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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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11 Groton Jr. Teeners

Tuesday, June 30
8:10PM

W.I.N. Jr. Legion 2

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	R	H	E
GRTN	0	7	0	0	4	X	X	11	8	0
W..N	2	0	0	0	0	X	X	2	2	2

Groton Jr. Teeners

Lineup	AB	R	H	RBI	BB	SO
Dillon Abeln	2	1	0	0	1	1
Colby Dunker	2	1	1	2	0	0
Kaleb Antonsen	0	0	0	0	1	0
Ryan Groeblinghoff	2	0	1	0	0	0
Bradin Althoff	2	0	1	1	0	0
Braxton Imrie	0	1	0	0	1	0
Brevin Fliehs	2	2	1	0	1	0
Logan Ringgenberg	2	1	0	0	0	0
Korbin Kucker	2	2	1	2	1	0
Caden Mcinerney	2	0	0	0	1	2
Kaleb Hoover	2	1	2	3	0	0
Jacob Zak	3	1	1	1	0	1
Taylor Diegel	0	1	0	0	0	0
Totals	21	11	8	9	6	4

Batting

TB: Bradin Althoff, Colby Dunker, Brevin Fliehs, Ryan Groeblinghoff, Kaleb Hoover 2, Korbin Kucker, Jacob Zak
RBI: Bradin Althoff, Colby Dunker 2, Kaleb Hoover 3, Korbin Kucker 2, Jacob Zak
SE: Kaleb Hoover
ROE: Ryan Groeblinghoff
HBP: Ryan Groeblinghoff, Logan Ringgenberg
SB: Dillon Abeln, Bradin Althoff, Taylor Diegel 2, Colby Dunker, Kaleb Hoover 2, Braxton Imrie 2, Korbin Kucker, Caden Mcinerney, Jacob Zak 2
CS: Kaleb Antonsen, Taylor Diegel

Totals

Team QAB: 16 (53.33%)
 Dillon Abeln, Kaleb Antonsen, Colby Dunker, Brevin Fliehs 2, Ryan Groeblinghoff, Kaleb Hoover 2, Braxton Imrie, Korbin Kucker 2, Caden Mcinerney, Logan Ringgenberg 2, Jacob Zak 2

Team LOB: 4

W.I.N. Jr. Legion

Lineup	AB	R	H	RBI	BB	SO
Z Wood	2	0	0	0	0	0
N Fischbach	0	1	0	0	1	0
L Jensen	1	0	0	0	0	1
Kade Stahl	2	1	1	1	0	1
C Neiber	1	0	0	1	0	0
J Ortmeier	2	0	0	0	0	1
A Remily	2	0	0	0	0	1
L Scepanick	1	0	0	0	0	1
H Cramer	1	0	0	0	0	1
G Ratigan	1	0	0	0	1	1
Sam Nilsson	2	0	1	0	0	0
C Carlson	1	0	0	0	0	1
Totals	16	2	2	2	2	8

Batting

3B: Kade Stahl
TB: Kade Stahl 3, Sam Nilsson
RBI: Kade Stahl, C Neiber
SF: C Neiber

Totals

Team QAB: 11 (57.89%)
 Z Wood, N Fischbach, Kade Stahl 2, C Neiber 2, J Ortmeier 2, A Remily, L Scepanick, G Ratigan

Team LOB: 2

Fielding

E: N Fischbach, C Carlson

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Groton Jr. Teeners

Pitching	IP	#P	S%	H	R	ER	SO	BB	HR
Korbin Kucker	3.0	58	.534	2	2	2	4	1	0
Kaleb Hoover	2.0	36	.528	0	0	0	4	1	0
Totals	5.0	94	.532	2	2	2	8	2	0

Pitching

WP: Korbin Kucker

Pitches-Strikes: Kaleb Hoover 36-19, Korbin Kucker 58-31

Groundouts-Flyouts: Kaleb Hoover 2-0, Korbin Kucker 4-1

First pitch strikes-Batters faced: Kaleb Hoover 3-7, Korbin Kucker 4-12

W.I.N. Jr. Legion

Pitching	IP	#P	S%	H	R	ER	SO	BB	HR
Z Wood	1.2	62	.484	4	7	7	1	2	0
N Fischbach	0.1	6	.667	1	0	0	0	0	0
C Carlson	2.1	63	.508	3	4	4	3	4	0
L Scepanick	0.2	7	.571	0	0	0	0	0	0
Kade Stahl	0.0	0	.000	0	0	0	0	0	0
Totals	5.0	138	.507	8	11	11	4	6	0

Pitching

HBP: Z Wood 2

WP: Z Wood 3, C Carlson 3

BK: Z Wood

Pitches-Strikes: Z Wood 62-30, N Fischbach 6-4, Kade Stahl 0-0, L Scepanick 7-4, C Carlson 63-32

Groundouts-Flyouts: Z Wood 2-0, N Fischbach 0-1, Kade Stahl 0-0, L Scepanick 0-2, C Carlson 1-2

First pitch strikes-Batters faced: Z Wood 5-13, N Fischbach 0-2, Kade Stahl 0-0, L Scepanick 1-2, C Carlson 7-13

Big Second Inning Propels Groton Jr. Teeners To Victory Over W.I.N. Jr. Legion

Seven runs in the second inning led Groton Jr. Teeners past W.I.N. Jr. Legion 11-2 on Tuesday. Groton Jr. Teeners batters contributing to the big inning included Kaleb Hoover, Jacob Zak, Colby Dunker, and Bradin Althoff, all driving in runs in the frame.

W.I.N. Jr. Legion got on the board in the first inning. Kade Stahl drove in one when he tripled.

Groton Jr. Teeners pulled away for good with seven runs in the second inning. In the second Hoover singled on a 3-2 count, scoring two runs, Zak singled on a 3-2 count, scoring two runs, Dunker singled on a 2-0 count, scoring two runs, and Althoff singled on a 1-0 count, scoring one run.

Korbin Kucker led things off on the mound for Groton Jr. Teeners. He lasted three innings, allowing two hits and two runs while striking out four and walking one.

Z Wood was on the hill for W.I.N. Jr. Legion. He lasted one and two-thirds innings, allowing four hits and seven runs while striking out one. C Carlson, L Scepanick, and N Fischbach each contributed in relief for W.I.N. Jr. Legion.

Hoover led Groton Jr. Teeners with two hits in two at bats. Groton Jr. Teeners was sure-handed in the field and didn't commit a single error. Ryan Groeblichhoff had the most chances in the field with eight. Groton Jr. Teeners stole 13 bases during the game as four players stole more than one. Hoover led the way with two.

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18 Groton Jr. Teeners

Tuesday, June 30
6:00PM

W.I.N. Jr. Legion 5

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	R	H	E
GRTN	0	0	13	0	1	4	X	18	14	3
W..N	1	2	2	0	0	0	X	5	7	2

Groton Jr. Teeners

Lineup	AB	R	H	RBI	BB	SO
Bradin Althoff	5	2	3	4	0	0
Brevin Flihs	5	2	2	3	0	0
Ryan Groeblichhoff	2	1	1	2	1	0
Colby Dunker	4	1	0	1	0	1
Kaleb Hoover	4	1	1	3	0	1
Kaleb Antonsen	2	1	0	0	2	1
Taylor Diegel	4	1	2	1	0	0
Dillon Abeln	1	0	1	0	1	0
Braxton Imrie	2	2	1	0	1	0
Jacob Zak	1	3	1	1	0	0
Logan Ringgenberg	3	3	2	1	0	0
Korbin Kucker	0	1	0	0	0	0
Caden Mcinerney	-	-	-	-	-	-
Totals	33	18	14	16	5	3

Batting

2B: Bradin Althoff, Kaleb Hoover
TB: Dillon Abeln, Bradin Althoff 4, Taylor Diegel 2, Brevin Flihs 2, Ryan Groeblichhoff, Kaleb Hoover 2, Braxton Imrie, Logan Ringgenberg 2, Jacob Zak
RBI: Bradin Althoff 4, Taylor Diegel, Colby Dunker, Brevin Flihs 3, Ryan Groeblichhoff 2, Kaleb Hoover 3, Logan Ringgenberg, Jacob Zak
SAC: Dillon Abeln
ROE: Bradin Althoff, Colby Dunker
HBP: Dillon Abeln, Ryan Groeblichhoff, Logan Ringgenberg
SB: Bradin Althoff 2, Brevin Flihs, Logan Ringgenberg, Jacob Zak

Totals

Team QAB: 19 (45.24%)
 Dillon Abeln 3, Bradin Althoff 3, Kaleb Antonsen 2, Taylor Diegel, Colby Dunker, Brevin Flihs 2, Ryan Groeblichhoff 2, Kaleb Hoover 2, Braxton Imrie, Logan Ringgenberg, Jacob Zak

Team LOB: 6

Fielding

E: Bradin Althoff, Colby Dunker, Kaleb Hoover

W.I.N. Jr. Legion

Lineup	AB	R	H	RBI	BB	SO
Z Wood	4	1	2	1	0	0
N Fischbach	3	0	0	0	1	1
Kade Stahl	4	0	1	1	0	0
C Neiber	3	0	1	0	0	0
J Ortmeier	4	0	0	0	0	1
A Remily	2	1	1	0	1	1
L Scepanick	1	2	0	0	2	1
L Jensen	2	1	1	1	0	0
Sam Nilsson	2	0	1	1	1	1
H Cramer	1	0	0	1	2	0
G Ratigan	-	-	-	-	-	-
C Carlson	-	-	-	-	-	-
Z Evans	-	-	-	-	-	-
Totals	26	5	7	5	7	5

Batting

TB: Z Wood 2, Kade Stahl, C Neiber, A Remily, L Jensen, Sam Nilsson
RBI: Z Wood, Kade Stahl, L Jensen, Sam Nilsson, H Cramer
ROE: N Fischbach, C Neiber, L Jensen
FC: Z Wood
HBP: C Neiber, L Jensen
SB: Z Wood 2, N Fischbach, Kade Stahl, C Neiber, L Scepanick
CS: Z Wood

Totals

Team QAB: 13 (37.14%)
 Z Wood 2, N Fischbach, Kade Stahl, A Remily 2, L Scepanick 3, Sam Nilsson 2, H Cramer 2

Team LOB: 12

Fielding

E: N Fischbach, C Neiber

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Groton Jr. Teeners

Pitching	IP	#P	S%	H	R	ER	SO	BB	HR
Braxton Imrie	3.0	74	.432	5	5	5	1	6	0
Jacob Zak	3.0	54	.574	2	0	0	4	1	0
Totals	6.0	128	.492	7	5	5	5	7	0

Pitching

HBP: Braxton Imrie 2

WP: Braxton Imrie, Jacob Zak

Pitches-Strikes: Braxton Imrie 74-32, Jacob Zak 54-31

Groundouts-Flyouts: Braxton Imrie 4-2, Jacob Zak 1-3

First pitch strikes-Batters faced: Braxton Imrie 10-21, Jacob Zak 10-14

W.I.N. Jr. Legion

Pitching	IP	#P	S%	H	R	ER	SO	BB	HR
A Remily	3.0	71	.676	9	13	6	2	2	0
L Jensen	2.0	34	.529	2	1	1	1	2	0
G Ratigan	1.0	27	.519	3	4	4	0	1	0
Totals	6.0	132	.606	14	18	11	3	5	0

Pitching

HBP: A Remily 2, G Ratigan

WP: A Remily 2, G Ratigan

Pitches-Strikes: A Remily 71-48, L Jensen 34-18, G Ratigan 27-14

Groundouts-Flyouts: A Remily 4-3, L Jensen 4-1, G Ratigan 2-1

First pitch strikes-Batters faced: A Remily 17-24, L Jensen 5-10, G Ratigan 4-8

Four RBI Day For Bradin Althoff Leads Groton Jr. Teeners Past W.I.N. Jr. Legion

Bradin Althoff was clutch at the plate with runners on base on Tuesday, driving in four on three hits to lead Groton Jr. Teeners past W.I.N. Jr. Legion 18-5 on Tuesday. Althoff drove in runs on a single in the third, a single in the third, a groundout in the fifth, and a double in the sixth.

Groton Jr. Teeners secured the victory thanks to 13 runs in the third inning. Groton Jr. Teeners batters contributing to the big inning included Althoff, Brevin Flihs, Ryan Groeblichhoff, Colby Dunker, Kaleb Hoover, and Teylor Diegel, all sending runners across the plate with RBIs in the inning.

W.I.N. Jr. Legion got things started in the first inning. Kade Stahl drove in one when he singled.

Groton Jr. Teeners pulled away for good with 13 runs in the third inning. In the third Althoff singled on a 0-1 count, scoring one run, Flihs singled on a 0-1 count, scoring one run, Groeblichhoff was struck by a pitch, driving in a run, an error scored one run for Groton Jr. Teeners, Hoover doubled on a 0-1 count, scoring three runs, Diegel grounded out, scoring one run, Althoff singled on a 1-0 count, scoring one run, Flihs singled on a 0-2 count, scoring two runs, and Groton Jr. Teeners scored on a stolen base during Groeblichhoff's at bat. Then Groeblichhoff singled, driving in one.

Braxton Imrie led things off on the pitcher's mound for Groton Jr. Teeners. He surrendered five runs on five hits over three innings, striking out one.

A Remily was on the hill for W.I.N. Jr. Legion. He went three innings, allowing 13 runs on nine hits and striking out two. L Jensen and G Ratigan entered the game as relief, throwing two innings and one inning respectively.

Groton Jr. Teeners racked up 14 hits. Althoff, Diegel, Logan Ringgenberg, and Flihs each managed multiple hits for Groton Jr. Teeners. Althoff went 3-for-5 at the plate to lead Groton Jr. Teeners in hits.

Z Wood led W.I.N. Jr. Legion with two hits in four at bats.

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Legion LN/Badger Legion Runs Away With Early Lead In Victory

Groton Legion Post #39 fell behind early and couldn't come back in a 10-0 loss to Legion LN/Badger Legion on June 14. Legion Lake Norden/Badger Legion took the lead on a single in the first inning.

The Groton Legion Post #39 struggled to contain the high-powered offense of Legion LN/Badger Legion, giving up ten runs.

Legion LN/Badger Legion fired up the offense in the first inning, when Steffenson singled on a 2-1 count, scoring two runs.

A single by Darien Shabazz in the fourth inning was a positive for Groton Legion Post #39.

Mitchell Noem was credited with the victory for Legion LN/Badger Legion. He lasted six innings, allowing two hits and zero runs while striking out 11 and walking one.

Alex Morris took the loss for Groton Legion Post #39. He went three innings, allowing three runs on six hits, striking out five and walking one.

Shabazz and Reilly Thurston each collected one hit to lead Groton Legion Post #39. Groton Legion Post #39 didn't commit a single error in the field. Connor Thaler had nine chances in the field, the most on the team.

