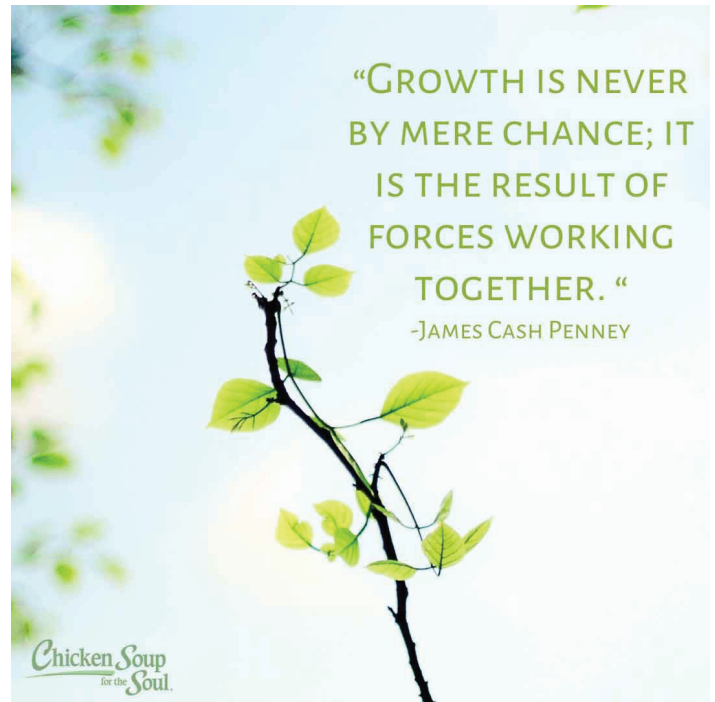


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Congratulations Groton Area Graduates and Families from the Groton Lions & Leos Clubs... To help you celebrate this milestone, we invite you to Summer Fest 2020 in the Groton City Park, Sunday, July 12th. Summer Fest may help you with a fun place for 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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COVID-19 information keeps changing, but the goal is to get the kids back to school

Information is changing by the week and day on the COVID-19 virus and its impact on the upcoming school year. Superintendent Joe Schwan told the board of education Monday night that the "expectation is to get the kids back to school as often as possible. It will come down to "How" and not "if."

The district is still awaiting guidance for sporting events and the music department. "I anticipate different rules for different sports," Schwan said. "There are a lot of different groups meeting and everyone acknowledges to get the kids back to school."

North Dakota is proposing closing school for three days on the first positive case, and two weeks for the second positive case and two weeks for each additional positive case thereafter. "If we get something like that, then we'll be out of school more than we'll be in school," Schwan said.

Tigh Flihs suggested starting school earlier - like August 13th. Schwan said the board would have to make any adjustments to the school calendars its July meeting. Schwan is going to make a proposed calendar for the board to review. Board member Grant Rix said that the elementary school students are starting out behind so it's important to get as much in-classroom time as possible. Board member Deb Gengerke said there will be options for everyone. "It won't be perfect and we'll have to adjust," she said.

Students will now need to be fever-free without medication for three days instead of one as it is now. "That's a big difference from where we were at last year," Schwan said.

Middle/High School Principal Kristen Sombke said with the dual credit situation, it is important that the students check their emails.

Business Manager Mike Weber said there is about \$80,000 in surplus due to many factors with no school being held in the spring. Such savings include not running the bus routes, teacher substitutes, no travel for track or golf, etc.

There were a number of fund transfers to balance the budget to close out the school year.

The district has to set up a budget for the CARES ACT ESSER program. The district is expected to receive \$94,110 in COVID-19 related funds. The district could attempt to collect around \$84,000 in COVID-19 related wages that were paid out from the CARES ACT and then carry the balance over to the next year. It would reflect wages being paid for auxiliary staff from March 13 to May 22. Nothing will be collected for special ed money due to federal regulations.

Lions Club approached Smith about moving the flag pole from the elementary school to the city park. The board approved to declare the flag pole as surplus.

Ken's Shell Express and MJ's Sinclair both submitted bids for diesel and gas. Quote for 25,000 gallons of #2 Diesel was \$1.8744 from Ken's and \$1.576 from MJ's. Last year's quote from Ken's was \$2.54. Quote for 5,000 gallons of #1 Diesel was \$2.0986 from Ken's and \$2.13 from MJ's. Last year's quote from Ken's was \$2.81. Quote for Ethanol was \$1.7728 from Ken's and \$1.701 from MJ's. Last year was \$2.25 from Ken's. Quote for Lead Free was \$1.9645 from Ken's and \$1.791 from MJ's. Last year's Ken's quote was \$2.50. E85 quote was \$1.3904 from Ken's and \$1.079 from MJ's. Last year's Ken's quote was \$1.92. A collective of 6,000 gallons of gas is used. The board accepted the quote from MJ's for the upcoming school year.

Two quotes were submitted for the official newspaper. The Groton Independent quote was .304 for legal line rate, \$3 per week for classified and \$3.50 for display. The Webster Reporter & Farmer submitted a legal line rate of .338, Classified minimum was \$8 and Display advertising was \$7.80 per column inch. The board accepted the quote from The Groton Independent.

Superintendent's Report to the Board of Education

Groton Area Board of Education
Regular Meeting – June 29, 2020

COVID 19 Related Issues/Superintendent Report

Graduation. As of today, we are planning for in-person graduation on July 12 at 2:00 PM in the GHS Arena with no limitations on attendance for family members. We will have the students seated appropriately distanced from each other and will structure transitions between speakers such as to limit contacts. We will be eliminating as many common touch points as possible and providing sanitizing stations for those in attendance.

Planning for the 2020-2021 School Year. Our task force on returning to school has met three times. Today, we were able to review survey results from our staff and parent surveys and continue our discussions on responsible return to face-to-face learning for the fall.

There is currently an inter-agency work group meeting to develop specific guidance for K-12 schools, childcare facilities, universities and technical schools in South Dakota. This includes representatives from the Department of Education, Department of Health, Department of Social Services, Board of Regents, and Board of Technical Education. There is a webinar scheduled with this group on July 8. We anticipate learning three important items, in particular, from this group.

1. School scenarios (e.g. what to do when a student/parent/staff member test positive, etc.)
2. Process for when a student/staff member tests positive including communication with appropriate parties, contact tracing, communication to school families.
3. Appropriate use of PPE in the school setting – who should wear what and when.

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#127 in a series

Covid-19 Update: by Marie Miller

We're still looking pretty rough in the US. We have now reported 2,603,700 cases of Covid-19 since this pandemic hit our shores, which means our new case number is again over 40,000 today at 40,800. At this rate, we'll hit three million cases next week some time, and that's even before we account for the fact that new case numbers run low on Mondays. Total cases increased by 1.6% today. States where new cases are increasing are the same as last night with the addition of Pennsylvania, which had been looking stable. And states where new cases are decreasing are also the same as last night with the addition of South Dakota, which had been looking stable too. But it is important to note that, of the 55 states and territories I've been tracking, 32 are showing growth—not a great place to be.

We've reported 126,138 deaths, so there were 334 reported today, increasing the total by 0.3%. With new case reports growing, it might seem odd that the death rate is staying so low. There are likely a few things operating here. One is that, as we've talked about more than once before, deaths lag new cases by at least a couple of weeks, so increased deaths should be working their way through the system soon enough. I would expect, however, that the risk of death, should you become ill, has probably decreased since we started with this; we've learned more about how this virus acts and how to successfully treat it, which should keep more people alive who might have died a few months ago when we didn't really know what to do. We are also seeing a whole lot more young people infected, and we know they, generally speaking, have a lower risk for serious disease and death. This could be expected to drive death rates downward too.

Nonetheless, Dr. Scott Gottlieb, former FDA commissioner, says he expects to see more than 1000 deaths per day again before the end of the year. He also predicts we might have upwards of 40% of the country infected by the end of the year. I shudder to think of the costs we'll pay to reach that point, in treasure, in suffering, and in lives.

And before you get all excited about how at least we'll be well on the way to herd immunity, think again. Remember a few nights ago when we discussed the possibility that people with mild or asymptomatic infections may not develop long-lasting immunity as a result? While getting all the results about long-term immunity will obviously take longer than the few months we've been in contact with this virus, it is important to recognize that we are not sure just how much immunity is going to develop, especially in the majority of people who never get too sick. Remember, too, the silent damage that seems to accumulate in some folks with mild or asymptomatic infections. Remember here the costs are high and the outcome uncertain. So don't celebrate yet.

Gottlieb also pointed out that there is "serious community spread" which is likely to get worse, for example, in Florida, Georgia, and South Carolina. The young people turning up with positive tests now may not, for the most part, become as seriously ill as at-risk groups; but they're spreading virus to folks who will become seriously ill and die. This is the basis for his prediction the death numbers will rise again.

Florida reported more than 5000 new cases, which is lower than yesterday; but the rolling seven-day average was still at a record level as it has been every day for 22 straight days. This average has increased by 102% in the last week. Louisiana is worse off with a seven-day average increased by 123% in a week. South Carolina has set a similar record for 21 consecutive days, and Texas is on its 19th day. Due to reporting issues, Arizona did not have an accurate count of new cases on the day; it is expected tomorrow's total will be outsized, as some of today's cases will appear in that total. The rolling seven-day average is 12% higher than it was a week ago. And a state from which we haven't heard much so far, Montana, reported the highest number of new cases in three months and the highest seven-day average since early April. Second lowest number of cases of any state, and they're on the move too.

Likewise, seven-day average hospitalizations have been rising and are at least 25% higher in seven states than they were a week ago. Texas reported a record high number of hospitalizations today. Their seven-day average is over 60% higher than it was a week ago. Arizona also reported a record high for hospitalizations, 30% higher than yesterday, with a seven-day average 36% higher than a week ago.

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The other states also showing increases over 25% are California, Nevada, Montana, Georgia, and South Carolina. Record highs for current hospitalizations were set in Utah, Arizona, Texas, Arkansas, Alabama, Tennessee, and South Carolina.

The rolling average for new deaths is increasing in several states too. Arizona saw a 67% increase, Virginia had a 70% increase. Other states with an increase in seven-day deaths are Arizona, Oklahoma, Kentucky, Tennessee, Alabama, New Hampshire, and Florida.

Los Angeles County reported a record number of new cases and now has over 100,000 cases. Hospitalizations are higher than they've been in weeks. Positivity rates have increased too, as high as 23% in Imperial County, although they are more like 5% across the state. The County is projecting it will reach hospital capacity in the next few weeks. Riverside County, California, hospitals are moving to surge capacity. Across the state, new cases increased by 45% in the last week.

Ashish Jha, director of the Harvard Global Health Institute, is recommending people avoid indoor gatherings if they live in a place where cases are increasing. He called this sort of socializing "very risky" and recommended people stay outdoors to socialize. He attributed the recent increases in cases to states reopening without meeting White House guidelines and gathering indoors at restaurants, bars, and private venues.

I read a piece by a pulmonologist who addressed some common misconceptions about transmission of Covid-19. She wrote, first, that a review of 172 studies published in *The Lancet* last week (which I also read) shows that wearing masks can reduce the risk of spreading the virus to about 3%. Get that: not BY 3%, but TO 3%. She then explains that asymptomatic people are the source for 40-45% of infections. We know it is possible to transmit this virus for more than two weeks without being ill yourself. She repeats, for those who didn't get the first dozen memos, that masks do not trap enough carbon dioxide to be toxic, particularly because the average person is not wearing a mask 24/7. She also points out that, in order for a mask to be most effective, the nose and the mouth must be covered. If you're one of the folks I see at the grocery store with the mask pulled down from your nose, you're doing it wrong. The material from which the mask is made is far less important than how you wear it; any material will block droplets, especially if it is multi-layered and fits well. She mentions, too, that all of the precautions work together: masks, social distancing, hand hygiene, etc. You do not maximal benefit unless you're addressing transmission on as many fronts as possible, so don't go thinking you don't need to mask if you social distance or you don't need to social distance if you wash your hands a lot. It doesn't work like that—sort of like seat belts won't help you if you do not also use the brakes. Both is best. Really.

There are a few bright spots. One is a new way to run clinical trials called the virtual trial. Now before you get the wrong idea, people are receiving actual treatment in these, not some virtual reality thing. Traditional clinical trials can run two-thirds the cost of bringing a drug to market, and that cost can be as high as \$2.6 billion. When you consider some 90% of those trials end in failure, you can see there's a fair amount of money spent for every new drug that hits the pharmacy shelves. The virtual clinical trial is intended to reduce that cost and to streamline the process, an important consideration in the situation we're in right now. What we have here is a remote—or decentralized—trial.

The traditional way to run a trial is to have the participants come in to a clinic on a regular basis, but a virtual trial can work remotely, asking participants to engage in some alternative means for gathering information to assess the patient and provide safety. We know that time and travel requirements often leave large groups of people out of trials because of work, child care, and health status can and also increase dropout rates due to these burdens. Virtual trials expand the pool of possible subjects. They do, however, require a smartphone, an Internet connection, and the ability to manage the communication technology used, so these requirements can limit participation in a new way. Some people believe at least some of the principles here will last longer than the current crisis. There are ideas here that can be incorporated into at least some trials for other drugs well into the future.

A couple in Fort Worth, Texas, have lived a lifetime of service. The husband was an EMT and first responder at the Pentagon on 9/11. He was on a list of people to go to New York in the aftermath, but was never called, and he decided, if ever New York needed him again, he'd be ready to go. That's how he ended

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up with Team Rubicon, an organization of veterans and first responders who help during humanitarian disasters, in New York from March to May, working in the emergency room of a hospital there. The wife is in the military and has deployed twice to Iraq and once to Afghanistan. In the year they've lived in Fort Worth, they've volunteered with dog adoptions and at an urban farm and restaurant. So when, in the midst of the economic devastation wrought by this pandemic, they saw a neighbor throwing out cabinets from a renovation as an opportunity. They placed the cabinets in their front yard stocked with grocery items, starting with only about \$25 in goods and expanding as donations came in. It is now stocked with dried and canned foods, toiletries, baby supplies, and homemade masks made by a neighbor. They post updates on Covid guidance on the cabinets as a further service and report there are generally four to five visitors per day. They say this pantry is some families' main source of food these days. So they started with their own \$25 and discarded cabinets and created a community resource.

Now in a city the size of Fort Worth, one little front yard pantry doesn't put much dent in the need; but it puts a big dent in it for some people. No one can do everything, but everyone can do something. You can start small because every need met is a need met, and to the person with the need, that's not small at all.

Keep yourself well. We'll talk again.

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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	June 30
Minnesota	33,469	33,763	34,123	34,616	35,033	35,549	35,861
Nebraska	18,092	18,221	18,346	18,524	18,775	18,899	19,042
Montana	743	766	803	829	852	863	919
Colorado	30,893	31,155	31,479	31,796	32,022	No Update	32,511
Wyoming	992	1016	1052	1079	1097	1121	1151
North Dakota	3320	3362	3393	3421	3458	3495	3539
South Dakota	6353	6419	6479	6535	6626	6681	6716
United States	2,347,102	2,381,369	2,422,312	2,467,837	2,510,323	2,548,143	2,682,897
US Deaths	121,225	121,979	124,415	125,039	125,539	125,799	129,544
Minnesota	+242	+417	+360	+493	+417	+516	+312
Nebraska	+135	+129	+125	+178	+251	+124	+143
Montana	+9	+23	+37	+26	+23	+11	+56
Colorado	+188	+262	+324	+317	+226		+353
Wyoming	+18	+24	+36	+27	+18	+24	+30
North Dakota	+7*	+42	+31	+28	+37	+37	+44
South Dakota	+27	+66	+60	+56	+91	+55	+35
United States	+34,800	+34,267	+40,943	+45,525	+42,486	+37,820	+134,754
US Deaths	+823	+754	+2,439	+624	+500	+260	+3,745

* 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 29th COVID-19 UPDATE

Groton Daily Independent
from State Health Lab Reports

Bon Homme has been added to the fully recovered list and South Dakota had more recovered patients than positive. That allowed the percent recovered to tick up half a point for today. The active cases in South Dakota dropped by 31, down to 807. Five people were released from the hospital as there are currently 70 hospitalized in the state.

Brown County had one positive and two recovered patients.

Despite the great news in South Dakota, don't let your guard down!

Brown County:

Active Cases: -1 (22)

Recovered: +2 (318)

Total Positive: +1 (342)

Ever Hospitalized: 0 (18)

Deaths: 2

Negative Tests: +29 (2934)

Percent Recovered: 93.0% (up 0.3)

South Dakota:

Positive: +35 (6716 total)

Negative: +529 (72741 total)

Hospitalized: +5 (657 total). 70 currently hospitalized (5 less than yesterday)

Deaths: 0 (91 total)

Recovered: +66 (5818) total)

Active Cases: -31 (807)

Percent Recovered: 86.6% up .5

Counties with no positive cases report the following negative tests: Butte +4 (458), Campbell +1 (62), Haakon +1 (226), Harding 39, Jones 29, Perkins +1 (84), Potter 171, unassigned +70 (4735).

Beadle: +1 positive, +8 recovered (444 of 523 recovered)

Bon Homme: +1 recovered (11 of 11 recovered)

Brown: +1 positive, +2 recovered (318 of 342 recovered)

Brule: +2 positive (12 of 20 recovered)

Buffalo: +1 positive, +3 recovered (56 of 71 recovered)

Charles Mix: +5 positive, +1 recovered (26 of 75 recovered)

Clay: +2 recovered (69 of 80 recovered)

Codington: +4 positive, +1 recovered (47 of 61 recovered)

Corson: +1 recovered (14 of 17 recovered)

Davison: +1 positive (31 of 40 recovered)

Fall River: +1 positive, +1 recovered (5 of 12 recovered)

Gregory: +1 positive (1 of 3 recovered)

Hanson: +1 positive (4 of 7 recovered)

Hughes: +1 positive, +1 recovered (33 of 52 recovered)

Lake: +1 positive (16 of 21 recovered)

Lincoln: +2 positive, +1 recovered (312 of 341 recovered)

Lyman: +4 recovered (37 of 59 recovered)

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Meade: +2 recovered (38 of 47 recovered)
Minnehaha: +2 positive, ++18 recovered (3332 of 3600 recovered)
Oglala Lakota: +1 positive, +4 recovered (45 of 85 recovered)
Pennington: +6 positive, +14 recovered (368 of 513 recovered)
Roberts: +4 positive (40 of 45 recovered)
Todd: +1 positive (48 of 57 recovered)
Tripp: +1 positive (10 of 16 recovered)
Yankton: +2 recovered (62 of 78 recovered)

Fully recovered from positive cases (Gained Bon Homme): Bon Homme 11-11, 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 3,368 completed tests today for COVID-19 with 47 new positive cases, bringing the statewide total to 3,539. NDDoH reports no new deaths.

State & private labs have reported 180,588 total completed tests.
3,163 ND patients are recovered.

RACE/ETHNICITY OF SOUTH DAKOTA COVID-19 CASES

Race/Ethnicity	# of Cases	% of Cases
Asian, Non-Hispanic	700	10%
Black, Non-Hispanic	969	14%
Hispanic	1081	16%
Native American, Non-Hispanic	977	15%
Other	699	10%
White, Non-Hispanic	2290	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	523	444	1401
Bennett	5	2	413
Bon Homme	11	11	573
Brookings	61	47	1660
Brown	342	318	2934
Brule	20	12	462
Buffalo	71	56	447
Butte	0	0	458
Campbell	0	0	62
Charles Mix	75	26	606
Clark	14	10	317
Clay	80	69	927
Codington	61	47	1834
Corson	17	14	139
Custer	8	4	519
Davison	40	31	1582
Day	16	13	399
Deuel	3	1	285
Dewey	4	0	834
Douglas	4	4	316
Edmunds	7	5	297
Fall River	12	5	696
Faulk	23	17	117
Grant	13	13	527
Gregory	3	1	224
Haakon	0	0	226
Hamlin	11	9	418
Hand	7	6	182
Hanson	7	4	131
Harding	0	0	39
Hughes	52	33	1078
Hutchinson	12	9	674

Hyde	3	3	93
Jackson	6	2	299
Jerauld	39	35	230
Jones	0	0	29
Kingsbury	6	3	403
Lake	21	16	664
Lawrence	19	15	1284
Lincoln	341	312	4260
Lyman	59	37	656
Marshall	5	4	286
McCook	10	6	479
McPherson	4	3	161
Meade	47	38	1236
Mellette	3	3	193
Miner	9	3	177
Minnehaha	3600	3332	19174
Moody	21	19	463
Oglala Lakota	85	45	2013
Pennington	513	368	6326
Perkins	0	0	84
Potter	0	0	171
Roberts	45	40	984
Sanborn	12	12	171
Spink	11	6	875
Stanley	12	12	136
Sully	1	1	44
Todd	57	48	926
Tripp	16	10	379
Turner	24	23	659
Union	121	109	1341
Walworth	9	5	380
Yankton	78	62	2236
Ziebach	3	2	139
Unassigned****	0	0	4735

SEX OF SOUTH DAKOTA COVID-19 CASES

Sex	# of Cases	# of Deaths
Female	3240	51
Male	3476	40

Age Range	# of Cases	# of Deaths
0-19 years	690	0
20-29 years	1383	1
30-39 years	1442	3
40-49 years	1084	6
50-59 years	1068	12
60-69 years	614	15
70-79 years	235	12
80+ years	200	42

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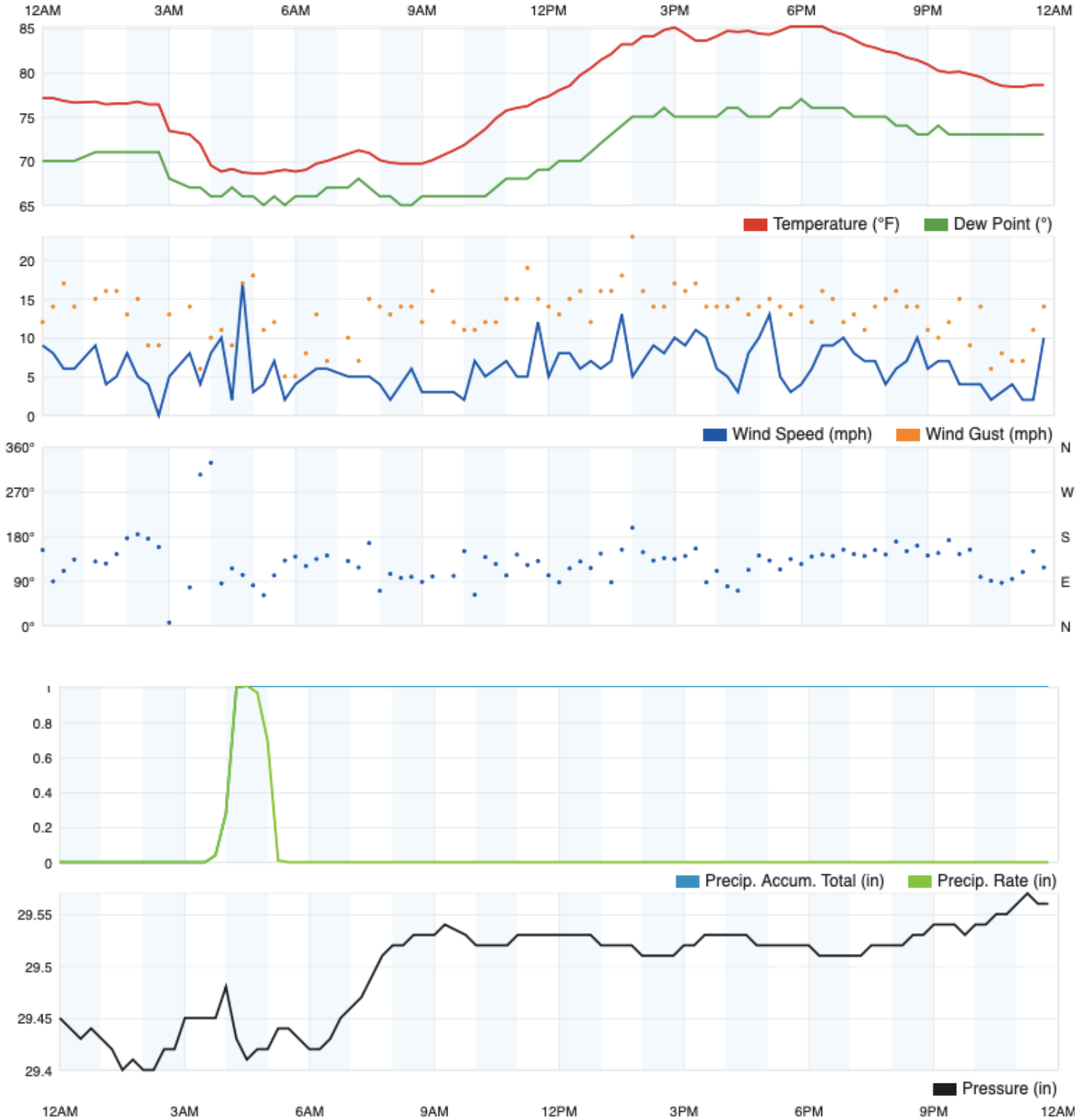
Baseball Schedule

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

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Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs



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Today



Hot

High: 91 °F

Tonight



Severe
Thunderstorms

Low: 66 °F

Wednesday



Slight Chance
T-storms then
Sunny

High: 86 °F

Wednesday
Night



Clear

Low: 64 °F

Thursday



Hot

High: 94 °F

Slight Risk

of severe thunderstorms this afternoon
and evening, June 30th

1 2 3 4 5

Hazards

Along with frequent lightning and heavy rain, the most likely hazards from the most intense thunderstorms are **hail up to around the size of golf ball and wind gusts around 60-70 mph.**

Timing

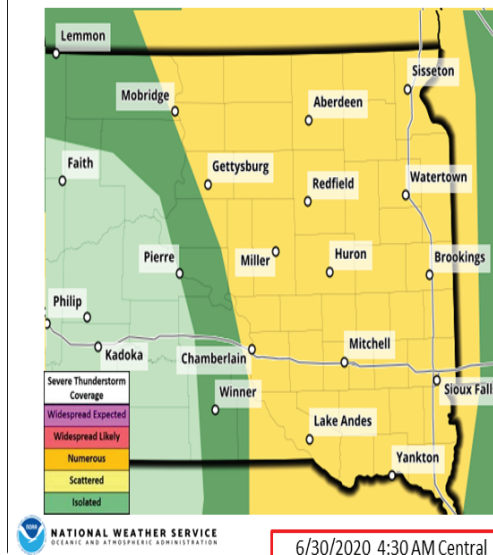
The most intense storms will occur **this afternoon across central/north central SD, and track into eastern SD/western MN through the evening/overnight hours.**

Some Cities at Risk

Afternoon: Mobridge, Gettysburg, Chamberlain

Evening: Aberdeen, Watertown, Sisseton

Severe Weather Outlook



Expect some showers and thunderstorms over north central South Dakota this morning, before expanding south and east as a front moves through the area. Some thunderstorms this afternoon and evening may be severe with large hail and damaging winds. The front will exit into Minnesota early Wednesday morning, bringing an end to the storms.

