

Groton Daily Independent

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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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We are nearing the midway point of our offseason roster breakdown. While the quarterback position makes all the headlines and running backs and pass catchers are well known to most casual observers, today we'll be talking about the most important part of an NFL team: the offensive line.

Pro Football Focus ranked all the offensive lines across the league after the 2019 regular season concluded, and they had the Vikings ranked 19th, which is actually quite high. The reason that slightly below average ranking was because of the team's success in the running game. If the changes the team made don't pan out, the offensive line could be in for a regression. In other words, this could be a rough season to be a Vikings fan.

Projected starters:

Riley Reiff –

There were some rumblings that the Vikings could cut Reiff this offseason, but the team decided to hang on to him for at least one more season. Reiff is an average left tackle who was affected by the other linemen near him. If the Vikings can get the left guard spot figured out, there is a decent chance Reiff could improve over what we saw last season.

Pat Elflein – Elflein was the starting left guard last season, but he was undoubtedly the worst part of the offensive line last season. There was hope that a move from center to guard would help the young lineman, but his third year was his worst one yet. This year is Elflein's last chance to stick on the roster.

Garrett Bradbury – Starting as a rookie last season, Bradbury had his ups and downs. It would have been nice to get more consistency from the position, but there is hope he progresses in year two in the NFL.

Dru Samia – Both guard spots are tricky to project, as the team could end up going a variety of different directions, but for now I have Samia penciled in as the starter at right guard. Samia is entering year two after being drafted by the Vikings in 2019. He was a bit of a project, but if he can get ahold of a starting role, the offensive line will be better because he has a nasty demeanor that is lacking right now.

Brian O'Neill – Unquestionably the team's best offensive lineman last season, O'Neill played well enough that many question if he might be a better fit at left tackle. For now, we'll keep him at right tackle where he has played since entering the league.

Austin Cutting – Will once again be the team's long snapper.

Primary backups

Ezra Cleveland – Drafted by the Vikings this year, many are hoping Cleveland can end up being as good (if not better) than O'Neill. I would imagine he will be a backup as a rookie, especially with virtually no offseason program so far. But the hope is he will claim a starting role sooner rather than later.

Rashod Hill – Another player the Vikings really like, Hill will once again be a swing tackle who can play



By Jordan Wright

for

The Heart of the Matter

A few years ago, I spoke at a conference for women physicians. My talk opened with a simple question. What organ does the heart supply blood to first? It was a deceptively simple question, but the room was silent as they all pondered what they thought was a trick question.

Various answers came in, but they were all wrong. Everyone else tried to guess what the most important organ would be that would receive the blood first. They tried to deduce which organ was physically the closest to the heart.

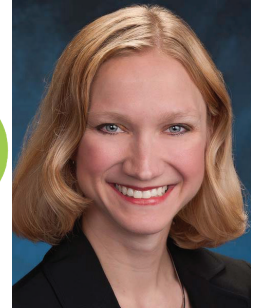
The next slide in my talk was a picture of the heart from an anatomy textbook and there I showed the answer. The heart feeds itself first. The very first blood vessels that branch off the heart at the aorta are the coronary arteries. These are the blood vessels that feed the heart and are the ones that, when blocked, cause a heart attack.

This was not a talk about anatomy, and it wasn't a lesson in physiology. It was a conference on self-care. No one has ever called the heart a selfish organ. We call someone who is generous and kind as someone who has a "big heart". The heart's sole purpose is to supply oxygenated blood to the entire body, and it beats constantly from before we are born until the moment we die. The only way it can do this is by taking care of itself and making sure its needs are met first. Yet when we think of taking time for ourselves or saying "no" to someone's request because we do not have the time or energy to help, we often feel selfish.

When the heart does not have enough blood flow to an area, or there is a blockage in a vessel, it causes pain. Sometimes people ignore this pain and push through. Sometimes the pain goes away, only to come back later when the demands on the heart grow stronger. If the area of the heart is starved for blood for long enough, that part of the heart dies. If a large enough area of the heart dies, then the heart cannot effectively pump blood to the rest of the body and the person may die of a heart attack.

We need to follow this example in how we treat ourselves. We need to take care of ourselves – emotionally, physically, and spiritually – before we can take care of others. If we ignore this and take care of our needs last, our ability to care for not only ourselves, but others will suffer. Be like the heart, tirelessly giving and kind to the entire body, but most importantly ensuring that the giving and kindness applies to you first and foremost.

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



By Jill Kruse, DO ~ Prairie Doc® Perspectives

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Cloud Burst This Morning

An inch of rain fell in Groton in 30 minutes this morning. It started raining at 3:45 a.m. and by 4:15 a.m. the cloud burst was done. These photos were taken by Jeslyn Kosel this morning in downtown Groton as the water was up over the curb and up to some business doors.

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GROTON AREA SCHOOL DISTRICT #06-6

School Board Meeting

June 29, 2020 – 7:00 PM – GHS Conference Room

AGENDA:

1. Call to Order with members present. Approve agenda as proposed or amended.

POTENTIAL CONFLICTS DISCLOSURE PURSUANT SDCL 23-3

CONSENT AGENDA:

1. Approval of year ending District bills.
2. Second reading and approval of recommended handbook changes for Elementary and MS/HS Student Handbooks.

OLD/CONTINUING BUSINESS:

1. Open Forum for Public Participation in accordance with Board Policy & Guidelines.
2. Continued discussion and necessary action on District response to COVID-19.
3. Administrative Reports: (a) Superintendent's Report; (b) Principal's Reports; (c) Business Manager Report

NEW BUSINESS:

1. Authorize Business Manager to make necessary Contingency Fund transfers to cover year-ending deficit accounts in General Fund
2. Approve Supplemental Budget to Capital Outlay and Special Education pursuant SDCL13-11-3.2.
3. Amend FY2020 Title I 1003 grant budget.
4. Amend FY2020 Cares Act ESSER budget.
5. Cast ballot for SDHSAA runoff election for East River At-Large Representative.
6. Declare flag pole from Groton Area Elementary surplus.
7. Open and approve diesel/gas quotes.
8. Open and approve newspaper quotes and designate official newspaper for FY2020.

ADJOURN

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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	June 28	June 29
Minnesota	33,469	33,763	34,123	34,616	35,033	35,549
Nebraska	18,092	18,221	18,346	18,524	18,775	18,899
Montana	743	766	803	829	852	863
Colorado	30,893	31,155	31,479	31,796	32,022	No Update
Wyoming	992	1016	1052	1079	1097	1121
North Dakota	3320	3362	3393	3421	3458	3495
South Dakota	6353	6419	6479	6535	6626	6681
United States	2,347,102	2,381,369	2,422,312	2,467,837	2,510,323	2,548,143
US Deaths	121,225	121,979	124,415	125,039	125,539	125,799

Minnesota	+242	+417	+360	+493	+417	+516
Nebraska	+135	+129	+125	+178	+251	+124
Montana	+9	+23	+37	+26	+23	+11
Colorado	+188	+262	+324	+317	+226	
Wyoming	+18	+24	+36	+27	+18	+24
North Dakota	+7*	+42	+31	+28	+37	+37
South Dakota	+27	+66	+60	+56	+91	+55
United States	+34,800	+34,267	+40,943	+45,525	+42,486	+37,820
US Deaths	+823	+754	+2,439	+624	+500	+260

* 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 28th COVID-19 UPDATE

Groton Daily Independent
from State Health Lab Reports

I feel a little better today - we're more in a yo-yo situation at this point. South Dakota recorded 55 more positive cases which is down considerably from yesterday, despite the fact that there were nearly double the number of tests done.

Brown County had two more positive cases. Day County had another positive case, Marshall County lost a fully recovered person as that number dropped from 5 to 4 with still 5 positive cases being reported, so they are off the fully recovered list.

Ziebach County got another positive case to fall off the fully recovered list and Stanley County is now on the fully recovered list.

No new deaths in South Dakota. North Dakota recorded a new death.

Brown County:

Active Cases: +1 (23)

Recovered: +1 (316)

Total Positive: +2 (341)

Ever Hospitalized: 0 (18)

Deaths: 2

Negative Tests: +56 (2849 2905)

Percent Recovered: 92.7% (down 0.2)

South Dakota:

Positive: +55 (6681 total)

Negative: +1732 (72212 total)

Hospitalized: +7 (652 total). 75 currently hospitalized (2 more than yesterday)

Deaths: 0 (91 total)

Recovered: +35 (5752) total)

Active Cases: +20 (838)

Percent Recovered: 86.1% down .2

Counties with no positive cases report the following negative tests: Butte +7 (454), Campbell 61, Haakon 225, Harding 39, Jones 29, Perkins +8 (83), Potter +1 (171), unassigned +65 (4665).

Beadle: +4 positive, +3 recovered (436 of 522 recovered)

Brookings: +3 positive, +1 recovered (47 of 61 recovered)

Brown: +2 positive, +1 recovered (316 of 341 recovered)

Buffalo: +1 positive, +1 recovered (53 of 72 recovered)

Charles Mix: +2 positive, +1 recovered (25 of 70 recovered)

Clay: +3 recovered (67 of 80 recovered)

Codington: +4 positive (46 of 57 recovered)

Corson: +1 recovered (13 of 17 recovered)

Davison: +2 positive (31 of 39 recovered)

Day: +1 positive (13 of 16 recovered)

Fall River: +1 positive (4 of 11 recovered)

Hughes: +2 positive, +2 recovered (32 of 51 recovered)

Hutchinson: +1 positive (9 of 12 recovered)

Lake: +1 positive (16 of 20 recovered)

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Lincoln: +2 positive, +3 recovered (311 of 339 recovered)
 Lyman: +2 positive, +1 recovered (33 of 59 recovered)
 Marshall: -1 recovered (4 of 5 recovered)
 McPherson: +1 positive, +1 recovered (4 of 5 recovered)
 Miner: +1 positive, +1 recovered (3 of 9 recovered)
 Minnehaha: +12 positive, +7 recovered (3314 of 3598 recovered)
 Oglala Lakota: +1 positive (41 of 84 recovered)
 Pennington: +10 positive, +8 recovered (354 of 507 recovered)
 Roberts: +1 positive, +2 recovered (40 of 41 recovered)
 Stanley: +1 recovered (12 of 12 recovered)
 Turner: -1 positive (23 of 24 recovered)
 Union: +2 positive, +1 recovered (109 of 121 recovered)
 Yankton: +1 positive (60 of 78 recovered)
 Ziebach: +1 positive (2 of 3 recovered)

Fully recovered from positive cases (Lost Marshall, Ziebach, Gained Stanley): Douglas 4-4, Grant 13-13, Hyde 3-3, Mellette 3-3, Sanborn 12-12, Stanley 12-12, Sully 1-1.

The NDDoH & private labs report 3,227 completed tests today for COVID-19 with 37 new positive cases, bringing the statewide total to 3,495. NDDoH reports one new death.

State & private labs have reported 177,229 total completed tests.
 3,139 ND patients are recovered.

RACE/ETHNICITY OF SOUTH DAKOTA COVID-19 CASES

Race/Ethnicity	# of Cases	% of Cases
Asian, Non-Hispanic	698	11%
Black, Non-Hispanic	967	15%
Hispanic	1071	16%
Native American, Non-Hispanic	951	14%
Other	695	10%
White, Non-Hispanic	2244	34%

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	57
Pennington	16
Todd	1
Union	1

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County	Positive Cases	Recovered Cases	Negative Cases
Aurora	34	33	278
Beadle	522	436	1396
Bennett	5	2	411
Bon Homme	11	10	568
Brookings	61	47	1623
Brown	341	316	2905
Brule	18	12	456
Buffalo	72	53	447
Butte	0	0	454
Campbell	0	0	62
Charles Mix	70	25	577
Clark	14	10	314
Clay	80	67	914
Codington	57	46	1820
Corson	17	13	136
Custer	8	4	508
Davison	39	31	1561
Day	16	13	397
Deuel	3	1	284
Dewey	4	0	833
Douglas	4	4	308
Edmunds	7	5	294
Fall River	11	4	691
Faulk	23	17	117
Grant	13	13	523
Gregory	2	1	223
Haakon	0	0	225
Hamlin	11	9	417
Hand	7	6	182
Hanson	6	4	130
Harding	0	0	39
Hughes	51	32	1073
Hutchinson	12	9	666

Hyde	3	3	92
Jackson	6	2	299
Jerauld	39	35	229
Jones	0	0	29
Kingsbury	6	3	398
Lake	20	16	660
Lawrence	19	15	1270
Lincoln	339	311	4241
Lyman	59	33	654
Marshall	5	4	280
McCook	10	6	478
McPherson	4	3	159
Meade	47	36	1224
Mellette	3	3	193
Miner	9	3	174
Minnehaha	3598	3314	19102
Moody	21	19	461
Oglala Lakota	84	41	2014
Pennington	507	354	6288
Perkins	0	0	83
Potter	0	0	171
Roberts	41	40	978
Sanborn	12	12	169
Spink	11	6	872
Stanley	12	12	135
Sully	1	1	43
Todd	56	48	926
Tripp	15	10	378
Turner	24	23	654
Union	121	109	1328
Walworth	9	5	380
Yankton	78	60	2215
Ziebach	3	2	138
Unassigned****	0	0	4665

SEX OF SOUTH DAKOTA COVID-19 CASES

Sex	# of Cases	# of Deaths
Female	3227	51
Male	3454	40

Age Range	# of Cases	# of Deaths
0-19 years	689	0
20-29 years	1375	1
30-39 years	1434	3
40-49 years	1076	6
50-59 years	1061	12
60-69 years	612	15
70-79 years	235	12
80+ years	199	42

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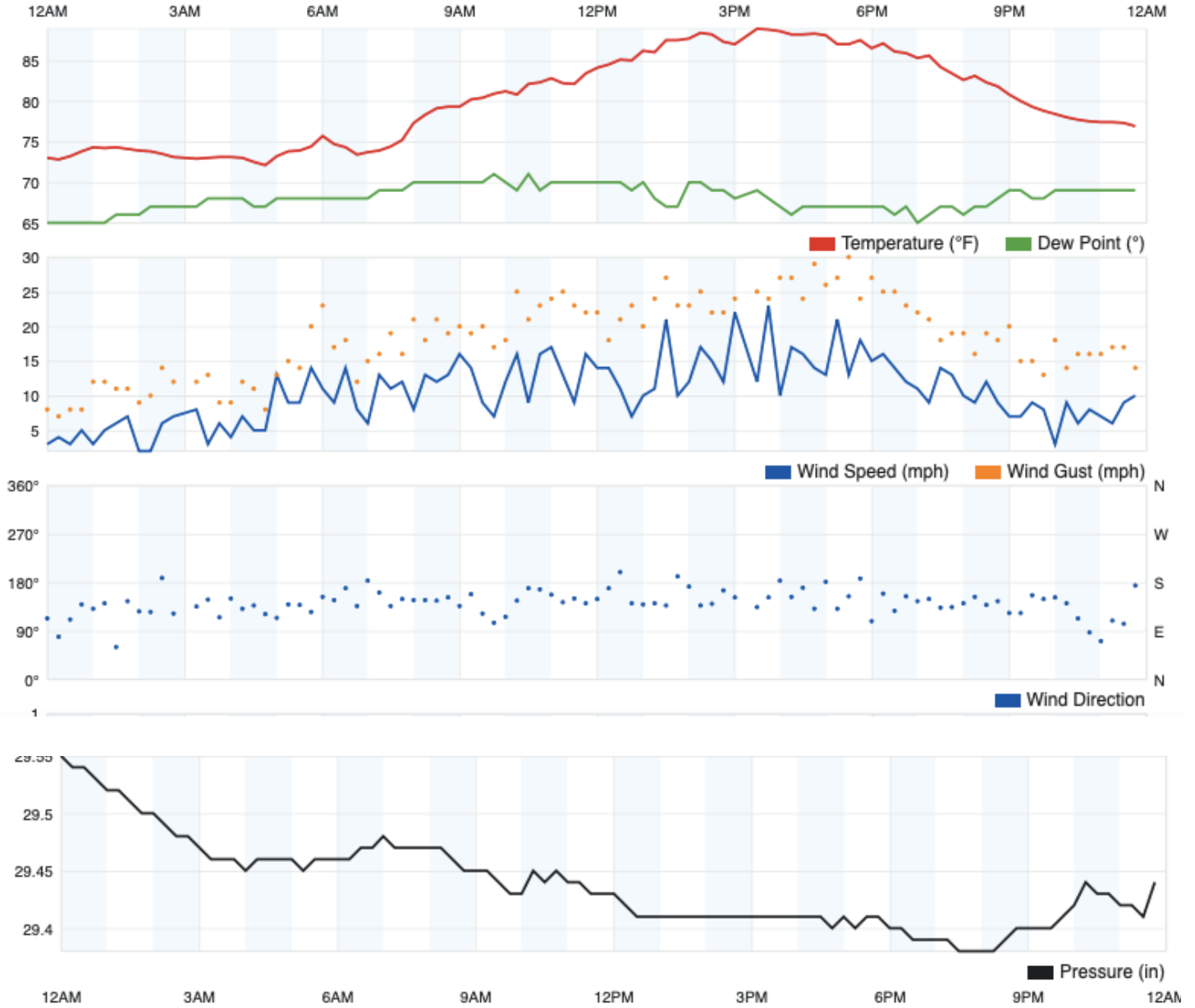
Baseball Schedule

Date	Team	Opponent	Location	Time
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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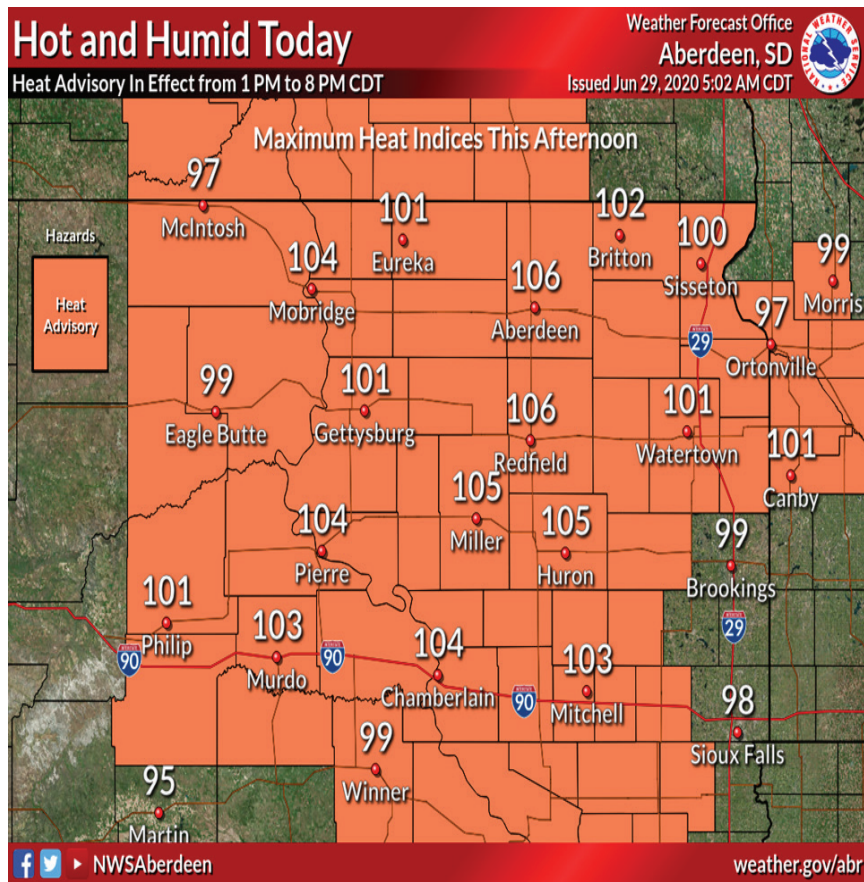
Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs



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Heat Advisory		Monday	Monday Night	Tuesday	Tuesday Night	Wednesday
Slight Chance T-storms then Mostly Sunny		Partly Cloudy	Partly Sunny then Chance T-storms and Breezy	T-storms	Chance T-storms	
High: 96 °F		Low: 75 °F	High: 92 °F	Low: 68 °F	High: 86 °F	



It will be hot and humid across the area today, as temperatures rise into the 90s. This will lead to heat indices rising above 100 degrees. If spending time outdoors, drink plenty of water, wear loose fitting clothing, and take frequent breaks.

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Today in Weather History

June 29, 1927: This estimated F2 tornado moved northeast from near Claremont, passing along the northwestern edge of Britton. The Claremont area had a \$12,000 loss as a large silo was destroyed. A dozen homes had roof damage in Britton.

June 29, 2005: Torrential rains of three to seven inches fell across far eastern Brown, western and northern Day, and most of Marshall Counties in the early morning and again in the afternoon hours. One location measured five inches of rain in two hours. Many township roads and highways were flooded along with thousands of acres of cropland. Water surrounded several homes resulting in people being rescued. Some of the houses were flooded. Many bridges were damaged, and roads and culverts were washed out. In Day County, 30 roads were washed out, and 15 bridges needed repairs. Some rainfall amounts include 5.04 inches in Britton, 3.34 at 8N of Columbia, and 2.08 in Aberdeen. Total June rainfall for some locations in Marshall and Day Counties was between 11 and 12 inches. The flooding continued into early July before receding by July 10th.

1826: Thomas Jefferson made his last entry in his weather observation log on this date, just six days before he died. The weather held a fascination for Jefferson as he made regular weather observations. He bought his first thermometer while working on the Declaration of Independence and his first barometer shortly after that.

1904: Tornado hits Karacharov Village area of Moscow killing about 24 people.

1998: "The Corn Belt Derecho of 1998" in the following states NE, IA, IL, IN, KY. A derecho which originated in far southeast South Dakota moved across Illinois during the afternoon and evening and continued as far east as Ohio the next morning. Every county in central Illinois sustained some damage, as these severe thunderstorms passed. Winds gusted in the 60 to 80 mph range, with some localized microbursts producing winds more than 100 mph. Significant damage occurred in the microburst areas, including the towns of Morton, McLean, LeRoy, and Tolono. In Tolono, 22 cars of a southbound 101-car Illinois Central freight train were blown off the tracks. It was unknown how many vehicles were picked up by the wind, but 16 cars were turned over, and another six derailed but remained upright. The train was en route to Centralia from Chicago with a load of mixed freight, including plastic pellets and meal. The freight cars empty weighed about 60,000 pounds, while a full one weighs about 260,000 pounds. Overall, 12 people were injured, and damage was estimated at around \$16 million.

1926 - A hurricane came inland near Daytona Beach, FL. The hurricane caused 2.5 million dollars damage in eastern Florida, including the Jacksonville area. (David Ludlum)

1939 - The temperature at Lewiston, ID, hit 117 degrees to establish an all-time record high for that location. (The Weather Channel)

1943 - On a whim, and flying a single engine AT-6, Lieutenant Ralph O'Hair and Colonel Duckworth were the first to fly into a hurricane. It started regular Air Force flights into hurricanes. (The Weather Channel)

1987 - Thunderstorms in Minnesota spawned a tornado which moved in a southwesterly direction for a distance of thirty miles across Rice County and Goodhue County. Trees were uprooted and tossed about like toys, and a horse lifted by the tornado was observed sailing horizontally through the air. Thunderstorms drenched La Crosse, WI, with 5.26 inches of rain, their second highest 24 hour total of record. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1988 - Hot weather prevailed in the north central U.S. Williston, ND, reported a record high of 108 degrees. Thunderstorms produced severe weather in the eastern U.S., and in southeastern Texas. Richland County, SC, was soaked with up to 5.5 inches of rain. (The National Weather Summary)

1989 - Thunderstorms produced locally heavy rains in the southwestern U.S. Yuma, AZ, experienced their most severe thunderstorm of record. Strong thunderstorm winds, with unofficial gusts as high as 95 mph, reduced visibilities to near zero in blowing dust and sand. Yuma got nearly as much rain in one hour as is normally received in an entire year. The storm total of 2.55 inches of rain was a record 24 hour total for July. Property damage due to flash flooding and high winds was in the millions. (Storm Data)

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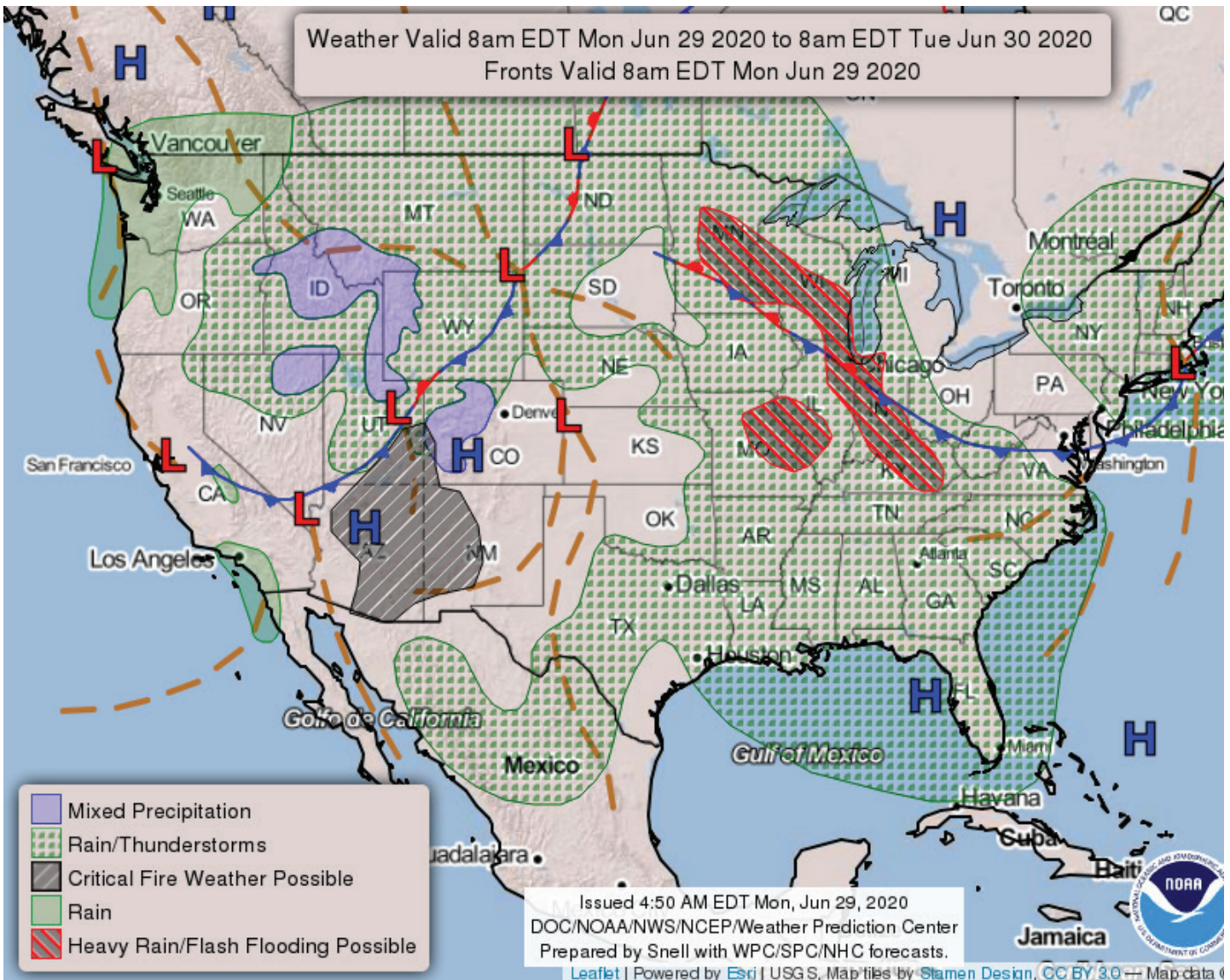
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Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 89 °F at 3:42 PM
Low Temp: 72 °F at 4:43 AM
Wind: 30 mph at 5:26 PM
Precip: .00

Today's Info

Record High: 107° in 1931
Record Low: 42° in 1900
Average High: 81°F
Average Low: 57°F
Average Precip in June.: 3.47
Precip to date in June.: 2.47
Average Precip to date: 10.61
Precip Year to Date: 7.12
Sunset Tonight: 9:26 p.m.
Sunrise Tomorrow: 5:49 a.m.