Legion LN/Badger Legion had 12 hits in the game. Noem, Heiss, Seth Madsen, Steffenson, and Noem each had multiple hits for Legion LN/Badger Legion. Noem went 3-for-3 at the plate to lead Legion LN/Badger Legion in hits. Legion LN/Badger Legion was sure-handed in the field and didn't commit a single error. Madsen had the most chances in the field with 13.

Groton Legion Post #39 Grabs Lead In Seventh Inning For Victory Over Jr LEGION AND LEGION Claremont Honkers Youth

Groton Legion Post #39 ran off with the lead late in the game in a 6-4 victory over Jr LEGION AND LEGION Claremont Honkers Youth on June 15. The game was tied at four with Groton Legion Post #39 batting in the top of the seventh when Reilly Thurston drew a walk, scoring one run.

Jr LEGION AND LEGION Claremont Honkers Youth got things moving in the second inning, when Jesse Keough doubled on the first pitch of the at bat, scoring two runs.

Connor Thaler pitched Groton Legion Post #39 to victory. He lasted two innings, allowing one hit and one run while striking out three.

Benton West took the loss for Jr LEGION AND LEGION Claremont Honkers Youth. He allowed one hit and three runs over two innings, striking out four.

Chandler Larson started the game for Groton Legion Post #39. He allowed five hits and three runs over five innings, striking out four and walking zero. Colin Frey started the game for Jr LEGION AND LEGION Claremont Honkers Youth. He surrendered two runs on three hits over five innings, striking out three.

Garret Schroeder, Larson, Darien Shabazz, Austin Jones, and Thurston each collected one hit to lead Groton Legion Post #39.

Jr LEGION AND LEGION Claremont Honkers Youth saw the ball well today, racking up six hits in the game. Boston Marlow and Keough each had multiple hits for Jr LEGION AND LEGION Claremont Honkers Youth. Jr LEGION AND LEGION Claremont Honkers Youth was sure-handed in the field and didn't commit a single error. Ben Gustafson had the most chances in the field with nine.

Early Lead For Redfield Post 92 Seals Fate For Groton Post #39

Groton Legion Post #39 fell behind early and couldn't come back in a 14-1 loss to Redfield Post 92 on June 17. Redfield Post 92 scored on a single by Camden Osborn, an error, a sacrifice fly by Easton Millar, and a walk by Connor Jessen in the first inning.

The Groton Legion Post #39 struggled to contain the high-powered offense of Redfield Post 92, giving up 14 runs.

In the first inning, Redfield Post 92 got their offense started. Osborn singled on the first pitch of the at

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bat, scoring one run.

Redfield Post 92 scored six runs in the fifth inning. Christian Deyoung, Barrett Wren, and Osborn each had RBIs in the big inning.

Bennett Osborn pitched Redfield Post 92 to victory. He surrendered one run on two hits over five innings, striking out seven.

Connor Thaler took the loss for Groton Legion Post #39. He lasted three innings, allowing six hits and seven runs while striking out three.

Garret Schroeder and Reilly Thurston each managed one hit to lead Groton Legion Post #39.

Redfield Post 92 had eight hits in the game. Osborn and Wren all managed multiple hits for Redfield Post 92.

Groton Legion Post #39 Can't Hold Up Against Redfield Post 92

Groton Legion Post #39 couldn't keep up with Redfield Post 92 and fell 14-4 on June 17.

Barrett Wren led the Redfield Post 92 to victory on the pitcher's mound. He allowed four hits and four runs over three innings, striking out five.

Tristan Traphagen took the loss for Groton Legion Post #39. He went one inning, allowing ten runs on five hits.

Austin Jones, Alex Morris, Darien Shabazz, and Reilly Thurston each managed one hit to lead Groton Legion Post #39. Groton Legion Post #39 didn't commit a single error in the field. Morris had three chances in the field, the most on the team.

Redfield Post 92 collected ten hits on the day. Keaton Rohlf and Peyton Osborn all managed multiple hits for Redfield Post 92. Redfield Post 92 was sure-handed in the field and didn't commit a single error. Rohlf had the most chances in the field with five.

Groton Legion Post #39 Takes Victory Over Milbank Legion, 6-2

Groton Legion Post #39 was victorious over Post #9 Legion, 6-2, on June 22.

Groton Legion Post #39 opened up scoring in the first inning, when Alex Morris tripled on a 2-1 count, scoring one run.

Groton Legion Post #39 notched four runs in the second inning. Morris, Chandler Larson, and Austin Jones each had RBIs in the big inning.

Larson was the winning pitcher for Groton Legion Post #39. He went five innings, allowing two runs on five hits, striking out ten and walking one. Connor Thaler threw two innings in relief out of the bullpen. Thaler recorded the last six outs to earn the save for Groton Legion Post #39.

Brad Femling took the loss for Post #9 Legion. He lasted two and two-thirds innings, allowing seven hits and six runs while striking out three.

Groton Legion Post #39 tallied eight hits. Wyatt Locke and Morris each had multiple hits for Groton Legion Post #39. Morris and Locke each collected two hits to lead Groton Legion Post #39. Groton Legion Post #39 was sure-handed in the field and didn't commit a single error. Morris had the most chances in the field with 13.

Post #9 Legion racked up five hits on the day. Brodie Holtquist and Kacen Huber all managed multiple hits for Post #9 Legion. Post #9 Legion didn't commit a single error in the field. Micah Dietmeir had the most chances in the field with eight.

Morris Throws No-Hitter As Groton Legion Post #39 Defeats Jr LEGION AND LEGION Claremont Honkers Youth

Alex Morris was brilliant on the pitcher's mound on June 23, as he threw a no-hitter to lead Groton Legion Post #39 past Jr LEGION AND LEGION Claremont Honkers Youth 1-0.

The pitching was strong on both sides. Morris struck out 15, while Boston Marlow sat down seven.

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Groton Legion Post #39 got things started in the second inning when Connor Thaler grounded out, scoring one run.

Morris pitched Groton Legion Post #39 to victory. He surrendered zero runs on zero hits over seven innings, striking out 15 and walking zero.

Marlow took the loss for Jr LEGION AND LEGION Claremont Honkers Youth. He allowed one hit and one run over six innings, striking out seven.

Wyatt Locke went 1-for-2 at the plate to lead Groton Legion Post #39 in hits. Groton Legion Post #39 was sure-handed in the field and didn't commit a single error. Locke had the most chances in the field with 12.

Jr LEGION AND LEGION Claremont Honkers Youth didn't commit a single error in the field. Benton West had the most chances in the field with seven.

Groton Legion Post #39 Clinches Lead In Fifth Inning For Victory Over Clark Legion

Groton Legion Post #39 ran off with the lead late in the game in a 9-6 victory over Clark Legion on June 26. The game was tied at six with Groton Legion Post #39 batting in the bottom of the fifth when.

Bats blistered as Groton Legion Post #39 collected nine hits and Clark Legion tallied five in the high-scoring game.

Clark Legion opened up scoring in the first inning, when Zach Winter grounded out, scoring one run.

Clark Legion scored three runs in the third inning. Clark Legion's big inning was driven by a groundout by Winter and an error on a ball put in play by Lucas Kannegieter.

Darien Shabazz led the Groton Legion Post #39 to victory on the hill. He lasted four and two-thirds innings, allowing two hits and one run while striking out seven.

Kannegieter took the loss for Clark Legion. He lasted one-third of an inning, allowing one hit and one run while walking one.

Matt Streff started the game for Clark Legion. He went five and two-thirds innings, allowing eight runs on eight hits and striking out eight. Wyatt Locke started the game for Groton Legion Post #39. He allowed three hits and five runs over two and a third innings, striking out three.

Reilly Thurston led Groton Legion Post #39 with two hits in four at bats.

Clark Legion tallied five hits. Mitchell Larson and Trey Huber each racked up multiple hits for Clark Legion.

Pitching By Alex Shuts Out American Legion Winner Colome Legion 18 U, Groton Legion Post #39 Takes The Win

Alex Morris had all the right stuff on June 27 for Groton Legion Post #39, allowing zero runs and besting American Legion Winner Colome Legion 18 by a score of 3-0.

The pitching was strong on both sides. Morris struck out 13, while Jacob Beckers sat down 12.

In the first inning, Groton Legion Post #39 got their offense started. Groton Legion Post #39 scored one run when Morris singled.

One bright spot for American Legion Winner Colome Legion 18 u was a single by Colby Kaiser in the second inning.

Morris led the Groton Legion Post #39 to victory on the hill. He allowed two hits and zero runs over seven innings, striking out 13 and walking one.

Beckers took the loss for American Legion Winner Colome Legion 18 u. He allowed five hits and three runs over seven innings, striking out 12.

Garret Schroeder, Chandler Larson, Morris, Wyatt Locke, and Connor Thaler each collected one hit to lead Groton Legion Post #39.

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Groton Jr. Teeners Overcomes Webster 14u

In Face Of Early 4-Run Inning

Groton Jr. Teeners weathered a push by Webster 14u in the fourth inning where Groton Jr. Teeners coughed up four runs, but Groton Jr. Teeners still won 11-4 on June 19. Webster 14u's big inning was driven by walks by Matthew Mount, Kaden Kwasnewski, and Blaize Amdahl and by Carson Mount.

Groton Jr. Teeners got things moving in the first inning. Kaleb Hoover drove in two when he doubled.

Groton Jr. Teeners tallied three runs in the sixth inning. Groton Jr. Teeners big bats were led by Hoover, Logan Ringgenberg, and Dillon Abeln, who each had RBIs in the inning.

Hoover led things off on the pitcher's mound for Groton Jr. Teeners. He surrendered one run on zero hits over three innings, striking out eight.

Carter Williams led things off on the mound for Webster 14u. He lasted two innings, allowing four hits and five runs while striking out one. Amdahl threw four innings in relief out of the bullpen.

Groton Jr. Teeners racked up nine hits. Bradin Althoff, Ryan Groeblichhoff, Colby Dunker, and Hoover each collected multiple hits for Groton Jr. Teeners. Hoover, Dunker, Groeblichhoff, and Althoff each managed two hits to lead Groton Jr. Teeners. Groton Jr. Teeners didn't commit a single error in the field. Groeblichhoff had 15 chances in the field, the most on the team.

Colby Dunker Drives In Four To Groton Jr. Teeners Victory Over Webster 14u

Colby Dunker was bad news for opposing pitchers on June 19, driving in four on three hits to lead Groton Jr. Teeners past Webster 14u 16-4 on Friday. Dunker drove in runs on a double in the first, a triple in the second, and a double in the fourth.

In the first inning, Webster 14u got their offense started. Gage Baumgarn singled on a 1-1 count, scoring one run.

Groton Jr. Teeners scored seven runs in the second inning. The offensive firepower by Groton Jr. Teeners was led by Ryan Groeblichhoff, Dunker, Dillon Abeln, Kaleb Hoover, and Kaleb Antonsen, all driving in runs in the frame.

Brevin Fliehs got the start for Groton Jr. Teeners. He allowed one hit and three runs over two innings, striking out two.

Jack Shoemaker started the game for Webster 14u. He allowed four hits and seven runs over one and one-third innings, striking out one. Matthew Mount and Jeron McCreary entered the game from the bullpen, throwing two innings and two-thirds of an inning respectively.

Dunker led Groton Jr. Teeners with three hits in three at bats. Groton Jr. Teeners didn't commit a single error in the field. Bradin Althoff had six chances in the field, the most on the team.

Two Pitchers Combine In No-Hitter As Groton Jr. Teeners Takes Victory Over Clark Teeners

Groton Jr. Teeners's two pitchers didn't allow a single hit, as Groton Jr. Teeners defeated Clark Teeners 12-1 on June 22. Colby Dunker struck out Jack Helkenny to get the last out of the game.

Groton Jr. Teeners got things started in the first inning. Groton Jr. Teeners scored one run when Kaleb Hoover doubled.

Bradin Althoff toed the rubber for Groton Jr. Teeners. He surrendered one run on zero hits over four innings, striking out nine.

Helkenny was on the pitcher's mound for Clark Teeners. He went one inning, allowing six runs on two hits and striking out two. Conner Mudgett threw six innings in relief out of the bullpen.

Groton Jr. Teeners totaled nine hits in the game. Dunker and Jacob Zak all managed multiple hits for Groton Jr. Teeners. Zak and Dunker each collected two hits to lead Groton Jr. Teeners. Groton Jr. Teeners

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was sure-handed and didn't commit a single error. Ryan Groeblichhoff made the most plays with 17. Dunker led Groton Jr. Teeners with three stolen bases, as they ran wild on the base paths with nine stolen bases.

Groton Jr. Teeners Defeats Clark Teeners In High-Scoring Affair

Both offenses were strong in Groton Jr. Teeners 16-10 victory over Clark Teeners .

Clark Teeners opened up an early lead in the first inning when an error scored one run for Clark Teeners.

After Groton Jr. Teeners scored five runs in the top of the second, Clark Teeners answered with five of their own. Groton Jr. Teeners scored when Dillon Abeln drew a walk, scoring one run, Logan Ringgenberg grounded out, scoring one run, and Kaleb Hoover singled on a 3-2 count, scoring one run. Clark Teeners then answered when an error scored one run for Clark Teeners, Conner Mudgett drew a walk, scoring one run, and Mason McElhone singled on a 3-2 count, scoring two runs.

Groton Jr. Teeners took the lead for good with eight runs in the third inning. In the third Jacob Zak doubled on a 1-2 count, scoring two runs, Kaleb Antonsen doubled on a 1-2 count, scoring one run, Groton Jr. Teeners scored on a stolen base during Abeln's at bat. Then Abeln singled , an error scored one run for Groton Jr. Teeners, Teylor Diegel singled on a 1-2 count, scoring one run, Josh Kannegieter induced Hoover to hit into a fielder's choice, but one run scored, and Brevin Flihs singled on a 0-1 count, scoring one run.

Zak led things off on the pitcher's mound for Groton Jr. Teeners. He surrendered six runs on one hit over one inning, striking out two.

Tyson Huber was on the hill for Clark Teeners. He lasted two innings, allowing one hit and eight runs while striking out three. Kannegieter and Emmerson Larson entered the game as relief, throwing two and two-thirds innings and one-third of an inning respectively.

Zak, Antonsen, Flihs, Ringgenberg, Diegel, Hoover, and Abeln each collected one hit to lead Groton Jr. Teeners. Diegel led Groton Jr. Teeners with three stolen bases, as they ran wild on the base paths with 12 stolen bases.

Huber went 2-for-3 at the plate to lead Clark Teeners in hits.

Groton Jr. Teeners Defeats Milbank 14u On Heels Of Abeln's No-Hitter

Dillon Abeln was brilliant on the hill on June 24, as he threw a no-hitter to lead Groton Jr. Teeners past Milbank 14u 11-0.

