36	+27
North Dakota	+7*	+42	+31	+28
South Dakota	+27	+66	+60	+56
United States	+34,800	+34,267	+40,943	+45,525
US Deaths	+823	+754	+2,439	+624

* Due to a temporary software issue with the Electronic Lab Reporting System, most of the results from June 22 will be delayed. The issue has been resolved and as the system catches up today, the numbers will be reported out on June 24. Thank you for your understanding.

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June 26th COVID-19 UPDATE

Groton Daily Independent from State Health Lab Reports

It's a mixed bag of results today, but South Dakota is continuing on the road to recovery from COVID-19. South Dakota is down to 795 active cases. It is pretty sure we will not get down to zero, but at least we are on track for reducing the active cases. We have more recovered cases than positive cases today, resulting in an uptick to 86.6 percent recovered in South Dakota.

Deuel and Gregory counties fell off the fully recovered list. Brown County is getting close to fully recovered, down to just 19 active cases now with no new positive cases and three more recovered. There are a number of counties within one of fully recovered and they are Aurora (33 recovered of 34 positive cases), Bon Homme 10-11, Gregory 2-1, Hand 7-6, Hutchinson 9-10 and Turner 23-24.

Meanwhile Spink County got another case and they are now at six active cases. Walworth County got another case so they are now at four active cases.

An 80+ year old female from Pennington County is the latest casualty from the COVID-19 virus in South Dakota.

Brown County:

Active Cases: -3 (19)
Recovered: +3 (314)
Total Positive: 0 (335)
Ever Hospitalized: 0 (18)
Deaths: 2
Negative Tests: +54 (2790)
Percent Recovered: 93.7% (+0.9)

South Dakota:

Positive: +56 (6535 total)
Negative: +1105 (70480 total)
Hospitalized: +7 (639 total). 79 currently hospitalized (No Change)
Deaths: +1 (88 total)
Recovered: +60 (5652) total)
Active Cases: -5 (795)
Percent Recovered: 86.6% Up .2

Counties with no positive cases report the following negative tests: Butte +17 (443), Campbell 61, Haakon +3 (224), Harding +1 (39), Jones 27, Perkins 75, Potter +1 (168), unassigned -20 (4661).

Beadle: +7 positive, +11 recovered (423 of 515 recovered)
Brown: +3 recovered (311 of 335 recovered)
Brule: +1 positive, +1 recovered (11 of 17 recovered)
Buffalo: +1 positive, +1 recovered (51 of 68 recovered)
Charles Mix: +1 positive (24 of 58 recovered)
Clay: +1 recovered (63 of 79 recovered)
Codington: +1 recovered (46 of 51 recovered)
Custer: +2 recovered (3 of 7 recovered)
Davison: +1 positive, +1 recovered (31 of 36 recovered)
Deuel: +2 positive (1 of 3 recovered)
Fall River: +1 positive (4 of 10 recovered)
Gregory: +1 positive (1 of 2 recovered)

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Hanson: +1 recovered (3 of 6 recovered)
 Hughes: +2 recovered (28 of 42 recovered)
 Lake: +1 positive, +1 recovered (16 of 19 recovered)
 Lawrence: +1 positive, +2 recovered (14 of 18 recovered)
 Lincoln: +3 positive, +3 recovered (304 of 332 recovered)
 Lyman: +3 recovered (32 of 55 recovered)
 McCook: +1 positive (6 of 10 recovered)
 Meade: +2 positive, + 2 recovered (36 of 46 recovered)
 Miner: +1 positive (2 of 8 recovered)
 Minnehaha: +17 positive, +9 recovered (3293 of 3577 recovered)
 Oglala Lakota: +3 positive, +1 recovered (41 of 68 recovered)
 Pennington: +4 positive, +9 recovered (337 of 486 recovered)
 Roberts: +1 recovered (38 of 40 recovered)
 Spink: +1 positive (5 of 11 recovered)
 Todd: +1 positive, +2 recovered (44 of 53 recovered)
 Tripp: +2 positive, +2 recovered (10 of 15 recovered)
 Union: +1 recovered (107 of 118 recovered)
 Walworth: +1 positive (5 of 9 recovered)
 Yankton: +3 positive (57 of 74 recovered)

Fully recovered from positive cases (Lost Deuel, Gregory): Day 13-13, Douglas 4-4, Grant 13-13, Hyde 3-3, Marshall 5-5, McPherson 4-4, Sanborn 12-12, Sully 1-1, Ziebach 2-2.

RACE/ETHNICITY OF SOUTH DAKOTA COVID-19 CASES

Race/Ethnicity	# of Cases	% of Cases
Asian, Non-Hispanic	697	11%
Black, Non-Hispanic	965	15%
Hispanic	1067	16%
Native American, Non-Hispanic	906	14%
Other	690	11%
White, Non-Hispanic	2210	34%

The NDDoH & private labs report 4,411 completed tests today for COVID-19 with 29 new positive cases, bringing the statewide total to 3,421. NDDoH reports no new deaths.

State & private labs have reported 169,838 total completed tests.

3,090 ND patients are recovered.

County of Residence	# of Deaths
Beadle	6
Brown	2
Buffalo	1
Faulk	1
Jackson	1
Jerauld	1
Lake	1
Lincoln	1
McCook	1
Meade	1
Minnehaha	56
Pennington	14
Todd	1
Union	1

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County	Positive Cases	Recovered Cases	Negative Cases
Aurora	34	33	276
Beadle	515	423	1380
Bennett	4	1	407
Bon Homme	11	10	552
Brookings	57	40	1570
Brown	335	314	2790
Brule	18	12	446
Buffalo	69	52	431
Butte	0	0	443
Campbell	0	0	61
Charles Mix	58	24	538
Clark	13	10	309
Clay	79	63	900
Codington	51	46	1786
Corson	17	12	133
Custer	7	3	502
Davison	36	31	1534
Day	13	13	386
Deuel	3	1	274
Dewey	4	0	832
Douglas	4	4	298
Edmunds	6	4	291
Fall River	10	4	670
Faulk	23	16	110
Grant	13	13	511
Gregory	2	1	221
Haakon	0	0	224
Hamlin	11	9	346
Hand	7	6	180
Hanson	6	3	127
Harding	0	0	39
Hughes	42	28	1029
Hutchinson	10	9	659

Hyde	3	3	92
Jackson	6	2	297
Jerauld	39	35	225
Jones	0	0	27
Kingsbury	6	3	393
Lake	19	16	642
Lawrence	18	14	1241
Lincoln	332	304	4134
Lyman	55	32	626
Marshall	5	5	276
McCook	10	6	446
McPherson	4	4	159
Meade	46	36	1208
Mellette	3	1	190
Miner	8	2	170
Minnehaha	3577	3293	18619
Moody	21	19	433
Oglala Lakota	68	41	1967
Pennington	486	337	6145
Perkins	0	0	75
Potter	0	0	168
Roberts	40	38	955
Sanborn	12	12	168
Spink	11	5	868
Stanley	12	10	127
Sully	1	1	40
Todd	53	44	912
Tripp	15	10	364
Turner	24	23	633
Union	118	107	1293
Walworth	9	5	377
Yankton	74	57	2156
Ziebach	2	2	138
Unassigned****	0	0	4661

SEX OF SOUTH DAKOTA COVID-19 CASES

Sex	# of Cases	# of Deaths
Female	3154	49
Male	3381	39

Age Range	# of Cases	# of Deaths
0-19 years	669	0
20-29 years	1347	1
30-39 years	1410	3
40-49 years	1059	6
50-59 years	1040	12
60-69 years	590	13
70-79 years	223	11
80+ years	197	42

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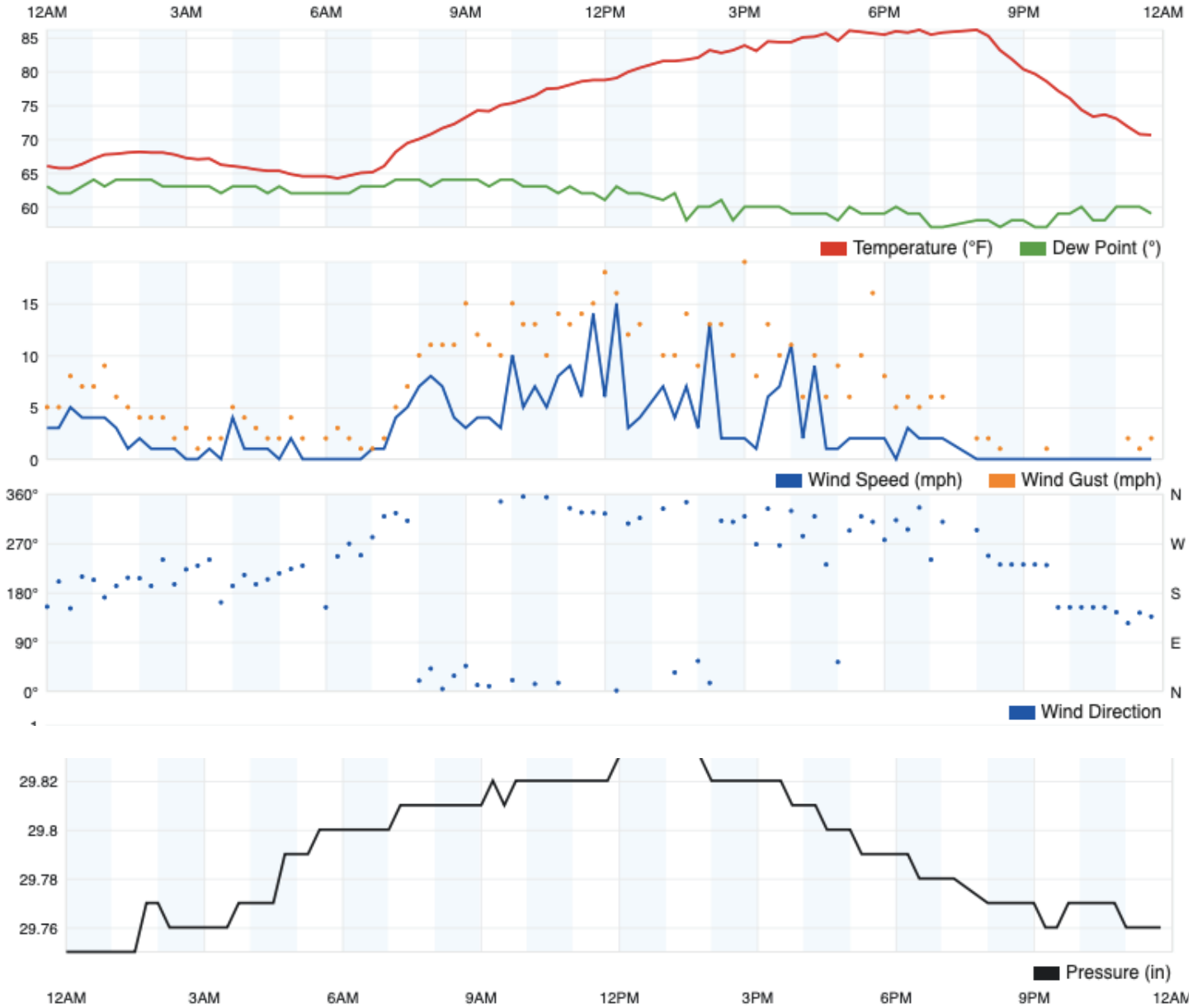
Baseball Schedule

Date	Team	Opponent	Location	Time
June 27	Jr. Teener	Lake Norden	Lake Norden	2:00 (2)
June 27	Legion	Redfield	Redfield	2:00 (1)
June 28	Jr. Teener	Northville	Groton	4:00 (2)
June 29	Jr. Legion	Redfield	Groton	6:00 (2)
June 29	Legion	Webster	Webster	6:00 (2)
June 30	Jr. Legion	Northville	Northville	6:00 (2)
July 1	Jr. Teener	Lake Norden	Groton	5:30 (2)
July 1	Legion	Northville	Northville	6:00 (2)
July 2	Jr. Teener	Clark	Groton	6:00 (2)
July 6	Jr. Legion	Clark	Groton	5:30 (2)
July 7	Legion	Redfield	Redfield	6:00 (2)
July 9	Jr. Legion	Milbank	Milbank	5:30 (1)
July 9	Legion	Milbank	Milbank	7:00 (1)
July 10	Jr. Legion	Faulkton	Groton	6:00 (2)
July 14	Jr. Legion	Lake Norden	Lake Norden	5:30 (1)
July 14	Legion	Lake Norden	Lake Norden	7:00 (1)
July 15	Jr. Legion	Redfield	Redfield	6:00 (2)
July 15	Legion	Webster	Groton	6:00 (2)
July 20	Jr. Legion	Clark	Clark	6:00 (2)
July 20	Legion	Northville	Groton	6:00 (2)

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Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs



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Today



Hot

High: 91 °F

Tonight



Mostly Clear

Low: 68 °F

Sunday



Hot and Breezy

High: 92 °F

Sunday Night



Slight Chance T-storms

Low: 72 °F

Monday

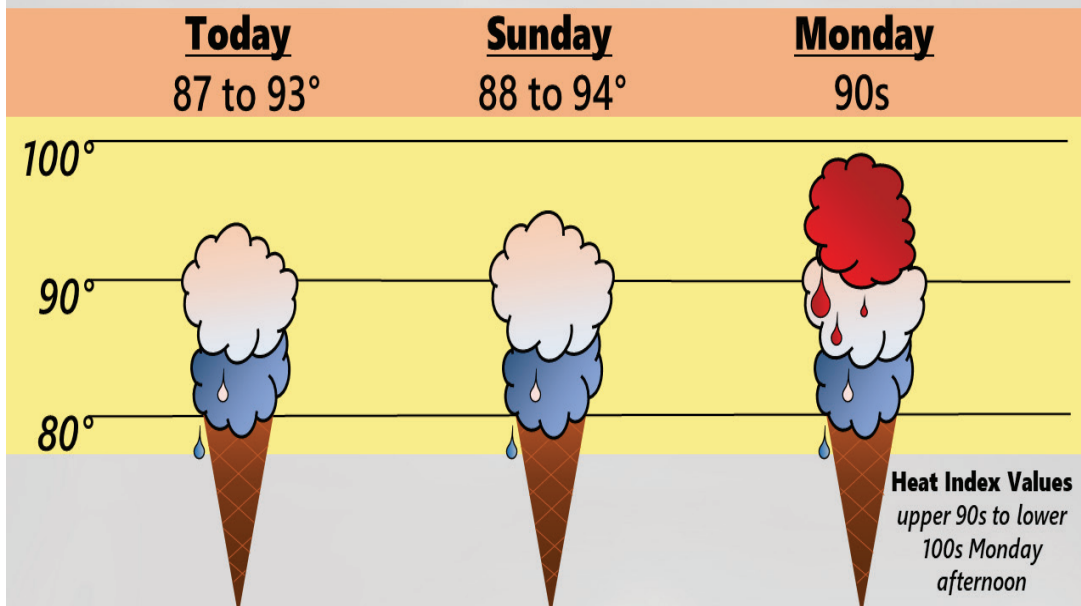


Hot

High: 96 °F

Climbing Temperatures

Hot and Muggy Monday



Hot and Muggy weather approaching! After highs in the upper 80s to low 90s today and Sunday, temperatures will rise into the 90s on Monday. The combination of the hot and humid air will result in potentially dangerous Heat Index values in the 90s to lower 100s Monday afternoon. What can you do during this period of very hot and muggy conditions? Wear light, loose-fitting clothing and drink water often. Don't wait until you are thirsty. Avoid unnecessary hard work or activities outdoors or in a building without air conditioning, and take extra breaks.

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Today in Weather History

June 27, 1894: Three people were injured as a tornado destroyed a home 5 miles north of Houghton in Brown County. Lumber on a wagon was scattered for over a mile. This tornado was estimated to be an F2. Also, a second F2 tornado formed south of Aberdeen and moved northeast and went near Randolph, to beyond Bath. Several barns and two homes were destroyed along the narrow path. Three other small funnels were seen to touch down. Another tornado with estimated F2 strength moved ENE from northeast of St. Lawrence to Bonilla and Hitchcock. At least one home was destroyed. One person was killed in the destruction of her home, north of Wessington. An estimated F2 tornado hit 2 miles south of Henry. At least two small houses were blown away. There was another possible tornado 12 miles north of Henry. Numerous tornadoes continued into Minnesota.

June 27, 1928: A long-lived estimated F2 tornado moved southeast from 7 miles west of Faulkton, passing north and east of Orient. Buildings were damaged on nine farms. One home near Orient was riddled with timbers from a nearby grain elevator. This tornado was estimated to travel a distance of 40 miles.

1915: The temperature at Fort Yukon, Alaska soared to 100 degrees to establish a state record.

1995: The Madison County Flood on June 27, 1995, was the worst flash floods Virginia had seen since the remnants of Camille dropped up to 30 inches of rain one night in Nelson County in August 1969. The Nelson County flood ranked as one of the nation's worst flash floods of this century and resulted in the deaths of 117 people. The Madison County flood killed one person.

2011: Polar temperatures and unusual snowfall chill several cities in Brazil's southern states. Four cities in Santa Catarina state are blanketed in snow. The town of Urubici reported a temperature of 23.9 degrees Fahrenheit with a wind chill of 16.6 degrees below zero. In Florianopolis, the capital of Santa Catarina and a renowned sea resort, thermometers registered 21.2 degrees.

1901 - There was a rain of fish from the sky at Tiller's Ferry. Hundreds of fish were swimming between cotton rows after a heavy shower. (David Ludlum)

1957 - Hurricane Audrey smashed ashore at Cameron, LA, drowning 390 persons in the storm tide, and causing 150 million dollars damage in Texas, Louisiana and Mississippi. Audrey left only a brick courthouse and a cement-block icehouse standing at Cameron, and when the waters settled in the town of Crede, only four buildings remained. The powerful winds of Audrey tossed a fishing boat weighing 78 tons onto an off-shore drilling platform. Winds along the coast gusted to 105 mph, and oil rigs off the Louisiana coast reported wind gusts to 180 mph. A storm surge greater than twelve feet inundated the Louisiana coast as much as 25 miles inland. It was the deadliest June hurricane of record for the U.S. (David Ludlum) (The Weather Channel)

1987 - Thunderstorms moving out of Nebraska produced severe weather in north central Kansas after midnight. Thunderstorm winds gusting to 100 mph damaged more than fifty camping trailers at the state park campground at Lake Waconda injuring sixteen persons. Thunderstorm winds gusted to 80 mph at Beloit and Sylvan Grove. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1988 - The afternoon high of 107 degrees at Bismarck, ND, was a record for the month of June, and Pensacola, FL, equalled their June record with a reading of 101 degrees. Temperatures in the Great Lakes Region and the Ohio Valley dipped into the 40s. (The National Weather Summary)

1989 - Thunderstorms produced severe weather from the Ohio Valley to western New England. Thunderstorm spawned six tornadoes, and there were 98 reports of large hail and damaging winds. Tropical Storm Allison spawned six tornadoes in Louisiana, injuring two persons at Hackberry. Fort Polk LA was drenched with 10.09 inches of rain in 36 hours, and 12.87 inches was reported at the Gorum Fire Tower in northern Louisiana. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

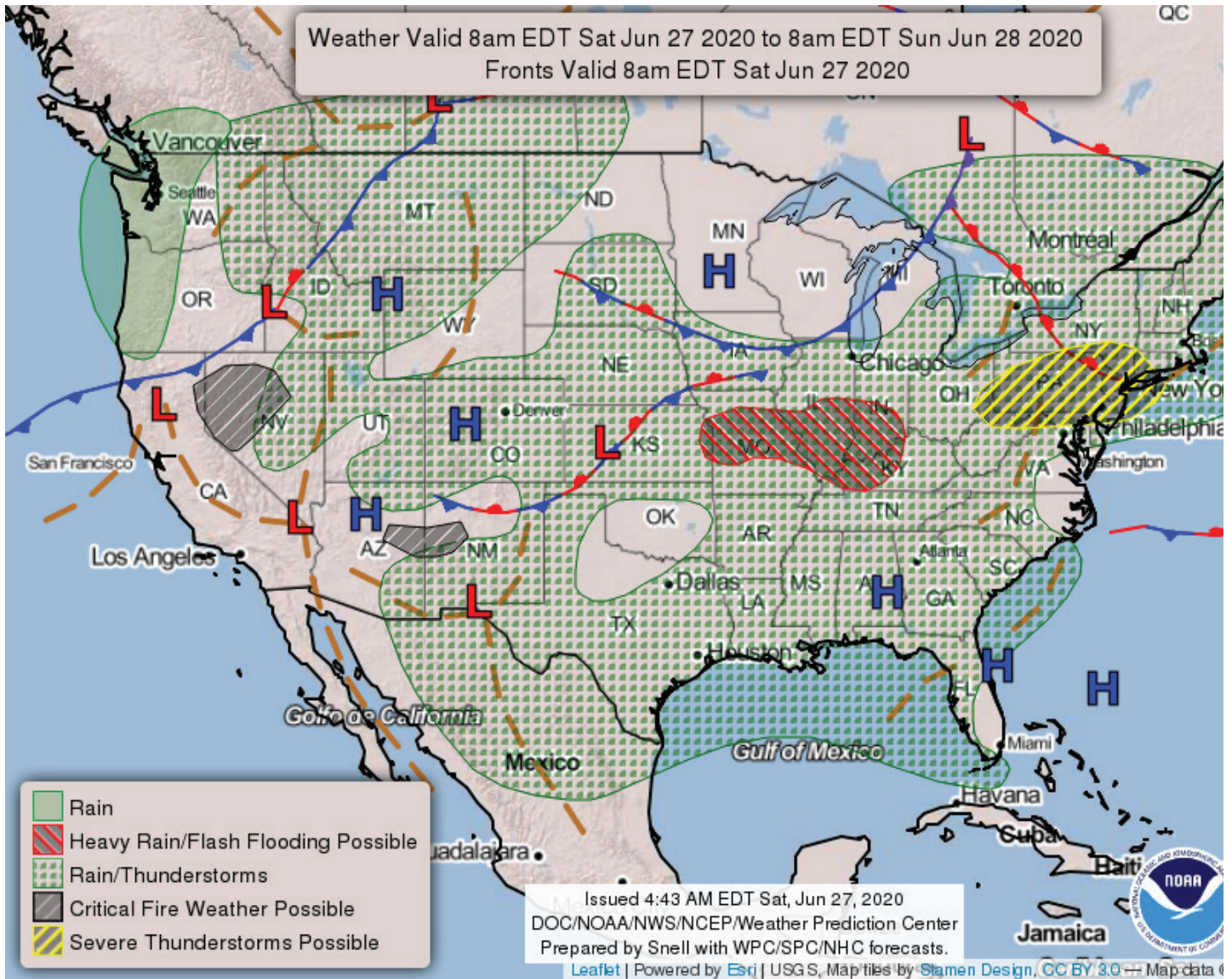
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Yesterday's Groton Weather Today's Info

High Temp: 86 °F at 5:20 PM
Low Temp: 64 °F at 6:07 AM
Wind: 19 mph at 2:55 PM
Precip: .00

Record High: 104° in 1936, 1931
Record Low: 42° in 2017
Average High: 81°F
Average Low: 57°F
Average Precip in June.: 3.22
Precip to date in June.: 2.47
Average Precip to date: 10.36
Precip Year to Date: 7.12
Sunset Tonight: 9:26 p.m.
Sunrise Tomorrow: 5:48 a.m.



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WHAT'S IN A GOAL?

Charlie Brown struck out for the fourth time in the same game. In deep despair, he cried out, "Lucy! I'll never make it. All of my life I've dreamed of playing in the big leagues. But I know now I'll never make it!"

"Charlie," she answered, "choose an immediate goal. When you go out to pitch, see if you can walk to the mound without falling."

What's in a goal?

GUIDANCE: Establishing goals provides a process that enables us to accomplish worthwhile projects in life. Great things can be achieved when we know what we want to do. Goals enable us to make plans, solve problems, make decisions, and set priorities. Then, at the end of the day, we can review our progress or lack of it, redirect our steps, and move forward.

OBJECTIVITY: We all have days when we feel like giving up. But if we have a goal in front of us, we will be able to see progress and know that the struggle is worth the effort.

ACCOUNTABILITY: If we truly want to make a difference in this world, we can find an accountability partner who will work with us to encourage us to "get where we want to go." Being accountable is difficult without someone looking over our shoulder.

LABOR: Anything that has value and worth will require our hard work, patience, perseverance, and prayer. Want God's Help? Do whatever you do for the glory of God!

Prayer: Father, You have given each of us a reason for living and a purpose to accomplish. May we use the talents You have given us to achieve great things for You. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: I press on to reach the end of the race and receive the heavenly prize for which God, through Christ Jesus, is calling us. Philippians 3:13-14

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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
- 07/04/2020 Firecracker Golf Tourney at Olive Grove Golf Course
- 07/12/2020 Summer Fest/Car Show
- 07/16/2020 Olive Grove Golf Course Pro Am Golf Tourney
- 07/24/2020 Olive Grove Golf Course Ferney Open 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

News from the Associated Press

SD Lottery

By The Associated Press undefined

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

Mega Millions

19-33-37-56-57, Mega Ball: 6, Megaplier: 2

(nineteen, thirty-three, thirty-seven, fifty-six, fifty-seven; Mega Ball: six; Megaplier: two)

Estimated jackpot: \$44 million

Powerball

Estimated jackpot: \$42 million

Hard-hit tribe takes strict steps as virus surges in Arizona

By FELICIA FONSECA Associated Press

FLAGSTAFF, Ariz. (AP) — People in the deserts of Arizona flee to the White Mountains when the triple-digit heat is too much to bear, cooling off in the forest a few hours away. That worries a Native American tribe that calls the area home, as coronavirus infections and temperatures have both spiked in one of the hardest-hit states.

The White Mountain Apache Tribe is taking some of the most drastic actions in Arizona to protect its 13,500 residents, more than one-eighth of whom have already tested positive for COVID-19. It's taking cues from severe measures imposed by other tribes nationwide, including the Navajo Nation, which has curtailed an outbreak that once made it a national hot spot.