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HOW MUCH GOOD SHOULD WE HAVE?

It was the first parent-teacher conference of the year. Mrs. Adams was a bit fearful as she entered her son's classroom. Seated across from her son's teacher she did not know what to expect.

"Mrs. Adams," began the teacher, "it is a delight to have your son as a student in my class. He is so good!"

"My son?" gasped Mrs. Adams. She was shocked beyond belief.

"Yes. Charles is a model student," the teacher continued.

Then, turning to her son, Mrs. Adams said to Charles, "Your teacher said that you are a good student. Even a model student. Why can't you be good at home?"

"Well, Mom," he replied slowly, "I only got so much goodness in me and I decided to use it in school."

Goodness is an expression of "God-like-ness" that should reside inside of every believer and find its way outside of us in showing God's love and grace to others. "God-like-ness" should come easily, naturally, and constantly in our relationships with others.

As we become more of who God wants us to be, more "God-like," we must allow Him to move freely in us and through us. As we sense His love flooding into our hearts, showing "God-like-ness" should not be something we force ourselves to do. Rather, it is something we do without even thinking about it because we are a child of God.

Prayer: Help us, Heavenly Father, to express "God-like-ness" to others as You have expressed God-love to us. May our "God-like-ness" reflect Your love for them. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: Therefore, whenever we have the opportunity, we should do good to everyone—especially to those in the family of faith. Galatians 6:10

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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

After renovations, classic dive bar reopens in Sioux Falls

By ERIN BORMETT Argus Leader

SIoux FALLS, S.D. (AP) — Ask any Crow Bar regular and they would tell you they were nervous about the renovations. No one wanted to lose their classic old-school bar.

On a recent Thursday night, the doors were open again, the house was packed and the consensus was clear. There may be new multi-tone wood panels surrounding a more open floor plan, a fresh shiny bar top and updated wall decor, but the Crow Bar still feels like home.

"We didn't want it to get fancy," said Cathy Kayl, a regular at the bar for the past 28 years. "We like our crowd. We like our bar."

Kayl told the Argus Leader she's been coming to the Crow Bar once a week since she turned 21. A friend joked that she never left while the bar was closed for renovations, but camped in the parking lot until she could get back in. She and a few friends had come for lunch because they were itching to see the redesign, and returned for evening drinks.

"It looks great with the renovations, but it has the same feel," she said.

Crow Bar full of fond memories for many

Kayl's group of friends have fond memories attached to their time at the Crow Bar. Multiple wedding parties have ended up in the back corner drinking the night away over the years. Even with the new open layout and updated look, she could easily point to the cluster of tables the group had overtaken on such occasions.

A few of those tables had been pushed together that Thursday night to make space for the Crow Bar softball team. It's no surprise that the team sponsored by the bar would make it their regular hangout.

"It feels like home again," said Spencer Taylor, one of the players. "They did an amazing job."

The Crow Bar was Taylor's college bar when he went to Augustana, and he's friends with some of the employees. He said he wants to keep supporting the bar in reciprocity for the owners' support of the softball team. It's Barry and Terri Hermanson's care for their customers that keeps him coming back.

Fellow teammate Allen Goodroad echoed that sentiment. His friend knows the Hermansons personally, so he was able to attend the bar's soft opening for friends and family.

"When they were giving a little speech, they said, 'By the way, prices aren't changing,'" Goodroad said. "They dumped a lot of money into this, but it's great that they care about their customers."

He added that he was impressed with the new flourishes. His favorite update is the wall of signed guitars near the pool tables.

One of those guitars hung just above Logan Landon's head as lined up his pool cue for the break. After making the shot, he declared the Crow Bar to be the "best bar in Sioux Falls."

"They got the same feel of the place," he said, smiling. "It just looks a little younger now."

A waitress passed by the pool table with a tray of shots, carrying them around the bar and coming to rest on a table next to a pitcher of beer. Angel Kasper and her friends made a toast to the new bar.

Kasper has worked as a waitress at the Crow Bar since last September, though she was off-duty that Thursday night. While many people may not willingly spend extra time at their place of employment, she thoroughly enjoys her nights off as a patron.

"The first time I ever came here I was looking for a second job, and it just felt right," Kasper said. "Ever since then it's been my favorite place to come and hang out and be around people."

Big crowd on Crow Bar reopening night

Many of the bar's employees helped with the renovation process, so the final product wasn't a surprise to Kasper. Still, seeing the space filled with happy people was the missing link the team was waiting for, even amidst the COVID-19 pandemic that shut things down for a while.

"It's an amazing accomplishment and it makes us overjoyed to see the people in the bar," she said.

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Seeing "people in the bar" might be underselling just how successful the Crow Bar's first day was upon reopening. Terri Hermanson said she's received lots of compliments on how the building looks from the "constant stream of people" that came in all day long. At night, the crowds were shoulder to shoulder.

"It's some mixed emotions, because there's all the hard work you put into it, and you hope everyone likes it," Hermanson said.

Having a completely full bar on a Thursday night is unusual, and she's taking it as a good sign that the renovation was a success.

"It's great to have people back into it, because it makes it feel more like home and not a work site," she said.

That was all the conversation Hermanson had time for before hustling back to work the bar, which was kept busy all night long.

Show must go on: Yankton theater prepares to reopen

By RANDY DOCKENDORF Yankton Daily Press & Dakotan

YANKTON, S.D. (AP) — Even during a pandemic, Lewis and Clark Theatre Company (LCTC) members believe the show must go on.

The stage has remained dark since mid-March, when the first COVID-19 cases were detected in Yankton and the theater was shut down. The precaution was taken to protect the cast, crew and audience members.

Even the theater marquee remains frozen in time, still announcing last March's showing of the movie "Hoosiers." The event was held in celebration of the Yankton Bucks' berth and top seed in the State "AA" boys basketball tournament — which was later canceled because of the pandemic. The movie screening was the last event held at Dakota Theatre before the COVID shutdown.

However, the LCTC board has reopened the building and is taking the next big step — auditions for the first production since the pandemic. The LCTC will stage "M(asterisk)A(asterisk)S(asterisk)H" during the first and second weekends of August.

The board feels comfortable with its decision, President Michael Schumacher told the Press & Dakotan.

"We just felt the time was right to bring back the theater," he said. "We looked around at the number of (coronavirus) cases in Yankton County and our surrounding counties. The number seems to be holding fairly steady. Churches have re-opened, and businesses have re-opened, so we thought it was time for us, too."

In addition, the LCTC board took cues from other theater companies in South Dakota and elsewhere, Schumacher said.

"Mitchell and Pierre are putting on productions in late July or early August, so it's not like we're going rogue (here in Yankton)," he said.

However, not all theaters are moving forward with business as usual, Schumacher said.

"Vermillion isn't putting on its community theater production. The Shakespeare festival's outdoor performances (at Prentis Park in Vermillion) are also canceled," he said.

"In Yankton, the Dakota Players (an outreach of the Black Hills Playhouse) aren't holding their youth theater camp. And we're waiting to see what's happening with things like Music at the Meridian and the second part of the summer concert series (at the Riverside Park amphitheater)."

In deciding to stage a summer production, the LCTC also took into account the projected peak of around July 4 for the pandemic in Yankton, Schumacher said.

"Our next production is two months out," he said. "It's hard to project, but I think people will be much more comfortable by the time we put on the show."

TAKING PRECAUTIONS

A number of safety precautions will be taken for the "M(asterisk)A(asterisk)S(asterisk)H" auditions. The cast calls for 30 members ages 12 and older.

"We'll be taking the temperatures of people who show up, and we'll ask them to wear a mask when they're not auditioning on stage," he said. "We'll also space things out by using assigned seating for those sitting out in the audience and waiting to go on stage."

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Precautions will continue not only for rehearsals but also for the productions themselves, Schumacher said. Those steps include the usage of masks during certain times and the availability of hand sanitizer at the theater. In addition, temperatures will be taken not only for the cast and crew but also audience members as they enter the theater.

"We're asking people to wear masks while they're in the lobby, mingling and close to so many others," he said. "They don't need to wear masks in the theater, during the performance. We're roping off every other row, and we're seating people depending on the ticket sales. A family of four would sit together, and we could leave open spaces before seating the next people.

"Because of that, we're really encouraging early ticket sales so we can plan for the seating arrangements."

The same seats won't be used for each performance, Schumacher said. The theater company will alternate rows of seats used for two consecutive performances. In that way, workers have more time to clean all the seats and the entire theater.

Dakota Theatre seats 600 viewers, including the balcony. The new seating arrangement will reduce the number of audience members and ticket sales, thereby limiting revenue at each production.

However, Schumacher thinks the LCTC can make things work financially, or at least reach the break-even point.

"It's much more difficult with a musical, where you have more costs because you're paying for music rights," he said. "In those cases, you need to sell, 200, 300 or even 400 tickets for each performance. If a production isn't a musical, you can get by with selling around 140 tickets."

TRYING TIMES

The past three months have created trying times for the theater, Schumacher said. A number of events were canceled, which hurt both the theater's offerings and finances, he said.

"The pandemic has really affected us in so many ways," he said. "It started with canceling our gala in mid-March. It's a major fundraiser, but that's when the first (coronavirus) cases were being seen and there was so much uncertainty. We believed that we just had to cancel it."

The gala was only the first casualty of the pandemic, Schumacher said.

"Then we canceled our April showing of 'Stuart Little.' The (COVID) outbreak was starting, and we were only a couple of weeks out from opening night. We had to make some really quick decisions. We just couldn't see moving ahead with the production," he said.

"However, we are planning to bring it back next April (2021). We don't have any of our current cast who are graduating and moving on, so we'll see about bringing them back for next year's production."

As the pandemic continued, the gala and "Stuart Little" were followed by more cancellations of the improvisational show in May, another theater production in June and stage performances by Ted and Alice Miller, James Dean and the Rough Diamonds.

"We estimate we lost \$16,000 in net revenue during that time," Schumacher said. "Fortunately, we had some past dollars (in reserve) that helped us weather things."

In addition, LCTC didn't qualify for federal funds for protecting jobs during the pandemic, Schumacher said.

"We're all volunteers, so we didn't actually lose any jobs, as many business owners did," he said. "For that reason, we didn't qualify for the stimulus money aimed at keeping employees."

The LCTC did receive a timely boost from a Yankton Area Foundation grant. The funds enabled the theater to purchase new microphones meeting Federal Communications Commission (FCC) regulations.

Besides replacing lost funds, the theater board also sought to replace lost connections with the public during the pandemic, Schumacher said.

"We worked to keep our visibility through Facebook," he said. "We did things like a musical matchup, similar to the NCAA basketball tournament. We made up brackets, and we posted old and new musicals, just to mix things up. People voted on their favorites, and the winners kept moving on to the next round. People really seemed to enjoy it."

In addition, the LCTC turned to its own membership to create self-promotion.

"Our LCTC alumni were used for short videos," he said. "We had a variety of people from young kids

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to older members. They talked about what their theater experience meant to them. It wasn't just the enjoyment of being on stage. It also helped them become more confident for things like practicing law and standing in front of a courtroom."

The video series helped spread a much larger message, Schumacher said.

"It showed the importance of theater and the other arts for our community and region, and actually for the entire nation," he said.

The use of social media and virtual performances has helped satisfy some of the craving for entertainment, but it's not a wholesale, long-term substitute, Schumacher said.

"We really need the arts, and we need people to come out and support us," he said. "It's one thing to watch 'Jesus Christ Superstar' on Facebook or television, and it's good, but it's nothing like watching a concert or theater production in person and having that shared experience."

On the other hand, Schumacher realizes the perilous times created by the coronavirus.

"We want people to feel safe and comfortable in coming out," he said, noting some people may not feel they have reached that point.

MOVING FORWARD

The LCTC board plans to continue its schedule for later in the year, including a Buddy Holly tribute show Oct. 24 and a LCTC theater production in October. Plans include showing the movie "The Rocky Horror Picture Show" during Halloween along with performing a Christmas show in December and another theater production next February.

"There are just some shows you can't postpone, like doing your Christmas play in February," Schumacher said.

He is also mulling some other ideas, spawned by the unusual circumstances created by the pandemic.

"I would like to build up our base of actors and create a bigger theater company," he said. "I've also thought about doing things like radio plays or using Zoom. I've heard of other companies doing it, with some dressing up (as characters) while others didn't."

However, his biggest goal for now is regaining the momentum from the start of 2020. Those early shows included the U.S. Air Force Heartland of America Band performance — featuring members from Offutt Air Force Base in Omaha — and the Rachel DeeLynn concert.

"I think people are really ready to get out and enjoy live performances," Schumacher said. "They want to be entertained and to socialize after being cooped up at home for months."

The public has already shown comfort in attending church, shopping in stores, eating at restaurants and going to bars, Schumacher noted. He thinks that comfort will grow even more by the time the LCTC raises the curtain on its production in two months.

Unlike a play, there is no script to follow in today's setting, Schumacher admitted. However, he's hoping for the best as the LCTC moves ahead with its plans.

"This is all once-in-a-lifetime stuff," he said. "But I'm cautiously optimistic."

Fracking pioneer Chesapeake files for bankruptcy protection

By CATHY BUSSEWITZ and TALİ ARBEL AP Business Writers

NEW YORK (AP) — Chesapeake Energy, a shale drilling pioneer that helped to turn the United States into a global energy powerhouse, has filed for bankruptcy protection.

The Oklahoma City-based company said Sunday that it was a necessary decision given its debt. Its debt load is currently nearing \$9 billion. It has entered a plan with lenders to cut \$7 billion of its debt and said it will continue to operate as usual during the bankruptcy process.

The oil and gas company was a leader in the fracking boom, using unconventional techniques to extract oil and gas from the ground, a method that has come under scrutiny because of its environmental impact.

Other wildcatters followed in Chesapeake's path, racking up huge debts to find oil and gas in fields spanning New Mexico, Texas, the Dakotas and Pennsylvania. A reckoning is now coming due with those massive debts needing to be serviced by Chesapeake and those that followed its path.

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More than 200 oil producers have filed for bankruptcy protection in the past five years, a trend that's expected to continue as a global pandemic saps demand for energy and depresses prices further.

Founded in 1989 with an initial \$50,000 investment, Chesapeake focused on drilling in underdeveloped areas of Oklahoma and Texas. It largely abandoned traditional vertical well drilling, employing instead lateral drilling techniques to free natural gas from unconventional shale formations.

It became a colossus in the energy markets, eventually reaching a market valuation of more than \$37 billion. Then, the first in a series of financial shocks hit Chesapeake as the Great Recession sent energy prices into the basement.

The company closed Friday valued at around \$115 million.

Chesapeake grew with lightning speed under one-time CEO Aubrey McClendon, known for his aggressiveness acquiring oil and gas drilling rights. He pushed the company to acquire enormous tracks of land in several states, taking on mounting debt along the way. Chesapeake in some ways became a victim of its own success as other companies followed its lead and U.S. energy production soared, driving down prices.

As Chesapeake was expanding at breakneck speed, natural gas prices were near \$20 per million British thermal units, the benchmark for natural gas trading. But frackers like Chesapeake flooded the market with cheap natural gas, sending prices to well under \$2.

McClendon left the company in 2013 with questions swirling about its business practices. On March 1, 2016, McClendon was indicted on a charge of conspiring to rig bids on energy leases in Oklahoma. McClendon died the following day, the single occupant in his Chevrolet Tahoe that smashed into a concrete viaduct at nearly 90 mph.

The coroner ruled his death an accident.

Chesapeake has paid millions of dollars since to settle charges of bid rigging.

Robert Lawler became CEO after McClendon's death and began selling off assets to get Chesapeake's debt under control. But that debt grew more threatening within two years as the fracking boom turned to a bust in 2015. Chesapeake reported a quarterly loss of \$4 billion that year and the first wave of layoffs began with 750 jobs.

Despite Chesapeake's problems, Lawler last year remained the highest-paid CEO in Oklahoma with \$15.4 million in compensation, according to a ranking compiled by The Associated Press and Equilar.

Chesapeake lost an eye-popping \$8.3 billion in the first quarter of this year, and it listed \$8.62 billion in net debt. The company said in a regulatory filing in May that "management has concluded that there is substantial doubt about the company's ability to continue as a going concern."

___ This story has been corrected to show that Chesapeake went from vertical to lateral drilling, not horizontal drilling.

South Dakota confirms 55 new virus cases among 21 counties

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — South Dakota health officials on Saturday reported 55 new cases of the coronavirus spread out among 21 counties, which increased the total number of positive tests in the state to nearly 6,700.

The update showed that the state screened 792 people in the last day, for a positive test rate of 6.9%. There are currently 838 active cases, an increase of 20 since Saturday. Of those, 75 are hospitalized, an increase of two.

No new deaths were reported.

The new positive tests included 12 in Minnehaha County, putting it two away from 3,600 total cases, and 10 in Pennington County, putting it over 500 total cases.

Other counties with confirmed new cases were Beadle, Brookings, Brown, Buffalo, Charles Mix, Codington, Davison, Day, Fall River, Hughes, Hutchinson, Lake, Lincoln, Lyman, Roberts, Oglala Lakota, Union, Yankton and Ziebach.

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.

French former prime minister, wife found guilty of fraud

By SYLVIE CORBET and NICOLAS VAUX-MONTAGNY Associated Press

PARIS (AP) — A Paris court on Monday found French former prime minister Francois Fillon guilty of having used public funds to pay his wife and children for work they never performed.

The work had brought the family more than 1 million euros (\$1.13 million) since 1998. The couple's lawyers immediately announced an appeal.

Fillon, 66, was sentenced to five years in prison, three of which were suspended, and a 375,000 euro (\$423,100) fine. He is also banned from seeking elected office for 10 years. He remains free pending appeal.

His wife, Penelope Fillon, 64, was found guilty as an accomplice. She was given a three-year suspended sentence and fined the same amount.

The scandal broke in the French media just three months before the country's 2017 presidential election, as Fillon was the front-runner in the race. It cost him his reputation. Fillon sank to third place in the election, which was won by Emmanuel Macron.

Fillon, who was France's prime minister from 2007 to 2012, and his wife have denied any wrongdoing and can appeal the decision.

Penelope Fillon's role alongside her husband drew all the attention during the February-March trial, which focused on determining whether her activities were in the traditional role of an elected official's partner — or involved actual paid work.

Prosecutors denounced "fraudulent, systematic practices."

Fillon was accused of misuse of public funds, receiving money from the misuse of public funds and the misappropriation of company assets. His wife was charged mostly as an accomplice.

During the trial, Penelope Fillon explained how she decided to support her husband's career when he was first elected as a French lawmaker in 1981 in the small town of Sable-sur-Sarthe, in rural western France.

Over the years, she was offered different types of contracts as a parliamentary assistant, depending on her husband's political career.

She described her work as mostly doing reports about local issues, opening the mail, meeting with residents and helping to prepare speeches for local events. She said working that way allowed her to have a flexible schedule and raise their five children in the Fillons' countryside manor. She said her husband was the one who decided the details of her contracts.

Prosecutors pointed at the lack of actual evidence of her work, including the absence of declarations for any paid vacations or maternity leave, as her wages reached up to nine times France's minimum salary.

Prosecutor Aurelien Letocart argued that "meeting with voters, getting the children from school, going shopping or reading mail isn't intended to be paid work."

Letocart said Fillon "had a deep feeling of impunity, the certainty that his status would dissuade anyone from suing him ... This gets cynical when that attitude comes from a man who made probity his trademark."

Francois Fillon insisted his wife's job was real and said that, according to the separation of powers, the justice system can't interfere with how a lawmaker organizes work at his office.

In addition, charges also cover a contract that allowed Penelope Fillon to earn 135,000 euros in 2012-2013 as a consultant for a literary magazine owned by a friend of her husband — also an alleged fake job. The magazine owner, Marc de Lacharriere, already pleaded guilty and was given a suspended eight-month prison sentence and fined 375,000 euros in 2018.

The National Assembly, which joined the proceedings as a civil plaintiff, has requested a total penalty of 1.081 million euros that correspond to the salaries and payroll charges that were paid.

Fillon, once the youngest lawmaker at the National Assembly at the age of 27, served as prime minister under President Nicolas Sarkozy from 2007 to 2012. He was also a minister under two previous presidents, Francois Mitterrand and Jacques Chirac.

He left French politics in 2017 and now works for an asset management company.

Mississippi surrenders Confederate symbol from state flag

By EMILY WAGSTER PETTUS Associated Press

JACKSON, Miss. (AP) — Mississippi will retire the last state flag in the U.S. with the Confederate battle emblem, more than a century after white supremacist legislators adopted the design a generation after the South lost the Civil War.

A broad coalition of lawmakers — Black and white, Democrat and Republican — voted Sunday for change as the state faced increasing pressure amid nationwide protests against racial injustice.

Mississippi has a 38% Black population, and critics have said for generations that it's wrong to have a flag that prominently features an emblem many condemn as racist.

Democratic Sen. David Jordan told his colleagues just before the vote that Mississippi needs a flag that unifies rather than divides.

"Let's do this because it's the right thing to do," Jordan said.

The Senate voted 37-14 to retire the flag, hours after the House voted 91-23.

Cheers rang out in the state Capitol after the Senate vote. Some spectators wept. Legislators embraced each other, many hugging colleagues who were on the opposing side of an issue that has long divided the tradition-bound state.

Republican Gov. Tate Reeves is expected to sign the bill into law in the next few days.

Democratic Rep. Robert Johnson of Natchez choked back tears as he told reporters that he has seen white colleagues develop more empathy about how the Confederate symbol is painful to him and other African Americans.

"They began to understand and feel the same thing that I've been feeling for 61 years of my life," Johnson said.

A commission will design a new flag that cannot include the Confederate symbol and that must have the words "In God We Trust." Voters will be asked to approve the new design in the Nov. 3 election. If they reject it, the commission will set a different design using the same guidelines, and that would be sent to voters later.

Republican House Speaker Philip Gunn, who is white, has pushed for five years to change the flag, saying the Confederate symbol is offensive.

"How sweet it is to celebrate this on the Lord's day," Gunn said.

Legislators put the Confederate emblem on the upper left corner of Mississippi flag in 1894, as white people were squelching political power that African Americans had gained after the Civil War.

In a 2001 statewide election, voters chose to keep the flag. An increasing number of cities and all Mississippi's public universities have taken down the state flag in recent years. But until now, efforts to redesign the flag sputtered in the Republican-dominated Legislature.

That dynamic shifted as an extraordinary and diverse coalition of political, business, religious groups and sports leaders pushed for change.

At a Black Lives Matter protest outside the Mississippi Governor's Mansion in early June, thousands cheered as an organizer said the state needs to divorce itself from all Confederate symbols.

Religious groups said erasing the rebel emblem from the state flag is a moral imperative. Notable among them was the state's largest church group, the 500,000-member Mississippi Baptist Convention, which called for change last week after not pushing for it before the 2001 election.

Business groups said the banner hinders economic development in one of the poorest states in the nation.

In a sports-crazy culture, the biggest blow might have happened when college sports leagues said Mississippi could lose postseason events if it continued flying the Confederate-themed flag. Nearly four dozen of Mississippi's university athletic directors and coaches came to the Capitol to lobby for change.

Many people who wanted to keep the emblem on the Mississippi flag said they see it as a symbol of heritage.

The battle emblem is a red field topped by a blue X with 13 white stars. The Ku Klux Klan and other

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hate groups have waved the rebel flag for decades.

The Mississippi Supreme Court found in 2000 that when the state updated its laws in 1906, portions dealing with the flag were not included. That meant the banner lacked official status. The Democratic governor in 2000, Ronnie Musgrove, appointed a commission to decide the flag's future. It held hearings across the state that grew ugly as people shouted at each other about the flag.

Legislators then opted not to set a flag design themselves, and put the issue on the 2001 statewide ballot.

Former Mississippi Gov. William Winter, who is now 97, served on then-President Bill Clinton's national advisory board on race in the 1990s and was chairman of the Mississippi flag commission in 2000. Winter said Sunday that removing the Confederate symbol from the banner is "long overdue."