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Today in Weather History

June 30, 1991: Thunderstorms dropped over 2 inches of rain over Brown, Marshall, and Roberts County. The rain washed out many county roads and flooded low-lying areas. Several streets were impassable in Aberdeen. Officially, Aberdeen recorded 1.91 inches of rain.

June 30, 1992: An F2 tornado lifted a roof off a house 18 miles east of Pierre. A barn was destroyed, and power lines and trees were downed. Also, an estimated wind gust of 61 mph was observed 5 miles west of Miller in Hand County.

1792: The first recorded tornado in Canadian history struck the Niagara Peninsula between Foothill and Port Robinson, leveling some houses and uprooting trees between the communities.

1900: The combination of high winds and the presence of wooded fuel-filled cargo helped to spread fire on the Hoboken Docks in New Jersey. The fire began when cotton bales caught fire and spread to nearby volatile liquids. The fire killed at least 300 people and was seen in New York City.

1912: An estimated F4 tornado ripped through Regina, Saskatchewan, Canada on this day. The storm became the deadliest tornado in Canada's history as it killed 28 people along a rare, 18.5-mile track from south to north.

1999: Mount Baker, Washington closed out a record snowfall season both for the United States and the verifiable world record as the seasonal total from July 1, 1998, to June 30, 1999, finished with 1,140 inches.

1886 - The second destructive hurricane in nine days hit the Apalachicola-Tallahassee area. (David Ludlum)

1942 - The temperature at Portland, OR, hit 102 degrees, an all-time record for that location. (The Weather Channel)

1972 - The entire state of Pennsylvania was declared a disaster area as a result of the catastrophic flooding caused by Hurricane Agnes, which claimed 48 lives, and caused 2.1 billion dollars damage. (The Weather Channel)

1987 - Hot weather prevailed in the Pacific Northwest, with readings above 100 degrees reported as far north as southern British Columbia. Yakima, WA, reported a record high of 100 degrees, while temperatures near the Washington coast hovered near 60 degrees all day. Thunderstorms prevailed from southwest Texas to New England. Thunderstorm winds gusting to 100 mph at Gettysburg, PA, killed one person. High winds and large hail caused more than five million dollars damage to property and crops in Lancaster County, PA. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1988 - Thunderstorms in eastern Kansas drenched Worden with 12.21 inches of rain, and a wall of water two to four feet deep swept through Lone Star, KS, flooding every home in the town. Up to ten inches of rain was reported southeast of Callaway, NE. Thunderstorm winds gusted to 75 mph at Winfield, KS. Seventeen cities in the north central and northeastern U.S. reported record low temperatures for the date, including Duluth, MN, with a reading of 36 degrees. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1989 - Winnfield, LA, reported 22.52 inches of rain in three days, and more than thirty inches for the month, a record for June. Shreveport LA received a record 17.11 inches in June, with a total for the first six months of the year of 45.55 inches. Thunderstorms also helped produce record rainfall totals for the month of June of 13.12 inches at Birmingham AL, 14.66 inches at Oklahoma City, OK, 17.41 inches at Tallahassee FL, 9.97 inches at Lynchburg, VA, and more than 10.25 inches at Pittsburgh, PA. Pittsburgh had also experienced a record wet month of May. (The National Weather Summary)

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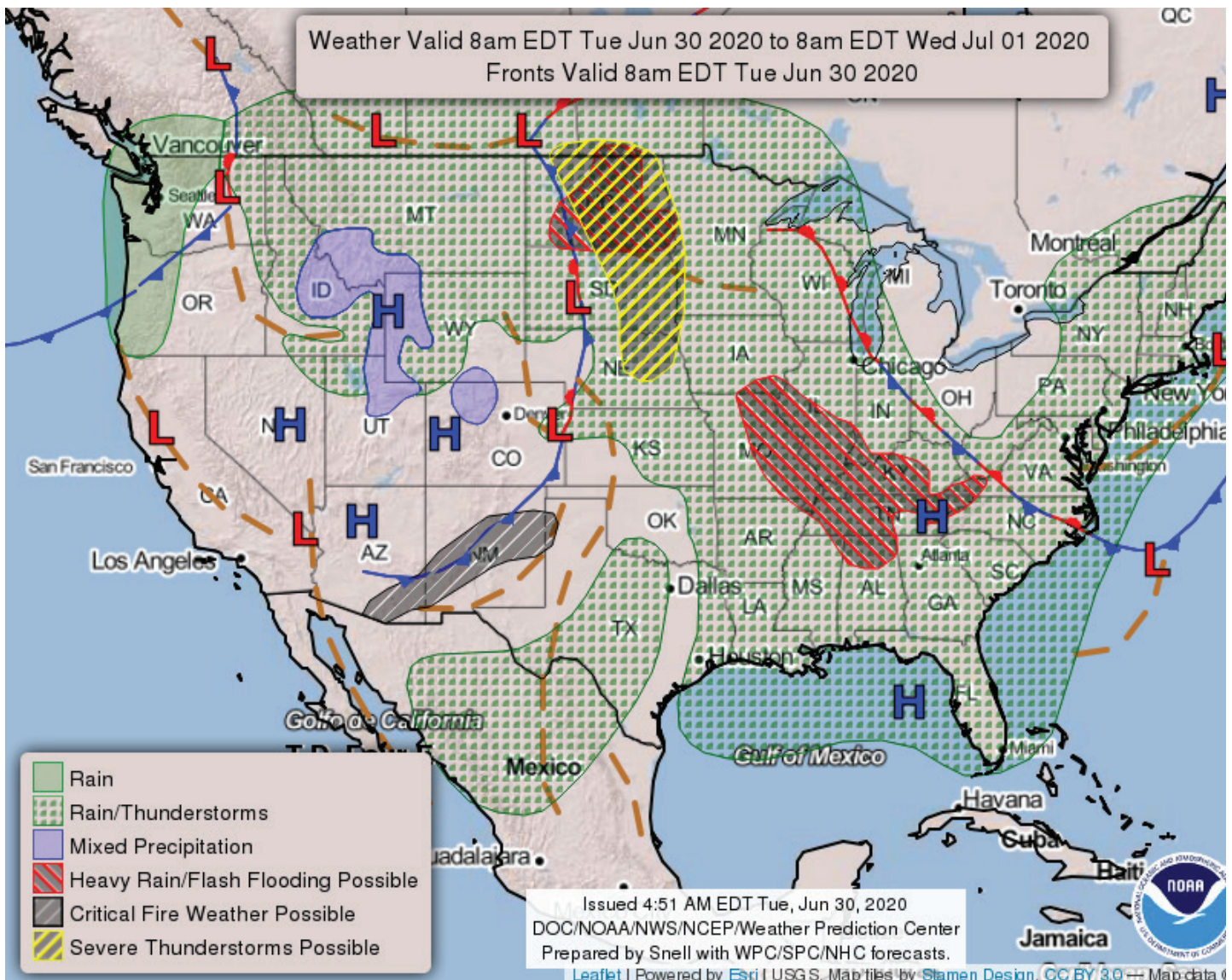
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Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 86 °F at 2:51 PM
Low Temp: 68 °F at 5:06 AM
Wind: 23 mph at 1:53 PM
Precip: 1.01

Today's Info

Record High: 104° in 1931
Record Low: 38° in 1918
Average High: 82°F
Average Low: 57°F
Average Precip in June.: 3.59
Precip to date in June.: 3.48
Average Precip to date: 10.73
Precip Year to Date: 8.13
Sunset Tonight: 9:26 p.m.
Sunrise Tomorrow: 5:49 a.m.



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SLIPPERY ROADS

Driving through a fierce snow-storm, Greg lost control of his car, and it slipped into a deep ditch. A truck stopped, and the driver got out and surveyed the situation. After a few moments, he yelled at Greg and said, "Hey, you, let me tell you how to drive on slippery roads."

"Forget it!" said Greg. "I don't need advice, I need help."

David knew what it was to need help. On one occasion he cried out, "I entrust my spirit into your hand. Rescue me, Lord, for You are a faithful God."

David demonstrated his complete faith in God when he proclaimed these words. And, Jesus, when He was dying on the cross, showed His absolute confidence in God, when He uttered this same phrase. And, Stephen repeated these identical words when he was being stoned to death, confidently expressing his Hope in God as he was passing into eternity.

How blest we are to be able to join David, Jesus, and Stephen in knowing that we can say with no hesitation, "I entrust my spirit into your hand, Lord." It does not matter what we have or what we do, whether we live alone in a cell or have large families, whether we manage great corporations or work alone, unnoticed. We have the same opportunity as they did to entrust ourselves and all that we have or ever will have to Him.

Prayer: How grateful we are, Heavenly Father, to know that we can - if we choose - trust You to care for and be with us in and through all the dangers of life. Thanks! In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: I entrust my spirit into your hand. Rescue me, Lord, for You are a faithful God. Psalm 31

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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

Police detain suspect in Sioux Falls shooting that hurt 3

SIoux FALLS, S.D. (AP) — Sioux Falls police are holding a suspect after three people were shot and wounded at a home.

The shooting happened around 2:30 p.m. Monday at a home in the central part of Sioux Falls. Police found two women and a man were shot. Their ages are not known. Police spokesman Sam Clemens said their injuries could be life-threatening.

The Argus Leader reports it's also unclear how many other people were in the home.

A suspect was detained about an hour later. Clemens said that person was wearing the same clothes that matched surveillance video from another home in the neighborhood.

No charges have been filed.

Noem slams US Supreme Court ruling on Louisiana abortion law

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) — A U.S. Supreme Court ruling striking down a Louisiana law regulating abortion clinics is wrong, South Dakota Gov. Kristi Noem said Monday.

Justices ruled that the law requiring doctors who perform abortions have admitting privileges at nearby hospitals violates abortion rights that were outlined in the Roe v. Wade decision in 1973. The Louisiana law is similar to one in Texas that the court struck down in 2016.

"This decision is wrong for a number of reasons," Noem said in a statement, citing Justice Clarence Thomas' opinion stating that the Constitution does not constrain states' ability to regulate or prohibit abortion. "The fight for life is unquestionably the right one."

In his dissent, Thomas wrote, "Today a majority of the Court perpetuates its ill-founded abortion jurisprudence by enjoining a perfectly legitimate state law and doing so without jurisdiction."

Nancy Northup, president and CEO of the Center for Reproductive Rights, said she was relieved by Monday's decision but is worried it could inspire states to pass even more restrictive laws.

Said Noem, "Our work doesn't stop until abortion is eliminated completely."

Excerpts from recent South Dakota editorials

By The Associated Press undefined

Madison Daily Leader, June 26

Looking long-term at Dakota State housing

Construction progress continues on a beautiful new residence hall at Dakota State University, with the four-story, 122-bed facility to be ready for occupancy by fall 2021.

As enrollment grew in recent years, DSU has made substantial investments in student housing: renovation of the 1960s dormitories, leasing of apartment units north of N.E. 9th Street, purchase and renovation of the former Madison Community Hospital to become The Courtyard residence hall, and purchase and renovation of the St. Thomas Convent to become Van Eps Place.

Even so, occupancy in fall 2019 was 100%. Clearly, it's been a lot of work to keep up with demand. Part of that work including planning for a brand new facility and the financing required to construct it.

Then COVID-19 came along. DSU switched from in-person classes to on-line instruction in March and ended up refunding half of the residence hall rent and meal service plans for the spring semester.

DSU and other state universities will hold in-person classes again this fall, but there is some uncertainty as to enrollment levels. We've heard of some students choosing to take a break from school for the fall semester.

Even so, DSU is looking long-term. Projections for the jobs for which students are being trained are increasing; some categories show job growth of more than 30% over the next 10 years, according to DSU

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President Jose-Marie Griffiths.

"All signs indicate enrollment growth at Dakota State will continue in coming years," she said.

Even if on-campus enrollment falls this year, DSU is well positioned. Plans are already in the works to create housing that could assist in isolation protocols if a student contracts COVID-19. If residence halls aren't filled to capacity, there could be opportunities to increase social distancing to prevent virus spread.

We're glad DSU administrators are working on residence hall plans for both the short term and long term. Both plans will help ensure long-term success.

Yankton Daily Press & Dakotan, June 25

What could have been

There have been moments during this pandemic — which has tended to have me thinking way too much anyway — when a thought comes to mind that haunts me and hurts me:

I'm glad my mother isn't here for all this.

Sometimes, that feels like such a terrible notion; sometimes, it feels like a blessing.

My mother died a year ago last March, and not a day goes by that I don't think about her. Lately, I've also been wondering how she might have dealt with the COVID-19 onslaught that has devoured our lives.

Unfortunately, I think I know the answer. She would have been miserable: terrified of being infected by this coronavirus and depressed about feeling isolated and not being able to go out and, say, shop at Walmart as she loved to do regularly. Her life would have been plagued by anxiety and, most likely, a consequent feeling of helplessness. She certainly would have been worried about being around other people.

That would have included people like me, I suppose. I'm out in the public every day and could potentially be facing whatever viruses are in circulation here. My mother might have been concerned about being around me, which would have bothered me (and her) a lot.

What makes me feel even worse is my sense of sad relief that she isn't around for this. I would be constantly worried about her; so, too, would my brother and sister and their families. Every cough, every uptick in her temperature would have caused us to imagine the worst. At least we don't have that to deal with now ... which also makes me feel guilty.

No doubt, the media's relentless coverage of the pandemic would have driven my mother to other forms of TV viewing (old movies on TCM work for me), but she couldn't have escaped how much the pandemic would have impacted her life, nor could she have ignored the manner in which this country has dealt with the coronavirus. I think the lack of a principled, informed course of action would have driven her crazy. She would have wanted to hear only from health experts, not from politicians.

For instance, my mother would have found nothing funny whatsoever about President Trump's "joke" last weekend about slowing down the pace of the nation's COVID testing — if in fact it was a joke, as the White House said it was ... but Trump himself then said it wasn't. Instead, she would have wondered why anyone would either want such a thing or, given the death toll, joke about it.

I wouldn't have blamed her.

In a way, these really shouldn't be uncertain times. There should be a certain, cogent, clear purpose in how we deal with this pandemic. The science should be guiding us and fueling our resolve in addressing it.

For instance, we shouldn't see the wearing — or NOT wearing — of face masks being turned into some kind of political flashpoint. There is no rational sense in that at all. And yet, here we are.

We shouldn't have leadership undercutting and contradicting the science we need to get through this pandemic. But that's being done almost daily.

And a nation like this shouldn't be pursuing courses guided by hunches, internet rumors and long shots (hydroxychloroquine anyone?).

But with COVID-19, America has been a disaster. A quick scan of the charts comparing coronavirus cases in this country to other nations makes that grimly clear. As some critics have noted, it seems sometimes that we've just given up on trying. We're "reopening" the country while the virus remains unchecked, which is like opening the windows of a house while a monsoon is still lashing away. Now the White House is reportedly thinking about lifting the nation's social distancing guidelines, basically as a means of declaring an

illusionary election-year victory over a virus for which there is no vaccine, no treatment or no end in sight. So, frankly, I'm relieved that my mother isn't here to endure any of this.

I can't really say she would have been angry about it all because that wasn't the way she generally processed things. Instead, she would have been quietly upset and, in darker moments, panicked. She would have been calling me on the phone on a lot of late nights to share her anxieties, worrying for herself and for the rest of her family. It would have made this struggle even harder to bear.

It makes me feel for the people who ARE facing that struggle with their own elders and/or at-risk loved ones right now. It adds an incredible weight to the burdens of the moment — a moment that could be, and should be, playing out differently and much more smartly.

Noem suspends teen driving law during COVID-19

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) — South Dakota Gov. Kristi Noem has suspended a teen driving law which was set to take effect this week.

Noem said the legislative bill was suspended because of concerns over the coronavirus pandemic and the impact the new law would have on licensing.

The suspension of the law which was to have taken effect July 1 will help relieve the backlog on driver's license officers across the state, according to the governor.

The bill changes the required length of time to hold a car or motorcycle instruction permit from 180 days to 275 days.

It changes the age for a mandatory restricted minor's permit from 16 to 18 and it prohibits passengers outside the immediate family or household for the first six months driving on restricted permit and limits a non-family member during the second six-month period to one person.

According to Noem's executive order, the suspension of the driving law is temporary and "shall continue for the duration of the COVID-19 State of Emergency."

AP sources: White House aware of Russian bounties in 2019

By JAMES LaPORTA Associated Press

Top officials in the White House were aware in early 2019 of classified intelligence indicating Russia was secretly offering bounties to the Taliban for the deaths of Americans, a full year earlier than has been previously reported, according to U.S. officials with direct knowledge of the intelligence.

The assessment was included in at least one of President Donald Trump's written daily intelligence briefings at the time, according to the officials. Then-national security adviser John Bolton also told colleagues at the time that he briefed Trump on the intelligence assessment in March 2019.

The White House didn't respond to questions about Trump or other officials' awareness of Russia's provocations in 2019. The White House has said Trump wasn't — and still hasn't been — briefed on the intelligence assessments because they haven't been fully verified. However, it's rare for intelligence to be confirmed without a shadow of a doubt before it is presented to top officials.

Bolton declined to comment Monday when asked by the AP if he'd briefed Trump about the matter in 2019. On Sunday, he suggested to NBC that Trump was claiming ignorance of Russia's provocations to justify his administration's lack of response.

"He can disown everything if nobody ever told him about it," Bolton said.

The revelations cast new doubt on the White House's efforts to distance Trump from the Russian intelligence assessments. The AP reported Sunday that concerns about Russian bounties also were in a second written presidential daily briefing this year and that current national security adviser Robert O'Brien had discussed the matter with Trump. O'Brien denies doing that.

On Monday, O'Brien said that while the intelligence assessments regarding Russian bounties "have not been verified," the administration has "been preparing should the situation warrant action."

The administration's earlier awareness of the Russian efforts raises additional questions about why Trump didn't take punitive action against Moscow for efforts that put the lives of American service members

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at risk. Trump has sought throughout his time in office to improve relations with Russia and President Vladimir Putin, moving this year to try to reinstate Russia as part of a group of world leaders it had been kicked out of.

Officials said they didn't consider the intelligence assessments in 2019 to be particularly urgent, given Russian meddling in Afghanistan isn't a new occurrence. The officials with knowledge of Bolton's apparent briefing for Trump said it contained no "actionable intelligence," meaning the intelligence community didn't have enough information to form a strategic plan or response. However, the classified assessment of Russian bounties was the sole purpose of the meeting.

The officials insisted on anonymity because they weren't authorized to disclose the highly sensitive information.

The intelligence that surfaced in early 2019 indicated Russian operatives had become 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 during the Obama administration.

The National Security Council and the undersecretary of defense for intelligence held meetings regarding the intelligence. The NSC didn't respond to questions about the meetings.

Late Monday, the Pentagon issued a statement saying it was evaluating the intelligence but so far had "no corroborating evidence to validate the recent allegations."

"Regardless, we always take the safety and security of our forces in Afghanistan — and around the world — most seriously and therefore continuously adopt measures to prevent harm from potential threats," said Pentagon spokesman Jonathan Hoffman.

Concerns about Russian bounties flared anew this year after 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 in U.S. currency. The funds bolstered the suspicions of the American intelligence community that Russians had offered money to Taliban militants and linked associations.

The White House contends the president was unaware of this development, too.

The officials told the AP that career government officials developed potential options for the White House to respond to the Russian aggression in Afghanistan, which was first reported by The New York Times. However, the Trump administration has yet to authorize any action.

The intelligence in 2019 and 2020 surrounding Russian bounties was derived in part from debriefings of captured Taliban militants. Officials with knowledge of the matter told the AP that Taliban operatives from opposite ends of the country and from separate tribes offered similar accounts.

Putin spokesman Dmitry Peskov denied Russian intelligence officers had offered payments to the Taliban in exchange for targeting U.S. and coalition forces.

Secretary of State Mike Pompeo called the Taliban's chief negotiator, a spokesman for the insurgents said Tuesday, but it was unknown whether there was any mention during their conversation of allegations about Russian bounties. Pompeo pressed the insurgents to reduce violence in Afghanistan and discussed ways of advancing a U.S.-Taliban peace deal signed in February, the Taliban spokesman tweeted.

The U.S. is investigating whether Americans died because of the Russian bounties. Officials are focused on an April 2019 attack on an American convoy. Three U.S. Marines were killed after a car rigged with explosives detonated near their armored vehicles as they returned to Bagram Airfield, the largest U.S. military installation in Afghanistan.

The Defense Department identified them as Marine Staff Sgt. Christopher Slutman, 43, of Newark, Delaware; Sgt. Benjamin Hines, 31, of York, Pennsylvania; and Cpl. Robert Hendriks, 25, of Locust Valley, New York. They were infantrymen assigned to 2nd Battalion, 25th Marines, a reserve infantry unit headquartered out of Garden City, New York.

Hendriks' father told the AP that even a rumor of Russian bounties should have been immediately addressed.

"If this was kind of swept under the carpet as to not make it a bigger issue with Russia, and one ounce

of blood was spilled when they knew this, I lost all respect for this administration and everything," Erik Hendriks said.

Three other service members and an Afghan contractor were wounded in the attack. As of April 2019, the attack was under a separate investigation, unrelated to the Russian bounties.

The officials who spoke to the AP also said they were looking closely at insider attacks from 2019 to determine if they were linked to Russian bounties.

Associated Press writers Zeke Miller and Deb Riechmann in Washington, Deepti Hajela in New York and Vladimir Isachenkov in Moscow contributed to this report.

Support for Putin wanes in his former Russian stronghold

By YULIA ALEXEYeva and DARIA LITVINOVA Associated Press

NIZHNY TAGIL, Russia (AP) — In 2011, the industrial city of Nizhny Tagil was dubbed "Putingrad" for its residents' fervent support for Russian President Vladimir Putin.

Nine years later, it appears the city 1,400 kilometers (870 miles) east of Moscow no longer lives up to that nickname.

Workers are speaking out against the constitutional changes that would allow Putin to stay in office until 2036 amid growing frustration over their dire living conditions, which have not improved despite all the promises. A nationwide vote on the amendments has been scheduled for Wednesday, but polling stations have been open for a week already to allow for early voting and to prevent election-day crowds amid the pandemic.

"I am against the constitutional changes, most importantly because they are a coronation of the czar, who reigns but does not rule — Vladimir Vladimirovich Putin," says Nikolay Nemytov, a 43-year-old engineer at Russian Railways, a state-run monopoly. He says his monthly salary, the equivalent of \$430, is not nearly enough.

Anton Zhuravlyov, a 33-year-old operator at the Nizhny Tagil Iron and Steel Works Plant, or NTMK, agrees with him on the vote.

"I think (the vote) is just a show. It is more for Putin to show that, 'Look, the people support me, I am still needed, I am in demand,'" said Zhuravlyov, whose employer is one of the two biggest companies in the city. He says his salary hasn't changed in four years, adding: "The majority of people are against him."

Commentators say dwindling public support is the reason why the Kremlin rushed to push through the changes that effectively would allow Putin, already in power for two decades, to hold office for another 16 years if he chooses.

The coronavirus outbreak forced officials to postpone an April 22 vote on a set of constitution amendments that included a clause that resets the term count for Putin, allowing him to run for two more six-year terms after his current term ends in 2024.

At the first sign of the outbreak slowing down, Putin rescheduled the plebiscite for Wednesday, even though Russia's daily number of new infections is still just under 7,000. His historically high approval rating is at an all-time low — 59% in May, according to Levada Center, Russia's top independent pollster — and the Kremlin is clearly struggling to rally the enthusiasm and the turnout needed for the vote to be seen as a nationwide triumph.

Economic woes, like those in Nizhny Tagil, have been eroding Putin's ratings for years, said Denis Volkov, a sociologist with the Levada Center.

"Over the past five years, poverty has been continuously growing, people's financial situation was worsening, and in the midst of it, the (approval) ratings have been slowly declining," he said.

The mood was far different in 2011-12, when Nizhny Tagil, with its 360,000 residents, became a bedrock of support for Putin.

Igor Kholmanski, a foreman at the state tank and railroad car factory Uralvagonzavod, appeared on Putin's annual nationwide phone-in marathon in December 2011 and denounced the mass protests occur-

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ring in Moscow at the time as a threat to "stability."