Those living on the White Mountain Apache Tribe's reservation in northeastern Arizona face the risk of fines and other penalties if they venture beyond their own yards this weekend. A two-week shelter-in-place order will follow. The tribe's Fort Apache Reservation also is closed to the summertime visitors who flock to the area to fish, hike and camp among ponderosa pines.

The tribe's confirmed infections and 20 deaths as of Friday make the reservation one of the hardest-hit places in a state that's recording over 3,000 cases a day and running short on hospital space.

"COVID has just turned our world upside down," White Mountain Apache Chairwoman Gwendena Lee-Gatewood said.

The tribe also is ordering homeless people who test positive for the virus to quarantine at the tribe's casino-hotel — now closed to visitors — and is banning the sale and use of alcohol for the rest of the year. Lee-Gatewood hopes it will help keep people safe if they get lax about social distancing and other measures when they're drinking.

The tribe's strict steps come as Arizona Gov. Doug Ducey has declined to impose new restrictions on businesses like other states where confirmed cases are surging. Fellow Republican governors in Texas and Florida cracked down on bars Friday.

Ducey, who lifted a stay-at-home order in mid-May, has now paused further efforts to reopen the economy and allowed cities to require face coverings, without bowing to pressure for a statewide mandate.

Lee-Gatewood said the White Mountain Apache Tribe took that into consideration, along with the typical summer crowds, when deciding how to target the pandemic on its land.

"We're seeing these visitors not paying attention to social distancing and wearing masks, and the governor had a real relaxed attitude about all of that in reopening the businesses back up," she said.

Elsewhere in Arizona, officials on the Havasupai reservation deep in a gorge off the Grand Canyon warned river rafters they would be detained if they stepped foot on land the tribe traditionally uses but isn't part of its formal reservation. Known worldwide for its towering blue-green waterfalls, the reservation has been shut down for months and has no reported COVID-19 cases.

"We are left to take aggressive action to maintain the safety of our tribal members and the future of the

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Havasupai Tribe," Chairwoman Evangeline Kisson wrote in a notice to river guides.

After talking with Grand Canyon National Park, the tribe said it would station law enforcement at its boundary with the park, miles from the Colorado River shore.

The nearby Navajo Nation, the nation's largest Native American reservation that spans parts of Arizona, New Mexico and Utah, has attributed a slowdown in infections to a daily curfew it's had in place for months, a shutdown of government offices and tourist sites, weekend lockdowns and a mask requirement.

On tribal land elsewhere, residents of the tiny Alaska Native village of Napaskiak are being advised to stay home until July 5, leaving only for medical needs or quick runs to the grocery store. A health care corporation that serves the village and dozens of other rural communities pointed to a "strong likelihood" of community spread.

In Montana, tribal leaders on the Blackfeet Indian Reservation said this week that they closed their boundary with popular Glacier National Park for the tourism season to protect their residents.

The Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe in South Dakota has kept up roadblocks since March despite criticism from the state's governor. Tribal Chairman Harold Frazier said this week that the tribe took the step because it realized it had to protect its people.

"All we have is ourselves," he said.

In Arizona, the White Mountain Apache Tribe said people can travel on a highway through its land, but they can't stop along the way. Tribal police also are considering checkpoints, and a COVID-19 testing blitz is planned.

"There's frustration, there's impatience, there's a lot of things," tribal Councilman Jerold Altaha said in a video. "But remember, we are doing the best we can, we are doing everything we can to help you."

They're looking to prevent more people from dying, like Apache elder Timothy Clawson Sr., 91. He married his sweetheart under a tree on the reservation and spent his life in the White Mountains, working as a rancher and at a sawmill.

Lee-Gatewood, the tribal chairwoman, recalled their last conversation. Clawson called earlier this month and said, "Well, chairwoman, I'm at the hospital, and they told me I have this virus. They treated me, and the doctors said I wouldn't leave here, and I'm calling to say my goodbyes."

Lee-Gatewood said Clawson told her that he was proud of her.

"You're a tough cowboy," she responded. "I'll keep you in my prayers."

The next day, Lee-Gatewood got a text from Clawson's granddaughter: He had died.

Associated Press writers Becky Bohrer in Juneau, Alaska, and Matt Volz in Helena, Montana, contributed to this report.

Lifelong friends march in solidarity in Sioux Falls

By ABIGAIL DOLLINS Argus Leader

SIOUX FALLS S.D. (AP) — Mariyom Deng and Liz Magnuson grew up together. If you asked them how they knew each other, they would say they're sisters.

On the night of May 31, the pair held on to one another as they marched the streets of Sioux Falls with hundreds of other protesters in response to the killing of George Floyd in Minneapolis.

Marching with her childhood friend was important to Deng, an African American woman whose parents immigrated from Sudan.

"I need people to see that there can be a greater love between two different individuals of two different races," Deng said.

Deng was 3 years old when Magnuson's mother, Jean, became her preschool teacher. When Deng's mother, Achol, needed a break, the Magnusons would watch her. Deng's mom worked long, hard hours to support her husband, Peter, who was still in Sudan at the time.

Although they are six years apart, they quickly grew close. The young girls would spend their evenings in old dance recital costumes they pulled out of Magnuson's closet. Dressed in neon wigs, and the fluff

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of bright pink and red tutus, they would sing Hannah Montana songs as they danced around Magnuson's basement.

"When I think about all the weekends we spent together, I never think of it as us helping them," Magnuson told the Argus Leader. "I think of it as them helping us. I have learned so much from her family."

Deng's father eventually immigrated to the United States when she was 5 years old. The families would spend Thanksgiving together around the dinner table. The two families became one.

Prior to the march, it had been months since Deng and Magnuson last saw each other. Deng moved to Brookings in 2012 with her family and visits became less frequent. While they were eager to catch up, they knew important conversations needed to happen. Their hearts felt heavy. Deng spilled her thoughts to Magnuson about what she has experienced being a black woman in South Dakota. At one time in her life, she felt confused by her identity.

"I felt like I had to assimilate and act like every other white girl I was friends with," she said. "In a way, I lost myself. I started straightening my hair and tried to look as normal as possible. That hurt me, because I was trying to change myself for people who were already willing to accept me for who I was in the first place."

During that Sunday's marches, Deng embraced who she is. She took off her wig and painted her face with designs of bright silver, which represented Sudan. In dark letters, she wrote on her poster, "Give my baby brothers the future they deserve!!!"

Deng led the way as Magnuson stood by her. Magnuson spent her whole life acting as an older sibling to Deng, teaching her things like how to tie her shoes. But as they navigated Sunday evening's protest together, she knew that she would never be able to understand the struggles Deng and her siblings may go through.

As the two clung to one another, they protected each other. They reflected on those conversations they had while getting ready just hours before. They felt anger as they thought about the injustices black people endure, but felt peace seeing a community march together. They thought about George Floyd.

"Every time I see (George Floyd's) picture, I see one of my little brothers under that knee," Deng said. "I don't want that to be the type of world they live in."

Longtime South Dakota amateur radio operator signs off

By TANYA MANUS Rapid City Journal

RAPID CITY, S.D. (AP) — Sapphire Lane lost its signature radio antenna and tower this month when the neighborhood's amateur radio operator, Lewis Rohrer, signed off from his longtime hobby.

"It was the landmark of Sapphire Lane," Rohrer said, chuckling as he recalled that when his neighbors had company, they gave directions "look for that big tower and we live near that."

For Rohrer, selling his tower and antenna that stretched to 70 feet high, and selling some radio equipment, wraps up a lifelong passion. Radio put him in contact with people around the world. A radio operator from Selby bought Rohrer's antenna and tower, dismantled them and removed them June 12.

"I've enjoyed it and I've done my thing," Rohrer told the Rapid City Journal.

Rohrer was a longtime member, former president and former treasurer for the nonprofit W0BLK Black Hills Amateur Radio Club. Rohrer, known by his call sign K0LEW, was one of between 75 and 80 amateur radio operators in the Black Hills.

Rohrer grew up on a farm in North Dakota during the Depression and World War II. From childhood, Rohrer had a fascination with mechanical things, especially radio.

"My dad always subscribed to 'Mechanix Illustrated' and when he wasn't reading it, I devoured it as a young lad and read articles about radio," Rohrer said.

"About 1940 or 1941 there was an article about ordering a crystal radio kit. I scrounged what money I had and ordered that and built it. ... I wound my own coil and used a (detector called) a cat whisker on a little round piece of galena crystal, and I really ate that up," he chuckled. "We never did have electricity on the farm. The radio was strictly powered by the airwaves (radio signals)."

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Rohrer fondly remembers listening to Bismarck's KFJR radio station and, late at night, KOA out of Oklahoma City.

"They just boomed in our little farmhouse and it was late at night and I know I'd fall asleep with my earphones on, listening. That's what really got me into it — building my own radio," he said.

Rohrer and his family moved from the farm, and in the mid-1940s Rohrer had the opportunity to join the Bismarck amateur (ham) radio club.

"I tried to learn more about radio but I struggled with radio tube theory that you had to (know) to get licensed," Rohrer said. "In the 1950s, I joined the Air Force and finally did more studying. I finally got my first license (from the Federal Communications Commission), which was a novice license. It was strictly Morse code stuff."

"As a novice, it was a hobby. You talked to other people that were on the air that did American Morse code. I think it was five or eight words a minute. Today nobody uses code anymore," Rohrer said.

Rohrer, who jokes that he always wanted to move south, has lived in South Dakota since 1956 when he was stationed at Ellsworth Air Force Base during the Korean War. After four years in the Air Force, Rohrer spent his 30-year professional career as a banker. Banking gave him skills that aided his radio hobby.

Rohrer upgraded to become a general class license holder, and then held an advanced license for many years, he said. One of his friends talked him into taking the test to earn an extra class license, which is highest level of license of amateur radio operators.

"It's a lot of theory and algebra and trigonometry ... because you had to calculate out antennas and circuits and design circuits," Rohrer said. "I guess during my professional career I did a lot of math because it came easy and then I finally got the extra class license."

Rohrer still has his extra class license, which he first earned 35 years ago, and his call sign remains active. He retired from banking 30 years ago, and Rohrer recalled many opportunities and adventures radio has brought him in his retirement years.

"I talked all around the world to various (ham radio operators) in different countries, and that was fun. English is the international language to talk on ham radio. People that would try to speak English would do their best and speak slow, but we made it through and talked about mainly radio. No politics and no religion. That was subjects you stayed away from to make sure everything was friendly," Rohrer said. "If I would be wanting to contact anybody on the airwaves, I would call and say this is KOLEW, Rapid City, South Dakota, listening for anybody that would like to talk to me."

A tradition that's fading is for amateur radio operators to exchange postcards. Rohrer estimates he's got a stack of thousands of postcards from all over the world.

"In past years, when we would talk to a ham we hadn't talked to before, we would mail a QSL, a 3-by-5 card with the date we contacted them and the frequency and maybe a short note," Rohrer said. "But with postage costs, it's kind of a lost art."

Rohrer was part of amateur radio emergency services in the Black Hills. Among his many contributions over the years, he designed a system for emergency use for Pennington and Meade counties using a digital form of radio instead of code or voice.

"You had to have the proper equipment in order to listen in, so it was fairly secret from the general population," Rohrer said. "In an emergency, you don't want to just pass out information."

During an emergency such as the 1972 flood, radio operators could use a laptop computer and necessary equipment and travel among Red Cross or other shelters trying to track down relatives or provide other communication as needed, Rohrer said.

When the 1972 flood hit, Rohrer was in demand for his flying skills he'd learned in the Air Force, not his radio expertise. At the time, Pennington County Sheriff Glen Best owned his own plane, and Rohrer had a pilot's license.

"I flew Glen's plane up and down Rapid Creek trying to see if I could find bodies. That was my expertise at the time," Rohrer said.

During Desert Storm and Desert Shield, Rohrer became a military operator on military frequencies.

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Military-affiliate radio stations were appointed by the government, he said.

"We had special call signs to get onto the military frequencies to pass traffic between the United States and Saudi Arabia. I believe I was the only one in the Black Hills area (in that program) that talked directly to Saudi Arabia and Kuwait," Rohrer said.

In those days before smartphones, texting and Zoom, Rohrer provided a vital service to military families. He didn't pass along military information to Saudi Arabia and Kuwait. Instead, he gave Black Hills area families a means to communicate with deployed loved ones.

"I had my radio system here in my home tied into the telephone circuit so I could catch a GI on the radio and switch it to my phone and call his wife or girlfriend, and they could talk back and forth. I enjoyed doing that because I was retired at the time and always looking for something to do," Rohrer said.

Radio never failed to give him something to do. Rohrer installed and removed radio antennas on the KOTA radio tower and at Terry Peak for other amateur radio operators. He gave demonstrations of ham radio for tourists at Mount Rushmore, and for the public at special events.

His wife had been a teacher, so Rohrer also gave presentations in local fifth- and sixth-grade classrooms.

"I took my portable stations and I'd take it into the classroom and set up the antenna wherever I could run a coaxial cable into the classroom and make contacts and let the kids talk to various people. I took my portable computer and set that up and I'd send international Morse code and the computer would print it out in English so the kids could see what I was sending and receiving," Rohrer said. "The kids ate that up. That was fun. They seemed to get a big charge out of that."

None of those students got involved in ham radio, Rohrer said. Radio doesn't seem to intrigue younger generations.

"In this day and age it's hard to get young people interested in amateur radio. They've got cellphones. They don't need to learn what radio is all about to talk to people wherever. Unless they've really got an interest in radio, it's tough," Rohrer said.

Judge: Alaska corporations can get tribal virus relief money

By FELICIA FONSECA Associated Press

FLAGSTAFF, Ariz. (AP) — Alaska Native corporations are eligible for a share of coronavirus relief funding set aside for tribes, a federal judge ruled late Friday in a case that has been closely watched around Indian Country.

U.S. District Judge Amit Mehta in Washington, D.C., initially granted a request from tribal nations to withhold money from the corporations while he determined whether they qualified for a share of \$8 billion.

Mehta said the corporations can be treated as tribal governments for limited purposes after sorting through arguments that picked apart the language in the Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security Act, congressional intent and the history of other federal laws.

"It stands to reason that Congress, in its effort to distribute emergency funds quickly to Indians under the CARES Act, intended to get those dollars in the hands of the same entities that deliver public services to Indians," he wrote. "In the lower 48 states, those entities are largely Tribal governments in the traditional sense, but in Alaska, those entities include Alaska Native village and regional corporations."

Various tribes that sued said they were reviewing the decision and deciding on next steps.

"We sincerely believe that Alaska Native corporations are not governments and should not be allowed to access funding that is intended to go to tribal governments," said Rémi Bald Eagle, a spokesman for the Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe in South Dakota.

The Treasury Department, responsible for doling out the money, did not immediately respond to a request for comment. It withheld more than \$162 million for Alaska Native corporations from an initial disbursement that was based on population data, according to court documents. The total hasn't publicly been disclosed.

Alaska Native corporations are unique to Alaska and own most of the Native land in the state under a 1971 settlement known as the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act. The corporations were not party to lawsuits regarding the relief funding but have said they support Alaska Natives economically, socially and

culturally.

"This disaster assistance will provide immediate support to Alaska's rural communities suffering from COVID-19 and help repair the economic damage caused by the pandemic," said Kim Reitmeier, executive director of the ANCSA Regional Association.

Tribes had expressed concern that a ruling in favor of the corporations would lead to competition between tribal nations and the corporations for limited federal resources.

Mehta disputed that, saying his ruling in no way elevates the corporations to "super tribal status," as some plaintiffs argued, or fosters competition.

"Today's decision would result in critical congressional funding intended for Indian tribal governments being diverted to state-chartered corporate entities with no governance authority and no governmental duties to tribal citizens in Alaska," the National Congress of American Indians said in a statement Friday.

The Alaska Federation of Natives said it understands that the more than 200 Alaska Native tribes have sovereignty that doesn't extend to corporations through any federal law or policy.

Associated Press writer Stephen Groves in Sioux City, South Dakota, contributed to this report.

Pennington County GOP warns convention attendee had COVID-19

RAPID CITY, S.D. (AP) — The Pennington County Republican party has warned members that they may have been exposed to the coronavirus at a Saturday event after one attendee tested positive this week.

Ed Randazzo, who chairs the Resolution Committee for the state GOP, confirmed to The Associated Press that he tested positive and is now at home recovering. He said that he did not have a fever or cough on Saturday, the day of the event, but his conditions later worsened. The Pennington County GOP held an in-person event to participate in the statewide party convention, which was held electronically this year, South Dakota Public Broadcasting reported.

Randazzo said that people who attended the event adhered to social distancing guidelines.

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.

Native Americans protesting Trump trip to Mount Rushmore

By STEPHEN GROVES Associated Press

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — President Donald Trump's plans to kick off Independence Day with a showy display at Mount Rushmore have angered Native Americans, who view the monument as a desecration of land violently stolen from them and used to pay homage to leaders hostile to Indigenous people.

Several groups led by Native American activists are planning protests for Trump's July 3 visit, part of Trump's "comeback" campaign for a nation reeling from sickness, unemployment and, recently, social unrest. The event is slated to include fighter jets thundering over the 79-year-old stone monument in South Dakota's Black Hills and the first fireworks display at the site since 2009.

But it comes amid a national reckoning over racism and a reconsideration of the symbolism of monuments around the globe. Many Native American activists say the Rushmore memorial is as reprehensible as the many Confederate monuments being toppled around the nation.

"Mount Rushmore is a symbol of white supremacy, of structural racism that's still alive and well in society today," said Nick Tilsen, a member of the Oglala Lakota tribe and the president of a local activist organization called NDN Collective. "It's an injustice to actively steal Indigenous people's land, then carve the white faces of the colonizers who committed genocide."

While some activists, like Tilsen, want to see the monument removed and the Black Hills returned to the Lakota, others have called for a share in the economic benefits from the region.

Trump has long shown a fascination with Mount Rushmore. South Dakota Gov. Kristi Noem said in 2018 that he once told her straight-faced that it was his dream to have his face carved into the monument. He

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later joked at a campaign rally about getting enshrined alongside George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, Theodore Roosevelt and Abraham Lincoln. And while it was Noem, a Republican, who pushed for a return of fireworks on the eve of Independence Day, Trump committed to visiting South Dakota for the celebration.

Some wildfire experts have raised concerns the pyrotechnics could spark fires, especially because the region has seen dry weather this year. Firefighters called in crews from two other states to help Thursday as a blaze consumed approximately 150 acres (61 hectares) about 6 miles (10 kilometers) south of the monument.

The four faces, carved into the mountain with dynamite and drills, are known as the "shrine to democracy." The presidents were chosen by sculptor Gutzon Borglum for their leadership during four phases of American development: Washington led the birth of the nation; Jefferson sparked its westward expansion; Lincoln preserved the union and emancipated slaves; Roosevelt championed industrial innovation.

And yet, for many Native American people, including the Lakota, Cheyenne, Omaha, Arapaho, Kiowa and Kiowa-Apache, the monument is a desecration to the Black Hills, which they consider sacred. Lakota people know the area as Paha Sapa — "the heart of everything that is."

As monuments to Confederate and Colonial leaders have been removed nationwide, some conservatives have expressed fear that Mount Rushmore could be next. Commentator Ben Shapiro this week suggested that the "woke historical revisionist priesthood" wanted to blow up the monument. Noem responded by tweeting, "Not on my watch."

The governor told Fox News on Wednesday, "These men have flaws, obviously every leader has flaws, but we're missing the opportunity we have in this discussion to talk about the virtues and what they brought to this country, and the fact that this is the foundation that we're built on and the heritage we should be carrying forward."

Tim Giago, a journalist who is a member of the Oglala Lakota tribe, said he doesn't see four great American leaders when he looks at the monument; he sees four white men who either made racist remarks or initiated actions that removed Native Americans from their land. Washington and Jefferson held slaves. Lincoln, though he led the abolition of slavery, approved the hanging of 38 Dakota men in Minnesota after a violent conflict with white settlers there. Roosevelt is reported to have said, "I don't go so far as to think that the only good Indians are dead Indians, but I believe nine out of every 10 are ..."

The monument has long been a "Rorschach test," said John Taliaferro, author of "Great White Fathers," a history of the monument. "All sorts of people can go there and see it in different ways."

The monument often starts conversations on the paradox of American democracy — that a republic that promoted the ideals of freedom, determination and innovation also enslaved people and drove others from their land, he said.

"If we're having this discussion today about what American democracy is, Mount Rushmore is really serving its purpose because that conversation goes on there," he said. "Is it fragile? Is it permanent? Is it cracking somewhat?"

The monument was conceived in the 1920s as a tourist draw for the new fad in vacationing called the road trip. South Dakota historian Doane Robinson recruited Borglum to abandon his work creating the Stone Mountain Confederate Memorial in Georgia, which was to feature Robert E. Lee, Jefferson Davis and Stonewall Jackson.

Borglum was a member of the Ku Klux Klan, according to Mount Rushmore historian and writer Tom Griffith. Borglum joined the Klan to raise money for the Confederate memorial, and Griffith argues his allegiance was more practical than ideological.

Native American activists have long staged protests at the site to raise awareness of the history of the Black Hills, which were seized despite treaties with the United States protecting the land. Fifty years ago, a group of activists associated with an organization called United Native Americans climbed to the top of the monument and occupied it.

Quanah Brightman, who now runs United Native Americans, said the activism in the 1970s grew out of the civil rights movement of the 1960s. He hopes a similar movement for Native Americans comes from

the Black Lives Matter movement.

"What people find here is the story of America — it's multidimensional, it's complex," Griffith said. "It's important to understand it was people just trying to do right as best they knew it then."

The White House declined to comment.

Tribal health board: Native Americans hit hard by COVID-19

RAPID CITY, S.D. (AP) — Native American people are being disproportionately affected by the coronavirus, accounting for over half of the confirmed cases in one South Dakota county, according to data from the Great Plains Tribal Chairmen's Health Board released on Friday.

Tribal leaders have long been concerned that the coronavirus could decimate their members because many are elderly and have existing health problems. Data from two large Rapid City health care providers reveals that 53% of people with confirmed cases in Pennington County are tribal members, the Rapid City Journal reported. Statewide, Native Americans account for 14% of all cases, while they make up about 9% of the population.

"This shocking revelation must serve as a warning for our people and as a wake-up call to the city, state and federal governments to take immediate steps to slow its spread among our people," said Great Plains Tribal Chairmen's Health Board CEO Jerilyn Church in a video message.

The organization, which operates a clinic in Rapid City and advocates for improved health care for Native Americans, said it collected data from Monument Health and the Great Plains Tribal Epidemiology Center. It also held its first mass testing event last weekend, which revealed that three of the 200 people tested had the COVID-19 virus. Church said the organization is planning two more mass testing events in the coming weeks.

Tribal leaders have argued that Native American communities need to be vigilant against outbreaks, especially because South Dakota has not issued a statewide lockdown during the pandemic. They fear that COVID-19, the disease caused by the virus, could be deadly for tribal communities, where multiple generations often live together in one household.

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

Several tribes have set up coronavirus checkpoints to keep unnecessary visitors from the reservation. But state and federal authorities argue the checkpoints are not approved and block access to U.S. and state highways.

So far, tribes in South Dakota have not seen major outbreaks, although many Native Americans frequently travel between Rapid City and the reservations.

South Dakota launches coronavirus counseling program

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — South Dakota is launching a program to provide counseling and support for people affected by the coronavirus pandemic, the Department of Social Services announced Friday.

The program is encouraging people to call 211, a state crisis hotline, if they feel the stress or financial burden from the pandemic. Department of Social Services Secretary Laurie Gill said the program can connect people with counseling or financial assistance.

"Many individuals have been isolated from their families, have lost jobs or their businesses — the pandemic has impacted so many and we want to find a way to support them," she said in a statement.

The state received a grant of \$210,723 from the Federal Emergency Management Agency to start the program.

Meanwhile, health officials on Friday reported one more death from COVID-19, along with 56 new cases. The woman who died was over the age of 80 and a Pennington County resident. The state has confirmed a total of 6,535 cases of the virus, but 86% of those have recovered. 88 people have died.

For most people, the coronavirus causes mild or moderate symptoms. For some, especially older adults

and people with existing health problems, it can cause more severe illness, including pneumonia, and death.

Rebuilding from tornado done at Sioux Falls health center

SIoux FALLS, S.D. (AP) — The rebuilding process has been complete at Avera Behavioral Health Center in Sioux Falls where a tornado struck the hospital complex last September.

Avera said all services at the center have now reopened.

One of three EF-2 tornadoes pummeled the hospital campus Sept. 10.

Nurse manager Natasha Sundet arrived at the center after the patients had been moved and said she hardly recognized the hospital and grounds.

"There are big chunks of metal hanging from the building; broken glass everywhere; tree limbs and trash; cars that have been picked up and moved with their windows blown out," Sundet said in the aftermath. "When I walked into the building there was water pouring in through the ceiling. I have never seen anything like it."

Dr. Matt Stanley remembers driving to Avera Behavioral Health the right after the tornado hit.

"You see, building material, you know, several blocks away," said Stanley.

"Surprising that no one was hurt. And as we walked through the facility and look at that destruction, realize how many patients we had to move with just a few minutes of warning," Stanley told KSFY-TV.

Staff had 10 minutes of warning to move 102 patients to safer areas.

While the care continued in undamaged parts of the building and elsewhere, construction crews made changes to the 108-bed center to create more open spaces.

Germany cautions virus risk still high as economies restart

By DAVID RISING and PAUL J. WEBER Associated Press

BERLIN (AP) — German Chancellor Angela Merkel cautioned Saturday that the coronavirus pandemic is far from over, as regional outbreaks gave rise to fears of a second wave. Two of the largest U.S. states reversed course and reinstated some coronavirus restrictions amid a surge in new infections.

India reported more than 18,000 new cases, pushing its cumulative total over the half-million mark, the fourth highest globally behind the U.S., Brazil and Russia. Elsewhere, Egypt and Britain said they would ease virus controls, while China and South Korea battled smaller outbreaks in their capitals.

Merkel said in her weekly video podcast that getting Europe's economy back on track is her primary goal as Germany takes over the rotating European Union presidency next week, but stressed that everyone shared a "joint responsibility" in following social distancing, mask and hygiene rules as lockdown rules are relaxed.

German authorities renewed a lockdown in a western region of about 500,000 people last week after about 1,300 slaughterhouse workers tested positive for COVID-19, in an attempt to prevent the outbreak from spreading across the area.