Groton Jr. Teeners scored four runs in the fifth inning. The offensive firepower by Groton Jr. Teeners was led by Teylor Diegel, Ryan Groeblichhoff, and Brevin Flihs, all knocking in runs in the inning.

Abeln got the start for Groton Jr. Teeners. He surrendered zero runs on zero hits over five innings, striking out 11 and walking one.

Joe Schulte led things off on the pitcher's mound for Milbank 14u. He lasted four innings, allowing ten hits and seven runs while striking out nine and walking one.

Groton Jr. Teeners scattered 11 hits in the game. Kaleb Hoover and Groeblichhoff each collected multiple hits for Groton Jr. Teeners. Hoover went 3-for-3 at the plate to lead Groton Jr. Teeners in hits. Groton Jr. Teeners stole 11 bases during the game as four players stole more than one. Hoover led the way with three.

Three Pitchers Combine In No-Hitter As Groton Jr. Teeners Takes Victory Over Milbank 14u

Groton Jr. Teeners's three pitchers didn't allow a single hit, as Groton Jr. Teeners defeated Milbank 14u 14-2 on June 24. Teylor Diegel induced a groundout from Daniel Shelstad to get the last out of the game.

Groton Jr. Teeners secured the victory thanks to nine runs in the first inning. Kaleb Hoover, Bradin Althoff, Brevin Flihs, and Colby Dunker all moved runners across the plate with RBIs in the inning.

Groton Jr. Teeners got things started in the first inning when Hoover singled on a 0-1 count, scoring

one run.

Caden Mcinerney was on the pitcher's mound for Groton Jr. Teeners. He went one and one-third innings, allowing one run on zero hits and striking out two.

Khayri Bergman was on the hill for Milbank 14u. He lasted one inning, allowing nine hits and nine runs while striking out one. Josh Pederson threw three innings in relief.

Groton Jr. Teeners racked up 15 hits in the game. Althoff, Hoover, Ryan Groeblichhoff, Dunker, Logan Ringgenberg, and Flihs all managed multiple hits for Groton Jr. Teeners. Hoover and Althoff each managed three hits to lead Groton Jr. Teeners. Groton Jr. Teeners was sure-handed in the field and didn't commit a single error. Dunker had the most chances in the field with five.

Althoff Strong At The Plate As Groton Jr. Teeners Defeats Webster 14u

Bradin Althoff collected four hits in four at bats, as Groton Jr. Teeners defeated Webster 14u 28-7 on June 25. Althoff singled in the first, singled in the second, singled in the third, and singled in the third.

Webster 14u scored four runs in the third inning, but Groton Jr. Teeners still managed to pull out the victory. Trey Donse and Taten Kurkowski all moved runners across the plate with RBIs in the inning.

Groton Jr. Teeners put up 16 runs in the third inning. Groton Jr. Teeners big bats were led by Kaleb Antonsen, Teylor Diegel, Colby Dunker, Brevin Flihs, Logan Ringgenberg, and Dillon Abeln, who all drove in runs.

Braxton Imrie led things off on the mound for Groton Jr. Teeners. He allowed six hits and seven runs over two innings, striking out three.

Brent Bearman was on the mound for Webster 14u. He allowed six runs on three hits. Carter Williams and Kurkowski entered the game as relief, throwing two and a third innings and two-thirds of an inning respectively.

Groton Jr. Teeners racked up 21 hits. Althoff, Ringgenberg, Ryan Groeblichhoff, Antonsen, Abeln, Dunker, and Flihs all had multiple hits for Groton Jr. Teeners. Ringgenberg and Althoff each managed four hits to lead Groton Jr. Teeners. Groton Jr. Teeners was sure-handed in the field and didn't commit a single error. Althoff had the most chances in the field with five.

Blaize Amdahl went 2-for-2 at the plate to lead Webster 14u in hits.

Groton Jr. Teeners Victorious Webster 14u Thanks To Second Inning Boost

Groton Jr. Teeners scored seven runs in the second on its way to a 12-1 victory over Webster 14u on June 25. The offensive onslaught came from walks by Kaleb Hoover and Kaleb Antonsen, singles by Bradin Althoff and Logan Ringgenberg, and a double by Korbin Kucker.

Groton Jr. Teeners tallied seven runs in the second inning. Hoover, Althoff, Antonsen, Ringgenberg, and Kucker each had RBIs in the big inning.

Jacob Zak led things off on the hill for Groton Jr. Teeners. He lasted two innings, allowing one hit and one run while striking out one.

Taten Kurkowski started the game for Webster 14u. He went one inning, allowing seven runs on three hits and striking out one. Sheldon Schmig threw two innings in relief out of the bullpen.

Groton Jr. Teeners racked up eight hits in the game. Althoff and Ringgenberg all managed multiple hits for Groton Jr. Teeners. Ringgenberg and Althoff each managed two hits to lead Groton Jr. Teeners. Groton Jr. Teeners stole seven bases during the game as two players stole more than one. Kucker led the way with two. Groton Jr. Teeners didn't commit a single error in the field. Dillon Abeln had three chances in the field, the most on the team.

Webster 14u didn't commit a single error in the field. Brent Snaza had the most chances in the field with three.

Groton Jr. Teeners Grabs Lead In Fifth Inning For Victory Over Lake Norden

Groton Jr. Teeners nabbed the lead late in the game in a 5-1 victory over Lake Norden on June 27. The game was tied at one with Groton Jr. Teeners batting in the top of the fifth when Bradin Althoff singled on a 1-1 count, scoring one run.

Groton Jr. Teeners opened up scoring in the first inning, when Colby Dunker singled on a 2-2 count, scoring one run.

In the bottom of the first inning, Lake Norden tied things up at one. An error scored one run for Lake Norden.

Kaleb Hoover was on the mound for Groton Jr. Teeners. He went five innings, allowing one run on two hits and striking out eight.

Dawson Noem started the game for Lake Norden. He surrendered five runs on 12 hits over seven innings, striking out seven.

Groton Jr. Teeners racked up 12 hits in the game. Althoff, Dunker, Hoover, and Logan Ringgenberg all collected multiple hits for Groton Jr. Teeners. Dunker and Althoff each collected three hits to lead Groton Jr. Teeners.

Tyson Stevenson went 2-for-3 at the plate to lead Lake Norden in hits.

Groton Jr. Teeners Drops Game To Lake Norden After Late Score

June 27th's game against Lake Norden was a heartbreaker for Groton Jr. Teeners, as they lost the lead late in a 3-2 defeat. The game was tied at two with Lake Norden batting in the bottom of the fourth when Taylor Diegel threw a wild pitch allowing one run across the plate for Lake Norden.

The pitching was strong on both sides. Lake Norden pitchers struck out nine, while Groton Jr. Teeners sat down six.

Tyson Stevenson led things off on the mound for Lake Norden. He went five innings, allowing two runs on four hits and striking out nine.

Colby Dunker was on the mound for Groton Jr. Teeners. He allowed zero hits and zero runs over three innings, striking out four. Diegel threw one inning out of the bullpen.

Jacob Zak, Kaleb Hoover, Dunker, and Bradin Althoff each collected one hit to lead Groton Jr. Teeners.

Evan Stormo led Lake Norden with one hit in two at bats.

Groton Jr. Teeners Grabs Lead In Sixth Inning To Defeat W.I.N.

Groton Jr. Teeners nabbed the lead late in the game in a 14-8 victory over W.I.N. on June 28. The game was tied at six with Groton Jr. Teeners batting in the bottom of the sixth when Jacob Zak singled on a 1-2 count, scoring one run.

Both offenses were strong at the plate as Groton Jr. Teeners collected 13 hits and W.I.N. four in the high-scoring affair

W.I.N. got things started in the first inning when Jude Ortmeir homered on a 3-1 count, scoring two runs.

W.I.N. scored four runs in the fifth inning. W.I.N. big bats were led by Ortmeir and Chase Neiber, all driving in runs in the inning.

Bradin Althoff got the start for Groton Jr. Teeners. He surrendered six runs on four hits over five innings, striking out ten.

Gavin Lane led things off on the hill for W.I.N.. He allowed three hits and two runs over four innings, striking out one. Dawson Ward and Neiber entered the game from the bullpen, throwing one and one-third innings and two-thirds of an inning respectively.

Groton Jr. Teeners scattered 13 hits in the game. Althoff, Colby Dunker, Kaleb Hoover, and Brevin Fliehs all managed multiple hits for Groton Jr. Teeners. Fliehs, Hoover, Dunker, and Althoff each collected two

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hits to lead Groton Jr. Teeners. Groton Jr. Teeners stole seven bases during the game as two players stole more than one. Hoover led the way with two.

Ortmeir led W.I.N. with two hits in three at bats.

Four RBI Day For Hoover Brings In Win For Groton Jr. Teeners Over W.I.N.

Kaleb Hoover wasted no opportunities at the plate on June 28, driving in four on two hits to lead Groton Jr. Teeners past W.I.N. 12-4 on Sunday. Hoover drove in runs on a single in the first and a double in the third.

Groton Jr. Teeners earned the victory despite allowing W.I.N. to score four runs in the third inning. W.I.N.'s big inning was driven by walks by Tristan Gosch, Noah Fischbach, and Xavier Kadlec and by Chase Neiber.

Groton Jr. Teeners fired up the offense in the first inning, when Hoover singled on a 3-0 count, scoring two runs.

Taylor Diegel led things off on the pitcher's mound for Groton Jr. Teeners. He allowed four hits and four runs over two and two-thirds innings, striking out six.

Henry Williams was on the pitcher's mound for W.I.N.. He allowed eight hits and 12 runs over four innings, striking out four.

Groton Jr. Teeners collected eight hits on the day. Colby Dunker and Hoover each had multiple hits for Groton Jr. Teeners. Hoover and Dunker each collected two hits to lead Groton Jr. Teeners. Groton Jr. Teeners tore up the base paths, as two players stole at least two bases. Dunker led the way with three.

Renner Bruns led W.I.N. with two hits in three at bats.

Early Lead For Clark Traders Seals Fate For Northern Plains Groton Locke Electric

Northern Plains Groton Locke Electric watched the game slip away early and couldn't recover in a 15-0 loss to Clark Traders on May 31. Clark Traders scored on an error, an error, a single by Levi Sauder, an error, a double by Brent Griffith, and a home run by Zach Toben in the first inning.

The Northern Plains Groton Locke Electric struggled to put runs on the board and had a tough time defensively containing Clark Traders, giving up 15 runs.

Clark Traders opened up scoring in the first inning. An error scored one run for Clark Traders.

Jay Huber was the winning pitcher for Clark Traders. He lasted two innings, allowing zero hits and zero runs while striking out one and walking zero. Tyler Brinka threw three innings in relief out of the bullpen.

Aaron Severson took the loss for Northern Plains Groton Locke Electric. He allowed six hits and ten runs over one inning, striking out one.

Clark Traders racked up 11 hits on the day. Kyle Braun, Toben, and Lane Hovde each managed multiple hits for Clark Traders. Braun led Clark Traders with three hits in four at bats. Clark Traders was sure-handed in the field and didn't commit a single error. Grayson Florey had the most chances in the field with eight.

Northern Plains Groton Locke Electric's High Score Not Enough To Secure Win Against Lake Norden Lakers

Both Lake Norden Lakers and Northern Plains Groton Locke Electric had their offenses going on June 7, but Northern Plains Groton Locke Electric eventually succumbed 22-12 in the high-scoring affair.

The Northern Plains Groton Locke Electric struggled to put runs on the board and had a tough time defensively containing Lake Norden Lakers, giving up 22 runs.

Northern Plains Groton Locke Electric fired up the offense in the first inning, when Dylan Frey singled on a 1-1 count, scoring two runs.

Lake Norden Lakers took the lead for good with seven runs in the third inning. In the third Jordan King

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drew a walk, scoring one run, Nate Wicks drew a walk, scoring one run, Brant Gilbertson drew a walk, scoring one run, Tom Vener singled on a 3-2 count, scoring one run, and Asa Stiles singled on the first pitch of the at bat, scoring three runs.

Northern Plains Groton Locke Electric notched five runs in the fourth inning. Northern Plains Groton Locke Electric's big bats in the inning were led by a single by Carlos Camacho and a double by Jose Cisner.

Northern Plains Groton Locke Electric scattered 11 hits in the game. Frey, Camacho, and Spencer Locke each managed multiple hits for Northern Plains Groton Locke Electric. Frey led Northern Plains Groton Locke Electric with four hits in four at bats.

Lake Norden Lakers racked up 12 hits in the game. Vener, Jordan Johnson, and Mick Tulson all managed multiple hits for Lake Norden Lakers. Vener went 3-for-3 at the plate to lead Lake Norden Lakers in hits.

Lake Norden Lakers Captures Lead Early To Defeat Northern Plains Groton Locke Electric

Northern Plains Groton Locke Electric fell behind early and couldn't come back in a 5-4 loss to Lake Norden Lakers on June 7. Lake Norden Lakers scored on a walk by Mick Tulson, a groundout by Matt Stevenson, and a single by Jordan Johnson in the first inning.

Northern Plains Groton Locke Electric tallied three runs in the second inning.

Roniel Tejeda was on the hill for Northern Plains Groton Locke Electric. He lasted one inning, allowing one hit and three runs while striking out one.

Carlos Camacho went 1-for-1 at the plate to lead Northern Plains Groton Locke Electric in hits.

Johnson led Lake Norden Lakers with one hit in one at bats.

Northern Plains Groton Locke Electric Eke Out Six Hits, Not Enough To Best Northville Merchants

Northern Plains Groton Locke Electric fell 6-3 to Northville Merchants on June 14 despite out-hitting them six to five.

Northville Merchants pulled away for good with five runs in the fourth inning. In the fourth Clayton G singled on a 1-2 count, scoring one run, Clayton Nutting doubled on the first pitch of the at bat, scoring two runs, and Brady Feidler singled on a 0-1 count, scoring one run.

Caleb Schentzel was on the pitcher's mound for Northville Merchants. He went four and two-thirds innings, allowing three runs on five hits and striking out five.

Roniel Tejeda led things off on the pitcher's mound for Northern Plains Groton Locke Electric. He allowed two hits and five runs over three and a third innings, striking out seven. Spencer Knecht threw two and two-thirds innings out of the bullpen.

Heath Giedt led Northern Plains Groton Locke Electric with two hits in four at bats. Northern Plains Groton Locke Electric didn't commit a single error in the field. Carlos Camacho had the most chances in the field with nine.

G went 2-for-4 at the plate to lead Northville Merchants in hits.

Northern Plains Groton Locke Electric Pitches Well, But Can't Find Enough Runs In Loss To Northville Merchants

Both teams were strong on the hill on June 14, but Northville Merchants was just a little bit stronger at the plate in a victory over Northern Plains Groton Locke Electric on Sunday. Spencer Knecht started the game for Northern Plains Groton Locke Electric and recorded six outs.