"Today, our staff of many thousands has work, has salaries, has a future, and we value this stability very much. We don't want to go back," the foreman said in proposing that he "and the guys" travel to Moscow to help suppress the unrest.

"Do come over!" Putin said with a smile. Several days after his inauguration in May 2012, the president visited Nizhny Tagil. A week later, he appointed Kholmanskikh to be his envoy in the Ural mountains region.

In a stark contrast, the once-vehement Putin supporter later criticized authorities for embellishing statistics on salaries that didn't reflect the dire living conditions. Kholmanskikh's unremarkable political career ended in June 2018 when Putin dismissed him, and he returned to Uralvagonzavod as chairman of the board — only to step down and completely vanish from public view by January of this year.

"The majority doesn't see this kind of money in their wallets. When people hear about average salaries in their cities and regions, they just assume they're being lied to," Kholmanskikh said in a rare public appearance at a conference in December.

His sentiment tracked the shifting mood of Nizhny Tagil residents, from support to opposition, after several years of falling living standards.

"Indeed, we used to be 'Putingrad.' We used to support the government's agenda," says Nadezhda Zhuravlyova, 36, a local activist. "A lot has changed. The agenda that the government is promoting no longer satisfies local residents' needs."

Zhuravlyova, who worked at NTMK for seven years and is now on maternity leave, is the face of a local opposition movement, Tagil for Changes, that was founded in 2018 — the year of the election that gave Putin another six years.

She says protests have been rising since then, with people no longer afraid to take a public stand.

"In March, we organized a mass picket against the constitutional amendments, and many city residents (who attended) we were not acquainted with — they were not just from our circle. People just saw the protest and came forward," Zhuravlyova says.

Zhuravlyova blames unpopular government policies such as raising the retirement age and increasing tariffs on garbage collection. She says wages are rising slowly but living conditions are worsening.

"Many people get their salary and immediately spend it — (on) utility bills, paying off loans ... education, health care, groceries and medicine," Zhuravlyova said.

Nemytov, who worked at NTMK for 12 years before joining Russian Railways, says he spends almost half of his \$430 salary on utility bills that go up every year.

"This is just not enough for my family," said the engineer, who adds that he cannot take his four children on fun outings or on vacations to southern Russia.

Zhuravlyov echoes his sentiment, blaming Putin.

"He's the most important boss. (People) do as he says," the worker says.

Nemytov believes the constitutional changes won't improve life for workers in Nizhny Tagil.

"They only care for us as numbers on a piece of paper. We don't exist for them," the engineer says.

—
Litvinova reported from Moscow.

Belgian king expresses regret for violence in colonial rule

By SAMUEL PETREQUIN Associated Press

BRUSSELS (AP) — For the first time in Belgium's history, a reigning king expressed deep regret Tuesday for the violence carried out by the former colonial power when it ruled over what is now the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

In a letter to the president of the DRC, Felix Tshisekedi, Belgium's King Philippe stopped short of issuing a formal apology but conveyed his "deepest regrets" for the "acts of violence and cruelty" and the "suffering and humiliation" inflicted on Belgian Congo. The letter was published on the 60th anniversary of the African country's independence.

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"To further strengthen our ties and develop an even more fruitful friendship, we must be able to talk to each other about our long common history in all truth and serenity," Philippe wrote.

Philippe's letter was sent amid growing demands that Belgium reassess its colonial past and take responsibility for the atrocities committed by former King Leopold II. In the wake of the protests against racial inequality triggered by the May 25 death of George Floyd in the United States, several statues of Leopold, who is blamed for the deaths of millions of Africans during Belgium's colonial rule, have been vandalized. A petition has called for Belgium to remove all statues of the former king.

A bust of Leopold II is expected to be taken down from display later Tuesday in the city of Ghent following a decision from local authorities.

Earlier this month, regional authorities also promised history course reforms to better explain the true character of colonialism. The federal Parliament has decided that a commission would look into Belgium's colonial past.

Belgium Prime minister Sophie Wilmes has called for "an in-depth" debate conducted "without taboo."

"In 2020, we must be able to look at this shared past with lucidity and discernment," she said on Tuesday. "Any work of truth and memory begins with the recognition of suffering. Acknowledging the suffering of the other."

In his letter to Tshisekedi, Philippe stressed the "common achievements" reached by Belgium and its former colony, but also the painful episodes of their unequal relationship.

"At the time of the independent State of the Congo, acts of violence and cruelty were committed that still weigh on our collective memory," Philippe wrote, referring to the period when the country was privately ruled by Leopold II from 1885 to 1908.

"The colonial period that followed also caused suffering and humiliation," Philippe acknowledged.

Leopold ruled Congo as a fiefdom, forcing many of its people into slavery to extract resources for his personal profit. His early rule, starting in 1885, was famous for its brutality, which some experts say left as many as 10 million people dead.

After his ownership of Congo ended in 1908, he handed the central African country over to the Belgian state, which continued to rule over an area 75 times its size until the African nation became independent in 1960.

"I want to express my most deepest regrets for these wounds of the past, the pain of which is today revived by discrimination that is all too present in our societies," the king wrote, insisting that he is determined to keep "fighting all forms of racism."

Philippe also congratulated President Tshisekedi on the 60th anniversary of the country's independence, ruing the fact that he was not able to attend celebrations to which he had been invited due to the coronavirus pandemic.

Follow all AP stories about racial injustice and police brutality at <https://apnews.com/GeorgeFloyd>.

The Latest: US envoy to Afghanistan not going to Kabul

By The Associated Press undefined

ISLAMABAD — The U.S. peace envoy to Afghanistan, Zalmay Khalilzad, will not be going to the Afghan capital, Kabul, while in the region on his latest peace mission because of the dangers presented by the coronavirus and instead will video conference with Afghan leaders, the U.S. State Department said.

Afghanistan's dilapidated health system is grappling with the pandemic, with the number of infections thought to far outnumber the official tally of over 31,000 cases, including 733 deaths.

Khalilzad, who was in the Uzbek capital, Tashkent, on Tuesday, will be traveling to Pakistan later in the day or early Wednesday before meeting with Taliban officials in Qatar, where they have a political office.

The coronavirus infection rate in Pakistan has been climbing steadily, with 209,336 cases recorded as of Tuesday and more than 4,300 deaths.

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HERE'S WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT THE VIRUS OUTBREAK:

- Experts say the pandemic is wreaking havoc in poor and war-torn nations.
- Virus cases worldwide hit 10 million and deaths have surpassed 500,000.
- UK PM Boris Johnson says the pandemic "has been a disaster" for Britain.
- Hunger stalks Yemen's children as pandemic hits Arab world's poorest nation.
- Nurses, doctors feel strain as virus races through Arizona.
- The pandemic means millions of women in Africa and other developing regions could lose years of success in contributing to household incomes and asserting their independence.

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

HERE'S WHAT ELSE IS HAPPENING:

LONDON — Britain's medical regulatory agency has approved the resumption of a trial testing whether hydroxychloroquine, the malaria drug favored by U.S. President Donald Trump, might help prevent health workers from contracting the coronavirus.

The Medicines and Healthcare Products Regulatory Agency had suspended enrollment into the trial after a paper was published in the journal *Lancet* last month that suggested there was an increased death risk linked to the drug. The paper was found to be based on fraudulent data and was retracted.

A large British trial previously found that hydroxychloroquine did not prevent deaths among people hospitalized with COVID-19 compared to people who didn't get the drug. The World Health Organization suspended its own trial into the drug, citing data from Britain and elsewhere, but said it was still unknown whether or not hydroxychloroquine might work to prevent coronavirus infections preventively.

In a statement issued on Tuesday, Britain's Medicines and Healthcare Products Regulatory Agency said it had approved the resumption of an ongoing clinical trial testing the use of the drug in health workers. Oxford University's tropical research center in Bangkok is leading a trial aiming to include more than 40,000 health workers and other staff at risk to determine if hydroxychloroquine can stop infections of the coronavirus.

MADRID — Spanish official statistics show that the country's gross domestic product contracted 5.2% during the first three months of the year compared to the previous quarter, the biggest drop in at least half a century.

The National Institute of Statistics, or INE, said Tuesday that the economic freeze imposed to slow the spread of the coronavirus impacted the economy like never before since quarterly records began to be kept in 1970. From January to March 2009, following a global financial meltdown, the country's GDP shrank by 2.6%.

If the figures for the second quarter are also negative compared to the first — and nobody doubts that since the impact of a strict lockdown was felt especially in April and May, and recovery of economic activity since then has been slow — the eurozone's fourth-largest economy will officially enter in recession.

That's a sharp contrast from GDP growth averaging 0.4% in the second, third and fourth quarters of 2019. Year on year, the drop on the first quarter of 2020 was of 4.1% compared to the same period in 2019.

Spain has recorded some 249,000 coronavirus infections confirmed by lab tests and at least 28,300 deaths.

TOKYO — Online services Yahoo Japan and Line Corp. said Tuesday the fallout from the coronavirus pandemic is causing delays that will push back their merger to later than the scheduled October date.

Z Holdings Corp., which operates Yahoo Japan, and Naver Corp. of South Korea, which owns a majority stake in Line, announced last year the merger as equal partners that will form a joint venture through a tender offer.

Both sides said procedures required under law were getting delayed because of the outbreak.

"Due in part to the impact of the global spread of COVID19, the procedures and measures under the

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competition laws of some of the countries have not been completed," their statement said.

A new schedule will be announced as soon as possible, it said.

Z Holdings includes Yahoo Japan, Japan Net Bank, GyaO video content distributor, BuzzFeed Japan and ZoZo fashion e-commerce under its wing. It's also part of Japanese technology giant SoftBank Group., which includes solar power and robotics.

The planned combination will create one of the largest Japanese net businesses in combined sales, with retail services, advertising and mobile messaging. The move is designed to boost competitiveness in an evolving market, with potential expansion in various sectors focused on the Japanese market.

MELBOURNE, Australia — Australia's second-largest city will lock down dozens of suburbs for a month in a bid to contain the spread of coronavirus.

Victoria state Premier Daniel Andrews said Tuesday that 233 positive tests for COVID-19 in Melbourne since Thursday was unacceptably high.

Andrews announced 10 zip codes covering 36 suburbs in which residents will be required to stay at home from Wednesday night until July 29 except for four permitted reasons.

Residents will face fines if they leave home for reasons other than to give or receive care, to exercise, to buy essentials or to go to work or school. People who live outside those suburbs will only be allowed to enter them for the same reasons.

Andrews also announced there would be no international flights allowed into Melbourne for the next two weeks to help curb infections.

SEOUL, South Korea -- South Korea's professional baseball league says it will require fans to wear masks, sit at least a seat apart and prohibit them from eating food in the stands as it prepares to bring back spectators in the coming weeks amid the coronavirus epidemic.

The Korea Baseball Organization said Tuesday that teams will be initially allowed to sell only 30% of the seats for each game. It said attendance could be expanded to as much as 50% depending on the progress in the country's anti-virus efforts.

Fans will also be screened for fevers and discouraged from shouting, singing and cheering during the game. They will be able to buy tickets only with credit cards so that health authorities could easily locate them when needed. South Korea has been actively tracing the contacts of virus carriers using credit card information, cellphone location data and surveillance camera footage.

The KBO became one of the world's first major sports competitions to return to action in May, but without fans in the stands. Seats have been covered with cheering banners, dolls or pictures of fans as teams tried to mimic a festive atmosphere.

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates — The island nation of Bahrain says it will cover 50% of the salaries of private-sector workers amid the coronavirus pandemic.

The island kingdom off Saudi Arabia in the Persian Gulf says the program will begin in July and covers "insured citizens employed in the private sector working for companies most affected by the coronavirus."

The payments will go on for three months.

The kingdom says it also will cover electricity bills at employees' homes.

Like other Gulf Arab nations, Bahrain has a large population of foreign workers. The kingdom's announcement is among the most significant aid offered that covers those workers.

SEOUL, South Korea -- South Korea has reported 43 newly confirmed cases of COVID-19 from across the country as infections begin to spread beyond the greater capital area, which has been at the center of a virus resurgence since late May.

The figures announced by South Korea's Centers for Disease Control and Prevention on Tuesday brought national totals to 12,800 cases, including 282 deaths. Seventeen of the new cases came from the Seoul

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metropolitan area, where about half of South Korea's 51 million people live, while infections were also reported in other major cities such as Daejeon, Gwangju, Busan and Sejong.

Twenty of the new cases were linked to international arrivals as the coronavirus continues to strengthen its hold in Southern Asia, the United States and beyond.

Authorities in recent weeks have been struggling to track transmissions that have been popping up from various places as people increasingly venture out in public amid an erosion in citizen vigilance.

SALEM, Ore. — Gov. Kate Brown announced Monday that people throughout Oregon will be required to wear face coverings in indoor public spaces starting Wednesday to slow the spread of the coronavirus.

The guidance applies to businesses and members of the public visiting indoor public spaces, she said in a news release.

Face covering requirements were mandated in eight counties last week. Over the past month, Brown said the disease has spread at an alarming rate in both urban and rural counties.

Face coverings that cover the nose and mouth play a critical role in reducing the spread of the disease because droplets from people's breath can carry the virus to others without people realizing it, she said.

She said she did not want to close businesses again as has happened in other states that are seeing a spike in cases. She said Oregon Occupational Safety and Health (OSHA) will take the lead in enforcing face covering requirements for all covered Oregon businesses.

TOPEKA, Kan. — Kansas Gov. Laura Kelly says she will issue an executive order mandating the use of masks in public starting Friday to stop the spread of COVID-19.

"The evidence could not be clearer — wearing a mask is not only safe, but it is necessary to avoid another shutdown," the Democratic governor told reporters Monday.

Kelly's executive order would require every Kansan to wear a mask if they are around other people. She said her administration will issue specific guidance later this week and will work with the attorney general's office to implement the policy.

Local officials would enforce the policy.

"This is all we have to fight this virus and it is up to each of us to do our part," Kelly said.

Kansas health officials reported on Monday at least 14,443 confirmed coronavirus cases, an increase of 905 since Friday. The state also had six more deaths from COVID-19, bring the total number of deaths in the state to 270. Kansas reported that 1,152 people had been hospitalized.

MIAMI — In South Beach, not wearing a mask could lead to a \$50 fine starting Tuesday. Miami Beach Mayor Dan Gelber said the broader regulations, which include requiring masks when not able to socially distance, including outside, in condominium common areas and at hotels, will be punishable with a verbal warning or fine. A curfew is also being discussed.

"We don't have too many tools left in our kit, and we don't want to be forced to return to a shelter in place order that proved so economically devastating," Gelber said, urging residents to comply.

The city will also dispatch ambassadors to congested areas to pass out free masks.

"To those of you who seem to believe that wearing a mask is a political statement — it is not. This virus couldn't care who you support or what party you belong to," said Gelber. "I don't know the politics of the 13 seniors living here in South Beach and who recently perished."

China approves contentious Hong Kong national security law

By ZEN SOO and KEN MORITSUGU Associated Press

HONG KONG (AP) — China approved a contentious national security law that will allow authorities to crack down on subversive and secessionist activity in Hong Kong, a move many see as Beijing's boldest yet to erase the legal firewall between the semi-autonomous territory and the mainland's authoritarian Communist Party system.

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President Xi Jinping signed a presidential order promulgating the law after it was approved by the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress, the official Xinhua News Agency said. It will be added to the Basic Law, Hong Kong's constitution.

"We hope the law will serve as a deterrent to prevent people from stirring up trouble," said Tam Yiu-Chung, Hong Kong's sole representative on the Standing Committee "Don't let Hong Kong be used as a tool to split the country."

He said punishments would not include the death penalty, but did not elaborate on further details.

Passage of the law came amid fears in Hong Kong and abroad that it would be used to curb opposition voices in the Asian financial hub. The U.S. has already begun moves to end special trade terms given to Hong Kong after the former British colony was returned to China in 1997.

The legislation is aimed at curbing subversive, secessionist and terrorist activities, as well as foreign intervention in the city's affairs. It follows months of anti-government protests in Hong Kong last year that at times descended into violence.

Speaking in a video message to the U.N. Human Rights Council in Geneva, Hong Kong leader Carrie Lam said the law would "only target an extremely small minority" of lawbreakers, would not be retroactive, and that mainland legal bodies would only have jurisdiction in "rare, specified situations."

Critics say it is the most significant erosion to date of Hong Kong's British-style rule of law and the high degree of autonomy that Beijing promised Hong Kong would enjoy at least through 2047 under a "one country, two systems" framework.

Hong Kong pro-democracy activists Joshua Wong, Agnes Chow and Nathan Law issued statements on Facebook saying they would withdraw from their organization Demosisto, which then announced that it would disband with the loss of its top members.

Wong said "worrying about life and safety" has become a real issue and nobody will be able to predict the repercussions of the law, whether it is being extradited to China or facing long jail terms.

More than a hundred protesters gathered at a luxury mall in Hong Kong's Central business district, chanting slogans including "Free Hong Kong, Revolution Now," with several holding up a flag representing an independent Hong Kong as well as posters condemning the law.

The law's passage "represents the greatest threat to human rights in the city's recent history," said the head of Amnesty International's China Team, Joshua Rosenzweig.

"The speed and secrecy with which China has pushed through this legislation intensifies the fear that Beijing has calculatingly created a weapon of repression to be used against government critics, including people who are merely expressing their views or protesting peacefully," Rosenzweig said in a statement.

Concerns were also expressed in Taiwan, which Beijing claims as its own territory to be brought under its control by force if necessary.

"Democracy and freedom are shared universal values of Hong Kong and Taiwan," the island's Mainland Affairs Council said, adding that China had betrayed its promises to Hong Kong,

The self-governing island recently said it would consider providing asylum for Hong Kong opposition figures who fear arrest.

Ahead of the law's passage, the Trump administration said Monday it will bar defense exports to Hong Kong and will soon require licenses for the sale of items that have both civilian and military uses.

"We cannot risk these items falling into the hands of the People's Liberation Army, whose primary purpose is to uphold the dictatorship of the (ruling Communist Party) by any means necessary," Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said in a statement.

British Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab said his government was "deeply concerned" over reports of the law's passage, saying that would be a "grave step." Britain has said it could offer residency and possible citizenship to around 3 million of Hong Kong's 7.5 million people.

"This issue is purely China's internal affairs, and no foreign country has the right to interfere," Chinese foreign ministry spokesperson Zhao Lijian said Tuesday.

He said China would take necessary measures to protect its national interests in response to "the wrong

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acts of the United States.”

Under the law, Beijing will set up a national security office in Hong Kong to collect and analyze intelligence and deal with criminal cases related to national security.

Government critics fear Beijing will use the law to pursue political opponent. Some have questioned the legal basis on which China proceeded with the legislation, saying it undermines the Basic Law.

An earlier attempt to pass a security law in 2003 was dropped after hundreds of thousands of people marched in Hong Kong’s streets against it.

China for years had put off another such effort, but citing a new urgency after last year’s protests, announced it would bypass the Hong Kong legislature and enact the law on its own.

Chinese officials have railed against what they claim is foreign interference in the territory that they blame for encouraging the anti-government protests. Beijing condemned those protests as an attempt to permanently split Hong Kong away from China.

Drafting of the law took place amid intense secrecy, with even top Hong Kong officials reportedly not given advance notice of its specifics.

Questions linger over the effects on Hong Kong’s free press that has come under increasing political and financial pressure, as well as the operations of non-governmental organizations, particularly those with foreign connections.

The law’s passage comes after Hong Kong’s legislature in early June approved a contentious bill making it illegal to insult the Chinese national anthem. Pro-China figures have also been pushing for more “patriotic” education to be introduced into the curriculum in hopes that will boost their identification with Beijing.

Moritsugu reported from Beijing.

Businesses chafe in Leicester as UK city faces new lockdown

By JILL LAWLESS and DANICA KIRKA Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — Stores closed their doors Tuesday and schools prepared to send children home in the English city of Leicester, where the British government has imposed a local lockdown to contain a spike in coronavirus cases.

The reintroduction of restrictions on the city of 330,000 people came as British Prime Minister Boris Johnson prepared to outline an infrastructure investment plan to help the U.K. fix the economic devastation caused by the pandemic. Johnson planned to use a speech to set out his vision of a “New Deal,” echoing the policies of President Franklin D. Roosevelt that helped wrench the United States out of the Great Depression.

People in most of England will be able to drink in pubs, eat in restaurants and get a haircut when the next phase of lockdown-easing measures begins Saturday. But the government has rolled back those freedoms in Leicester, saying that the city 100 miles (160 kilometers) north of London accounted for a tenth of all new coronavirus cases in the country last week.

Shops in Leicester selling non-essential items — most things apart from food and medicines — were ordered to shut down again starting Tuesday, two weeks after they reopened. Schools, which have been gradually welcoming children back, have to send them home on Thursday and residents are being told to make only essential journeys.

“I opened my shop last week for the first time and saw an instant increase in orders and now I worry this change will go back to no orders,” said James West, who runs a design and printing company in Thurmaston, just outside Leicester.

The U.K.’s official death coronavirus death toll stands at 43,659, the worst in Europe and the third-highest in the world after the United States and Brazil. But the country’s infection rate has been falling and Britain is gradually easing lockdown restrictions that were imposed in March.

Local officials accused the U.K. government of being too slow to act in Leicester, an industrious, multi-cultural city with two universities and factories making shoes, clothes and potato chips. They said a rise

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in local infections had been evident for almost two weeks but the central government had not shared the data promptly with public health authorities in Leicester.

The city has a large South Asian community who often live in multi-generational households that can transmit the virus between family members. Britain's ethnic minority communities have been hit especially hard in the pandemic.

There was also confusion about the borders of Leicester's new lockdown area.

"As yet the government has not announced what it accepts to be the boundary of this lockdown, so policing it is going to be something of a challenge until we know what the area is to be policed," said Leicester Mayor Peter Soulsby.

Health Secretary Matt Hancock defended the government's policy.

"The strategy is to allow for the opening up of the rest of the country, giving people their freedoms back where it is safe to do so," he told Sky News. "But we also need, alongside that, to take local action where there is a specific flare-up."

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

GOP lawmakers urge action after Russia-Afghanistan briefing

By ZEKE MILLER, JAMES LAPORTA and MARY CLARE JALONICK Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Eight Republican lawmakers attended a White House briefing about explosive allegations that Russia secretly offered bounties to Taliban-linked militants for killing American troops in Afghanistan — intelligence the White House insisted the president himself had not been fully read in on.

Members of Congress in both parties called for additional information and consequences for Russia and its president, Vladimir Putin, and eight Democrats were to be briefed on the matter Tuesday morning, a day after the Republicans' briefing. Still, White House press secretary Kayleigh McEnany insisted Trump had not been briefed on the findings because they hadn't been verified.

The White House seemed to be setting an unusually high bar for bringing the information to Trump, since it is rare for intelligence to be confirmed without a shadow of doubt before it is presented to senior government decision-makers. McEnany declined to say why a different standard of confidence in the intelligence applied to briefing lawmakers than bringing the information to the president.

Republicans who were in the briefing Monday expressed alarm about Russia's activities in Afghanistan.

Rep. Michael McCaul, the ranking member of the House Foreign Affairs Committee, and Rep. Adam Kinzinger were in the briefing led by Director of National Intelligence John Ratcliffe, White House chief of staff Mark Meadows and national security adviser Robert O'Brien. McCaul and Kinzinger said in a statement that lawmakers were told "there is an ongoing review to determine the accuracy of these reports."

"If the intelligence review process verifies the reports, we strongly encourage the Administration to take swift and serious action to hold the Putin regime accountable," they said.

Rep. Liz Cheney, R-Wyo., and Texas Rep. Mac Thornberry, the top Republican on the House Armed Services Committee, said, "After today's briefing with senior White House officials, we remain concerned about Russian activity in Afghanistan, including reports that they have targeted U.S. forces."

Senators reviewed classified documents related to the allegations Monday evening. The information they received was not previously known, according to one aide who was not authorized to discuss the matter publicly and spoke on the condition of anonymity.

On CNN, House Speaker Nancy Pelosi confirmed the timing of the Democratic briefing but said "it's no substitute for what they owe the Congress of the United States." She said that "this is as serious as it gets."

She speculated that Trump wasn't briefed "because they know it makes him very unhappy, and all roads for him, as you know, lead to Putin. And would he tell Putin what they knew?"

The intelligence assessments came amid Trump's push to withdraw the U.S. from Afghanistan. They suggested Russia was making overtures to militants as the U.S. and the Taliban held talks to end the

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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.

Republican Sen. John Cornyn told reporters Monday, "I don't think it's should be a surprise to anybody that the Taliban's been trying to kill Americans and that the Russians have been encouraging that, if not providing means to make that happen."

He added: "Intelligence committees have been briefed on that for months. so has Nancy Pelosi, so has (Democratic Senate leader) Chuck Schumer. So, this is, this is a more leaks and partisanship."

While Russian meddling in Afghanistan isn't new, 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.

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, officials told the AP.

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" attacks — from 2019 to determine if they are also linked to Russian bounties.

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

Intelligence officials told the AP that the White House first became aware of alleged Russian bounties in early 2019 — a year earlier than had been previously reported. The assessments were included in one of Trump's written daily briefings at the time, and then-national security adviser John Bolton told colleagues he had briefed Trump on the matter. Bolton declined to comment, and the White House did not respond to questions on the matter.

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.

Trump's Democratic general election rival, former Vice President Joe Biden, used an online fundraiser Monday to hammer the president for a "betrayal" of American troops in favor of "an embarrassing campaign of deferring and debasing himself before Putin."