Germany has recorded nearly 195,000 coronavirus infections and only around 9,000 deaths, with more than 177,000 recoveries, according to a Johns Hopkins University tally.

"The risk posed by the virus is still serious," Merkel said. "It's easy to forget because Germany has gotten through the crisis well so far, but that doesn't mean we are protected, that the risk has been averted; that is not the case, as is demonstrated by these regional outbreaks."

Fans of Germany's Schalke soccer club planned to demonstrate later in the day at the stadium against chairman Clemens Toennies, one of whose companies owns the slaughterhouse where the outbreak began. Workplace and living conditions for migrant workers employed at the facility have come into focus after the outbreak.

In the U.S., the daily number of confirmed infections surged to an all-time high of 45,300 on Friday, eclipsing the previous high of 40,000 set the previous day, according to Johns Hopkins. Newly reported cases per day have risen on average about 60% over the past two weeks, according to an Associated

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Press analysis.

While the rise partly reflects expanded testing, experts say there is ample evidence the scourge is making a comeback, including rising deaths and hospitalizations in parts of the country and higher percentages of virus tests coming back positive.

About 600 people are dying every day from the coronavirus in the U.S., down from a peak of around 2,200 in mid-April. Some experts doubt that deaths will return to that level, because of advances in treatment and prevention and because younger adults are more likely than older ones to survive.

The virus is blamed for about 125,000 deaths and nearly 2.5 million confirmed infections nationwide in the U.S., by Johns Hopkins' count. But health officials believe the true number of infections is about 10 times higher. Worldwide, the virus has claimed close to a half-million lives with nearly 10 million cases.

Texas Gov. Greg Abbott ordered all bars closed, and Florida banned alcohol at such establishments. They joined a small but growing number of states that are either backtracking or putting any further reopening of their economies on hold because of a comeback by the virus, mostly in the country's South and West.

Health experts have said a disturbingly large number of cases are being seen among young people who are going out again, often without wearing masks or observing other social-distancing rules.

"It is clear that the rise in cases is largely driven by certain types of activities, including Texans congregating in bars," Abbott said.

The Republican governor, who had pursued one of the most aggressive reopening schedules of any state, also scaled back restaurant capacity and said outdoor gatherings of more than 100 people would need approval from local officials.

Mayor Carlos Gimenez in Florida's Miami-Dade County announced Friday night that he would close beaches over the Fourth of July weekend. He said cracking down on recreational activities is prudent given the growing number of infections among young adults.

Florida's agency that regulates bars acted after the daily number of new confirmed cases neared 9,000, almost doubling the record set just two days earlier.

Colleen Corbett, a 30-year-old bartender at two places in Tampa, said that she was disappointed and worried about being unemployed again, but that the restrictions are the right move. Most customers were not wearing masks, she said.

"It was like they forgot there was a pandemic or just stopped caring," Corbett said.

Elsewhere, Britain was expected to scrap a 14-day quarantine requirement for people returning from abroad in a bid to make summer vacation travel possible. Only travelers from "red" zones, places with a high level of COVID-19, will be told to self-isolate. A full list of countries, due to be published next week, is likely to give Spain, Greece and France a green light.

Egypt on Saturday lifted many restrictions put in place against the coronavirus pandemic, reopening cafes, clubs, gyms and theaters after more than three months of closure, despite a continued upward trend in new infections.

Authorities in other countries were taking a more cautious approach, with the Indian city of Gauhati, the capital of Assam state, announcing a new two-week lockdown starting Monday, with night curfews and weekend lockdowns in the rest of the state. India added 18,552 cases in the past 24 hours, raising its total to 508,953. The death toll reached 15,685.

China saw an uptick in cases, one day after authorities said they expect an outbreak in Beijing to be brought under control in the near future. The National Health Commission reported 17 new cases in the nation's capital, the most in a week, among 21 nationwide.

South Korea, where a resurgence in the past month threatens to erase the country's earlier success, reported 51 new cases, including 35 in the Seoul metropolitan area. Officials, worried about the fragile economy, have resisted calls to reimpose restrictions eased in April.

Australia braced for more imported cases as citizens return home. About 300 people were due to arrive this weekend from Mumbai, India, with others expected to follow from South America and Indonesia. One state health official said he is preparing for 5% to 10% of the returnees to be infected, based on arrivals from Indonesia in other states.

Weber reported from Austin, Texas. Associated Press journalists around the world contributed to this report.

AP Week in Pictures, Global

JUNE 20 - 26, 2020

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In Belgian town, monuments expose a troubled colonial legacy

By RAF CASERT Associated Press

HALLE, Belgium (AP) — For a long time, few people in the small Belgian town of Halle paid much attention to the monuments. They were just fixtures in a local park, tributes to great men of the past.

But these are very different times, and yesterday's heroes can be today's racist villains.

And so it was that three weeks ago, a bust of Leopold II, the Belgian king who has been held responsible for the deaths of millions of Congolese, was spattered in red paint, labeled "Murderer," and later knocked off its pedestal.

Nearby, a pale sandstone statue formally known as the "Monument to the Colonial Pioneers" has stood for 93 years. It depicts a naked Congolese boy offering a bowl of fruit in gratitude to Lt. Gen. Baron Alphonse Jacques de Dixmude, a Belgian soldier accused of atrocities in Africa.

These monuments, and others across Europe, are coming under scrutiny as never before, no longer a collective blind spot on the moral conscience of the public. Protests sweeping the world that followed the death of George Floyd, a Black man killed last month by Minneapolis police, are focusing attention on Europe's colonial past and racism of the present.

Eric Baranyanka, a 60-year-old musician who came to Halle as a refugee from Belgium's African colony of Burundi when was 3, said he has always found the statue of Jacques "humiliating."

"I had this pride being who I was. It was in complete contradiction with that statue," he said.

But Halle Mayor Marc Snoeck appears to be more representative of his citizenry. He said he "never really noticed" the monuments until an anti-colonial group raised awareness of them a dozen years ago in the town of 40,000 people about 15 kilometers (10 miles) south of Brussels.

"I'm part of an older generation and I heard precious little during my studies about colonialism, the Congo Free State and the Belgian Congo," said the 66-year-old Snoeck, noting he was taught about how Europeans brought civilization, not exploitation and death, to the heart of Africa.

Statues of Leopold, who reigned from 1865 to 1909, have been defaced in a half-dozen cities, including Antwerp, where one was burned and had to be removed for repairs. It's unclear if it will ever come back.

But Leopold is hardly the only focus. Snoeck found it remarkable that protesters have not targeted the statue of Jacques, which he called "possibly even worse."

The mayor said the statue is known locally as "The White Negro," because of the hue of the sandstone depicting the Congolese youth offering the fruit to the colonial-era Belgian who condoned or was responsible for murders, rapes and maiming workers in the Congo Free State.

Baranyanka was lovingly raised by a white foster family in Halle and said he never experienced prejudice until after he had been in Belgium for about a decade.

His 98-year-old foster mother Emma Monsaert recalls others in town asking her if she was really going

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to take in a Black youth in the 1960s: "I said, 'Why not, it is a child after all.'"

But at school, Baranyanka found out how others felt about race.

One teacher poured salt on his head, he recalled, saying it would make it whiter. When he wanted a part in a school play of the 17th century fairy tale "Puss in Boots," he was denied a role, with a teacher telling him: "Mr. Baranyanka, in those days there were no Blacks in Europe."

He counts himself lucky to have had a close circle of friends that survives to this day. As a teenager, he often talked to them about the monuments, his African roots and Leopold's legacy.

"They understood, and they were grateful I explained it," he said.

On Tuesday, Congo celebrates 60 years of independence from Belgium. The city of Ghent will remove a statue of Leopold to mark the anniversary and perhaps take a healing step forward.

Eunice Yahuma, a local leader of a group called Belgian Youth Against Racism and the youth division of the Christian Democrats, knows about Belgium's troubled history.

"Many people don't know the story, because it is not being told. Somehow they know, 'Let's not discuss this, because it is grim history,'" said Yahuma, who has Congolese roots. "It is only now that we have this debate that people start looking into this."

The spirit of the times is different, she said.

"Black people used to be less vocal. They felt the pain, but they didn't discuss it. Now, youth is very outspoken and we give our opinion," Yahuma added.

History teachers like 24-year-old Andries Devogel are trying to infuse their lessons with the context of colonialism.

"Within the next decade, they will be expecting us to stress the impact of colonialism on current-day society, that colonialism and racism are inextricably linked," Devogel said. "Is contemporary racism not the consequence of a colonial vision? How can you exploit a people if you are not convinced of their second-class status?"

The colonial era brought riches to Belgium, and the city of Halle benefited, building a rail yard that brought jobs. Native son Franz Colruyt started a business that grew into the supermarket giant Colruyt Group with 30,000 employees — one of them Baranyanka's foster father.

Halle has escaped the violence seen in other cities from the protests, and officials would rather focus attention on its Gothic church, the Basilica of St. Martin, as well as its famous fields of bluebells and Geuze beer.

Baranyanka, who will soon stage a musical show of his life called "De Zwette," — "The Black One," returned recently to the park and the monuments.

Despite the hostility and humiliation he felt as a youngster, he didn't consider their destruction as the way to go.

"Vandalism produces nothing, perhaps only the opposite effect. And you see that suddenly such racism surges again," he said. "It breeds polarization again. This thing of 'us against them.'"

Devogel, the teacher, says it is the task of education "to let kids get in touch with history."

"Otherwise, it will remain a copper bust without meaning," he said of the Leopold II monument. "And you will never realize why, for all these people, it is so deeply insulting."

New Israeli espionage TV series tackles shadow war with Iran

By ISAAC SCHARF and ARON HELLER Associated Press

TEL AVIV, Israel (AP) — Israel's latest hit TV series takes the viewers straight into the heart of the country's archenemy Iran.

"Tehran" tells the story of Tamar Rabinyan, a young Mossad operative tasked with hacking into and disabling an Iranian nuclear reactor so the Israeli military can carry out an airstrike. But when the mission goes wrong, the agent goes rogue, falls in love with a local pro-democracy activist and rediscovers her Iranian roots in the city of her birth.

It's a story arc that touches on many of the region's most pressing fault lines. It's also the latest episode

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in the golden age of Israeli television.

After numerous Israeli shows inspired American spin-offs such as "Homeland," "Hostages" and "In Treatment," Netflix went a step further by running "Fauda," the groundbreaking action series on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, in its original Hebrew-Arabic form with subtitles.

"Tehran" marks the next stage, with Apple TV+ purchasing the rights to the eight-part series and signing on to co-produce its international streaming. The espionage thriller, with dialogue in Hebrew, English and Farsi, premiered on June 22 in Israel. It's looking to take a page out of the "Fauda" success story, mixing fast-paced action scenes with topical political intrigues and personal backstories that touch on the chaotic nature of the region.

"Although it's a very entertaining show and it has a lot of action, there are a lot of layers," said Dana Eden, one of the show's creators. "We just thought it's very interesting to try to get into Tehran, into Iran, which is a place we really don't know and really want to know more about."

Israel considers Iran to be its most dangerous foe, citing its calls for Israel's destruction, its development of sophisticated missiles and support for anti-Israel militias in Lebanon and the Gaza Strip. Israeli leaders believe Iran is trying to develop a nuclear-weapons capability, and have frequently hinted at the possibility of a military strike against Iran's nuclear facilities should international sanctions fail to halt the suspect Iranian atomic program. Israeli Mossad agents are believed to have acted behind enemy lines in stealing documents from a secret Iranian nuclear archive.

But before Iran's 1979 Islamic Revolution, the countries were close allies and Iran was home to a large and thriving Jewish community. Some 250,000 Israelis are of Iranian descent and have stayed close to the music, culture and food of their roots.

"My character reminds me of my mother, my aunt, my grandmother," said actress Esti Yerushalmi, who plays the role of Rabinyan's Iranian aunt Arezoo. "I took all of them and put it in my character. It is an Iranian woman that is also a Jew."

Yerushalmi and her family fled Iran after the revolution when she was 13, and she said that acting in her mother tongue of Farsi was an emotional experience.

"It was hard because it took me back to my memories from Iran," she said. "It was very moving for me and also very painful. I miss Iran. I miss all the beauty, all the people. It is a great country, but now I think they're suffering."

The show, co-written by Fauda's writer Moshe Zonder, features Israeli actress Niv Sultan in the lead and Homeland's Navid Negahban and Iron Man actor Shaun Toub in supporting roles. It was shot in Athens to replicate the Iranian capital.

The television series has yet to be mentioned by Iranian officials, though Kayhan International, a publication affiliated with the hard-line newspaper of the same name, described the show as an "anti-Iranian production." The paper, Kayhan, also acknowledged the show, saying in April that it reveals the "pro-West and promiscuous" nature of activists targeting Iran.

In similar fashion to Fauda, creators said they aimed to present a nuanced narrative to a deep-seated conflict that would resonate with all sides.

"We don't have bad guys and good guys in this show. It's more complicated and I'm sure that Iranians who will watch the show will enjoy it very much," said Eden, who also co-produced the series. "I'm sure it's going to be a hit in Iran."

Associated Press producer Audrey Horowitz contributed to this report.

Follow Aron Heller on Twitter at www.twitter.com/aronhellerap

Hard-hit tribe takes strict steps as virus surges in Arizona

By FELICIA FONSECA Associated Press

FLAGSTAFF, Ariz. (AP) — People in the deserts of Arizona flee to the White Mountains when the triple-

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digit heat is too much to bear, cooling off in the forest a few hours away. That worries a Native American tribe that calls the area home, as coronavirus infections and temperatures have both spiked in one of the hardest-hit states.

The White Mountain Apache Tribe is taking some of the most drastic actions in Arizona to protect its 13,500 residents, more than one-eighth of whom have already tested positive for COVID-19. It's taking cues from severe measures imposed by other tribes nationwide, including the Navajo Nation, which has curtailed an outbreak that once made it a national hot spot.

Those living on the White Mountain Apache Tribe's reservation in northeastern Arizona face the risk of fines and other penalties if they venture beyond their own yards this weekend. A two-week shelter-in-place order will follow. The tribe's Fort Apache Reservation also is closed to the summertime visitors who flock to the area to fish, hike and camp among ponderosa pines.

The tribe's confirmed infections and 20 deaths as of Friday make the reservation one of the hardest-hit places in a state that's recording over 3,000 cases a day and running short on hospital space.

"COVID has just turned our world upside down," White Mountain Apache Chairwoman Gwendena Lee-Gatewood said.

The tribe also is ordering homeless people who test positive for the virus to quarantine at the tribe's casino-hotel — now closed to visitors — and is banning the sale and use of alcohol for the rest of the year. Lee-Gatewood hopes it will help keep people safe if they get lax about social distancing and other measures when they're drinking.

The tribe's strict steps come as Arizona Gov. Doug Ducey has declined to impose new restrictions on businesses like other states where confirmed cases are surging. Fellow Republican governors in Texas and Florida cracked down on bars Friday.

Ducey, who lifted a stay-at-home order in mid-May, has now paused further efforts to reopen the economy and allowed cities to require face coverings, without bowing to pressure for a statewide mandate.

Lee-Gatewood said the White Mountain Apache Tribe took that into consideration, along with the typical summer crowds, when deciding how to target the pandemic on its land.

"We're seeing these visitors not paying attention to social distancing and wearing masks, and the governor had a real relaxed attitude about all of that in reopening the businesses back up," she said.

Elsewhere in Arizona, officials on the Havasupai reservation deep in a gorge off the Grand Canyon warned river rafters they would be detained if they stepped foot on land the tribe traditionally uses but isn't part of its formal reservation. Known worldwide for its towering blue-green waterfalls, the reservation has been shut down for months and has no reported COVID-19 cases.

"We are left to take aggressive action to maintain the safety of our tribal members and the future of the Havasupai Tribe," Chairwoman Evangeline Kisson wrote in a notice to river guides.

After talking with Grand Canyon National Park, the tribe said it would station law enforcement at its boundary with the park, miles from the Colorado River shore.

The nearby Navajo Nation, the nation's largest Native American reservation that spans parts of Arizona, New Mexico and Utah, has attributed a slowdown in infections to a daily curfew it's had in place for months, a shutdown of government offices and tourist sites, weekend lockdowns and a mask requirement.

On tribal land elsewhere, residents of the tiny Alaska Native village of Napaskiak are being advised to stay home until July 5, leaving only for medical needs or quick runs to the grocery store. A health care corporation that serves the village and dozens of other rural communities pointed to a "strong likelihood" of community spread.

In Montana, tribal leaders on the Blackfeet Indian Reservation said this week that they closed their boundary with popular Glacier National Park for the tourism season to protect their residents.

The Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe in South Dakota has kept up roadblocks since March despite criticism from the state's governor. Tribal Chairman Harold Frazier said this week that the tribe took the step because it realized it had to protect its people.

"All we have is ourselves," he said.

In Arizona, the White Mountain Apache Tribe said people can travel on a highway through its land, but

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they can't stop along the way. Tribal police also are considering checkpoints, and a COVID-19 testing blitz is planned.

"There's frustration, there's impatience, there's a lot of things," tribal Councilman Jerold Altaha said in a video. "But remember, we are doing the best we can, we are doing everything we can to help you."

They're looking to prevent more people from dying, like Apache elder Timothy Clawson Sr., 91. He married his sweetheart under a tree on the reservation and spent his life in the White Mountains, working as a rancher and at a sawmill.

Lee-Gatewood, the tribal chairwoman, recalled their last conversation. Clawson called earlier this month and said, "Well, chairwoman, I'm at the hospital, and they told me I have this virus. They treated me, and the doctors said I wouldn't leave here, and I'm calling to say my goodbyes."

Lee-Gatewood said Clawson told her that he was proud of her.

"You're a tough cowboy," she responded. "I'll keep you in my prayers."

The next day, Lee-Gatewood got a text from Clawson's granddaughter: He had died.

Associated Press writers Becky Bohrer in Juneau, Alaska, and Matt Volz in Helena, Montana, contributed to this report.

Coronavirus task force briefs — but not at White House

By DARLENE SUPERVILLE and DEB RIECHMANN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — There was no presidential appearance and no White House backdrop when the government's coronavirus task force briefed the public for the first time since April — in keeping with an administration effort to show it is paying attention to the latest spike in cases but is not on a wartime footing that should keep the country from reopening the economy.

The Friday briefing at the Department of Health and Human Services was held as the number of confirmed new coronavirus infections per day in the U.S. soared to an all-time high of 40,000 — higher even than during the deadliest stretch in April and May. In light of the new surge, task force briefers chose their words carefully to update the public about COVID-19, which has become both a public health and political issue.

Vice President Mike Pence had the most delicate line to walk. He acknowledged a surge in new cases across the South and West, while backing the president's desire to get the economy up and running without mentioning that it will also help the prospects for reelection.

"As we see new cases rising, and we're tracking them very carefully, there may be a tendency among the American people to think that we are back to the place that we were two months ago — in a time of great losses and a great hardship on the American people," Pence said.

But the vice president also took note of positive job numbers and added: "The reality is we're in a much better place."

Unbound by politics, Dr. Anthony Fauci, the nation's top infectious disease expert, sounded a more cautionary tone.

"As you can see, we are facing a serious problem in certain areas," Fauci said. But he also was careful not to blame the recent spike on gatherings where people haven't worn face masks or adhered to social distancing guidelines.

Pence deftly sidestepped pointed questions about the apparent dissonance between the administration's admonitions that Americans heed the guidance of local officials and President Donald Trump's decision to hold a political rally last week in Tulsa, Oklahoma, over the objection of health officials. And during a Trump event in Arizona on Tuesday, thousands of young attendees violated Phoenix's mandate to wear face masks.

Insisting that Trump was "taking proper steps," Pence invoked the constitutional protection of free speech, saying, "we still want to give people the freedom to participate in the political process."

The White House over the last two months all but eliminated coronavirus task force briefings and sharply

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curtailed public appearances by its medical experts as Trump shifted his focus to getting the country moving again. The return of the briefing was a sign that the administration knows it can't ignore growing anxiety over the increased number of cases as governors in some states pause or delay reopening.

But the briefings are not expected to come back with the same daily frequency. And it's no coincidence, officials said, that Friday's briefing took place at HHS rather than at the White House. The president is still dead-set on cheerleading an economic resurgence even in the face of the spike in infections.

Pence announced that 16 states were seeing worrisome increases — up from 12 states on Wednesday. He said there still is work to do, but that it was important to reflect on how much the federal and state governments and health care workers have done to respond to the pandemic.

"This moment in the coronavirus pandemic is different" from the grim days when New York, New Jersey, Connecticut and New Orleans struggled under the weight of the outbreak, he said.

America has since accelerated testing to 500,000 a day, which has contributed to the increase in reported new cases, Pence said. He plans to travel next week to Texas, Arizona and Florida; the previously scheduled trips to the hot spots of COVID-19 were initially to be more political in nature, but will now include greater focus on the virus. He said Dr. Deborah Birx, the task force coordinator, will accompany him to Texas and Arizona.

"I just encourage every American to continue to pray," Pence said in closing. "Pray for all the families that have lost loved ones. Pray for our health care workers on the front lines. And just continue to pray that, by God's grace, every single day we'll each do our part to heal our land."

Back at the White House, Trump held a jobs-focused event in the East Room and offered this can-do message:

"We have a little work to do and we'll get it done. We're having some very good numbers coming out in terms of the comeback, the comeback of our nation and I think it's going very rapidly and it's going to be very good."

Associated Press writers Zeke Miller and Jill Colvin contributed to this report.

Democrats warn against overconfidence in fight against Trump

By BILL BARROW Associated Press

President Donald Trump is entering the final four-month stretch before Election Day presiding over a country that faces a public health crisis, mass unemployment and a reckoning over racism. His Democratic challenger, Joe Biden, is raking in cash. And a series of national and battleground polls suggests growing obstacles to Trump's reelection.

But the election is far from locked in.

Biden and his leading supporters are stepping up warnings to Democrats to avoid becoming complacent. Former President Barack Obama and Michigan Gov. Gretchen Whitmer insist that plenty could change between now and Nov. 3 and that the party must be vigilant against Trump, who knows few boundaries when it comes to his political foes.

"We understand that what happens five months before the election and what happens at the election can be very different things," Whitmer said.

Michigan was one of the Midwestern states that Trump carried by a razor-thin margin in 2016, helping him win the Electoral College even as he lost the popular vote. Other Democrats in the state say the strength of the president's support shouldn't be underestimated.

"If the election were held today, I think Biden would win Michigan," said Michigan Rep. Debbie Dingell. "But the Trump supporters are out there, and they're still intense."

Obama underscored that point this week during his first joint fundraiser with Biden.

"We can't be complacent or smug or suggest that somehow it's so obvious that this president hasn't done a good job," Obama told thousands of donors who gathered online. "He won once, and it's not like we didn't have a good clue as to how he was going to operate the last time."

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Democrats have reason to be cautious. Four years ago, Hillary Clinton was leading by wide margins nationally and in Michigan, Wisconsin and Pennsylvania -- the very states that ultimately put Trump over the top. But in the final weeks before the election, Republicans coalesced around their nominee, leading to his upset win.

Trump is aiming for a repeat this year. He is stoking culture wars on health care and race relations. After warning that the 2016 election would be "rigged" against him, Trump said without evidence this week that the fall campaign would be the "most corrupt election ever."

Trump and many of his GOP allies, meanwhile, are working to squelch the expansion of absentee voting, which they worry would hand Democrats an advantage, despite no evidence supporting that.

Many Republicans are quietly grim about the trends. But some are comforted by the same factors that give Democrats pause.

"I've always thought it was going to be razor-thin in Wisconsin, and in turn, across the nation," said former Gov. Scott Walker, who survived a bitter 2012 recall election and 2014 reelection before losing a third nail-biter in 2018.

Trump's fundraising and organizing still dwarfs those of Biden, who has named state-based staff in just three battlegrounds: Wisconsin, Arizona and North Carolina. When Biden announced his Wisconsin team Wednesday, Trump's campaign retorted that its 2016 operation there never closed and already this year has trained 3,200 volunteers, held 750 "MAGA Meet-ups" and made 6 million voter contacts, which means their targets have been reached multiple times already.

Still, the current dynamics don't fit seamlessly with 2016.

Trump benefited four years ago from Clinton being almost as unpopular as he was. And as a first-time candidate, Trump took advantage of his disruptive brand. It's harder to be the anti-establishment outsider from the Oval Office.

Trump's Gallup job approval rating stands at 39% this month, putting him in dangerous territory historically.

Since World War II, all incumbent presidents who lost were at 45% or lower in Gallup polls conducted in June of their reelection year. Only Harry Truman, at 40% in 1948, managed a comeback win. Trump's ahead of one-term presidents Jimmy Carter (32% in 1980) and George H.W. Bush (37% in 1992). But he's behind Obama's 46% in 2012 and George W. Bush's 49% in 2004.

Trump has broken precedent before. Still, in Biden, Trump faces an opponent with a stronger standing among some groups of voters, especially independents, than Clinton had.

Democratic National Committee Chair Tom Perez pointed to the 2018 midterms and special elections since Trump's inauguration as proof that voters are "fired up" to oust Trump and "take nothing for granted."

Ohio Democratic Chair David Pepper, whose state went for Trump by a surprisingly wide margin in 2016, said Democrats are better organized this year. He described 2016 as "top down," with Clinton's national lieutenants dictating details regardless of DNC or state parties.

Pepper noted Biden's first campaign manager, Greg Schultz, is now based at the DNC. Pepper described a recent call Schultz held with state party chairs nationwide. The theme from Schultz, he said: "What do you need? What lessons are there from 2016?"

Still, Dingell noted Biden hasn't yet installed a state director in Michigan, where she described Democratic "factions" as difficult to corral. While Trump animates the left, Dingell warned that Democrats haven't closed the deal with alienated moderates and can unwittingly help Trump expand his white base.

"This 'defund the police' stuff is not the answer," she said, referring to the rallying cry of activists who want to shift resources and responsibilities away from armed law enforcement after police killings of Black men. Biden doesn't back "defunding" efforts, but Dingell said Trump can exploit the sloganeering.

Walker hinged a Trump comeback less on campaign tactics and more on "people's health and the health of the economy and the stability of the country." If that improves, Walker said, "I think the president's in a good position."