"The battle for a better Mississippi does not end with the removal of the flag, and we should work in concert to make other positive changes in the interest of all of our people," said Winter, a Democrat who was governor from 1980 until 1984.

Democratic state Sen. Derrick Simmons of Greenville, who is African American, said the state deserves a flag to make all people proud.

"Today is a history-making day in the state of Mississippi," Simmons told colleagues. "Let's vote today for the Mississippi of tomorrow."

Follow Emily Wagster Pettus on Twitter: <http://twitter.com/EWagsterPettus>.

UK judge warns Assange on US extradition hearing attendance

LONDON (AP) — A British judge said Monday that WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange must attend his next court hearing unless he can provide medical evidence to support his absence.

Lawyers for Assange said he could not attend the latest hearing on his U.S. extradition case by video link from prison for medical reasons.

District Judge Vanessa Baraitser set another hearing date of July 27 and said Assange must appear "unless there is medical evidence" to explain his non-attendance.

The 48-year-old Australian has been indicted in the U.S. on 18 charges over the publication of classified documents. Prosecutors say he conspired with U.S. army intelligence analyst Chelsea Manning to crack a password, hack into a Pentagon computer and release secret diplomatic cables and military files on the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Last week the U.S. Justice Department added a new, superseding, indictment that alleges Assange conspired with members of hacking organizations and sought to recruit hackers to provide WikiLeaks with classified information. The indictment does not add any new charges, but broadens the allegations against Assange.

Assange was arrested last year after being evicted from the Ecuadorian Embassy in London, where he had sought refuge to avoid being sent to Sweden over allegations of rape and sexual assault.

He is in London's Belmarsh Prison awaiting a full extradition hearing, which has been postponed because of the coronavirus pandemic. Originally due to begin in May, it is now scheduled to start on Sept. 7.

Trump denies briefing about reported bounties on US troops

By ZEKE MILLER, JAMES LAPORTA and DEB RIECHMANN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump has denied he was made aware of U.S. intelligence officials' conclusions Russia secretly offered bounties to Taliban-linked militants for killing American troops in Afghanistan. The Trump administration was set to brief select members of Congress on the matter Monday.

The intelligence assessments came amid Trump's push to withdraw the U.S. from Afghanistan and suggested Russia was making overtures to militants as the U.S. and the Taliban held talks to end the long-running war. The assessment was first reported by The New York Times, then confirmed to The Associated Press by American intelligence officials and two others with knowledge of the matter.

While Russian meddling in Afghanistan isn't a new phenomenon for seasoned U.S. intelligence officials

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and military commandos, officials said Russian operatives became more aggressive in their desire to contract with the Taliban and members of the Haqqani Network, a militant group aligned with the Taliban in Afghanistan and designated a foreign terrorist organization in 2012. Russian operatives are said to have met with Taliban leaders in Doha, Qatar, and Afghanistan; however, it's unknown if the meetings were to discuss bounties.

The officials the AP spoke to said the intelligence community has been investigating an April 2019 attack on an American convoy that killed three U.S. Marines after a car rigged with explosives detonated near their armored vehicles as they traveled back to Bagram Airfield, the largest U.S. military installation in Afghanistan.

Three other U.S. service members were wounded in the attack, along with an Afghan contractor. The Taliban claimed responsibility for the attack on Twitter. The officials the AP spoke to also said they were looking closely at insider attacks — sometimes called “green-on-blue” incidents — from 2019 to determine if they are also linked to Russian bounties.

In early 2020, members of the elite Naval Special Warfare Development Group, known to the public as SEAL Team Six, raided a Taliban outpost and recovered roughly \$500,000. The recovered funds further solidified the suspicions of the American intelligence community that the Russians had offered money to Taliban militants and linked associations.

One official said the administration discussed several potential responses, but the White House has yet to authorize any step.

The intelligence officials told the AP that Trump was briefed on the bounty matter earlier this year; Trump denied that, tweeting Sunday neither he nor Vice President Mike Pence had been briefed. Trump tweeted Sunday night he was just told intelligence officials didn't report the information to him because they didn't find it credible.

The intelligence officials and others with knowledge of the matter insisted on anonymity to discuss the highly sensitive matter.

The White House National Security Council wouldn't confirm the assessments but said the U.S. receives thousands of intelligence reports daily that are subject to strict scrutiny.

Sen. Lindsey Graham, R-S.C., who golfed with Trump on Sunday, tweeted Saturday it's “Imperative Congress get to the bottom of recent media reports that Russian GRU units in Afghanistan have offered to pay the Taliban to kill American soldiers with the goal of pushing America out of the region.” GRU is a reference to the Russian military intelligence agency.

Rep. Liz Cheney of Wyoming, the No. 3 Republican in the House, called for the White House to share more information with Congress, saying, if true, lawmakers need to know “Who did know and when?” and, referring to Russian leader Vladimir Putin, “What has been done in response to protect our forces & hold Putin accountable?”

Democratic presumptive presidential nominee Joe Biden said reports Trump was aware of the Russian bounties would be a “truly shocking revelation” about the commander in chief and his failure to protect U.S. troops in Afghanistan and stand up to Russia.

Russia called the report “nonsense.”

“This unsophisticated plant clearly illustrates the low intellectual abilities of the propagandists of American intelligence, who instead of inventing something more plausible have to make up this nonsense,” the Russian Foreign Ministry said.

The Kremlin echoed that sentiment Monday and called the report “a lie.” Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said he regretted “the biggest, respectful and high-class international media organizations have not been above publishing absolute hoaxes in recent years.”

A Taliban spokesman said the militants “strongly reject this allegation” and aren't “indebted to the beneficence of any intelligence organ or foreign country.”

John Bolton, an ex-national security adviser who was forced out by Trump last September and has written a tell-all book about his White House tenure, said Sunday it's “pretty remarkable the president's going

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out of his way to say he hasn't heard anything about it. One asks, why would he do something like that?"

Bolton told NBC's "Meet the Press" he thinks the answer "may be precisely because active Russian aggression like that against the American service members is a very, very serious matter and nothing's been done about it, if it's true, for these past four or five months, so it may look like he was negligent. But, of course, he can disown everything if nobody ever told him about it."

House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, one of the few congressional leaders typically briefed on sensitive intelligence matters, told ABC's "This Week" she hadn't been informed about the reported bounties and requested a report to Congress on the matter.

"This is as bad as it gets, and yet the president will not confront the Russians on this score, denies being briefed. Whether he is or not, his administration knows and our allies — some of our allies who work with us in Afghanistan had been briefed and accept this report," she said.

Trump responded to Biden on Twitter, saying, "Russia ate his and Obama's lunch during their time in office"

But it was the Obama administration, with international allies, that suspended Russia from the Group of Eight after its unilateral annexation of Crimea from Ukraine — a move that drew widespread condemnation.

Biden criticized Trump for "his embarrassing campaign of deference and debasing himself" before Putin. Trump tweeted "nobody's been tougher" on Russia than his administration.

Associated Press writer Lynn Berry contributed to this report.

Boris Johnson says COVID-19 has been a disaster for Britain

By JILL LAWLESS Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — Prime Minister Boris Johnson acknowledged Monday that the coronavirus pandemic has been a "disaster" for Britain, as he announced a spending splurge designed to get the country — and his faltering Conservative government — back on track.

As the U.K. emerges from a three-month lockdown, Johnson has lined up big-money pledges on schools, housing and infrastructure, in an attempt to move on from an outbreak that has left more than 43,000 Britons dead — the worst confirmed death toll in Europe.

"This has been a disaster," Johnson acknowledged Monday. "Let's not mince our words. I mean, this has been an absolute nightmare for the country and the country's gone through a profound shock.

"But in those moments, you have the opportunity to change and to do things better," he told Times Radio. "This is a moment now to give our country the skills, the infrastructure, the long-term investment that we need."

Johnson promised a "Rooseveltian approach," invoking the New Deal policies of President Franklin D. Roosevelt that helped wrench the United States out of the Great Depression. Johnson's first announcement was 1 billion pounds (\$1.25 billion) to build new schools. The British leader plans to unveil a series of other infrastructure projects this week.

Johnson won a large majority in Parliament in December with a promise to rebalance Britain's London-dominated economy and revive the long-neglected former industrial regions of central and northern England.

Those plans were thrown into turmoil by COVID-19. The U.K.'s official death toll stands at 43,550, the third-highest in the world after the United States and Brazil, and the true figure is likely higher.

"What we're going to be doing in the next few months, is really doubling down on our initial agenda, which was all about investment ... in infrastructure, in education, in technology, to bring the country together," he said.

Critics want to know where the money will come from. The economic freeze caused by the pandemic has left Britain facing a deep recession — the Bank of England estimates that the U.K. economy could end the first half of 2020 around 20% smaller than at the start of the year.

The U.K. faces another economic shock at the end of this year when a post-Brexit transition period ends, casting the country out of the 27-nation bloc's vast single market.

Talks with the EU on a new trade deal have bogged down amid wide differences on major issues includ-

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ing fishing rights and competition. If no agreement is struck by the end of the year, the U.K. faces tariffs and other barriers to business with the EU, its biggest trading partner.

Despite the gloomy economic outlook, Johnson said it would be "a mistake" to return to the austerity of previous Conservative governments, which since 2010 have cut public spending in an attempt to lower a national debt that was swollen by the 2008 global financial crisis.

Despite his attempts to turn the page, Johnson, who was hospitalized in intensive care with the coronavirus in April, will likely face a reckoning over his government's handling of the outbreak.

Critics accuse the government of being too slow to impose a nationwide lockdown, of failing to get enough protective equipment to medical workers and of botching the launch of a test-and-trace system to control new outbreaks.

Deaths and new infections are now declining, but slowly, and Britain lags behind its European neighbors in reopening society and the economy.

In another sign of Johnson's attempt to regain control, Britain's top civil servant announced late Sunday he was stepping down. Mark Sedwill is leaving his twin jobs as head of the civil service and national security adviser after reports of disagreements with Johnson's powerful chief adviser, Dominic Cummings.

Johnson has named David Frost, the government's EU trade negotiator, to the national security post. The appointment has raised some eyebrows because Frost is a political appointee, rather than a neutral civil servant.

Opposition Labour Party leader Keir Starmer said it was "obvious that the prime minister wanted to move (Sedwill) and was determined to do so."

"Why you do so in the middle of a pandemic and a crisis instead of actually focusing on the crisis, is a question the prime minister needs to answer," he said.

Follow all of AP's pandemic coverage at <https://apnews.com/VirusOutbreak> and <https://apnews.com/UnderstandingtheOutbreak>

5 things to know for today

By The Associated Press undefined

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

1. NIGHTMARE CORONAVIRUS SCENARIO BECOMING A REALITY The pandemic is beginning to overwhelm poor and war-torn countries ill-equipped to contain the virus as it sweeps through their populations.

2. CHINA TAKING DRACONIAN MEASURES TO CURB UIGHUR MUSLIM POPULATION The government is forcing IUDs, abortions and sterilizations and punishing parents who violate family planning measures, the AP has learned.

3. MILITANTS ATTACK STOCK EXCHANGE IN PAKISTAN At least two security guards and a policeman were killed before all 4 gunman were killed by special forces in Karachi.

4. HOW IMAGES OF POLICE BRUTALITY AFFECT BLACK PEOPLE Psychologists call it racial trauma — the distress experienced because of the accumulation of racial discrimination, racial violence or institutional racism.

5. MISSISSIPPI TO UPDATE ITS STATE FLAG Spectators cheered after legislators passed a bill that will retire the last state flag in the U.S. that includes the Confederate battle emblem

Militants attack Karachi stock exchange, killing at least 3

By ADIL JAWAD Associated Press

KARACHI, Pakistan (AP) — Militants attacked the stock exchange in the Pakistani city of Karachi on Monday, killing at least three people — two guards and a policeman, according to police. Special police forces deployed to the scene of the attack and in a swift operation secured the building, killing all four gunmen.

A third security guard was reported to be in critical condition following the assault.

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There were no reports of any wounded among the brokers and employees inside the exchange and a separatist militant group from a neighboring province later claimed responsibility for the attack.

The attackers were armed with grenades and automatic rifles, police said. They launched the attack by opening fire at the entrance gate of the Pakistan Stock Exchange in the southern port city, the country's financial center.

Heavily armed special forces quickly surrounded the building located in the heart of Karachi's financial district, where the Pakistan State Bank is located, as well as the headquarters of several national and international financial institutions.

Local television stations broadcast images of police in full body armor surrounding the building but still staying outside the high-walled compound of the stock exchange.

Rizwan Ahmend, a police official at the scene, said that after opening fire, the gunmen entered the stock exchange grounds. He said that after the attack was over, food supplies were found on the bodies of the gunmen, indicating they may have planned a long siege, which police quickly thwarted.

Inside the stock exchange, broker Yaqub Memon told The Associated Press that he and others were huddled inside their offices while the attack was underway. As the firing ended and the gunmen were killed, police gathered all the employees and brokers in a single room while security forces went floor by floor to ensure that no explosives had been left behind, he said.

Shazia Jehan, a police spokesman, said the bomb disposal team was also called to the stock exchange to clear the building of any explosive devices.

Later, the Baluchistan Liberation Army, claimed responsibility for the attack. The group has been waging an insurgency for years, demanding independence for Pakistan's gas-rich southwestern Baluchistan province, which borders the southern Sindh province, where Karachi is the provincial capital.

The group also circulated to the media a photograph of four men in full body armor and camouflage outfits, saying they were the militants who attacked the stock exchange.

At a news conference later Monday, Maj. Gen Omar Ahmed Bokhari who oversees the paramilitary Rangers force, which took part in the operation, accused neighboring India of aiding the attackers, by allegedly activating "sleeper cells" that Pakistan claims Indian intelligence has planted throughout the country.

India and Pakistan routinely exchange allegations of using militant groups to attack the other country. The two nuclear-armed neighbors have fought three wars, two of them over the disputed Himalayan mountain region of Kashmir, which is divided between the two but coveted by both in its entirety.

The Baluchistan Liberation Army, which Pakistan says has found safe across the border in Afghanistan, has carried out several attacks in Karachi in recent years, including an attack on the Chinese Consulate in November 2018 that killed two people.

Gen. Bukhari said Monday's attack bore the same hallmarks as the Chinese Consulate attack, with the level of coordination and a large ammunition stockpile found at the scene.

Pakistani police and Rangers found more than a dozen hand grenades, boxes of ammunition and several automatic rifles that the attackers had brought to the stock exchange.

The Arabian Sea port of Gwadar is located in Baluchistan, and is part of China's multi-billion dollar one-road project linking south and Central Asia to China. The Baluchistan militant group has opposed the one-road project, including a highway connecting the Gwadar port to the Chinese border.

The Karachi stock exchange is Pakistan's largest and oldest stock exchange, incorporated today with the exchanges in Islamabad and Lahore.

Associated Press writer Kathy Gannon in Islamabad contributed to this report.

China forces birth control on Uighurs to suppress population

By The Associated Press undefined

The Chinese government is taking draconian measures to slash birth rates among Uighurs and other minorities as part of a sweeping campaign to curb its Muslim population, even as it encourages some of

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the country's Han majority to have more children.

While individual women have spoken out before about forced birth control, the practice is far more widespread and systematic than previously known, according to an AP investigation based on government statistics, state documents and interviews with 30 ex-detainees, family members and a former detention camp instructor. The campaign over the past four years in the far west region of Xinjiang is leading to what some experts are calling a form of "demographic genocide."

The state regularly subjects minority women to pregnancy checks, and forces intrauterine devices, sterilization and even abortion on hundreds of thousands, the interviews and data show. Even while the use of IUDs and sterilization has fallen nationwide, it is rising sharply in Xinjiang.

The population control measures are backed by mass detention both as a threat and as a punishment for failure to comply. Having too many children is a major reason people are sent to detention camps, the AP found, with the parents of three or more ripped away from their families unless they can pay huge fines. Police raid homes, terrifying parents as they search for hidden children.

After Gulnar Omirzakh, a Chinese-born Kazakh, had her third child, the government ordered her to get an IUD inserted. Two years later, in January 2018, four officials in military camouflage came knocking at her door anyway. They gave Omirzakh, the penniless wife of a detained vegetable trader, three days to pay a \$2,685 fine for having more than two children.

If she didn't, they warned, she would join her husband and a million other ethnic minorities locked up in internment camps — often for having too many children.

"God bequeaths children on you. To prevent people from having children is wrong," said Omirzakh, who tears up even now thinking back to that day. "They want to destroy us as a people."

The result of the birth control campaign is a climate of terror around having children, as seen in interview after interview. Birth rates in the mostly Uighur regions of Hotan and Kashgar plunged by more than 60% from 2015 to 2018, the latest year available in government statistics. Across the Xinjiang region, birth rates continue to plummet, falling nearly 24% last year alone — compared to just 4.2% nationwide, statistics show.

The hundreds of millions of dollars the government pours into birth control has transformed Xinjiang from one of China's fastest-growing regions to among its slowest in just a few years, according to new research obtained by The Associated Press in advance of publication by China scholar Adrian Zenz.

"This kind of drop is unprecedented....there's a ruthlessness to it," said Zenz, a leading expert in the policing of China's minority regions. "This is part of a wider control campaign to subjugate the Uighurs."

China's foreign ministry called the story "fabricated" and "fake news," saying the government treats all ethnicities equally and protects the legal rights of minorities.

"Everyone, regardless of whether they're an ethnic minority or Han Chinese, must follow and act in accordance with the law," ministry spokesman Zhao Lijian said Monday when asked about the AP story.

Chinese officials have said in the past that the new measures are merely meant to be fair, allowing both Han Chinese and ethnic minorities the same number of children.

For decades, China had one of the most extensive systems of minority entitlements in the world, with Uighurs and others getting more points on college entrance exams, hiring quotas for government posts and laxer birth control restrictions. Under China's now-abandoned 'one child' policy, the authorities had long encouraged, often forced, contraceptives, sterilization and abortion on Han Chinese. But minorities were allowed two children — three if they came from the countryside.

Under President Xi Jinping, China's most authoritarian leader in decades, those benefits are now being rolled back. In 2014, soon after Xi visited Xinjiang, the region's top official said it was time to implement "equal family planning policies" for all ethnicities and "reduce and stabilize birth rates." In the following years, the government declared that instead of just one child, Han Chinese could now have two, and three in Xinjiang's rural areas, just like minorities.

But while equal on paper, in practice Han Chinese are largely spared the abortions, sterilizations, IUD insertions and detentions for having too many children that are forced on Xinjiang's other ethnicities,

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interviews and data show. Some rural Muslims, like Omirzakh, are punished even for having the three children allowed by the law.

State-backed scholars have warned for years that large rural religious families were at the root of bombings, knifings and other attacks the Xinjiang government blamed on Islamic terrorists. The growing Muslim population was a breeding ground for poverty and extremism, "heightening political risk," according to a 2017 paper by the head of the Institute of Sociology at the Xinjiang Academy of Social Sciences. Another cited as a key obstacle the religious belief that "the fetus is a gift from God."

Outside experts say the birth control campaign is part of a state-orchestrated assault on the Uighurs to purge them of their faith and identity and forcibly assimilate them. They're subjected to political and religious re-education in camps and forced labor in factories, while their children are indoctrinated in orphanages. Uighurs, who are often but not always Muslim, are also tracked by a vast digital surveillance apparatus.

"The intention may not be to fully eliminate the Uighur population, but it will sharply diminish their vitality," said Darren Byler, an expert on Uighurs at the University of Colorado. "It will make them easier to assimilate into the mainstream Chinese population."

Some go a step further.

"It's genocide, full stop. It's not immediate, shocking, mass-killing on the spot type genocide, but it's slow, painful, creeping genocide," said Joanne Smith Finley, who works at Newcastle University in the U.K. "These are direct means of genetically reducing the Uighur population."

For centuries, the majority was Muslim in the arid, landlocked region China now calls "Xinjiang" — meaning "New Frontier" in Mandarin.

After the People's Liberation Army swept through in 1949, China's new Communist rulers ordered thousands of soldiers to settle in Xinjiang, pushing the Han population from 6.7% that year to more than 40% by 1980. The move sowed anxiety about Chinese migration that persists to this day. Drastic efforts to restrict birth rates in the 1990s were relaxed after major pushback, with many parents paying bribes or registering children as the offspring of friends or other family members.

That all changed with an unprecedented crackdown starting in 2017, throwing hundreds of thousands of people into prisons and camps for alleged "signs of religious extremism" such as traveling abroad, praying or using foreign social media. Authorities launched what several notices called "dragnet-style" investigations to root out parents with too many children, even those who gave birth decades ago.

"Leave no blind spots," said two county and township directives in 2018 and 2019 uncovered by Zenz, who is also an independent contractor with the Victims of Communism Memorial Foundation, a bipartisan nonprofit based in Washington, D.C. "Contain illegal births and lower fertility levels," said a third.

Officials and armed police began pounding on doors, looking for kids and pregnant women. Minority residents were ordered to attend weekly flag-raising ceremonies, where officials threatened detention if they didn't register all their children, according to interviews backed by attendance slips and booklets. Notices found by the AP show that local governments set up or expanded systems to reward those who report illegal births.

In some areas, women were ordered to take gynecology exams after the ceremonies, they said. In others, officials outfitted special rooms with ultrasound scanners for pregnancy tests.

"Test all who need to be tested," ordered a township directive Zenz found from 2018. "Detect and deal with those who violate policies early."

Abdushukur Umar was among the first to fall victim to the crackdown on children. A jovial Uighur tractor driver-turned-fruit merchant, the proud father considered his seven children a blessing from God.

But authorities began pursuing him in 2016. The following year, he was thrown into a camp and later sentenced to seven years in prison — one for each child, authorities told relatives.

"My cousin spent all his time taking care of his family, he never took part in any political movements," Zuhra Sultan, Umar's cousin, said from exile in Turkey. "How can you get seven years in prison for having too many children? We're living in the 21st century — this is unimaginable."

Fifteen Uighurs and Kazakhs told the AP they knew people interned or jailed for having too many chil-

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dren. Many received years, even decades in prison.

Leaked data obtained and corroborated by the AP showed that of 484 camp detainees listed in Karakax county in Xinjiang, 149 were there for having too many children - the most common reason for holding them. Time in a camp — what the government calls “education and training” — for parents with too many children is written policy in at least three counties, notices found by Zenz confirmed.

In 2017, the Xinjiang government also tripled the already hefty fines for violating family planning laws for even the poorest residents — to at least three times the annual disposable income of the county. While fines also apply to Han Chinese, only minorities are sent to the detention camps if they cannot pay, according to interviews and data. Government reports show the counties collect millions of dollars from the fines each year.

In other efforts to change the population balance of Xinjiang, China is dangling land, jobs and economic subsidies to lure Han migrants there. It is also aggressively promoting intermarriage between Han Chinese and Uighurs, with one couple telling the AP they were given money for housing and amenities like a washing machine, refrigerator and TV.

“It links back to China’s long history of dabbling in eugenics...you don’t want people who are poorly educated, marginal minorities breeding quickly,” said James Leibold, a specialist in Chinese ethnic policy at La Trobe in Melbourne. “What you want is your educated Han to increase their birth rate.”

Sultan describes how the policy looks to Uighurs like her: “The Chinese government wants to control the Uighur population and make us fewer and fewer, until we disappear.”

Once in the detention camps, women are subjected to forced IUDs and what appear to be pregnancy prevention shots, according to former detainees. They are also made to attend lectures on how many children they should have.

Seven former detainees told the AP that they were force-fed birth control pills or injected with fluids, often with no explanation. Many felt dizzy, tired or ill, and women stopped getting their periods. After being released and leaving China, some went to get medical check-ups and found they were sterile.

It’s unclear what former detainees were injected with, but Xinjiang hospital slides obtained by the AP show that pregnancy prevention injections, sometimes with the hormonal medication Depo-Provera, are a common family planning measure. Side effects can include headaches and dizziness.

Dina Nurdybay, a Kazakh woman, was detained in a camp which separated married and unmarried women. The married women were given pregnancy tests, Nurdybay recalled, and forced to have IUDs installed if they had children. She was spared because she was unmarried and childless.

One day in February 2018, one of her cellmates, a Uighur woman, had to give a speech confessing what guards called her “crimes.” When a visiting official peered through the iron bars of their cell, she recited her lines in halting Mandarin.

“I gave birth to too many children,” she said. “It shows I’m uneducated and know little about the law.”

“Do you think it’s fair that Han people are only allowed to have one child?” the official asked, according to Nurdybay. “You ethnic minorities are shameless, wild and uncivilized.”

Nurdybay met at least two others in the camps whom she learned were locked up for having too many children. Later, she was transferred to another facility with an orphanage that housed hundreds of children, including those with parents detained for giving birth too many times. The children counted the days until they could see their parents on rare visits.

“They told me they wanted to hug their parents, but they were not allowed,” she said. “They always looked very sad.”

Another former detainee, Tursunay Ziyawudun, said she was injected until she stopped having her period, and kicked repeatedly in the lower stomach during interrogations. She now can’t have children and often doubles over in pain, bleeding from her womb, she said.

Ziyawudun and the 40 other women in her “class” were forced to attend family planning lectures most Wednesdays, where films were screened about impoverished women struggling to feed many children.

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Married women were rewarded for good behavior with conjugal visits from their husbands, along with showers, towels, and two hours in a bedroom. But there was a catch – they had to take birth control pills beforehand.

Some women have even reported forced abortions. Ziyawudun said a “teacher” at her camp told women they would face abortions if found pregnant during gynecology exams.

A woman in another class turned out to be pregnant and disappeared from the camp, she said. She added that two of her cousins who were pregnant got rid of their children on their own because they were so afraid.

Another woman, Gulbakhar Jalilova, confirmed that detainees in her camp were forced to abort their children. She also saw a new mother, still leaking breast milk, who did not know what had happened to her infant. And she met doctors and medical students who were detained for helping Uighurs dodge the system and give birth at home.