"I'm disgusted," Biden told donors, as he recalled his late son Beau's military service. Families of service members, Biden said, "should never, ever have to worry they'll face a threat like this: the commander in chief turning a blind eye."

Asked about the reports on the alleged bounties, Putin's spokesman Dmitry Peskov said Monday, "These claims are lies."

Associated Press writer Deb Riechmann contributed to this report.

EU to list which citizens can enter; US likely to miss out

By LORNE COOK Associated Press

BRUSSELS (AP) — The European Union on Tuesday is announcing a list of nations whose citizens will be allowed to enter 31 European countries, but most Americans are likely to be refused entry for at least another two weeks due to soaring coronavirus infections in the U.S.

As Europe's economies reel from the impact of the coronavirus, southern EU countries like Greece, Italy and Spain are desperate to entice back sun-loving visitors and breathe life into their damaged tourism industries.

More than 15 million Americans are estimated to travel to Europe each year, while some 10 million Europeans head across the Atlantic.

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Still, many people both inside and outside Europe remain wary of travel in the coronavirus era, given the unpredictability of the pandemic and the possibility of second waves of infection that could affect flights and hotel bookings. Tens of thousands of travelers had a frantic, chaotic scramble in March to get home as the pandemic swept across the world and borders slammed shut.

EU envoys to Brussels have launched a written procedure which would see the list endorsed Tuesday as long as no objections are raised by member countries. The list is expected to contain up to 15 countries that have virus infection rates comparable to those in the EU.

Infection rates in Brazil, Russia and India are high too, and they are also unlikely to make the cut.

The countries would also have to lift any bans they might have on European travelers. The list of permitted nations is to be updated every 14 days, with new countries being added or even dropping off depending on if they are keeping the disease under control.

The daily number of new confirmed cases in the United States has surged over the past week. The U.S. has the world's worst coronavirus outbreak, with nearly 2.6 million people confirmed infected and over 126,000 dead, according to a tally by Johns Hopkins University that experts say understates the pandemic's true toll due to limited testing and other reasons.

In contrast, aside from a notable recent outbreak tied to a slaughterhouse in western Germany, the virus's spread has generally stabilized across much of continental Europe.

In March, President Donald Trump suspended all people from Europe's ID check-free travel zone from entering the U.S., making it unlikely now that U.S. citizens would qualify to enter the EU.

The EU imposed restrictions on non-essential travel to its 27 nations, plus Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway and Switzerland, which are part of the Schengen open-borders area, in March to halt the spread of the virus. Non-EU citizens who are already living in Europe are not included in the ban.

The EU list does not apply to travel to Britain, which left the EU in January. Britain now requires all incoming travelers — bar a few exceptions like truck drivers — to go into a self-imposed 14-day quarantine, although the measure is under review and is likely to ease in the coming weeks. The requirement also applies to U.K. citizens.

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

Supreme Court's abortion ruling raises stakes for election

By DAVID CRARY AP National Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Supporters of abortion rights are elated, foes of abortion dismayed and angry, but they agree on one consequence of the Supreme Court's first major abortion ruling since President Donald Trump took office: The upcoming election is crucial to their cause.

Both sides also say Monday's ruling is not the last word on state-level abortion restrictions. One abortion rights leader evoked the image of playing whack-a-mole as new cases surface.

The Supreme Court, in a 5-4 decision, struck down a Louisiana law seeking to require doctors who perform abortions to have admitting privileges at nearby hospitals. For both sides in the abortion debate, it was viewed as a momentous test of the court's stance following Trump's appointments of two conservative justices, Neil Gorsuch and Brett Kavanaugh.

Both justices joined the conservative bloc's dissent that supported the Louisiana law. But they were outvoted because Chief Justice John Roberts concurred with the court's four more liberal justices.

The ruling was yet another major decision in which the conservative-leaning court failed to deliver an easy victory to the right in culture war issues during an election year; one ruling protects gay, lesbian and transgender people from discrimination in employment, and the other rejected Trump's effort to end protections for young immigrants.

Now, anti-abortion leaders say there's an urgent need to reelect Trump so he can appoint more justices like Gorsuch and Kavanaugh. Abortion rights activists, with equal fervor, say it's crucial to defeat Trump

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and end Republican control of the Senate, where the GOP majority has confirmed scores of conservative judges during Trump's term.

The Louisiana law "was an obvious challenge to our reproductive freedom, and it points to the urgent need to vote for pro-choice candidates from the top of the ballot all the way down," said Heidi Sieck of #VOTEPROCHOICE, an online advocacy group. "Do this in primaries, do this in runoffs, do this in special elections and do this in the general in November."

James Bopp Jr., general counsel for National Right to Life, made a similar appeal, from an opposite vantage point.

"This decision demonstrates how difficult it is to drain the D.C. swamp and how important it is that President Trump gets reelected so that he may be able to appoint more pro-life justices," Bopp said.

The Rev. Frank Pavone, national director of Priests for Life and a member of the Trump campaign's Catholic voter outreach project, noted that two of the liberal justices — Ruth Bader Ginsberg and Stephen Breyer — are the oldest members of the court.

"Nobody can predict the future, but who's going to name their replacements when the time comes? That is a question that motivates a lot of voters," Pavone said.

Anti-abortion activists swiftly made clear that Monday's ruling would not dissuade them from continuing to push tough abortion restrictions through state legislatures.

In recent years, several states have enacted near-total bans on abortion only to have them blocked by the courts. However, Texas Right to Life urged lawmakers there to press ahead with a proposed three-pronged measure that would start with a ban on late-term abortions and proceed to a total ban.

Monday's ruling "highlights the need for pro-life states to pass laws that directly protect pre-born children in new and dynamic ways rather than get distracted on regulating the corrupt abortion industry," a Texas Right to Life statement said.

Mike Gonidakis, the president of Ohio Right to Life, questioned the wisdom of pushing now for sweeping bans. He noted that an Ohio bill sharply restricting late-term abortions had taken effect, while the courts blocked a measure passed last year that would ban most abortions as early as six weeks into pregnancy.

"We have to be methodical, strategic, and take an incremental approach," he said. "A lot of people want to go from 0 to 60 — you usually end up with nothing."

The president of a national anti-abortion group, Marjorie Dannenfelser of the Susan B. Anthony List, said she and her allies would encourage states to continue pressing forward with proposed restrictions that stopped short of near-total bans.

"These measures are extremely popular in some battleground states," she said. "Prioritizing them is part of our electoral strategy."

Abortion rights advocate Nancy Northup, the CEO of the Center for Reproductive Rights, acknowledged that Monday's ruling "will not stop those hell-bent on banning abortion."

"We will continue to fight state by state, law by law to protect our constitutional right to abortion," she said. "But we shouldn't have to keep playing whack-a-mole."

She urged Congress to pass a bill called The Women's Health Protection Act, which seeks to bolster women's ability to access abortion even in states that pass laws seeking to restrict that access. The measure was introduced in May 2019 and has strong Democratic support — but no chance of passage for now due to Republican opposition.

From the other side of the debate, there also are dreams of a congressional solution.

Michael New, an abortion opponent who teaches social research at Catholic University of America, said some legal experts in the anti-abortion community believe Congress could find ways to restrict or ban abortion while circumventing the courts — for example by establishing constitutional legal protections for unborn children.

But any such measures are nonstarters for now, given that Democrats in Congress would overwhelmingly oppose them.

Whatever the strategy, New said, it would be important for the anti-abortion movement to be unified. He

recalled that internal debates decades ago over how to draft a human life amendment to the Constitution did a great deal of damage to the anti-abortion cause.

Johnnie Moore, an evangelical adviser to the Trump administration, said Monday's court ruling would intensify interest in the election among religious conservatives who are a key part of Trump's base.

"Conservatives know they are on the one-yard-line," Moore tweeted. "Enthusiasm is already unprecedented, evangelical turnout will be too."

Associated Press writer Elana Schor contributed to this report.

How risky is flying during the coronavirus pandemic?

By The Associated Press undefined

How risky is flying during the coronavirus pandemic?

Flying can increase your risk of exposure to infection, but airlines are taking some precautions and you can too.

Air travel means spending time in security lines and airport terminals, which puts you into close contact with other people. As travel slowly recovers, planes are becoming more crowded, which means you will likely sit close to other people, often for hours, which raises your risk.

Once on a plane, most viruses and other germs don't spread easily because of the way air circulates, according to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Airlines also say they are focusing on sanitizing the hard surfaces that passengers commonly touch.

Some airlines like Alaska, Delta, JetBlue and Southwest are blocking middle seats or limiting capacity. But even if every middle seat is empty you will likely be closer than the recommended distance of 6 feet to another passenger now that planes are getting fuller.

American, United and Spirit are now booking flights to full capacity when they can. All leading U.S. airlines require passengers to wear masks. Lauren Ancel Meyers, an expert in disease outbreaks at the University of Texas, says that can help limit risk.

For air travel, and all other types of transportation, the CDC recommends washing your hands, maintaining social distancing and wearing face coverings.

Several airlines announced Monday that they will ask passengers about possible COVID-19 symptoms and whether they have been in contact with someone who tested positive for the virus in the previous two weeks.

Still, Meyers said you still might consider whether you need to be on that plane. "We should all be in the mindset of 'only if necessary' and always taking the most precautions we can to protect ourselves and others," she said.

The AP is answering your questions about the coronavirus in this series. Submit them at: FactCheck@AP.org.

Read previous Viral Questions:

Who would be the first to get a COVID-19 vaccine?

Is it safe to form a COVID-19 "support bubble" with friends?

Is it safe to stay in hotels as reopenings get underway?

Analysis: Virus surge forces Arizona gov's hand on masks

By JACQUES BILLEAUD and PETER PRENGAMAN Associated Press

PHOENIX (AP) — After telling Arizonans that many public places were again being closed amid a surge of coronavirus cases, Gov. Doug Ducey ended a somewhat contentious news conference by imploring people to wear face masks.

"Arm yourself with a mask," he said Monday after issuing an executive order to shut down bars, night clubs and water parks while pushing back the start of school in the fall. "It's your best defense against

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this virus.”

While the Republican governor has never discouraged the use of masks, his full-throated endorsement of them was a big change from a largely lukewarm stance the last few months.

“There are some people that can’t wear masks for whatever reason, shortness of breath or they are asthmatic,” Ducey said June 13 when asked why he wouldn’t mandate the use of them.

The change in tone on masks and a return to restrictions are the latest signs that Ducey, similar to some other Republican governors nationwide, is being forced to set political considerations aside amid surging cases.

“He saw that medically and even politically he needed to do something,” said Mike O’Neil, an Arizona pollster and political analyst. “The greater political risk would be if those figures continue to go through the ceiling and he didn’t act.”

Just a week ago, Ducey attended a Phoenix event in a church with President Donald Trump that featured many attendants not wearing masks. Ducey wore a mask when in the crowd but did not while introducing Trump. A few days before that event, Ducey allowed mayors to make wearing masks in public places mandatory, a turnabout after weeks of pressure to allow cities to do more slow the virus spread. Ducey had resisted allowing such measures, arguing that they lead to a patchwork of regulations.

“The governor made the wrong call (on masks) early on and he doubled down on that” by waiting too long to let cities decide for themselves, said State Rep. Reginald Bolding, a Democrat.

Several cities, including Phoenix, immediately put into place mask-wearing orders. That set up an awkward situation for Trump’s June 23 visit: masks technically should have been worn by everybody going to the event. The mayor, a Democrat, explained her decision to let it go by saying that the idea was to educate the populace, not punish people.

Ducey had ordered many businesses closed and forced schools to take learning online in early March. By mid-May, he began opening things up. While hospitals used the time to prepare in the case of a crush of cases, Ducey arguably did little to prepare the state for a reopening that was not simply a return to normal. Within days of lifting the orders, bars were packed, large gatherings could be seen in parks and mask use continued to be sporadic.

Ducey acknowledged that in a roundabout way on Monday, saying that the “early message” about the virus was that it largely impacted the elderly. He said it was now clear that it could also harm younger people, particularly those with other health issues.

“You’ve seen a change in tone and direction because of the change and direction from the trajectory of this virus,” he said Monday in response to one of many questions about his changing stance. “We are going to do what is necessary, and I mean whatever is necessary, to protect the lives and livelihoods of Arizonans.”

By early June, just a few weeks after restrictions were lifted, cases began spiking. Arizona has seen its cases go from 13,000 on May 15 to 74,500 on Monday, and deaths from the virus have nearly doubled in the last six weeks. More than 1,500 people have died.

In recent weeks, Ducey has clearly tried to find a middle ground, acknowledging the surging cases while also assuring Arizonans that all was under control and resisting a return to restrictions. He has frequently said the hospitals were well prepared for whatever came while interspersing arguments about personal liberties and the need for the state to stay open for business. He has suggested people wear masks when socially distancing wasn’t possible but generally framed it as a matter of personal choice.

The state’s decision to tell hospitals on Friday to carry out their crisis care plans was likely a turning point for the governor, said Will Humble, executive director of the Arizona Public Health Association.

If a hospital goes over capacity, it will have to end all non-emergency surgeries and some people may get lower standards of care or be discharged early. Statewide, hospitals were at 84% capacity on Sunday. While officials said Monday it was impossible to know when they may reach 100%, there are no signs that the virus is slowing.

“It becomes very personal,” Humble said.

UN agency: source of radioactivity in Nordics still unclear

BERLIN (AP) — The U.N. nuclear agency says slightly elevated levels of radioactivity that have been detected in northern Europe pose no risk to human health or to the environment but it's still unclear what the cause was.

The Finnish, Norwegian and Swedish radiation and nuclear safety watchdogs said last week that they had spotted small amounts of radioactive isotopes in parts of Finland, southern Scandinavia and the Arctic.

The International Atomic Energy Agency's director general, Rafael Grossi, said in a statement late Monday that "the levels reported to the IAEA are very low and pose no risk to human health and the environment."

The Vienna-based agency contacted European countries on Saturday to request information. It said that, by Monday afternoon, 29 had voluntarily reported that nothing had happened on their territory that might have caused the concentrations of isotopes in the air. A few countries outside Europe reported similar findings.

Russia wasn't on the list of countries that had reported back to the IAEA by Monday.

"I expect more member states to provide relevant information and data to us, and we will continue to inform the public," Grossi said.

The Netherlands' National Institute for Public Health and the Environment said Friday the isotopes may be from a source in Russia and "may indicate damage to a fuel element in a nuclear power plant."

Russia's state nuclear power operator, however, said the two nuclear power plants in northwestern Russia haven't reported any problems.

Follow all AP coverage about pollution and climate change issues at <https://apnews.com/Climate>.

Israel undeterred by international opposition to annexation

By JOSEF FEDERMAN Associated Press

JERUSALEM (AP) — Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu appears determined to carry out his pledge to begin annexing parts of the occupied West Bank, possibly as soon as Wednesday.

His vision of redrawing the map of the Holy Land, in line with President Donald Trump's Mideast plan, has been welcomed by Israel's religious and nationalist right wing and condemned by the Palestinians and the international community.

But with opponents offering little more than condemnations, there seems little to prevent Netanyahu from embarking on a plan that could permanently alter the Mideast landscape.

Here's a closer look at annexation:

WHY ANNEXATION, AND WHY NOW?

Israel's right wing has long favored annexing parts or all of the West Bank, saying the territory is vital for the country's security and an inseparable part of the biblical Land of Israel. But most of the world considers the West Bank, captured by Israel from Jordan in the 1967 Mideast war, to be occupied territory, and Israel's dozens of settlements, now home to nearly 500,000 Jewish Israelis, as illegal.

Surrounded by a team of settler allies, Trump has upended U.S. policy, recognizing contested Jerusalem as Israel's capital, moving the U.S. Embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem, recognizing Israel's 1981 annexation of the Golan Heights and announcing that Jewish settlements are not illegal.

Seeking to court hard-line voters on the campaign trail, Netanyahu last year began talking about annexation. After Trump released his Mideast plan in January envisioning permanent Israeli control over 30% of the West Bank, including all of Israel's settlements and the strategic Jordan Valley region, Netanyahu quickly jumped on board. Israel and the U.S. have formed a joint committee to map out precisely which areas Israel can keep.

Netanyahu made sure that under the coalition agreement, he can bring a proposal to the new government anytime after July 1. He appears eager to move forward before the November presidential election, possibly with a limited move billed as a first stage, especially with Trump's re-election prospects in question.

WHY IS THERE SO MUCH OPPOSITION?

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The Palestinians seek the entire West Bank as the heartland of a future independent state and believe the Trump plan would deliver a fatal blow to their fading hopes of statehood.

Among the plan's components: The Palestinians would only have limited autonomy in a fraction of territory they seek. Isolated Israeli settlements deep inside Palestinian territory would remain intact, and the Israeli military would retain overall security control over the Palestinian entity.

The international community has invested billions of dollars in promoting a two-state solution since the interim Oslo peace accords of the 1990s. The U.N. secretary general, the European Union and leading Arab countries have all said that Israeli annexation would violate international law and greatly undermine the prospects for Palestinian independence.

WILL ANYTHING CHANGE ON THE GROUND?

Not immediately. Israel has controlled the entire West Bank for more than 50 years. Palestinians will remain in their towns and villages, while Israelis will live in their newly annexed settlements. The Palestinian Authority is protesting annexation but has ruled out any kind of violent response.

But over time, there is a larger risk of conflict.

Netanyahu has said he opposes granting citizenship to Palestinians living on annexed lands, presumably because it would undercut Israel's Jewish majority. But failing to grant equal rights to Palestinians in annexed areas opens Israel up to charges of establishing an apartheid system that would draw heavy international condemnation.

Palestinians who are not living on annexed lands could face other challenges. Moving between Palestinian population centers — or even reaching their own properties and farmlands — could become difficult if they have to cross through Israeli territory. Critics say that Israel could also use its sovereignty to expropriate Palestinian lands.

The Palestinian Authority has already cut off its ties with Israel to protest the looming annexation. In the absence of any peace prospects, the Palestinian Authority could see its international funding dry up or decide to close.

The collapse of the authority could force Israel, as an occupying power, to pick up the tab for governing the Palestinians. In the long term, it could lead to Palestinian and international calls to establish a single binational state with voting rights for all — a scenario that could spell the end of Israel as a Jewish-majority state.

WHY DOESN'T THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY STOP THIS?

U.N. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres has said annexation would mark a "most serious violation of international law." The EU's foreign policy chief, Josep Borrell, has warned of "significant consequences." Jordan and Egypt, the only Arab states at peace with Israel, have condemned the annexation plan. Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, powerful Arab players with informal relations with Israel, have said warming ties will be in danger.

But Israel and the U.S. appear to be banking on the international community's poor record of translating rhetoric into concrete action. Days after the UAE warned Israel against annexation, for instance, two Emirati companies reached cooperation deals with Israeli partners in the fight against the coronavirus.

Thanks to the U.S. veto over U.N. Security Council decisions, international sanctions appear to be out of the question. Divisions within the EU make concerted European reaction unlikely as well.

Individual countries might seek to impose limited sanctions against Israel, and the International Criminal Court in the Hague could take annexation into account as it weighs whether to launch a war crimes investigation into Israeli policies.

CAN ANYTHING STOP ANNEXATION?

The biggest obstacle to Netanyahu appears to be from within. U.S. officials say they are unlikely to allow Israel to move forward unless Netanyahu and his coalition partner, Defense Minister Benny Gantz, are in agreement.

Gantz, a former military chief and bitter rival of Netanyahu, has said Israel should move carefully and in coordination with regional partners. Gantz laid the groundwork for further delays Monday when he said

his top priority is guiding the country through the coronavirus crisis.

"Anything unrelated to the battle against the coronavirus will wait," he said.

Ironically, some hard-line settler leaders have also opposed the plan, saying they cannot accept any program that envisions a Palestinian state.

If the issue remains frozen, time could run out on Netanyahu. The presumptive Democratic nominee, Joe Biden, has said he opposes annexation. A Biden victory in November could mean that any Israeli annexation will be short-lived.

Lives Lost: Indonesian doctor's musical passion led to love

By EDNA TARIGAN Associated Press

JAKARTA, Indonesia (AP) — Michael Robert Marampe knew what he wanted to be since he was a kid: a doctor and a pianist. He became both, and his passion for music even led him to his fiancée — a woman he never got to marry because he got the coronavirus.

Marampe met Tri Novia Septiani, a singer and worship leader, at the church where he played piano in Jakarta, Indonesia's capital. They formed the duo Miknov, covering popular songs and composing their own music that they uploaded to Instagram and YouTube.

They planned to tie the knot in April in Bali but postponed the wedding as the coronavirus started spreading in the Southeast Asian country in March.

"He made a song for me. ... The title is 'You Are the Last One.' Turns out I became the last one for him," Septiani said.

EDITOR'S NOTE: This is part of an ongoing series of stories remembering people who have died from the coronavirus around the world.

Loved ones recalled memories of the 28-year-old Marampe during an online memorial service in June. The gathering began with laughter, but many couldn't hold back tears as they remembered his short life.

His mother, Herlina Simbala, said she would never forget one of the last things her oldest son said to her: He promised to hug her again after he got out of the hospital. He never got the chance.

"He only texted me. I think he was afraid to talk to me directly," Simbala said.

Marampe always aspired to be a doctor, following in the footsteps of his father, who is a physician at a hospital. After finishing medical school, Marampe took an internship that sent him more than 2,000 kilometers (1,260 miles) away from home to East Kalimantan province on the island of Borneo.

"He was happy with his job. Wherever and whenever it is. ... He never complained," his mother said.

Marampe discovered his other passion when he was young, learning to play music on a mini keyboard before taking piano lessons.

His love for gospel music connected him to his future fiancée, Septiani. They met at church in 2011, and a friend set them up on a date the next year. They became inseparable after that.

As their romance developed, so did their love for music, and they formed their group despite both having busy jobs. Septiani is a fashion designer, and Marampe was a general medical practitioner at a hospital.

Because of his work, Marampe worried about contracting the coronavirus. Septiani said he told her that one of his patients showed symptoms of the virus but didn't want to be tested.

Marampe got tested himself in April and was positive for COVID-19. But he never blamed anyone, Septiani said.

He was treated at a hospital, and on his eighth day there, Marampe recorded a video that he posted to Instagram.

"For me, being a doctor is something I'm proud of. I can serve my patients. I can help so many people. And I have no regrets at all. For my friends at the front line, keep your spirits up," Marampe said in the video.

His condition improved, and he was released from the hospital after 13 days. But the next morning, his

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fiancée found him struggling to breathe.

He died on April 25, becoming one of 38 doctors the coronavirus has claimed so far in Indonesia. There are many reasons for the deaths, according to Indonesian Medical Association spokesman Halik Malik, including a lack of protective equipment, testing delays and limited medical resources.

Marampe spent his final days in a hospital isolation room, so he spoke his last words to Septiani as she rushed him to the emergency room.

"He said, 'Honey, I really love you. I love you so much.' ... And then he said again, 'Honey, I am a doctor. I know my condition now,'" Septiani said.

Confederate flag losing prominence 155 years after Civil War

By JAY REEVES Associated Press

BIRMINGHAM, Ala. (AP) — Long a symbol of pride to some and hatred to others, the Confederate battle flag is losing its place of official prominence 155 years after rebellious Southern states lost a war to perpetuate slavery.

Mississippi's Republican-controlled Legislature voted Sunday to remove the Civil War emblem from the state flag, a move that was both years in the making and notable for its swiftness amid a national debate over racial inequality following the police killing of George Floyd in Minnesota. Mississippi's was the last state flag to include the design.

NASCAR, born in the South and still popular in the region, banned the rebel banner from races earlier this month, and some Southern localities have removed memorials and statues dedicated to the Confederate cause. A similar round of Confederate flag and memorial removals was prompted five years ago by the slaying of nine Black people at a church in Charleston, South Carolina. A white supremacist was convicted of the shooting.

Make no mistake: The Confederate flag isn't anywhere close to being gone from the South. Just drive along highways where Sons of Confederate Veterans members have erected gigantic battle flags or stop by Dixie General Store, where Bob Castello makes a living selling hundreds of rebel-themed shirts, hats, car accessories and more in an east Alabama county named for a Confederate officer, Gen. Patrick Cleburne.

"Business is very good right now," Castello said Monday.

But even Castello is surprised by how demonstrations over police brutality became a wave that seems to be washing over generations of adoration for the Confederate battle flag by some. He wonders what might happen next.

"This could go on and on," he said. "There's just no limit to where they could go with it."

The Confederacy was founded in Montgomery in 1861 with a Constitution that prohibited laws "denying or impairing the right of property in negro slaves." The South lost, slavery ended, and Confederate sympathizers almost ever since have argued the war wasn't just about slavery, instead advocating the "lost cause" version centered around state's rights, Southern nobility and honor.

To some, the Confederate battle flag — with its red background, blue X and white stars — is a down-home symbol of Southern heritage and pride. The band Alabama, one of the top-selling country music groups ever, included the banner on five album covers in the 1980s and '90s while at the height of its popularity.

Patty Howard, who was visiting a huge carving of Confederate Civil War generals at Georgia's Stone Mountain Park with her husband, Toby, on Monday, said they aren't offended by the flag, but they also don't fly it at their home in Hendersonville, North Carolina.

"I don't see it as related to slavery," said Howard, 71. "To us, it just represents being from the South."

But the flag has a dark side. It has been waved for decades by the Ku Klux Klan, neo-Nazis and other white supremacists who oppose equal rights. The banner's use by such groups, combined with a widening sense that it is time to retire the symbol of a defeated nation once and for all, has led to change.

"The argument over the 1894 flag has become as divisive as the flag itself and it's time to end it," Mississippi Gov. Tate Reeves said of the state's current flag, which was adopted by lawmakers at a time when white supremacists were actively squelching political power that African Americans had gained after the

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Civil War.