That's the way top Democrats want their voters to see it, too.

"In any scenario, ignore the polls and assume this is going to be super close," said David Plouffe, an architect of Obama's two campaigns. And if that caution yields a wider Biden win, Plouffe said, then it

means more Democrats in Congress and statehouses around the country: "Let's win by every vote we can."

Associated Press writers Alexandra Jaffe in Washington and Steve Peoples in Montclair, N.J., contributed to this report.

Congress stalls out — again — dealing with national trauma

By ANDREW TAYLOR Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — For a moment, Congress had a chance to act on policing reform, mobilized by a national trauma and overwhelming public support. Now those efforts have stalled and seem unlikely to be revived in an election year.

It's latest example of the ways hyper-partisanship and deepening polarization on Capitol Hill have hamstrung Congress' ability to meet the moment and keep up with public opinion. As a result, police reform seems likely to join gun control and immigration as issues where Americans overwhelmingly support changes to laws that elected representatives are unable or unwilling to pass.

"In this moment, as it was with gun violence and immigration reform, we don't know where the president really is," said Sen. Chris Coons, D-Del., who weeks ago was expressing skepticism that this time would be any different from prior failures. "If this were the first time we were in this situation, I'd be more hopeful," he said then.

The bipartisan outcry over the deaths of George Floyd and other Black Americans appeared to be a chance for Congress to reshape its reputation. Polls showed nearly all Americans in a favor of some measure of change to the criminal justice system, and both chambers moved quickly to draft legislation.

There were common elements in the House Democratic proposal and the Senate Republican bill, including a national database of use-of-force incidents by law enforcement and restrictions on police chokeholds. But efforts to bridge the divides that did exist in the bills quickly got bogged down in a debate over process, stirred an outcry among liberal activists and exposed again how little trust there is between the top Senate leaders Mitch McConnell, R-Ky., and Chuck Schumer, D-N.Y.

McConnell said Democrats refused to take him at his word that he was willing to negotiate over the final bill; Schumer and other Democrats said there was little in McConnell's tenure as majority leader that suggests that's true.

The swift rise and fall of prospects for police reform also underscored one of the harsh realities of modern American politics. Lawmakers are often driven more by the views of their parties' hardliners than overall public opinion.

"The incentive structure is misaligned for compromise. That's the reality of it. Members are more likely to be rewarded electorally for representing their base primary voters than for reaching out to voters in the middle," said Michael Steel, who was a top aide to former House Speaker John Boehner. "The giants of yesteryear are remembered as such because voters rewarded them for successfully legislating. And that just seems to be less and less the case."

Public support for some measure of police reform following the death of Floyd, who died when a white police officer pressed a knee on his neck for several minutes, is overwhelming. A new Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research poll shows 29% of Americans say the criminal justice system needs a complete overhaul, 40% say it needs major changes and 25% say it needs minor changes.

There are other high-profile examples where public support has been unable to overcome hyper-partisanship in Congress — most notably on gun control. An AP-NORC survey from March 2019 found 83% of Americans in favor of a federal law requiring background checks on all potential gun buyers. Trump has also supported the idea.

But gun control legislation has gone nowhere in Washington, not even after the horrific shooting deaths of 20 first-graders and six educators in Newtown, Connecticut, in 2012. The obstinacy on gun control has largely been among Republicans, though a handful of Democratic senators joined them in blocking legislation after the Newtown shooting.

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The parties have also failed to make progress in overhauling the nation's fractured immigration laws, despite broad public support. The most overwhelmingly popular immigration measure — granting legal protections to young people brought to the U.S. illegally as children — has gotten caught in the fray, with GOP leaders unwilling to pass it on its own so it can be used as leverage in broader talks.

The congressional gridlock has only been exacerbated by Trump's reputation on Capitol Hill as an unreliable negotiating partner on major issues. On police reform, he spoke generally about supporting legislation but exerted little political capital when the process hit a roadblock.

"To do really hard things you always need a president leaning in and engaged," said Brendan Buck, a top aide to former Speaker Paul Ryan, R-Wis., during Trump's first two years in office. "And on the really hard things he has not shown a willingness to get engaged."

The police reform debate also suffered from the realities of the political calendar. With the Congressional Black Caucus, progressive activists and the civil rights community all calling the Republican bill too weak to be salvaged, some Democrats saw little incentive to give ground now when they might be able to get more if their party has sweeping successes in the November elections, now just over four months away.

"Why cut a bad deal now when you could potentially be in the driver's seat to write a real bill that effects real change in just a few months?" said Matt House, a former Schumer leadership aide.

Some veteran lawmakers in both parties have found ways to navigate the fierce partisanship on Capitol Hill and make progress on major issues. Health and Labor Committee Chairman Lamar Alexander, R-Tenn., and top panel Democrat Patty Murray of Washington have shepherded both a major education policy rewrite and legislation to combat opioids through a McConnell-led Senate. They did so by building sweeping consensus among lawmakers in both parties before committee or floor action.

Murray said in an interview that there was little attempt to do that kind of behind-the-scenes work on policing reform.

"This didn't even smell like an attempt to get something done," Murray said. "The feeling that you want to accomplish something, that you want to get something done ... is a very different feeling than we saw with policing reform."

American jailed in Spain was unwitting drug mule, US says

By ERIC TUCKER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Victor Stemberger wasn't about to ignore the emails inviting him into a multimillion-dollar business opportunity, so he pitched himself as perfect for the job. In a way he was — but for all the wrong reasons.

The 76-year-old Virginia man, whose family says he has cognitive issues, accepted the offer and boasted of his credentials as "an experienced businessman who does what he says he will do, and executes flawlessly, according to plan."

He apparently did follow the plan, but the execution wasn't flawless.

Today Stemberger sits in a Spanish jail, one year after flying into the country with 2.4 kilograms (more than 5 pounds) of cocaine expertly sewn into bubble jackets in a bag. His family says he knew nothing about the drugs. Though Spanish authorities are dubious, the U.S. Justice Department has advised Spain that it believes Stemberger was duped into acting as a drug mule for a West Africa criminal network, and has asked the country for evidence it's gathered, according to correspondence obtained by The Associated Press.

Federal officials have for years warned about scams that lure elderly Americans or those with diminished mental capacity — Stemberger had a significant brain injury nearly 15 years ago — into becoming drug couriers. The scams convince them that they'll receive payouts if they travel or take some other requested action. The Department of Homeland Security in 2016 said immigration and border authorities had intercepted more than 140 unwitting couriers, some as old as 87, and that over 30 were believed to still be jailed.

"One of the common characteristics that we find in these scams is that oftentimes the senior is living alone, has lost a spouse and is lonely," said Sen. Susan Collins, R-Maine, who chairs the Senate Commit-

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tee on Aging and helped secure the release of a Maine man jailed in Spain under similar circumstances as Stemberger.

Stemberger, who marks his one-year anniversary in Spanish detention on July 5, faces a trial next month in Madrid. His son says the only explanation for his father's actions is that "these perpetrators really connected with our dad under the veil of what he thought was a legitimate business opportunity."

"With his diminished mental state, he became the perfect victim of a crime syndicate just like this," Vic Stemberger said.

A spokesman for the Madrid judiciary, who agreed to discuss the case only on condition of anonymity, said Stemberger told authorities he had planned to deliver the jackets to United Nations officials in Asia and he didn't know they contained drugs. Officials did not consider the narrative plausible and sought to have him jailed before trial rather than let him return to the U.S., the spokesman said.

Prosecutors are seeking a prison sentence for Stemberger, whose Spanish lawyer, Juan Ospina, said he plans to argue that there was no way Stemberger could have noticed the extra weight of the drugs because they were cleverly distributed among the jackets.

"It's a pity that it's always the mules that are being snatched, the lowest in the scale of a criminal organization. They are the easiest, weakest target, but there is rarely a police investigation, deep and rigorous, targeting the original sin," Ospina said.

The Drug Enforcement Administration and prosecutors from the Southern District of New York are investigating whether his contacts were part of a West Africa network of money launderers, fraudsters and drug traffickers under scrutiny for scheming the elderly and feeble, according to a Justice Department document sent to Spain last October that seeks permission to interview Stemberger and copies of investigative documents.

The case began in March 2018 with an email from someone purporting to be a financial consultant with Nigeria's foreign ministry, inviting Stemberger, of Centreville, Virginia, into a business opportunity that carried the prospect of a lucrative payout. The job entailed traveling abroad to deliver gifts and documents to officials, with a goal of recovering funds that were misallocated.

A flurry of emails and phone calls continued over the next year and a half. Stemberger concealed details from his family. He even traveled to Argentina and Hong Kong when his wife thought he was in Chicago.

"He certainly knew that talking to these folks internationally could be possibly something that our family would question," said Vic Stemberger. "We just never had an opportunity to intervene."

Emails reviewed by AP show Stemberger at times sought reassurance the project was legitimate but also portrayed himself as game for it, saying he could travel provided his expenses were covered "and we have a clear plan in place before I depart."

A Justice Department attorney told Spanish authorities the emails show Stemberger concerned about being defrauded, undergoing uncomfortable travel conditions and having to pay for travel. But, wrote attorney Jason Carter, "There are no communications reflecting that Stemberger believed or suspected that he would assist in trafficking controlled substances."

Retired DEA agent Robert Zachariasiewicz, whose investigative firm has worked with the family on the case, said the 161 pages of emails he's reviewed make clear that "he's completely unwitting."

"It was very hard to read, quite honestly, because it tells a sad tale in and of itself," he added.

A Vietnam veteran with two master's degrees, Stemberger specialized in corporate executive coaching and prided himself on being a savvy businessman, his son said. But he hasn't been the same since a 2006 brain aneurysm left him with impairments in judgment and critical thinking.

Last July, he traveled to Brazil on a trip that was to take him to Spain and on to Asia. His contacts told him officials would be visiting his Sao Paulo hotel room to help transfer gifts into luggage.

Stemberger reassured his son over email the work was legitimate: "Gifts referred to in the message are standard protocol for dealing with government officials in this part of the world. No contraband — be sure of that."

He was arrested the next day after arriving in Madrid.

As his family works to prove his innocence, even Stemberger, who passed his 50th wedding anniversary in jail, has come around to the idea that he was roped into a scam, his son said.

The younger Stemberger said he understands how extraordinary the saga may sound, joking that if every drug dealer used his father's defense, no one would be in jail.

But, he said, his father was unquestionably duped.

"There was never any attempt to commit a crime," he said.

Associated Press writer Aritz Parra in Madrid contributed to this report.

Brazen ambush of Mexico City chief blamed on Jalisco cartel

By MARK STEVENSON Associated Press

MEXICO CITY (AP) — Dozens of gunmen believed tied to the hyper-violent Jalisco New Generation Cartel deployed for a complex, multi-point dawn ambush meant to kill Mexico City's police chief, unleashing one of the most brazen attacks in Mexico since the equally ruthless Zetas carved a path of terror across the country nearly a decade ago.

The attackers used grenades and a .50-caliber sniper rifle to assault the chief's armored vehicle early Friday and killed two of his bodyguards and a woman driving by. Police chief Omar García Harfuch was shot in the shoulder, collar bone and the knee but was reported out of danger.

He called the attack "cowardly" and blamed it on the Jalisco cartel, which has established a nearly national presence, from the white-sand beaches of Cancun to Mexico City and the country's most important ports, as well as in key border cities traditionally controlled by other cartels.

Police officers who converged on the scene on the capital's iconic Paseo de la Reforma boulevard in the upscale Lomas neighborhood rounded up a dozen of the shooters, who were hauled off for questioning, authorities said.

Later Friday, capital police arrested an alleged head of Jalisco New Generation hitmen, suggesting he could have been the mastermind of the attack, said a Mexico City police official who was not authorized to be quoted by name.

The official said police arrested José Armando Briseño on the east side of the city. Nicknamed "Cow," he is allegedly the gang's chief of hitmen in the city of Tonalá in Jalisco.

The attack on the police chief was meticulously planned and involved a total of 28 gunmen hired three weeks before, said Ulises Lara, the spokesman for the Mexico City prosecutors office. Three separate possible ambush points were set up on major thoroughfares, including one — which wasn't used — in the heart of Mexico City, one block from the Independence Monument.

The gunmen were divided into four different cells, and they received ski masks and weapons Thursday night. They were taken to the ambush points at 4 a.m. to lie in wait for their target. They jumped from a truck and opened fire when Garcia's convoy attempted to pass.

Lara said that of the suspects detained, one is Colombian and the other 11 are Mexicans from the capital and five states — Jalisco, Guerrero, Nayarit, Chihuahua and Michoacan.

It was the second high-profile attack just this month, following the shooting death of a federal judge and his wife, bringing uncomfortable comparisons to Colombia's drug wars of the 1980s and '90s in which drug traffickers routinely targeted judges and police for assassination.

Mexico targeted and dismantled the Zetas cartel after it killed migrants, unsuspecting citizens and officials from 2010 to 2013. But it remains to be seen whether the government will go after the Jalisco cartel the way it did the Zetas.

"If they (Jalisco) are not made a priority target after this, I don't know what is happening, something is wrong with the strategy" of the government, said security analyst Alejandro Hope.

With the Zetas, Mexico used elite military units and worked closely with the United States to go after the cartel. But now, amid budget cuts and President Andrés Manuel López Obrador's policy of not directly confronting the cartels, it is unclear whether the government has the will or ability to fight Jalisco, espe-

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cially in the middle of the coronavirus pandemic.

"This kind of attack is not normal, they crossed a line. You have to read it like an exceptional act," said Hope. "You have two very serious attacks in two weeks."

Federal Security Secretary Alfonso Durazo said Mexico's intelligence agency apparently had information that Jalisco New Generation was planning an attack, but did not offer additional details.

It was unclear whether the attack was related to recent crackdowns on Jalisco-affiliated gangs in Mexico City or to the police chief's earlier work in federal investigations.

García, 37, is a former head of the Federal Police investigation division and in 2016-2019 he led the branch of the federal Attorney General's Office that oversees investigations and arrests of organized crime members. Before being named Mexico City police chief, he spent several months as the mayor's intelligence coordinator.

Jalisco is the same gang that U.S. prosecutors said tried to buy belt-fed M-60 machine guns in the United States and that once shot down a Mexican military helicopter with a rocket-propelled grenade. In October, the cartel's gunmen ambushed and killed 14 state police officers in Michoacan.

Friday's attack came two weeks after rumors swirled for a day that Jalisco's leader, Nemesio Oseguera Cervantes, better known as "El Mencho," had been captured or killed — though officials later denied that. Oseguera is the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration's most-wanted fugitive, with a \$10 million price on his head.

In March, U.S. authorities arrested hundreds of Jalisco operatives in raids across the United States. They said the gang controls between one-third and two-thirds of the U.S. drug market.

Majors confronting short time period before opening day

By JAY COHEN AP Sports Writer

CHICAGO (AP) — Forget about those halcyon first few days of spring training, when arranging for the right tee time on the right golf course is often more challenging than the work on the field.

When major leaguers report next week for spring training 2.0 — or perhaps more accurately, baseball's first summer camp — time will be one precious commodity with about three weeks to go before opening day.

"We're going to have some live batting practices the first day they show up. Day 1 and Day 2. ... Multiple ups for the starters," Kansas City manager Mike Matheny said Friday on a video conference call. "These guys are prepared for that. They've been hungry for it."

All across the majors, the race is on to set up travel plans and work out the final details for training ahead of an unforgiving season of just 60 games. After intake coronavirus tests and a mandatory quarantine period while awaiting results, full-squad workouts likely will begin next weekend.

The regular season starts July 23 and 24, leaving a short period for players to prepare and a tricky balance for managers trying to get their teams ready while also worrying about potential health issues that could pop up with more frequency during a truncated training period.

"I think that the biggest issue is going to be just the buildup," White Sox catcher James McCann said. "I honestly think that everyone's done everything they possibly can to stay in shape, from pitchers throwing and hitters hitting. But there's only so many swings in a cage and so many, you know, non-adrenaline bullpens you can throw.

"There's a reason why we have six weeks of spring training, in a typical spring training."

There is particular concern for starting pitchers, who take great care in building up their arms over an extended period. That's one reason why active rosters will be 30 players during the first two weeks of the season, 28 during the second two weeks and 26 after that.

Brewers manager Craig Counsell said they could begin the year with as many as 17 pitchers.

"We have a bunch of guys that are much further along than I anticipated," Counsell said. "So, I'm not as concerned about that as I would have originally thought when we departed in mid-March. They've all been throwing on a regular schedule. They've all been throwing to hitters. Now, the challenge when we

ramp up intensity, what does recovery look like? That's probably the thing I'll think about the most."

While spring training was suspended March 12, players haven't exactly been sitting around this whole time. McCann worked out in former Cubs utilityman Ben Zobrist's barn in Tennessee. White Sox ace Lucas Giolito said he has been facing hitters in Northern California, everyone from high school prospects to minor leaguers.

"On a pretty much weekly basis, I'm getting a couple bullpens in, a live bullpen facing hitters out here in Sacramento," he said. "And I'm right now at like a up-and-down three times kind of shape I guess you could say, where I'm simulating three innings, even extending the innings out sometimes just to get the pitch count up."

Beyond injury and coronavirus concerns, space is also an issue for baseball's summer camp. While spring training facilities in Florida and Arizona have several backfields that players can use, teams are going to have to make the most of their home ballparks and a handful of area facilities.

That means staggered start times for player workouts and extended days for coaching staffs. It also means meetings in airy stadium concourses instead of cramped clubhouses so players can observe social distancing guidelines designed to help prevent the spread of COVID-19.

"It's basically just using all parts of the facility very wisely and efficiently and I think with the initial plan that we have, it functions like that," Pirates manager Derek Shelton said. "The one thing for the staff portion of it, it's going to be a longer day because we are dealing with one field and you're talking about live BPs and getting guys ready. We're going to have to be very efficient."

Some places are better suited for the task than others. Domed stadiums will give their teams more reliability for their schedules. The Diamondbacks are going to use Chase Field and their spring training facility in Scottsdale, just a short drive away from their home ballpark.

"It just creates a little bit longer day," Counsell said. "We'll get all the work done that we need to get done. Intra-squad games are going to be a big part of this. We'll use both clubhouses. The space is fine, but one field just kind of lengthens the day, I think."

AP Sports Writers Will Graves, Steve Megargee and David Brandt contributed to this report.

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Judge: US must free migrant children from family detention

By NOMAAN MERCHANT Associated Press

HOUSTON (AP) — A federal judge on Friday ordered the release of children held with their parents in U.S. immigration jails and denounced the Trump administration's prolonged detention of families during the coronavirus pandemic.

U.S. District Judge Dolly Gee's order applies to children held for more than 20 days at three family detention centers in Texas and Pennsylvania operated by U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement. Some have been detained since last year.

Citing the recent spread of the virus in two of the three facilities, Gee set a deadline of July 17 for children to either be released with their parents or sent to family sponsors.

The family detention centers "are 'on fire' and there is no more time for half measures," she wrote.

Gee's order said ICE was detaining 124 children in its centers, which are separate from U.S. Department of Health and Human Services facilities for unaccompanied children that were holding around 1,000 children in early June. The numbers in both systems have fallen significantly since earlier in the Trump administration because the U.S. is expelling most people trying to cross the border or requiring them to wait for their immigration cases in Mexico.

Gee oversees a long-running court settlement governing the U.S. government's treatment of immigrant

children known as the Flores agreement. Her order does not directly apply to the parents detained with their children.

Gee's order says ICE can decline to release a child if there is not a suitable sponsor, the child's parent waives rights under the Flores agreement, or if there is a "prior unexplained failure to appear at a scheduled hearing."

ICE did not respond to a request for comment Friday.

But most parents last month refused to designate a sponsor when ICE officials unexpectedly asked them who could take their children if the adults remained detained, according to lawyers for the families. The agency said then it was conducting a "routine parole review consistent with the law" and Gee's previous orders.

Advocates contend that ICE should release all families from detention especially as the coronavirus has spread rapidly through immigration detention. In court filings revealed Thursday, ICE said 11 children and parents have tested positive for COVID-19 at the family detention center in Karnes City, Texas.

At the detention center in nearby Dilley, at least three parents and children — including a child who turned 2 this week — were placed in isolation after two private contractors and an ICE official tested positive for the virus.

Amy Maldonado, an attorney who works with detained families, said Gee "clearly recognized that the government is not willing to protect the health and safety of the children, which is their obligation."

"They need to make the sensible choice and release the parents to care for their children," she said of the government.

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

More than 2,500 people in ICE custody have tested positive for COVID-19. The agency says it has released at least 900 people considered to have heightened medical risk and reduced the populations at its three family detention centers. But in court filings last month, ICE said it considered most of the people in family detention to be flight risks because they had pending deportation orders or cases under review.

Police: Illinois shooting suspect kills 2 coworkers, himself

By JOHN O'CONNOR and DON BABWIN Associated Press

SPRINGFIELD, Ill. (AP) — The 48-year-old man suspected of fatally shooting two coworkers and critically wounding another at a central Illinois warehouse Friday died after apparently shooting himself, the city's police chief said.

Springfield police believe Michael L. Collins fatally shot himself Friday after shooting and killing two co-workers at the Bunn-O-Matic facility shortly after 11 a.m. Collins, of Springfield, also critically injured another woman, police said.

Collins, the two other men and the woman all arrived for work at about 7 a.m. Friday in the welding area of the facility, Springfield Police Chief Kenny Winslow told reporters Friday evening. They all worked in the same area, he said.

Winslow said the sheriff of nearby Morgan County called his office later Friday to say Collins' body had been found in the suspect's car. Two handguns were found in the car. No other suspects were being sought.

Winslow released Collins' name earlier Friday but later said he would not repeat it. The names of the victims were not released, neither was the name of the female co-worker who was in critical condition at a hospital.

"Words can't explain what occurred," Winslow said Friday evening. "I know we all want answers. People want motives. I don't have that at this time. It's too early in the investigation."

The bodies of the two dead employees were found by officers searching the building. The female employee was found in the parking lot and taken to a hospital. Winslow said one of the men who died was in his 60s, one was in his 20s and the woman is in her 50s.

"We're trying to verify if anything occurred today, or if there was any kind of activity that would cause

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something like this," he continued. "We are digging into the background of the suspect. We are reaching out to acquaintances and family members of him."

Bunn-O-Matic manufactures dispensed beverage equipment, and is headquartered in Springfield, according to the company's website.

One employee described a chaotic scene when the crack of gunfire shattered an otherwise quiet workday. Charles Bantle estimated that about half of the warehouse employees weren't working due to concerns about the coronavirus.

"I was in the maintenance shop and just heard the gunshots and everybody started running," Bantle told The (Springfield) State Journal-Register. "And I'm in maintenance, so I figured something's broken. So I started walking towards it, figured it was the air compressor blowing up or something, and I was going to have to go fix it. But then everyone was screaming and yelling, telling me to go the other way. So we all ran and took cover."

Nearly 175 workers were in several buildings at the site at the time of the shootings, Winslow said. About 100 employees hurried from the main building, and police gathered them together to determine if everyone had left the facility, he said.

"We're still trying to see exactly when he left," Winslow said of the suspect.

Winslow said investigators are working with the federal Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives agency to determine whether the guns in Collins' car were obtained legally. They're also looking into how Collins was able to get a weapon into the Springfield facility.

"I don't know what the protocols are at this time for entering the building," Winslow said. "I don't know what safety mechanism they may or may not have in place."

Babwin reported from Chicago. Reporter Corey Williams in West Bloomfield, Michigan, contributed to this report.

Trump signs 'strong' executive order to protect monuments

By DARLENE SUPERVILLE and ASHRAF KHALIL Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump signed an executive order Friday to protect monuments, memorials and statues facing new scrutiny amid fresh debate over the nation's racist beginnings.

Trump had promised to take action earlier this week after police thwarted an attempt by protesters to pull down a statue of Andrew Jackson in a park across from the White House.

The order calls on the attorney general to prosecute to the fullest extent of the law any person or group that destroys or vandalizes a monument, memorial or statue. Federal law authorizes a penalty of up to 10 years in prison for the "willful injury" of federal property.

The order also calls for maximum prosecution for anyone who incites violence and illegal activity, and it threatens state and local law enforcement agencies that fail to protect monuments with the loss of federal funding.

Trump announced earlier Friday on Twitter that he had signed the order and called it "strong."

Earlier in the day, the president used Twitter to call for the arrest of protesters involved with the attempt to bring down the Jackson statue from Lafayette Park.

He retweeted an FBI wanted poster showing pictures of 15 protesters who are wanted for "vandalization of federal property."

Trump wrote, "MANY people in custody, with many others being sought for Vandalization of Federal Property in Lafayette Park. 10 year prison sentences!"

He also said on Twitter that he had scrapped plans to spend the weekend at his central New Jersey home to stay in Washington "to make sure LAW & ORDER is enforced."

"These arsonists, anarchists, looters, and agitators have been largely stopped," Trump tweeted. "I am doing what is necessary to keep our communities safe — and these people will be brought to Justice!"

Protesters on Monday night attempted to drag the Jackson statue down with ropes and chains. Police repelled the protesters and sealed off Lafayette Park, which had been reopened to the public for more

than a week after protests against the death of George Floyd at police hands in Minnesota. On Tuesday, police cleared out the entire area around the corner of 16th and H streets — and pushed demonstrators away from the intersection, which had recently been renamed Black Lives Matter Plaza by the city.

Statistics released by the Metropolitan Police Department show that nine people were arrested Tuesday night and a total of 12 arrested between Monday and Wednesday. There were no protest-related arrests Thursday, according to the MPD data.

Demonstrators have grown increasingly emboldened about targeting statues deemed offensive or inappropriate. On June 19, or Juneteenth, the day marking the end of slavery in the United States, cheering crowds pulled down a statue of Confederate Gen. Albert Pike. The statue stood on federal land and had withstood previous attempts by the Washington, D.C., government to remove it. According to participants, police officers were on the scene but did not attempt to interfere.

The targeting of the statues has become a rallying cry for Trump and other conservatives. Immediately after the Pike statue was toppled and set ablaze, Trump called the incident a “disgrace to our Country!” on Twitter.