One bright spot for Northern Plains Groton Locke Electric was a single by Josh Heupel in the second inning.

Bryan Weber led things off on the pitcher's mound for Northville Merchants. He lasted five innings, allowing three hits and zero runs while striking out two and walking zero.

Knecht was on the mound for Northern Plains Groton Locke Electric. He lasted two innings, allowing zero hits and zero runs while striking out three and walking one. Anthony Sippel threw two innings out

of the bullpen.

Dylan Frey, Roniel Tejeda, and Heupel all had one hit to lead Northern Plains Groton Locke Electric. Northern Plains Groton Locke Electric didn't commit a single error in the field. Cody Hanson had the most chances in the field with five.

Northville Merchants was sure-handed in the field and didn't commit a single error. Ryan Hoffman had the most chances in the field with five.

Northern Plains Groton Locke Electric Loses Lead Early In Defeat

Northern Plains Groton Locke Electric watched the game slip away early and couldn't recover in a 15-1 loss to Redfield Pheasants on June 28. Redfield Pheasants scored on a walk by Nate Binger and a single by Kevin Krumm in the second inning.

The Northern Plains Groton Locke Electric struggled to put runs on the board and had a tough time defensively containing Redfield Pheasants, giving up 15 runs.

In the second inning, Redfield Pheasants got their offense started. Nate Binger drew a walk, scoring one run.

Redfield Pheasants scored five runs in the fourth inning. Redfield Pheasants's big inning was driven by singles by Kaleb Rogers and Krumm and a walk by Nate Binger.

Keith Jandel was the winning pitcher for Redfield Pheasants. He allowed six hits and one run over four innings, striking out five. Elliot Millar threw three innings in relief out of the bullpen.

Roniel Tejeda took the loss for Northern Plains Groton Locke Electric. He surrendered five runs on four hits over three innings, striking out eight.

Northern Plains Groton Locke Electric totaled eight hits. Carlos Camacho and Dylan Frey all managed multiple hits for Northern Plains Groton Locke Electric. Frey and Camacho each collected two hits to lead Northern Plains Groton Locke Electric.

Redfield Pheasants collected 12 hits. Krumm, Elliot Millar, Kaleb Rogers, and Christian Christianson each had multiple hits for Redfield Pheasants. Krumm led Redfield Pheasants with three hits in five at bats.

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The Groton Senior Citizens group have planted flowers around the Groton Community Center. The members would like to say many thanks to Thrivent Financial Services for their gift to buy the flowers. It is a generous gift that also adds to the beauty of our community. Pictured are Ruby Donovan, president of the Groton Senior Citizens, and Ella Johnson, past president of the group. (Photo by Tina Kosel)

Covid-19 Update: by Marie Miller

It just keeps getting worse. Some of this could be Monday troubles, but things took a turn again today. We're now at 2,651,600 cases in the US. We added 47,900 today, second highest ever—and you will recall the worst was just a couple of days ago. Two weeks ago today, the new case number was just over half of today's number. This is a 1.8% increase, also a bump from yesterday's 1.6%. I am seeing 35 states whose 14-day trend is increasing, three more than yesterday; 15 states whose rate of increase is fairly stable; and only three states left with decreasing trends, four less than yesterday.

There have been 127,425 reported deaths in the US; this is a huge increase. Yesterday's new death number was 334; today we're at 1287, which represents just about tripled. This is a 1% increase in total deaths. I am seriously hoping this is a Monday catch-up thing after a slow reporting weekend; but this is quite a bump. I've been looking for news a state did a statistical adjustment that would account for it, but haven't found anything yet. If I see news like that later, I'll update tomorrow. In the meanwhile, this looks bad.

We have eight states with record numbers of new cases, Alaska, California, Idaho, Arizona, Oklahoma, Texas, Georgia, and South Carolina. Forty percent of today's new cases come from just three states, Arizona, California, and Texas. And now, we're seeing surges in the Midwest where things had calmed down over the past few weeks. Kansas is moving back toward its peak levels, parts of Wisconsin are setting records, and cases in the counties with Cincinnati and Cleveland have been doubling, even as positivity rates are rising. Forty-five states reported seven-day averages higher than they were a week ago. This is not a good direction.

We have more states increasing restrictions. For example, the tristate group of New York, New Jersey, and Connecticut doubled the number of states on their quarantine list, and Arizona has delayed school starting dates for in-person education. Several states have now mandated masks in public. Those pausing or rolling back reopening plans and/or imposing new restrictions include Arizona, Arkansas, California, Colorado, Delaware, Florida, Idaho, Kansas, Maine, Michigan, Nevada, New Mexico, North Carolina, Louisiana, Tennessee, Texas, Utah, Virginia, and Washington.

A collection of epidemiologists, health and public policy experts, and technologists calls itself CovidAct Now, and this group has created a model to assess progress in the efforts to deal with this pandemic. This tool uses four indicators in its assessment:

(1) R_e : You will recall this is reproduction number, the number of people to whom each case, on average, transmits the infection; this number must be below 1 to see reduction in cases, so this tells us whether cases are decreasing over time. Using a 14-day weighted average and recognizing data less than a week old may be subject to revision, this model classifies R_e as low below 0.9, medium 0.9-1.1, high 1.1-1.4, and critical over 1.4.

(2) Test positivity rate: The percentage of Covid-19 tests that come back positive. This tells us whether testing is widespread enough to identify new cases. Based on WHO recommendation that positivity should be below 10% and data showing most successful control is achieved at 3% rates or less, this model classifies positivity rate as low when below 3%, medium 3-10%, high 10- 20%, and critical above 20%.

(3) ICU headroom used: The percentage of ICU beds available for Covid-19 patients which are already

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occupied by those patients. This tells us whether hospitals have capacity to treat a surge of patients. Based on a recommendation that hospitals maintain enough ICU capacity to double the number of Covid-19 patients, this model classifies headroom used as low when below 50%, medium 50-60%, high 60-70%, and critical above 70%.

(4) Adequate contact tracing: The percentage of new infections that can be traced within 48 hours. This tells us whether most new cases are being found and isolated before they spread. Based on the estimate that 5 tracers are needed per new case as well as fast testing, this model classifies risk as low when over 90% of infections can be traced, medium 20-90%, high 7-20%, and critical under 7%.

After classifying each state on these four parameters, they then project future hospitalizations and 30-day outcomes in terms of hospital overload date, percentage of population infected, and number of deaths. Using this tool, only four states are assessed as "On track to contain COVID." These are New York, Massachusetts, Connecticut, and New Jersey. Twenty-two states are listed with "Controlled disease growth." Nineteen are "At risk." These are Alaska, Oregon, Montana, Idaho, Wyoming, Nevada, Utah, Kansas, Oklahoma, Texas, Iowa, Illinois, Arkansas, Louisiana, Tennessee, Mississippi, Georgia, Ohio, and Pennsylvania. Five states are listed having "Active or imminent outbreak;" these are Arizona, Missouri, Alabama, South Carolina, and Florida.

It's fascinating to rummage around on this website, at least for us nerdy types; I wasted way too much time there this morning. If you're interested in checking out your state—or any other, hit up the website at covidactnow.org, and have a look. There are lots of graphical depictions showing historical trends for each parameter going back several months, along with the 30-day projections. This is a rich source of information for those seeking to understand trends in a state. And there is risk-level assessment for at least some counties in each state; there's a color-coded map showing counties and available individual data for selected counties.

Dr. Anne Schuchat, principal deputy director of the CDC was interviewed Monday, and she offered a fairly bleak assessment of our current situation in the US, saying, "We're not in the situation of New Zealand or Singapore or Korea where . . . they can keep things under control. We have way too much virus across the country for that right now." She added, "I think there was a lot of wishful thinking around the country that, 'Hey it's summer. Everything's going to be fine; we're over this.' And we are not even beginning to be over this."

It seems to me that the geographical expanse of the US and the fact that efforts are patchwork, state-by-state, rather than coordinated at the federal level has contributed greatly to the crisis that we're in, along with, frankly, our stubborn insistence on our rights and our freedom—to walk around spreading infection wherever we go instead of suffering the least inconvenience or frustration in order to care for our fellow citizens. I find myself doubting that this is exactly what the Founders intended when they drew up the Bill of Rights.

Schuchat offered this assessment of our situation: "This is really the beginning."

I want you to really think about that; we're five months in, more than 127,000 of our fellow Americans have died, thousands more are sick and hospitalized, and "This is really the beginning." Unless we can get our act together to operate collectively for the common good, something else the Founders talked a lot about, things are going to get a whole lot worse before they get better. Partying 'til we drop and waiting for science to swoop in and save us isn't really working at the moment. It might be time for some personal sacrifice for the common good. I seriously wonder whether we're up to that. It does not feel like we are.

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So, besides taking some personal responsibility, what else needs to happen if we're not going to simply sit around waiting and praying for a vaccine (i.e. science) to swoop in and save us? One thing we've talked about before is testing. A lot more testing. A team of researchers at Harvard's Global Health Institute have analyzed testing in each state and concluded only nine states are doing enough testing and that nationwide we are doing less than half the testing we need just to keep things from getting out of control, never mind reducing the outbreak.

They explain there are two goals. The first is what's called mitigation, according to Ashish Jha, director of the Institute, "keeping the size of current outbreaks from growing." That means things don't get better, but they don't get worse either. We know we're at that point when test positivity stays below 10%. Thirty-two states fall short of this goal, and those are the states where we are seeing spikes in infections. A lot of the problems we're facing now are being blamed on reopening; but that's really only half of the picture. You can reopen if you know where your infections are. Our issue is that we reopened states when we hadn't met testing goals, i.e., we did not know where our infections were or even how many we had, and now we're reaping the result of that.

The second goal is suppression, "greatly reducing new infections and keeping them low enough to safely open public life again." This is the point at which the economy starts to revive because "people will have confidence going out to restaurants and bars and opening up schools without having large outbreaks and without having to shut down again," according to Jha. Economic analyses indicate that simply reopening won't solve our economic problems; for that, people need to actually go to the reopened businesses and buy things, and we're not seeing a lot of willingness to do that yet. People are not willing because we haven't brought this pandemic under control yet. To achieve this, you need not only adequate testing—in the neighborhood of eight times current rates, but also contact tracing so people who are positive can quarantine to prevent them spreading infection, along with masking, social distancing, and hand hygiene. Of course, we face serious shortages of test kits and the reagents (chemicals) to run them in the labs, inadequate tracing in many states, and determined refusal by the populace to take simple precautions, so it's looking very much like a three-strikes situation to me.

And as for that refusal, let's take the example of California as a case in point. California was the most proactive state in the nation and, even though it is also the most populous, was well down the list in total numbers of Covid-19 cases. Their lockdown suppressed outbreaks effectively. But then people grew impatient, agitating for more freedom—which feeling I totally get, by the way. I haven't been anywhere but the grocery store and visiting family by standing on their lawns and hollering back and forth since the first week in March—nearly four months. In response to the pressure—and a pile of impending lawsuits (of the "you're not the boss of me" variety), reopening decisions were placed in the hands of local officials—and infections surged out of control.

Analysis by public health experts finds that "the ultimate reasons for the surge lie in the millions of individual decisions made across the vast state." Mayor Eric Garcetti of Los Angeles said, "A lot of people didn't stick with the plan. The idea was, we would do a move, wait three weeks, check the impact, take the next move," but instead, the reopening "was like a tidal wave—one move led to the next, led to the next, led to the next."

State Senator Richard Pan, a physician, explained, "How this disease spreads is all about the margins. All it takes is, like, 5 percent more people doing more high-risk behavior to change its direction." He adds, "I'm frustrated because it's not that we don't know what to do. We know what to do. We're just not doing it." I don't think California is alone in this phenomenon; they're just paying more for it because there are so many people and such large cities there.

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If this sounds like our earlier conversation(s) redux, then you're starting to get the picture. This all keeps coming back to the same issues: test kits and reagents in the right hands so testing can be sufficient in quantity and targeted at high-risk settings, tracing and isolation/quarantine, individual precautions. While there have been successes in individual localities and states, the fact is people travel around the US from state to state, so patchwork efforts are never going to be completely successful; and nationwide we are failing at all three. What we lack is a coordinated federal response and the willingness on the part of individuals to put the collective welfare above other considerations. We're not even doing enough to achieve mitigation, so suppression is but a distant fantasy for us. This is the stuff that keeps me up at night.

In the category of the blindingly obvious, new research from Goldman Sachs is linking economic outcomes to pandemic outcomes. The work is suggesting a national mandate requiring face coverings in public would prevent 5% in GDP loss projected to result from the growth in case numbers in the US. They found masks have a significant impact on outcomes and that the mandate would significantly affect usage. This impact on our economy amounts to around \$1 trillion. The analysis says, "If a face mask mandate meaningfully lowers coronavirus infections, it could be valuable not only from a public health perspective but also from an economic perspective because it could substitute for renewed lockdowns that would otherwise hit GDP."

The Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions met today to discuss reopening of schools and offices. Several experts testified, including Dr. Anthony Fauci, director of the National Institute for Allergy and Infectious Diseases; Dr. Robert Redfield, CDC director; Dr. Stephen Hahn, FDA commissioner; and Adm. Brett Giroir, assistant secretary for health at HHS. They covered a lot of ground, much of it newsworthy.

Fauci said that, although he cannot predict exactly how many infections and deaths will occur, "it's going to be very disturbing." He mentioned a point we talked about above. "When you have an outbreak in one part of the country, even though in other parts of the country they're doing well, they are vulnerable. We can't just focus on those areas that are having the surge. It puts the entire country at risk," adding, "I would not be surprised if we go up to 100,000 a day if this does not turn around."

He also said, "There's no doubt that wearing masks protects you. Anything that furthers the use of masks . . . I am thoroughly in favor of." And Redfield added that universal use of masks is "the most important thing we can do."

They talked about the recent surges in various parts of the country. Fauci said it's clear guidelines for safe reopening were "skipped over," and also that, even where states followed these guidelines, people seem to be taking an "all or nothing" approach, going from lockdowns to cramming themselves into bars on a Saturday night. He says, "I think we need to emphasize the responsibility we have both as individuals and as part of a societal effort to ending the epidemic." Giroir amplified that point, saying, "We must take personal responsibility and be disciplined about our own behavior. Maintain physical distancing, wear a face covering whenever you can't physically distance, wash your hands, stay at home if you feel sick."

Fauci echoed his usual caution about the potential for a vaccine, mentioning again that there is "no guarantee" we're going to develop one that is "safe and effective," but also saying, as he has before, he is "cautiously optimistic" we will have a good idea whether the current candidates are safe and effective by the beginning of next year. Redfield added that it will be critical to use "all of our scientific knowledge, our regulatory framework" to ensure safety so that public confidence in vaccination is maintained.