Georgia — which added the battle emblem to its state flag in 1956 in response to U.S. Supreme Court decisions to desegregate public schools — adopted a flag without a rebel banner in 2003.

Alabama flew the battle flag atop its state Capitol until 1993, when it was removed following protests by Black legislators. Additional Confederate flags were removed from around a massive Confederate memorial just outside the building in 2015, when South Carolina also removed its battle flag from the state Capitol grounds after the shooting.

It has taken longer in Mississippi. Not long after the Charleston shooting, House Speaker Philip Gunn became the state's first prominent Republican to say the Confederate symbol on the state flag was morally offensive and must be changed. People posted signs with the slogan, "Keep the Flag. Change the speaker," but Gunn was easily reelected twice.

During the past month, Gunn and Mississippi's first-year lieutenant governor, Republican Delbert Hosemann, persuaded a diverse, bipartisan coalition of legislators that changing the flag was inevitable and they should be part of it.

Hosemann is the great-grandson of a Confederate soldier, Lt. Rhett Miles, who was captured at Vicksburg and requested a pardon after the war ended in 1865.

"After he had fought a war for four years, he admitted his transgressions and asked for full citizenship," Hosemann said during the debate. "If he were here today, he'd be proud of us."

Associated Press reporters Kate Brumback in Stone Mountain, Georgia, and Emily Wagster Pettus in Jackson, Mississippi, contributed to this report.

Distancing from Trump? Some Republicans step up critiques

By STEVE PEOPLES, JONATHAN LEMIRE and JILL COLVIN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — For more than three years, President Donald Trump instilled such fear in the Republican Party's leaders that most kept criticism of his turbulent leadership or inconsistent politics to themselves.

That's beginning to change.

Four months before voters decide the Republican president's reelection, some in Trump's party are daring to say the quiet part out loud as Trump struggles to navigate competing national crises and a scattershot campaign message.

"He is losing," former New Jersey Gov. Chris Christie, a Trump friend and confidant, said Sunday of Trump's reelection prospects on ABC's "This Week." "And if he doesn't change course, both in terms of the substance of what he's discussing and the way that he approaches the American people, then he will lose."

Beyond politics, Trump's allies — even some in his own administration — are distancing themselves from his policies.

While Trump avoids wearing a mask in public, Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell said, "We must have no stigma — none — about wearing masks when we leave our homes." Vice President Mike Pence was pictured this weekend wearing a mask and urged other Americans to do the same. And Wyoming Rep. Liz Cheney, the No. 3 Republican in the House, tweeted a picture of her father, former Vice President Dick Cheney, wearing a mask with the hashtag #realmenwearmasks.

At the same time, Trump has been criticized by some Republicans for inconsistent leadership during the sweeping national protests against police brutality. On Sunday, the president tweeted and subsequently deleted a video in which a supporter used the white supremacist mantra "White power."

South Carolina Sen. Tim Scott, the GOP's sole Black senator, called Trump's decision to share the video "indefensible."

Make no mistake, Trump still has a tight grip on the party. And the intensifying concerns are remarkably similar to those that emerged in 2016, when Trump overcame glaring personal and political liabilities to defeat Democrat Hillary Clinton. The splits signal that Republicans are aware of the president's weak

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political standing and may feel increasingly free to break from him as voting nears.

While Election Day isn't until Nov. 3, early voting in a handful of key states, including the battlegrounds of Pennsylvania, Michigan and Virginia, begins in mid-September.

Trump has come to accept that he is currently trailing Democratic rival Joe Biden following a series of phone calls and polling presentations with advisers, according to four campaign officials and Republicans close to the campaign who spoke on condition of anonymity because they weren't authorized to publicly discuss private conversations. He has responded with a mix of disbelief and anger, including frequent frustration that the pandemic robbed him of a strong economy and drowned out the attacks he hoped to land against Biden, according to the officials.

The president's popularity with the party base remains strong. But in an implicit acknowledgement of GOP anxiety, Trump's deputy campaign manager Bill Stepien released a memo Sunday evening questioning polling data that gives Biden an advantage, while pointing to voter participation numbers in recent primaries suggesting Trump's supporters are excited.

"Clearly, Democrats have not rallied around their flawed candidate," Stepien wrote. "Today there can be no debate that President Trump has a decided advantage in base enthusiasm and can be most confident that his supporters will turn out."

Biden pollster John Anzalone laughed at the argument.

"You know a candidate is in trouble when their only argument for reelection is the enthusiasm of their dwindling pool of supporters, which is now barely over 40%," he said.

One factor driving recent concerns has been Trump's inability to articulate an agenda or a clear message for his second term. After a first term defined almost exclusively by his desire to undo former President Barack Obama's accomplishments, Trump has failed to offer a single future policy priority of his own during multiple recent interviews.

Jerry Falwell Jr., a Trump confidant and the president of Liberty University, conceded that the president has not been clear enough about his plans.

"I do think he needs to talk more about what he's going to do in the next four years versus taking credit for what he's already done," Falwell said in an interview, even as he predicted Trump's political standing would improve once voters see Biden on the debate stage this fall.

"Whatever hesitance they might have about Donald Trump is going to turn into fear about Joe Biden's ability to confidently do the job," he said.

For now, however, aides privately worry about Trump's increasingly scattershot approach to the campaign. Many hoped that his comeback rally in Tulsa, Oklahoma, earlier in the month would spark new momentum, when it instead raised questions about his supporters' enthusiasm and his management of the pandemic.

The officials close to the campaign report that Trump was ecstatic about the raucous crowd he drew to Phoenix a few days later, but the positive development was quickly overshadowed by the resurgence of the virus. COVID-19 infections have exploded across several states, including Arizona, forcing some governors to scale back reopening plans.

Trump's campaign has also continued to struggle with its attempts to define and attack Biden, as broadsides over China and his son's work overseas have failed to land. Trump himself has begun wondering if his pet nickname for Biden, "Sleepy Joe," remains effective. Over the weekend, he tested out a new one: "Corrupt Joe."

Meanwhile, Trump aides at all levels have begun to accept the potential that their time in the White House may be short-lived.

Where six months ago, they plotted their promotion path within government, some are beginning to draw up plans to return to the private sector. To be sure, Trump's White House has set records for turnover, but efforts to prepare for life after the administration have been taken up in earnest in some corners of the White House complex.

Democrats, meanwhile, are working to avoid overconfidence.

"We're being really cautious," Anzalone said, "although we know there's something going on."

Peoples reported from New York. Associated Press writer Zeke Miller in Washington contributed to this report.

Roberts a pivotal vote in the Supreme Court's big opinions

By JESSICA GRESKO and MARK SHERMAN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The biggest cases of the Supreme Court term so far have a surprising common thread.

On a court with five Republican appointees, the liberal justices have been in the majority in rulings that make workplace discrimination against gay and transgender people illegal, protect young immigrants from deportation and, as of Monday, struck down a Louisiana law that restricted abortion providers.

As surprising, Chief Justice John Roberts, a conservative nominated by President George W. Bush who has led the court for nearly 15 years, has joined his liberal colleagues in all three.

Since the retirement of Justice Anthony Kennedy in 2018, Roberts has played a pivotal role in determining how far the court will go in cases where the court's four liberals and four conservatives are closely divided.

Here's a look at where Roberts stood in the abortion, immigration and LGBT cases, his history on the court and what's at stake in coming decisions in which Roberts could play a key role:

ABORTION

On Monday, Roberts joined liberal justices Ruth Bader Ginsburg, Stephen Breyer, Sonia Sotomayor and Elena Kagan in striking down Louisiana's Act 620. The justices ruled that the law requiring doctors who perform abortions to have admitting privileges at nearby hospitals violates the abortion rights the court first announced in the landmark 1973 *Roe v. Wade* decision.

But Roberts' reason for siding with the liberals had less to do with his feelings on abortion than with his feelings on whether the court should do an abrupt about-face. Four years ago the court's four liberal members and Justice Kennedy struck down a Texas law nearly identical to Louisiana's. At the time, Roberts was a vote in dissent. But with Kennedy's retirement and replacement by conservative Justice Brett Kavanaugh, many conservatives had hoped the result in the Louisiana case would be different. Not so, Roberts wrote: "The result in this case is controlled by our decision four years ago."

IMMIGRATION

On June 18, the court ruled 5-4 against the Trump administration, saying it did not take the proper steps to end the 8-year-old Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program, which protects some 650,000 young immigrants from deportation. Roberts wrote the court's opinion, joined by the four liberal justices.

Everyone agreed that the administration can end DACA, but the dispute was whether it had been done properly. Roberts said no, writing that the administration had, among other things, failed to consider "what if anything to do about the hardship to DACA recipients."

Trump has already said he will renew his effort to end DACA.

LGBT RIGHTS

The court's immigration ruling followed just days after its June 15 ruling that a landmark civil rights law protects LGBT people from discrimination in employment. The ruling didn't divide the court like the abortion and immigration rulings, however. Six of the justices — Roberts, the court's four liberals and Trump appointee Neil Gorsuch — ruled against the Trump administration and in favor of the LGBT plaintiffs in the cases. Gorsuch wrote the opinion, which Roberts joined.

ROBERTS IN THE TRUMP ERA

If liberals have this month been cheering Roberts' decisions while conservatives have bemoaned them, Roberts is used to taking heat from both sides and defying easy political labels. He has sided with the court's other conservatives in 5-4 decisions allowing the Trump administration to tap Pentagon funds to build more fencing at the U.S.-Mexico border and upholding the administration's travel ban. At this time last year, he handed Republicans a huge victory protecting even the most extreme partisan electoral districts from federal court challenge. But, on the same day, he served the Trump administration a defeat, writing an opinion that kept a citizenship question off the 2020 census.

Even on Monday, Roberts and the conservatives united in two other cases, ruling that the structure of

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the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau is unconstitutional and to uphold a provision of federal law that requires foreign affiliates of U.S.-based health organizations to denounce prostitution as a condition of receiving taxpayer money to fight AIDS around the world.

THE FUTURE

Partisans on both sides could quickly find their feelings on Roberts changing. The justices still have 10 decisions remaining to release before they go on their traditional summer break. Most of the outstanding cases were argued in May when the court heard arguments by telephone because of the coronavirus pandemic. The remaining cases include fights over the president's tax returns and important cases involving religion in public life. If those cases divide the court, Roberts' vote will again be key.

GOP lawmakers urge action after Russia-Afghanistan briefing

By ZEKE MILLER, JAMES LAPORTA and MARY CLARE JALONICK Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Eight Republican lawmakers attended a White House briefing Monday about explosive allegations that Russia secretly offered bounties to Taliban-linked militants for killing American troops in Afghanistan — intelligence the White House insisted the president himself had not been fully read in on.

Members of Congress in both parties called for additional information and consequences for Russia and its president, Vladimir Putin, and eight Democrats were to be briefed on the matter Tuesday morning. Still, White House press secretary Kayleigh McEnany insisted Trump had not been briefed on the findings because they hadn't been verified.

The White House seemed to be setting an unusually high bar for bringing the information to Trump, since it is rare for intelligence to be confirmed without a shadow of doubt before it is presented to senior government decision-makers. McEnany declined to say why a different standard of confidence in the intelligence applied to briefing lawmakers than bringing the information to the president.

Republicans who were in the briefing expressed alarm about Russia's activities in Afghanistan.

Rep. Michael McCaul, the ranking member of the House Foreign Affairs Committee, and Rep. Adam Kinzinger were in the briefing Monday led by Director of National Intelligence John Ratcliffe, White House chief of staff Mark Meadows and National Security Adviser Robert O'Brien. McCaul and Kinzinger said in a statement that lawmakers were told "there is an ongoing review to determine the accuracy of these reports."

"If the intelligence review process verifies the reports, we strongly encourage the Administration to take swift and serious action to hold the Putin regime accountable," they said.

Rep. Liz Cheney, R-Wyo., and Texas Rep. Mac Thornberry, the top Republican on the House Armed Services Committee, said, "After today's briefing with senior White House officials, we remain concerned about Russian activity in Afghanistan, including reports that they have targeted U.S. forces."

Senators were reviewing classified documents related to the allegations Monday evening. The information they received was not previously known, according to one aide who was not authorized to discuss the matter publicly and spoke on condition of anonymity.

On CNN, House Speaker Nancy Pelosi confirmed the timing of the Democratic briefing but said "it's no substitute for what they owe the Congress of the United States." She said "this is as serious as it gets."

She speculated that Trump wasn't briefed "because they know it makes him very unhappy, and all roads for him, as you know, lead to Putin. And would he tell Putin what they knew?"

McEnany, for her part, repeatedly stressed that the allegations had not been confirmed.

"There is no consensus within the intelligence community on these allegations and in effect there are dissenting opinions from some in the intelligence community with regards to the veracity of what's being reported and the veracity of the underlying allegations continue to be evaluated," she said.

The intelligence assessments came amid Trump's push to withdraw the U.S. from Afghanistan. They 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.

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Republican Sen. John Cornyn told reporters Monday, "I don't think it's should be a surprise to anybody that the Taliban's been trying to kill Americans and that the Russians have been encouraging that, if not providing means to make that happen."

He added, "Intelligence committees have been briefed on that for months. so has Nancy Pelosi, so has (Democratic Senate leader) Chuck Schumer. So, this is, this is a more leaks and partisanship."

While Russian meddling in Afghanistan isn't new, 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.

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, officials told the AP.

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.

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

Intelligence officials told the AP that the White House first became aware of alleged Russian bounties in early 2019 — a year earlier than had been previously reported. The assessments were included in one of Trump's written daily briefings at the time, and then-national security adviser John Bolton told colleagues he had briefed Trump on the matter. Bolton declined to comment, and the White House did not respond to questions on the matter.

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.

Trump's Democratic general election rival, former Vice President Joe Biden, used an online fundraiser Monday to hammer the president for a "betrayal" of American troops in favor of "an embarrassing campaign of deferring and debasing himself before Putin."

"I'm disgusted," Biden told donors, as he recalled his late son Beau's military service. Families of service members, Biden said, "should never, ever have to worry they'll face a threat like this: the commander in chief turning a blind eye."

Asked about the reports on the alleged bounties, Putin's spokesman Dmitry Peskov said Monday, "These claims are lies."

"If in the U.S. the special services are continuing to report to the president, I suggest that one be guided by the relevant statement of President Trump, who has already given his assessment of these publications," he told reporters during a conference call.

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

Associated Press writer Deb Riechmann contributed to this report.

AP sources: White House aware of Russian bounties in 2019

By JAMES LaPORTA Associated Press

Top officials in the White House were aware in early 2019 of classified intelligence indicating Russia was secretly offering bounties to the Taliban for the deaths of Americans, a full year earlier than has been previously reported, according to U.S. officials with direct knowledge of the intelligence.

The assessment was included in at least one of President Donald Trump's written daily intelligence brief-

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ings at the time, according to the officials. Then-national security adviser John Bolton also told colleagues he briefed Trump on the intelligence assessment in March 2019.

The White House did not respond to questions about Trump or other officials' awareness of Russia's provocations in 2019. The White House has said Trump was not — and still has not been — briefed on the intelligence assessments because they have not been fully verified. However, it is rare for intelligence to be confirmed without a shadow of a doubt before it is presented to top officials.

Bolton declined to comment Monday when asked by the AP if he had briefed Trump about the matter in 2019. On Sunday, he suggested to NBC's "Meet the Press" that Trump was claiming ignorance of Russia's provocations to justify his administration's lack of a response.

"He can disown everything if nobody ever told him about it," Bolton said.

The revelations cast new doubt on the White House's efforts to distance Trump from the Russian intelligence assessments. The AP reported Sunday that concerns about Russian bounties were also included in a second written presidential daily briefing earlier this year and that current national security adviser Robert O'Brien had discussed the matter with Trump. O'Brien denies he did so.

On Monday night, O'Brien said that while the intelligence assessments regarding Russian bounties "have not been verified," the administration has "been preparing should the situation warrant action."

The administration's earlier awareness of the Russian efforts raises additional questions about why Trump did not take any punitive action against Moscow for efforts that put the lives of Americans servicemembers at risk. Trump has sought throughout his time in office to improve relations with Russia and its president, Vladimir Putin, moving earlier this year to try to reinstate Russia as part of a group of world leaders it had been kicked out of.

Officials said they did not consider the intelligence assessments in 2019 to be particularly urgent, given that Russian meddling in Afghanistan is not a new occurrence. The officials with knowledge of Bolton's apparent briefing for Trump said it contained no "actionable intelligence," meaning the intelligence community did not have enough information to form a strategic plan or response. However, the classified assessment of Russian bounties was the sole purpose of the meeting.

The officials insisted on anonymity because they were not authorized to disclose the highly sensitive information.

The intelligence that surfaced in early 2019 indicated Russian operatives had become 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 during the Obama administration.

The National Security Council and the undersecretary of defense for intelligence did hold meetings regarding the intelligence. The Pentagon declined to comment and the NSC did not respond to questions about the meetings.

Concerns about Russian bounties flared anew this year after 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 in U.S. currency. The funds bolstered the suspicions of the American intelligence community that the Russians had offered money to Taliban militants and other linked associations.

The White House contends the president was unaware of this development as well.

The officials told the AP that career government officials developed potential options for the White House to respond to the Russian aggression in Afghanistan, which was first reported by The New York Times. However, the Trump administration has yet to authorize any action.

The intelligence in 2019 and 2020 surrounding Russian bounties was derived in part from debriefings of captured Taliban militants. Officials with knowledge of the matter told the AP that Taliban operatives from opposite ends of the country and from separate tribes offered similar accounts.

The officials would not name the specific groups or give specific locations in Afghanistan or time frames for when they were detained.

Dmitry Peskov, a spokesman for Putin, denied that Russian intelligence officers had offered payments

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to the Taliban in exchange for targeting U.S. and coalition forces.

The U.S. is investigating whether any Americans died as a result of the Russian bounties. Officials are focused in particular on an April 2019 attack on an American convoy. Three U.S. Marines were killed after a car rigged with explosives detonated near their armored vehicles as they returned to Bagram Airfield, the largest U.S. military installation in Afghanistan.

The Marines exchanged gunfire with the vehicle at some point; however, it's not known if the gunfire occurred before or after the car exploded.

Abdul Raqib Kohistani, the Bagram district police chief, said at the time that at least five Afghan civilians were wounded after the attack on the convoy, according to previous reporting by the AP. It is not known if the civilians were injured by the car bomb or the gunfire from U.S. Marines.

The Defense Department identified Marine Staff Sgt. Christopher Slutman, 43, of Newark, Delaware; Sgt. Benjamin Hines, 31, of York, Pennsylvania; and Cpl. Robert Hendriks, 25, of Locust Valley, New York, as the Marines killed in April 2019. The three Marines were all infantrymen assigned to 2nd Battalion, 25th Marines, a reserve infantry unit headquartered out of Garden City, New York.

Hendriks' father told the AP that even a rumor of Russian bounties should have been immediately addressed.

"If this was kind of swept under the carpet as to not make it a bigger issue with Russia, and one ounce of blood was spilled when they knew this, I lost all respect for this administration and everything," Erik Hendriks said.

Marine Maj. Roger Hollenbeck said at the time that the reserve unit was a part of the Georgia Deployment Program-Resolute Support Mission, a recurring six-month rotation between U.S. Marines and Georgian Armed Forces. The unit first deployed to Afghanistan in October 2018.

Three other service members and an Afghan contractor were also wounded in the attack. As of April 2019, the attack was under a separate investigation, unrelated to the Russian bounties, to determine how it unfolded.

The officials who spoke to the AP 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.

Associated Press writers Zeke Miller and Deb Riechmann in Washington, Deepti Hajela in New York and Vladimir Isachenkov in Moscow contributed to this report.

States reverse openings, require masks amid virus resurgence

By TAMARA LUSH and EMILY SCHMALL Associated Press

Arizona's Republican governor shut down bars, movie theaters, gyms and water parks Monday and leaders in several states ordered residents to wear masks in public in a dramatic course reversal amid an alarming resurgence of coronavirus cases nationwide.

Among those implementing the face-covering orders is the city of Jacksonville, Florida, where mask-averse President Donald Trump plans to accept the Republican nomination in August. Trump has refused to wear a mask during visits to states and businesses that require them.

Arizona Gov. Doug Ducey's order went into effect immediately and for at least 30 days. Ducey also ordered public schools to delay the start of classes until at least Aug. 17. Most Arizona bars and nightclubs opened after the governor's stay-at-home and business closure orders were allowed to expire in mid-May.

Arizona health officials reported 3,858 more confirmed coronavirus cases Sunday, the most reported in a single day in the state so far and the seventh time in the past 10 days that daily cases surpassed the 3,000 mark. Since the pandemic began, 74,500 cases and 1,588 deaths stemming from the virus have been reported in Arizona.

"Our expectation is that our numbers next week will be worse," Ducey said Monday.

The state is not alone in its reversal. Places such as Texas, Florida and California are backtracking, closing beaches and bars in some cases amid a resurgence of the virus.

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In New Jersey, Gov. Phil Murphy announced Monday that he's postponing the restarting of indoor dining because people have not been wearing face masks or complying with recommendations for social distancing. New Jersey has been slowly reopening, and on Monday indoor shopping malls were cleared to start business again.

Democratic governors in Oregon and Kansas said Monday that they would require people to wear masks. Oregon Gov. Kate Brown's order will require people to wear face coverings in indoor public spaces starting Wednesday. Kansas Gov. Laura Kelly said she will issue an executive order mandating the use of masks in stores and shops, restaurants, and in any situation where social distancing of 6 feet (2 meters) cannot be maintained, including outside. The order goes into effect Friday.

"The evidence could not be clearer: Wearing a mask is not only safe, but it is necessary to avoid another shutdown," Kelly said.

Idaho is moving in a different direction, at least when it comes to the elections. Despite the continuing spread of the virus, state elections officials said Monday that they would allow in-person voting — as well as mail-in ballots — for August primaries and the November general election, the Idaho Statesman reported. Idaho's May 19 primary was the first statewide election held by mail only. The primary had record voter turnout.

In Texas, a group of bar owners sued on Monday to try to overturn Republican Gov. Greg Abbott's order closing their businesses. They contend Abbott doesn't have the authority, and they complained that other businesses, such as nail salons and tattoo studios, remain open.

"Gov. Abbott continues to act like a king," said Jared Woodfill, attorney for the bar owners. "Abbott is unilaterally destroying our economy and trampling on our constitutional rights."

But Democratic New York Gov. Andrew Cuomo said that Abbott is on the right path, and he added that Trump should order the wearing of masks.

"States that were recalcitrant ... are doing a 180, and you have the same states now wearing masks," Cuomo said. "Let the president have the same sense to do that as an executive order, and then let the president lead by example and let the president put a mask on it, because we know it works."

One of Cuomo's Republican counterparts, Utah Gov. Gary Herbert, on a conference call with Vice President Mike Pence and members of the White House coronavirus task force, also asked Pence and Trump to issue a national call to wear masks.

Republican Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis has opposed a statewide mask requirement but said in response to Jacksonville's action that he will support local authorities who are doing what they think is appropriate.

In recent weeks, the Republicans moved some of the convention pageantry to Jacksonville after Democratic Gov. Roy Cooper of North Carolina objected to the holding of a large gathering in Charlotte without social-distancing measures.

Less than a week after Jacksonville Mayor Lenny Curry said there would be no mask requirement, city officials announced on Monday that coverings must be worn in "situations where individuals cannot socially distance."

White House spokeswoman Kayleigh McEnany responded by saying the president's advice is to "do whatever your local jurisdiction requests of you."

Elsewhere around the world, Britain reimposed lockdown restrictions on the city of Leicester after a spike in cases, ordering the closing of schools along with stores that do not sell essential goods.

The European Union is preparing a list of 15 countries whose citizens will be allowed to visit the bloc beginning Wednesday, Spain's foreign minister, Arancha Gonzalez Laya, told the Cadena SER radio network. Because of the resurgence in the U.S., America may not be on that list.

"This is not an exercise to be nice or unfriendly to other countries. This is an exercise of self-responsibility," she said.

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

Winds of change: Mississippi rebel-themed flag fading away

By EMILY WAGSTER PETTUS Associated Press

JACKSON, Miss. (AP) — The Mississippi flag is fading from public display in many places, even before the governor signs a bill that will retire the last state banner in the U.S. that includes the Confederate battle emblem.

A broad coalition of legislators passed the landmark bill Sunday after a weekend of emotional debate. On Monday, a U.S. flag fluttered outside the state Supreme Court building and a pole for the state flag stood vacant. Several local governments also furled the 126-year-old state banner.

"In the middle of a pandemic, we — the legislators of the state of Mississippi — decided that it was past time to remove the flag," Democratic state Rep. Oscar Denton of Vicksburg said Monday as he stood on the Capitol steps with other Legislative Black Caucus members.

Widespread protests in the past month have focused attention on racial injustice in the U.S., and Mississippi came under increasing pressure to surrender the flag that has the Confederate emblem — a red field topped by a blue X with 13 white stars.

A few supporters of the flag marched outside the Mississippi Capitol with it Saturday and Sunday. Inside the building, dozens of spectators cheered and some wept with happiness after legislators voted to change the flag. Senators on opposite sides of the issue embraced.

Republican Gov. Tate Reeves is expected to sign the flag bill this week, and the banner will be removed from state law. It still flew Monday on two poles atop the Capitol, signaling that the House and Senate were working.

White supremacist legislators put the Confederate emblem on the upper-left corner of the Mississippi flag in 1894, as white people were squelching political power that African Americans had gained after the Civil War. The Ku Klux Klan and other hate groups have used the rebel emblem, and critics have said for generations that it's wrong for a state with a 38% Black population to have the image on its flag.