On Tuesday he tweeted, “I have authorized the Federal Government to arrest anyone who vandalizes or destroys any monument, statue or other such Federal property in the U.S. with up to 10 years in prison, per the Veteran’s Memorial Preservation Act, or such other laws that may be pertinent.”

Some states revert to restrictions as virus cases surge

By PAUL J. WEBER and MICHELLE R. SMITH Associated Press

AUSTIN, Texas (AP) — Texas and Florida reversed course and clamped down on bars again Friday in the nation’s biggest retreat yet as the daily number of confirmed coronavirus infections in the U.S. surged to an all-time high of 40,000.

Texas Gov. Greg Abbott ordered all bars closed, while Florida banned alcohol at such establishments. The two states joined the small but growing list of those that are either backtracking or putting any further reopenings of their economies on hold because of a comeback by the virus, mostly in the South and West.

Health experts have said a disturbingly large number of cases are being seen among young people who are going out again, often without wearing masks or observing other social-distancing rules.

“It is clear that the rise in cases is largely driven by certain types of activities, including Texans congregating in bars,” Abbott said.

Abbott had pursued up to now one of the most aggressive reopening schedules of any governor. The Republican not only resisted calls to order masks be worn but also refused until last week to let local governments take such measures.

“The doctors told us at the time, and told anyone who would listen, this will be a disaster. And it has been,” said Dallas County Judge Clay Jenkins, a Democrat who is the county’s top official. “Once again, the governor is slow to act. He is now being forced to do the things that we’ve been demanding that he do for the last month and a half.”

Stocks fell sharply on Wall Street again over the surging case numbers. The Dow Jones Industrial Average shed 730 points, or nearly 3%.

Texas reported more than 17,000 new cases in the past three days, with a record high of nearly 6,000 on Thursday. The second-largest state also sets records daily for hospitalizations, surpassing 5,000 coronavirus patients for the first time Friday.

In Florida, under GOP Gov. Ron DeSantis, the agency that regulates bars acted after the daily number of new confirmed cases neared 9,000, almost doubling the record set just two days earlier.

Colleen Corbett, a 30-year-old bartender at two places in Tampa, said that she was disappointed and worried about being unemployed again but that the restrictions are the right move. Most customers were not wearing masks, she said.

“It was like they forgot there was a pandemic or just stopped caring,” Corbett said.

A number of the hardest-hit states, including Arizona and Arkansas, have Republican governors who

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have resisted mask-wearing requirements and have largely echoed President Donald Trump's desire to reopen the economy quickly amid warnings the virus could come storming back.

The White House coronavirus task force, led by Vice President Mike Pence, held its first briefing in nearly two months, and Pence gave assurances that the U.S. is "in a much better place" than it was two months ago.

He said the country has more medical supplies on hand, a smaller share of patients are being hospitalized, and deaths are much lower than they were in the spring.

The count of new confirmed infections, provided by Johns Hopkins University, eclipsed the previous high of 36,400, set on April 24, during one of the deadliest stretches. Newly reported cases per day have risen on average about 60 percent over the past two weeks, according to an Associated Press analysis.

While the rise partly reflects expanded testing, experts say there is ample evidence the scourge is making a comeback, including rising deaths and hospitalizations in parts of the country and higher percentages of tests coming back positive for the virus.

At the task force briefing, Dr. Anthony Fauci, the nation's top infectious-disease expert, urged people to mind their responsibility to others: "A risk for you is not just isolated to you."

Deaths from the coronavirus in the U.S. are running at about 600 per day, down from a peak of around 2,200 in mid-April. Some experts have expressed doubt that deaths will return to that level, because of advances in treatment and prevention and because younger adults are more likely than older ones to survive.

The virus is blamed for about 125,000 deaths and nearly 2.5 million confirmed infections nationwide, by Johns Hopkins' count. But health officials believe the true number of infections is about 10 times higher. Worldwide, the virus has claimed close to a half-million lives.

Louisiana reported its second one-day spike of more than 1,300 cases this week. The increasing numbers led Democratic Gov. John Bel Edwards this week to suspend further easing of restrictions. Republican Gov. Doug Ducey did the same in Arizona, where cases are topping 3,000 a day and 85% of hospital beds are occupied.

For the second time in a week, Tennessee reported its biggest one-day jump in confirmed infections, with more than 1,400, but Republican Gov. Bill Lee has been reluctant to reinstate restrictions or call for a mask mandate.

In Texas, Abbott also scaled back restaurant capacity, shut down rafting operations and said any outdoor gatherings of more than 100 people will need approval from local officials.

DeSantis has been lifting restrictions more slowly than a task force recommended but has allowed theme parks to reopen, encouraged professional sports to come to Florida and pushed for the GOP convention to be held in the Sunshine State.

In a reversal of fortune, New York said it is offering equipment and other help to Arizona, Texas and Florida, noting that other states came to its aid when it was in the throes of the deadliest outbreak in the nation this spring.

"We will never forget that graciousness, and we will repay it any way we can," Gov. Andrew Cuomo said.

Globally, another record daily increase in India pushed the caseload in the world's second most populous nation toward half a million. And other countries with big populations like Indonesia, Pakistan and Mexico grappled with large numbers of infections and strained health care systems.

Smith reported from Providence, Rhode Island. Associated Press journalists around the world contributed to this report.

Facebook to label all rule-breaking posts - even Trump's

By BARBARA ORTUTAY AP Technology Writer

OAKLAND, Calif. (AP) — Facebook said Friday that it will flag all "newsworthy" posts from politicians that break its rules, including those from President Donald Trump.

Separately, Facebook's stock dropped more than 8%, erasing roughly \$50 billion from its market valu-

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ation, after the European company behind brands such as Ben & Jerry's and Dove announced it would boycott Facebook ads through the end of the year over the amount of hate speech and divisive rhetoric on its platform. Later in the day, Coca-Cola also announced it joined the boycott for at least 30 days.

CEO Mark Zuckerberg had previously refused to take action against Trump posts suggesting that mail-in ballots will lead to voter fraud, saying that people deserved to hear unfiltered statements from political leaders. Twitter, by contrast, slapped a "get the facts" label on them.

Until Friday, Trump's posts with identical wording to those labeled on Twitter remained untouched on Facebook, sparking criticism from Trump's opponents as well as current and former Facebook employees. Now, Facebook is all but certain to face off with the president the next time he posts something the company deems to be violating its rules.

"The policies we're implementing today are designed to address the reality of the challenges our country is facing and how they're showing up across our community," Zuckerberg wrote on his Facebook page announcing the changes.

Zuckerberg said the social network is taking additional steps to counter election-related misinformation. In particular, the social network will begin adding new labels to all posts about voting that will direct users to authoritative information from state and local election officials.

Facebook is also banning false claims intended to discourage voting, such as stories about federal agents checking legal status at polling places. The company also said it is increasing its enforcement capacity to remove false claims about local polling conditions in the 72 hours before the U.S. election.

Ethan Zuckerman, director of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology's Center for Civic Media, said the changes are a "reminder of how powerful Facebook may be in terms of spreading disinformation during the upcoming election."

He said the voting labels will depend on how good Facebook's artificial intelligence is at identifying posts to label.

"If every post that mentions voting links, people will start ignoring those links. If they're targeted to posts that say things like 'Police will be checking warrants and unpaid traffic tickets at polls' — a classic voter suppression disinfo tactic — and clearly mark posts as disinfo, they might be useful," he said.

But Zuckerman noted that Facebook "has a history of trying hard not to alienate right-leaning users, and given how tightly President Trump has aligned himself with voter-suppressing misinfo, it seems likely that Facebook will err on the side of non-intrusive and ignorable labels, which would minimize impact of the campaign."

Earlier in the day, shares of Facebook and Twitter dropped sharply after consumer-product maker Unilever announced a new ad boycott on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram through at least the end of the year.

The European company said it took the move to protest the amount of hate speech online. Unilever said the polarized atmosphere in the United States ahead of November's presidential election placed responsibility on brands to act.

In addition to the decline in Facebook shares, Twitter ended the day more than 7% lower.

Unilever, which is based in the Netherlands and Britain, joins a raft of other advertisers pulling back from online platforms. Facebook in particular has been the target of an escalating movement to withhold advertising dollars to pressure it to do more to prevent racist and violent content from being shared on its platform.

"We have decided that starting now through at least the end of the year, we will not run brand advertising in social media newsfeed platforms Facebook, Instagram and Twitter in the U.S.," Unilever said. "Continuing to advertise on these platforms at this time would not add value to people and society."

Facebook did not immediately respond to a request for comment. On Thursday, Verizon joined others in the Facebook boycott.

Unilever "has enough influence to persuade other brand advertisers to follow its lead," said eMarketer analyst Nicole Perrin. She noted that Unilever pulled back spending "for longer, on more platforms (including Twitter) and for more expansive reasons" — in particular, by citing problems with "divisiveness"

as well as hate speech.

Sarah Personette, vice president of global client solutions at Twitter, said the company's "mission is to serve the public conversation and ensure Twitter is a place where people can make human connections, seek and receive authentic and credible information, and express themselves freely and safely."

She added that Twitter is "respectful of our partners' decisions and will continue to work and communicate closely with them during this time."

'Mulan' follows 'Tenet' to August, ending Hollywood's summer

By JAKE COYLE AP Film Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Hollywood's hopes for salvaging its summer season have effectively ended after the releases of both Christopher Nolan's "Tenet" and the Walt Disney Co.'s live-action reboot of "Mulan" were again delayed.

With reported cases of the coronavirus surging in parts of the U.S., Disney on Friday followed Warner Bros. in pushing "Mulan" to late August. The film, initially planned to open in March, had been slated for July 24. It's now moving to Aug. 21.

"While the pandemic has changed our release plans for 'Mulan' and we will continue to be flexible as conditions require, it has not changed our belief in the power of this film and its message of hope and perseverance," said Disney co-chairmen Alan Horn and Alan Bergman in a joint statement.

Late Thursday, Warner Bros. also postponed "Tenet," starring John David Washington and Robert Pattinson, from July 31 to Aug. 12. The studio stressed the need for flexibility.

"We are choosing to open the movie mid-week to allow audiences to discover the film in their own time, and we plan to play longer, over an extended play period far beyond the norm, to develop a very different yet successful release strategy," a Warner Bros. spokesperson said in a statement.

Movie theater chains had planned the widespread reopening of cinemas partially around the return of new releases like "Tenet" and Disney's "Mulan." AMC Theaters, Regal Cinemas and Cinemark — the three largest circuits in North America — had all set a timetable for nationwide reopening in early to mid-July with the aim of first playing catalog movies (including Nolan's own "Inception") and a smattering of smaller films as a lead-in to summer tentpoles.

But with COVID-19 cases surging in Texas, Arizona, Florida and elsewhere, those plans became uncertain. Rising cases in California forced Disney earlier this week to delay next month's planned reopening of Disneyland in Anaheim. On Wednesday, New York Gov. Andrew Cuomo also said New York would delay reopening cinemas while it continued to research the safety of indoor, air-conditioned venues.

United Artists Releasing's "Bill & Ted Face the Music" also pushed back from Aug. 14 to Aug. 28.

Democrats renew health care attacks on GOP as virus builds

By ALEXANDRA JAFFE and ALAN FRAM Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Democrats are intensifying their attacks on President Donald Trump and his Republican allies over health care, hoping that an issue that helped lift the party during the 2018 midterms will prove even more resonant as the White House seeks to repeal the Affordable Care Act during a public health crisis.

Joe Biden, the presumptive Democratic presidential nominee, told an audience in the swing state of Pennsylvania this week that efforts to undermine the Obama-era health care law were "cruel" and "callous." House Speaker Nancy Pelosi called Trump "beyond stupid" for trying to roll back the law and introduced legislation that would expand the scope of the overhaul, essentially daring Republicans to vote against it.

The health care law has been a flashpoint in American politics since its enactment a decade ago. Once a cudgel Republicans used against Democrats, the tables have turned as the law — and its protection for preexisting conditions — has become more popular. Democrats believe that their advantage on the issue will only grow as the Trump administration renews its push to nullify the law even as coronavirus infections surge.

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"Trying to take away health care in the middle of a pandemic is like throwing out the sandbags during a hurricane," said Jesse Ferguson, a longtime Democratic strategist. "The pandemic has made clear for people how important it is to them that their neighbors have health care. It's no longer a nicety that others have health care; it's now a necessity."

Still, the Trump administration filed a brief Thursday urging the Supreme Court to strike down the health care law in its entirety, in support of a lawsuit brought by Texas and other conservative states against it. The brief came on a day that the U.S. saw a record number of new coronavirus cases, with 37,077 reported Thursday.

If the lawsuit is successful, some 20 million Americans could lose their health coverage, and protections for people with preexisting health conditions also would be put at risk.

Trump has long expressed a desire to protect those with preexisting conditions but has not said what he would do instead. Even some Republicans say the party should avoid relitigating the issue.

Doug Heye, a longtime Republican strategist, said the Democratic attack ads essentially write themselves. "For me, it's really easy to see how Democrats will be able to out-message Republicans on this," he said. "You lay out the COVID statistics, and you blame President Trump and whoever the Republican is that you're running against."

David Flaherty, a Colorado political consultant not associated with GOP Sen. Cory Gardner's reelection campaign, said the pandemic and the White House legal filings "without question" made the issue even more helpful for Democrats.

"It's only good for Republicans from conservative districts" who want to avert a primary from a GOP rival, Flaherty said of the White House repeal effort. "It's only good for the base; it's not good for middle voters. It's nothing but upside for Democrats."

The Trump campaign, however, slammed Biden for what communications director Tim Murtaugh called the "Obamacare disaster" and hinted at the GOP's lines of attack on health care to come this fall.

"Joe Biden has no credibility on healthcare ever since the Obama/Biden administration's Obamacare disaster kicked Americans off of their preferred plans. His support for a government-run 'public option' for healthcare, which endangers 180 million Americans' private insurance and threatens more than 1,000 rural hospitals, is an admission that Obamacare was fatally flawed," he said.

After Republicans' unsuccessful efforts to repeal and replace the law in 2017, Democrats turned GOP opposition against them — and their efforts bore fruit, both by helping the party pick up seats in the midterms and by seeming to improve public perception of the law.

In a May poll by the Kaiser Family Foundation, Americans were more likely to have a favorable than unfavorable opinion of the law, 51% to 41%. Opinions of the law have long been divided along party lines, but polls conducted by KFF over the past several years have consistently found that more Americans overall now favor than oppose the law.

And the 2018 midterms suggested repealing the law was not the rallying cry it once was for Republicans.

According to AP VoteCast, a survey of the electorate, only half of voters who supported Republican House candidates in the 2018 midterm elections said they thought the law should be repealed entirely, while about 4 in 10 preferred to repeal parts of the law. About 1 in 10 said it should be left as is or expanded. Among those who voted for Democratic candidates, about 6 in 10 wanted the law expanded, about 2 in 10 preferred it be left as is and about 2 in 10 wanted at least parts of the law repealed.

Democrats have been airing ads focused on health care for months, but Priorities USA Action, the major Democratic super PAC supporting Biden, seized on the Trump administration's latest move Thursday and launched a new ad in Wisconsin, Pennsylvania and Michigan — three states key to Democrats' hopes this fall — arguing that Trump is "failing on health care."

One group focused specifically on the issue of health care, Protect Our Care, is also looking to make it a problem for Republicans in down-ballot races as well. Last year, it launched ads targeting Gardner and fellow Republican Sens. Thom Tillis of North Carolina, Martha McSally of Arizona and Joni Ernst of Iowa, focused on the GOP lawsuit.

And in March, it put \$250,000 behind an ad attacking Republican Sen. Steve Daines of Montana on health care.

And Rep. Cheri Bustos, D-Ill., who leads House Democrats' campaign arm, said the party considers health care the top issue in dozens of swing districts that will determine which party controls the chamber next year.

"We are literally battling the worst pandemic in 100 years. And Washington Republicans are dead set on being the biggest threat to public health," she said.

She said the Democratic health care message would be, "Democrats are the party of health care. Republicans are the party of drinking bleach."

Associated Press writer Emily Swanson in Washington contributed to this report.

Coronavirus task force briefs — but not at White House

By DARLENE SUPERVILLE and DEB RIECHMANN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — There was no presidential appearance and no White House backdrop Friday when the government's coronavirus task force briefed the public for the first time since April — in keeping with an administration effort to show it is paying attention to the latest spike in cases but is not on a wartime footing that should keep the country from reopening the economy.

The briefing at the Department of Health and Human Services was held as the number of confirmed new coronavirus infections per day in the U.S. soared to an all-time high of 40,000 — higher even than during the deadliest stretch in April and May. In light of the new surge, task force briefers chose their words carefully to update the public about COVID-19, which has become both a public health and political issue.

Vice President Mike Pence had the most delicate line to walk. He acknowledged a surge in new cases across the South and West, while backing the president's desire to get the economy up and running without mentioning that it will also help the prospects for reelection.

"As we see new cases rising, and we're tracking them very carefully, there may be a tendency among the American people to think that we are back to the place that we were two months ago — in a time of great losses and a great hardship on the American people," Pence said.

But the vice president also took note of positive job numbers and added: "The reality is we're in a much better place."

Unbound by politics, Dr. Anthony Fauci, the nation's top infectious disease expert, sounded a more cautionary tone.

"As you can see, we are facing a serious problem in certain areas," Fauci said. But he also was careful not to blame the recent spike on gatherings where people haven't worn face masks or adhered to social distancing guidelines.

Pence deftly sidestepped pointed questions about the apparent dissonance between the administration's admonitions that Americans heed the guidance of local officials and President Donald Trump's decision to hold a political rally last week in Tulsa, Oklahoma, over the objection of health officials. And during a Trump event in Arizona on Tuesday, thousands of young attendees violated Phoenix's mandate to wear face masks.

Insisting that Trump was "taking proper steps," Pence invoked the constitutional protection of free speech, saying, "we still want to give people the freedom to participate in the political process."

The White House over the last two months all but eliminated coronavirus task force briefings and sharply curtailed public appearances by its medical experts as Trump shifted his focus to getting the country moving again. The return of the briefing was a sign that the administration knows it can't ignore growing anxiety over the increased number of cases as governors in some states pause or delay reopening.

But the briefings are not expected to come back with the same daily frequency. And it's no coincidence, officials said, that Friday's briefing took place at HHS rather than at the White House. The president is still dead-set on cheerleading an economic resurgence even in the face of the spike in infections.

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Pence announced that 16 states were seeing worrisome increases — up from 12 states on Wednesday. He said there still is work to do, but that it was important to reflect on how much the federal and state governments and health care workers have done to respond to the pandemic.

“This moment in the coronavirus pandemic is different” from the grim days when New York, New Jersey, Connecticut and New Orleans struggled under the weight of the outbreak, he said.

America has since accelerated testing to 500,000 a day, which has contributed to the increase in reported new cases, Pence said. He plans to travel next week to Texas, Arizona and Florida; the previously scheduled trips to the hot spots of COVID-19 were initially to be more political in nature, but will now include greater focus on the virus. He said Dr. Deborah Birx, the task force coordinator, will accompany him to Texas and Arizona.

“I just encourage every American to continue to pray,” Pence said in closing. “Pray for all the families that have lost loved ones. Pray for our health care workers on the front lines. And just continue to pray that, by God’s grace, every single day we’ll each do our part to heal our land.”

Back at the White House, Trump held a jobs-focused event in the East Room and offered this can-do message:

“We have a little work to do and we’ll get it done. We’re having some very good numbers coming out in terms of the comeback, the comeback of our nation and I think it’s going very rapidly and it’s going to be very good.”

Associated Press writers Zeke Miller and Jill Colvin contributed to this report.

Appeals court: Trump wrongly diverted \$2.5B for border wall

By DAISY NGUYEN Associated Press

SAN FRANCISCO (AP) — A federal appeals court on Friday ruled against the Trump administration in its transfer of \$2.5 billion from military construction projects to build sections of the U.S. border wall with Mexico, ruling it illegally sidestepped Congress, which gets to decide how to use the funds.

In two opinions, the 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals agreed with a coalition of border states and environmental groups that contended the money transfer was unlawful and that building the wall would pose environmental threats.

The rulings were the latest twist in the legal battle that has largely gone Trump’s way. Last July, the Supreme Court allowed the \$2.5 billion to be spent while the litigation continued, blunting the impact of the latest appeals court action.

The administration has already awarded much of the money, including a \$1.3-billion job in Arizona that was announced last month. Trump visited Yuma, Arizona, on Tuesday to mark completion of the 200th mile of border wall during his administration, much of it with the transferred military funds that the 9th Circuit panel found illegal.

After the \$2.5 billion transfer of military funds, the Pentagon diverted another \$3.6 billion that an appeals court in New Orleans ruled in January could be spent.

Still, critics of Trump’s wall praised the rulings on Friday for upholding the Constitution, which grants Congress the power of the purse.

“The funds that he is pilfering, which were appropriated by Congress, are vital to support the safety and well-being of the brave men and women in uniform, as well as their families,” said House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, a California Democrat.

The 9th Circuit ruled that the Trump administration not only lacked the authority to authorize the transfer of funds, “but also violated an express constitutional prohibition designed to protect individual liberties.”

The vote on both rulings was 2-1 with judges appointed by former President Bill Clinton in the majority and a Trump nominee dissenting.

The panel said the government was proceeding with border wall construction without ensuring compliance with any environmental regulations, thereby harming the interests of Sierra Club members who visit

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the border region for hiking, bird watching and other recreational activities.

The panel also held that the government failed to show that construction would halt the flow of illegal drugs. It said the administration had cited drug statistics but didn't address how the wall would have an impact on the problem.

"The executive branch's failure to show, in concrete terms, that the public's interest favors a border wall is particularly significant given that Congress determined fencing to be a lower budgetary priority and the Department of Justice's data points to a contrary conclusion," the majority wrote.

The White House said the decisions won't interfere with its ability to continue building the wall and noted that the Supreme Court has overturned many of the court's rulings.

After the Supreme Court gave the green light last year to begin work on the wall using Defense Department money, the Justice Department vowed to continue to defend the administration's efforts to protect the southern border.

California Attorney General Xavier Becerra, who led a 20-state coalition of attorneys general that sued the administration, praised the court decision.

"While the Trump administration steals public funds to build an unauthorized wall at the southern border, families across the country are struggling to pay their bills," Becerra said. "They deserve to know that their hard-earned dollars are going where Congress intended — to benefit them and their communities."

The American Civil Liberties Union, which sued on behalf of Sierra Club and Southern Border Communities Coalition, said if the Trump administration appeals, the case will go back to the Supreme Court where the ACLU will seek to tear down sections of the wall that were built with the military money.

"There's no undoing the damage that's been done, but we will be back before the Supreme Court to finally put a stop to this destructive wall," said ACLU staff attorney Dror Ladin.

Associated Press writers Jill Colvin at the White House, Brian Melley in Los Angeles and Elliot Spagat in San Diego contributed to this report.

Q&A: Overturning 'Obamacare' during a pandemic

By RICARDO ALONSO-ZALDIVAR Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The decade-old health care law that has divided Americans even as it expanded coverage and protected people with preexisting conditions is being put to yet another test. Amid a pandemic, President Donald Trump and some red states want the Supreme Court to declare the Affordable Care Act unconstitutional. Blue states and the U.S. House say the case has no merit.

Here are questions and answers as the case unfolds:

WHAT HAPPENS NOW?

In the real world, very little will change right away. Politically, it's another story.

It's unclear if the court will hear oral arguments before the November election. A decision isn't likely until next year, which means the ACA stays in place for the foreseeable future.

Even if a Supreme Court majority comes down of the side of "Obamacare's" opponents, unwinding the 10-year-old law would be time-consuming and fraught with political risk. Many of the ACA's provisions are popular, such as guaranteed coverage for people with preexisting medical conditions, and birth control coverage for women free of charge. Others are wired into the health care system, like changes to Medicare payments and enhanced legal authority against fraud.

In the political realm, Trump's unrelenting opposition to the ACA energizes Democrats going into the November elections.

As if on cue, House Speaker Nancy Pelosi has rolled out a bill to expand the health law, and the House is expected to vote on it Monday.

The goal isn't so much to pass legislation, since Pelosi's bill won't get a look in the Republican-controlled Senate. But it may make some Republicans squirm by forcing them to cast a vote their Democratic opponents can use in campaign ads this fall.

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"God willing the courts will do the right thing, but we just don't know," says Pelosi. "So we are getting prepared for what comes next."

HOW IS OBAMACARE DOING UNDER TRUMP?

Remarkably well, despite dramatic pronouncements by politicians on both sides.

Larry Levitt of the nonpartisan Kaiser Family Foundation estimates that about 23 million people are covered under the law, about the same as when former President Barack Obama left office.

That includes about 12.5 million covered under Medicaid expansions in most states and some 10 million through health insurance marketplaces like HealthCare.gov that offer individual plans subsidized by the taxpayers.

According to Gallup, Americans under Trump have either tilted in favor of the ACA or been closely split. By contrast, during Obama's last term, the public more often tilted against the law. Fifty-two percent approved of the ACA in March, while 47% disapproved.

A turning point came when Trump and a GOP Congress failed to repeal Obamacare in 2017.

DOES THE ACA MAKE ANY DIFFERENCE IN THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC?

It has taken on a new role. Coverage through the ACA can be a lifeline for people who lost their health insurance as a result of layoffs.

The Kaiser Family Foundation estimated recently that nearly 27 million people lost employer coverage because of pandemic-related layoffs, and nearly 80% would be eligible for Medicaid or an Obamacare plan with subsidized premiums.

New government numbers show HealthCare.gov enrollment has grown by about half a million people amid the pandemic.

WHAT WOULD HAPPEN TO PROTECTIONS FOR PEOPLE WITH PREEXISTING CONDITIONS?

That's a source of anxiety for many Americans.

A Kaiser foundation poll in January found that 57% are worried that they or someone in their family will lose health insurance if the Supreme Court overturns the ACA's protections for people with preexisting conditions. Under Obamacare, insurers cannot use someone's medical history to turn them away or charge them more.

The Trump administration has argued in court that the law's constitutional flaws would also entangle its protections for people with preexisting conditions.

Yet Trump has promised he would preserve those safeguards, without laying out a plan for how he would do that.

Some prominent Republicans say they never intended to undermine protections for people with preexisting conditions when they voted to repeal Obamacare's unpopular fines on people going uninsured. That repeal is the root cause of the current court case, since the law's opponents argue that without the fines the entire statute is rendered unconstitutional.