In December 2017, on a visit from Kazakhstan back to China, Gulzia Mogdin was taken to a hospital after police found WhatsApp on her phone. A urine sample revealed she was two months pregnant with her third child. Officials told Mogdin she needed to get an abortion and threatened to detain her brother if she didn't.

During the procedure, medics inserted an electric vacuum into her womb and sucked her fetus out of her body. She was taken home and told to rest, as they planned to take her to a camp.

Months later, Mogdin made it back to Kazakhstan, where her husband lives.

“That baby was going to be the only baby we had together,” said Mogdin, who had recently remarried. “I cannot sleep. It's terribly unfair.”

The success of China's push to control births among Muslim minorities shows up in the numbers for IUDs and sterilization.

In 2014, just over 200,000 IUDs were inserted in Xinjiang. By 2018, that jumped more than 60 percent to nearly 330,000 IUDs. At the same time, IUD use tumbled elsewhere in China, as many women began getting the devices removed.

A former teacher drafted to work as an instructor at a detention camp described her experience with IUDs to the AP.

She said it started with flag-raising assemblies at her compound in the beginning of 2017 at which Uighur residents recited “anti-terror” lectures.

“If we have too many children, we're religious extremists,” she said they chanted. “That means we have to go to the training centers.”

Police rounded up over 180 parents with too many children until “not a single one was left,” she said. At night, she said, she lay in bed, stiff with terror, as officers with guns and Taser-like devices hauled her neighbors away. From time to time police pounded on her door and searched her apartment for Qurans, knives, prayer mats and of course children, she said.

“Your heart would leap out of your chest,” she said.

Then, that August, officials in the teacher's compound were told to install IUDs on all women of childbearing age. She protested, saying she was nearly 50 with just one child and no plans to have more. Officials threatened to drag her to a police station and strap her to an iron chair for interrogation.

She was forced into a bus with four armed officers and taken to a hospital where hundreds of Uighur women lined up in silence, waiting for IUDs to be inserted. Some wept quietly, but nobody dared say a word because of the surveillance cameras hanging overhead.

Her IUD was designed to be irremovable without special instruments. The first 15 days, she got headaches and nonstop menstrual bleeding.

“I couldn't eat properly, I couldn't sleep properly. It gave me huge psychological pressure,” she said. “Only Uighurs had to wear it.”

Chinese health statistics also show a sterilization boom in Xinjiang.

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Budget documents obtained by Zenz show that starting in 2016, the Xinjiang government began pumping tens of millions of dollars into a birth control surgery program and cash incentives for women to get sterilized. While sterilization rates plunged in the rest of the country, they surged seven-fold in Xinjiang from 2016 to 2018, to more than 60,000 procedures. The Uighur-majority city of Hotan budgeted for 14,872 sterilizations in 2019 — about 34% of all married women of childbearing age, Zenz found.

Even within Xinjiang, policies vary widely, being harsher in the heavily Uighur south than the Han-majority north. In Shihezi, a Han-dominated city where Uighurs make up just 2% of the population, the government subsidizes baby formula and hospital birth services to encourage more children, state media reported.

Zumret Dawut got no such benefits. In 2018, the mother of three was locked in a camp for two months for having an American visa.

When she returned home under house arrest, officials forced her to get gynecology exams every month, along with all other Uighur women in her compound. Han women were exempted. They warned that if she didn't take what they called "free examinations", she could end up back in the camp.

One day, they turned up with a list of at least 200 Uighur women in her compound with more than two children who had to get sterilized, Dawut recalled.

"My Han Chinese neighbors, they sympathized with us Uighurs," Dawut said. "They told me, 'oh, you're suffering terribly, the government is going way too far!'"

Dawut protested, but police again threatened to send her back to the camp. During the sterilization procedure, Han Chinese doctors injected her with anesthesia and tied her fallopian tubes — a permanent operation. When Dawut came to, she felt her womb ache.

"I was so angry," she said. "I wanted another son."

Looking back, Omirzakh considers herself lucky.

After that frigid day when officials threatened to lock her up, Omirzakh called relatives around the clock. Hours before the deadline, she scraped together enough money to pay the fine from the sale of her sister's cow and high-interest loans, leaving her deep in debt.

For the next year, Omirzakh attended classes with the wives of others detained for having too many children. She and her children lived with two local party officials sent specially to spy on them. When her husband was finally released, they fled for Kazakhstan with just a few bundles of blankets and clothes.

The IUD still in Omirzakh's womb has now sunk into her flesh, causing inflammation and piercing back pain, "like being stabbed with a knife." For Omirzakh, it's a bitter reminder of everything she's lost — and the plight of those she left behind.

"People there are now terrified of giving birth," she said. "When I think of the word 'Xinjiang,' I can still feel that fear."

Contact AP's global investigative team at Investigative@ap.org

Worst virus fears are realized in poor or war-torn countries

By GERALD IMRAY and JOSEPH KRAUSS Associated Press

CAPE TOWN, South Africa (AP) — For months, experts have warned of a potential nightmare scenario: After overwhelming health systems in some of the world's wealthiest regions, the coronavirus gains a foothold in poor or war-torn countries ill-equipped to contain it and sweeps through the population.

Now some of those fears are being realized.

In southern Yemen, health workers are leaving their posts en masse because of a lack of protective equipment, and some hospitals are turning away patients struggling to breathe. In Sudan's war-ravaged Darfur region, where there is little testing capacity, a mysterious illness resembling COVID-19 is spreading through camps for the internally displaced.

Cases are soaring in India and Pakistan, together home to more than 1.5 billion people and where authorities say nationwide lockdowns are no longer an option because of high poverty.

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In Latin America, Brazil has a confirmed caseload and death count second only to the United States, and its leader is unwilling to take steps to stem the spread of the virus. Alarming escalations are unfolding in Peru, Chile, Ecuador and Panama, even after they imposed early lockdowns.

The first reports of disarray are also emerging from hospitals in South Africa, which has its continent's most developed economy. Sick patients are lying on beds in corridors as one hospital runs out of space. At another, an emergency morgue was needed to hold more than 700 bodies.

"We are reaping the whirlwind now," said Francois Venter, a South African health expert at the University of Witwatersrand in Johannesburg.

Worldwide, there are 10.1 million confirmed cases and over 501,000 reported deaths, according to a tally by Johns Hopkins University of government reports. Experts say both those numbers are serious undercounts of the true toll of the pandemic, due to limited testing and missed mild cases.

South Africa has more than a third of Africa's confirmed cases of COVID-19 with 138,000 as of Monday. It's ahead of other African countries in the pandemic timeline and approaching its peak. So far its facilities have managed to cope, but if they become overwhelmed, it will be a grim forewarning because South Africa's health system is reputed to be the continent's best.

Most poor countries took action early on. Some, like Uganda, which already had a sophisticated detection system built up during its yearslong battle with viral hemorrhagic fever, have thus far been arguably more successful than the U.S. and other wealthy countries in battling coronavirus.

But since the beginning of the pandemic, poor and conflict-ravaged countries have been at a major disadvantage, and they remain so.

The global scramble for protective equipment sent prices soaring. Testing kits have also been hard to come by. Tracking and quarantining patients requires large numbers of health workers.

"It's all a domino effect," said Kate White, head of emergencies for Doctors Without Borders. "Whenever you have countries that are economically not as well off as others, then they will be adversely affected."

Global health experts say testing is key, but months into the pandemic, few developing countries can keep carrying out the tens of thousands of tests every week needed to detect and contain outbreaks.

"The majority of the places that we work in are not able to have that level of testing capacity, and that's the level that you need to be able to get things really under control," White said.

South Africa leads Africa in testing, but an initially promising program has now been overrun in Cape Town, which alone has more reported cases than any other African country except Egypt. Critical shortages of kits have forced city officials to abandon testing for anyone under 55 unless they have a serious health condition or are in a hospital.

Venter said Cape Town's hospitals are managing to cope "by the skin of their teeth" and now Johannesburg, South Africa's biggest city, is experiencing a surge of infections. He said South Africa's rising cases could easily play out next in "the big cities of Nigeria, Congo, Kenya," and they "do not have the health resources that we do."

Lockdowns are likely the most effective safeguard, but they have exacted a heavy toll even on middle-class families in Europe and North America, and are economically devastating in developing countries.

India's lockdown, the world's largest, caused countless migrant workers in major cities to lose their jobs overnight. Fearing hunger, tens of thousands took to the highways by foot to return to their home villages, and many were killed in traffic accidents or died from dehydration.

The government has since set up quarantine facilities and now provides special rail service to get people home safely, but there are concerns the migration has spread the virus to India's rural areas, where the health infrastructure is even weaker.

Poverty has also accelerated the pandemic in Latin America, where millions with informal jobs had to go out and keep working, and then returned to crowded homes where they spread the virus to relatives.

Peru's strict three-month lockdown failed to contain its outbreak, and it now has the world's sixth-highest number of cases in a population of 32 million, according to Johns Hopkins. Intensive care units are nearly 88% occupied and the virus shows no sign of slowing.

"Hospitals are on the verge of collapse," said epidemiologist Ciro Maguiña, a professor of medicine at

Cayetano Heredia University in the capital, Lima.

Aid groups have tried to help, but they have faced their own struggles. Doctors Without Borders says the price it pays for masks went up threefold at one point and is still higher than normal.

The group also faces obstacles in transporting medical supplies to remote areas as international and domestic flights have been drastically reduced. And as wealthy donor countries struggle with their own outbreaks, there are concerns they will cut back on humanitarian aid.

Mired in civil war for the past five years, Yemen was already home to the world's worst humanitarian crisis before the virus hit. Now the Houthi rebels are suppressing all information about an outbreak in the north, and the health system in the government-controlled south is collapsing.

"Coronavirus has invaded our homes, our cities, our countryside," said Dr. Abdul Rahman al-Azraqi, an internal medicine specialist and former hospital director in the city of Taiz, which is split between the rival forces. He estimates that 90% of Yemeni patients die at home.

"Our hospital doesn't have any doctors, only a few nurses and administrators. There is effectively no medical treatment."

Krauss reported from Jerusalem. Associated Press writers Andrew Meldrum in Johannesburg, Emily Schmall in New Delhi, Isabel DeBre in Cairo, Franklin Briceño in Lima, Peru, and Michael Weissenstein in Havana contributed to this report.

Follow all of AP's coronavirus coverage at <https://apnews.com/VirusOutbreak> and <https://apnews.com/UnderstandingtheOutbreak>

Testing stepped up as number of new coronavirus cases surges

By EMILY SCHMALL and ELAINE KURTENBACH Associated Press

NEW DELHI (AP) — Governments were stepping up testing and warily considering their next moves Monday as the number of newly confirmed coronavirus cases surges in many countries. India reported 20,000 new cases Monday, while the U.S. confirmed more than 40,000 new infections for the third straight day.

As infections rise in the northern hemisphere, many governments are stepping up testing and mulling more aggressive moves such as renewed lockdowns to stem fresh outbreaks.

India's 20,000 new infections was a new daily record. Several states reimposed partial or full lockdowns after the total number of cases jumped by nearly 100,000 in one week to 548,318.

While some states have tightened precautions, in the worst-affected regions of Maharashtra, which includes India's financial capital, Mumbai, and Delhi, home to the federal capital of New Delhi, most restrictions have been eased, with restaurants, shopping malls and parks reopened, and public buses and shared-ride services back on the roads.

The United States, the worst affected country, reported 42,600 newly confirmed infections as of Saturday, with the total surpassing 2.5 million, or about a quarter of all of the more than 10 million confirmed cases worldwide, according to a tally by Johns Hopkins University. Experts say the actual numbers, both in the U.S. and globally, are likely to be far higher due to the large number of apparently asymptomatic cases and issues with testing.

Beaches were closing and beer was going untapped as Florida, Texas and other states backpedaled on their pandemic reopenings, ordering mandatory use of masks in public places and closing down restaurants and bars in hopes of stemming a resurgence in cases.

Nearly 8.3 million out of about 21 million have undergone testing in recent weeks in the Chinese capital after an outbreak centered on a wholesale market. The country had 12 new cases Monday, including seven in Beijing, down by more than half from the day before, the National Health Commission reported.

South Korean authorities reported 47 new cases as they struggled to curb outbreaks that have spread from Seoul to other regions.

Widespread testing and contact tracing helped South Korea contain its initial outbreak in which it was

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finding hundreds of new cases a day in late February and early March. Most of those cases were in the area surrounding the city of Daegu, where many were linked to a single church congregation with thousands of members.

Tracing recent transmissions in the Seoul metropolitan area, home to about about half of the country's 51 million people, has proved to be more difficult.

South Korean health officials have said they are preparing to implement stronger social distancing measures -- including banning all gatherings of more than 10 people, shutting schools, halting professional sports, and restricting operations of non-essential businesses — if the daily increase in infections doubles more than two times in a week.

Health authorities are using what they describe as a world-first saliva test for the coronavirus in Australia's second-largest city, Melbourne in the state of Victoria, where the disease is spreading at an alarming rate.

Victorian Health Minister Jenny Mikakos said Monday that 75 people had tested positive in the state in the latest 24 hours, bringing the total number to 2,099.

Brett Sutton, Victoria's chief health officer, said the outbreak could surge out of control as pandemic restrictions ease elsewhere in Australia.

"I think it's a genuine challenge now. I think we're right at the edge in terms of being able to manage it," Sutton said.

In the Philippines, a Southeast Asian coronavirus hotspot with more than 35,000 confirmed infections, local officials were under fire for allowing a street parade and dance during a weekend religious festival to honor St. John the Baptist despite quarantine prohibitions against public gatherings.

Performers in native wear and face masks danced during the night procession, which drew a large crowd in Basak village on Cebu, in the central Philippines.

Restrictions have been eased in many places to help salvage the ailing Philippine economy, but Cebu resumed a strict lockdown this month after new cases spiked.

Some governments are pushing ahead with reopening travel, particularly between countries where outbreaks of the virus appear to be contained, though the changing landscape of the pandemic suggests the process will be complicated and subject to change.

The European Union is preparing a list of 15 countries whose nationals will be allowed to visit the bloc beginning Wednesday, Spain's foreign minister, Arancha Gonzalez Laya, told the Cadena SER radio network.

The resurgence of cases in the U.S. means Americans may not be on that list. Gonzalez Laya said countries will be chosen according to their coronavirus status and the reliability of their data.

"This is not an exercise to be nice or unfriendly to other countries, this is an exercise of self-responsibility," she said. She confirmed that Spain will reopen its borders with Portugal despite rising infections there.

Travelers at Frankfurt airport, Germany's biggest and a major intercontinental hub, will be able to get an on-site coronavirus test before jetting off after the airport, German carrier Lufthansa and medical research company Centogene open a walk-in testing center Monday.

Fast-track tests providing results within two to three hours will cost 139 euros (\$156). Regular tests with results available within six to twelve hours — recommended for travelers who can get tested the day before departure — cost 59 euros (\$52).

Meanwhile, civil aviation authorities in the United Arab Emirates announced they have suspended all flights to Pakistan until a "special laboratory" can be set up to conduct coronavirus tests for people traveling from the country to the UAE.

The UAE's state-run WAM news agency issued a statement late Sunday from the country's General Civil Aviation Authority announcing the decision.

Pakistan resumed international travel earlier this month even as critics said the airport precautions were limited and ineffective. Last week, Pakistani media reported 27 passengers traveling from Pakistan arrived in Hong Kong and tested positive for COVID-19. The passengers had transited through the UAE.

Kurtenbach reported from Bangkok. Associated Press reporters from around the world contributed to

this report.

Hunger stalks children in Yemen as UN cuts aid programs

By ISSA MOHAMMED Associated Press

AL-HANABIYA, Yemen (AP) — When Issa Nasser was born late last year in a village in northern Yemen, his weight was about 3 kilograms, or 6.6 pounds. Now, the 7-month-old infant weighs nearly the same — less than half the average weight for his age — and has wafer-thin skin and emaciated limbs.

Issa's condition mirrors what the U.N. children's agency warned about last week, that millions of children in war-torn Yemen could be pushed to the brink of starvation as the coronavirus sweeps across the Arab world's poorest country and as humanitarian agencies suffer from a huge drop in funding.

The baby's father, Ibrahim Nasser, a 51-year-old displaced fisherman now living in the village of al-Hanabiya in the district of Abs in Hajjah province, said the family has spent most of Issa's months-long life so far in a health care center, some 20 kilometers (12.5 miles) from the village. The ill-equipped medical center services more than 50,000 displaced people in the district.

Four years ago, when fighting between Yemen's Houthi rebels and government forces, backed by a Saudi-led coalition, escalated, Nasser left his home village near the coastal city of Midi, also in Hajjah province, on the border with Saudi Arabia.

Since then, he has been unemployed and depends on aid to feed his family, which became part of more than 3 million people displaced by the war, many pushed to the brink of famine amid stalemated fighting and a coronavirus pandemic that is ripping through the country.

"I am a poor person, and my son is in this state," said Nasser. "And they tell me he is malnourished, you can see how his condition is."

The health care center found out about the infant recently through a local charity which provides aid to displaced in the area, said Dr. Ali Hajar, who oversees the malnutrition clinic at the center.

"His condition is very, very tragic. He suffers from acute malnutrition. His skin is stretching tightly over his bones," the physician said.

The war, which wrecked the devastated country's already fragile ability to feed its population, began late in 2014, when Houthi rebels swept down from the mountains and occupied northern Yemen and the capital, Sanaa. The Iran-backed rebels pushed the internationally recognized government of President Abed Rabbo Mansour Hadi to the south and eventually into exile.

As the rebels pushed farther south, Saudi Arabia and other Gulf Arab states, backed by the United States, formed a coalition to take on the Houthis, and intervened in Yemen in 2015, describing their involvement as an effort to stop Iran from gaining sway over the country.

The conflict has killed more than 100,000 people and created the world's worst humanitarian disaster, with more than 3 million people internally displaced and two-thirds of the population reliant on food assistance for survival.

The situation in Yemen is only expected to get worse as donor countries recently cut back on aid amid the coronavirus pandemic and also due to concerns that the aid might not be reaching its intended recipients in territories controlled by the Houthis.

Some 24 million Yemeni people, which is 80% of the country's entire population, require some form of assistance or protection, according to the U.N. Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, or OCHA. And 75% of U.N. programs for the country, covering essentially every sector, from food to health care and nutrition, have already shut their doors or reduced operations.

The World Food Program had to cut rations in half and U.N.-funded health services have been reduced in nearly 200 hospitals nationwide.

Nutrition programs will also be cut, affecting 260,000 severely malnourished children. More than 1 million women and 2 million children need treatment for acute malnutrition, OCHA said earlier this month.

Last week, UNICEF warned that unless \$54.5 million are disbursed for health and nutrition aid by the end of August, more than 23,000 children will be at increased risk of dying because of acute malnutrition. It

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also said that 5 million others under the age of 5 will not have access to vaccines against deadly diseases. "We cannot overstate the scale of this emergency as children," said Sara Beysolow Nyanti, UNICEF representative to Yemen. "If we do not receive urgent funding, children will be pushed to the brink of starvation and many will die."

Yemen has officially recorded more than 1,120 cases of COVID-19, the illness caused by the coronavirus, including 303 deaths. However, the actual tally is believed to be much higher as testing capabilities are severely limited, and the Houthi rebels have not revealed the number of infections in areas under their control.

"I don't have anything to give him," said Nasser, the fisherman, looking in despair at his boy, little Issa, and the child's large, wide-open eyes.

Associated Press writer Samy Magdy in Cairo contributed to this report.

As French Greens notch gains, Macron renews his green agenda

PARIS (AP) — French President Emmanuel Macron, who once declared "Make The Planet Great Again" but whose climate agenda got knocked off course by persistent street protests, is under new pressure to fight climate change after the Green Party did well in Sunday's local elections.

France's Green party and its left-wing allies made significant gains in the second round of voting, capturing cities such as Lyon, Strasbourg and Besançon.

To show that he is taking the gains seriously, Macron is meeting Monday with a citizens' group that he convened earlier this year in response to criticism that he wasn't doing enough on the climate.

The citizens' group is giving him a new list of climate proposals drawn from an ambitious report it compiled, which includes recommendations on fighting CO2 emissions by weening the French off solo car rides and proposing alternatives such as electric cars, as well as capping the harmful effects of air travel.

The group reserved most of its fire on travel, which produces 30% of greenhouse gases in France.

The yellow vest economic justice protests that brought France to its knees for months knocked some of Macron's green agenda off track as it was triggered by opposition to a new fuel tax that he planned to help in the climate fight.

Earlier this year, Macron tried to woo green voters by calling the battle against climate change and environmental destruction "the fight of the century." The words came during a February visit to a melting glacier in the French Alps but it was condemned as a hollow electoral stunt by environmental campaigners. Critics accused Macron of using the icy photo-op to burnish his government's green credentials ahead of the local elections.

Follow all AP coverage of climate change at <https://apnews.com/Climate>.

Images of brutality against Black people spur racial trauma

By NOREEN NASIR Associated Press

Since Wanda Johnson's son was shot and killed by a police officer in Oakland, California, 11 years ago, she has watched video after video of similar encounters between Black people and police.

Each time, she finds herself reliving the trauma of losing her son, Oscar Grant, who was shot to death by a transit police officer. Most recently, Johnson couldn't escape the video of George Floyd, pinned to the ground under a Minneapolis officer's knee as he pleaded that he couldn't breathe.

"I began to shake. I was up for two days, just crying," she said. "Just looking at that video opened such a wound in me that has not completely closed."

Johnson's loss was extreme, but, for many Black Americans, her grief and pain feels familiar. Psychologists call it racial trauma — the distress experienced because of the accumulation of racial discrimination, racial violence or institutional racism. While it can affect anyone who faces repeated prejudice, in this moment, its impact on Black people is drawing particular attention.

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The unfortunate irony is that the very tool that may be helping to make more people aware of the racism and violence that Black and other people of color face is also helping to fuel their trauma. In the weeks following Floyd's death, the spread of the video that captured it has been a major catalyst for protests demanding a reckoning with racism — attended by people of all races, many of whom never before participated in such activism. And in a few weeks, the national conversation has shifted dramatically: The term "Black Lives Matter" has been adopted widely, including in corporate America, monuments of Confederate figures have come down, and calls for criminal justice reform have yielded new laws.

"It's really frustrating that that's what it takes for a lot of people in this country to actually start caring," said Alasia Destine-DeFreece, 20. "It takes showing something that's actively harming those of us who are Black and then having it spread on social media."

Destine-DeFreece, who remembers often being the only Black person in many situations growing up in Rhode Island, notes that such images have been used to great effect before. She learned in school about Emmett Till, a Black 14-year-old who was abducted, beaten and killed in 1955 after he was accused of whistling at a white woman in Mississippi. Her class saw photos of Till's brutally beaten face — images, in part, that had helped spur the civil rights movement.

"Seeing that type of imagery being spread further and faster now has taken a toll on me. You're seeing somebody who looks like you die," she said.

Symptoms of racial trauma can include anxiety and depression and be similar to those of post-traumatic stress disorder. The triggering event could be a shouted slur on the street or poor treatment because of one's race or creed. The profusion on social media of graphic images of harm to people of color means they are often inescapable.

"If you are in a situation where the danger seems ever-present, whether you're seeing a bird watcher in Central Park being harassed, or someone falling asleep in their car in a parking lot ... there is that constant physical presence of danger and the psychological awareness that danger is just around the corner," said Dr. Altha Stewart, past president of the American Psychiatric Association and currently a senior associate dean at the University of Tennessee Science Health Center.

That "constant bathing of our organs" in stress hormones can lead to a state of "near dysfunction," she said.

The video of Floyd's killing is one in a litany. Before it, 25-year-old Ahmaud Arbery's fatal shooting was also captured on camera, and no one was charged until public pressure mounted after the video made the rounds. Since then, many have watched an officer fatally shoot 27-year-old Rayshard Brooks in the back following a struggle.

"It feels like it's just been an endless cascade of hashtags of Black people dying," said Christine Ohenzuwa, 19, who recently protested outside the Minnesota state Capitol. "I feel like for me and a lot of other Black people, it reaches a point where it's just very traumatic to constantly see Black people being killed."

When video of Floyd's graphic death began to circulate online last month, Joi Lewis refused to watch it.

"I know what it looks like. I've seen Black death," the life coach and self-care expert said. Lewis, who is Black, had watched the death of Philando Castile in real time four years ago, after the 32-year-old Black man was shot by a Minneapolis police officer and video of the immediate aftermath streamed on Facebook.

But to inspire those who have been pushed into action in new ways in recent weeks, Lewis conceded: "The video had to be played."

Anyone might be upset by seeing such graphic images — and many are — but Resmaa Menakem, a Minneapolis-based racial trauma specialist, says, for many Black people, that pain is amplified.

"When something like this happens, it is not just the grief of watching that brother be destroyed, it is the 400 years of grief that was never addressed," said Menakem.

Aaron Requena periodically takes breaks from Twitter to avoid such images. The 25-year-old photographer in Los Angeles says he's struggled to balance keeping up with what is happening with not torturing himself at the same time.

"It hits close to home for me because I've had interactions with the police where I was just minding

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my business and had to wonder, 'Is this going to end for me the way that a lot of these situations end?'" asked Requena, who is Black. "It hits close to home because you know that it could be you next."

Nasir is a member of the AP's Race and Ethnicity team. Follow Nasir on Twitter at <https://twitter.com/noreensnasir>.

Beyoncé's message, epic performances stand out at BET Awards

By JONATHAN LANDRUM Jr. AP Entertainment Writer

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Beyoncé used her platform Sunday while accepting the BET humanitarian award to relay a direct appeal to viewers: Go vote.

"Your voices are being heard and you're proving to our ancestors that their struggles were not in vain," said the superstar singer at the BET Awards, which celebrated its 20 years of highlighting excellence in Black-led entertainment. But the ceremony, filmed virtually because of the coronavirus pandemic, kept much of its focus on topics such as systematic racism and equal rights.

Beyoncé was honored for her philanthropic work and relief efforts during the COVID-19 crisis. She said voting in the upcoming election was the way to end a "racist and unequal system" in America.

"I'm encouraging you to take action," she said following an introduction by former first lady Michelle Obama.