In a 2001 statewide election, Mississippi voters chose to keep the flag, with supporters saying they see it as a symbol of heritage. But, a growing number of cities and all the state's public universities have abandoned it in recent years because of the Confederate image.

Several Black legislators, and a few white ones, have pushed for decades to change the flag. After a white gunman killed Black worshippers at a South Carolina church in 2015, Mississippi's Republican speaker of the House, Philip Gunn, said his own religious faith compelled him to say that Mississippi must purge the Confederate symbol from its flag.

Until recently, though, the flag issue was broadly considered too volatile for legislators to touch.

In recent weeks, as Confederate monuments and other symbols were being removed in parts of the U.S. amid widespread protests over racial injustice, a groundswell of leaders from business, religion, education and sports called on Mississippi to change the flag. That provided the momentum that led legislators to vote.

"This battle is one that has been fought uphill," the Black Caucus chairwoman, Democratic Sen. Angela Turner Ford, said Monday.

A commission will design a new Mississippi 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.

President Donald Trump has criticized the removal of monuments, including those for the Confederacy. Monday in Washington, White House press secretary Kayleigh McEnany was asked about Mississippi taking steps to remove the Confederate emblem from the state flag.

"That's a decision for Mississippi to make, and it's commendable that they took this action in a lawful matter and took the appropriate steps rather than trying to tear down statues and monuments," McEnany said.

Associated Press writer Kevin Freking in Washington contributed to this report. Follow Emily Wagster

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

AP FACT CHECK: Actually, 20% of US lives in a virus hot spot

By HOPE YEN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — It's been a frequent Trump administration talking point on the recent spike in COVID-19 infections: Don't worry, only a small sliver of U.S. counties is at greater risk.

In offering this reassurance, Vice President Mike Pence and Health and Human Services Secretary Alex Azar have said that only 3% or 4% of counties in the country are seeing a surge in cases. Focus on the "encouraging signs," Pence told senators last week.

But they and other administration officials are skirting a key fact: More than 20% of Americans live in those relatively few counties.

The White House has repeatedly cited the low county tally, and Pence reaffirmed the point in a televised interview Sunday. He argued that states, not the federal government, should take the lead with reopening guidelines because virus outbreaks are happening in about "4% of all the counties in this country."

Azar asserted Friday only 3% of counties represent "hot spots" that are "very concerning."

The emphasis on a percentage of counties makes for a misleading portrayal of the virus threat.

The White House provided The Associated Press with the full list of U.S. counties that reported increases in COVID-19 cases as of Friday. It showed 137 of the 3,142 counties in the U.S. that were under a higher alert — indeed, about 4% at the time.

But measured by population, those counties represent a vastly higher share — over 1 in 5 people in the U.S.

Altogether there are 68.3 million people living in those 137 counties, while there is a total U.S. population of 322.9 million. That means 21.1% of U.S. residents actually live in a virus "hot spot."

In recent weeks, the U.S. has entered a dangerous new phase of the coronavirus with big Sun Belt states showing thousands of new cases a day. Texas and Florida reversed course on parts of their reopening and clamped down on bars last week as the daily number of confirmed infections in the U.S. surged to all-time highs.

Speaking about the coronavirus threat Friday, White House coordinator Dr. Deborah Birx explained that counties large and small are being tracked by the White House task force, and that anyone living in a virus hot spot should take the necessary precautions, including social distancing and wearing a mask.

Citing increases particularly in the under-40 age group, Birx stressed that much more testing is needed because that's the age group most likely to be infected without showing symptoms and to be "spreading the virus unbeknownst to them."

The population figures, both county level and national, come from the Census Bureau's American Community Survey five-year estimates for 2018, the latest available.

Associated Press writer Nicky Forster contributed to this report from New York.

EDITOR'S NOTE — A look at the veracity of claims by political figures.

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'White power' flare-up in retirement haven reveals tensions

By MIKE SCHNEIDER Associated Press

THE VILLAGES, Fla. (AP) — There has always been a low-boil tension in The Villages retirement community between the Republican majority and the much smaller cohort of Democrats, but a veneer of good manners in "Florida's Friendliest Hometown" mostly prevailed on golf courses and at bridge tables.

Those tensions, though, flared two weeks ago during a golf-cart parade for President Donald Trump's

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birthday in which a man shouted, "White Power," when confronted by anti-Trump protesters. A video clip of that confrontation in America's largest retirement community was tweeted approvingly by Trump last weekend and then taken down.

Some residents say they've never seen anything like the politically inspired hostilities that have surfaced over the past several months.

"It's like a powder keg here," said resident Alan Stone. "And Trump is just stirring the pot."

In the past, when conflicting political views came up in The Villages, residents said it was best to say, "I disagree," and quickly change the topic. But the emphasis on good manners has been tested like never before in recent months with the spread of the new coronavirus, the resulting stock market gyrations for a population that largely lives off retirement investments, the presidential race and the calls for racial justice following the death of George Floyd at the hands of Minneapolis police.

"This has been brewing. Most people kind of agree not to discuss politics ... and it had been accepted that with things being so divisive, you don't get into it," said Catherine Hardy, chair of the Sumter County Democratic Party.

The Villages' population of more than 120,000 residents — among the fastest growing areas in the U.S. in the past decade — is about 98% white, according to the U.S. Census Bureau. There are more than twice as many registered Republicans as registered Democrats in Sumter County, where most of The Villages is located.

The Trump parade occurred June 14 in the planned community immediately after a vigil was held by an African American philanthropic group to honor Floyd and the Black Lives Matter movement. Most of the attendees at the vigil had left by the start of the Trump parade, although a white woman wearing "Black Lives Matter" on her shirt shouted profanities at the Trump supporters as they drove by in golf carts. A man driving by in a golf car responded by shouting, "White Power," a racist slogan associated with white supremacists.

"Most people, up until now, even if people felt that way, it was socially unacceptable to voice it," Hardy said of the man's remark. "The difference is under Trump, you can spew that hatred. What has changed is now it's more acceptable."

The political partisanship can now be seen in the most mundane places, said Ira Friedman, who with his wife, Ellen, have volunteered for Democratic presidential candidates during their 18 years in The Villages.

"Go to the postal station and see people picking up their mail. If they're wearing a mask, they're Democrats. If they're not wearing a mask, talking to each other, bumping into each other, they're Republicans," Friedman said.

The flare-up at the Trump parade doesn't represent the vast majority of residents of The Villages, although with the election year, there are some people, "who are exercised" and are becoming more vocal in expressing their views, said John Calandro, chairman of the Sumter County Republican Party.

Because of the coronavirus, more residents than usual are staying at home and watching the news, rather than going to the retirement haven's famous happy hours and dances in its town squares, he said.

Some residents worry that the tensions of the past few months may make retirees think twice about moving to The Villages, whose founders have been longtime donors to Republicans and GOP presidential candidates. The Villages is often a popular campaign stop for GOP national and statewide candidates.

"I don't think The Villages wants this kind of publicity," Stone said. "People are saying, 'What the hell is going on in The Villages?'"

But Calandro said any dissension among residents is overblown.

Calandro said when he plays golf with his Democratic friends, the biggest fights they get into aren't about politics — they're about who gets to take an extra putt on the green without being penalized.

"We aren't having arguments on every street corner here," Calandro said. "The Villages is still The Villages. We worked all of our lives to live here, and it's a great place to live."

Follow Mike Schneider on Twitter at <https://twitter.com/MikeSchneiderAP>

Fed's program for loaning to Main Street off to slow start

By CHRISTOPHER RUGABER AP Economics Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — Michael Haith, owner and CEO of a Denver-based restaurant chain called Teriyaki Madness, is in an unusual position for people like him: He's making money through food delivery and pickup and wants to borrow funds so he can expand.

Yet so far, a Federal Reserve lending program set up specifically for small and medium-sized businesses like his hasn't been much help. He can't find a bank that's participating in the program, and he isn't clear on a lot of the details about how it works. For example, he isn't sure how much he could borrow.

"We are trying to figure it out, and trying to find a bank that is working with the government on this," Haith said. "The guidance is pretty convoluted, and the banks seem a little wary."

Haith's experience underscores banks' surprising lack of interest in the Fed's Main Street Lending program, as well as the challenges potential borrowers are having accessing the program. Fed officials say more than 200 banks have signed up to participate since the program began two weeks ago, but that's a small slice of the nation's roughly 5,000 lenders. None have made any loans yet.

The sluggish start is in sharp contrast to the reaction that greeted the Treasury Department's small business lending efforts, known as the Paycheck Protection Program. That facility, launched in early April, set off a frenzied response from millions of desperate small companies seeking a loan. The first \$350 billion in PPP funding ran out in just two weeks before being replenished. Congress agreed to forgive the loans if they were mostly spent paying workers.

The Fed has come under criticism from a congressional watchdog for quickly taking steps to ease the flow of credit for large corporations but doing little for smaller companies. The Fed this month began its first-ever purchases of corporate bonds issued by companies such as AT&T, Microsoft and Pfizer.

The delay in Main Street funding may arise during a Tuesday hearing before a House committee in which Fed Chair Jerome Powell and Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin are scheduled to testify.

Powell said in prepared remarks released Monday that the PPP has apparently met the immediate credit needs of many small businesses.

"In the months ahead, Main Street loans may prove a valuable resource for firms that were in sound financial condition prior to the pandemic," Powell said.

The Fed's Main Street Lending program is the central bank's first attempt since the Great Depression to go beyond its typical financing for large banks and Wall Street firms and instead provide loans to businesses. Its goal is to help companies survive the pandemic by providing low-cost, five-year loans with no interest payments for the first year or principal payments for the first two years. Banks will make the loans, and the Fed will purchase 95% of the value, freeing up banks to do more lending.

Lauren Anderson, senior vice president at the Bank Policy Institute, a lobbying group for large banks such as Bank of America and JPMorgan, said some of the group's members have signed on, mostly as preparation in case the economy worsens later this year and more troubled companies need help. So far, business aren't clamoring for the loans.

"There's not huge borrower demand," she said. "I don't think we're going to see a mass run to the banks and a huge amount of loans being written at this point."

Eric Rosengren, president of the Boston Fed, said in an interview that the PPP attracted more interest because it essentially provided cash, not loans.

"So it's not surprising that a grant program is more popular than a lending program," he said. "Everybody wants a grant."

The Main Street program is also more complicated than the PPP, Rosengren said, "because bank loans are complicated financial instruments" that are tailored to a specific company's needs.

Companies with up to 15,000 employees or \$5 billion in revenue are eligible for Main Street. The loans can range from a minimum of \$250,000 to a maximum of \$300 million. The Fed has said it will purchase up to \$600 billion in Main Street loans from banks. Treasury has provided \$75 billion in taxpayer funds to

absorb any losses.

Rosengren said that the program aims to help companies that were successful before the pandemic and that can be successful again as the economy recovers. A deeply troubled borrower with no cash and no likelihood of rebounding won't qualify for a loan, he said.

The program may be targeting too narrow a group, analysts say. Many companies with a clear path to survival will likely be able to successfully borrow from banks anyway.

Two former Fed economists, Nellie Liang and William English, suggested in a paper for the Brookings Institution that to attract more interest, the Fed should lengthen the term of the loan beyond five years, offer a lower interest rate for more credit-worthy companies, and pay higher fees to banks as an incentive for them to offer the loans. Main Street loans currently have a rate slightly above 3%.

Liang said in an interview that many struggling small companies probably don't want more debt. By extending the terms of the loans to seven or 10 years, and offering some borrowers a lower rate, the loans would take on more of the features of a grant or equity investment, Liang said.

Still, that may not be enough. "Even with the recommended changes, the program may have limited demand, since many businesses need equity, not more credit," English and Liang wrote.

Haith, meanwhile, said the interest rate on a Main Street loan is much lower than he would typically expect to pay, even in a healthy economy.

But the loan would also work for him because his business is healthy and he is actually trying to expand. He's finding landlords a lot more accommodating and a lot of empty restaurant properties available. But there probably aren't many others in the same boat, he acknowledged.

"I don't know a lot of companies playing offense at this point," he said.

Dems push campaign-season health care bill through House

By ALAN FRAM Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Democrats pushed a package expanding "Obamacare" coverage through the House on Monday, a measure that's doomed to advance no further but spotlights how the coronavirus pandemic and President Donald Trump's efforts to obliterate that law have fortified health care's potency as a 2020 campaign issue.

While the legislation had no chance of survival in the Republican-led Senate and faced a White House veto threat for good measure, Democrats plunged ahead anyway. It joins a pile of bills they've compiled that highlight their priorities on health care, jobs, ethics and voting rights, issues they intend to wield in this year's presidential and congressional elections.

The bill cleared the House by a mostly party-line, 234-179 vote over solid GOP opposition. Republicans, who've never relented since unanimously opposing former President Barack Obama's 2010 statute, called the measure a blow to the nation's health care system during a pandemic and a political stunt.

"This bill attempts to exploit the coronavirus pandemic to resuscitate tired, partisan proposals," the White House wrote in its statement. It said provisions curbing prescription drug costs would cut pharmaceutical company revenues and "undermine the American innovation the entire globe is depending on" by crimping their research on developing vaccines and treatments.

GOP lawmakers' votes against the House measure seemed certain to pop up in campaign spots this fall. In a taste of those ads, House Speaker Nancy Pelosi said Monday's vote gave lawmakers a choice between strengthening health care protections or being "complicit" in Trump's effort to dismantle it.

"Make no mistake," said Pelosi, D-Calif. "A vote against this bill is a vote to weaken Americans' health and financial security during a pandemic."

Three lawmakers, all facing potentially tough reelection fights this fall, crossed party lines on the vote: Reps. Brian Fitzpatrick, R-Pa.; Collin Peterson, D-Minn., and Jeff Van Drew, R-N.J.

Democrats used Trump's and the GOP's failed 2017 efforts to erase Obama's law as their chief issue in the 2018 elections, helping them capture House control by gaining 40 seats.

They've talked ever since about reprising that theme in this year's campaigns by focusing on curbing

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drug and health care costs and saying Republicans want to dismantle the Obama law's patient protections. Republicans have denied that that is their goal.

Last week, the White House made a move that Democrats say provides them with fresh ammunition and that even some Republicans consider a political blunder.

It filed papers with the Supreme Court backing Republican-run states' drive to have Obama's entire law declared unconstitutional. The increasingly popular statute has expanded coverage to 20 million Americans, and required insurers to cover patients with preexisting conditions and include children up to age 26 under their parent's policies.

Debate also came as the number of cases of COVID-19, the disease that coronavirus causes, has begun soaring anew in more than half the states, including many that relaxed restrictions on activities aimed at preventing the illness' spread. The United States reported 38,800 newly confirmed coronavirus infections Monday, boosting the total over 2.5 million. More than 125,000 Americans have died, the highest figure in the world.

The House bill would expand tax credits for lower-earning Americans for paying insurance premiums, let more people qualify for subsidies and cap the portion of income some consumers would pay for coverage. It would let the government negotiate with pharmaceutical makers over drug prices, and block low-cost plans the Trump administration has permitted that don't require coverage of people with preexisting conditions.

The legislation would also cut federal payments to states that don't expand Medicaid to cover more low-income people, as Obama's statute allows. Around a dozen states, mostly run by Republicans, have opted not to do so.

Rep. Greg Walden, R-Ore., said that meant Democrats would be "punishing" states that don't expand Medicaid even as they struggle to cope with the virus. "It's vindictive and it's probably unconstitutional," Walden said.

The Democratic bill lacks a keystone of presumptive Democratic presidential nominee Joe Biden's health care plan: creating a government-run public option that people could join. Critics have said such a proposal could force people to abandon job-provided policies they like.

Democrats criticized Republicans for repeatedly claiming that after repealing Obama's law they would pass legislation protecting patients, though they've never presented a viable replacement package.

"It's been four years since our colleagues who say they're going to protect people have done anything," said Rep. Debbie Dingell, D-Mich.

The nonpartisan Kaiser Family Foundation has estimated that nearly 27 million people have lost employer-provided coverage because of pandemic-related layoffs. Nearly half a million people have gotten "Obamacare" policies, the government said last week.

The White House filed papers with the Supreme Court last week supporting an effort by GOP-led states to have the entire "Obamacare" statute declared unconstitutional.

Republicans have argued that the health care law became unconstitutional when Congress passed a 2017 tax bill eliminating the statute's fines on people who don't have health insurance.

But that tax measure left intact the health care law's requirement that nearly all Americans get health coverage. Republicans have argued that with the tax penalty abolished, the coverage requirement and the entire law must be invalidated.

It is not clear whether justices will hear oral arguments before this November's election. A decision is unlikely until next year.

The Supreme Court has rejected two previous efforts to declare the health care law invalid.

A how-to: BET pulls off artistic, virtual, political success

By MESFIN FEKADU AP Music Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — You'd think trying to produce the 2020 BET Awards during the coronavirus pandemic would be filled with restrictions, but instead, show producers took another approach: We're not limited to a single stage, so sky's the limit and let your creative minds run free.

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That's the model the producers of the show ran with when crafting the special event, which was a major success Sunday night and one of the first virtual awards shows of the coronavirus era. While abiding by safety guidelines and rules set in place by government officials to prevent the virus from spreading, the BET Awards featured highly produced, artsy pre-taped performances from DaBaby, Megan Thee Stallion, John Legend and Alicia Keys, while also addressing current issues in the world about the Black Lives Matter movement, police brutality and inequality.

"The irony of it is that we are in a situation where we are 'locked down' and can't do this and can't do that. But the truth is that, in this particular platform, it's actually very freeing," Jesse Collins, the longtime BET Awards producer, said in an interview Monday. "Creatively, it's very freeing."

Connie Orlando, BET's executive vice president of specials, music programming and music strategy, echoed Collins' thoughts.

"A show with COVID is challenging because of all the regulations and safety. Also, it takes the guardrail off. You're not limited to just being in a venue on a 100-foot stage. You can kind of let your imagination go wild and really create art and pieces that are epic," she said.

ViacomCBS, BET's parent company, had a COVID-19 task force in place, which helped BET keep safety at the forefront of production. The show's production was monitored by lawyers and experts in production, safety and risk management.

"If we wanted to change something or do it in a different way, they would tell us," Orlando said. "They're looking at the federal guidelines, the state, local laws, as well as the unions."

Sunday's night show celebrated the 20th anniversary of the awards show and BET's 40th year as a network. Orlando said though other networks canceled awards shows and special events, BET was always going to try to hold on: "Never in my mind was it that we would cancel it."

From its opening number, which included performers like Chuck D, Nas, Questlove and 12-year-old sensation Keedron Bryant rapping and singing about the Black experience to DaBaby's gripping performance as he emulated the last few moments of George Floyd's life by rapping as a police officer pressed his knee on his neck, the BET Awards stood out in major way.

On Monday morning TV Guide ran the headline: "The 2020 BET Awards Set a Bar for Award Shows in the COVID-19 Era." NME called the show "absolutely vital."

"Rather than the lo-fi, at-home performances from couches and kitchens that have become standard television fare during the Covid-19 crisis, BET provided budgets for its far-flung talent to produce remote segments that were often more like mini-music videos than the typically raw and sometimes glitchy live awards-show stagings," the New York Times reported.

Orlando said BET's nicely produced special "Saving Our Selves: A BET COVID-19 Relief," which aired in April, helped the team prep for the BET Awards. "We learned in that one because that was the first time we were all home."

Collins said they were developing the awards show for the last 2 1/2 months, but "things didn't really come together until the last two weeks."

"We were still locking and getting final performances on Saturday morning. It still kind of came in last minute," he continued.

He said his team and the artists collaborated on each performance, trying to be as creative as possible. Collins said the performances were filmed "all across the country": Keys taped her slot in downtown Los Angeles, Roddy Ricch filmed in Carlsbad, near San Diego, and Megan Thee Stallion brought the film "Mad Max" to life as she twerked and rapped in the desert.

"I think there was an expectation, well I know there was an expectation because I saw it on Twitter, that it was going to be very low production value, everybody at home, just not very engaging or exciting," Collins said. "I just knew people wanted something different. When we started speaking to the artists about how we wanted to do this differently, the artist community responded back right away. Everybody was in. Nobody was really excited to perform on their couch or their backyard."

DaBaby's performance was the most striking, and Collins said as the world changed, so did the ideas for that performance.

"That creative, he threw it out. He came up with his new idea and he was super passionate about it

and was very specific and knew exactly what he wanted. They shot it and he delivered. It was a breakout stand out moment," Collins said.

The BET Awards have always been a stage where Black artists have spoken and sang about race, disparities and more, from Kendrick Lamar rapping on top of a police car with a large American flag waving behind him to Janelle Monae and Jidenna wearing large "I'm a Classic Man" signs around their necks, a reference to the historic "I Am a Man" civil rights era protest signs.

But this year, as the world continues to protest following the deaths of Floyd, Breonna Taylor and Ahmaud Arbery and others, speaking out boldly felt more relevant than ever.

"This year was almost like a perfect storm. I think over decades music and musicians have always used their art for activism ... (and) BET has always been the platform to amplify our voices," Orlando said. "We freely and openly embrace that because that's who we are as a network and what we always want to be to our audience and to the world. We are unapologetic and authentic."

"To be able to be that platform during this time, like, my heart is just so full."

Judge warns of possible move of trial in George Floyd death

By STEVE KARNOWSKI Associated Press

MINNEAPOLIS (AP) — A Minnesota judge on Monday warned that he's likely to move the trials of four former police officers charged in George Floyd's death out of Minneapolis if public officials, attorneys and family members don't stop speaking out about the case.

Hennepin County Judge Peter Cahill stopped short of issuing a gag order against attorneys on both sides, but he said he likely will if public statements continue that make it hard to find an impartial jury. Cahill said that would also make him likely to grant a change-of-venue motion if one is filed, as he anticipates.

"The court is not going to be happy about hearing comments on these three areas: merits, evidence and guilt or innocence," Cahill said.

It was the second pretrial hearing for the officers, who were fired after Floyd's May 25 death. Derek Chauvin, 44, is charged with second-degree murder and other counts, while Thomas Lane, 37, J. Kueng, 26, and Tou Thao, 34, are charged with aiding and abetting Chauvin.

Floyd died after Chauvin, a white police officer, pressed his knee against the handcuffed 46-year-old Black man's neck for nearly eight minutes. The officers were responding to a call about a man trying to pass a counterfeit \$20 bill at a nearby store. Floyd's death sparked protests around the world.

Thao's attorney, Robert Paule, cited remarks from a variety of public officials saying they thought the officers were guilty, including President Donald Trump, Attorney General Keith Ellison and Mayor Jacob Frey.

Police Chief Medaria Arradondo has called Floyd's death "murder" and said Chauvin knew what he was doing because of his training. Gov. Tim Walz and Frey have also called it murder.

Cahill asked Assistant Attorney General Matthew Frank to use his influence to keep public officials silent, warning that if they continue to discuss it publicly, he likely would "have to pull (the trials) out of Hennepin County and they need to be aware of that." But he also made it clear that he wants defense attorneys and Floyd family members to stay out of the press, too.

Cahill set a March 8 trial date for the former officers if they are tried together, though he said he expects motions to be filed to separate their trials. If they're tried separately, those still in custody — currently Chauvin and Thao — would most likely go first. The next court date is Sept. 11.

The defendants have not entered pleas. Chauvin's attorney has not commented publicly on the charges, while Lane's and Kueng's attorneys have sought to minimize their clients' roles and deflect blame to the more senior Chauvin in Floyd's death. Kueng's attorney said in a court filing Monday that he intends to plead not guilty and that he will argue it was self-defense, a reasonable use of force and an authorized use of force.

Chauvin remains in custody on \$1 million bail and Thao is being held on \$750,000 bail. Lane and Kueng are free on bond.

Cahill rejected a defense request to reconsider his earlier decision to prohibit cameras in the courtroom

during pretrial proceedings. Defense attorneys asked for the cameras, saying it would help balance what the public has heard about the case, but prosecutors objected. The judge has not ruled on whether to allow cameras for the trial itself, but has said he is open to it.

The charges against Chauvin are unintentional second-degree murder, third-degree murder and second-degree manslaughter. Second-degree murder carries a maximum penalty of 40 years in prison, third-degree murder carries up to 25 years and manslaughter up to 10.

The other three former officers are charged with aiding and abetting both second-degree murder and second-degree manslaughter. Those charges are legally tantamount to the counts against Chauvin and carry the same penalties.

After the hearings, Selwyn Jones, Floyd's uncle, said he found it "totally hideous" that Lane and Kueng made bail, while "my nephew will never have a chance to be free ever again. ... I'm not mad at anybody, I just think we need to fix the system. Racism needs to go, police brutality definitely needs to go, and we need to find some kind of equality and care for each other."

Associated Press writer Mohamed Ibrahim contributed to this story.

Distancing from Trump? Some Republicans step up critiques

By STEVE PEOPLES, JONATHAN LEMIRE and JILL COLVIN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — For more than three years, President Donald Trump instilled such fear in the Republican Party's leaders that most kept criticism of his turbulent leadership or inconsistent politics to themselves.

That's beginning to change.

Four months before voters decide the Republican president's reelection, some in Trump's party are daring to say the quiet part out loud as Trump struggles to navigate competing national crises and a scattershot campaign message.

"He is losing," former New Jersey Gov. Chris Christie, a Trump friend and confidant, said Sunday of Trump's reelection prospects on ABC's "This Week." "And if he doesn't change course, both in terms of the substance of what he's discussing and the way that he approaches the American people, then he will lose."

Beyond politics, Trump's allies — even some in his own administration — are distancing themselves from his policies.