Traditionally, Republicans have supported protections for people with preexisting conditions, but with a limitation that individuals have to keep up their coverage to qualify.

WHERE'S JOE BIDEN IN ALL OF THIS?

He's backing his former boss' signature legislation.

The Democratic presidential candidate says if elected president he would build on the ACA to move the nation closer to coverage for all. Biden would increase the health law's subsidies for individual private plans, finish its Medicaid expansion, and create a new "public option" alternative modeled on Medicare.

HOW IS THE U.S. DOING ON ACCESS TO HEALTH INSURANCE?

Under Trump, the uninsured rate had started inching up again. The economic shutdown to try to slow the spread of coronavirus is likely to have made things much worse, but government numbers aren't available to quantify the impact.

The Census Bureau reported last year that 27.5 million people, 8.5% of the population, lacked health insurance coverage in 2018. That was an increase of 1.9 million uninsured, or 0.5 percentage point, from 2017.

It's not clear how many people who lost employer coverage in the pandemic have wound up uninsured.

Stocks sink as virus cases jump, forcing states to backtrack

By ALEX VEIGA and DAMIAN J. TROISE AP Business Writers

Stocks on Wall Street fell sharply Friday as confirmed new coronavirus infections in the U.S. hit an all-time high, prompting Texas and Florida to reverse course on the reopening of businesses.

The combination injected new jitters into a market that's been mostly riding high since April on hopes that the economy will recover from a deep recession as businesses open doors and Americans begin to feel more confident that they can leave their homes again.

The S&P 500 dropped 2.4%, giving up all of its gains after a rally the day before. The sell-off capped a choppy week of trading that erased the benchmark index's gains for the month. Even so, the S&P 500 is still on pace for its best quarter since 1998.

The surge in the number of confirmed new coronavirus cases prompted Texas and Florida to reverse course and clamp down on bars again. The two states join a small but growing list of those that are either backtracking or putting any further reopenings of their economies on hold because of a resurgence of the virus.

"That certainly calls into question how vigorous this recovery will be," said Bill Northey, senior investment director at U.S. Bank Wealth Management. "We have to acknowledge there's a high degree of uncertainty about how this is going to progress for the balance of the year."

The S&P 500 fell 74.71 points to 3,009.05. The Dow Jones Industrial Average had its worst day in two weeks, losing 730.05 points, or 2.8%, to 25,015.55. The Nasdaq, which hit an all-time high earlier this week, dropped 259.78 points, or 2.6%, to 9,757.22.

Markets have been mostly rallying since April on hopes that U.S. states and regions around the world could continue to lift the spring lockdowns put in place to slow the spread of the coronavirus. The increase in cases casts doubt on expectations that the economy will continue to reopen and things can get back to normal sooner, rather than later.

The number of confirmed new coronavirus cases per day in the U.S. has hit an all-time high of 40,000, eclipsing the mark set during the deadliest stretch in late April. Deaths and hospitalizations have been rising in parts of the country, especially in the South and West.

The resurgence in the virus and the action by some governors to backtrack or at least pause the reopenings of their states undercut Wall Street's optimism for a relatively swift economic turnaround.

"That has real implications for the pace where we can return to economic normalcy," Northey said, adding that while some states are rolling back their reopening, it's unlikely there will be a broad, nationwide lockdown.

The stock market is likely to remain volatile as traders weigh the ups and downs in the trajectory of the pandemic.

"In large part, we're going to see some of these fits and starts," said Charlie Ripley, senior investment strategist for Allianz Investment Management. "It's going to weigh on sentiment to some extent, but overall we think the economy is on the mend and the recovery is on its way."

Facebook slumped 8.3% as an advertising boycott aimed at pressuring the social networking giant into doing more to prevent racist and violent information from being shared on its service intensifies. Verizon announced it had joined the boycott Thursday, and on Friday European consumer-products maker Unilever, which makes Ben & Jerry's ice cream and Dove soap also said it would stop advertising on Facebook.

Financial companies were among the biggest decliners after the Federal Reserve ordered many of the nation's biggest banks to suspend buybacks of their stock and cap dividend payments for several months.

Capital One Financial fell 8.8%, Goldman Sachs dropped 8.6% and JPMorgan lost 5.5%. The announcement came as part of the Fed's annual "stress tests," which showed that in a worst-case scenario involving the U.S. economy being ravaged by the pandemic, the banks would collectively lose roughly \$700 billion.

Traders also dumped shares in Nike after the athletic apparel maker reported a big loss as most of its stores were forced to close. The stock slid 7.6%.

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Bond yields were mixed. The yield on the 10-year Treasury note dropped to 0.65% from 0.67%, another sign of caution in the market. The yield tends to move with investors' expectations for the economy and inflation.

Concern that a pullback in the reopening of businesses could hamper demand for energy helped pull down oil prices Friday. Benchmark U.S. crude oil for August delivery fell 23 cents to settle at \$38.49 a barrel. Brent crude oil for August delivery fell 3 cents to \$41.02 a barrel.

Major indexes in Europe closed mostly lower, and Asian markets finished mostly higher.

As virus grows, governors rely on misleading hospital data

By JIM SALTER and LINDSEY TANNER Associated Press

Governors in places seeing huge spikes in coronavirus infections often cite statewide data to assure the public they have plenty of hospital capacity to survive the onslaught, even as the states routinely miss the critical benchmarks to guide their pandemic response.

Public health officials and experts say the heavy reliance on statewide hospital data is a misleading and sometimes irresponsible metric to justify keeping a state open or holding back on imposing new limits.

That is because statewide statistics can be deceiving, especially in large states where individual hospitals can be in crisis mode even while the overall capacity numbers look OK.

Thomas LaVeist, dean of the Tulane School of Public Health and Tropical Medicine in New Orleans, said basing pandemic and reopening policy on statewide hospital bed capacity "is incredibly irresponsible."

"To cherry-pick hospital capacity and to use that one metric without the context of number of cases, number of deaths, is shocking," LaVeist said.

The issue of hospital capacity has gained urgency across the nation this week as Florida, Texas, California, Arizona and other states reported skyrocketing case numbers. Governors have repeatedly invoked hospital capacity in arguing against new business restrictions, though the dynamic began to shift Friday when Texas and Florida clamped down on bars amid an increasingly dire situation with COVID-19.

At the first White House coronavirus briefing nearly two months Friday, Vice President Mike Pence also cited hospitalizations in discussing the outlook for the pandemic.

Two months ago, Pence said 15% of patients were being hospitalized. Now it's about 5%. That means the health care system is better positioned to cope with a resurgence in cases, he says.

In Texas, the state health department's website on Thursday showed 12,951 available beds, 1,320 available ICU beds, and 5,850 available ventilators. What it doesn't break down is how bleak the situation is in some particular places, including Houston, the nation's fourth largest city. Hospital beds in Houston are filling so fast that Texas Children's Hospital is starting to treat adult patients, and 97% of ICU beds at Texas Medical Center were in use.

In Miami, Homestead Hospital confirmed Tuesday it was at capacity. The hospital was transferring patients to other hospitals and preparing to convert regular beds to beds for ICU and acute care patients, if needed.

In Arizona, Republican Gov. Doug Ducey has declined to impose new restrictions on business activity or a stay-at-home order, repeatedly citing ample capacity in the state's hospitals as the reason he is comfortable staying open.

"That's what's most important when there's a rise in cases," Ducey said earlier this month.

Ducey has condemned as "misinformation" the notion that hospital space is running short, even as state data shows that 85% of Arizona's hospital beds are occupied. Arizona has about 2,500 hospitalized COVID-19 patients.

At the same time, the state is badly missing the mark on the benchmarks established by the White House task force to guide the reopening of the economy, with 23 percent of COVID-19 tests coming back positive in the past week in Arizona.

The task force does not include statewide hospitalizations as part of its criteria that states are supposed to meet before reopening. Those criteria include a downward trajectory of cases within a two-week period. They also specify that hospitals should have enough intensive care unit capacity to treat a surge in

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patients and should have a robust testing program in place for at-risk healthcare workers, including virus antibody testing.

Dr. Joseph Gerald, associate professor of public health policy and management at the University of Arizona, said that if the trend continues, cases will likely exceed statewide hospital bed capacity within the next several weeks.

California has broken several of its own daily records for the number of positive tests and hospitalizations have risen by more than 30 percent in the past two weeks. Democratic Gov. Gavin Newsom has sounded an upbeat tone in recent days about hospital capacity but changed his tune somewhat on Friday, saying he wants a Southern California county that borders Mexico to consider a stay-home order again.

Dr. Colleen Kraft, associate chief medical officer at Emory Hospital in Atlanta and a member of Georgia's coronavirus task force, said regional hospital bed capacity would be a better metric than statewide capacity. She lamented that the pandemic has seemingly devolved into a "political situation."

"As someone who came into medicine to serve people, it's difficult to watch," Kraft said.

Robyn Gershon, a professor and public health expert at New York University, called using statewide hospital bed capacity to guide policy "completely unethical."

"It's unethical to say let's just go about our business and by the way, we can handle the overflow," Gershon said. "A better measure is the 14-day and seven-day case infection rate. That's what's telling us what's going on right now."

—
Salter reported from O'Fallon, Missouri; Tanner reported from Three Oaks, Michigan. Jim Vertuno in Austin, Texas, contributed to this report.

Police solve case of girl abducted, raped, killed in 1982

COLUMBUS, Ohio (AP) — A nearly four-decade-old cold case involving the abduction, rape and murder of an 8-year-old girl was pronounced closed Friday when Columbus police said a new genealogical testing technique identified the girl's killer.

For years, police sought clues in the death of Kelly Prosser, abducted while walking home from a Columbus elementary school on Sept. 20, 1982. Her body was found in a Madison County cornfield two days later.

Detectives began working with a genealogy company in the past few months to use DNA from the crime scene to identify the suspect. After establishing a family tree, police interviewed family members and determined that Harold Warren Jarrell was Kelly's killer.

Jarrell died in Las Vegas in 1996 at 67. Jarrell was convicted of a similar abduction in Columbus in 1977 but no evidence tied him to Prosser's case, police said.

"It is satisfying to let the family know what happened to their little girl though it doesn't bring her back," said Det. Dana Croom of the police department's Cold Case Unit.

The technique known as genetic genealogy testing and research has solved a number of high-profile cold cases nationally in recent years, including California's so-called Golden State Killer.

Virus hits Venezuelan city, raising fears of broader crisis

By FABIOLA SANCHEZ Associated Press

CARACAS, Venezuela (AP) — Hospitals in the capital of Venezuela's main oil-producing state are filled with coronavirus patients and dozens of health workers have been infected, witnesses said this week in the first reports of the pandemic overwhelming the country's debilitated health care system.

Health experts have long feared the impact of COVID-19 on Venezuela, where hospitals are dilapidated and there are constant shortages of medicine and essential supplies after years of economic and political crisis.

Until now, Venezuela has appeared to avoid major outbreaks even as other South American countries see thousands of new cases daily. Observers have partially credited its isolation for protecting it from widespread infection.

This week, opposition figures and health care workers in the city of Maracaibo, capital of Zulia state,

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have reported that an outbreak that started in May has filled the city's hospitals and infected dozens of doctors and nurses. Officials have set up quarantine centers for asymptomatic patients in about 20 hotels.

According to official figures, Venezuela had 4,525 confirmed cases and 39 deaths as of Friday, although the true numbers appear to be significantly larger. President Nicolás Maduro has increased measures to limit the spread of the disease in Zulia state, the capital of Caracas and eight other states.

The outbreak in Maracaibo, the country's second most-important city, appears to have begun in Las Pulgas, a market that normally draws about 20,000 people a day.

The market was closed, and the official tally of cases in the city of 3 million stands at 600, with the actual number apparently much higher.

Maracaibo's University Hospital, once a state-of-the-art complex, suffers daily water shortages and air conditioning breakdowns, and rats, cockroaches, cats and dogs all can be found regularly in the hospital complex.

"This is a zoo," one doctor told The Associated Press, speaking on condition of anonymity for fear of official retaliation. Other medical workers also spoke on condition of anonymity to avoid repercussions from the state.

University Hospital has been closed to all patients except those with COVID-19, but even so, "the wards are filled to bursting," another doctor said.

In two other hospitals, the Chiquinquirá and Adolfo Pons, beds for virus patients have been set up in outpatient examination areas, a nurse said.

Dr. William Barrientos, a surgeon and opposition legislator, said 20 small and midsized hotels in Maracaibo are being used as quarantine centers for suspected virus patients.

Barrientos said more than 40 doctors have the virus, adding to an already severe staffing problem because of a lack of gasoline, public transportation and personal protective equipment, all of which have contributed to absenteeism.

The Maracaibo Military Hospital said a 46-year-old nurse had died. Health workers told AP she had been infected by a virus patient.

Health experts and human rights groups have been called for more international aid for Venezuela's health system because of the virus. A drop in oil prices and government mismanagement have generated a severe recession and hyperinflation, and nearly a third of the population is struggling to feed itself.

House adopts bill to make DC 51st state; Senate GOP opposes

By MATTHEW DALY Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Democratic-controlled House approved a bill Friday to make the District of Columbia the 51st state, saying Congress has both the moral obligation and constitutional authority to ensure that the city's 700,000 residents are allowed full voting rights, no longer subject to "taxation without representation."

Lawmakers approved the bill, 232-180, largely along party lines, marking the first time a chamber of Congress has passed a D.C. statehood bill. Minnesota Rep. Collin Peterson was the sole Democrat to oppose the bill. No Republican voted for it.

The legislation now goes to the Republican-controlled Senate, where it faces insurmountable opposition from GOP leaders.

Del. Eleanor Holmes Norton, the district's non-voting representative in Congress, sponsored the bill, saying it has both the facts and Constitution on its side.

D.C.'s population is larger than those of Wyoming and Vermont, and the new state would be one of seven with populations under one million, she said. The city's \$15.5 billion annual budget is larger than those of 12 states, and D.C.'s triple-A bond rating is higher than those of 35 states, Norton said.

Opponents, mostly Republicans, called the bill a power grab for the firmly Democratic city, and said the nation's founding fathers intended the capital to be separate from the other states.

"This is about power. Make no mistake about it," said Rep. Chip Roy, R-Texas. The bill would "fundamen-

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tally alter what D.C is," he added.

Norton, who has served as D.C. delegate since 1991, said the issue is deeply personal for her and thousands of other city residents who have long been disenfranchised. Her great-grandfather Richard Holmes escaped slavery at a Virginia plantation and "made it as far as D.C., a walk to freedom but not to equal citizenship," she said. "For three generations my family has been denied the rights other Americans take for granted."

Congress has two choices, she added. "It can continue to exercise undemocratic, autocratic authority over the 705,000 American citizens, treating them, in the words of Frederick Douglass, as 'aliens, not citizens, but subjects.' Or Congress can live up to this nation's promise and ideals, end taxation without representation and pass" the statehood bill.

The bill would create a new state of Washington, Douglass Commonwealth, in honor of the Virginia-born first president and the Maryland-born abolitionist and former slave.

The bill also would reduce the size of the federal district to a tourist-friendly area that includes the White House, the Capitol, the Supreme Court, federal monuments and the federal executive, legislative and judicial office buildings adjacent to the National Mall and the Capitol. Congress would retain control of that 2-square-mile area.

Washington Mayor Muriel Bowser invoked Douglass as she hailed the "historic vote" bringing the city closer than ever to becoming the 51st state.

"More than 160 years ago, Washingtonian Frederick Douglass told us: Power concedes nothing without a demand," Bowser said. "As Washingtonians and as taxpaying American citizens, we are demanding what is owed to us — the rights guaranteed to us by the U.S. Constitution. It is past time to fix this injustice."

Sen. Tom Cotton, R-Ark., blasted the bill ahead of the House vote. In a Senate speech, he dismissed Washington, D.C., as a city with little more to offer than lobbyists and federal workers.

"Yes, Wyoming is smaller than Washington by population, but it has three times as many workers in mining, logging and construction, and 10 times as many workers in manufacturing," Cotton said. "In other words, Wyoming is a well-rounded working-class state."

Cotton also criticized Democrats for prioritizing the D.C. statehood vote while there is "mob violence" in the streets. Recent protests near the White House required "force by federal law enforcement officers under federal control," he said.

"Would you trust Mayor Bowser to keep Washington safe if she were given the powers of a governor? Would you trust Marion Barry?" Cotton added referring to current and former mayors, both Black.

Cotton's remarks stirred outrage on social media, with many describing the remarks as racist. D.C. has a large African American population and was once known as "Chocolate City," although it is no longer majority Black.

Supporters said the bill has become even more important in the aftermath of protests for racial justice in both Washington and across the nation. Democratic leaders scheduled the vote after the Trump administration's much-criticized move to use federal forces to clear Lafayette Square near the White House of peaceful protesters so that President Donald Trump could trumpet his law and order credentials in a photo op.

"There shouldn't be troops from other states in Washington, D.C.," said Bowser. "There shouldn't be federal forces advancing against Americans, and there very definitely shouldn't be soldiers stationed around our city waiting for the go to attack Americans in a local policing matter."

Trump said last month that "D.C. will never be a state" because it would likely mean two more Democratic senators. "No, thank you. That'll never happen," he said.

But House Majority Leader Steny Hoyer, D-Md., said the rights of D.C. residents should transcend political calculations.

"We are the only free country in the world, from all our research, that doesn't have a voting member of their parliament in their country. We call our parliament 'Congress,'" Hoyer said.

Recent events have focused national attention on the city's plight. Earlier this year, when Congress

passed the CARES Act stimulus package, the capital was classified as a territory rather than a state — a distinction that cost Washington more than \$700 million in federal funding.

All District laws are subject to review by a congressional committee, which can veto them or alter them by attaching riders to federal appropriations bills. During GOP control of Congress, conservatives have sought, mostly unsuccessfully, to restrict some of the city's liberal initiatives such as needle exchanges for drug users and abortions under its Medicaid program.

Thomas Blanton, KKK bomber of 16th St Baptist Church, dies

BIRMINGHAM, Ala. (AP) — Thomas Edwin Blanton Jr., the last of three one-time Ku Klux Klansmen convicted in a 1963 Alabama church bombing that killed four Black girls and was the deadliest single attack of the civil rights movement, died Friday in prison, officials said. He was 82.

Gov. Kay Ivey's office said Blanton died of natural causes. He was being held at Donaldson prison near Birmingham, prison officials said.

In May 2001, Blanton was convicted of murder and sentenced to life in prison for the bombing of the 16th Street Baptist Church in Birmingham. Ivey, in a statement, called the bombing "a dark day that will never be forgotten in both Alabama's history and that of our nation."

When asked by the judge during sentencing if he had any comment, Blanton said: "I guess the good Lord will settle it on judgment day."

Sen. Doug Jones, who prosecuted Blanton, said the fact that Blanton remained free for almost 40 years after the bombing "speaks to a broader systemic failure to hold him and his accomplices accountable."

"That he died at this moment, when the country is trying to reconcile the multi-generational failure to end systemic racism, seems fitting," Jones said in a statement.

The church bombing, exposing the depths of hatred by white supremacists as Birmingham integrated its public schools, was a tipping point of the civil rights movement. Moderates could no longer remain silent and the fight to topple segregation laws gained new momentum.

The investigation into the bombing was stalled early and left dormant for long stretches, but two other ex-Klansmen, Robert Chambliss and Bobby Frank Cherry, also were convicted in the bombing in separate trials. Chambliss was convicted in 1977 and died in prison in 1985. Cherry was convicted in 2002 and died in prison in 2004.

On Sept. 15, 1963, a bomb ripped through an exterior wall of the brick church, killing four girls who were inside preparing for a youth program. The bodies of Denise McNair, 11, and Addie Mae Collins, Cynthia Wesley and Carole Robertson, all 14, were found in the downstairs lounge.

Collins' sister, Sarah Collins Rudolph, survived the blast but lost her right eye and is known as the "fifth little girl." Glass fragments remained in her chest, left eye and abdomen for decades after the explosion.

A parole hearing was scheduled next year for Blanton, and Rudolph and her husband planned to attend in opposition to his release, which was denied during a previous hearing.

"She hopes that he found Jesus Christ and repented," George Rudolph said on behalf of his wife.

Lisa McNair, the sister of Denise McNair, said she also hoped Blanton had repented and added: "I wish I could have sat down with him to find out if he had had a change of heart."

Blanton never admitted any role in the blast, but evidence showed he was part of a group of hard-core Klansmen who made a bomb and planted it on a Sunday morning.

During the trial, then-U.S. Attorney Jones, appointed as a special state prosecutor, said Blanton acted in response to months of civil rights demonstrations. The targeted church was a rallying point for protesters.

"Tom Blanton saw change and didn't like it," Jones said in the trial.

Blanton proclaimed his innocence years after being sent to prison. In a 2006 interview with Birmingham station WBRC-TV, he claimed the government used trumped-up evidence and lies to gain his conviction.

"I think I was cleverly set up by the government ... and that's why I'm here," Blanton told the television station from prison. "I'm sorry it happened. Deeply sorry. But I'm not responsible for it."

A 1993 meeting in Birmingham between FBI officials and Black ministers led to the reopening of the

bombing case against Blanton and Cherry. The investigation remained quiet until 1997 when agents went to Texas to talk to Cherry.

A decade earlier, the U.S. Justice Department concluded that former FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover had blocked prosecution of Klansmen in the bombing.

Associated Press writer Daniel Yee in Atlanta contributed to this report.

Latin America's critical food markets fuel virus spread

By ALEXIS TRIBOULARD and MARK STEVENSON Associated Press

MEXICO CITY (AP) — Mexico City's main wholesale market detects dozens of coronavirus cases every week. A covered food market in Venezuela was the source of one of the largest outbreaks in the country. And every single merchant in a vast market in Peru has tested positive for the virus.

As the coronavirus pandemic swamps countries from Mexico to Argentina, public health officials are struggling to contain outbreaks seeded at Latin America's iconic covered food markets, a beloved, essential feature of life in the region — and a near-perfect setting for spreading the disease.

With hundreds of millions relying on such markets for their food and livelihoods, officials are debating whether and how they can operate safely. With inconsistent testing, huge gaps in health coverage, poorly enforced social distancing measures and widespread inequality, many Latin American countries are seeing large and rising numbers of new cases daily, making the region one of the hardest-hit in the world.

Mexico City's massive Central de Abasto is an approximately 3-square-kilometer (1-square-mile) compound of lots, warehouses, loading bays and wholesale outlets that is the main depot for getting fruit, vegetables and other produce to about 20 million consumers in the metropolitan area. Its labyrinthine hallways are crowded with 90,000 workers and up to 300,000 customers each day.

The market has recorded 690 confirmed coronavirus cases, with a peak of over 200 cases per week in May. But it installed its own testing center and triage area and instituted contact tracing long before the city itself did, and the weekly number of new cases has since fallen to about 60 or 70, said its director, Hector Garcia Nieto.

Closing it is out of the question.

"It would be like closing the stomach of part of the nation," said Garcia Nieto.

That truth is repeated throughout Latin America, where clusters of street vendors often grow up around the markets; where millions of farmers have no other outlet for their produce; and where poverty prevents consumers from buying at grocery stores.

Peru has more than 2,600 food markets. In May, the government said that after examining thousands of vendors, it found that 36 of Lima's largest markets were points of contagion.

Jhoan Faneite, a 36-year-old Venezuelan migrant, picks up COVID-19 victims for a funeral home in the city.

"The centers of infection here are always around the popular markets," he said. "We always pick up in those areas, always."

At the Belén Market in Peru's Loreto region, officials found that 100% of the vendors were infected. All 2,500 of the market's stalls were destroyed.

In Maracaibo, Venezuela, the Las Pulgas market has been identified as the source of one of the largest outbreaks in the country, responsible for 400 of the province's nearly 580 recorded coronavirus cases. About a dozen deaths have been linked to the market.

The outbreak likely became so deadly because the vendors who run the informal stalls around the market refused for weeks to close up shop since they receive no government support — and so must continue selling. The way the insecurity of people working in the informal economy has helped fuel outbreaks can be seen across Latin America.

Finally, the government ordered Las Pulgas shut down.

But in many places in Latin America, there has been violent resistance to attempts to close markets.

In Bolivia in late June, in the La Paz suburb of El Alto, street market vendors stoned police officers who

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were trying to enforce a lockdown. The vendors said they had been without sales for two months, and could no longer stand to remain shut. About 75% of commerce in Bolivia is conducted in the informal economy, where, like elsewhere in the region, there is no unemployment insurance.

At Rio de Janeiro's Ceasa wholesale market, where about 50,000 customers and workers buzz about every day, fruit and vegetable vendor Marcos dos Santos now wears a mask.

"I'm wearing the mask because I lost a lot of friends here," Dos Santos said as he waited on customers. "When we see people we know dying, we see that it's real."

There has been much debate about whether these markets can be blamed for the spread of the virus — and whether they can ever operate safely. Many that were initially closed have reopened with measures like limiting the number of people, forming orderly lines, taking temperatures and requiring the use of masks — but the rules are hard to enforce and routinely flouted.

At Mexico City's Central de Abasto the passageways have remained crowded despite the pandemic, with huffing workers carting improbably tall stacks of bags and boxes on dollies, weaving through the crowds shouting "here comes the hit" to urge customers to get out of their way.

People keep coming because they have to: This is the cheapest place to buy produce in the city, and it is the main sales outlet for about a third of the country's fruit and vegetable production.

"People are desperate, they are coming to buy essentials, they're not buying superfluous stuff anymore, just the bare necessities," said Jorge Flores, 39, who has worked selling vegetables at the market with his father since he was 8.

While health workers in hazmat suits check temperatures at the door, and most people wear masks, a significant number don't or wear them only halfway.

"I usually use my face mask, my sanitizer gel, but I don't have anything on right now, because I just had a taco," Flores said half apologetically.

While the Central de Abasto is largely wholesale, it feeds Mexico City's 329 public markets and the city's hundreds of thousands of food stands and street vendors. It is how farms and truckers throughout the country gain access to greater Mexico City's 22 million inhabitants.

It is thus an ideal conduit for the virus — often invisibly.

Lab technician Ulises Cadena Santana helps take as many as 100 COVID-19 test samples per day outside the market.