The singer dedicated her award to the Black Lives Matter movement, and encouraged activists to continue to push forward.

"We have to vote like our lives depend on it, because it does," she said.

Here are some additional highlights from the three-hour show broadcast on CBS, BET and BET Her:

DaBABY'S MESSAGE

Rapper DaBaby lay on the pavement while an actor playing a police officer pressed his knee on the rapper's neck.

The reenactment at the beginning of the multi-platinum rapper's performance offered a glimpse into the last moments of the life of George Floyd, killed by Minneapolis police last month. DaBaby rapped a verse from the Black Lives Matter remix of his hit song "Rockstar" with Roddy Ricch at the awards.

While holding a baseball bat, DaBaby then stood on a stage behind a group of people who had their fists raised high while others held "Black Lives Matter" signs.

His performance also featured images from protests, a reflection of the current world in the wake of Floyd's death and the deaths of others, including Breonna Taylor and Ahmaud Arbery.

WEEZY HONORS KOBE

On a virtual stage, Lil Wayne paid tribute to the Black Mamba.

The rapper honored the late Kobe Bryant with a performance of his song "Kobe Bryant," highlighting the NBA icon's biggest moments. He paid tribute to Bryant who died in a helicopter crash in January that killed eight others, including his 13-year-old daughter, Gianna.

Wayne weaved in new lyrics as Bryant's No. 8 and 24 flashed behind him. His performance showed video clips of the Los Angeles Lakers star dunking on Dwight Howard and Steve Nash, hitting game-winning shots and highlights from his 81-point game against the Toronto Raptors in 2006.

"I call him King Bryant," Wayne rapped. "Now let the crown show."

LITTLE RICHARD BOP

Wayne Brady transformed from his normal actor-comedian self into the flamboyant character of the late Little Richard.

Wearing a gold glittery tuxedo, Brady put on his best emulation during a tribute to Richard, who died of bone cancer in May. He rolled around on the top of a piano as he sung a medley hits from Richard, considered one of the chief architects of rock 'n' roll.

"Shut up!" Brady blurted out in the same manner as Richard. Some of Richard's hits Wayne performed included "Lucy," "Good Golly," "Miss Molly" and "Tutti Frutti."

MAD STALLION

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Megan Thee Stallion took to the desert in a performance themed after the "Mad Max" films.

Sporting a feathered crop top, she danced and twerked alongside her dancers who wore masks and maintained social distance amid the coronavirus pandemic. She performed her Beyoncé-assisted hit "Savage Remix" and "Girls in the Hood," a revamp of Easy E's 1987 song "Boyz-N-The Hood."

In the post-apocalyptic setting, she and her dancers rode through the desert landscape on dusty ATVs. The rapper closed out her performance after jumping on a silver-spike vehicle.

Megan Thee Stallion's performance came after she won best female hip-hop artist.

STIRRING OPENING

It didn't take long for host Amanda Seales to touch on equal rights for African Americans.

In a stirring monologue, Seales said she was chosen to host the show because she's been "telling y'all everybody's racist." She touched on several topics including the death of Breonna Taylor, racial equality and took a jab at actor Terry Crews who faced recent backlash for his "Black supremacy" comment.

Seales joked she would rather talk about issues other than race, but "racism always beats me to it."

Her monologue came after an all-star performance of Public Enemy's 1989 anthem "Fight the Power." The performance featured group members Chuck D and Flavor Flav along with Nas, Black Thought, Rapsody and YG — who added lyrics to the song and name-dropped Taylor.

During the performance, video clips were shown of the national protests over the deaths of unarmed Black people including Floyd, Arbery and Taylor.

The 12-year-old sensation Keedron Bryant also performed in a cappella "I Just Wanna Live," a song about being a young black man that earned him a record deal.

Patriots owner's prostitution case heads to appellate court

By TERRY SPENCER Associated Press

FORT LAUDERDALE, Fla. (AP) — Prosecutors charging New England Patriots owner Robert Kraft with twice buying sex from massage parlor prostitutes will attempt to save their case this week by arguing to an appeals court that his rights weren't violated when police secretly video-recorded him in the act.

Prosecutors will tell the Florida Fourth District Court of Appeal during an online hearing Tuesday that a county judge erred when he invalidated the January 2019 search warrant allowing police to install secret cameras at Orchids of Asia spa as part of an alleged sex trafficking investigation.

The judge said the warrant didn't sufficiently protect the privacy of innocent customers who received legal massages, and he barred the videos' use at trial as well as testimony about what they showed. If the ruling stands, it will deal a fatal blow to the prosecution's case.

"Mr. Kraft's guilt is a virtual certainty" and he has no right to benefit from any possible mistakes police made involving innocent customers, Deputy Solicitor General Jeffrey DeSousa wrote in court documents.

Kraft's attorneys vehemently disagreed, arguing that if the three-justice panel allows the videos' use, "civil liberties cherished in Florida and beyond" will be endangered.

"If the state wins this appeal, then everyone loses, not just the accused," attorney Frank Shepherd wrote. "Government could run roughshod over privacy and constitutional rights while evading scrutiny."

The Jupiter police recordings led to misdemeanor charges against Kraft and two dozen other alleged Orchids of Asia customers. The spa owners and some employees are charged with prostitution-related felonies.

Most cases are in limbo while the appeals are heard. If prosecutors can't use the videos, they would almost certainly dismiss any misdemeanor charges awaiting trial. Some defendants took plea deals but Kraft refused. The felony cases could proceed, as those have other evidence besides the videos.

Kraft, a 79-year-old widower and part-time Palm Beach resident, has pleaded not guilty but issued a public apology. He faces a possible one-year jail sentence if convicted, but would likely receive a fine, community service and other sanctions. Kraft, whom Forbes Magazine ranks as the 82nd richest American with a worth of almost \$7 billion, is employing several high-priced attorneys to fight the charges.

DeSousa submitted several arguments against Palm Beach County Judge Leonard Hanser's ruling. Among them:

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— The warrant is valid because police minimized any privacy invasion by having only three detectives monitor video. Any further minimization, such as recording only snippets of each massage, would have made the investigation impossible.

— Kraft illegally paid for sex and is lawfully covered by the warrant, even if the justices determine police violated innocent customers' privacy rights.

— If the warrant is invalid, the detectives relied on it "in good faith" and a sanction banning the video is too extreme.

Shepherd submitted several counterarguments for Kraft. They include:

— Detectives' privacy protection efforts were insufficient because they recorded seminude men and women receiving legal massages, making the Kraft recordings also illegal.

— Police had enough evidence to charge the spa owners with felonies without recording, making the cameras "wholly gratuitous."

— The evidence detectives presented to obtain the magistrate's warrant approval was "deliberately misleading," negating any argument they acted in good faith.

The justices won't immediately rule after the hearing; decisions usually takes weeks. The losing side will likely appeal to the Florida Supreme Court, which could accept the case or let the justices' ruling stand.

Authorities say the Orchids of Asia investigation was part of a multicounty probe into possible sex trafficking by spa owners who they believe brought women from China and elsewhere to work as prostitutes. About 300 people were charged with various felonies and misdemeanors, but no trafficking charges were pursued — prosecutors say they received no cooperation from masseuses whom they suspect were trafficked.

According to police, Kraft's chauffeur drove him to Orchids of Asia on the evening of Jan. 19, 2019, where detectives recorded him engaging in a sex act with two women and then paying an undetermined amount in cash.

Investigators said Kraft returned the next morning and engaged in recorded sex acts with a woman before paying with a \$100 bill and another bill.

Hours later, Kraft was in Kansas City for the AFC Championship game, where his Patriots defeated the Chiefs. His team then won the 2019 Super Bowl in Atlanta, the Patriots' sixth NFL championship under his ownership.

Prosecutors offered to drop the charges if Kraft entered a diversion program for first-time offenders. That would include an admission he would be found guilty if the case went to trial, a \$5,000 fine, 100 hours of community service and attending a class on the dangers of prostitution and its connection to human trafficking.

Beyond 'love,' Trump has little to show from N Korea talks

By DEB RIECHMANN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Hours after an astonishing summit with North Korean dictator Kim Jong Un, President Donald Trump boldly declared a breakthrough. "There is no longer a Nuclear Threat from North Korea," he tweeted.

Yet two years later, despite two more face-to-face meetings and many exchanges of warm words between the leaders, North Korea continues to build up its nuclear program and test missiles. And even if Trump still hopes for an agreement, his administration isn't betting on it happening before the November election.

The last significant contact between the two sides was outside of Stockholm last October. North Korea declared the dialogue a failure in a statement written before talks even began, administration officials say. Communication has been limited to the lower-level "New York channel" at the United Nations.

North Korea's recent belligerence against South Korea has only stoked more tension. The North has lashed out at South Korea for not breaking from Washington to restart inter-Korean economic projects that have been held back by U.S.-led sanctions. Pyongyang blew up a multistory liaison office in the border town of Kaesong, a place where the North and South could talk and improve relations. The North also

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threatened military retaliation against the South, but then backed off.

Trump administration officials are hard pressed to find signals of interest from Pyongyang in resuming talks. But they are anticipating the possibility of an "October surprise" before the Nov. 3 election. They aren't sure if this would be an olive branch from Kim to resume talks or fireworks in the form of an atomic test or missile launch. The officials spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss the administration's thinking on a sensitive diplomatic matter.

The officials note, however, that despite the North's harsh rhetoric, Kim has not taken any irreversible steps, potentially leaving the door open, if only slightly, to renewed discussions. Experts aren't ruling out the possibility of a small agreement that Kim and Trump could sign, which could burnish Kim's image at home and give Trump a foreign policy win before the election.

"There was some discussion among the Korea watchers where President Trump and Kim Jong Un will go for a last-minute, eleventh-hour deal — an October surprise — where North Korea agrees to partly freeze its weapons of mass destruction programs for partial sanctions relief," said Sue Mi Terry, a fellow at the Center for Strategic and International Studies who formerly worked at the CIA and National Security Council.

She noted Kim said this year that he would freeze or reduce the nuclear program if his conditions are met. "I'm wondering if he's trying to go for the last possible minute deal with President Trump," she said.

The two leaders last met a year ago during Trump's made-for-television stroll across the Demilitarized Zone to become the first sitting U.S. president to step foot in the North.

After the first summit, in Singapore in 2018, Trump tweeted, "There is no longer a Nuclear Threat from North Korea. Meeting with Kim Jong Un was an interesting and very positive experience. North Korea has great potential for the future!"

Trump has repeatedly gushed about his relationship with Kim, the third leader in a dynasty reviled by Republicans and Democrats alike for human rights abuses and belligerent conduct. Trump told a rally in 2018 that Kim "wrote me beautiful letters and they're great letters. We fell in love."

Trump's likely Democratic challenger, former Vice President Joe Biden, says Trump's meetings with Kim have only provided legitimacy to the North Korean leader.

"After three made-for-TV summits, we still don't have a single concrete commitment from North Korea. Not one missile or nuclear weapon has been destroyed, not one inspector is on the ground," Biden wrote in response to a question posed by the Council on Foreign Relations.

"If anything, the situation has gotten worse. North Korea has more capability today than when Trump began his 'love affair' with Kim Jong Un, a murderous tyrant who, thanks to Trump, is no longer an isolated pariah on the world stage," Biden said.

Trump says it's still early in the U.S.-North Korea diplomatic process and insists he hasn't caved during his bromance with Kim and has maintained sanctions on Pyongyang. The U.S. negotiating stance hasn't changed from its longtime posture of demanding full, verifiable denuclearization.

Trump has said that the lack of war with North Korea is essentially a win for the United States.

Intaek Han, research fellow at Jeju Peace Institute, a top foreign policy think tank in South Korea, notes that throughout the latest provocations from the North, there have been no territorial incursions, no lives lost and no indication that things would escalate into a military conflict. He also points out that Trump himself has not been the target of the North's recent hostile rhetoric.

"North Korea isn't criticizing Mr. Trump, or the United States this time," he said. "So despite all these provocations. I think that relations between Chairman Kim and Mr. Trump, more or less, remain intact and quite possibly, relations between Chairman Kim and Mr. Moon (South Korean President Moon Jae-in) may be still OK," he said.

Still, some see the risk that Kim, who is hard-pressed to improve his country's deteriorating economy, could soon take more provocative actions.

Frank Aum at the United States Institute of Peace in Washington said Pyongyang could conduct short- to medium-range missile tests, launch satellite, expand nuclear or missile facilities or conduct cyberattacks against the United States and South Korea.

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"All of this said, it's not likely that North Korea will resort to a major provocation, such as a nuclear or ICBM (intercontinental ballistic missile) test, in the near future," he said.

AP Diplomatic Writer Matthew Lee contributed to this report.

California's alleged Golden State Killer set to plead guilty

By DON THOMPSON Associated Press

SACRAMENTO, Calif. (AP) — Forty years after a sadistic suburban rapist terrorized California in what investigators later realized were a series of linked assaults and slayings, a 74-year-old former police officer is expected to plead guilty Monday to being the elusive Golden State Killer.

The deal will spare Joseph James DeAngelo Jr. any chance of the death penalty for 13 murders and 13 kidnapping-related charges spanning six counties. In partial return, survivors of the assaults that spanned the 1970s and 1980s expect him to admit to up to 62 rapes that he could not be criminally charged with because too much time has passed.

Yet nothing is certain until he actually speaks in a Sacramento State University ballroom pressed into use as a courtroom to provide for social distancing during the coronavirus pandemic.

"I've been on pins and needles because I just don't like that our lives are tied to him, again," said Jennifer Carole, the daughter of Lyman Smith, a lawyer who was slain in 1980 at age 43 in Ventura County. His wife, 33-year-old Charlene Smith, was also raped and killed.

Investigators early on connected certain crimes to an armed and masked rapist who would break into sleeping couples' suburban homes at night, binding the man and piling dishes on his back. He would threaten to kill both victims if he heard the plates fall while he raped the woman.

Gay and Bob Hardwick were among the survivors.

They are now looking forward to DeAngelo admitting to that 1978 assault. The death penalty was never realistic anyway, she said, given DeAngelo's age and Gov. Gavin Newsom's moratorium on executions.

"He certainly does deserve to die, in my view, so I am seeing that he is trading the death penalty for death in prison," she said. "It will be good to put the thing to rest. I think he will never serve the sentence that we have served — we've served the sentence for 42 years."

A guilty plea and life sentence avoids a trial or even the planned weeks-long preliminary hearing. The victims expect to confront him at his sentencing in August, where it's expected to take several days to tell DeAngelo and Sacramento County Superior Court Judge Michael Bowman what they have suffered.

Ron Harrington's younger brother, Keith, was married to Patti Harrington for just three months when they were bludgeoned to death in their Orange County home in 1980 by a killer then known as the Original Night Stalker.

All four brothers were successful, but "Keith, the youngest of all of us, was the smartest," he said. "It's just such a loss. And every time this comes up I think of all the lives he would have saved as an emergency room doctor."

Their father found the couple two days later.

"It was so gruesome," Harrington said. "My dad was never the same."

The killer racked up a series of monikers for his crimes over the decades.

Visalia Ransacker.

East Area Rapist.

Original Night Stalker.

Diamond Knot Killer.

But it wasn't until years later that investigators connected a series of assaults in central and Northern California to later slayings in Southern California and settled on the umbrella Golden State Killer nickname for the mysterious assailant whose crimes spanned 11 counties from 1974 through mid-1986.

The mystery sparked worldwide interest, a best-selling book and a six-part HBO documentary, "I'll Be Gone in the Dark," that premiered Sunday.

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It was only the pioneering use of new DNA techniques that two years ago led investigators to DeAngelo, who was fired from the Auburn Police Department northeast of Sacramento in 1979 after he was caught shoplifting dog repellent and a hammer. He previously had worked as a police officer in the Central Valley town of Exeter from 1973 to 1976, near where the Visalia Ransacker struck more than 100 homes south of Fresno.

Investigators painstakingly built a family tree by linking decades-old crime scene DNA to a distant relative through a popular online DNA database. They eventually narrowed in on DeAngelo with a process that has since been used in other cases nationwide, but said they confirmed the link only after surreptitiously collecting his DNA from his car door and a discarded tissue.

His defense attorneys have publicly lobbied since then for a deal that would spare him the death penalty, though they did not respond to repeated requests for comment before Monday's hearing.

Prosecutors who had sought the death penalty cited the massively complicated case and the advancing age of many of the victims and witnesses in agreeing to consider the plea bargain.

"Death doesn't solve anything. But him having to sit through a trial or preliminary hearing, that would have helped," said Carole, who said neither she nor her slain father believed in capital punishment.

She was so committed to seeing the case through that she temporarily moved from Santa Cruz to her adult daughter's Sacramento home, where she has slept on an air mattress in a spare bedroom. She has told the story of her father's death and her own recent experiences through podcasts called The Lawyer's Daughter.

But she said it "absolutely" makes sense for prosecutors to agree to a life sentence without parole, both to spare older victims and witnesses who are most vulnerable to the coronavirus from having to appear in court, and to save taxpayers the \$20 million projected cost of a trial.

Harrington supports the death penalty, but also agreed with prosecutors' decision "just to give some degree of closure."

"This will be a relief for all of us, to move on with our lives," said Hardwick. "We've dealt with the effects of the attack for 42 years."

BET Awards highlight Black voices as artists turn political

By MESFIN FEKADU AP Music Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — The BET Awards served as an extension of the voices of Black people protesting in the streets about the inequalities Black people face daily, as artists used their performances to highlight the Black Lives Matter movement, civil rights and the lives of those lost because of police officers, including George Floyd.

DaBaby, with his face pressed against the ground as an officer's knee crippled his neck — replicating the last moments of Floyd's life — rapped a verse from the Black Lives Matter remix of his hit song "Rockstar." His performance also featured images from protests, a reflection of the current world in the wake of Floyd's death and the death of others, including Breonna Taylor and Ahmaud Arbery.

Sunday's show, a virtual event because of the coronavirus pandemic, featured a number of highly produced, well-crafted and pre-taped performances. The BET Awards kicked off with Black artists rapping and singing anthems about the Black experience and fighting for equal rights.

The 12-year-old sensation Keedron Bryant, who turned heads on social media with his passionate performance about being a young Black man in today's world, started the show with an a cappella performance of his poignant song "I Just Wanna Live," which earned him a record deal. That was followed by an all-star performance of Public Enemy's 1989 anthem "Fight the Power," featuring Nas, Black Thought, Rapsody and YG adding new lyrics to the song, even namedropping Taylor and others.

Michelle Obama highlighted Beyoncé's commitment to the Black community before presenting her with the humanitarian award, saying: "You can see it in everything she does, from her music that gives voice to Black joy and Black pain, to her activism that demands justice for Black lives."

Beyoncé used her speech to encourage viewers to vote "like our life depends on it" in the upcoming

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election.

"I want to dedicate this award to all of my brothers out there, all of my sisters out there inspiring me, marching and fighting for change. Your voices are being heard and you're proving to our ancestors that their struggles were not in vain. Now we have one more thing we need to do to walk in our true power, and that is to vote," she said. "There are people banking on us staying at home during local elections and primaries happening in states across the country. We have to vote like our life depends on it, because it does."

Sunday's show celebrated BET's 20th awards show and BET's 40th year as a network. The three-hour event, which aired on CBS for the first time, was hosted by comedian, actress and TV personality Amanda Seales, who starred in several skits, including one about women who identify as "Karen," a common stereotype and term for racist and privileged white women.

Other artists were political during their performances, including Roddy Ricch, who wore a Black Lives Matter shirt while he rapped, Alicia Keys, Anderson Paak and Jay Rock, as well as brothers SiR and D Smoke, who performed with their mother Jackie Gouché.

Lil Wayne paid tribute to NBA icon Kobe Bryant, who died in January, with a performance of his 2009 song "Kobe Bryant," weaving in new lyrics. Wayne Brady, in a glittery suit, rolled around on top of a piano as he sang a medley of Little Richard hits.

Nipsey Hussle, who was named best male hip-hop artist and earned the humanitarian award at last year's BET Awards, won video of the year for "Higher," a clip he filmed with DJ Khaled and John Legend shortly before he died .

"This is for Nipsey Hussle and hip-hop," Khaled said in a taped video. "Nipsey Hussle, thank you for working with me on this 'Higher' record. I appreciate you. Nipsey's family, we love you."

The BET Awards, one of the first awards shows to air virtually, featured performances that were sharp with artsy stage production, giving extra life to the songs being performed. It was a welcome break from the "living room" and homebound performances hundreds of artists have shared on social media since the pandemic hit in March.

Chloe x Halle, who have successfully performed for various TV shows and events during the pandemic while promoting their new album, gave an epic performance of their songs "Do It" and "Forgive Me." R&B star Summer Walker, who played guitar and sang, was also impressive during her performance, which featured Usher.

Megan Thee Stallion went to the desert with background dancers as she twerked and rapped her No. 1 hit "Savage." She won best female hip-hop artist, beating out Cardi B and Nicki Minaj.

"Oh my God, I probably recorded this video like 10 times. It feels so crazy doing this from my house," she said. "I used to watch the BET Awards all the time thinking, 'One day that's going to be me going up there accepting my award' — and now it is."

Though the BET Awards are technically about handing out trophies, the awards were an afterthought. During the live telecast, Richh won album of the year for his debut "Please Excuse Me for Being Antisocial"; Lizzo was named best female R&B/pop artist; and Burna Boy won best international act. Overall, Chris Brown, Beyoncé and Ricch were the night's big winners, taking home two honors each. Beyoncé won the BET HER award for "Brown Skin Girl," shared with daughter Blue Ivy Carter as well as Wizkid and Saint JHN. The song also won Beyoncé and Blue Ivy a Soul Train Music Award last year.

Trump denies briefing on reported bounties against US troops

By ZEKE MILLER, JAMES LAPORTA and DEB RIECHMANN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump on Sunday denied that he was made aware of U.S. intelligence officials' conclusions that Russia secretly offered bounties to Taliban-linked militants for killing American troops in Afghanistan. The Trump administration was set to brief select members of Congress on the matter on Monday.

The intelligence assessments came amid Trump's push to withdraw the U.S. from Afghanistan, and sug-

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gested that Russia was making overtures to militants as the U.S. and the Taliban were holding talks to end the long-running war. The assessment was first reported by The New York Times and then confirmed to The Associated Press by American intelligence officials and two others with knowledge of the matter.

There were conflicting reports about whether Trump was aware of Russia's actions. The intelligence officials told the AP that the president was briefed on the matter earlier this year; Trump denied that, tweeting on Sunday that neither he nor Vice President Mike Pence had been briefed. The president tweeted Sunday night that he was just told that intelligence officials didn't report the information to him because they didn't find it credible.

The intelligence officials and others with knowledge of the matter who spoke to the AP insisted on anonymity in order to discuss the highly sensitive matter.

The White House National Security Council would not confirm the assessments, but said the U.S. receives thousands of intelligence reports daily that are subject to strict scrutiny.

Sen. Lindsey Graham, R-S.C., who golfed with Trump on Sunday, tweeted a day earlier that it is "Imperative Congress get to the bottom of recent media reports that Russian GRU units in Afghanistan have offered to pay the Taliban to kill American soldiers with the goal of pushing America out of the region."

Rep. Liz Cheney of Wyoming, the No. 3 Republican in the House, called for the White House to share more information with Congress, saying if true, lawmakers need to know "Who did know and when?" and, referring to Russian leader Vladimir Putin, "What has been done in response to protect our forces & hold Putin accountable?"

Democratic presumptive presidential nominee Joe Biden said reports that Trump was aware of the Russian bounties would be a "truly shocking revelation" about the commander in chief and his failure to protect U.S. troops in Afghanistan and stand up to Russia.

Russia called the report "nonsense."

"This unsophisticated plant clearly illustrates the low intellectual abilities of the propagandists of American intelligence, who instead of inventing something more plausible have to make up this nonsense," the Russian Foreign Ministry said.

A Taliban spokesman said the militants "strongly reject this allegation" and are not "indebted to the beneficence of any intelligence organ or foreign country."

John Bolton, a former national security adviser who was forced out by Trump last September and has now written a tell-all book about his time at the White House, said Sunday that "it is pretty remarkable the president's going out of his way to say he hasn't heard anything about it. One asks, why would he do something like that?"

Bolton told NBC's "Meet the Press" that he thinks the answer "may be precisely because active Russian aggression like that against the American service members is a very, very serious matter and nothing's been done about it, if it's true, for these past four or five months, so it may look like he was negligent. But, of course, he can disown everything if nobody ever told him about it."

House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, one of the few congressional leaders briefed on sensitive intelligence matters, told ABC's "This Week" that she had not been informed about the reported bounties and requested a report to Congress on the matter.

"This is as bad as it gets, and yet the president will not confront the Russians on this score, denies being briefed. Whether he is or not, his administration knows and our allies — some of our allies who work with us in Afghanistan had been briefed and accept this report," she said.

While Russian meddling in Afghanistan is not a new phenomenon for seasoned U.S. intelligence officials and military commandos, officials said Russian operatives became more aggressive in their desire to contract with the Taliban and members of the Haqqani Network, a militant group that is aligned with the Taliban in Afghanistan and that was designated as a foreign terrorist organization in 2012. Russian operatives are said to have met with Taliban leaders in Doha, Qatar and inside Afghanistan; however, it is not known if the meetings were to discuss bounties.

The officials the AP spoke to said the intelligence community has been investigating an April 2019 attack

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on an American convoy that killed three U.S. Marines after a car rigged with explosives detonated near their armored vehicles as they were traveling back to Bagram Airfield, the largest U.S. military installation in Afghanistan. Three other U.S. service members were wounded in the attack, along with an Afghan contractor. The Taliban claimed responsibility for the attack on Twitter. The officials the AP spoke to also said they were looking closely at insider attacks — sometimes called “green-on-blue” incidents — from 2019 to determine if they are also linked to Russian bounties.

In early 2020, members of the elite Naval Special Warfare Development Group, known to the public as SEAL Team Six, raided a Taliban outpost and recovered roughly \$500,000. The recovered funds further solidified the suspicions of the American intelligence community that the Russians had offered money to Taliban militants and other linked associations.