While Trump avoids wearing a mask in public, Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell said, "We must have no stigma — none — about wearing masks when we leave our homes." Vice President Mike Pence was pictured this weekend wearing a mask and urged other Americans to do the same. And Wyoming Rep. Liz Cheney, the No. 3 Republican in the House, tweeted a picture of her father, former Vice President Dick Cheney, wearing a mask with the hashtag #realmenwearmasks.

At the same time, Trump has been criticized by some Republicans for inconsistent leadership during the sweeping national protests against police brutality. On Sunday, the president tweeted and subsequently deleted a video in which a supporter used the white supremacist mantra "White power."

South Carolina Sen. Tim Scott, the GOP's sole Black senator, called Trump's decision to share the video "indefensible."

Make no mistake, Trump still has a tight grip on the party. And the intensifying concerns are remarkably similar to those that emerged in 2016, when Trump overcame glaring personal and political liabilities to defeat Democrat Hillary Clinton. The splits signal that Republicans are aware of the president's weak political standing and may feel increasingly free to break from him as voting nears.

While Election Day isn't until Nov. 3, early voting in a handful of key states, including the battlegrounds of Pennsylvania, Michigan and Virginia, begins in mid-September.

Trump has come to accept that he is currently trailing Democratic rival Joe Biden following a series of phone calls and polling presentations with advisers, according to four campaign officials and Republicans close to the campaign who spoke on condition of anonymity because they weren't authorized to publicly

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discuss private conversations. He has responded with a mix of disbelief and anger, including frequent frustration that the pandemic robbed him of a strong economy and drowned out the attacks he hoped to land against Biden, according to the officials.

The president's popularity with the party base remains strong. But in an implicit acknowledgement of GOP anxiety, Trump's deputy campaign manager Bill Stepien released a memo Sunday evening questioning polling data that gives Biden an advantage, while pointing to voter participation numbers in recent primaries suggesting Trump's supporters are excited.

"Clearly, Democrats have not rallied around their flawed candidate," Stepien wrote. "Today there can be no debate that President Trump has a decided advantage in base enthusiasm and can be most confident that his supporters will turn out."

Biden pollster John Anzalone laughed at the argument.

"You know a candidate is in trouble when their only argument for reelection is the enthusiasm of their dwindling pool of supporters, which is now barely over 40%," he said.

One factor driving recent concerns has been Trump's inability to articulate an agenda or a clear message for his second term. After a first term defined almost exclusively by his desire to undo former President Barack Obama's accomplishments, Trump has failed to offer a single future policy priority of his own during multiple recent interviews.

Jerry Falwell Jr., a Trump confidant and the president of Liberty University, conceded that the president has not been clear enough about his plans.

"I do think he needs to talk more about what he's going to do in the next four years versus taking credit for what he's already done," Falwell said in an interview, even as he predicted Trump's political standing would improve once voters see Biden on the debate stage this fall.

"Whatever hesitance they might have about Donald Trump is going to turn into fear about Joe Biden's ability to confidently do the job," he said.

For now, however, aides privately worry about Trump's increasingly scattershot approach to the campaign. Many hoped that his comeback rally in Tulsa, Oklahoma, earlier in the month would spark new momentum, when it instead raised questions about his supporters' enthusiasm and his management of the pandemic.

The officials close to the campaign report that Trump was ecstatic about the raucous crowd he drew to Phoenix a few days later, but the positive development was quickly overshadowed by the resurgence of the virus. COVID-19 infections have exploded across several states, including Arizona, forcing some governors to scale back reopening plans.

Trump's campaign has also continued to struggle with its attempts to define and attack Biden, as broadsides over China and his son's work overseas have failed to land. Trump himself has begun wondering if his pet nickname for Biden, "Sleepy Joe," remains effective. Over the weekend, he tested out a new one: "Corrupt Joe."

Meanwhile, Trump aides at all levels have begun to accept the potential that their time in the White House may be short-lived.

Where six months ago, they plotted their promotion path within government, some are beginning to draw up plans to return to the private sector. To be sure, Trump's White House has set records for turnover, but efforts to prepare for life after the administration have been taken up in earnest in some corners of the White House complex.

Democrats, meanwhile, are working to avoid overconfidence.

"We're being really cautious," Anzalone said, "although we know there's something going on."

Peoples reported from New York. Associated Press writer Zeke Miller in Washington contributed to this report.

Abortion foes vent disappointment after Supreme Court ruling

By ELANA SCHOR Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Abortion opponents vented their disappointment and fury on Monday after the Supreme Court issued a 5-4 decision to strike down a Louisiana law that would have curbed abortion access.

The ruling delivered a defeat to anti-abortion activists, but President Donald Trump's reelection campaign quickly invoked it as part of a new appeal to voters — signaling its power to motivate religious conservatives who are a key part of his base ahead of November's election.

Vice President Mike Pence summed up that argument, tweeting that the Supreme Court's decision made one thing clear: "We need more Conservative justices on the U.S. Supreme Court." Underlining his case, Pence added "#FourMoreYears."

Top pro-Trump religious conservatives noted pointedly that both justices he named to the high court dissented from Monday's decision, aligning with Pence in making the case that Trump should get another term in office to potentially tap more conservative nominees.

The Rev. Frank Pavone, national director of Priests for Life and a member of Trump's Catholic voter outreach effort, said the president's "two appointees voted the right way" in supporting Louisiana's ability to require doctors who perform abortions to have admitting privileges at nearby hospitals.

"Once again this ruling underscores the importance of elections," Pavone said in a statement. "We need a solid pro-life majority on the Supreme Court to uphold the rights of women and the unborn."

Johnnie Moore, an evangelical adviser to the Trump administration, said the decision could help motivate anti-abortion activists to vote to reelect the president.

"Conservatives know they are on the one-yard-line," Moore tweeted. "Enthusiasm is already unprecedented, evangelical turnout will be too."

The Trump campaign also invoked the decision to appeal to voters in a statement from deputy communications director Ali Pardo.

"This case underscores the importance of re-electing President Trump, who has a record of appointing conservative judges, rather than Joe Biden, who will appoint radical, activist judges who will legislate from the courts," Pardo said.

Some right-leaning abortion foes — including at least four congressional Republicans — responded to the decision by criticizing Chief Justice John Roberts, appointed by President George W. Bush. Roberts concurred with the court's four more liberal justices while not signing onto their opinion in the case.

"Chief Justice Roberts is at it again with his political gamesmanship," Sen. Ted Cruz, R-Texas, tweeted. "This time he has sided with abortion extremists who care more about providing abortion-on-demand than protecting women's health."

"Americans hoping for justice for women and unborn babies were let down again today by John Roberts," Sen. Tom Cotton, R-Ark., said in a statement.

"What's next, Chief Justice Roberts? Our Second Amendment rights?" Rep. Jim Jordan, R-Ohio, tweeted. Missouri GOP Sen. Josh Hawley, a former Roberts clerk, tweeted that the decision was a "disaster" and "a big-time wake up call to religious conservatives," whom he urged to "make our voices heard."

But Roberts' move to stand apart from his more liberal colleagues, contextualizing his vote as one to protect the court's past precedent, left other religious conservatives vowing to rededicate themselves to their fight to overturn the 1973 *Roe v. Wade* decision that established abortion rights.

"This case was about whether the state has the right to ensure that abortionists who take women's money also provide for their safety," Family Research Council President Tony Perkins, a prominent pro-Trump evangelical ally, said in a statement, adding that "I do look forward to the day when the Supreme Court will correct the gross injustice of the *Roe v. Wade* decision that has led to the killing of tens of millions of unborn babies."

Russell Moore, president of the public policy arm of the Southern Baptist Convention, defended Louisiana's abortion law as "placing the most minimal restrictions possible on an abortion industry that insists on laissez-faire for itself and its profits."

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"Nonetheless, we will continue to seek an America where vulnerable persons, including unborn children and their mothers, are seen as precious, not disposable," said Moore, who leads the Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission.

The chairman of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops' Committee for Pro-Life Activities, Archbishop Joseph Naumann of Kansas City in Kansas, said in a statement that Catholics would "grieve this decision" but would "continue to pray and fight for justice for mothers and children."

"We will not rest until the day when the Supreme Court corrects the grave injustice of Roe ... and recognizes the Constitutional right to life for unborn human beings," Naumann said.

O. Carter Snead, a professor of law at the University of Notre Dame, said in a statement that Roberts' positioning in the decision was "cold comfort" on an otherwise "sad day."

Support for rescinding Roe remains strong among evangelical Protestants. Sixty-one percent of them said they wanted to see the court fully overturn the decision in a survey conducted last year by the nonpartisan Pew Research Center. That survey found support for overturning Roe at 28% among Catholics and 42% among Protestants generally.

The court's abortion ruling on Monday follows its 6-3 decision earlier this month that found a central provision of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 shields LGBT people from employment discrimination. Religious conservatives also openly lamented that decision, while noting that potential faith-based exemptions could be carved out.

Associated Press religion coverage receives support from the Lilly Endowment through the Religion News Foundation. The AP is solely responsible for this content.

Cape Cod officials warn of white sharks ahead of July Fourth

WELLFLEET, Mass. (AP) — Cape Cod's beaches and towns may be quieter because of the coronavirus pandemic, but officials are reminding visitors ahead of the July Fourth holiday that the famous Massachusetts destination remains a popular getaway for other summertime travelers: great white sharks.

Cape Cod National Seashore Chief Ranger Leslie Reynolds warned at a news conference that the powerful predators are coming close enough to shore to be a concern for swimmers.

Officials in Orleans also have documented at least two shark attacks on seals in recent days, the Cape Cod Times reports.

And Gregory Skomal, a prominent shark scientist with the state Division of Marine Fisheries, says he tagged three great whites circling a whale carcass earlier this month as his research team began its work for the season.

The peninsula southeast of Boston saw two shark attacks on humans in 2018, one of them fatal. Officials have recommended swimmers remain in waist deep water where possible and avoid areas where sharks have been previously spotted as they weigh a range of responses to protect beachgoers and preserve the region's tourist economy.

Great whites have been coming to the Cape in greater numbers each summer to prey on the region's large seal colonies. Most tend to favor the Atlantic Ocean-facing beaches where seals tend to congregate, but researchers have found them off nearly every part of the Cape.

Local residents concerned about the booming shark population, meanwhile, say they'll boost their efforts to help protect swimmers this summer.

More pilots have volunteered to radio in shark sightings as they fly over the peninsula, said Heather Doyle, co-founder of Cape Cod Ocean Community, a local group that advocates for white shark surveillance and detection measures.

The Atlantic White Shark Conservancy, a Chatham-based research group, is also offering its Sharktivity smartphone app, which allows users to report and track shark sightings.

Roberts a pivotal vote in the Supreme Court's big opinions

By JESSICA GRESKO and MARK SHERMAN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The biggest cases of the Supreme Court term so far have a surprising common thread.

On a court with five Republican appointees, the liberal justices have been in the majority in rulings that make workplace discrimination against gay and transgender people illegal, protect young immigrants from deportation and, as of Monday, struck down a Louisiana law that restricted abortion providers.

As surprising, Chief Justice John Roberts, a conservative nominated by President George W. Bush who has led the court for nearly 15 years, has joined his liberal colleagues in all three.

Since the retirement of Justice Anthony Kennedy in 2018, Roberts has played a pivotal role in determining how far the court will go in cases where the court's four liberals and four conservatives are closely divided.

Here's a look at where Roberts stood in the abortion, immigration and LGBT cases, his history on the court and what's at stake in coming decisions in which Roberts could play a key role:

ABORTION

On Monday, Roberts joined liberal justices Ruth Bader Ginsburg, Stephen Breyer, Sonia Sotomayor and Elena Kagan in striking down Louisiana's Act 620. The justices ruled that the law requiring doctors who perform abortions to have admitting privileges at nearby hospitals violates the abortion rights the court first announced in the landmark 1973 *Roe v. Wade* decision.

But Roberts' reason for siding with the liberals had less to do with his feelings on abortion than with his feelings on whether the court should do an abrupt about-face. Four years ago the court's four liberal members and Justice Kennedy struck down a Texas law nearly identical to Louisiana's. At the time, Roberts was a vote in dissent. But with Kennedy's retirement and replacement by conservative Justice Brett Kavanaugh, many conservatives had hoped the result in the Louisiana case would be different. Not so, Roberts wrote: "The result in this case is controlled by our decision four years ago."

IMMIGRATION

On June 18, the court ruled 5-4 against the Trump administration, saying it did not take the proper steps to end the 8-year-old Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program, which protects some 650,000 young immigrants from deportation. Roberts wrote the court's opinion, joined by the four liberal justices.

Everyone agreed that the administration can end DACA, but the dispute was whether it had been done properly. Roberts said no, writing that the administration had, among other things, failed to consider "what if anything to do about the hardship to DACA recipients."

Trump has already said he will renew his effort to end DACA.

LGBT RIGHTS

The court's immigration ruling followed just days after its June 15 ruling that a landmark civil rights law protects LGBT people from discrimination in employment. The ruling didn't divide the court like the abortion and immigration rulings, however. Six of the justices — Roberts, the court's four liberals and Trump appointee Neil Gorsuch — ruled against the Trump administration and in favor of the LGBT plaintiffs in the cases. Gorsuch wrote the opinion, which Roberts joined.

ROBERTS IN THE TRUMP ERA

If liberals have this month been cheering Roberts' decisions while conservatives have bemoaned them, Roberts is used to taking heat from both sides and defying easy political labels. He has sided with the court's other conservatives in 5-4 decisions allowing the Trump administration to tap Pentagon funds to build more fencing at the U.S.-Mexico border and upholding the administration's travel ban. At this time last year, he handed Republicans a huge victory protecting even the most extreme partisan electoral districts from federal court challenge. But, on the same day, he served the Trump administration a defeat, writing an opinion that kept a citizenship question off the 2020 census.

Even on Monday, Roberts and the conservatives united in two other cases, ruling that the structure of the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau is unconstitutional and to uphold a provision of federal law that requires foreign affiliates of U.S.-based health organizations to denounce prostitution as a condition of

receiving taxpayer money to fight AIDS around the world.

THE FUTURE

Partisans on both sides could quickly find their feelings on Roberts changing. The justices still have 10 decisions remaining to release before they go on their traditional summer break. Most of the outstanding cases were argued in May when the court heard arguments by telephone because of the coronavirus pandemic. The remaining cases include fights over the president's tax returns and important cases involving religion in public life. If those cases divide the court, Roberts' vote will again be key.

'Enough': 1 killed in shooting in Seattle's protest zone

By LISA BAUMANN Associated Press

SEATTLE (AP) — A 16-year-old boy was killed and a younger teenager was wounded early Monday in Seattle's "occupied" protest zone — the second deadly shooting in the area that local officials have vowed to change after business complaints and criticism from President Donald Trump.

The violence that came just over a week after another shooting in the zone left one person dead and another wounded was "dangerous and unacceptable" police Chief Carmen Best said.

"Enough is enough," Best told reporters. "We need to be able to get back into the area."

Demonstrators have occupied several blocks around the Seattle Police Department's East Precinct and a park for about two weeks after police abandoned the precinct following standoffs and clashes with protesters calling for racial justice and an end to police brutality.

Witnesses reported seeing a white Jeep SUV near one of the makeshift barriers around the protest zone about 3 a.m. Monday, just before the shooting, a police statement said.

Callers to 911 said several people fired shots into the vehicle. Police said that two people who were probably the occupants of the vehicle were transported to a local hospital.

The 16-year-old was pronounced dead at Harborview Medical Center, police said. The second victim, a 14-year-old boy, was hospitalized with gunshot injuries. He was reported in critical condition.

"Detectives searched the Jeep for evidence, but it was clear the crime scene had been disturbed," the police statement said.

In the previous fatal shooting in the zone, a 19-year-old man was killed on June 20 and a 33-year-old man was wounded.

Best said the shootings are obscuring the message of racial justice that protesters say they are promoting.

"Two African American men are dead, at a place where they claim to be working for Black Lives Matter. But they're gone, they're dead now," the police chief said.

Mayor Jenny Durkan said last week that the city would start trying to dismantle what has been named the "Capitol Hill Organized Protest" area. City workers on Friday tried to remove makeshift barriers erected around the area but stopped their work after demonstrators objected.

Nearby businesses and property owners filed a federal lawsuit against the city last Wednesday, claiming officials have been too tolerant of those who created the zone and that officials have deprived property owners of their property rights by allowing the zone to continue existing.

The business owners said they were not trying to undermine the protesters' anti-police-brutality and Black Lives Matter messages.

But the owners said they have suffered because the creation of the zone has limited their access to their businesses and that some owners trying clean graffiti from their storefronts or attempting to photograph protesters have been threatened.

Trump has repeatedly criticized the Seattle protest area, as well as city and state leaders. He tweeted Monday morning that the protesters "have ZERO respect for Government."

Some demonstrators in the occupied zone say the demonstration isn't the reason for the shootings.

"The bloodshed you're talking about has nothing to do with the movement," Antwan Bolar, 43, told The Seattle Times. "That's people who would have been doing it in North Seattle or South Seattle anyways — it's just concentrated here."

Associated Press reporters Chris Grygiel and Gene Johnson contributed to this report.

Billions of dollars in aid for small businesses go unclaimed

By JOYCE M. ROSENBERG AP Business Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Billions of dollars offered by Congress as a lifeline to small businesses struggling to survive the pandemic are about to be left on the table when a key government program stops accepting applications for loans.

Business owners and advocacy groups complain that the money in the Paycheck Protection Program was not fully put to work because the program created obstacles that stopped countless small businesses from applying. For those that did seek loans, the ever-changing application process proved to be an exercise in futility.

"It was a flawed structure to begin with," said John Arensmeyer, CEO of Small Business Majority, an advocacy group. "It favored established businesses. It was set up to give money to people with strong banking relationships."

The program's shortcomings also made it more difficult for minority businesses to get loans, according to a report from the Center for Responsible Lending, a research group.

The loans were designed to give companies devastated by government-ordered shutdowns money to pay staffers and survive. The money was aimed at small businesses such as restaurants, retailers and salons that are desperately trying to stay afloat as the U.S. economy reopens in fits and starts.

As of late Friday, the Small Business Administration had approved more than 4.7 million loans worth nearly \$518 billion. Small businesses that also included medical offices, dry cleaners and manufacturers obtained money that ultimately saved jobs and eased the unemployment rate from April's staggering 14.7% to May's still-excruciating 13.3%.

But more than \$140 billion in loan money remained unclaimed out of \$659 billion allocated by Congress. It will be up to Congress to decide what to do with any leftover funds, an SBA spokeswoman said.

Some banks rejected any companies that did not have multiple accounts. Sole proprietors and freelancers had to wait a week before applying, and many found they could not supply the kind of documents the government and banks demanded.

The program's biggest appeal was its promise that loans would be forgiven, but confusion abounded about requirements owners had to meet to get that forgiveness.

Those requirements and information about the program kept changing: Between March 31 and June 15, the SBA issued 35 changes to program rules and its frequently asked questions, according to a Government Accountability Office report issued last week. It was not until May 22, seven weeks after the program began, that the SBA and the Treasury Department released the first instructions and applications for loan forgiveness.

"It's been a moving target this whole time," Arensmeyer said.

In the dark and struggling with the effect of shutdowns, many owners said, "no thanks."

Gabriella Borrero, co-owner of The Vault, a Boonton, New Jersey, recording studio, said she was uncomfortable with the possibility that the business, which had been shut for three months, could be burdened with a loan if it could not get forgiveness. And she could not determine up-front how much money might need to be repaid.

"We decided to simply tough it out ourselves and make it through by dipping into our savings," she said. "I'd rather not have this looming thought, 'Are we going to have it forgiven or will it come back to bite us?'"

For many small business owners, a big drawback was the law's original requirement that companies use loan money within eight weeks, with a June 30 spending deadline. That gave businesses like restaurants two undesirable choices: recall laid-off workers immediately and risk having to lay them off again after eight weeks, or wait to use the money and then have to repay part of the loan.

"We knew it was a problem a week after the legislation was signed, when we looked at the shutdown orders," said Karen Kerrigan, CEO of the Small Business & Entrepreneurship Council, an advocacy group.

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At that point, it was clear that businesses were going to be closed longer than initially thought, and that the impact of the virus would be felt well after June 30, she said.

Not until June 3, less than four weeks before the deadline, did the Senate give final approval to extending the time frame to 24 weeks.

The law also required that companies spend 75% of their loan money on payroll to get forgiveness. But some businesses, like closed restaurants, needed money for rent and costs to reopen. They also worried about being stuck with a loan. Congress did not lower the payroll requirement to 60% until June.

"It was too late for many companies," said Todd McCracken, CEO of the advocacy group National Small Business Association. He summed up the program as "poorly designed from the start."

The program did not account for the vast differences among small businesses. Many hire freelancers or independent contractors rather than employees and under the program could not include those workers' compensation in calculations for loan amounts. Even when these owners were able to get loans, they were of little help.

"It seemed to be structured by people who might not know how small businesses are run," said Frank Groff, co-owner of Portland's White House, a bed and breakfast in Portland, Oregon. The B&B's workers, including cleaning services and landscapers, are independent contractors. Groff got \$12,000, but it only covered two managers' salaries. The B&B has remained open during the outbreak, but its revenue is down nearly 75%.

Also at a disadvantage: Sole proprietors who don't have employees, owners who work as freelancers and brand-new businesses.

Sole proprietor Michael Gips started his security consultancy at the end of 2019, had no revenue and so did not have the required tax return showing his business income. The first bank he applied to never reviewed his application. He then applied to an online bank, providing documents to show he was making money in early 2020.

"My application was denied for insufficient proof of salary payments," Gips said. As of Monday, he was waiting to hear about a third application.

Tiffany Joy Murchison, who owns a New York-based publicity firm, submitted her application April 3, the day the program began. The bank rejected the application on mistaken grounds that her account had not been open long enough, then took three weeks to correct the problem.

It took another three weeks before Murchison learned that her application was denied because it "didn't show we needed that amount of money." As the deadline approached, she was trying to get paperwork together that would get a loan approved, but was afraid she was running out of time.

Many businesses have gotten the message that the program isn't for them.

When Akosua Ayim looked at the requirements, the CEO of Equal Space realized her co-working space in Newark, New Jersey, was unlikely to get much help. All its workers are independent contractors. But what convinced her not to apply was news that companies like restaurant chain Shake Shack and the NBA's Los Angeles Lakers were easily able to get millions in the first round of funding. Although the companies said they were returning the money, and the government said it would audit loans over \$2 million, Ayim had already given up.

"After that information, that's when we decided to focus our efforts on grants," Ayim said. Equal Space has applied for federal, state and local grants, and so far has received money from two organizations.

AMC pushes back movie theater reopening by 2 weeks

By LINDSEY BAHR AP Film Writer

AMC Theaters, the nation's largest chain, is pushing back its plans to begin reopening theaters by two weeks following the closure because of COVID-19. The company said Monday that it would open approximately 450 U.S. locations on July 30 and the remaining 150 the following week.

The company had planned to begin opening theaters in mid-July, but last week the July theatrical release calendar was effectively wiped clean when Disney and Warner Bros. decided to delay the releases

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of "Mulan" and "Tenet" to August dates.

AMC CEO and President Adam Aron said that its general managers across the U.S. started working full time Monday to get their buildings ready to reopen.

"We continue to devote extraordinary resources into our plan to operate our theatres with a hyper commitment to the safety and health of our guests and associates," Aron said in a statement.

Most indoor U.S. theaters have been closed since mid-March because of the coronavirus pandemic. But both independent locations and major chains are readying to reopen within the next month.

However plans could continue to change given the surge of cases in a number of states. Last week, Gov. Andrew Cuomo said New York would delay reopening cinemas while it continued to research the safety of indoor, air-conditioned venues."

AMC expects its approximately 1,000 worldwide locations to be open by early August.

Critics question 'less lethal' force used during protests

By ACACIA CORONADO Report for America/ Associated Press

AUSTIN, Texas (AP) — When a participant at a rally in Austin to protest police brutality threw a rock at a line of officers in the Texas capital, officers responded by firing beanbag rounds — ammunition that law enforcement deems "less lethal" than bullets.

A beanbag cracked 20-year-old Justin Howell's skull and, according to his family, damaged his brain. Adding to the pain, police admit the Texas State University student wasn't the intended target.

Protesters took to the streets in Austin and across the nation following the May 25 police killing of George Floyd in Minneapolis. In some instances, police reacted with force so extreme that while their intent may not be to kill, the effects were devastating.

Pressure has mounted for a change in police tactics since Howell was injured. He was not accused of any crime. He was hospitalized in critical condition on May 31 and was discharged Wednesday to a long-term rehabilitation facility for intensive neurological, physical and occupational therapy. His brother has questioned why no one is talking about police use of less lethal but still dangerous munitions.

"If we only talk about policing in terms of policies and processes or the weapons that police use when someone dies or when they are 'properly lethal' and not less lethal, we're missing a big portion of the conversation," said Josh Howell, a computer science graduate student at Texas A&M University.

The Austin Police Department said in a news release that, before June 1, its officers used Def-Tec 12-gauge beanbag munitions on protesters. According to the manufacturer's website, they have a velocity of 184 mph (296 kph)

The growing use of less lethal weapons is "cause for grave concern" and may sometimes violate international law, said Agnes Callamard, director of Global Freedom of Expression at Columbia University and a U.N. adviser.

From 1990 to 2014, projectiles caused 53 deaths and 300 permanent disabilities among 1,984 serious injuries recorded by medical workers in over a dozen countries, according to Rohini Haar, an emergency room doctor in Oakland, California, and primary author of the 2016 Physicians for Human Rights report.