They talked about reopening schools. Fauci recommended local officials make their decisions based on

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the prevalence of infection in their school districts. He is, in general, supportive of getting children back into schools, but recommends school districts consider creative measures to do that safely like schedule modification. (I will add, although the experts did not address this as far as I know, that schools should also give attention to the risk status of employees, all of whom are older than the students and some of whom have co-morbidities that place them at risk. While schools are—and should be—all about kids, they don't run without staff.)

Hahn discussed potential treatments, noting that remdesivir has reduced days of hospitalization, that convalescent plasma has been shown to be safe, noting over 20,000 patients have received it so far. He also discussed monoclonal antibody treatments, telling the Senators he hopes we will have good indications of their "effectiveness and safety" by fall at the latest. We have discussed all of these treatments, some of them many times, so we've laid out how each of them works.

They also answered questions about airline, bus, and train safety. The experts expressed concern about social distancing on these forms of transportation, also saying face coverings would be important if social distancing is not possible, but did not commit to regulation on either point, even when asked specifically about that.

After a career in higher education, an item on my brain's agenda these days is colleges' and universities' reopening plans. Institutions are sort of all over the place on just where they are in the planning process, and those with plans are all over the place on just how they intend to handle this unprecedented situation. Some are reducing class size and moving some courses to online delivery; many are requiring face masks and increasing plans for disinfection and cleaning. Some are looking at ending the fall semester early and cancelling breaks to limit travel back and forth from far-flung homes to campus. How likely are these measures to prevent outbreaks?

According to Dave Blake from Augusta University's Department of Neuroscience and Regenerative Medicine, "The expectation would be that COVID-19 will run through campuses like wildfire. That's probably what's going to happen if you don't have really good surveillance testing procedures in place. And I don't see universities setting those up in a way to do that and be effective."

Well, OK then.

Dr. David Fajgenbaum teaches at the University of Pennsylvania Perelman School of Medicine, and he has Castleman disease, a rare condition that causes cytokine storms. It nearly killed him. Then six years ago, as a medical student, he created a collaborative way to organize medical research aimed at finding and repurposing old drugs to treat new conditions. It turned out this effort identified a drug used to suppress rejection reactions in kidney transplant patients which was also effective in treating his disease. It saved his life, and since then he has worked at identifying other drugs that can be repurposed for other conditions.

The FDA launched a new app for its website in December which aims to help physicians identify drugs they can repurpose in the same way to treat medical conditions for which they were not intended. Dr Fajgenbaum's work dovetails neatly with that effort, and in fact, he gave the keynote at the launch—which occurred just in time to put their methods to work on the current pandemic.

His lab has hit the road running, recruiting dozens of other scientists to help them review all of the published work on drugs being used all around the world to treat Covid-19. They published their analysis and made their data available in an open database called the Covid-19 Registry of Off-label & New Agents (CORONA – clever, huh?). The purpose of the database is to pull all available information together in one

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place to inform treatment decisions and the design of clinical trials, and the lab continues to compile new research and get it into the database too. Their work has led to the emergence of a number of potential treatments, including dexamethasone, a drug we discussed recently here.

This has to qualify as a serious case of turning lemons into lemonade. Guy almost dies, figures out how to save himself, and thus lives long enough to apply the same talents to maybe saving thousands of strangers in a worldwide crisis. Pretty good life's work so far for a guy in his 30s. This is the sort of thing that makes me impatient with people who go on and on about what's wrong with kids these days.

For the rest of us, even if we're not whiz-bang medical researchers, there are ways we each can pitch in too. Look around—really look. And when you see a need, meet a need. No research required.

Stay well. We'll talk again.

Health Department Awards \$500,000 For Mosquito Control

PIERRE, S.D. – More than 200 South Dakota cities, counties and tribes will share in \$500,000 in grants intended to control mosquitoes and prevent West Nile virus (WNV), the Department of Health announced today.

"South Dakota has a disproportionately high number of WNV cases when compared to other states. Local mosquito control efforts play a vital role in protecting our communities," said Bill Chalcraft, administrator of public health preparedness and response for the Department of Health.

All applying communities received funding, with grants ranging from \$500 to \$20,000. Grant awards were based on the population of the applying jurisdiction and its history of human WNV cases through 2019.

Since its first human WNV case in 2001, the state has reported 2,612 human cases and 46 deaths. Every county has reported cases.

Including this latest round of grants, the state has provided local mosquito control programs with more than \$8.5 million in support, in either direct grant funding or control chemicals, since the virus emerged in South Dakota. Groton is one of many communities in South Dakota being awarded

Local communities receiving grants are: Aberdeen, \$20,000; Andover, \$500; Bath Sanitary District, \$2,157; Bristol, \$718; Britton, \$6,647; Brown County, \$15,000; Claremont, \$1,836; Columbia, \$876; Conde, \$876; Frederick, \$1,357; Groton, \$4,730; Hecla, \$1,837; Langford, \$1,838; Pierpont, \$1,196; Redfield, \$4,898; Roslyn, \$877; Stratford, \$1,676; Warner, \$1,680; Webster, \$3,614; Westport, \$1,996.

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Area COVID-19 Cases

	July 1
Minnesota	36,303
Nebraska	19,177
Montana	967
Colorado	32,715
Wyoming	1184
North Dakota	3576
South Dakota	6764
United States	2,629,372
US Deaths	127,322

Minnesota	+442
Nebraska	+135
Montana	+48
Colorado	+204
Wyoming	+33
North Dakota	+37
South Dakota	+48
United States	+46,475
US Deaths	+1149

	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	+34,754
US Deaths	+823	+754	+2,439	+624	+500	+260	+374

* 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 30th COVID-19 UPDATE

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from State Health Lab Reports

The number of active cases in South Dakota dropped by six more today with the total at 801. There were more recovered cases in the state than positive ones, resulting in an increase in the percent recovered to 86.8 percent.

You will not see Brown County listed on the county list for the first time in a very, very long time. It was basically all goose eggs for Brown County with no positive, no recovered, no increase in hospitalization.

One of the positive cases in Ziebach County was reassigned so that county returns to the fully recovered list.

Brown County:

Active Cases: 0 (22)
Recovered: 0 (318)
Total Positive: 0 (342)
Ever Hospitalized: 0 (18)
Deaths: 2
Negative Tests: +36 (2970)
Percent Recovered: 93.0% (No Change)

South Dakota:

Positive: +48 (6764 total)
Negative: +583 (73324 total)
Hospitalized: +9 (666 total). 62 currently hospitalized (8 less than yesterday)
Deaths: 0 (91 total)
Recovered: +54 (5872) total)
Active Cases: -6 (801)
Percent Recovered: 86.8% up .2

Counties with no positive cases report the following negative tests: Butte +7 (465), Campbell +1 (63), Haakon +1 (227), Harding 39, Jones +1 (30), Perkins +2 (86), Potter 171, unassigned -547 (4188).

Beadle: +1 positive, +4 recovered (448 of 524 recovered)
Bennett: -1 positive, +1 recovered (3 of 4 recovered)
Brookings: +1 positive (47 of 62 recovered)
Brule: +3 positive, +1 recovered (13 of 23 recovered)
Charles Mix: +7 positive, +1 recovered (27 of 82 recovered)
Clark: +1 positive, +1 recovered (11 of 15 recovered)
Clay: +2 positive, +3 recovered (72 of 82 recovered)
Codington: +2 positive (47 of 63 recovered)
Corson: +1 positive (14 of 18 recovered)
Davison: +1 positive, +2 recovered (33 of 41 recovered)
Dewey: +1 recovered (1 of 4 recovered)
Hughes: +3 positive (33 of 55 recovered)
Hutchinson: +1 recovered (10 of 12 recovered)
Kingsbury: +2 recovered (5 of 6 recovered)
Lawrence: +1 recovered (16 of 19 recovered)
Lincoln: +2 positive, +2 recovered (314 of 343 recovered)

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Lyman: +3 positive, +2 recovered (39 of 62 recovered)
 Meade: +1 positive (38 of 48 recovered)
 Miner: +1 recovered (4 of 9 recovered)
 Minnehaha: +10 positive, +10 recovered (3342 of 3610 recovered)
 Moody: +1 positive (19 of 22 recovered)
 Oglala Lakota: +3 recovered (48 of 85 recovered)
 Pennington: +5 positive, +13 recovered (381 of 518 recovered)
 Roberts: +2 positive, +1 recovered (47 of 41 recovered)
 Spink: +2 recovered (8 of 11 recovered)
 Union: +2 positive (109 of 123 recovered)
 Walworth: +3 positive (5 of 12 recovered)
 Yankton: +1 positive, +2 recovered (64 of 77 recovered)
 Ziebach: -1 positive (2 of 2 recovered)

Fully recovered from positive cases (Gained Ziebach): 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, Ziebach 2-2.

The NDDoH & private labs report 1,709 completed tests today for COVID-19 with 38 new positive cases, bringing the statewide total to 3,576. NDDoH reports no new deaths.

State & private labs have reported 182,283 total completed tests.
 3,195 ND patients are recovered.

RACE/ETHNICITY OF SOUTH DAKOTA COVID-19 CASES

Race/Ethnicity	# of Cases	% of Cases
Asian, Non-Hispanic	702	10%
Black, Non-Hispanic	971	14%
Hispanic	1086	16%
Native American, Non-Hispanic	991	15%
Other	705	10%
White, Non-Hispanic	2309	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	281
Beadle	524	448	1412
Bennett	4	3	414
Bon Homme	11	11	577
Brookings	62	47	1674
Brown	342	318	2970
Brule	23	13	465
Buffalo	71	56	450
Butte	0	0	465
Campbell	0	0	63
Charles Mix	82	27	647
Clark	15	11	319
Clay	82	72	939
Codington	63	47	1849
Corson	18	14	141
Custer	8	4	525
Davison	41	33	1590
Day	16	13	401
Deuel	3	1	288
Dewey	4	1	838
Douglas	4	4	318
Edmunds	7	5	298
Fall River	12	5	706
Faulk	23	17	118
Grant	13	13	528
Gregory	3	1	228
Haakon	0	0	227
Hamlin	11	9	443
Hand	7	6	184
Hanson	7	4	131
Harding	0	0	39
Hughes	55	33	1100
Hutchinson	12	10	679

Hyde	3	3	93
Jackson	6	2	333
Jerauld	39	35	231
Jones	0	0	30
Kingsbury	6	5	405
Lake	21	16	667
Lawrence	19	16	1305
Lincoln	343	314	4304
Lyman	62	39	661
Marshall	5	4	287
McCook	10	6	482
McPherson	4	3	161
Meade	48	38	1255
Mellette	3	3	193
Miner	9	4	189
Minnehaha	3610	3342	19479
Moody	22	19	467
Oglala Lakota	85	48	2082
Pennington	518	381	6500
Perkins	0	0	86
Potter	0	0	171
Roberts	47	41	1000
Sanborn	12	12	171
Spink	11	8	878
Stanley	12	12	137
Sully	1	1	45
Todd	57	48	927
Tripp	16	10	392
Turner	24	23	668
Union	123	109	1347
Walworth	12	5	390
Yankton	77	64	2353
Ziebach	2	2	140
Unassigned****	0	0	4188

SEX OF SOUTH DAKOTA COVID-19 CASES

Sex	# of Cases	# of Deaths
Female	3265	51
Male	3499	40

Age Range	# of Cases	# of Deaths
0-19 years	698	0
20-29 years	1394	1
30-39 years	1452	3
40-49 years	1090	6
50-59 years	1071	12
60-69 years	622	15
70-79 years	237	12
80+ years	200	42

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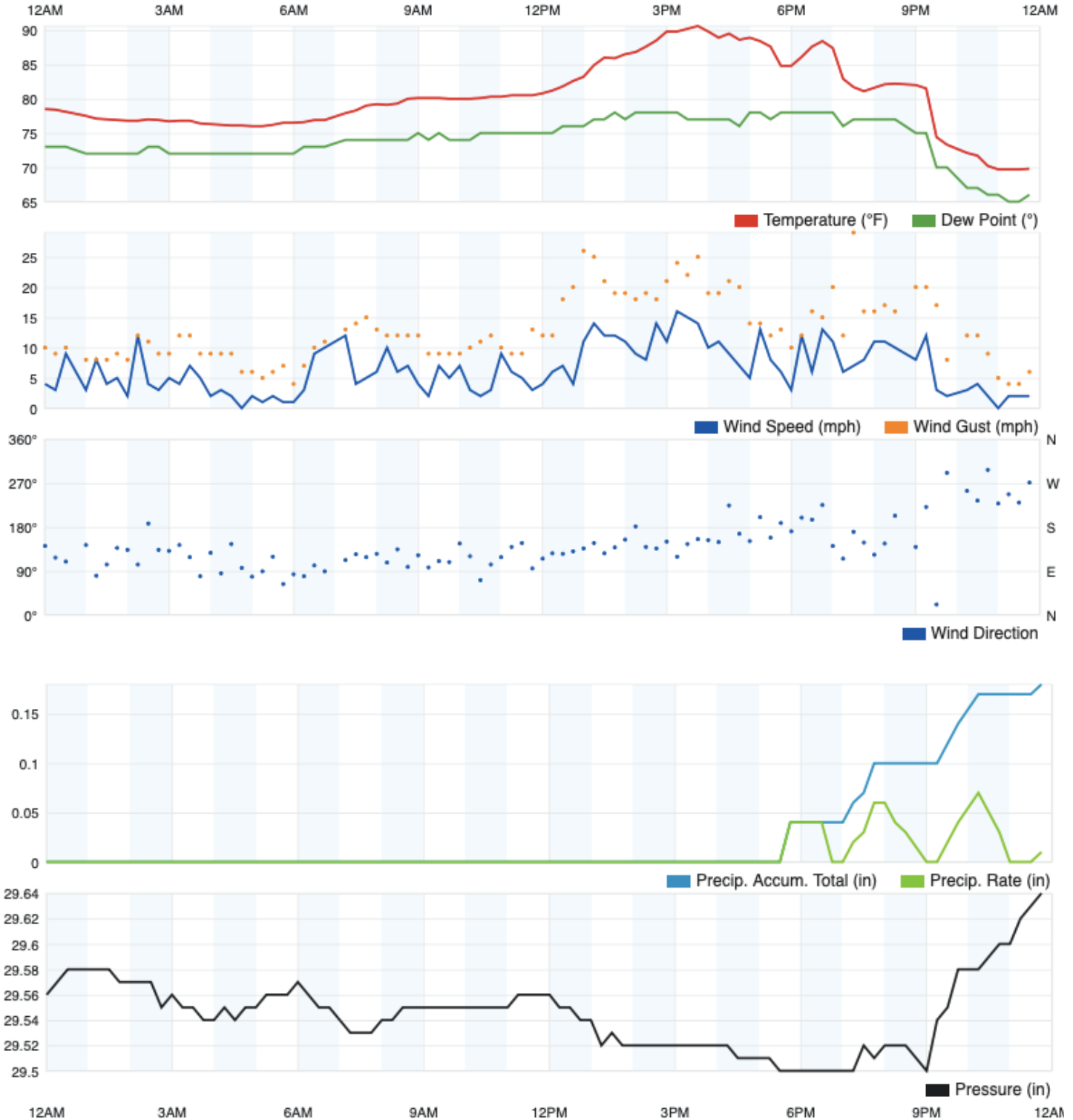
Baseball Schedule

Date	Team	Opponent	Location	Time
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

Tonight

Thursday

Thursday
Night

Friday



Becoming
Sunny

Clear

Hot

Chance
T-storms

Mostly Sunny
then Slight
Chance
T-storms


High: 87 °F

Low: 65 °F

High: 93 °F

Low: 69 °F

High: 91 °F

Today	Thursday
Sunny	Sunny
Less Humid	Breezy 15-25 mph
	Late Afternoon Storms Possible West of the Missouri River
Highs: Mid to Upper 80s	Highs: Upper 80s, Low 90s

National Weather Service
Aberdeen, SD
weather.gov/abr
Graphic Created
7/1/2020 4:20 AM

Today will feature sunny skies along with less humid conditions. High temperatures will reach the mid to upper 80s. Increasing southerly winds on Thursday will bring humidity back into the region. There is also the potential for thunderstorms in central South Dakota during the late afternoon hours.