One official said the administration discussed several potential responses, but the White House has yet to authorize any step.

Trump responded to Biden on Twitter, saying “Russia ate his and Obama’s lunch during their time in office”

But it was the Obama administration, along with international allies, that suspended Russia from the Group of Eight after its unilateral annexation of Crimea from Ukraine — a move that drew widespread condemnation.

Biden criticized Trump for “his embarrassing campaign of deference and debasing himself” before Putin. Trump tweeted that “nobody’s been tougher” on Russia than his administration.

Associated Press writer Lynn Berry contributed to this report.

In NYC, marking 50th anniversary of Pride, no matter what

By DEEPTI HAJELA and BRIAN MAHONEY Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — There were protests, rainbow flags and performances — it was LGBTQ Pride, after all. But what was normally an outpouring on the streets of New York City looked a little different this year, thanks to social distancing rules required by the coronavirus.

With the city’s massive Pride parade canceled, Sunday’s performances were virtual, the flags flew in emptier than normal spaces and the protesters were masked.

The disruption caused by the virus would be an aggravation in any year, but particularly in this one, the 50th anniversary of the first Pride march in New York City.

“It’s a great thing to see because the original Pride started with the civil rights movement,” Matthew Fischer said as he passed out hand sanitizer Sunday at Foley Square. “So we’re really going back to the roots of that and making sure we encompass everything that empowers people to be who they are.”

Fischer said it was important this year to show cooperation between the Black and LGBTQ communities, given the recent deaths of George Floyd and others that have sparked demonstrations against police brutality.

A number of people in the crowd at Foley Square held signs reading “All Black Lives Matter,” with a black fist surrounded by rainbow colors. Most wore masks, though some scrapped social distancing in favor of hugging friends. One man held a sign advertising free hugs.

The first Pride march, on June 28, 1970, was a marker of the Stonewall uprisings of the year before in New York City’s West Village that helped propel a global LGBTQ movement.

Initially called the Christopher Street Liberation Day March, it looked much like the protests that have streamed through the streets of New York City daily in recent weeks over racial injustice. Marchers trooped to Central Park, chanting “Gay power!” and “Gay and proud!”

Cities around the world in subsequent years followed New York’s lead, hosting commemorative events.

The historic Stonewall Inn, known as the birthplace of the gay rights movement, furloughed its employees and has been shuttered more than three months amid the pandemic. But it announced Sunday it will receive a \$250,000 contribution from the Gill Foundation — money that will go toward several months of rent and utilities.

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"I don't think things will really be back to normal for us until there's a vaccine, so this is a much-needed lifeline," co-owner Stacy Lentz told The Associated Press. "It would be devastating to think about walking down Christopher Street and seeing that building shuttered."

Organizers of this year's event in New York City were determined to showcase some of that spirit, with a TV broadcast honoring the front line workers who have been so necessary in the fight against the virus as well as people and institutions of the LGBTQ community.

The show featured several performers including Janelle Monáe, Deborah Cox and Billy Porter, and appearances from a number of other celebrities.

The Queer Liberation March for Black Lives and Against Police Brutality, meanwhile, marched from Lower Manhattan toward Washington Square Park. The organizers are activists who held a protest march last year as an alternative to the main Pride parade, saying it had become too corporate.

The group wrote on Twitter that police had become aggressive later in the afternoon, saying it ended its live streaming of the march early because police were using pepper spray and making arrests.

Joseph Engargeau feared there might be no event this year because of the coronavirus restrictions. Instead, he felt this scaled-down version better resembled the first Pride than the massive event the parade became.

Engargeau, wearing a rainbow mask, said he's watched tourists through the years come to snap photos of the Stonewall, only to realize it doesn't look like anything special.

"It's just this nothing place," he said, "but it meant everything."

Other celebrations of the day were visual. At Rockefeller Center, more than 100 rainbow flags were placed around the center rink, and the plaza was lit up in rainbow colors.

In the West Village, a rainbow light art installation next to the Stonewall Inn was expected to illuminate the sky in tribute to the uprising and the original march, as well as those who have marched and fought through the years.

"The feeling doesn't go away because of the coronavirus," Mayor Bill de Blasio said in an interview with WABC-TV.

Gatherings of large groups of people are still barred in New York City as part of an effort to control the spread of the coronavirus. Other parades canceled this spring included the St. Patrick's Day parade and Puerto Rican Day parade.

Still, people have gathered by the thousands since the late-May death of George Floyd at the hands of police in Minnesota. One of the largest demonstrations was a June 14 demonstration in Brooklyn, where thousands gathered for a Black Trans Lives Matter protest.

Associated Press writer Jim Mustian contributed to this report.

World hits coronavirus milestones amid fears worse to come

By NICOLE WINFIELD and KEN MORITSUGU Associated Press

ROME (AP) — The world surpassed two sobering coronavirus milestones Sunday -- 500,000 confirmed deaths, 10 million confirmed cases -- and hit another high mark for daily new infections as governments that attempted reopenings continued to backtrack and warn that worse news could be yet to come.

"COVID-19 has taken a very swift and very dangerous turn in Texas over just the past few weeks," said Gov. Greg Abbott, who allowed businesses to start reopening in early May but on Friday shut down bars and limited restaurant dining amid a spike in cases.

California Gov. Gavin Newsom rolled back reopenings of bars in seven counties, including Los Angeles. He ordered them to close immediately and urged eight other counties to issue local health orders mandating the same.

More Florida beaches will be closing again to avoid further spread of the new coronavirus as officials try to tamp down on large gatherings amid a spike in COVID-19 cases. Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis said interactions among young people are driving the surge.

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"Caution was thrown to the wind and so we are where we are," DeSantis said.

South Africa's health minister warned that the country's current surge of cases is expected to rapidly increase in the coming weeks and push hospitals to the limit. Health Minister Zwelini Mkhize said the current rise in infections has come from people who "moved back into the workplace.

New clusters of cases at a Swiss nightclub and in the central English city of Leicester showed that the virus was still circulating widely in Europe, though not with the rapidly growing infection rate seen in parts of the U.S., Latin America and India.

Poland and France, meanwhile, attempted a step toward normalcy as they held elections that had been delayed by the virus.

Wearing mandatory masks, social distancing in lines and carrying their own pens to sign voting registers, French voters cast ballots in a second round of municipal elections. Poles also wore masks and used hand sanitizer, and some in virus-hit areas were told to mail in their ballots.

"I didn't go and vote the first time around because I am elderly and I got scared," said Fanny Barouh as she voted in a Paris school.

In Texas, Abbott appeared with Vice President Mike Pence, who cut campaign events from upcoming visits to Florida and Arizona because of rising virus cases in those states.

Pence praised Abbott for both his decision to reopen the state, and to roll back the reopening plans.

"You flattened the curve here in Texas ... but about two weeks ago something changed," Pence said.

Pence urged people to wear masks when unable to practice social distancing. He and Abbott wore face masks as they entered and left the room, taking them off while speaking to reporters.

Health and Human Services Secretary Alex Azar, meanwhile, defended the fact that President Donald Trump has rarely worn a mask in public, saying he doesn't have to follow his own administration's guidance because as a leader of the free world he's tested regularly and is in "very different circumstances than the rest of us."

Addressing spikes in reported coronavirus cases in some states, Azar said on NBC's "Meet the Press" that people "have to take ownership" of their own behaviors by social distancing and wearing masks if possible.

A reported tally Sunday from Johns Hopkins University researchers said the death toll from the coronavirus pandemic had topped 500,000.

About 1 in 4 of those deaths – more than 125,000 – have been reported in the U.S. The country with the next highest death toll is Brazil, with more than 57,000, or about 1 in 9.

The true death toll from the virus, which first emerged in China late last year, is widely believed to be significantly higher. Experts say that especially early on, many victims died of COVID-19 without being tested for it.

To date, more than 10 million confirmed cases have been reported globally. About a quarter of them have been reported in the U.S.

The World Health Organization announced another daily record in the number of confirmed coronavirus cases across the world - topping over 189,000 in a single 24-hour period. The tally eclipses the previous record a week earlier at over 183,000 cases, showing case counts continue to progress worldwide.

Overall the U.S. still has far and away the most total cases. At more than 2,450,000 - roughly twice that of Brazil. The number of actual cases worldwide is much higher.

New York, once the nation's pandemic epicenter, is now "on the exact opposite end," Gov. Andrew Cuomo said in an interview with "Meet the Press."

The state reported five new virus deaths Saturday, its lowest reported daily death toll since March 15. During the state's peak pandemic in April, nearly 800 people were dying every day. New York still leads the nation in COVID-19 deaths with nearly 25,000.

In the state of Washington, Gov. Jay Inslee put a hold on plans to move counties to the fourth phase of his reopening plan as cases continue to increase. But in Hawaii, the city of Honolulu announced that campgrounds will reopen for the first time in three months with limited permits to ensure social distancing.

Britain's government, meanwhile, is considering whether a local lockdown is needed for the central English city of Leicester amid reports about a spike in COVID-19 among its Asian community. It would be

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Britain's first local lockdown.

"We have seen flare-ups across the country in recent weeks," Home Secretary Priti Patel told the BBC on Sunday.

Polish voters were casting ballots, in person and by mail, for a presidential election that was supposed to have taken place in May but was chaotically postponed amid the pandemic. President Andrzej Duda, a 48-year-old conservative, is running against 10 other candidates as he seeks a second five-year term.

Iwona Goge, 79, was encouraged to see so many people voting in Warsaw.

"It's bad. Poland is terribly divided and people are getting discouraged," she said.

French voters were choosing mayors and municipal councilors in Paris and 5,000 towns and cities in a second round of municipal elections held under strict hygiene rules.

Italy was honoring its dead later Sunday with an evening Requiem concert in hard-hit Bergamo province. The ceremony in the onetime epicenter of the European outbreak came a day after Italy registered the lowest daily tally of COVID-19 deaths in nearly four months: eight.

European leaders were taking no chances in tamping down new clusters. German authorities renewed a lockdown in a western region of about 500,000 people after about 1,300 slaughterhouse workers tested positive.

Africa's confirmed cases of COVID-19 continued to climb to a new high of more than 371,000, including 9,484 deaths, according to figures released Sunday by the African Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

China on Monday reported a further decline in new confirmed cases, with a total of just 12, including seven cases of domestic transmission in Beijing, where nearly 8.3 million people have now undergone testing in recent weeks. No new deaths were reported Monday, leaving the total at 4,634 among 83,512 confirmed cases of COVID-19.

Associated Press journalists around the world contributed to this report.

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

Look away, Dixie: Mississippi to lose rebel emblem from flag

By EMILY WAGSTER PETTUS Associated Press

JACKSON, Miss. (AP) — Mississippi lawmakers voted Sunday to surrender the Confederate battle emblem from the state flag, more than a century after white supremacist legislators adopted the design a generation after the South lost the Civil War.

Spectators cheered and applauded after the historic votes in the House and Senate.

Each chamber had broad bipartisan support for the landmark decision. Republican Gov. Tate Reeves has said he will sign the bill, and the state flag will lose its official status as soon as he acts. That could happen "in coming days," said his spokeswoman, Renae Eze.

Mississippi has a 38% Black population — and the last state flag with the emblem that's widely seen as racist. The state faced mounting pressure to change its flag as weeks of international protests against racial injustice in the United States have led to the toppling or removal of Confederate statues and monuments.

After an emotional day Sunday, legislators hugged each other — even those on opposing sides.

Democratic Rep. Robert Johnson of Natchez choked back tears as he told reporters that he has seen white colleagues develop more empathy about how the Confederate symbol is painful to him and other African Americans.

"They began to understand and feel the same thing that I've been feeling for 61 years of my life," Johnson said.

A commission will design a new flag that cannot include the Confederate symbol and that must have the words "In God We Trust." Voters will be asked to approve the new design in the Nov. 3 election. If they

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reject it, the commission will set a different design using the same guidelines, and that would be sent to voters later.

Republican House Speaker Philip Gunn, who is white, has pushed for five years to change the flag, saying the Confederate symbol is offensive. The House passed the bill 91-23 Sunday afternoon. Within hours, the Senate followed suit, 37-14.

"How sweet it is to celebrate this on the Lord's day," Gunn said. "Many prayed to Him to bring us to this day. He has answered."

An increasing number of cities and all Mississippi's public universities have taken down the state flag in recent years. But until now, efforts to redesign the flag sputtered in the Republican-dominated Legislature.

That dynamic shifted as an extraordinary and diverse coalition of political, business, religious groups and sports leaders pushed for change.

At a Black Lives Matter protest outside the Mississippi Governor's Mansion in early June, thousands cheered as an organizer said the state needs to divorce itself from all Confederate symbols.

Religious groups — including the large and influential Mississippi Baptist Convention — said erasing the rebel emblem from the state flag is a moral imperative.

Business groups said the banner hinders economic development in one of the poorest states in the nation.

In a sports-crazy culture, the biggest blow might have happened when college sports leagues said Mississippi could lose postseason events if it continued flying the Confederate-themed flag. Nearly four dozen of Mississippi's university athletic directors and coaches came to the Capitol to lobby for change.

Many people who wanted to keep the emblem on the Mississippi flag said they see it as a symbol of heritage.

Legislators put the Confederate emblem on the upper left corner of Mississippi flag in 1894, as whites were squelching political power that African Americans had gained after the Civil War.

The battle emblem is a red field topped by a blue X with 13 white stars. The Ku Klux Klan and other hate groups have waved the rebel flag for decades. Georgia put the battle emblem prominently on its state flag in 1956, during a backlash to the civil rights movement. That state removed the symbol from its banner in 2001.

The Mississippi Supreme Court found in 2000 that when the state updated its laws in 1906, portions dealing with the flag were not included. That meant the banner lacked official status. The Democratic governor in 2000, Ronnie Musgrove, appointed a commission to decide the flag's future. It held hearings across the state that grew ugly as people shouted at each other about the flag.

Legislators then opted not to set a flag design themselves. They put the issue on a 2001 statewide ballot, and people voted to keep the flag.

Former Mississippi Gov. William Winter, who is now 97, served on then-President Bill Clinton's national advisory board on race in the 1990s and was chairman of the Mississippi flag commission in 2000. Winter said Sunday that removing the Confederate symbol from the banner is "long overdue."

"The battle for a better Mississippi does not end with the removal of the flag, and we should work in concert to make other positive changes in the interest of all of our people," said Winter, a Democrat who was governor from 1980 until 1984.

Democratic state Sen. Derrick Simmons of Greenville, who is African American, said the state deserves a flag to make all people proud.

"Today is a history-making day in the state of Mississippi," Simmons told colleagues. "Let's vote today for the Mississippi of tomorrow."

Follow Emily Wagster Pettus on Twitter: <http://twitter.com/EWagsterPettus>.

Starbucks latest to say it will pause social media ads

Starbucks is the latest company to say it will pause social media ads after a campaign led by civil rights organizations called for an ad boycott of Facebook, saying it doesn't do enough to stop racist and violent content.

Starbucks said Sunday that its actions were not part of the "#StopHateforProfit" campaign, but that it is pausing its social ads while talking with civil rights organizations and its media partners about how to stop hate speech online.

The coffee chain's announcement follows statements from Unilever, the European consumer-goods giant behind Ben & Jerry's ice cream and Dove soap; Coca-Cola; cellphone company Verizon and outdoors companies like Patagonia, Eddie Bauer and REI; film company Magnolia Pictures; jeans maker Levi's and dozens of smaller companies. Some of the companies will pause ads just on Facebook, while others will refrain from advertising more broadly on social media.

In response to companies halting advertising, Facebook executive Carolyn Everson said earlier this week the social networking platform is committed to purging hateful content from its services.

"Our conversations with marketers and civil rights organizations are about how, together, we can be a force for good," said Everson, vice president of Facebook's global business group.

Facebook's market value dropped Friday by more than 8%, or about \$50 billion, as more companies said they would pause ads. Twitter stock also dropped more than 7% Friday.

Sarah Personette, vice president of global client solutions at Twitter, said Friday 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."

This story has been updated to correct the date of Twitter's statement. It was sent Friday, not Thursday.

Exit poll: Polish presidential vote headed for runoff

By VANESSA GERA and MONIKA SCISLOWSKA Associated Press

WARSAW, Poland (AP) — Poland's conservative president, Andrzej Duda, was the frontrunner in Sunday's election, but fell short of the 50% of votes needed to win in the first round, according to the projection of an exit poll.

The results, if confirmed, pave the way for what is building into a very tight race in July 12 runoff that will most likely pit the populist incumbent against the centrist Warsaw mayor, Rafal Trzaskowski, who was in second place.

Whether Duda ultimately wins a second five-year term in two weeks' time will determine whether the ruling nationalist party that backs him, Law and Justice, keeps its near-monopoly on political power in Poland.

The party has been in conflict with the European Union over laws that have given it control over top courts and key judicial bodies, something the 27-nation bloc has denounced as an erosion of democratic European values.

Since the Polish president has the power to veto laws, Duda winning a second term is crucial to the party as it seeks to continue to reshape the nation's laws in line with its conservative worldview. The pro-EU Trzaskowski has vowed to block any new laws that violate constitutional norms.

In a speech to cheering supporters late Sunday in the town of Lowicz, west of Warsaw, Duda noted that his result was better than in the first round five years ago.

"I have this result after five years of being in politics, of being criticized in many ways, attacked, of taking difficult decisions," Duda said. "After these five years many more people voted for me."

According to the projection by the Ipsos polling firm, Duda won 41.8% and Trzaskowski 30.4% in Sunday's vote. The poll has a margin of error of plus or minus 2 percentage points.

Poland's state electoral commission has said it would release the final official results by Wednesday evening.

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The candidate with the third most votes according to the exit poll was Szymon Holownia, a TV personality and journalist who had once studied to be a priest. He was projected by the Ipsos poll to have 13.3%. Holownia is unaffiliated with any party and generated enthusiasm among some Poles tired of years of bickering between Law and Justice and Civic Platform, the country's two main parties.

A far-right nationalist candidate, Krzysztof Bosak, was projected by the exit poll to win 7.4% of the vote, and his voters would also be up for grabs in the runoff.

In his speech to supporters late Sunday, Duda lost no time in reaching out to supporters of other candidates, saying he shares some views with those on the left, but making particular mention of Bosak.

Duda said there is "very little that separates" him from Bosak and that "we are of a similar mind on very many issues."

Trzaskowski told his supporters that it was good news the majority opposed Duda.

"I want to say clearly to all these citizens - I will be your candidate. I will be the candidate of change," he said.

A left-wing politician who was Poland's first openly gay presidential candidate, Robert Biedron, was projected to win 2.9%, while an agrarian candidate, Wladyslaw Kosiak-Kamysz had 2.6% in the exit poll. All other candidates in a field of 11 polled even lower.

The vote had been scheduled for May 10 but was postponed in a chaotic political and legal battle as the ruling party pressed to hold it despite the pandemic.

In April, Duda had very high support and was expected then to win in a single round. He was helped by adulatory coverage in state media and the inability of other candidates to campaign.

But as restrictions eased, Trzaskowski replaced an earlier candidate fielded by his Civic Platform party who had dismal poll numbers, adding a new dynamic and suspense into the race.

Poland hasn't been as badly hit by the pandemic as many countries in Western Europe, and most people voted in person, wearing masks and observing other hygiene rules. There was also a mail-in voting option, and thousands of voters in some southwestern regions with higher virus infection numbers were required to vote by mail.

As of Sunday, Poland had nearly 34,000 confirmed cases of COVID-19 among its 38 million people, with over 1,400 deaths.

Duda's campaign focused on defending traditional values in the mostly Catholic nation while promising to keep raising living standards to Western European levels. He took a position against same-sex marriage and adoption and denounced the LGBT rights movement as a dangerous "ideology."

That kind of rhetoric — along with the judicial overhaul and the party's harnessing of public media to promote the government's image — have raised concerns among some that Poland is following Hungary in eroding democratic norms established after communism collapsed three decades ago.

On the campaign trail, Trzaskowski promised to keep the ruling party's popular social welfare spending programs while vowing to restore constitutional norms and Poland's relationship with the EU.

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

New knotholes: Good MLB views, if fans know where to look

By JIMMY GOLEN AP Sports Writer

BOSTON (AP) — Tucked under the center field seats at Fenway Park, down some stairs from Lansdowne Street in an area previously used as the visiting team's batting cage, is a sports bar that is preparing to reopen from the coronavirus shutdown.

Largely windowless and decorated with sepia photographs hung on dark wooden walls, the main source of light is the sunshine streaming in through a thick metal screen that reveals the true treasure of the location: a view of the Boston Red Sox field, from Green Monster to Pesky Pole, that could make the Bleacher Bar one of the few spots to watch a major league game in person this season.

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"It's one of a kind. It really is," said Joe Hicks, who runs the restaurant and three others in the area. "Kids and families, they get excited when they walk in here and they see how cool this is. People, they walk in and they're just naturally happy.

"Being able to see inside the park, it doesn't get much better than that."

Major League Baseball suspended spring training on March 12, and the season that was scheduled to open on March 26 never did. Last week, players and owners reached an agreement to play an abbreviated, 60-game season that would start July 23 or 24 in teams' home ballparks.

But they're not yet ready to crowd the seats with tens of thousands of fans.

Instead, those hoping to see a game in person may have to settle for places like the Bleacher Bar, the Rogers Centre hotel or the Wrigley rooftops, pressing their face up to the windows or squinting through fences like the Knothole Gangs of yore.

The Roberto Clemente Bridge provides a look into PNC Park and a hotel in Baltimore might offer rooms with a view of the field at Camden Yards.

"There is some irony in the fact that the kind of social areas that we've created in baseball parks may end up being the key to the social distancing that may be required when we do see the sport again," baseball architect Janet Marie Smith said. "I think there's some, yeah, some sort of cruel irony in that."

Smith, who helped build the paradigm-shifting Camden Yards and worked on renovations for Dodger Stadium and Fenway, said ballpark designers have tried to find new ways to connect with their urban surroundings after moving back from the suburbs in the 1990s.

The result: a picnic area in San Diego, a waterfront promenade in San Francisco, a street plaza in Baltimore, a nightclub in Miami.

And now those new knotholes could be a foot in the door for fans if teams and government officials deem them safe to open before the actual seating bowls.

"We're seeing that the mixture of uses bode well for a lot of situations," Smith said. "We weren't looking for this one, for sure. But it does allow one to tiptoe back in and have a lighter touch than the traditional way of thinking of a stadium or ballpark with all fixed seating."

Most teams contacted by The Associated Press last week said they were following guidance from local officials on whether fans would be allowed to watch games from these areas. In many states, a key distinction is whether they are designed for ticketed fans or outside the turnstiles; in Massachusetts, for example, the Bleacher Bar can reopen as a restaurant even while Fenway and other large arenas remain closed.

The Toronto Marriott City Centre is awaiting word from the Blue Jays on whether it can rent out the 70 rooms with perfect views of the field, general manager Anup Israni said. (As of Friday, the hotel had "Baseball Stadium view" rooms available for booking for late July and into August.)

A Chicago Cubs spokesman said it has not been decided if the rooftops along Waveland and Sheffield Avenues will be open.

San Francisco's Portwalk, a promenade next to McCovey Cove that has views into Oracle Park, will remain closed, a Giants spokeswoman said. Kayakers are still hoping to paddle around, scrambling for splash shots.

The Cleveland Marlins Park, a nightclub with a swimming pool beyond the left field fence in Miami, also will not open, the team said. The San Diego Padres said the Park at the Park, a ticketed grassy area beyond the center field fence, will be closed for the regular season; it will be open for the spring training reboot, though, with fans required to social distance.

Eutaw Street, which runs beyond the right field wall in Baltimore, helped popularize the trend toward seatless viewing areas. On game days, it is typically filled with fans who hawk for home runs or purchase sandwiches at Boog's BBQ.

But it is inside the Camden Yards gates, and it will remain closed, the team said. It was also off limits when the Orioles played a game without fans in 2015 because of protests over Freddie Gray's death in police custody -- until now, the only major league game played without fans in the ballpark.

Some resourceful Orioles fans watched that game by crowding onto balconies at the Hilton Baltimore Inner Harbor, which offers a mostly unobstructed but distant view of the field. (For now, the hotel is

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closed because of COVID-19 and is not taking reservations until July 14 at the earliest, a Hilton Hotels spokesman said.)

Boston Mayor Marty Walsh has ruled out fans in the Fenway seats through at least August.

"I just anticipate it being extremely odd when we get going playing Major League Baseball games in front of no fans, it being a strange environment," Red Sox president Sam Kennedy said this week.

"I think it's incredibly important that we start -- when it's safe -- to try to get back to some sense of normalcy," he said. "For me, that has always been going to baseball games. I think our fans want that and, ultimately, our players want that."

In Massachusetts, restaurants like the Bleacher Bar can open with limited capacity starting June 30. Last week, the tables had already been rearranged to accommodate the social distancing requirements; the three tables with the best view of the field were now two.

Hicks, the Bleacher Bar director of operations, was talking to a reporter when a mother and her two sons popped their heads in to check the place out. Their brief glimpse through the screen will be their only chance to see the field before returning home to Naples, Florida.

"We're actually big Yankees fans but we always wanted to see Fenway Park because it's the oldest park, it's like the most legendary park in the world," 17-year-old Sebastian Bustamante said.

"The Yankees were supposed to do good things this year, so I was really looking forward to that," he said. "Aside from that, I just love watching baseball. It's going to not be the same not watching it in person, but hopefully we'll be able to catch some games on TV."

AP Sports Writers David Ginsburg in Baltimore, Bernie Wilson in San Diego, Andrew Seligman in Chicago, Steven Wine in Miami, Janie McCauley in San Francisco and freelancer Ian Harrison in Toronto contributed to this story.

Suspect in killing at Louisville protest in custody

By DYLAN LOVAN and JOHN RABY Associated Press

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (AP) — The suspect arrested in the shooting death of a man during a Louisville protest over the police killing of Breonna Taylor had taken part in demonstrations but was disruptive and had been asked by other protesters to leave, authorities and protesters said Sunday.

The man, identified by an arrest citation as Steven Nelson Lopez, was hospitalized and being interviewed by homicide investigators about the shooting that happened late Saturday, interim Louisville Police Chief Robert Schroeder said at a news conference.