"The big majority of cases come in asymptomatic," said Cadena Santana. "They appear healthy, they have no symptoms, they are the most dangerous positive cases."

Downstream from the Central de Abasto, the produce makes its way to smaller neighborhood sellers, like the San Cosme market, where the problem is obvious: The aisles under the tents of San Cosme leave customers only a couple of feet (less than a meter) to walk, stop, haggle and buy.

Yet many people visiting such markets have resisted wearing masks or taking other measures to protect themselves.

But that may be changing.

"People are starting to believe that the disease exists, and it is not just something the government invented," said Rocio Bautista, a lab technician who administers COVID-19 test swabs at the Central de Abasto. "People are starting to say, well, yes, when they have had close relatives or neighbors who have died."

In Colombia, Mauricio Parra, the manager of Bogota's Corabastos produce market, insists the market can be safe, even as it serves up to 80,000 customers and 10,000 trucks every day.

The market has temperature checks and 500 hand-washing stations.

"The key is the triangle of life: mandatory face masks, hand washing and social distancing," said Parra. "If we comply with these three requirements, we can stop this from spreading further."

Associated Press journalists Franklin Briceño in Lima, Peru; Cesar Garcia in Bogota, Colombia; Jorge Rueda in Caracas, Venezuela; Paola Flores in La Paz, Bolivia; and Yesica Fisch in Rio de Janeiro contributed to this story.

Spacewalking astronaut loses mirror, newest space junk

By MARCIA DUNN AP Aerospace Writer

CAPE CANAVERAL, Fla. (AP) — A spacewalking astronaut added to the millions of pieces of junk orbiting the Earth on Friday, losing a small mirror on his sleeve as soon as he emerged from the International Space Station for battery work.

Commander Chris Cassidy said the mirror quickly floated away. The lost item posed no risk to either the spacewalk or the station, according to NASA.

While millions of pieces of space debris orbit Earth, more than 20,000 items including old rocket parts and busted satellites are big enough to be tracked in order to safeguard the space station and working satellites.

Spacewalking astronauts wear a wrist mirror on each sleeve to get better views while working. The mirror is just 5-by-3 inches (7-by-12 centimeters), and together with its band has a mass of barely one-tenth of a pound (50 grams).

The mirror came loose in darkness. Cassidy inspected his spacesuit sleeve later in sunlight but didn't see any clues that might explain how the mirror came off.

The rest of the six-hour spacewalk went swimmingly.

Cassidy and Bob Behnken hustled through the first of four planned spacewalks to replace the last bunch of old station batteries. They removed five old batteries and installed two new ones — which checked out fine — getting a jump on their next spacewalk on Wednesday. They have four more to plug in before the job is complete.

"I think we've done enough for one day," Behnken said.

Once all the new batteries are installed in the coming weeks, the orbiting lab should be good for the rest of its life, according to NASA. The big, boxy batteries — more powerful and efficient than the old nickel-hydrogen batteries coming out — keep the station humming when it's on the night side of Earth.

The battery replacements began in 2017, with previous crews putting in 18 lithium-ion batteries, half as many as the old ones replaced. It's cumbersome work: Each battery is about a yard (meter) tall and wide, with a mass of 400 pounds (180 kilograms).

Their spacewalks are expected to continue through July before Behnken returns to Earth in August aboard a SpaceX Dragon capsule. Behnken and Doug Hurley made history at the end of May with SpaceX's first astronaut launch.

This was the seventh spacewalk for both men. Each has spent about 40 hours out in the vacuum of space.

As the spacewalk ended, Cassidy thanked the cleaning staff at Mission Control in Houston, kept especially busy during "this crazy, interesting time."

"Everything has to be cleaned and sanitized multiple times a day, so a special shoutout to the custodial staff at the Johnson Space Center," he said.

The spacewalkers also paid tribute to NASA's space station program manager, Kirk Shireman, retiring Friday after 35 years to go into private industry. "I'm sure we'll run into him in his future line of work," Behnken said. "Thank you, Uncle Kirk."

The Associated Press Health and Science Department receives support from the Howard Hughes Medical Institute's Department of Science Education. The AP is solely responsible for all content.

Pelosi pushes Senate with House passage of George Floyd bill

By LISA MASCARO AP Congressional Correspondent

WASHINGTON (AP) — Passage of the House Democrats' far-reaching police overhaul bill returned attention to the Senate on Friday, as the divided Congress struggles to address the global outcry over the killings of George Floyd and other Black Americans.

House Speaker Nancy Pelosi signaled she's willing to negotiate if the Senate is able to approve its own

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bill. But she said Democrats have no interest in engaging with Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell on the Republican-only package, which collapsed this week after Senate Democrats blocked it from debate. "The Senate has to do better," Pelosi said.

The House approved the George Floyd Justice in Policing Act late Thursday in a vote heavy with emotion and symbolism. It was one month to the day after Floyd's death, which sparked a national reconsideration of policing tactics and racial injustice.

The legislative package from Democrats is perhaps the most ambitious set of proposed changes to police procedures and accountability in decades. Backed by the nation's leading civil rights groups, it aims to match the moment of demonstrations that filled streets across the nation. It has almost zero chance of becoming law.

President Donald Trump's administration said he would veto the bill. McConnell has said the bill would not pass the Republican-held chamber.

After the GOP policing bill stalled this week, blocked by Democrats, Trump shrugged.

"If nothing happens with it, it's one of those things," Trump said. "We have different philosophies."

Congress is now at a familiar impasse despite protests outside their door and polling that shows Americans overwhelmingly want changes after the deaths of Floyd, Breonna Taylor and others in interactions with law enforcement. The two parties are instead appealing to voters ahead of the fall election, which will determine control of the House, Senate and White House.

In the month since Floyd's May 25 death, funeral services were held for Rayshard Brooks, a Black man shot and killed by police in Atlanta. Thursday was also what would have been the 18th birthday of Tamir Rice, a Black boy killed by police in Ohio in 2014. In New York, prosecutors this week filed criminal charges against an officer who put a Black man in what they said was a banned chokehold.

Even though the proposals from Congress share common ground, they diverge widely. One main difference is that several of the changes proposed by Republicans — such as restrictions on police use of chokeholds, which are already prohibited in many jurisdictions — are banned by Democrats.

Pelosi said she's all for bringing ideas to the table, but "if one person is saying chokeholds and the other is saying no chokeholds, it's very hard to compromise."

Law enforcement organizations and some of the nation's leading business groups, including the influential Business Roundtable of leading CEOs, are encouraging Congress to keep working toward a solution. But that seems unlikely, with lawmakers' positions hardening and the parties settled in for a political standoff ahead of campaign season and elections.

Sen. Tim Scott of South Carolina, the only Black Republican senator, who drafted the GOP package, said Thursday that his bill is now "closer to the trash can than it's ever been."

During the daylong debate, several Democratic lawmakers read the names of those killed, shared experiences of racial bias and echoed support of Black Lives Matter activists.

Rep. Karen Bass, D-Calif., the chairwoman of the Congressional Black Caucus, said hundreds of thousands of people "in every state in the union" are marching in the streets to make sure Floyd "will not be just another Black man dead at the hands of the police."

White Republican lawmakers countered that the bill goes too far and failed to include GOP input. "All lives matter," said Rep. Debbie Lesko, R-Ariz. New York Rep. Pete King said it's time to stand with law enforcement, the "men and women in blue." House GOP leader Kevin McCarthy decried the "mob" of demonstrators.

Rep. Barry Loudermilk, R-Ga., stood up to say he just didn't understand what was happening in the country — from Floyd's death to the protests that followed. Several Black Democratic lawmakers rose to encourage him to pick up a U.S. history book or watch some of the many films now streaming about the Black experience in America.

The 236-181 House vote was largely on party lines. Three Republicans joined Democrats in favor of passage, and no Democrats opposed it. Democrats also voted against the House version of the Senate GOP bill.

Central to both bills would be the creation of a national database of use-of-force incidents, which is

viewed as a way to provide transparency on officers' records if they transfer from one agency to another. The bills would also set up new training procedures, including beefing up the use of body cameras.

The Democratic bill goes further, revising the federal statute for police misconduct and holding officers personally liable for damages in lawsuits. It also would halt the practice of sending military equipment to local law enforcement agencies.

Neither bill goes as far as some activists want, with calls to defund the police and shift resources to other community services.

Scott insisted he was open to amending his bill with changes proposed by Democrats. But Democrats doubted McConnell would allow a thorough debate and instead blocked the GOP bill in hopes of renegotiating.

Associated Press writers Laurie Kellman, Andrew Taylor, Darlene Superville and Jill Colvin in Washington contributed to this report.

Police not treating Glasgow stabbings as terrorism

By PAN PYLAS and DANICA KIRKA Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — A male suspect stabbed and wounded a police officer before he was shot dead in Glasgow on Friday. Authorities are not treating the incident that left five other men wounded as terrorism, Scottish First Minister Nicola Sturgeon said.

The suspect died at a Glasgow hotel that appeared to be largely housing asylum-seekers and refugees. The 42-year-old police officer stabbed during the incident at the Park Inn Hotel on Friday was in a critical but stable condition. Five men between the ages of 17 and 53 also were hospitalized. Sturgeon said, "It's been a dreadful afternoon for the city of Glasgow." She says police are still investigating and she urged the public to avoid speculation.

"The police have just confirmed that at this stage they are not treating this as a terrorist incident," Sturgeon said. "But of course, there are still details yet to be determined."

Sturgeon said she had spoken with British Prime Minister Boris Johnson, who expressed his concern and sympathies.

"It's been a dreadful afternoon for the city of Glasgow," Sturgeon said. "Clearly there is already much speculation around this incident, which remains under investigation."

Steve Johnson, assistant chief constable at Police Scotland, said officers were on the scene within two minutes of reports of an incident at 12:50 p.m., and that armed police arrived shortly afterwards.

"The incident was quickly contained," he said.

Police weren't searching for anyone else.

The Scottish Police Federation, which represents the large majority of Scottish police officers, said it has notified the family of the injured officer.

Craig Milroy, who witnessed the aftermath from a nearby office building, said he saw four people taken away in ambulances.

"I saw a man lying on the ground, of African descent, with no shoes on," Milroy said. "He was on the ground with someone holding his side. I don't know if it was a bullet wound, a stab wound, or what it was."

Milroy said the man was one of the four taken away by paramedics and believed him to be a victim.

"We were still standing outside. After that the police all came down, the riot police and triage team told us to go back in and lock the door," he said.

A spokeswoman for campaign group Positive Action In Housing said the 91-room hotel was housing asylum seekers for the Mears Group, a housing and social care provider, which moved them there during the coronavirus lockdown.

Sturgeon urged people to avoid speculation, "to not share potentially harmful or upsetting material on social media and to follow police advice while investigations are underway."

St. Louis rapper Huey killed in shooting in Missouri

KINLOCH, Mo. (AP) — A St. Louis rapper who went by the stage name Huey was killed in a shooting that also wounded another man, authorities say.

St. Louis County police said in a news release that the shooting happened just before 11 p.m. Thursday in Kinloch.

Police identified the man who was killed as 32-year-old Lawrence Franks Jr., known by fans as Huey. The Kinloch native was best known in the rap community for his 2006 debut single, "Pop, Lock & Drop It. It eventually reached the No. 6 spot on the Billboard Hot 100 chart. The music video has more than 50 million hits on YouTube.

A 21-year-old man who was wounded in the shooting remained hospitalized Friday with non-life threatening injuries.

Police said in a news release that detectives believe as many as 10 other people were there when the shooting happened.

Police released no details about how the shooting unfolded or a possible motive. They also have not said whether they have any suspects.

Mueller report witness gets 10 years on child sex charges

By MATTHEW BARAKAT Associated Press

ALEXANDRIA, Va. (AP) — A Lebanese American businessman who was a key witness in special counsel Robert Mueller's report and who helped broker the release of American hostages was sentenced Friday to 10 years in prison sentence on child sex charges.

George Nader pleaded guilty in January to bringing a 14-year-old boy from the Czech Republic to the U.S. 20 years ago to engage in sexual activity. He also acknowledged possessing child pornography.

Nader's name appears more than 100 times in the Mueller report. It details Nader's efforts to serve as liaison between Russians and members of President Donald Trump's transition team.

In the 1990s, Nader served as a broker to facilitate the release of American hostages held in the Middle East.

The convictions carried a 10-year mandatory minimum. The judge could have imposed a longer term, though prosecutors also recommended a 10-year sentence.

Nader also agreed to pay \$150,000 in restitution to the Czech boy he abused, who is now an adult and testified at Friday's sentencing hearing in U.S. District Court in Alexandria by phone.

"George destroyed practically my entire life, and I am trying to put it back together piece by piece," he said through a translator.

Nader's interest in children and his status as a behind-the-scenes power player both extend back decades. And there's at least some indication that the latter shielded him from the consequences of the former.

Almost 30 years ago, Nader was caught by customs officials transporting two films, hidden in candy tins, of minor boys into the U.S. He received a six-month sentence, a term that prosecutors in the current case acknowledge is "far below what would be expected of such a crime today."

In 1991, as he awaited sentencing, his case was twice delayed so he could continue his work on hostage negotiations. Court records cited by his current defense lawyers indicate that British hostage Jon McCarthy and American hostage Edward Tracy were released in July of that year and that Nader played an outsized role in securing the release. Participants in the negotiations wrote letters to the judge on Nader's behalf.

Later, in 2003, Nader sentenced to a 1-year prison term in the Czech Republic after being convicted there on 10 counts of sexually abusing minors and sentenced to a one-year prison term in 2003.

Prosecutors say the abused boys were largely child prostitutes. The 14-year-old boy brought to the U.S. also alleged he was victimized by Nader in the Czech case, though Nader's lawyers say he wasn't convicted there. The two sides dispute the extent of abuse inflicted on the boy in the U.S. but Nader has admitted to one sex act.

Nader "used his contacts and his wealth to accomplish" bringing the Czech boy into the U.S., prosecutor

Jay Prabhu wrote.

The current case against Nader began in 2018 when images were found on his phone after it was confiscated under a search warrant connected to the Mueller probe.

The images found in Nader's phones at Dulles International Airport ended up not being the basis for the child-pornography conviction. Instead, prosecutors relied on images and videos he received via email in 2012 that in some cases involved sadistic depictions of infants or toddlers.

Even though it had no bearing on the sentence Nader received, defense lawyers and prosecutors continued to argue at Friday's sentencing hearing as to whether the images found on the phone were child pornography. Nader's attorney, Jonathan Jeffress, acknowledged that the photos showed naked children and were obscene, but said they amounted to "dirty jokes" and that Nader had put his struggles with child pornography behind him in 2012.

Prosecutors say the images included clear depictions of child pornography and bestiality and show that Nader is a lifelong recidivist.

Parts of the sentencing papers detailing Nader's testimony to the special counsel remain blacked out.

Nader, for his part, apologized for his actions at Friday's hearing.

"I have listened to what's been said about me," he said. "I can say I am sincerely, deeply sorry for the suffering I have caused."

Blaine Kern Sr., New Orleans' 'Mr. Mardi Gras,' dies at 93

NEW ORLEANS (AP) — Blaine Kern Sr., a float builder who was often credited with helping expand New Orleans' Mardi Gras celebration into a giant event known worldwide, has died.

News outlets reported that Blaine Kern Sr., known as "Mr. Mardi Gras" for his decades of work that helped boost New Orleans Carnival celebration, died Thursday. He was 93.

Kern's wife, Holly Kern, told WWL-TV that her husband loved what he did and was always eager to share the story of Mardi Gras.

"He was an amazing guy. So generous, so kind. He had a love for life and a zest for life that I've never seen before," she said. Kern developed an infection after a fall and died at home, she said.

Mayor LaToya Cantrell said Kern was "an iconic part of what makes New Orleans magical."

"What Mardi Gras is today, what our City is today, owes much to him and his imagination, his larger-than-life personality, and his relentless creativity," she said in a statement.

The pre-Lenten celebration has been big for generations in the riverside city, but in 1947 Kern founded Kern Studios, which constructed elaborate floats that helped distinguish New Orleans' Mardi Gras festivities from others. Innovations including double-decker floats helped create a spectacle that draws massive crowds every year.

"Everybody's got a big grin on their face, everybody's smiling and shouting and having fun, so I figure I'm bringing joy and fun to millions of people," Kern said in an interview with WWL-TV in 1997.

Kern, the son of a sign painter, grew up poor on Algiers Point across the Mississippi River from the city's famed French Quarter.

"It would not be an exaggeration to declare Blaine Kern as one of the most significant individuals in the entire history of the celebration of Mardi Gras," Arthur Hardy, publisher of the definitive "Mardi Gras Guide," told nola.com.

SUPREME COURT NOTEBOOK: Election-year retirement unlikely

By MARK SHERMAN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The last time a Supreme Court justice announced his retirement in a presidential election year, most of the current justices were too young to vote.

It was 1968, and things didn't work out as planned. The nomination to replace Chief Justice Earl Warren failed in that turbulent year, and no justice has retired in an election year since.

The pattern is not likely to be broken in 2020, despite persistent chatter that Justice Clarence Thomas

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could give President Donald Trump a seat to fill before the election.

Retirements have tended to be announced in June, as Justice Anthony Kennedy did in 2018. But the conservative Thomas has made clear to anyone who has asked, including an interviewer last year, that he has no plans to retire.

"Let's fast forward to 20 years from now. Twenty years from now, at your retirement party," his interviewer, Pepperdine University law professor James Gash, began.

"I'm not retiring," Thomas broke in to say.

"Twenty years?" Gash said.

"No," Thomas said.

"Thirty years?" Gash followed.

"No," Thomas said.

The 72-year-old Georgia native is the longest-serving justice on the current court. If he serves another eight years, he would eclipse the service of record-holding Justice William O. Douglas, whose tenure lasted 36 years and nearly 8 months.

If Thomas does stay that long, he'll only be 80 — younger than Justices Ruth Bader Ginsburg and Stephen Breyer are today.

In 1968, Warren announced his retirement, but it didn't take effect until the Senate confirmed his successor. President Lyndon Johnson quickly named Justice Abe Fortas for the job. The president also nominated a federal judge and friend from Texas, Homer Thornberry, for Fortas' seat.

It didn't go well for Fortas, whose nomination was blocked by Republicans and conservative Democrats in the Senate. Thornberry never got a vote either, once it became clear Fortas wasn't moving up.

When Richard Nixon won the 1968 election, he got a bonus, the opportunity to select a chief justice who would be nothing like the liberal Warren. The outgoing chief justice served another year, until Warren Burger took the oath of office in June 1969.

The only other vacancy that has occurred in an election year since was in 2016, when Justice Antonin Scalia died. President Barack Obama named Merrick Garland to fill the seat and Senate Republicans refused to act on the nomination.

When Trump shocked the nation by winning the presidency, he too had a seat to fill and quickly named Justice Neil Gorsuch.

Enough of things that are not likely to happen.

For the first time in 24 years, the court's work is almost certain to extend into July, mainly a product of the court's response to the coronavirus pandemic.

The justices heard arguments by telephone in 10 cases in May, after closing the building to the public in mid-March and abandoning most in-person activities for a court in which 6 of the 9 justices are 65 and older, and most at risk of serious complications from COVID-19.

None of those cases has been decided yet, and the justices still have pending three earlier cases, including one dealing with abortion clinic regulations in Louisiana. More opinions are expected Monday and Tuesday, the last day in June.

Thomas, Ginsburg and Breyer were the only three justices who were on the court the last time it didn't finish issuing opinions in June. That was in 1996, when the court held on July 1 that the government could be sued by once-healthy savings and loans that were forced into the red as part as the congressional response to the S&L crisis of the 1980s.

Charles Cooper, who argued the S&Ls' case at the Supreme Court, recalled that a resolution was urgently needed "because scores of copy-cat cases had been clogging" court dockets for years.

The court also issued opinions in July a few years earlier, in 1989. That July, the court struck down a nativity display inside a government building in Pittsburgh, while upholding a menorah erected outside a different public building in Pittsburgh. The next day, the justices upheld or allowed to take effect several abortion restrictions in Missouri.

When Burger was chief justice, from 1969 to 1986, the court routinely kept working into July, even past

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Independence Day.

Adam Feldman, the creator of the Empirical Scotus blog, provided the data cited above.

Another reason there is no special urgency to finishing up by the end of June is that the justices have nowhere to go this year.

The last decisions of the term typically are followed closely by flights to very desirable locations, in the Alps, the Rockies, European capitals, even "an island fortress" in the Mediterranean, as Chief Justice John Roberts described Malta before heading there on the heels of his opinion saving the heart of the Affordable Care Act in 2012.

The law schools that usually are thrilled to snag a justice to teach for a week or two in a study-abroad program all canceled their summer sessions this year because of the coronavirus outbreak.

"I think we have reason to believe no one needs to jet off to Europe," Supreme Court lawyer Paul Clement said, joking that the term could last to August 10 at the current pace of decisions.

Associated Press writer Jessica Gresko contributed to this report.

US consumer spending up 8.2%, partly erasing record plunge

By MARTIN CRUTSINGER AP Economics Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — American consumers increased their spending by a record 8.2% in May, partly erasing huge plunges the previous two months, against the backdrop of an economy that's likely shrinking by its steepest pace on record this quarter.

Last month's rebound in consumer spending followed record spending drops of 6.6% in March and 12.6% in April, when the viral pandemic shuttered businesses, forced millions of layoffs and sent the economy into a recession. Since then, many businesses have reopened, drawing consumers back into shops and restaurants and restoring some lost jobs.

Friday's Commerce Department report showed that Americans stepped up their spending in May despite a 4.2% decline in personal income, which had soared by 10.8% the previous month. Income had jumped in April on the strength of billions of dollars in support through government payments in the form of unemployment aid as well as one-time \$1,200 stimulus checks. In May, those stimulus checks were no longer counted as income for most people.

Besides the unemployment aid states are providing to the 30 million jobless Americans, the federal government is providing \$600 a week in additional benefits. The federal money has pumped nearly \$20 billion a week into the economy and enabled many of the unemployed to stay afloat. But the \$600 a week in aid will expire after July, and Trump administration officials have said they oppose an extension.

Without the stimulus checks or an extension of unemployment aid, it's unclear whether consumers will keep spending freely. In testimony to Congress last week, Federal Reserve Jerome Powell said he thought lawmakers should consider providing some form of extended unemployment benefits beyond their typical six-month period, on the assumption that joblessness will likely still be quite high by year's end.

Last month's rise in consumer spending also coincides with a sudden surge in coronavirus cases that's forcing states and businesses to consider scaling back or even reversing the re-openings. If an escalation of the pandemic does force another round of widespread business shutdowns, fewer people would shop, travel, eat out or attend large events. That would reverse any rebound in spending and would further weaken the economy.

Consumer spending is closely watched because it accounts for about 70% of economic activity. Despite the increased spending in May, economists have estimated that the economy, as measured by the gross domestic product, is contracting at a roughly 30% annual rate in the April-June quarter after shrinking at a 5% rate in the January-March period. That would be, by far, the worst U.S. quarterly contraction since record-keeping began in 1948.

Economists cautioned against reading much into last month's surge in consumer spending. They noted

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that the increase followed two record declines and that it still left spending 11% below its pace before the pandemic hit.

"Amid rapidly rising infections across many states, risks to the outlook are dangerously tilted to the downside," Gregory Daco, chief U.S. economist at Oxford Economics, said in a research note.

Friday's report showed that among the categories for which consumers ramped up spending in May, the sharpest increase — a 29% jump — was for durable goods, led by purchases of autos and recreation vehicles. Spending on non-durable goods, which are items like food and clothing, rose nearly 8%.

And spending on services — everything from cellphone contracts to hospital visits — rose more than 5%. The service-sector increase was led by spending on healthcare. That category of spending had been curtailed before May by limits imposed on elective surgery as hospitals focused on the initial surge in COVID-19 patients.

Last month's 4.2% drop in incomes was the sharpest such decline since 2013. It reflected that the economic stimulus checks and other emergency government benefits tumbled by an annualized \$1.1 trillion in May after having surged \$3 trillion in April, when most of the payments were distributed.

Inflation, as measured by a gauge tied to consumer spending, edged up a scant 0.1% in May, the report showed. Inflation over the past year is just 0.5%, far below the Fed's annual 2% target.

In February, the economy fell into a deep recession, according to the National Bureau of Economic Research, the association of economists that is the official arbiter of recessions in the United States. Most analysts expect the economy to rebound in the second half of this year before potentially regaining its pre-pandemic level in late 2021 at the earliest.

The Trump administration is predicting a relatively fast and robust economic rebound starting this summer. Most private economists are far less optimistic. And they warn that if the pandemic intensifies and forces a second round of business closures, it would set the job market and the economy even further back. The damage could be dire.

One hopeful sign, in the meantime, comes from data compiled from Chase Bank credit and debit cards. It shows that consumers have gradually but consistently increased their spending since the government distributed the stimulus checks in mid-April.

As COVID cases rise, White House seeks to scrap 'Obamacare'

By RICARDO ALONSO-ZALDIVAR and MARK SHERMAN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — As coronavirus cases rise in more than half of the states, the Trump administration is urging the Supreme Court to overturn the Affordable Care Act.

The administration's high court filing at 10:30 p.m. Thursday came the same day the government reported that close to half a million people who lost their health insurance amid the economic shutdown to slow the spread of COVID-19 have gotten coverage through HealthCare.gov.

The administration's legal brief makes no mention of the virus.

More than 20 million Americans could lose their health coverage and protections for people with preexisting health conditions also would be put at risk if the court agrees with the administration. Nothing will happen immediately. The case won't be heard before the fall.

House Speaker Nancy Pelosi blasted the administration's latest move in a partisan battle over "Obamacare" that has stretched on for a full decade since the law's passage in 2010. Pelosi is planning a floor vote early next week on her own bill to expand the ACA, sweetening its health insurance subsidies so more people will be covered.

"There is no legal justification and no moral excuse for the Trump administration's disastrous efforts to take away Americans' health care," she said in a statement.

Just as the nation seemed to be getting better control over the virus outbreak, states including Arizona, California, Florida, Georgia, Nevada and Texas are reporting a surge in cases. Overall, more than half the states are seeing case increases and some are tapping the brakes on reopening plans.