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Today in Weather History

July 1, 1928: A powerful, estimated F4 tornado moved southeast from 6 miles west of Miller, Hand County, destroying farms near the start of the path. All buildings were leveled to the ground, including two homes. A checkbook from one residence was found 10 miles away. Estimated property damaged was set at \$50,000.

July 1, 1955: An estimated F2 tornado moved northeast near Bowdle. Two barns were destroyed. A small girl and a pony were reportedly carried a quarter mile without injury. A tornado was also spotted in Emmons County in North Dakota, causing \$10,000 worth of damage.

July 1, 2005: Torrential rains of three to seven inches fell across far eastern Brown, western and northern Day, and most of Marshall Counties in late June causing widespread flooding. The flood waters slowly receded through July 10th. Many township roads and highways were flooded along with thousands of acres of cropland. Water surrounded several homes resulting in people being rescued. Some of the houses were flooded. Many bridges were damaged, and roads and culverts were washed out. In Day County, 30 roads were washed out, and 15 bridges needed repairs.

July 1, 2006: With continued little or no rainfall along with much above average temperatures, a drought expanded and intensified through July across central and north central South Dakota. Severe (D2) to an extreme (D3) drought early in July worsened to an extreme (D3) to exceptional (D4) across all of the areas by the middle of July and remained there until the end of the month. Rainfall was 1.50 inches to 2.25 inches below average for the month and from 7 to 8 inches below average for the year. Soil moisture was 4 to 5 inches below average, and lakes and river flows were well below normal. Crops and pastures were devastated due to the extreme dryness and burn bans were in effect across all of the areas. Many ranchers had to sell off much of their cattle. Throughout July, periodic high winds, low relative humidity values, along with many lightning storms resulted in several fires across central and north central South Dakota. The fires burned tens of thousands of acres of pastureland and cropland. Hundreds of firefighters worked throughout the month to contain the flames. The governor of South Dakota declared a statewide emergency and the United States Department of Agriculture declared all of the counties drought disasters. Swan Lake, in north-central South Dakota between Lowry and Hoven, had completely dried up from the long period of dryness. The last time this happened to the lake was 30 years prior in 1976. Also, Lake Oahe at Pierre was four feet above its all-time low.

1792 - A tremendous storm (a tornado or hurricane) hit Philadelphia and New York City. Many young people were drowned while out boating on that Sunday. (David Ludlum)

1861: Cherrapunji, Meghalaya, India measured 366 inches of rain during the month of July 1861. From August 1, 1860, to July 31, 1861, Cherrapunji received a record-breaking 1,041.75 inches of precipitation.

1911 - The high of just 79 degrees at Phoenix AZ was their coolest daily maximum of record for the month of July. The normal daily high for July 1st is 105 degrees. (The Weather Channel)

1979 - It snowed almost half a foot (5.8 inches) at Stampede Pass WA, a July record. (The Weather Channel)

1987 - Lake Charles LA was drenched with a month's worth of rain during the early morning. More than five inches of rain soaked the city, including 2.68 inches in one hour. A thunderstorm in the southern Yakima Valley of Washington State produced high winds which downed trees up to six feet in diameter. (Storm Data) (The National Weather Summary)

1988 - Twenty-six cities in the north central and northeastern U.S. reported record low temperatures for the date. Lows of 48 degrees at Providence RI, 48 degrees at Roanoke VA, 49 degrees at Stratford CT, and 48 degrees at Wilmington, DE, were records for the month of July. Boston MA equalled their record for July with a low of 50 degrees. Five inches of snow whitened Mount Washington NH. (The National Weather Summary)

1989 - Showers and thunderstorms associated with the low pressure system which was once Tropical Storm Allison continued to drench parts of Mississippi, Louisiana and eastern Texas. Late night thunderstorms produced 12.58 inches of rain at Biloxi, MS, in six hours, and 10.73 inches at Gulfport MS. Flooding in Mississippi over the first six days of the month caused 55 million dollars damage. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

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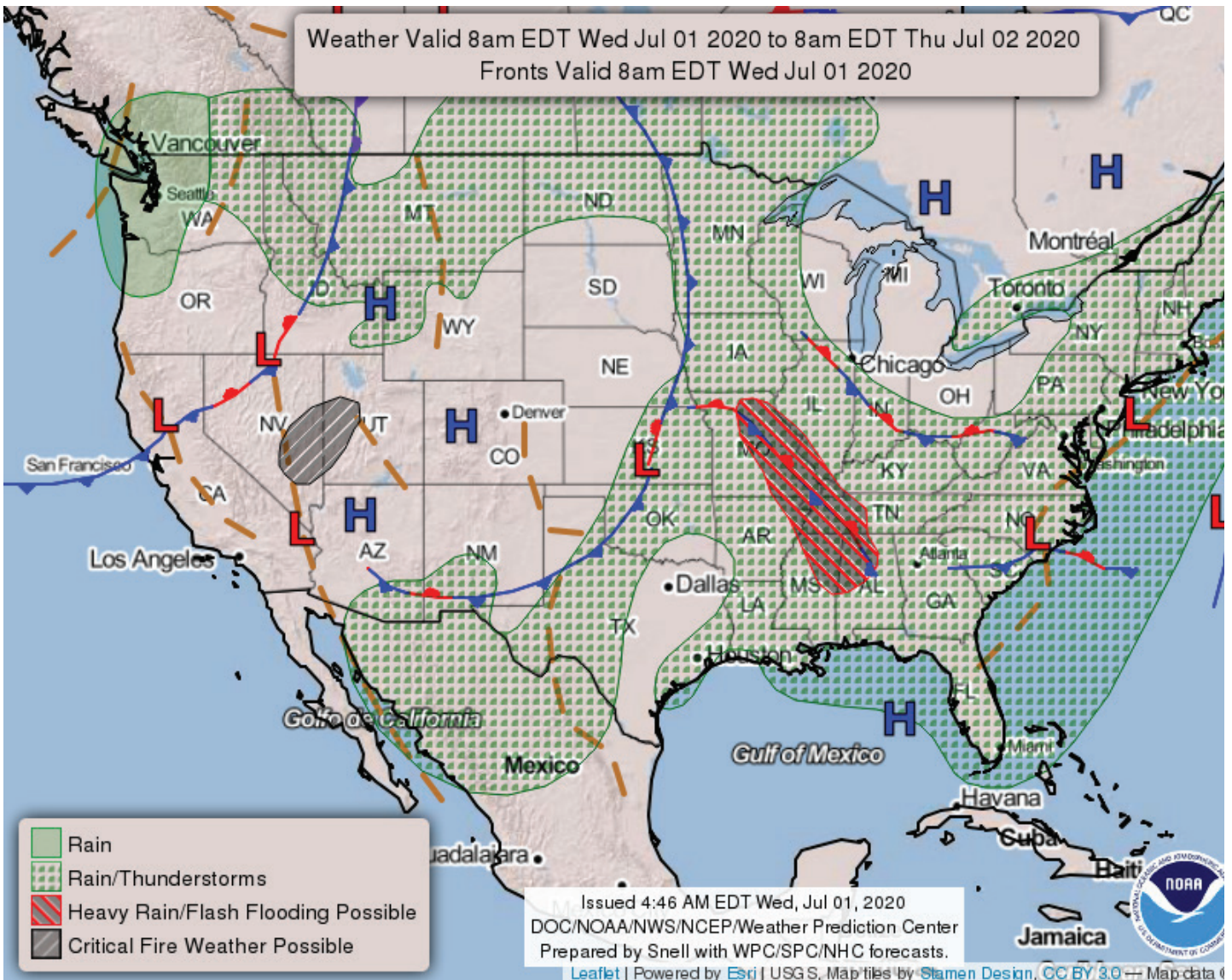
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Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 91 °F at 3:39 PM
Low Temp: 69 °F at 11:58 PM
Wind: 29 mph at 7:26 PM
Precip: .19

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.: 3.67
Average Precip to date: 10.73
Precip Year to Date: 8.32
Sunset Tonight: 9:26 p.m.
Sunrise Tomorrow: 5:49 a.m.



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NO LIMITS

Shortly after birth he became physically ill. Not long after that he developed some early childhood mental problems. He entered school two years late and was asked to leave three months after enrolling. The authorities felt he was "addled."

Discouraged but not defeated, his mother began to teach him at home. Much to her surprise, he learned so fast that she finally gave up. When he was nine years old, she purchased a chemistry book and encouraged him to read it. He was fascinated with its ideas, purchased some chemicals and began mixing them together to see what might happen. Unfortunately, one of his experiments started a fire, and he burned down his father's barn. Three years later a similar accident happened to a railroad baggage car.

Though deaf and considered by most to be "backward," he became one of the world's greatest inventors and was credited with 1,093 patents. Among his inventions are the motion picture camera, the phonograph, the long-lasting electric light bulb and what we now call industrial research parks. Thomas Edison did not allow any handicap or any person to stop him from doing what he was called to do. Because he persevered in spite of great obstacles, he was able to accomplish much.

We too can accomplish great and mighty things for God. Whatever He calls us to do we can do because His Word assures us that we can do "all things through Him."

Prayer: Father, we look to You for insight, inspiration and encouragement to do what You have called us to do. May we use our time, talents and treasures wisely. In Jesus' Name. Amen.

Scripture For Today: July 1 – For I can do everything through Christ who gives me strength. Philippians 4:13

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2020 Groton SD Community Events

- **CANCELLED** Groton Lions Club Easter Egg Hunt - City Park (Saturday a week before Easter Weekend)
- **CANCELLED** Dueling Piano's Baseball Fundraiser at the American Legion
- **CANCELLED** Fireman's Fun Night (Same Saturday as GHS Prom)
- **POSTPONED** Front Porch 605 Rural Route Road Trip
- **CANCELLED** Father/Daughter dance.
- **CANCELLED** Spring City-Wide Rummage Sales, (1st Saturday in May)
- **CANCELLED** Girls High School Golf Meet at Olive Grove Golf Course
- 05/25/2020 Groton American Legion Post #39 Memorial Day Services
- 07/04/2020 Firecracker Golf Tourney at Olive Grove Golf Course
- 07/12/2020 Summer Fest/Car Show
- 07/16/2020 Olive Grove Golf Course Pro Am Golf Tourney
- 07/24/2020 Olive Grove Golf Course Ferney Open Golf Tourney
- **CANCELLED** State American Legion Baseball Tournament in Groton
- 08/07/2020 Wine on Nine Event at Olive Grove Golf Course
- 09/12/2020 Fall City-Wide Rummage Sales (1st Sat. after Labor Day)
- 09/13/2020 Olive Grove Golf Course Couples Sunflower Classic
- 10/09/2020 Lake Region Marching Band Festival (2nd Friday in October)
- 10/10/2020 Pumpkin Fest (Saturday before Columbus Day)
- 10/31/2020 Downtown Trick or Treat
- 10/31/2020 Groton United Methodist Trunk or Treat
- 11/14/2020 Groton Legion Annual Turkey Party (Saturday closest to Veteran's Day)
- 11/26/2020 Community Thanksgiving at the Community Center
- 12/05/2020 Olive Grove Golf Course Tour of Homes & Holiday Party
- 12/05/2020 Santa Claus Day at Professional Management Services
- 01/--/2021 83rd Annual Carnival of Silver Skates

News from the Associated Press

SD Lottery

By The Associated Press undefined

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

Mega Millions

09-16-29-37-53, Mega Ball: 11, Megaplier: 2

(nine, sixteen, twenty-nine, thirty-seven, fifty-three; Mega Ball: eleven; Megaplier: two)

Estimated jackpot: \$53 million

Powerball

Estimated jackpot: \$51 million

Police: Suspect fatally shot wrong victim in Sioux Falls

SIoux FALLS, S.D. (AP) — Sioux Falls police say a man entered the wrong house and fatally shot a resident while searching for his intended target.

Police Capt. Michael Colwill said the 45-year-old suspect shot and killed 40-year-old Tracy Saboe on Monday while thinking the home belonged to another man.

Colwill says Saboe and the suspect had a brief altercation after the suspect broke into the house, and the suspect shot Saboe once in the head.

The suspect then went to the correct address in central Sioux Falls at 2:30 p.m. Monday and shot three people — a 30-year-old man, an 18-year-old woman and a 52-year-old woman. The Argus Leader reports all are expected to recover.

Police say the 30-year-old man who was shot at the second address was the intended target. The suspect believed the targeted man had assaulted someone in the suspect's family.

Saboe's wife found him with a fatal gunshot wound to his head just before 8 p.m. Monday.

Police connected the two incidents after realizing the same 9 mm handgun was used in all four shootings.

2 sent to prison for felony kidnapping in Aberdeen

ABERDEEN, S.D. (AP) — Two people from Aberdeen have sentenced to prison after pleading guilty to felony kidnapping in what authorities say was an attempt to rob a man.

Ryan Rencountre, 21, was sentenced to 15 years in prison with five years suspended and given credit for 38 days served.

Cassandra Reef, 26, was sentenced to 10 years in prison with two years suspended. Both were fined \$107 each.

Aberdeen American News reports Rencountre, Reef and two others were in an apartment with a man and demanded his property last April. Rencountre was armed with a gun and Reef had a knife, according to court documents.

Even though the man said he didn't have any money, they wouldn't let him leave the apartment, the complaint said.

The victim was later escorted to his mother's apartment to retrieve money, but once he arrived he refused and called police.