Ishia Lynette, a spokeswoman for the Austin Justice Coalition, said her group had been organizing a rally with an expected 10,000 attendees, but that was canceled after Howell was shot. With anger flaring on both sides, the organization that advocates for racial justice feared confrontations could arise.

"I feel safe in some sense, but it is always in the back of my head, the what if? Other people can incite violence, whether that be other protesters or the police," Lynette said.

The Austin City Council has since begun an overhaul of the Police Department, banning the use of less lethal munitions and tear gas in crowds participating in free speech, and prohibiting the use of chokeholds. The attack on Howell is one of more than 100 under investigation.

Lynette hailed the city's efforts to change, but said more needs to be done. Her organization also has been calling for Austin Police Chief Brian Manley to resign.

"They recently banned chokeholds, rubber bullets, beanbags," she said. "These are small things, but we need them to take more actions to not hurt any more protesters. Since then, I have seen videos of

them operating in the same way. If they would uphold what they said, it is not enough, but it is a start.”

David Frost, who captured on video the moments after Howell was shot, said he saw protesters throwing fist-sized rocks and water bottles at the line of police on an overpass. Then he saw Howell fall. He was bleeding heavily and went into a seizure, Frost said.

As medical volunteers with red crosses on their arms helped Frost to move Howell to a safe place, officers again opened fire. Frost’s video shows the police firing towards them.

Manley said at a news conference that Howell was not the intended target, insisting that the officer was aiming for the person who he said attacked the police line near the Austin Police Department headquarters.

“One of the officers fired their less lethal munition at that individual, apparently, but it struck this victim instead,” Manley said. “Our thoughts and prayers are with his family and we hope his condition will improve quickly.”

Howell was not the first person at the Austin rallies to be injured by police. A day earlier, 16-year-old Brad Levi Ayala, who was watching a protest from a distance, was also shot in the head with a beanbag.

“We can’t really take comfort in the phrase ‘less lethal,’” Josh Howell said. “Because if what we mean is less lethal than a bullet, that’s not a high bar to clear.”

He declined to comment on the changes the city and police chief said they are making because he doesn’t live in Austin.

This story was first published on June 27. It was updated on June 29 to correct the name of a man who captured on video the severe injuring of a protester during a demonstration in Austin, Texas. His name is David Frost, not David Foster.

Acacia Coronado is a corps member for the Associated Press/Report for America Statehouse News Initiative. Report for America is a nonprofit national service program that places journalists in local newsrooms to report on undercovered issues.

Tracking coronavirus cases proves difficult amid new surge

By TAMMY WEBBER, BRADY McCOMBS and JOHN MONE Associated Press

HOUSTON (AP) — Health departments around the U.S. that are using contact tracers to contain coronavirus outbreaks are scrambling to bolster their ranks amid a surge of cases and resistance to cooperation from those infected or exposed.

With too few trained contact tracers to handle soaring caseloads, one hard-hit Arizona county is relying on National Guard members to pitch in. In Louisiana, people who have tested positive typically wait more than two days to respond to health officials — giving the disease crucial time to spread. Many tracers are finding it hard to break through suspicion and apathy to convince people that compliance is crucial.

Contact tracing — tracking people who test positive and anyone they’ve come in contact with — was challenging even when stay-at-home orders were in place. Tracers say it’s exponentially more difficult now that many restaurants, bars and gyms are full, and people are gathering with family and friends.

“People are probably letting their guard down a little ... they think there is no longer a threat,” said Grand Traverse County, Michigan, Health Officer Wendy Hirschenberger, who was alerted by health officials in another part of the state that infected tourists had visited vineyards and bars in her area.

Her health department was then able to urge local residents who had visited those businesses to self-quarantine.

Hirschenberger was lucky she received that information — only made possible because the tourists had cooperated with contact tracers. But that’s often not the case.

Dr. Anthony Fauci, the nation’s top infectious disease expert, said Friday that contact tracing simply isn’t working in the U.S.

Some who test positive don’t cooperate because they don’t feel sick. Others refuse testing even after being exposed. Some never call back contact tracers. And still others simply object to sharing any information.

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Another new challenge: More young people are getting infected, and they're less likely to feel sick or believe that they're a danger to others.

While older adults were more likely to be diagnosed with the virus early in the pandemic, figures from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention show that the picture flipped almost as soon as states began reopening. Now, people 18 to 49 years old are most likely to be diagnosed.

On Monday, the United States reported 38,800 newly confirmed infections, with the total surpassing 2.5 million, according to a tally by Johns Hopkins University. For a few days now, daily reported cases in the U.S. have broken the record set in April. That partially reflects increased testing.

Some states were caught off guard by the surge and are trying to quickly bolster the number of contact tracers.

"Right now we have an insufficient capacity to do the job we need to," Arkansas Gov. Asa Hutchinson said recently, announcing he wanted to use federal coronavirus relief funds to increase the number of contact tracers to 900.

Arkansas already has 200 doing the job, but infections have risen more than 230% and hospitalizations nearly 170% since Memorial Day. Businesses that had closed because of the virus were allowed to reopen in early May, and the state further eased its restrictions this month.

In addition to needing more staff to handle rising case numbers, contact-tracing teams also must build trust with people who might be uneasy or scared, said Dr. Umair Shah, executive director for Harris County Public Health in Houston, where an outbreak threatens to overwhelm hospitals.

That's difficult to do if infected people don't return calls.

In Louisiana, only 59% of those who have tested positive since mid-May have responded to phone calls from contact tracers, according to the latest data from the state health department. Just one-third answered within the crucial first 24 hours after the test results. Tracers there get an answered phone call, on average, more than two days after receiving information about the positive test.

Perry N. Halkitis, dean of the Rutgers School of Public Health, said COVID-19 spreads so fast that contact tracers need to get in touch with 75% of the potentially exposed people within 24 hours of their exposure to successfully combat the spread.

"Is it as good as we would like? Well, obviously not," said Dr. Jimmy Guidry, Louisiana's state health officer. "It's better than not having it."

Contact tracers around Utah's capital of Salt Lake City have seen caseloads double and cooperation wane since the economy reopened, said health investigator Mackenzie Bray. One person who wasn't answering calls told Bray they didn't want to waste her time because they and their contacts weren't high-risk — a dangerous assessment because the person might not know the health history of their contacts, Bray said.

Getting people to act on tracers' advice also is a challenge. In the Seattle area, only 21% of infected people say they went into isolation on the day they developed symptoms. People, on average, are going three days from the time they develop symptoms until they test, said Dr. Matt Golden, a University of Washington doctor who is leading case investigations for King County Public Health Department.

Since people are infectious for two days before symptoms, that means many are spreading the virus for five days, he said.

In hard-hit Maricopa County, Arizona, officials hired 82 people to bolster contact tracing, allowing them to reach 600 people a day, said Marcy Flanagan, executive director of the Maricopa County Department of Public Health.

But the daily average of confirmed infections has soared, to 1,800 a day from 200 in May, county figures show. That means the county must leave the rest of the cases to be handled by colleges, health agencies and the Arizona National Guard, Flanagan said.

All of them must triage: Each infected person is asked in an automated text to fill out a survey to assess their risk level, and tracers only contact by phone those who appear to be high risk or work in settings that could trigger a dangerous outbreak, such as an assisted living facility.

Contact tracing is key to avoiding worst-case outcomes, said Dr. Tom Frieden, former director of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and current president and CEO of Resolve to Save Lives, a

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nonprofit that works to prevent epidemics. But the explosion of U.S. cases has made it nearly impossible for even the most well-staffed health departments to keep up, he said.

Contact tracing is "a tried and true public health function," Frieden said. "If the health department calls, pick up the phone."

Webber reported from Fenton, Michigan, and McCombs from Salt Lake City. Associated Press journalists Andrew DeMillo in Little Rock, Arkansas; Carla K. Johnson in Seattle; Melinda Deslatte in Baton Rouge, Louisiana; and Terry Chea in San Francisco contributed.

Band's pandemic diversion leads to every-night gig in park

By KATHY WILLENS and EMILY LESHNER Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — What started as a way for two musicians to get out of the house during the pandemic has turned into nightly concerts at the boathouse in Brooklyn's Prospect Park -- with fans who expect them to play three to four hours a night, seven nights a week.

The musicians, accustomed to playing their Haitian roots and jazz music in bars and restaurants that had been shuttered or limited to takeout by the lockdown, couldn't be happier.

"One day I came here with my guitar out of nowhere, to just get some fresh air. And people just started coming over. And then they were like, 'Thank you!' And then it took a life on its own," said Alegba Jahyile, leader of Alegba and Friends.

Jahyile, a Haitian raised in New York who plays guitar, drums and bass, recalled a woman who cried at one concert.

"You made my day," she told him. "It's been a terrible week for me and my family. Listening to you, singing, I felt the joy, I found a little bit of serenity, of peace to my day."

It was then, Jahyile said, that "I decided that every day I would come here."

Classically trained saxophone player Mark Kraszewski has played with Jahyile for more a year. But Kraszewski, who was busking for tips in Central Park last September, can't believe the group's good fortune.

"Initially when we started, it was just us playing. We were just practicing and jamming and having fun with it," he said. "Every once in a while, we'd end a song and we noticed people were clapping. Alegba quickly realized that the Prospect Park boathouse would be a better spot than the park entrance," where people had no place to sit.

Prospect Park is Central Park's lesser-known, outer-borough sister, designed as well by Frederick Law Olmsted and Calvert Vaux. With so many people out of work, — with no school, no camp and for most, no vacation homes to escape to — the park has become a daily escape. On weekdays, it's as crowded as Memorial Day or July 4, especially in the early evening when the group performs.

Situated on what's known as the Lullwater, a winding park waterway, the Beaux-Arts style 1905 boathouse has steps that are good for sitting. It's also adjacent to a grassy hill where people can bring children and dogs, spread blankets, plop down lounge chairs, and picnic while listening to the music.

"I think everyone just kinds of needs that literal breath of fresh air," said one fan, Jackie Padilla. "But also just hearing them reminds you that it's still summertime, and we still can be a community."

Said Jahyile: "When people come here, they come to have a little good time, to have a picnic with their family, their friends, their lovers. And then the music takes them to another level. So, it becomes a daily thing."

People ask him, "Are you going to be here tonight?" And I say, "Yes. This is your daily rendezvous until the next snowflakes. I will be here."

Kraszewski has his own take: After each performance, as the musicians leave, "people on the steps say, 'Thank you for doing this. I haven't heard live music in months.' Ironically for us, if there were just three people, we would still be doing the same thing."

New York City is in the second phase of reopening and gatherings are restricted to 10 people or less.

The constant work is good for the band's music. "We get to keep working on our skills and on our sound

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while also building an audience, turning our music on to new people," Kraszewski said. It has become, he said, "our own self-generated concert residency in Prospect Park."

And the crowds are enthusiastic. "We've had really lively concerts that rival where we would have been playing in bars and clubs. Some nights it's better," Kraszewski said.

Associated Press religion coverage receives support from the Lilly Endowment through the Religion News Foundation. The AP is solely responsible for this content.

VIRUS DIARY: Soccer in UK loses passion, soul with no fans

By TAMER FAKAHANY Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — What have I learned about pandemic soccer — I mean football, of course — since its return in England?

You watch soulless matches with no fans out of ingrained habit — and the misplaced hope that slays you. Your team implodes, also out of ingrained habit. All in all, an added unpleasantness in trying times.

But let's rewind.

In the grand scheme of things, sport during the pandemic is only a matter of life or death if players, staff or fans become infected. Perhaps an updated rendering of the famous Karl Marx quote: Has sport become "the opium of the people"?

In Britain, where I live, some in the political arena ventured that the return of professional football without fans in seats, dubbed Project Restart, would lift the national morale. Debatable.

It's a passionate game of which the fans are the lifeblood. That's true across Europe and beyond.

Supporters, many clad in team colors, are a breathing, heaving, shouting mass — living every moment, every decision, with joyful outbursts or howls of derision. Chants full of industrial language encourage hero worship at best and, at worst, plumb the depths of outright racism and xenophobia.

Watching the English Premier League upon its return has been excitement-free for me — quite a bizarre feeling after decades of following my London team, Arsenal, in the flesh at home and abroad.

So far, the team hasn't played a "home" match that I would normally attend. Watching other empty stadia has featured a decision: whether to choose the fake audio atmosphere generated by the channels.

No, thanks. That ranks with laugh tracks, lip synching and ghostwriting. So it's natural sound for me — the agitated strains of players, coaches and the ball being kicked and headed.

The first two matches I watched, my team lost. Once, against a superior team, barely registered on the anger scales. The second, against an inferior one, rankled due to a long-term injury to our goalkeeper because of unnecessary foul play from an opponent who then rubbed salt in the wound by scoring the winning goal in the dying seconds.

But it passed quickly, quicker than it ever would have in the past.

A close friend and colleague who has also supported Arsenal all his life felt the same watching live from New York in our hyper-connected world. We WhatsApp-ed, then moved on with the rest of our weekends.

The same friend and I had attended a match that we still reminisce about where a winning goal, a penalty deep into stoppage time, had sent my row bonkers, us included, and seemed to take the roof off.

Those are the joys. Camaraderie with several people I sit with as a season ticket holder for more than a quarter century. The pre-match rituals, the pub for a couple looseners (or not, in the event my teenage son, who has gone off the game in the last few years, accompanies me — a rare treat).

Then on Thursday, a win — but dreary watching nonetheless.

I'll keep watching the matches every few days as the league races to complete the interrupted season. But let's not kid ourselves: Like so much else, this was a financial decision as lockdowns are eased across the world to resuscitate flatlining economies. Hundreds of millions in various currencies are at stake for the monstrous cash-cow brand; global TV rights are in the balance.

But the first "home" game of the pandemic rest-of-season this week will feel especially soulless to view

denuded of fans and denuded of me. And I cannot even fathom when it will cease to be insanity to attend an event with some 60,000 other people again.

Memories fortify. Maybe Humphrey Bogart's Rick was right in "Casablanca": "We'll always have ..."

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Virus Diary, an occasional feature, showcases the coronavirus pandemic through the eyes of Associated Press journalists around the world. See previous entries here. Follow Tamer Fakahany, AP's deputy director of global news coordination, at <http://twitter.com/tamerfakahany>

EU finalizing virus 'safe list,' US unlikely to make the cut

By LORNE COOK Associated Press

BRUSSELS (AP) — The European Union is edging toward finalizing a list of countries whose citizens will be allowed to enter Europe again in coming days, with Americans almost certain to be excluded in the short term due to the number of U.S. coronavirus cases.

Spain's foreign minister said that the list could contain 15 countries that are not EU members and whose citizens would be allowed to visit from July 1. EU diplomats confirmed that the list would be made public on Tuesday. The diplomats spoke on condition of anonymity because the procedure is ongoing and politically very sensitive.

EU envoys in Brussels worked over the weekend to narrow down the exact criteria for countries to be included, mostly centered on their ability to manage the spread of the disease. Importantly, the countries are also expected to drop any travel restrictions they have imposed on European citizens.

The number of confirmed cases in the United States has surged over the past week, and President Donald Trump also suspended the entry of all people from Europe's ID check-free travel zone in a decree in March, making it highly unlikely that U.S. citizens would qualify.

Infection rates in Brazil, Russia and India are high, too, and their nationals are also unlikely to make the cut.

Spanish Foreign Minister Arancha González Laya said the EU is considering whether to accept travelers from China if Beijing lifts restrictions on European citizens. Morocco is another possibility, although its government doesn't plan to open borders until July 10.

She said she wasn't aware of pressure from the United States for the EU to reopen travel to its nationals, adding that countries have been chosen according to their coronavirus statistics — whether similar or not to that in the EU — trends of contagion and how reliable their data is.

"This is not an exercise to be nice or unfriendly to other countries, this is an exercise of self-responsibility," she told Spain's Cadena SER radio on Monday.

The safe country list would be reviewed every 14 days, with new countries being added and some possibly dropping off, depending on how the spread of the disease is being managed. Non-EU nationals already in the bloc wouldn't be affected.

More than 15 million Americans are estimated to travel to Europe annually, and any delay would be a further blow to virus-ravaged economies and tourism sectors on both sides of the Atlantic. Around 10 million Europeans are thought to cross the Atlantic for vacations and business each year.

The 27 EU nations and four other countries that are part of Europe's "Schengen area" — a 26-nation bloc where goods and people move freely without document checks — appear on track to reopen borders between each other from Wednesday.

Once that happens and the green light is given, restrictions on nonessential travel to Europe from the outside world, which were imposed in March to halt new virus cases from entering, would gradually be lifted.

Brussels fears that opening up to countries outside in an ad hoc way could lead to the reintroduction of border controls between nations inside the Schengen area, threatening once again Europe's cherished principle of free movement, which allows people and goods to cross borders without checks.

—
Aritz Parra in Madrid contributed to this report.

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

Iran issues arrest warrant for Trump that Interpol rejects

By NASSER KARIMI Associated Press

TEHRAN, Iran (AP) — Iran has issued an arrest warrant and asked Interpol for help in detaining President Donald Trump and dozens of others it believes carried out the U.S. drone strike that killed a top Iranian general in Baghdad, a local prosecutor reportedly said Monday.

Interpol later said it wouldn't consider Iran's request, meaning Trump faces no danger of arrest. However, the charges underscore the heightened tensions between Iran and the United States since Trump unilaterally withdrew America from Tehran's nuclear deal with world powers.

Tehran prosecutor Ali Alqasimehr said Trump and 35 others whom Iran accuses of involvement in the Jan. 3 strike that killed Gen. Qassem Soleimani in Baghdad face "murder and terrorism charges," the state-run IRNA news agency reported.

Alqasimehr did not identify anyone else sought other than Trump, but stressed that Iran would continue to pursue his prosecution even after his presidency ends.

Alqasimehr also was quoted as saying that Iran requested a "red notice" be put out for Trump and the others, which represents the highest-level arrest request issued by Interpol. Local authorities generally make the arrests on behalf of the country that requests it. The notices cannot force countries to arrest or extradite suspects, but can put government leaders on the spot and limit suspects' travel.

After receiving a request, Interpol meets by committee and discusses whether or not to share the information with its member states. Interpol has no requirement for making any of the notices public, though some do get published on its website.

Interpol later issued a statement saying its guidelines for notices forbids it from "any intervention or activities of a political" nature.

Interpol "would not consider requests of this nature," it said.

Brian Hook, the U.S. special representative for Iran, dismissed the arrest warrant announcement during a news conference in Saudi Arabia on Monday.

"It's a propaganda stunt that no one takes seriously and makes the Iranians look foolish," Hook said.

The U.S. killed Soleimani, who oversaw the Revolutionary Guard's expeditionary Quds Force, and others in the January strike near Baghdad International Airport. It came after months of rising tensions between the two countries. Iran retaliated with a ballistic missile strike targeting American troops in Iraq.

Associated Press writers Jon Gambrell in Dubai, United Arab Emirates, and Angela Charlton in Paris contributed to this report.

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

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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 the Richard's hits that Wayne performed included "Lucy," "Good Golly, Miss Molly" and "Tutti Frutti."

MAD STALLION

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.

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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.

French ex-prime minister Fillon, wife found guilty of fraud

By SYLVIE CORBET and NICOLAS VAUX-MONTAGNY Associated Press

PARIS (AP) — Former French Prime Minister Francois Fillon was found guilty Monday in a fraud case of having used public funds to pay his wife and children more than 1 million euros (\$1.13 million) since 1998 for work they never performed.

The couple's lawyers immediately appealed Monday's verdict from the Paris court.

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

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

In addition, the couple was requested to reimburse the National Assembly more than 1 million euros that correspond to the salaries and payroll charges that were paid. The penalty is suspended pending appeal.

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.

The Paris court considered that Fillon "elaborated and established an organization enabling to misappropriate money for his personal use."

In a statement, the court said that "nothing concrete has been proven in court regarding the work of Madam Fillon."

"She did not have any professional activity alongside her husband," the court added. "Nothing justifies the paid salaries."

Fillon and his wife have denied any wrongdoing.

Fillon's lawyer Antonin Levy told reporters "there will be a new trial ... We will be able to get a full and serene debate that will finally allow justice to be made."

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.

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.

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.

A former lawmaker, Marc Joulaud, also went on trial in the case for misuse of public funds after he allegedly gave Penelope Fillon a fake job as an aide from 2002 to 2007, while her husband was minister. He

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was found guilty and sentenced to a three-year suspended prison sentence.

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.

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.

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, 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.

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 502,000 reported deaths, according to a tally by Johns Hopkins University. Experts say both those numbers undercount 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. 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. 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.

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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 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.

The pandemic has caused global hunger to rise to record numbers, the World Food Program warned Monday. The number of hungry people in the 83 countries where it operates could increase to 270 million before the end of 2020 — an 82% increase from before COVID-19 took hold, it said.

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>

Today in History

By The Associated Press undefined

Today in History

Today is Tuesday, June 30, the 182nd day of 2020. There are 184 days left in the year.

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Today's Highlight in History:

On June 30, 1971, the Supreme Court ruled, 6-3, that the government could not prevent The New York Times or The Washington Post from publishing the Pentagon Papers.

On this date:

In 1865, eight people, including Mary Surratt and Dr. Samuel Mudd, were convicted by a military commission of conspiring with John Wilkes Booth, the assassin of President Abraham Lincoln. (Four defendants, including Surratt, were executed; Mudd was sentenced to life in prison, but was pardoned by President Andrew Johnson in 1869.)

In 1918, labor activist and socialist Eugene V. Debs was arrested in Cleveland, charged under the Espionage Act of 1917 for a speech he'd made two weeks earlier denouncing U.S. involvement in World War I. (Debs was sentenced to prison and disenfranchised for life.)

In 1934, Adolf Hitler launched his "blood purge" of political and military rivals in Germany in what came to be known as "The Night of the Long Knives."

In 1958, the U.S. Senate passed the Alaska statehood bill by a vote of 64-20.

In 1963, Pope Paul VI was crowned the 262nd head of the Roman Catholic Church.

In 1971, a Soviet space mission ended in tragedy when three cosmonauts aboard Soyuz 11 were found dead of asphyxiation inside their capsule after it had returned to Earth.

In 1982, the proposed Equal Rights Amendment to the U.S. Constitution expired, having failed to receive the required number of ratifications for its adoption, despite having its seven-year deadline extended by three years.

In 1986, the Supreme Court, in *Bowers v. Hardwick*, ruled 5-4 that states could outlaw homosexual acts between consenting adults (however, the nation's highest court effectively reversed this decision in 2003 in *Lawrence v. Texas*).

In 1994, the U.S. Figure Skating Association stripped Tonya Harding of the national championship and banned her for life for her role in the attack on rival Nancy Kerrigan.

In 1997, the Union Jack was lowered for the last time over Government House in Hong Kong as Britain prepared to hand the colony back to China at midnight after ruling it for 156 years.

In 2009, American soldier Pfc. Bowe R. Bergdahl went missing from his base in eastern Afghanistan, and was later confirmed to have been captured by insurgents. (Bergdahl was released on May 31, 2014 in exchange for five Taliban detainees.)

In 2013, 19 elite firefighters known as members of the Granite Mountain Hotshots were killed battling a wildfire northwest of Phoenix after a change in wind direction pushed the flames back toward their position.

Ten years ago: President Barack Obama talked about the economy at a town hall in Racine, Wisconsin, saying, "We got it moving again," and that he intended to get "our debt and our deficits under control," but warned he wouldn't slash spending at the expense of the economic rebound. Benigno Aquino III was sworn in as the Philippines' 15th president.

Five years ago: a tough-talking New Jersey Gov. Chris Christie launched his 2016 campaign for president with a promise to tell voters the truth "whether you like it or not, or whether it makes you cringe every once in a while or not." An Indonesian Air Force transport plane crashed, killing more than 120 people on board and 22 on the ground. Actress Jennifer Garner and actor Ben Affleck announced plans to end their 10-year marriage.

One year ago: President Donald Trump and North Korea's Kim Jong Un met at the heavily fortified Demilitarized Zone between North and South Korea, and agreed to revive talks on the North's nuclear program. (A working-level meeting in Sweden in October would break down over what the North Koreans described as the Americans' "old stance and attitude.") A small plane crashed at a suburban Dallas airport, killing all 10 people on board; the plane had struggled to gain altitude before veering to the left and crashing into a hangar. At the start of the NBA's free agency period, Kevin Durant announced that he was leaving the Golden State Warriors after three seasons and signing with the Brooklyn Nets.

Today's Birthdays: Actress Lea Massari is 87. Actress Nancy Dussault (doo-SOH') is 84. Songwriter Tony Hatch is 81. Singer Glenn Shorrock is 76. Actor Leonard Whiting is 70. Jazz musician Stanley Clarke is 69.

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Actor David Garrison is 68. Rock musician Hal Lindes (Dire Straits) is 67. Actor-comedian David Alan Grier is 64. Actor Vincent D'Onofrio is 61. Actress Deirdre Lovejoy is 58. Actor Rupert Graves is 57. Former boxer Mike Tyson is 54. Actor Peter Outerbridge is 54. Rock musician Tom Drummond (Better Than Ezra) is 51. Actor-comedian Tony Rock (TV: "Living Biblically") is 51. Actor Brian Bloom is 50. Actor Brian Vincent is 50. Actress Monica Potter is 49. Actress Molly Parker is 48. Actor Rick Gonzalez is 41. Actor Tom Burke is 39. Actress Lizzy Caplan is 38. Actress Susannah Flood is 38. Rock musician James Adam Shelley (American Authors) is 37. Country singer Cole Swindell is 37. Rhythm and blues singer Fantasia is 36. Olympic gold medal swimmer Michael Phelps is 35. Actor Sean Marquette (TV: "The Goldbergs") is 32.