Lopez was wounded in the leg by gunfire from bystanders at the park who were defending themselves, the arrest citation said. He has been charged with murder and wanton endangerment.

Tyler Charles Gerth, 27, of Louisville, died after being shot at Jefferson Square Park in downtown Louisville, authorities said. The Courier Journal reported that Gerth was an avid photographer and a vocal supporter of the ongoing protests whose godfather is a columnist at the newspaper.

In a video of the shooting shown during the news conference, Lopez was surrounded by several people before shots were fired, and people scrambled for cover. Another video posted on social media later showed at least one person bleeding profusely on the ground.

Several other people fired gunshots after the suspect began firing, but no one else was hit, Louisville Mayor Greg Fischer said.

"Whether they were there at the time of the shooting or not, I know the sadness of those who have been organizing and participating in peaceful protests for racial justice. This is absolutely not what they wanted or any of us wanted," Fischer said. "We cannot let one senseless act by one individual derail that dream, that vision that we have as a city."

For nearly a month, protesters have been calling for the officers involved in Breonna Taylor's death to be charged. Taylor, a 26-year-old Black woman, was killed in her Louisville home in March by police who were serving a no-knock warrant. One of the officers was recently fired.

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Saturday's shooting was at least the second during the protests. Seven people were wounded May 28 when gunfire erupted near City Hall, prompting Taylor's mother to issue a statement asking people to demand justice "without hurting each other."

Gerth's family said he was "incredibly kind, tenderhearted and generous, holding deep convictions and faith."

"It was this sense of justice that drove Tyler to be part of the peaceful demonstrations advocating for the destruction of the systemic racism within our society's systems," the family said in a statement to the Courier Journal.

Protesters at the park Sunday said Lopez was a familiar face around the protests but sometimes caused trouble. Julie Sullivan, who was near the corner where the shooter fired, said Lopez was asked to leave earlier on Saturday.

Sullivan said she heard about eight gunshots that broke up an otherwise calm day of demonstrations. She saw some nearby children and yelled for them to crawl toward her.

"I've never been through anything like that, and I hope I never go through anything like that again," Sullivan said.

Schroeder said the man had been participating in the protests since they began and had been arrested a few times. The arrest citation said Lopez was born in 1996, but it lists no driver's license number or home address, other than Louisville.

Lopez "had been repeatedly asked by other members at the park to leave due to his disruptive behavior," Schroeder said.

Protesters were allowed to continue gathering at the park Sunday, although police said overnight camping and cooking were banned. They also removed tents and told protesters they could pick them up at a separate location.

John Kriner knelt for nearly 30 minutes at the site to pray for peace. He said it was his first visit.

"I just want there to be peace and calm," Kriner said.

Shootings across Chicago kill 3 kids; activists seek change

By SOPHIA TAREEN Associated Press

CHICAGO (AP) — Activists and local leaders called for more state and federal support Sunday as weekend shootings across Chicago left three children dead, including a 10-year-old who was struck by a stray bullet that came through an apartment window.

The Saturday night death was among at least 10 shooting fatalities since Friday evening, which follow a deadly Father's Day weekend and fresh concerns about a violent summer ahead. A 1-year-old and 17-year-old were also killed.

"It's out of control where even innocent children are losing their lives," said neighborhood activist Raul Montes Jr., who planned a Sunday evening vigil on the city's southwest side.

He called for federal intervention while a state legislator announced a new task force to addressing underlying issues.

"Violence is a result of poverty, and must be addressed with human services and support," said state Rep. La Shawn Ford, a Chicago Democrat, in a statement. The group called on federal, state and city leaders for support.

A recent spate of shootings in Chicago and other cities have had authorities on edge. Experts say non-suicidal gun deaths are on track to top last year. The news comes as the American public is dealing with the stress of the coronavirus pandemic and economic fallout, more awareness of racial injustice and policing, and deeper political divisions in a presidential election year.

"The pain of losing a child never goes away," Mayor Lori Lightfoot said Saturday on Twitter. "As a mother, I am tired of the funerals. I am tired of burying our children."

Her office said Sunday that the multi-faceted approach to curbing violence in the coming months will include a \$7.5 million street outreach program where police partner with organizations and an operations

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center launched last month. Staff from the park district, schools and a transit agency will work to "broaden the city's footprint in places where shootings and homicides have recently occurred."

The 10-year-old girl died at a hospital after the shooting in the Logan Square neighborhood northwest of downtown around 9:40 p.m., according to police spokesman Roberto Garduno.

Preliminary information showed the gunfire came from a group of males who had been shooting at each other on the block, he said. No one was in custody Sunday.

Earlier Saturday in the Englewood neighborhood on the city's South Side, a 1-year-old boy who was riding in the back of a car driven by his mother was shot when someone opened fire from another car. The mother suffered a graze wound to the head. The boy was identified as Sincere A. Gaston.

Police said the motive for the shooting was unclear.

Superintendent David Brown pleaded with the public for someone to come forward with details.

"We ALL need to be outraged by the violence we are seeing in our city," he said in a statement. "This baby, and all of our residents, deserve better. This is not just a problem that Englewood needs to solve. This is not just a problem on the South Side or the West Side. We cannot compartmentalize the violence that is tearing families and communities apart."

His office didn't immediately have further comment Sunday.

The 17-year-old, identified as Antiwon Douglas, was killed around 11:30 a.m. Saturday. Police said he got into a fight and someone from a large crowd that was gathered in the Humboldt Park neighborhood on the city's West Side fired shots.

Over Father's Day weekend, 14 people, including five children, were killed and more than 100 people were shot, marking the city's highest number of shooting victims in a single weekend this year.

Follow Sophia Tareen on Twitter: <https://twitter.com/sophiatareen>.

Trump tweets video with 'white power' chant, then deletes it

By ZEKE MILLER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump on Sunday tweeted approvingly of a video showing one of his supporters chanting "white power," a racist slogan associated with white supremacists. He later deleted the tweet and the White House said the president had not heard "the one statement" on the video.

The video appeared to have been taken at The Villages, a Florida retirement community, and showed dueling demonstrations between Trump supporters and opponents.

"Thank you to the great people of The Villages," Trump tweeted. Moments into the video clip he shared, a man driving a golf cart displaying pro-Trump signs and flags shouts "white power." The video also shows anti-Trump protesters shouting "Nazi," "racist," and profanities at the Trump backers.

"There's no question" that Trump should not have retweeted the video and "he should just take it down," Sen. Tim Scott, R-S.C., told CNN's "State of the Union." Scott is the only Black Republican in the Senate.

"I think it's indefensible," he added.

Shortly afterward, Trump deleted the tweet that shared the video. White House spokesman Judd Deere said in a statement that "President Trump is a big fan of The Villages. He did not hear the one statement made on the video. What he did see was tremendous enthusiasm from his many supporters."

The White House did not respond when asked whether Trump condemned the supporter's comment.

Joe Biden, the presumptive Democratic presidential nominee, condemned Trump. "We're in a battle for the soul of the nation — and the President has picked a side. But make no mistake: it's a battle we will win," the former vice president tweeted.

Trump's decision to highlight a video featuring a racist slogan comes amid a national reckoning over race following the deaths of George Floyd and other Black Americans. Floyd, a Black Minneapolis man, died after a white police officer pressed his knee into his neck for several minutes.

Protests against police brutality and bias in law enforcement have occurred across the country following Floyd's death. There also has also been a push to remove Confederate monuments and to rename military

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bases that honor figures who fought in the Civil War against the Union. Trump has opposed these efforts.

Trump has been directing his reelection message at the same group of disaffected, largely white voters who backed him four years ago. In doing so, he has stoked racial divisions in the country at a time when tensions are already high. He also has played into anti-immigrant anxieties by falsely claiming that people who have settled in this country commit crimes at greater rates than those who were born in the U.S.

Trump's tenure in office has appeared to have emboldened white supremacist and nationalist groups, some of whom have embraced his presidency. In 2017, Trump responded to clashes in Charlottesville, Virginia, between white nationalists and counter-protesters by saying there were "very fine people on both sides."

Sherrilyn Ifill, president and director-counsel of the NAACP Legal Defense and Education Fund told CBS' "Face the Nation" that "This really is not about the president taking it down. This is about the judgment of the president in putting it up."

She added, "It's about what the president believes and it's time for this country to really face that."

AP Interview: US envoy calls for Iran arms embargo renewal

By JON GAMBRELL Associated Press

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates (AP) — An expiring United Nations weapons embargo on Iran must remain in place to prevent it from "becoming the arms dealer of choice for rogue regimes and terrorist organizations around the world," the U.S. special representative to Iran said Sunday.

Brian Hook told The Associated Press that the world should ignore Iran's threats to retaliate if the arms embargo set to expire in October is extended, calling it a "mafia tactic." Among its options, the Islamic Republic could expel international inspectors monitoring Iran's nuclear program, deepening a crisis created by President Donald Trump unilaterally withdrawing from Tehran's 2015 atomic accord with global powers.

The U.N. arms embargo so far has stopped Iran from purchasing fighter jets, tanks, warships and other weaponry, but has failed to halt its smuggling of weapons into war zones. Despite that, Hook argued both an import and export ban on Tehran must remain in place to secure the wider Mideast.

"If we let it expire, you can be certain that what Iran has been doing in the dark, it will do in broad daylight and then some," Hook said.

Iran's mission to the United Nations did not immediately respond to a request for comment on Hook's remarks. However, President Hassan Rouhani described 2020 as Iran's "most difficult year" on Sunday due to the U.S. economic pressure campaign and the coronavirus pandemic.

Hook made the comments while on a visit to Abu Dhabi, the capital of the U.S.-allied United Arab Emirates, as part of a Mideast tour. Hook met Saturday with Emirati Foreign Minister Abdullah bin Zayed Al Nahyan and planned Sunday to meet with other officials. Hook declined to say where else he would travel on his trip.

Hook spoke to AP journalists in Dubai via videoconference as Abu Dhabi's borders remain closed to the UAE's six other sheikhdoms over the pandemic.

The United Nations banned Iran from buying major foreign weapon systems in 2010 amid tensions over its nuclear program. That blocked Iran from replacing its aging equipment, much of which had been purchased by the shah before the 1979 Islamic Revolution. An earlier embargo targeted Iranian arms exports.

If the embargo is lifted, the U.S. Defense Intelligence Agency predicted in 2019 that Iran likely would try to purchase Russian Su-30 fighter jets, Yak-130 trainer aircraft and T-90 tanks. Tehran also may try to buy Russia's S-400 anti-aircraft missile system and its Bastian coastal defense missile system, the DIA said.

Iran long has been outmatched by U.S.-backed Gulf nations like the UAE, which have purchased billions of dollars of advanced American weaponry. In response, Tehran turned toward developing ballistic missiles as a deterrent. Hook declined to discuss an explosion Friday in Iran near an area analysts believe hides an underground tunnel system and missile production sites.

Being able to pay for new, foreign weapons systems, however, remains in question. U.S. sanctions imposed after Trump withdrew from the nuclear deal have crushed Iran's oil sales, a major source of revenue. Energy prices have also collapsed amid the pandemic.

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Asked about how Iran would pay for the new weapons, Hook said Tehran's lowered revenues represented "a good thing for the region" and affected its ability to back its regional proxies, like Syria.

"We have put this regime through our strategy on the horns of a dilemma," Hook said. "They have to choose between guns in Damascus or butter in Tehran."

That financial pressure has led to sporadic anti-government protests in Iran, including nationwide demonstrations in November that Amnesty International says saw over 300 people killed. While the Trump administration has maintained it doesn't seek to overthrow Iran's government, its pressure campaign has exacerbated public anger against its Shiite theocracy.

Since Trump's withdrawal from the nuclear deal, Iran has broken all the accord's production limits. The U.N.'s International Atomic Energy Agency, which monitors Iranian nuclear activity as part of the deal, says Tehran's stockpile of low-enriched uranium continues to grow.

While not at weapons-grade levels, the growing stockpile and increased production shortens the one-year timeline analysts believe Iran would need to have enough material for a nuclear weapon if it chose to pursue one. Iran long has denied seeking atomic bombs, though the IAEA previously said Iran had done work in "support of a possible military dimension to its nuclear program" that largely halted in late 2003.

Iran has threatened to expel IAEA inspectors and withdraw from the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty amid the U.S. pressure campaign. North Korea, which now has nuclear weapons, is the only country to ever withdraw from the treaty.

"If we play by Iran's rules, Iran wins," Hook said. "It is a mafia tactic where people are intimidated into accepting a certain kind of behavior for fear of something far worse."

Hook maintained that the U.N.'s ban on Iran exporting weapons abroad also needed to remain in place, even though it has not prevented Tehran from smuggling arms. Iranian arms in particular have turned up in Yemen, where Tehran-backed Houthi rebels fight a Saudi-led coalition.

"I don't think anyone believes that Iran's behavior merits loosening restrictions on their ability to move weapons," Hook said.

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

Russian nickel producer admits pollution in Arctic tundra

MOSCOW (AP) — A Russian metallurgical company said Sunday that it improperly pumped wastewater into the Arctic tundra and that it has suspended the responsible employees.

The statement from Norinickel is the second time in a month the company has been connected to pollution in the ecologically delicate region.

In May, around 21,000 tons of diesel fuel leaked after a reservoir at a Norinickel-operated power plant collapsed; some of the fuel entered a lake that feeds into an arm of the Arctic Sea.

The statement came hours after the independent newspaper Novaya Gazeta reported that water tainted with heavy metals from the tailings at a nickel-processing plant were being pumped into a river.

Norinickel said the water was improperly pumped because of an overflowing sump; it said the water was "clarified" and there is no threat of waste leakage.

Both facilities are near Norilsk, north of the Arctic Circle, 2,900 kilometers (1,800 miles) northeast of Moscow.

This story has been corrected to show that the name of the company is Norinickel, not Norilsk Nickel.

Follow all AP stories about pollution and climate change at <https://apnews.com/Climate>

Rolling Stones threaten to sue Trump over using their songs

By DANICA KIRKA Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — The Rolling Stones are threatening President Donald Trump with legal action for using their songs at his rallies despite cease-and-desist directives.

The Stones said in a statement Sunday that their legal team is working with music rights organization BMI to stop use of their material in Trump's reelection campaign.

"The BMI have notified the Trump campaign on behalf of the Stones that the unauthorized use of their songs will constitute a breach of its licensing agreement," the Stones said. "If Donald Trump disregards the exclusion and persists, then he would face a lawsuit for breaking the embargo and playing music that has not been licensed."

The Trump campaign team didn't immediately respond to an email seeking comment.

The Stones had complained during Trump's 2016 campaign about the use of their music to fire up his conservative base at rallies.

The Rolling Stones' 1969 classic "You Can't Always Get What You Want" was a popular song for his events. It was played again at the close of Trump's recent rally in Tulsa, Oklahoma — an indoor event criticized for its potential to spread the coronavirus.

The music rights organization BMI provides licenses for venues to play a broad array of music and has a catalog of more than 15 million songs that can be played at political events. Artists can opt out of having their music played at political events, and a BMI statement says the Stones have done that.

BMI has informed the Trump campaign that if it plays Stones music again at an event, it will be in breach of its licensing agreement, the statement said.

Other artists have also complained about having their music associated with Trump's events.

The family of the late rock musician Tom Petty said that it had issued a cease-and-desist order after Trump used the song "I Won't Back Down" in Tulsa.

"Trump was in no way authorized to use this song to further a campaign that leaves too many Americans and common sense behind," the statement said. "Both the late Tom Petty and his family firmly stand against racism and discrimination of any kind. Tom Petty would never want a song of his to be used in a campaign of hate. He liked to bring people together."

Grammy Award-winning musician Neil Young lashed out at Trump in 2018 after hearing one of his songs played against his wishes during Trump's pre-midterm campaign rallies. The Canadian-born musician admonished Trump for using his 1990 single, "Rockin' in the Free World," in spite of earlier warnings.

Experts see no proof of child-abuse surge amid pandemic

By DAVID CRARY AP National Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — When the coronavirus pandemic took hold across the United States in mid-March, forcing schools to close and many children to be locked down in households buffeted by job losses and other forms of stress, many child-welfare experts warned of a likely surge of child abuse.

Fifteen weeks later, the worries persist. Yet some experts on the front lines, including pediatricians who helped sound the alarm, say they have seen no evidence of a marked increase.

Among them is Dr. Lori Frasier, who heads the child-protection program at Penn State's Hershey Medical Center and is president of a national society of pediatricians specializing in child abuse prevention and treatment.

Frasier said she got input in recent days from 18 of her colleagues across the country and "no one has experienced the surge of abuse they were expecting."

A similar assessment came from Jerry Milner, who communicates with child-protection agencies nationwide as head of the Children's Bureau at the federal Department of Health and Human Services. "I'm not aware of any data that would substantiate that children are being abused at a higher rate during the pandemic," he told The Associated Press.

Still, some experts believe the actual level of abuse during the pandemic is being hidden from view

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because many children are seeing neither teachers nor doctors, and many child-protection agencies have cut back on home visits by caseworkers.

"There's no question children are more at risk — and we won't be able to see those children until school reopens," said Marci Hamilton, a University of Pennsylvania professor who heads CHILD USA, a think tank seeking to prevent child abuse and neglect.

Several states said calls to their child-abuse hotlines dropped by 40% or more, which they attributed to the fact that teachers and school nurses, who are required to report suspected abuse, no longer had direct contact with students.

"While calls have gone down, that doesn't mean abuse has stopped," said Gov. Chris Sununu of New Hampshire, which reported a 50% drop in hotline calls.

Comprehensive data on abuse during the pandemic won't be available for many months, according to Milner.

And whatever the current level of abuse, there's no question some of it is horrific.

Georgia Boothe of Children's Aid, a private agency that provides some of New York City's foster care services, said some of the children now entering the system were brought in by police officers investigating domestic violence reports.

"The level of severity in some of those cases is unreal," she said.

Frasier, the Pennsylvania-based pediatrician, said some of her colleagues documented a sharp increase in shaken baby syndrome and children's head injuries during the 2008 recession, which they attributed at least partly to economic stress.

"With the pandemic, we saw the high jobless rates, the layoffs, and we thought 'OK, now we're in for it again,'" she said.

She and others have noted some changes during the pandemic — for example, more accidental injuries from burns, falls and mishaps on farms. What they have not seen is a surge of child abuse.

Frasier has a couple of guesses as to why — a protective effect in households where multiple people were locked down together and federal financial aid that eased the stress on some vulnerable families.

In Nashville, Tennessee, Dr. Heather Williams says she and her colleagues who specialize in child-abuse pediatrics were braced for a pandemic-fueled surge, based on the experiences of 2008. Now she wonders if the recent infusion of federal unemployment assistance may have helped ward off such an increase.

"We'd be really excited if we're wrong," she said.

At the Children's Bureau, Milner says he's gratified that child protection is deemed a high priority during the pandemic, but he was troubled by the tone of some of the early warnings. He suggested that some had "racist underpinnings" — unfairly stereotyping low-income parents of color as prone to abusive behavior.

"To sound alarm bells, because teachers aren't seeing kids every day, that parents are waiting to harm their kids — it's an unfair depiction of so many parents out there doing the best under very tough circumstances," he said.

One of Milner's top aides, special assistant David Kelly, noted that in normal times a large majority of calls to child-abuse hotlines don't trigger investigations.

"We know that the majority of findings of child maltreatment are for neglect, not physical abuse or exploitation, and we know that there are strong associations between neglect and challenges associated with poverty," Kelly wrote in a June 12 article in the Chronicle of Social Change.

"If we take a closer look ... we might be able to see the depth of resiliency that is present and the remarkable efforts poor parents make to get by on the smallest fraction of what many of us have."

Concerns about children's well-being amid the pandemic extend beyond physical abuse. There are worries about children missing vaccinations as their parents skip visits to doctors' offices.

For children with internet access, weeks away from school have increased the risk of online sexual exploitation, according to Dr. Elizabeth Letourneau. She heads the Johns Hopkins Moore Center for the Prevention of Child Sexual Abuse.

However, Letourneau is encouraged by one recent trend — more older children are calling hotlines themselves to report exploitation and abuse.

Summer may decide fate of leading shots in vaccine race

By LAURAN NEERGAARD AP Medical Writer

People on six continents already are getting jabs in the arm as the race for a COVID-19 vaccine enters a defining summer, with even bigger studies poised to prove if any shot really works -- and maybe offer a reality check.

Already British and Chinese researchers are chasing the coronavirus beyond their borders, testing potential vaccines in Brazil and the United Arab Emirates because there are too few new infections at home to get clear answers.

The U.S. is set to open the largest trials -- 30,000 people to test a government-created shot starting in July, followed about a month later with another 30,000 expected to test a British one.

Those likely will be divided among Americans and volunteers in other countries such as Brazil or South Africa, Dr. Anthony Fauci of the National Institutes of Health told The Associated Press.

While he's optimistic, "we've been burned before," Fauci cautioned.

Multiple successes, in multiple parts of the world, are vital.

"This isn't a race of who gets there first. This is, get as many approved, safe and effective vaccines as you possibly can," Fauci said.

Vaccine experts say it's time to set public expectations. Many scientists don't expect a coronavirus vaccine to be nearly as protective as the measles shot.

If the best COVID-19 vaccine is only 50% effective, "that's still to me a great vaccine," said Dr. Drew Weissman of the University of Pennsylvania.

"We need to start having this conversation now," so people won't be surprised, he added.

And for all the government promises of stockpiling doses in hopes of starting vaccinations by year's end, here's the catch: Even if a shot pans out -- and it's one that your country stockpiled -- only some high-risk people, such as essential workers, go to the front of a very long line.

"Will you and I get vaccinated this year? No way," said Duke University health economist David Ridley.

THE HOME STRETCH

Vaccines train the body to rapidly recognize and fend off an invading germ. About 15 experimental COVID-19 vaccines are in various stages of human studies worldwide.

And while there's no guarantee any will pan out, moving three different kinds into final testing offers better odds -- especially since scientists don't yet know just how strong an immune reaction the shots must spark to protect.

Measuring that with the first proven vaccine will "really help us understand for all the other vaccines in development, do they also have a chance?" said Oxford University lead researcher Sarah Gilbert.

Only China is pushing out "inactivated" vaccines, made by growing the new coronavirus and killing it. Vaccines by Sinovac Biotech and SinoPharm use that old-fashioned technology, which requires high-security labs to produce but is dependable, the way polio shots and some flu vaccines are made.

Most other vaccines in the pipeline target not the whole germ but a key piece -- the "spike" protein that studs the surface of the coronavirus and helps it invade human cells. Leading candidates use new technologies that make shots faster to produce but haven't yet been proven in people.

Oxford's method: Genetically engineer a chimpanzee cold virus so it won't spread but can carry the gene for that spike protein into just enough cells to trick the immune system that an infection's brewing.

Another vaccine made by the NIH and Moderna Inc. simply injects a piece of the coronavirus genetic code that instructs the body to produce harmless spike copies that the immune system learns to recognize.

CHASING THE VIRUS

Researchers must test thousands of people not where COVID-19 is surging -- because then it's too late -- but where it's smoldering, Fauci said.

Only if the virus starts spreading through a community several weeks after volunteers receive either a vaccine or a dummy shot -- time enough for the immune system to rev up -- do scientists have the best chance at comparing which group had more illness.

Lacking a crystal ball, the NIH has vaccine testing networks in the U.S., South America and South Africa

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on standby while finalizing decisions on the summer tests.

"We're going to be doing it in multiple sites with a degree of flexibility" so researchers can rapidly shift as the virus moves, Fauci said. "Nothing is going to be easy."

The Oxford shot, with a 10,000-person study underway in England, already encountered that hurdle. Gilbert told a Parliament committee last week that there's "little chance, frankly" of proving the vaccine's effectiveness in Britain after infections plummeted with the lockdown.

So her team looked abroad. In addition to the planned U.S.-run study, Brazil last week began a last-stage test of the Oxford shot in 5,000 health workers, the first experimental COVID-19 vaccinations in South America. In another first, South Africa opened a smaller safety study of the Oxford shot.

With few new infections in China, Sinovac next month will begin final tests in 9,000 Brazilian volunteers. And SinoPharm just signed an agreement with the United Arab Emirates; that study's size isn't clear.

EXPECT IMPERFECT PROTECTION

Animal research suggests COVID-19 vaccines could prevent serious disease but may not completely block infection. One study that dripped the coronavirus into monkeys showed vaccinated animals avoided pneumonia but had some virus lurking in their noses and throats. Whether it was enough to spread to the unvaccinated isn't known.

Still, that would be a big win.

"My expectations have always been that we'll get rid of symptomatic disease. From what we've seen of the vaccines so far, that's what they do," said Penn's Weissman.

The initial vaccines might be replaced with later, better arrivals, as historically happens in medicine, noted Duke's Ridley.

And while shots in the arm are the fastest to make, those for respiratory diseases require virus-fighting antibodies to make their way into the lungs. Gilbert said Oxford eventually will explore nasal delivery.

WARNING AGAINST SHORTCUTS

Some U.S. lawmakers worry about pressure from the Trump administration to push out an unproven shot during the fall election season.

"We want a vaccine, not a headline," Sen. Jack Reed, a Democrat from Rhode Island, said at a recent Senate committee hearing.

Dr. Stephen Hahn, commissioner of the Food and Drug Administration, pledged to a House committee last week that any decision would be based on science.

Different countries have different rules about when to release a vaccine. For the U.S., Fauci insisted there will be no safety shortcuts, a key reason NIH is investing in such huge studies.

Regardless of how and when a vaccine arrives, each country also will prioritize who's first in line as doses become available. Presumably they'll start with health workers and those most vulnerable to severe disease — as long as each shot is proven to work in at-risk groups such as older adults.

Because each vaccine works differently, "which population group it will protect, we don't know yet," said Dr. Mariangela Simao of the World Health Organization, which is advising countries on how to choose.

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Courts straining to balance public health with public access

By DAVID A. LIEB Associated Press

After her son was arrested for allegedly throwing rocks at police during a protest over racial injustice, Tanisha Brown headed to the courthouse in her California hometown to watch her son's arraignment.