Anger over problems with "Obamacare" was once a winning issue for Republicans, helping them gain

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control of the House in 2010 and the Senate in 2014. But the politics of the issue flipped after President Donald Trump failed to deliver in 2017 on his vow to "repeal and replace" the health law and provide lower-cost coverage for everybody. Democrats were energized by their successful defense of the ACA, and that contributed to their winning back the House.

In the case before the Supreme Court, Texas and other conservative-led states argue that the ACA was essentially rendered unconstitutional after Congress passed tax legislation in 2017 that eliminated the law's unpopular fines for not having health insurance, but left in place its requirement that virtually all Americans have coverage.

Trump has put the weight of his administration behind the legal challenge.

If the health insurance requirement is invalidated, "then it necessarily follows that the rest of the ACA must also fall," Solicitor General Noel Francisco wrote Thursday. It's the third time the court is being asked to undo "Obamacare." Two previous attempts failed.

At the White House on Friday, there was no turning back.

"A global pandemic does not change what Americans know — Obamacare has been an unlawful failure," White House spokesman Judd Deere said Friday in a statement. He said it limits choice and "forces Americans to purchase unaffordable plans."

Other prominent Republicans, including Sen. Lamar Alexander of Tennessee, have said Congress didn't intend to bring down the whole law by striking the coverage penalty.

Alexander, who leads the Health, Education, Labor and Pensions committee, has repeatedly said there's no way Congress would repeal protections for people with preexisting conditions. He says senators intended to repeal the penalty for people who go without coverage, and that's all.

The Trump administration's views on what parts of the ACA might be kept or replaced if the law is overturned have shifted over time. But in legal arguments, it has always supported getting rid of "Obamacare" provisions that prohibit insurance companies from discriminating against people on account of their medical history.

Nonetheless, Trump has repeatedly assured Americans that people with preexisting conditions would still be protected. Neither the White House nor congressional Republicans have specified how.

The government report showing rising sign-ups for health coverage under the ACA amid the coronavirus shutdown came from the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services. The figures are partial because they don't include sign-ups from states that run their own health insurance marketplaces. Major states like California and New York are not counted in the federal statistics.

An estimated 27 million people may have lost job-based coverage due to layoffs. That means they would be eligible for a special sign-up period for subsidized plans under the Obama-era law. Many may also qualify for Medicaid.

Thursday's report from the government showed that about 487,000 people signed up with HealthCare.gov after losing their workplace insurance this year. That's an increase of 46% from the same time period last year.

It's unclear from the government numbers how many of the new enrollees lost their coverage because of layoffs due to the pandemic. CMS also made no estimate of how many people will ultimately seek coverage through the Obama health law as a result of economic shock waves. Generally there's a 60-day window to apply after losing coverage.

However, the report found a clear connection. "While the magnitude may be unclear, job losses due to COVID-19 have led to increased enrollments on HealthCare.gov," it said.

Governors who quickly reopened backpedal as virus surges

By PAUL J. WEBER Associated Press

AUSTIN, Texas (AP) — When Texas began lifting coronavirus restrictions, Republican Gov. Greg Abbott didn't wear a mask. He wouldn't let mayors enact extra precautions during one of America's swiftest efforts to reopen. He pointed out that the White House backed his plan and gave assurances there were

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safe ways to go out again.

Two months later, a sharp reversal is unfolding as the number of confirmed infections surges.

The backpedaling is not just in Texas, where Abbott ordered bars to shut down again Friday and scaled back restaurant dining and is now urgently telling people to stay home. Arizona Gov. Doug Ducey, also a Republican, did the same, declaring the state "on pause" as hospitals accelerate toward capacity.

As an alarming coronavirus resurgence sets records for confirmed cases and hospitalizations across the U.S. South and West, governors are retreating to measures they once resisted and striking a more urgent tone.

"I think they're going to have to," said Dr. Mark McClellan, former head of the Food and Drug Administration. "It doesn't take most people in a community getting sick to overwhelm health care systems."

Critics bristle that the actions are too little, or worse, possibly too late as patients fill up intensive-care beds and the U.S. closes in on hitting all-time highs for daily confirmed cases.

And governors are not entirely bending in their resolve: Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis, who until recently had rarely worn a face covering, has said he won't impose statewide mask orders or delay reopening. And Abbott says shutting down the Texas economy again is a last resort.

The escalating crisis is testing governors — many of them Republicans who aggressively reopened before most of the U.S. — as pressure mounts from their biggest cities, health experts and even friendly business groups. Any move backward could land them at odds with President Donald Trump, who has sought to move on from the virus and return to the campaign stage, all while refusing to wear a mask in public.

A June survey from The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research says many Americans never fully embraced the reopening effort now underway in many states. A majority of Americans still have concerns about contracting the virus that causes COVID-19, and significant shares still support the kinds of public health restrictions that states have rolled back.

The most widespread about-face in GOP states is a sudden openness to letting local authorities mandate masks — a concession that cities including Phoenix and Little Rock, Arkansas, quickly put into action but is increasingly criticized as insufficient as the outbreaks rage.

In Florida, which has reported over 5,000 new cases in each of the past two days, DeSantis has resisted calls to mandate masks, leaving that decision to local leaders. The Republican contends that areas not as severely affected should not have to bear the same burdens.

Add to that the political optics of reimposing restrictions less than two months before Republicans descend on the state in late August to renominate Trump. The Republican National Committee awarded Jacksonville the convention. Trump got in a tiff with North Carolina's Democratic governor over social distancing restrictions that threatened to dampen his celebration.

The number of confirmed cases in Duval County, which is home to Jacksonville, has shot up along with statewide numbers.

"It's not political. You're in a situation where the whole reason the mitigation was done was to flatten the curve so the hospitals weren't overwhelmed," DeSantis said last weekend. "We didn't 100 percent know what was going to happen."

U.S. Rep. Donna Shalala of Florida, a former secretary of Health and Human Services during the Clinton administration, called on DeSantis to make a course correction.

"He followed the president's leadership, and people have died because of it," she said. "He can pivot and take very strong steps."

In Arkansas, Gov. Asa Hutchinson has urged people to cover their faces and even begins his daily briefings by showing off his mask. But the Republican governor has resisted calls to require them, arguing that it would be difficult to enforce in a rural state.

Hutchinson also says he's concerned such a mandate could spark a backlash, with people refusing to wear masks. Some cities have acted on their own, and he says he won't get in their way.

"How do you encourage people to wear a mask?" Hutchinson said this week. "I think we're taking it by providing the guidelines."

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In Arizona, Ducey resisted pressure to close restaurants as the virus first spread in March, saying the state wasn't seeing explosive growth like New York and didn't need to act so aggressively. The Democratic mayors of Phoenix, Tucson, Flagstaff and elsewhere imposed their own restrictions.

The governor responded with an executive order barring dining in restaurants in counties with known coronavirus infections. The order also prohibited cities from imposing restrictions on a list of businesses, including golf courses.

Last week, Ducey changed his mind on local restrictions. Under extreme pressure to act as COVID-19 cases soar, Ducey gave local leaders the power to require masks, while avoiding making it a statewide mandate.

The numbers "continue to go in the wrong direction," Ducey said Thursday.

Associated Press writers Andrew DeMillo in Little Rock, Arkansas; Bobby Caina Calvin in Tallahassee, Florida; and Jonathan J. Cooper in Phoenix contributed to this report.

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

Seawater seeping into decaying oil tanker off Yemen coast

By MAGGIE MICHAEL Associated Press

CAIRO (AP) — The United Nations said an abandoned oil tanker moored off the coast of Yemen loaded with more than 1 million barrels of crude oil is at risk of rupture or exploding, causing massive environmental damage to Red Sea marine life, desalination factories and international shipping routes.

Meanwhile, Houthi rebels who control the area where the ship is moored have denied U.N. inspectors access to the vessel. Internal documents obtained by The Associated Press shows that seawater has entered the engine compartment of the tanker, which hasn't been maintained for over five years, causing damage to the pipelines and increasing the risk of sinking. Rust has covered parts of the tanker and the inert gas that prevents the tanks from gathering inflammable gases, has leaked out. Experts say maintenance is no longer possible because the damage to the ship is irreversible.

For years, the U.N. has been trying to send inspectors to assess the damage aboard the vessel known as the FSO Safer and look for ways to secure the tanker by unloading the oil and pulling the ship to safety.

But one European diplomat, a Yemeni government official and the tanker's company owner said that Houthi rebels have resisted. The diplomat said the rebels are treating the vessel as a "deterrent like having a nuclear weapon." All three individuals spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss the subject with a reporter.

"They do say that openly to the U.N., 'We like to have this as something to hold against the international community if attacked,'" the diplomat said. "Houthis are definitely responsible for failure of the U.N. to look at the ship."

Money is also an issue, the diplomat said, adding that the Houthis initially were demanding millions of dollars in return for the oil stored in the tanker. The U.N. is trying to reach an arrangement where money could be used to pay workers and employees at Yemen's Red Sea ports, the diplomat added.

Some experts, however, criticize both the Houthis and the U.N. for failing to fully understand the magnitude of the crisis with the abandoned ship.

Ian Ralby, founder of I.R. Consilium, who specializes in maritime and resource security, told the AP that U.N.'s efforts to send a team to assess the ship is "futile." What the vessel needs is a salvage team, he said.

"It's real shame that they wasted so much money and time in this futile operation," said Ralby. "If you are taking these years to get a simple team to assess, we will not have a second chance to salvage," he added.

Ralby, who has written extensively about the tanker, told the AP that amid declining oil prices the cost spent on cleaning up the environmental damage from an explosion or leakage will be much more than

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the millions worth of oil on the ship.

But the Houthis have refused to back down from their demands.

Mohammed Ali al-Houthi, the rebel group's leader, blamed the U.S. and Saudis for not letting the rebels sell the oil, saying in a June 18 Twitter post that any "disastrous consequences ... God forbid," that could result from the collapse of the vessel will be the responsibility of these two countries.

The Iranian-backed Houthi rebels are in control of the western Red Sea ports, including Ras Issa, 6 kilometers (3.7 miles) from where the FSO Safer tanker has been moored since the 1980s. They are at war with the internationally recognized government, which is backed by a Saudi-led coalition and the United States. President Abed Rabbu Mansour Hadi is in exile in Saudi Arabia and his government in disarray.

The floating tanker is a Japanese-made vessel built in the 1970s and sold to the Yemeni government in 1980s to store for export up to 3 million barrels pumped from oil fields in Marib, a province in eastern Yemen. The ship is 360 meters (1,181 feet) long with 34 storage tanks.

A senior official at the state-owned oil company in charge of the tanker, said because of a shrinking operational budget, which used to be around 20 million dollars a year before the war, the company could no longer afford to purchase fuel needed to run the boilers on the ship. The boilers are needed to power generators that, among other things, keep an inert gas that prevents explosions flowing. The tanker needs 11,000 tons of the fuel, which cost about 8 million dollars each year.

"After the stoppage of the boilers the strong majority of the equipment and the machines of the tanker stopped because they all depend on steam power," the company official said. That includes the machines that power the ventilation system, which reduces humidity and prevents corrosion, he said.

Since 2015, annual maintenance on the ship has come to a complete halt and most crew members, except for 10 people, were pulled off the vessel after the Saudi-led coalition imposed a land, sea, and air embargo before waging an extensive air campaign to dislodge the Houthi rebels from areas they seized including the capital, Sanaa.

The civil war in Yemen has caused massive destruction in most of the areas under Houthis control. Because of the proximity of the tanker to the contested Hodeida port, fears have grown that a stray shell or bullet could hit the tanker causing massive explosion or oil leak into the Red Sea.

Hodeida was at the center of Yemen's civil war in 2018 when coalition forces made major advances to take over the vital port, which is considered the life-line of most of northern Yemen, where most of Yemenis live and where the Houthis enjoy full control. A U.N.-brokered peace deal put an end to the offensive but failed to achieve peace or loosen Houthis' grip over the ports.

Over the past two years, the Yemeni government in exile, the U.N., and western diplomats have been sounding the alarm and putting pressure on Houthis to secure the tanker. The rebels initially agreed to let inspectors examine the tanker but later backtracked.

Top Houthi leaders often expressed cynicism toward the international community warnings.

"The life of the shrimps is more precious than the life of Yemeni citizen to the U.S. and its allies. Is this because they care about their naval ships or the Israeli presence in the Red Sea?" wrote Mohammed Ali al-Houthi in a May 25 Twitter post. "Why is Safer more dangerous than the siege and the assault of the American, British, Saudi, Emirati and their allies on the people?" he added in reference to the US-backed, Saudi-led coalition targeting the rebels in Yemen.

Yahia Sharaf Eddin, the deputy head of Yemen Red Sea Ports Corporation, defended the Houthi rebels and told the AP that the group had instructed port authorities to assist U.N. inspectors. He said it was the Saudi-led coalition that refused to give the U.N. a green light to board the decaying tanker.

The more delays in reaching a solution to the vessel, the more dangers it poses, Sharaf Eddin said.

A recent internal government memo obtained by the AP shows that earlier this month a diving team was dispatched by the state-run oil company that owns the tanker to seal holes in the ship that have allowed seawater to leak into the engine room.

The divers were able to make repairs, but it remain unclear if the work will hold, according to the July 13 report.

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"We believe that the plugs/seals that were installed to prevent the entry of seawater into the engine room space will not withstand/hold long," the report read.

An earlier letter dated Oct. 2019 sent by the Yemeni minister of oil — who is affiliated with the Saudi-backed government — to the prime minister, and seen by the AP, found other problems with the tanker.

"Rust has covered some parts of the tanker along with equipment, fire distinguishing system stopped working, and what is more dangerous is that the gas which was covering the oil inside the tanks has leaked out. It was used to protect the tankers from exploding," the letter read.

The oil minister's letter recommended three different approaches to deal with the tanker: make repairs, pump the oil to another ship, or to pull the tanker away and safely unload it in another port.

The minister wrote that because of the "collapsing condition" of the vessel, the best solution is to pull it away to another port.

"We are notifying you about this dangerous situation to do your best and to get Yemen and the region out from such environmental dangers," he wrote.

The letter came months after the U.N.'s projects arm, known as UNOPS, put out a tender to hire an international agency to inspect the vessel after an initial agreement with Houthis.

The U.N. hired a team of experts and had them standing by in Djibouti. The AP obtained a copy of the tender letter and documents showing the experts' proposed inspection program and a list of equipment needed, including gas detector and oil sampling kits.

But the Houthis backed out of the agreement before the repair crew could be sent to Yemen.

Mark Lowcock, the U.N. humanitarian chief, told the U.N. Security Council last year that the U.N. assessment team was ready to be deployed but "the necessary permits remain pending with the Ansar Allah authorities" in reference to Houthis.

"I would just like to note that this is additionally frustrating when one recalls that the same authorities wrote to the United Nations early last year requesting assistance with the tanker and promising to facilitate our work," he added.

Sharaf Eddin, the Yemeni ports official, accused the U.N of siding with the Saudi-coalition and misleading the public by blaming Houthis for the delays.

"This is the same U.N. which is exploiting Yemen tragedy to collect donations then spend it on its own employees," he said, echoing Houthis' widely held anti-U.N. sentiment. He added that the coalition in 2017 refused to give access to a fuel vessel to head to the Safer tanker to run the power generators. "What is Houthis' interest in preventing a disaster? Any spark could cause massive explosion," he acknowledged.

He provided letters sent by Houthi-appointed government officials last summer, including one from the foreign minister, approving the visit by the U.N. But the European diplomat said the Houthis revoked their initial approval and put new conditions on U.N. activities.

The U.N. has repeatedly warned that delays in taking action to fix the FSO Safer could lead to a man-made environmental disaster in the Red Sea four times greater than the Exxon Valdez oil spill.

The Exxon Valdez disaster in 1989 was one of the largest oil spills in U.S. history. The tanker spewed nearly 300,000 barrels of thick, toxic crude oil into Alaska's pristine Prince William Sound. Scores of herring, sea otters and birds were soaked in oil, and hundreds of miles of shoreline polluted. The spill destroyed the livelihoods of hundreds of commercial fishermen in the area.

The senior official at the state-owned company in charge of the tanker issued an appeal for help to the international community saying that a similar oil spill off the coast of Yemen could accelerate Yemen's worsening humanitarian disaster.

"The disaster could happen at any second," he said, "Rescue Yemen from a terrible, imminent disaster that will add to Yemen's burdens for tens of years and deprive thousands from their source of living, and kill marine life in the Red Sea."

US police registry would fail without changes in states

By NOMAAN MERCHANT Associated Press

HOUSTON (AP) — Without major changes in almost every state, a national police misconduct database like what the White House and Congress have proposed after George Floyd's death would fail to account for thousands of problem officers.

Lawmakers nationwide are struggling with how to reform policing following massive demonstrations, increased calls for change and a stark shift in public opinion on the topic. Democrats want to create a policing registry that would catalog disciplinary records, firings and misconduct complaints; President Donald Trump's executive order calls on the attorney general to create a "database to coordinate the sharing of information" between law enforcement agencies.

Any eventual registry that emerges would depend on states reporting into it. But states and police departments track misconduct very differently, and some states currently don't track it at all. The result is a lack of reliable official data and a patchwork system in which officers can stay employed even after being arrested or convicted of a crime.

In the wake of Floyd's death, lawmakers in several states have proposed bolstering their states' powers to identify and remove problem officers.

"I think the politicians have been reluctant to take a step that might be perceived as anti-police," Ohio Attorney General Dave Yost said.

Yost and Ohio Gov. Mike DeWine, both Republicans, have proposed giving their state's police licensing agency the power to remove officers from law enforcement for racial profiling or other misconduct that doesn't lead to a criminal charge, a power many states already have.

"The potential for reform is better than it's been in my professional lifetime," Yost said. "That doesn't mean it's a certainty on how much we're going to get, but there's a genuine interest and willingness to look at these things seriously and honestly."

One measure of police misconduct at a state level is decertification. Almost all states issue licenses to police officers by mandating standards and training. Most states can decertify an officer's license to prevent a bad one from working in law enforcement.

The Associated Press this month asked all 50 states to provide the number of officers they decertified for the last five full years. Georgia said it decertified 3,239 officers between 2015 and 2019. Minnesota, where Floyd died after a white police officer pressed a knee on his neck for several minutes, decertified 21. Maryland decertified just one officer.

Minnesota revokes an officer's license automatically only after the officer is convicted of a felony. Georgia can take an officer's license on several grounds, including misuse of force, committing a theft that isn't prosecuted or lying in an internal investigation.

The suburban Minneapolis police officer who killed Philando Castile, a Black man, during a 2016 traffic stop was never decertified. The officer, Jeronimo Yanez, was acquitted of second-degree manslaughter and later left his department under a settlement. He is not working in law enforcement elsewhere in Minnesota, according to the state licensing board.

A federal requirement to collect police misconduct data already exists. According to criminal justice experts, the Justice Department has never met a requirement in the landmark 1994 crime bill — signed by then-President Bill Clinton, a Democrat — that it would "acquire data about the use of excessive force by law enforcement officers" and publish an annual summary.

Then-President Barack Obama created a task force on policing that in 2015 recommended the creation of a police misconduct registry, but no action was taken. And the outlook for a policing bill is newly uncertain after Senate Democrats on Wednesday blocked a Republican proposal from moving forward. The House approved a far-reaching police overhaul from Democrats on Thursday, but it has almost zero chance of becoming law.

In the meantime, the most complete information on officer shootings, sexual assaults and arrests has been compiled by university researchers and news organizations.

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In 2015, The Associated Press found that nearly 1,000 officers had been decertified across the country over six years for sexual assault or other forms of sexual misconduct.

The AP's investigation uncovered examples of officers who were accused of sexual misconduct at one agency, fired or allowed to resign, then rehired in law enforcement and accused of misconduct again.

Five states — California, Hawaii, Massachusetts, New Jersey and Rhode Island — have no decertification process at all. Neither does the federal government for most of its estimated 130,000 law enforcement officers, including agents in the FBI, U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement and the U.S. Border Patrol.

The Department of Justice declined to comment on how it would implement Trump's executive order.

For now, states voluntarily submit the names of officers to a private database called the National Decertification Index that police agencies can use in hiring. But Georgia doesn't submit names to the index because it is "not a governmental institution," according to Ryan Powell, deputy director of the state's standards board. Meanwhile, Minnesota and almost all other states do.

The index was created and updated with Department of Justice grant funding but last received federal money in 2005, said Mike Becar, director of the organization that runs the index. He runs the database on roughly \$1,000 a month.

"The federal government could apply a lot more pressure," Becar said. "The biggest hurdle is the 50 states with their own individual laws and regulations and legislatures."

In the meantime, the attorneys general of California and New Jersey, both Democrats, announced they support creating a system to decertify police officers in their states. And New York, which implemented police decertification in 2016, this month repealed a law that shielded police misconduct records from public disclosure.

Even if an eventual national registry of officers were incomplete, it would still be helpful, said Yost, the Ohio attorney general. Ohio decertified 93 officers between 2015 and 2019.

"Some information is better than no information," Yost said. "Because the thing is hard doesn't mean we shouldn't start and do what we can."

Associated Press reporters Stefanie Dazio in Los Angeles and Colleen Long in Washington contributed to this report.

Today in History

By The Associated Press undefined

Today in History

Today is Saturday, June 27, the 179th day of 2020. There are 187 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On June 27, 1991, Supreme Court Justice Thurgood Marshall, the first Black jurist to sit on the nation's highest court, announced his retirement. (His departure led to the contentious nomination of Clarence Thomas to succeed him.)

On this date:

In 1844, Mormon leader Joseph Smith and his brother, Hyrum, were killed by a mob in Carthage, Illinois.

In 1846, New York and Boston were linked by telegraph wires.

In 1880, author-lecturer Helen Keller, who lived most of her life without sight or hearing, was born in Tuscumbia, Alabama.

In 1942, the FBI announced the arrests of eight Nazi saboteurs put ashore in Florida and Long Island, New York. (All were tried and sentenced to death; six were executed while two were spared for turning themselves in and cooperating with U.S. authorities.)

In 1944, during World War II, American forces liberated the French port of Cherbourg (SHEHR'-boorg) from the Germans.

In 1950, the U.N. Security Council passed a resolution calling on member nations to help South Korea repel an invasion from the North.

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In 1957, Hurricane Audrey slammed into coastal Louisiana and Texas as a Category 4 storm; the official death toll from the storm was placed at 390, although a variety of state, federal and local sources have estimated the number of fatalities at between 400 and 600.

In 1974, President Richard Nixon opened an official visit to the Soviet Union.

In 1988, at least 56 people were killed when a commuter train ran into a stationary train at the Gare de Lyon terminal in Paris. In 1988, Mike Tyson retained the undisputed heavyweight crown as he knocked out Michael Spinks 91 seconds into the first round of a championship fight in Atlantic City, New Jersey.

In 2001, actor Jack Lemmon died in Los Angeles at age 76.

In 2005, the Supreme Court ruled, in a pair of 5-4 decisions, that displaying the Ten Commandments on government property was constitutionally permissible in some cases but not in others. BTK serial killer Dennis Rader pleaded guilty to ten murders that had spread fear across Wichita, Kansas, beginning in the 1970s. (Rader later received multiple life sentences.)

In 2006, a constitutional amendment to ban desecration of the American flag died in a Senate cliffhanger, falling one vote short of the 67 needed to send it to states for ratification.

Ten years ago: Wary of slamming on the stimulus brakes too quickly but shaken by the European debt crisis, world leaders meeting in Canada pledged to reduce government deficits in richer countries in half by 2013, with wiggle room to meet the goal. Pope Benedict XVI lashed out at what he called "deplorable" raids carried out by Belgian police as part of an investigation into priest sex abuse. Cristie Kerr cruised to a 12-stroke victory in the LPGA Championship, closing with a 6-under 66 for a 19-under 269 total.

Five years ago: The Episcopal Church elected its first African-American presiding bishop, choosing Bishop Michael Curry of North Carolina during the denomination's national assembly in Salt Lake City. Chris Squire, 67, the bassist and co-founder of the progressive rock band Yes, died in Phoenix, Arizona.

One year ago: A debate involving ten Democratic presidential candidates included a heated exchange between former Vice President Joe Biden and California Sen. Kamala Harris, who criticized Biden's record of working with Democratic segregationist senators on non-race issues; Biden called it a "complete mischaracterization" of his record and said he had run for office "because of civil rights." The Supreme Court refused to let the Trump administration add a citizenship question to the 2020 census. The high court also ruled that federal courts have no role to play in challenges to the drawing of electoral districts for partisan purposes.

Today's Birthdays: Former Interior Secretary Bruce Babbitt is 82. Singer-musician Bruce Johnston (The Beach Boys) is 78. Fashion designer Vera Wang is 71. Actress Julia Duffy is 69. Actress Isabelle Adjani is 65. Country singer Lorrie Morgan is 61. Actor Brian Drilling is 60. Writer-producer-director J.J. Abrams is 54. Former Sen. Kelly Ayotte (AY'-aht), R-N.H., is 52. Olympic gold and bronze medal figure skater Viktor Petrenko (peh-TREHN'-koh) is 51. Latin singer Draco Rosa is 51. Actor Edward "Grapevine" Fordham Jr. is 50. TV personality Jo Frost is 50. Actor Yancey Arias is 49. Actor Christian Kane is 48. Actor Tobey Maguire is 45. Rock singer Bernhoft is 44. Gospel singer Leigh Nash is 44. Christian rock singer Zach Williams is 42. Musician Chris Eldridge (Punch Brothers) is 38. Reality TV star Khloe Kardashian (kar-DASH'-ee-uhn) is 36. Actor Drake Bell is 34. Actor Sam Claflin is 34. Actress India de Beaufort is 33. Actor Ed Westwick is 33. Actor Matthew Lewis (Film: "Harry Potter"; TV: "Ripper Street") is 31. Actress Madylin Sweeten is 29. Pop singer Lauren Jauregui (Fifth Harmony) (TV: "The X Factor") is 24. R&B singer H.E.R. is 23. Actor Chandler Riggs is 21.

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Carroll and Pearl Dean will be celebrating their 68th anniversary on June 28th. The family requests a card shower - greetings can be sent to Carroll and Pearl Dean 1324 12th Ave SE #32, Aberdeen, SD 57401.