BeyondEdge™ Launches First SD-LAN XGS-PON Featuring Tibit MicroPlug™ OLT

RICHARDSON, Texas--(BUSINESS WIRE)--Jun 30, 2020--

BeyondEdge™, Inc., a software-defined, edge compute company with decades of experience in delivering

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high-speed, multi-vendor Optical Network Terminal (ONT) solutions and Tibit Communications, a CA-based innovator in next generation access devices announced today, availability of a breakthrough integrated solution that simplifies the LAN PON network architecture via the BeyondEdge SD-LAN solution and the game-changing Tibit XGS-PON MicroPlug OLT. This disruptive, single solution offers enterprise network operators a truly cost-effective migration path to multi-gigabit PON networks in order to meet near-term and long-term requirements for higher-bandwidth, ultra-fast networks in campus, building, and greenfield environments.

This press release features multimedia. View the full release here: <https://www.businesswire.com/news/home/20200630005004/en/>

The BeyondEdge SD-LAN software & Tibit MicroPlug Solution Streamlines Costs of Deploying & Managing a Symmetrical Network for Campuses, Greenfield, or Business Office Projects (Graphic: Business Wire)

"BeyondEdge provides network operators with the right platform that opens the door for competitive differentiation, new ARPU business services and premium-tier revenue streams with all technologies existing on the same fiber infrastructure, enabling high speed services to the user edge at half the cost of most industry solutions," said Amir Elbaz, CEO of BeyondEdge. "With BeyondEdge, vendor and technology lock-in is eliminated, so network operators can invest now and benefit from both cost reductions and network efficiencies with an unrestricted migration path to future xPON technologies."

"Tibit and BeyondEdge have a long-standing cooperation on this solution, and we're proud to contribute our game-changing MicroPlug™ OLT architecture to their end-to-end, SD-LAN design," said Richard Stanfield, President and CEO of Tibit Communications. "With the commercial release of the combined solution, the BeyondEdge SD-LAN architecture provides an industry-leading approach to flexible deployments for 10 Gbps access. It enables highly-modular, port-by-port scaling for carriers and enterprises deploying next-generation broadband speeds. At the same time, the BeyondEdge architecture provides robust SDN management controls over both Ethernet and PON access domains."

The BeyondEdge SD-LAN solution leverages XGS-PON's inherent reach and passive nature to deliver an advanced network solution using the most simplified architecture with service to the enterprise edge client at a 10 Gigabit symmetric rate. The design replaces the traditional, expensive OLT Chassis with the Tibit MicroPlug™ OLT (Pluggable PON Transceiver & OLT MAC), providing more capacity that plugs into a COTS switch or legacy Ethernet hardware, reducing power, space, and overall total cost of ownership.

Design of the BeyondEdge SD-LAN software and Tibit MicroPlug solution streamlines the costs of deploying and managing a symmetrical network for campuses, greenfield, or business office projects and scales to eliminate overbuilds. Later, when higher bandwidth is required migration to the NG-PON solution can be added to the network without design or infrastructure changes, providing the right balance for current and long-term investment of the network.

About BeyondEdge™

BeyondEdge™ is a software-defined, edge compute company focused on advancing the transformation of networks via an open and modular software platform that delivers highly intelligent and fully automated networks for buildings and campus-wide environments. With its proven software technology, BeyondEdge solves the challenges that come with complex networks and proprietary hardware, providing the only 100% Software-Defined LAN for all services. This solution simplifies network architecture and management, and enables businesses to succeed faster, while delivering marked value, including decreased CAPEX and OPEX and support of current and future technologies. Through its blue-chip partners, established VARs, and MSPs, BeyondEdge solutions are deployed across many high-growth and high-value customer segments. BeyondEdge is headquartered in Richardson, TX. For more information on the company, please visit www.beyondedenetworks.com.

About Tibit Communications

Founded in 2014, Tibit Communications has introduced a fundamental change to the architecture and economics of PON solutions, which has been mostly constrained to proprietary, chassis-mounted architectures available from only a few global vendors. Tibit's MicroPlug™ OLT is the world's first pluggable OLT. The standard based SFP+ form factor allows their device to plug into almost any 10G switchport, greatly

expanding architecture options for carriers. All this is enabled by the Tibit bridge ASIC, the world's smallest and lowest power 10G OLT chipset, which supports a rich feature set across both ITU-T and IEEE 10 GPON standards. PON should be much simpler to deploy than it is today. Watch for more news from Tibit in 2020 on how we're making that happen.

View source version on businesswire.com:<https://www.businesswire.com/news/home/20200630005004/en/>

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KEYWORD: UNITED STATES NORTH AMERICA TEXAS

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Judge rules South Dakota prison porn policy is too broad

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — A federal judge has ruled a South Dakota corrections policy that bans prisoners from possessing nude pictures that aren't sexually explicit is unconstitutional.

Judge Larry Piersol, in an opinion finalized Monday, said the policy that also bans written works that contain sexual references is overly broad and cuts off the inmates access to literature.

"The present policy bans written material with any sexual content," Piersol wrote. "That means the potential of banning the Bible and much of Shakespeare, not to mention all of the fiction of John Updike, Phillip Roth, Ernest Hemingway, and Gabriel Garcia Marquez, to name a few."

The ruling is the result of a lawsuit filed by Charles Sisney, 52, who is serving a life sentence for the murder of his girlfriend in Sioux Falls.

In 2018, the Eight Circuit Court of Appeals remanded the case back to the district court to determine if the policy was constitutional, the Argus Leader reported.

Piersol found that while the Department of Corrections has an interest in banning pornography and sexually explicit material, banning simple nudity and written scenes goes too far.

An exception is children's nudity because the department has an interest in keeping those images away from sex offenders, he said.

The judge ruled Sisney could have works of literature that include sexual encounters, an art book and scenes from sculptures and painting of Michelangelo.

Lebanon's plea to skeptical expats: Come visit, bring cash

By ZEINA KARAM Associated Press

BEIRUT (AP) — With Beirut's airport partially reopening from a three-month virus shutdown, the government is hoping thousands of Lebanese expatriates will return for the summer — and bring dollars desperately needed to prop up the crashing economy.

But Lebanon's far-flung diaspora, renowned as entrepreneurs who for years sent their cash home, may no longer be willing to do that.

Many are staying away, appalled at the ruling elite's handling of Lebanon's unprecedented economic and financial meltdown and outraged at local banks holding their dollar deposits hostage. Some have stopped

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sending money, except small amounts to sustain their families. Others are considering cutting ties completely with a corrupt country they say has robbed them of a future.

"If you're a Lebanese considering visiting this summer, you will think about bringing only what you need to spend while there, not a single penny more," said Hasan Fadlallah, who has lived since 1997 in Dubai, where he founded a consultancy agency, Brand Lounge.

"I doubt anyone is thinking about investing in the economy, especially when you know the recipient is not worthy of this help," he said.

Once a beacon of free market growth and fine living, Lebanon is suffering the worst economic crisis in its modern history. The local currency has lost around 80% of its value against the dollar on the black market since October and continues to tumble daily. Banks have clamped down on withdrawals and transfers of U.S. dollars. Food prices have soared, businesses and households have been thrown into disarray, salaries and savings are fast disappearing and unemployment has surged.

The crisis stems from decades of systematic corruption and mismanagement. Public frustration exploded into street protests in October demanding the entire leadership go. Now, a slide into violence is feared amid mounting poverty and sectarian tensions.

Still, political leaders appear unwilling to act, instead squabbling and trading blame. Talks with the International Monetary Fund over a bailout have faltered over the inability to implement pledges to combat corruption and instill reforms.

For years, millions of Lebanese abroad helped keep their native land afloat by sending remittances that once amounted to 12.5% of GDP.

Lebanese politicians are pleading with them to come to the rescue again. Prime Minister Hassan Diab on Tuesday called on them to "come with dollars." Christian party leader Samir Geagea suggested each expatriate family abroad to "adopt" a family in Lebanon for \$200 a month to stave off hunger. One lawmaker sparked outrage by saying Lebanon is now "cheap" in an attempt to attract expatriates and tourists after the currency collapse.

Visits home are a summer tradition for Lebanon's expats. The airport, closed since mid-March, starts operating Monday at 10% capacity, welcoming around 2,000 passengers a day.

Nabil Bou Monsef, deputy editor in chief of Lebanon's An-Nahar newspaper, said he expected very limited numbers of Lebanese to visit, and any dollars they bring will be held onto by relatives like "gold," rather than being injected into the economy.

"The Lebanese people are being subjected to a systematic and organized theft by the ruling oligarchy and the banks on daily basis," he said. "No one wants to contribute to this cycle anymore."

Lebanon, a country of 5 million, takes massive pride in its emigrant community — including the many successful businessmen and celebrities of Lebanese heritage. Famous names among them are Mexican business magnate Carlos Slim, Columbian singer Shakira, Mexican-American actress Salma Hayek, Lebanese-British barrister Amal Clooney and fashion designers Elie Saab and Reem Accra. They also include the disgraced former Nissan-Renault boss Carlos Ghosn, who fled Japan to Lebanon last year.

The diaspora is estimated at about three times the population at home. Large communities are found everywhere, from Australia and Africa to Canada, Latin America and Europe. About 400,000 Lebanese work in oil-rich Gulf countries.

Their billions have helped keep the local economy liquid. The Central Bank has kept the pound stable at 1,507 to the dollar since 1997, thanks to heavy borrowing at high interest rates. That encouraged expats to send money home, buy property and deposit in local banks.

Now the currency has spiraled to around 9,000 to the dollar on the black market. Capital controls have locked up dollars in bank accounts, uniting both rich and poor in anger.

Many in the diaspora have been agonizing on social media how to send money to relatives without going through transfer shops and local banks.

"I am definitely not handing my hard-earned money to our corrupt government on a silver platter so they can perpetuate their corruption," posted Elie Fares, a Lebanese doctor based in Philadelphia.

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In a Twitter thread, he lamented how his parents who have invested all their lives in Lebanon are now dependent on their expat son.

"I was on the phone with my parents the other day. My mom hasn't seen me in over a year, and all she kept saying is, 'Thank God you left, there is no future here.' It breaks my heart when their voices break."

Many now fear a new wave of emigration by Lebanon's middle class, once the global pandemic subsides and the world's economy picks up.

TV host Ricardo Karam, who has made a career out of interviewing successful expats, said Lebanon's talented youth and business elite are prevented from succeeding in their own country.

"Amid this meltdown ... I am saddened by the lack of any vision to benefit from this elite," he posted. "Instead of steering the ship, the rudder has been left to those who will one day enter the dustbin of history."

Fadlallah, the Dubai consultancy CEO, said he is still contemplating whether to make his summer family visit to Lebanon. He considers himself lucky — he managed to transfer his savings out of Lebanon in September, right before the crisis began.

He says that after what was effectively a Ponzi scheme, it will take years before people regain confidence in Lebanese banks and institutions, if at all.

"You need faith, credibility and trust for the country to begin recovering," he said. "They do not exist."

UK: China's new security law violates Hong Kong agreement

LONDON (AP) — Britain's foreign secretary has told reporters that China's new national security law for Hong Kong "is a clear and serious violation" of the Sino-British Joint Declaration, the agreement that paved the way for the former British colony's handover to Chinese rule 23 years ago.

Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab said Wednesday officials have carefully assessed the contents of the new law since it was published late Tuesday. He said he planned to set out details of what action the U.K. will take along with its international partners in reaction to the law.

Hong Kong police make first arrests under new security law

By ZEN SOO Associated Press

HONG KONG (AP) — Hong Kong police made their first arrests under a new national security law imposed by China's central government, arresting at least seven people suspected of violating the legislation during protests Wednesday.

At least two people were arrested for carrying flags and signs calling for Hong Kong's independence.

One man with a Hong Kong independence flag was arrested at a protest in the city's Causeway Bay shopping district after police issued multiple warnings to the crowd that they might be in violation of the law, according to a police statement on Twitter.

Police later arrested another woman for holding up a sign displaying the British flag and calling for Hong Kong's independence. Further details were not immediately available.

Hong Kong police said on Facebook that they had arrested more than 180 people on various charges, including unlawful assembly, possession of weapons and violating the national security law.

The law makes secessionist, subversive, or terrorist activities illegal, as well as foreign intervention in the city's internal affairs. Any person taking part in secessionist activities, such as shouting slogans or holding up banners and flags calling for the city's independence, is violating the law regardless of whether violence is used.

The arrests come less than 24 hours after the law was imposed by China following last year's anti-government protests in the semi-autonomous territory. The law took effect on Tuesday at 11 p.m.

The most serious offenders, such as those deemed to be masterminds behind the crimes, could receive a maximum punishment of life imprisonment. Lesser offenders could receive jail terms of up to three years, short-term detention or restriction.

Hong Kong's leader strongly endorsed the new law in a speech marking Wednesday's 23rd anniversary

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of the handover of the territory — officially called the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region — from British colonial rule.

“The enactment of the national law is regarded as the most significant development in the relationship between the central authorities and the HKSAR since Hong Kong’s return to the motherland,” chief executive Carrie Lam said in a speech, following a flag-raising ceremony and the playing of China’s national anthem.

“It is also an essential and timely decision for restoring stability in Hong Kong,” she said.

A pro-democracy political party, The League of Social Democrats, organized a protest march during the flag-raising ceremony. About a dozen participants chanted slogans echoing demands from protesters last year for political reform and an investigation into accusations of police abuse.

The law’s passage Tuesday further blurs the distinction between the legal systems of Hong Kong, which maintained aspects of British law after the 1997 handover, and the mainland’s authoritarian Communist Party system. Critics say the law effectively ends the “one country, two systems” framework under which Hong Kong was promised a high degree of autonomy.

The law directly targets some of the actions of anti-government protesters last year, which included attacks on government offices and police stations, damage to subway stations and the shutdown of the city’s international airport. Acts of vandalism against government facilities or public transit can be prosecuted as subversion or terrorism, while anyone taking part in activities deemed secessionist would also be in violation of the law.

Pro-democracy lawmaker Claudia Mo said in a news conference that the security legislation does not abide by the rule of law and is a dire warning to the free press.

“This would tell you that they want not just to get us, but to intimidate us into inaction, into a catatonic state,” Mo said.

Hong Kong’s police force said they would consider as illegal any flag or banner raised by protesters deemed to promote Hong Kong’s separation from China or express support for independence for Tibet, Xinjiang or the self-governing island democracy of Taiwan that China claims as its own.

Police will use a new purple flag to warn protesters if they display banners or shout slogans that may constitute a crime under the law.

Concerns have also been raised over the fate of key opposition figures, some of whom have already been charged for taking part in protests, as well as the disqualification of candidates for Legislative Council elections scheduled for September.

In Beijing, the executive deputy director of the Cabinet’s Hong Kong affairs office, Zhang Xiaoming, said Hong Kong people are allowed to criticize the ruling Communist Party but cannot turn those complaints “into actions.”

“What happened recently in Hong Kong has shown a deviation from the right track of the ‘one country, two systems’ (framework),” Zhang told reporters Wednesday.