She was turned away, told the courthouse was closed to the public because of coronavirus precautions. A day later, the Kern County Superior Court in Bakersfield posted a notice on its website explaining how the public could request special permission from judicial officers to attend court proceedings.

But problems with public access have persisted, according to a federal lawsuit filed Friday on behalf of

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Brown and several others who have been unable to watch court sessions.

The situation in Kern County highlights the challenges courts across the U.S. are facing as they try to balance public health protections with public access to their proceedings amid the COVID-19 outbreak.

The U.S. Constitution guarantees the right to a public trial, but some courts have held arraignments and other pretrial hearings without the public watching or listening. In some cases, the public had no means of participating. In other cases, the defendant's family members, friends or other interested residents weren't aware how to gain access to special video feeds.

"The courtrooms are supposed to be fully public, anybody who's interested is supposed to be able to watch, and they have not been doing that," said Sergio De La Pava, legal director of New York County Defender Services, a nonprofit public defenders office in Manhattan.

In California, a coalition of civil liberties and open-government organizations sent a letter this month to the state's chief justice documenting numerous instances in multiple courts where the public was shut out of proceedings, including the one involving Brown's son on June 10.

"We've found widespread instances, to put it most bluntly, of court secrecy," said David Snyder, executive director of the First Amendment Coalition, based in the San Francisco Bay area.

Brown said she was surprised to be turned away when her 24-year-old-son, Avion Hunter, was arraigned on a felony charge of assaulting a police officer and misdemeanors of rioting, unlawful assembly and resisting arrest during a June 1 protest over the death of George Floyd at the hands of Minneapolis police.

"I can understand you don't want a lot of people in," Brown told The Associated Press. "But why couldn't I go in, just one person, as his mom?"

Members of two media outlets were allowed in to the courtroom for Hunter's arraignment because they filled out requests, said Kern County Superior Court spokeswoman Kristin Davis.

When cases of COVID-19 started mounting in March, many courts shut down because of concerns about staff, attorneys, defendants, jurors, witnesses, media and members of the public all crowding together in courtrooms. Many courts later began conducting some proceedings remotely, using video feeds of defendants from jail and attorneys from their homes or offices.

It's unclear exactly how many people have been denied the ability to observe court proceedings, because it's difficult to track the thousands of local courts across the U.S., said Bill Raftery, a senior analyst at the National Center for State Courts.

"Has it happened? Yes," Raftery said. But he said court officials are trying to balance "the idea that the courts have to be open as much as possible consistent with not spreading a mass contagion."

In Chicago's home of Cook County, Illinois, the circuit court includes a link on its website to a YouTube channel allowing anyone to watch its proceedings. The video feed includes a warning that people recording or photographing the live-streamed sessions could be penalized for contempt of court.

The remote hearings generally seem to be working. But volunteer court observers experienced some technical difficulties during a coordinated initiative to monitor proceedings last month, said Sharlyn Grace, executive director of the Chicago Community Bond Fund, a nonprofit group involved in the monitoring project.

Remote court proceedings also have been used in civil cases in some states, with mixed results.

The Missouri Supreme Court has offered an audio livestream of its remote proceedings while excluding the public, the attorneys and most of the judges from its courtroom. But the livestream failed during a June 15 hearing on a challenge to the state's absentee voting requirements to be used during the coronavirus outbreak. The court posted an audio recording online about an hour later.

Some courts, like those in New York City, have declined to post live video feeds on their websites. Instead, as they gradually ramp up proceedings, the city's courts are allowing a limited number of people to enter courtrooms where they can listen to audio of remote hearings or get a one-time video link to watch on their personal computers or smartphones, said Regan Williams, senior clerk in Manhattan's criminal court.

New York's arrangement "may in fact be reasonable under the circumstances" as a way of ensuring that the defendants' interests aren't harmed by people recording the hearings, said Douglas Keith, a counsel at the Brennan Center for Justice's Democracy Program at New York University Law School.

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But holding hearings in which the judge, defendant, attorneys and the public are in separate places can weaken judicial accountability, he said. When people are present in a courtroom, judges and attorneys may be more aware of "the sheer weight of their responsibility," Keith said.

In New Orleans, another city that was hit hard by the coronavirus, courts that had been shuttered to the public began holding Zoom proceedings in June.

The court's website directed the public to contact a judge's office to get the access code to watch particular proceedings. But few people actually have done so, said Chief Judge Karen Herman of the Orleans Parish Criminal District Court.

Herman said the courts plan to reopen to the public on July 6, with limited seating because of social distancing. Her courtroom will have a capacity of just 14 people, with half the spots filled by court personnel, attorneys and the defendant.

Although onlookers could attempt to attend court in person, "we're going to ask members of the public to call in and view from Zoom if they wish," Herman said.

Follow David A. Lieb on Twitter @DavidALieb

Trump's attacks seen undercutting confidence in 2020 vote

By JILL COLVIN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — It was a startling declaration about one of the pillars of American democracy, all the more so given its source.

The president of the United States last week publicly predicted without evidence that the 2020 presidential election would be "the most corrupt election in the history of our country."

"We cannot let this happen," Donald Trump told an audience of young supporters at a Phoenix megachurch. "They want it to happen so badly."

Just over four months before Election Day, the president is escalating his efforts to cast doubt on the integrity of the vote.

It's a well-worn tactic for Trump, who in 2016 went after the very process that ultimately put him in the White House. He first attacked the Republican primaries ("rigged and boss controlled") and then the general election, when he accused the media and Democratic rival Hillary Clinton's campaign of conspiring against him to undermine a free and fair election.

"The process is rigged. This whole election is being rigged," he said that October when polls showed him trailing Clinton by double digits as he faced a flurry of sexual misconduct allegations.

Then, as now, election experts have repeatedly discredited his claims about widespread fraud in the voting process.

In a country with a history of peaceful political transition, a major-party candidate's efforts to delegitimize an election amounted to a striking rupture of faith in American democracy. But to do the same as president, historians say, is unprecedented.

"Never," said presidential historian Douglas Brinkley when asked whether any past U.S. president had ever used such language. "What you're seeing is someone who's an autocrat or a dictator in action."

This year, Trump has seized on efforts across the country to expand the ability of people to vote by mail. It's a movement that was spurred by the coronavirus, which has infected more than 2.4 million people in the U.S. and killed more than 125,000 nationwide. The virus is highly contagious and especially dangerous for older people, who typically vote in higher numbers and have been advised by federal health authorities to limit their interactions with others.

There is no evidence of widespread voter fraud through mail-in voting, even in states with all-mail votes. Trump and many members of his administration have themselves repeatedly voted via absentee ballots. But that hasn't stopped Trump from accusing Democrats of trying to "rig the election by sending out tens of millions of mail-in ballots, using the China virus as the excuse for allowing people not to go to the polls."

"People went to the polls and voted during World War I. They went to the polls and voted during World

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War II. We can safely go to the polls and vote during COVID-19," he said in his Phoenix speech.

Trump's complaints come as he has been lagging in both internal and public polls. The criticism is seen by some as part of a broader effort by Trump to depress turnout by making it harder for people, especially in cities, to vote safely, and to lay the groundwork for a potential challenge to the results in November if he loses. Trump and his campaign vociferously deny this.

Julian Zelizer, a presidential historian at Princeton University, said Trump may be trying to preempt the sting of a humiliation if he fails to win a second term. But Zelizer said Trump also appears to be "setting up the foundation for taking action."

"What I do think is very realistic is a replay of 2000," he said, referring to the legal saga in which the Supreme Court stepped in to resolve a dispute over which candidate had won Florida. Republican George W. Bush's ultimate win in the state gave him a general election victory over Democrat Al Gore.

If this year's election is close, Zelizer said, Trump could turn to the courts "and wage a political campaign to say this is being stolen and tie up efforts to count the votes."

Brinkley was even more alarmist, questioning whether Trump would vacate the office if he lost.

"Trump is laying down his markers very clearly that he's not going to leave the White House. I think that he's just setting the stage," Brinkley said, to say "I'm not leaving. It was a fraudulent election."

Even barring such an extreme move, Brinkley said the president's rhetoric undermines public confidence in the electoral system. "It creates mayhem and it breaks the heart of what a democracy is."

Americans already have widespread concerns about the security and integrity of elections. A February poll from The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research found that only about one-third have high confidence that votes in the 2020 election will be counted accurately.

Americans' support for mail-in voting has jumped amid concerns over the virus, with 6 in 10 now saying they would support their state allowing people to vote by mail-in ballot without requiring a reason, according to an April survey. Democrats are far more likely to support it than Republicans, a partisan split that has emerged since 2018, suggesting Trump's public campaign may be resonating with his GOP backers.

White House officials and Trump's campaign say he has raised the issue because Democrats are trying to use the virus as an excuse to tilt voting rules their way.

"I think the president is only talking about this because Democrats have been going around to try to change rules in their favor under the guise of the virus. ... This isn't a fight he picked," said Trump campaign political adviser and senior counsel Justin Clark. "The coronavirus does not give us an excuse to radically alter our way of voting."

Officials noted Trump has voiced support for the use of absentee ballots when voters have a legitimate reason, although he has not said whether that includes fear of contracting the virus.

"Imposing a new voting system in a hurried fashion ahead of November only exacerbates the real, underlying concerns about the security of voting by mail without the proper safeguards," said White House spokesperson Sarah Matthews. "All Americans deserve an election system that is secure and President Trump is highlighting that Democrats' plan for mass mail-in system would lead to fraud."

But Wendy R. Weiser, director of the Democracy Program at the Brennan Center for Justice at NYU School of Law, said such concerns are "completely baseless," according to study after study. While no system is immune to fraud, she said, expanded voting by mail is "clearly the safest and necessary response to a pandemic."

Trump's efforts to suggest otherwise are "extremely damaging to America, to our democracy, on multiple fronts," she said, noting that foreign adversaries have long tried to undermine confidence in the American politician system.

"This," she said, "is in some respects doing their work for them."

After Floyd, raw talk, racial reckoning among US Muslims

By MARIAM FAM Associated Press

As a young student, Hind Makki recalls, she would call out others at the Islamic school she attended when some casually used an Arabic word meaning "slaves" to refer to Black people.

"Maybe 85% of the time, the response that I would get from people ... is, 'Oh, we don't mean you, we mean the Americans,'" Makki said during a virtual panel discussion on race, one of many organized in the wake of George Floyd's death.

"That's a whole other situation about anti-Blackness, particularly against African Americans," said Makki, who identifies as a Black Arab Muslim.

In recent weeks, many Muslims in the U.S. have joined racial justice rallies across the country and denounced racism in sermons, statements and webinars. American Muslims, Black and non-Black, are also having raw conversations like Makki's as they grapple with questions of racial equity, tensions and representation in their own faith communities.

"Everyone is talking about this, like from the uncle who's been here since the early '70s, was a retired doctor somewhere, a retired board member of a mosque to ... a high school student in the suburbs," Makki, an anti-racism and interfaith educator, said in an interview. "The question needs to be pushed further than what words, what slurs you're using, which you shouldn't be using. How can we reach equity ... in the spaces that we actually can change?"

Muslims in America are diverse. No racial or ethnic group makes up a majority of Muslim American adults, and 20 percent are Black, according to a 2017 survey by Pew Research Center.

Margari Hill, executive director of the Muslim Anti-Racism Collaborative, says she has seen a surge of interest, questions and demand from Muslim communities for her expertise: Can she look at a statement or provide topics for a program? Are there resources in Arabic or Bengali? Is it more appropriate to say Black or African American? Can she talk about anti-Blackness?

"There's been a lot of calling out and calling in and deep reflection," she said. "We're asking people to be committed to, like, unlearning, you know, and building authentic relationships" that last beyond the current moment.

Questions about how much change the flurry of discussions can spark echo those about a larger, national reckoning.

"The openness of all different corners of the Muslim community to have this conversation in a really robust way is unprecedented and it is commendable," said Imam Dawud Walid, the executive director of the Michigan chapter of the Council on American-Islamic Relations. "The challenge is when the protests eventually fizzle and the next calamity hits our country, will the conversation continue within the Muslim community?"

For this not to be a fleeting moment, Walid said, the makeup of leadership at national Islamic organizations must be more representative. He and others have called for more Black Muslim speakers and not just to talk about race or only during Black History Month.

At the Islamic Society of North America, where the current elected board of 10 directors has no African Americans, executive director Basharat Saleem said the organization has been working to boost diversity but acknowledged that more must be done.

African American Muslims have been well represented as speakers at ISNA events, he said, but attendance from people in that community at annual conventions has been low.

"We have to do more work to basically reach out to the community," Saleem said. "Also, (the) same thing has to happen from that community."

Through the likes of art and social media hashtags, many Black Muslims have worked in recent years to amplify their stories and highlight a narrative that many of them say have been overshadowed by that of other Muslims. Some reflect on what it's like to be Black and Muslim.

Some experiences feel "exhausting," Hill said. She remembers being referred to as a "slave" in Arabic at a Muslim store. One time, she was asked if she could "really read" a copy of the Quran she wanted to

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buy. "No one wants to, you know, feel like they have to justify their humanity or their faith."

Ubaydullah Evans, resident scholar for the American Learning Institute for Muslims, says he's experienced "interpersonal racism," from some Muslims. Still, other non-Black Muslims "have always sought to build community," and work with African Americans, he said.

Walid, like many others, says Islam sends a clear message of egalitarianism.

Over the years, there have been efforts to build bridges. More recently, some have taken an oath against using the Arabic word for "slaves."

Others focused discussions on how to improve relations between Arab and Muslim store owners and the Black communities they serve. Dozens of American Muslim organizations came together to demand police reform and pledged to support Black-led groups.

Evans credits younger Muslims with a lot of work challenging racial inequality. He hopes "we get the maximum mileage out of this moment," but says some Black American Muslims "have been hurt so badly that it's hard for them to summon that trust."

Sylvia Chan-Malik, who teaches about race and about Islam in America at Rutgers University, said some of the tensions stem from divergent views of America. Many African American Muslims have, historically, engaged Islam as a repudiation of anti-Black racism and "have long viewed the police as a threat to Black communities," she said. Meanwhile, some immigrants "really want to believe in the promise of America" and have faith in the system, she added.

And because Islam's history in the U.S. is "marginalized," Chan-Malik argued, misconceptions by some about African American Muslims may include thinking that they are all converts or practice an inauthentic form of Islam.

"Islam entered this country as a religious presence through the bodies, the culture, the voices and perspectives of enslaved Africans," she said. "You cannot divorce Islam in America from the African American experience."

On a recent virtual panel to bring attention to the history of Black American Muslims and address racism, Imam Jihad Saafir said he was "hopeful and happy" about Muslims' response.

Some imams, he said, have been telling him they want to learn more and better understand racism. He shared plans to send African American imams to different California mosques for a day.

"No co-opting our issues on that day," he told participants. "The pleasure of Allah lies in us building community with one another."

Associated Press religion coverage receives support from the Lilly Endowment through the Religion News Foundation. The AP is solely responsible for this content.

Today in History

By The Associated Press undefined

Today in History

Today is Monday, June 29, the 181st day of 2020. There are 185 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On June 29, 1613, London's original Globe Theatre, where many of Shakespeare's plays were performed, was destroyed by a fire sparked by a cannon shot during a performance of "Henry VIII."

On this date:

In 1520, Montezuma II, the ninth and last emperor of the Aztecs, died in Tenochtitlan (tay-nohch-TEET'-lahn) under unclear circumstances (some say he was killed by his own subjects; others, by the Spanish).

In 1767, Britain approved the Townshend Revenue Act, which imposed import duties on glass, paint, oil, lead, paper and tea shipped to the American colonies. (Colonists bitterly protested, prompting Parliament to repeal the duties — except for tea.)

In 1776, the Virginia state constitution was adopted, and Patrick Henry was made governor.

In 1880, France annexed Tahiti, which became a French colony on December 30, 1880.

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In 1927, the first trans-Pacific airplane flight was completed as U.S. Army Air Corps Lt. Lester J. Maitland and Lt. Albert F. Hegenberger arrived at Wheeler Field in Hawaii aboard the Bird of Paradise, an Atlantic-Fokker C-2, after flying 2,400 miles from Oakland, California, in 25 hours, 50 minutes.

In 1933, actor-director Roscoe "Fatty" Arbuckle died in New York at age 46.

In 1946, authorities in British-ruled Palestine arrested more than 2,700 Jews in an attempt to stamp out extremists.

In 1970, the United States ended a two-month military offensive into Cambodia.

In 1974, Isabel Martinez de Peron was sworn in as acting president of Argentina, two days before the death of her ailing husband, President Juan Peron.

In 1995, the space shuttle Atlantis and the Russian Mir space station linked in orbit, beginning a historic five-day voyage as a single ship. A department store in Seoul (sohl), South Korea, collapsed, killing at least 500 people. Actress Lana Turner died in Century City, California, at age 74.

In 2006, the Supreme Court ruled, 5-3, that President George W. Bush's plan to try Guantanamo Bay detainees in military tribunals violated U.S. and international law.

In 2009, disgraced financier Bernard Madoff received a 150-year sentence for his multibillion-dollar fraud.

Ten years ago: China and Taiwan signed a tariff-slashing trade pact that boosted economic ties and further eased political tensions six decades after the rivals split amid civil war. Talk show host Larry King announced he would step down from his CNN show in the autumn after 25 years on the air.

Five years ago: A deeply divided Supreme Court upheld the use of a controversial drug, midazolam (mih-DAZ'-oh-lam), in lethal-injection executions. (Executions that employed midazolam took longer than usual and raised concerns that the drug did not perform its intended task of putting inmates into a coma-like sleep.) A car bomb killed Egypt's chief prosecutor, Hisham Barakat, in the country's first assassination of a senior official in 25 years. Stanley Cup winners Nicklas Lidstrom, Chris Pronger and Sergei Fedorov and former NHL star Phil Housley were among the seven newcomers in the Hockey Hall of Fame.

One year ago: Former New York City police detective Luis Alvarez, who was a leader in the fight to maintain the Sept. 11 Victims Compensation Fund, died of cancer at the age of 53. In Major League Baseball's first game in Europe, the New York Yankees outlasted the Boston Red Sox 17-13 in a London game that stretched for four hours and 42 minutes, just three minutes shy of the record for a nine-inning game.

Today's Birthdays: Songwriter L. Russell Brown is 80. Singer-songwriter Garland Jeffreys is 77. Actor Gary Busey is 76. Comedian Richard Lewis is 73. Actor-turned-politician-turned-radio personality Fred Grandy is 72. Rock musician Ian Paice (Deep Purple) is 72. Singer Don Dokken (Dokken) is 67. Rock singer Colin Hay (Men At Work) is 67. Actress Maria Conchita Alonso is 65. Actress Kimberlin Brown (TV: "The Bold and the Beautiful") is 59. Actress Sharon Lawrence is 59. Actress Amanda Donohoe is 58. Actress Judith Hoag is 57. Violinist Anne-Sophie Mutter is 57. Rhythm and blues singer Stedman Pearson (Five Star) is 56. Actress Kathleen Wilhoite is 56. Producer-writer Matthew Weiner is 55. Musician Dale Baker is 54. Actress Melora Hardin is 53. Actor Brian D'Arcy James is 52. Actress Christina Chang is 49. Rap DJ Shadow is 48. Actor Lance Barber is 47. Actor-dancer Will Kemp is 43. Actress Zuleikha Robinson is 43. Rock musician Sam Farrar is 42. Actor Luke Kirby is 42. Country musician Todd Sansom (Marshall Dyllon) is 42. Singer Nicole Scherzinger is 42. Comedian-writer Colin Jost (johst) is 38. Actress Lily Rabe is 38. Rhythm and blues singer Aundrea Fimbres is 37. NBA forward Kawhi Leonard is 29. Actress Camila Mendes (TV: "Riverdale") is 26.

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#126 in a series

Covid-19 Update: by Marie Miller

Two things are going to be different tonight. One is that, instead of comparing today's numbers with yesterday's, I am going to have a look at what's changed over the past two weeks. I've taken a look back at last Sunday and the Sunday before to see if I can smooth out the daily fluctuations which are, I believe, largely due to uneven reporting. This should give us a better look at trends over time. The other is that, since I took a good portion of the day off from this enterprise, there will be very little news beyond this analysis and whatever highlights I think shouldn't wait.

And the news isn't great. We are now at 2,562,900 cases in the US, 38,100 more than yesterday. That puts us back under 40,000 new daily cases, which is something; but we're still running well above the previous peaks seen in late April. Considering that reporting tends to be slow on weekends, this isn't all that amazing. We have now reported 125,804 deaths in the US, an increase from yesterday of only 283, which is good news unless it is also due to wonky weekend reporting. This is well below the typical numbers we've seen this week, so I hope we can stay around this number or decline further. I am looking for the day when I can tell you no new deaths were reported, but I suspect that day is months away.

So what do I see for trends over the past couple of weeks? Total cases in the US are just over 270,000 (11.6%) higher than they were a week ago and almost 476,000 (22.3%) more than two weeks ago. We had held the weekly rate of increase under 10% for more than a month now after the crazy stuff we were seeing in April, and now we're right back up over 10% and on a trend to go higher. The downward trajectory reversed about two weeks after the Memorial Day holiday, which coincided with a lot of states relaxing restrictions on June 1, and the trend line has been steadily upward since.

I track 50 states, DC, and four US territories, so 55 in all; and just 25 of these showed rates of increase lower than we saw nationwide. The really terrifying numbers come from 20 states, all with more than 30% growth in cases over the past two weeks; none of those showed any signs of slowing down this last week. Here are the states with the greatest rate of growth in cases over 14 days with their percentage increase in that time: Arizona (112.70%), Florida (91.81%), South Carolina (85.58%), Texas (72.10%), Arkansas (63.85%), Oklahoma (60.34%), Idaho (57.40%), Nevada (56.36%), Oregon (50.60%), Utah (50.33%), Alaska (46.81%), Montana (46.77%), North Carolina (44.90%), Alabama (44.06%), California (43.21%), Wisconsin (35.57%), Wyoming (34.95%), Tennessee (34.57%), Georgia (34.37%), and Mississippi (33.86%).

Fourteen-day trends in new case reporting have 31 states and territories increasing, as follows: Hawaii, Alaska, Washington, Oregon, California, Idaho, Nevada, Utah, Arizona, Montana, Wyoming, Colorado, New Mexico, Kansas, Oklahoma, Texas, Iowa, Missouri, Arkansas, Louisiana, Wisconsin, Michigan, Ohio, Kentucky, Tennessee, Mississippi, Delaware, West Virginia, Georgia, South Carolina, and Florida. Sixteen states and territories are not showing much change, as follows: Guam, North Dakota, South Dakota, Nebraska, Minnesota, Illinois, Indiana, Alabama, Maine, New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Massachusetts, Connecticut, North Carolina, and Virginia. Only six states and territories are showing declines in new case numbers, as follows: Vermont, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, Maryland, District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico.

I think it is significant that the worldwide death toll from this infection has surpassed half a million today, and there have been ten million cases confirmed. The number of deaths has doubled in just the past two months; the number of cases doubled in just 40 days, and no one thinks we're accounting for anywhere near the total cases at this point. Of course, we are quite certain we're underestimating the number of deaths too; we've talked about the reasons this is likely so. Those are mind-boggling numbers, especially considering this disease has only been circulating around six months or so. The US, with just 4% of the world's population has a quarter of the cases and deaths.

Texas's positivity rate has increased from 4% to 13% within the last month. Generally, a figure above 5% indicates you're not doing enough testing to catch most cases, and increases in positivity rates indicate case number increases are not primarily due to increased testing because more testing generally drives positivity rates downward. Arizona and Georgia recorded another record day for new case reports. Florida reported more than 8500 new cases for a third consecutive day, and their positivity rates have been over

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20% for a week now. The seven-day rolling average of new cases in Florida has set records for 21 days running. We are seeing that testing sites in hard-hit states have long lines and crowding with people turned away as capacity was reached, which is another indication there may not be enough testing available; that crowding is also likely to increase spread. Meanwhile, California's daily new-case numbers have set records for 12 days running.

A few days ago, I warned you that some brands of hand sanitizer produced in Mexico contain methanol, a toxic alcohol. I guess it was bound to happen, but we have seven cases of methanol poisoning reported in New Mexico related to ingestion of a product like this. Exposure to methanol can cause nausea, vomiting, headache, blurred vision, blindness, seizures, coma, nervous system damage, and death. In case you need a note, here you go: Do not drink hand sanitizer, no matter what's in it; hand sanitizer is intended for external application only. And if the hand sanitizer you have is one of those brands I mentioned earlier, don't use it at all; methanol absorbs very well through the skin.

We've talked about the potential for bars to produce superspreader events, and here's an example. A bar in East Lansing, Michigan, is now the focus of an outbreak that has 85 people confirmed positive and patrons asked to self-quarantine after visiting it. The number of cases is expected to rise. Even though the business followed guidelines, this looks like a major event in a state which is trying to get this virus under control. I will repeat: Bars are not good places to hang out during a pandemic of a respiratory disease. Just don't.

For some happier news, New York, once the American epicenter of the disease, reported a 0.2% increase in cases, coming in last among all states and territories, and reported only five deaths today. That is quite remarkable. I hope, as they cautiously reopen, that they can continue this downward trajectory. That's a state which has certainly suffered enough.

John Henderson is a bagpiper. He earns his living playing at parades, funerals, and places like Radio City Music Hall in the city where he lives, New York City; his wife works as a bereavement counselor at a hospital. She's been a lot busier lately than he is. Even though funerals are an important part of his work, Henderson says, "I don't want people to die," and yet, they've died and died in his city. Nowadays, he stands on a street corner in Brooklyn to honor the dead—22,000 of them and counting. Residents hear and are comforted by the music.

If you can't solve the essential problem, you can help people to deal with it. And that is what he does, day after day after day, even as New York emerges from its long nightmare. He helps where he can.

How do you help people through these hard times? I hope it is with some supportive act, some way you share your talents to ease others' burdens. If you look around you, you will see a need you can fill. Please look. And act.

Stay healthy. We'll talk again.