“To some extent, we made this law in order to correct the deviation ... to pull it closer to ‘one-country.’”

Schools, social groups, media outlets, websites and others will be monitored and their national security awareness will be raised, according to the law, while the central government will have authority over the activities of foreign non-governmental organizations and media outlets in Hong Kong.

The law says central government bodies in Hong Kong will take over in “complicated cases” and when there is a serious threat to national security. Local authorities are barred from interfering with central government bodies operating in Hong Kong while they are carrying out their duties.

Security legislation was mandated under Hong Kong’s local constitution, but an earlier attempt to pass it in the city’s legislative body in 2003 was shelved because of massive public opposition. Beijing finally decided to circumvent the Hong Kong legislature and have the law passed Tuesday by the Standing Committee of the National People’s Congress, China’s rubber-stamp parliament.

President Xi Jinping signed a presidential order putting the law into effect, and it has been added to the Basic Law, Hong Kong’s constitution.

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.

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The new laws have deepened concerns abroad about Hong Kong's future.

The U.S. is moving to end special trade terms given to the territory. The Trump administration has also said 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.

The U.S. Congress has also moved to impose sanctions on people deemed connected to political repression in Hong Kong, including police officials, while Britain has said it could offer residency and possible citizenship to about 3 million of Hong Kong's 7.5 million people.

China has said it will impose visa restrictions on Americans it sees as interfering over Hong Kong.

U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo denounced the threat of a visa ban as a sign of "how Beijing refuses to take responsibility for its own choices" and said the law's adoption "destroys the territory's autonomy and one of China's greatest achievements."

Beijing's "paranoia and fear of its own people's aspirations have led it to eviscerate the very foundation of the territory's success," Pompeo said in a statement.

Taiwan on Wednesday opened an office to facilitate migration from Hong Kong.

The establishment of the office is "not only a statement on Taiwan's support to Hong Kong's democracy and freedom, but also highlights our determination to care for Hong Kong people," said Taiwan's Mainland Affairs Council minister Chen Ming-tong at a ribbon-cutting ceremony.

AP video journalist Johnson Lai in Taipei and producer Wayne Zhang in Beijing contributed to this report.

5 Things to Know for Today

By The Associated Press undefined

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

1. PUBLIC HEALTH SYSTEM FACES MORE CUTS AMID VIRUS An investigation by the AP and KHN finds that since 2010, spending for state public health departments has dropped by 16% per capita and by 18% per capita for local health departments.

2. TRUMP'S RUSSIA POLICY CONFOUNDS The paths followed by Trump and the other by his hawkish but changing cast of national security aides on the other create confusion in Congress and among allies and enemies alike.

3. HONG KONG ENFORCES NEW SECURITY LAW Police arrest at least two protesters for carrying flags and signs calling for independence in the semiautonomous city.

4. 16 MORE YEARS That's what Russian President Vladimir Putin is seeking in office in a constitutional ballot amid widespread reports of voter pressure and other irregularities.

5. 'YOU BROKE MY WRIST!' A Black man in Georgia is accusing police of violating his civil rights, saying a white officer slammed him to the ground in the mistaken belief that there was a warrant for his arrest.

Analysis: What Trump leaves unspoken carries consequences

By NANCY BENAC Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump seems to rarely leave a thought unspoken.

Of late, though, it is increasingly clear there are things Trump won't say — and they are tied to the most important issues of his presidency.

Among them:

— Knock it off, Russia.

— Wear a mask, Americans.

— Systemic racism must end.

None of the above are particularly bold or controversial messages.

Modern American presidents of both parties have often sounded off against Russian aggression. They have amplified the advice of medical experts in public health emergencies like the coronavirus. They have used the bully pulpit of the presidency to ask Americans to summon their better angels in confronting racism.

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But such words do not come easily to Trump — and his silence emboldens those who reject these messages and contributes to the cascading crises that now engulf the White House and have put his reelection in peril.

“People now require a serious man with a serious message and don’t feel like they have it,” says Calvin Jillson, a presidential historian at Southern Methodist University.

For his part, Trump has responded to the chaos surrounding the coronavirus pandemic, the unrest over racial injustice and more recent questions about his stance toward Russia by insisting that the “silent majority” of Americans are with him. There are surely those who endorse his sentiments and trust his instincts as Trump plays to his most loyal base supporters.

But revelations this week that the president has long known about allegations that Russia secretly offered bounties to Taliban-linked militants for killing American troops in Afghanistan represent a fresh source of tumult for Trump when he can least afford it.

The president’s tendency to go easy on Russia in his public pronouncements has long been a source of dismay and puzzlement to many in Washington and beyond, perhaps most notably that jaw-dropping moment at a 2018 summit in Helsinki when he sided with Vladimir Putin over U.S. intelligence agencies on the question of whether Russia had interfered in the 2016 U.S. elections.

Now, legislators, diplomats and others are openly questioning why Trump is refusing to speak out clearly against Russian aggression given the latest explosive allegations.

Democratic Rep. Adam Schiff, chairman of the House Intelligence Committee, found it “inexplicable, in light of these very public allegations, that the president hasn’t come before the country and assured the American people that he will get to the bottom of whether Russians are putting a bounty on the heads of American troops.”

The White House stresses that the bounty allegations are unverified. And the president can fairly point to a series of administration actions over the last three years to punish Russia for malign behavior. But Trump’s own words — and lack thereof at key moments — have sent a far more conciliatory message to Moscow.

Trump in recent months has been angling to welcome Russia back into the Group of Seven industrialized nations, which gave Putin the boot after Moscow seized control of Crimea in 2014. And this week, rather than address the substance of the bounty allegations, Trump chose to harangue the media for what he calls fabrications designed to “make Republicans look bad.”

Kathleen Hall Jamieson, director of the Annenberg Public Policy Center at the University of Pennsylvania, thinks Trump’s aversion to talking about Russia stems in part from his sensitivity about whether Moscow’s interference in the 2016 election helped get him elected.

“He seems to think when Russia is raised, automatically it means someone is going to use it to say that they elected him,” she said.

As for face masks, Trump has bluntly said they’re not for him and that other people can make their own choices. He refuses to wear one in public and has speculated that some people wear masks to show they don’t like him. He’s urged people to follow local guidelines, but his own campaign has flouted them.

It all undercuts health officials’ efforts to promote use of a critical weapon in stopping the spread of the coronavirus.

Republican Sen. Lamar Alexander of Tennessee on Tuesday urged Trump to wear a mask even occasionally, predicting the president’s millions of admirers “would follow his lead.”

With virus cases now surging in Sun Belt states and reported U.S. deaths from the virus nearing 130,000, GOP officials are increasingly speaking out about the importance of masks.

Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell says there should “no stigma” to wearing one. Utah Gov. Gary Herbert urged Trump and Vice President Mike Pence to issue a national call to wear them.

Those are words that, to many, should have been easy ones for the president to utter long ago.

But Trump shows no signs of budging — no matter that his allies see them as the only way to avoid another economic shutdown, an even worse wave of cases and a GOP election rout. “LONE WARRIOR,” he tweeted on Tuesday.

Lawrence Gostin, a public health expert at Georgetown University, said Trump’s failure to promote mask

usage is having devastating consequences in the U.S.

"I have become increasingly convinced if there is one thing that has separated countries that have done well and those that have done really poorly, it's inconsistent messaging where you've lost the confidence of the population," Gostin said.

The coronavirus surge has played out alongside the national reckoning over racial injustice triggered by the death of George Floyd and other Black Americans killed by police. Trump has offered little balm to those confronting the pain of racism.

Jamieson suspects Trump avoids talking about racism because he thinks it "signals that you are sympathetic to the left."

And so Trump has come down squarely on the side of "law and order," been quick to defend law enforcement and painted protesters with a broad brush that blurs the distinction between peaceful demonstrators and those doing violence.

Trump has failed to acknowledge systemic racism and suggests instead that there are a few "bad apples" among the police who need to be culled. As for his plan to combat racism, he calls an economic rebound "the greatest thing that can happen for race relations."

Talk of a big presidential speech to the nation on how the country can come to terms with its racial problems have fallen by the wayside, the White House well aware that such an address would not likely come off well.

Trump has "an inability to perform that critical role as president, as spokesman for the nation in good times or bad but most critically in difficult times," says Jillson.

The combination of the virus, the racial unrest and economic upheaval, Jillson says, has got Trump supporters reevaluating their past inclination to be mildly amused by the chaos he sows and left them asking: "Am I still entertained? Am I still comfortable? Am I still willing to take the uncertainty?"

Associated Press writers Calvin Woodward, Aamer Madhani and Ricardo Alonso-Zaldivar contributed to this report.

EDITORS' NOTE — Nancy Benac is White House news editor and has covered government and politics for The Associated Press for four decades.

Russian bounties further strain Trump's bond with veterans

By STEVE PEOPLES and SARAH BLAKE MORGAN Associated Press

CHARLOTTE, N.C. (AP) — They didn't like it when then-candidate Donald Trump criticized John McCain for being captured in combat. They were angrier when Trump, as commander in chief, abandoned Kurdish allies in the Middle East. And they were upset again last month when he threatened to deploy troops against American protesters.

Trump's relationship with the nation's military community has been frequently strained. But just four months before the November election, reports that he either ignored, or was unaware of, a Russian plot to kill U.S. troops could intensify the tension and create new political risks.

"I don't think he cares about troops at all," said Shawn LeMond, a Navy veteran who served his country in the Middle East and then his state of North Carolina as a Republican legislator. "If he didn't know about Russia, it's because he didn't do his damn homework. And that's despicable."

After sitting out the 2016 election, LeMond has withdrawn from the Republican Party and plans to vote for Trump's Democratic opponent, Joe Biden, this fall.

It's difficult to gauge how widespread LeMond's sentiment is among veterans, but there was a significant outcry this week from a collection of retired servicemen, elected officials in both parties and families of fallen soldiers who have lost confidence in the president's commitment to the troops. That's just four weeks after Trump's former defense secretary James Mattis, a Marine general, described the president

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as a threat to the Constitution.

Any erosion in Trump's support from the national security community, long a pillar of the GOP base, could damage his reelection prospects, particularly in swing states with large concentrations of veterans, including Florida, Virginia, Texas and North Carolina.

Rep. Richard Hudson, R-N.C., whose district includes Fort Bragg, acknowledged the troubling nature of the revelations, but like many other Republicans on Capitol Hill, he sidestepped Trump's role.

"There is no consensus on the intelligence yet, but as Fort Bragg's congressman, I'm deeply troubled by the reports," he said. "And if they are verified to be true, I believe there needs to be swift and severe consequences on Russia."

American intelligence has assessed that Russia offered militants bounties to kill American troops in Afghanistan. Initial intelligence was shared with the White House and included in one of Trump's daily briefings in early 2019. In spite of that, Trump has maintained a warm relationship with Russian leader Vladimir Putin throughout his presidency.

The White House initially said Trump wasn't briefed on the intelligence. But on Tuesday, White House press secretary Kayleigh McEnany said Trump was indeed briefed, though there were reservations about the veracity of the allegations.

"Make no mistake. This president will always protect American troops," she declared.

Those words rang hollow to some who serve the military community, like Rep. Paul Cook, R-Calif., a Marine veteran who represents several military installations and is retiring at year's end.

"I'm not really sure he absorbs a lot of this stuff," Cook told The Associated Press of reports that Trump was briefed on the bounties. "He's probably thinking about the polls."

Cook added: "I'm not going to be an apologist for Trump. Trump is Trump."

Biden leaned into the debate Tuesday, calling the Trump administration's handling of the Russian intelligence "an absolute dereliction of duty."

As he often does, Biden reflected on his own son's military service in Iraq. The developments were even more personal for potential Biden running mate Sen. Tammy Duckworth, a former Army lieutenant colonel who lost her legs in a helicopter crash in Iraq.

"It's deeply personal, it's nauseating, and it's obscene," Duckworth, D-Ill., said of Trump's muted response to the Russian bounties, which she cast as evidence that the commander in chief doesn't value the well-being of American troops. "I think the only thing President Trump cares about is his own reelection and his own well-being."

The most poignant reactions, however, didn't come from politicians.

Erik Hendriks lost his 25-year-old son in an April 2019 attack that intelligence officials believe may be tied to the Russian bounties. The New York man said the pain of his son's death would be even worse if there were bounties on American soldiers that the Trump administration didn't address.

"When they sign up and they go — any soldier, a Marine, Navy, Air Force, Army — I'm sure they want to believe that the government is 100% in their corner," Hendriks told the AP. "And if any of this is true, how could a soldier actually believe that anymore? How could this government let one soldier go on patrol out there knowing this is true?"

Those questions resonated with Matthew Whitney, a retired Army intelligence officer who worked in the Pentagon and now lives in Florida, a must-win state for the president.

The 55-year-old Orlando man said the Trump administration clearly didn't prioritize vital intelligence on Russia, which speaks either to the president's leadership or to the people he surrounds himself with. He said he voted for Trump four years ago and wouldn't do it again.

"I feel like when this president stands in front of the troops -- there's probably a part of his heart that cares for them — but I wonder to what extent they're basically just props for him to talk about himself," Whitney said.

He admitted, however, that many of his close friends from the military community continue to support Trump.

That's the case in the Bush household near Fort Bragg, where Robyne Bush, the mother of a soldier in

basic training and the wife of a retired Green Beret, shrugged off the latest revelations as old news.

"We knew this. It's not a secret," said Bush, an Army veteran herself, who has helped comfort nearly 20 families of fallen soldiers.

She voted for Trump in 2016 and vowed to do so again, praising his support for service members and the Veterans Administration.

"I don't like him as a person. I don't like that personality," Bush said. "But I think that he knows more than he ever lets on."

Peoples reported from New York. Associated Press writers Alan Fram and Nathan Ellgren in Washington and Deepti Hajela in New York contributed to this report.

Trump's two Russias confound coherent US policy

By MATTHEW LEE AP Diplomatic Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — When it comes to Russia, the Trump administration just can't seem to make up its mind.

For the past three years, the administration has careered between President Donald Trump's attempts to curry favor and friendship with Vladimir Putin and longstanding deep-seated concerns about Putin's intentions. As Trump has repeatedly and openly cozied up to Putin, his administration has imposed harsh and meaningful sanctions and penalties on Russia.

The dizzying, often contradictory, paths followed by Trump on the one hand and his hawkish but constantly changing cast of national security aides on the other have created confusion in Congress and among allies and enemies alike. To an observer, Russia is at once a mortal enemy and a misunderstood friend in U.S. eyes.

Even before Trump took office questions about Russia abounded. Now, nearing the end of his first term with a difficult reelection ahead, those questions have resurfaced with a vengeance. Intelligence suggesting Russia was encouraging attacks on U.S. and allied forces in Afghanistan by putting bounties on their heads has thrust the matter into the heart of the 2020 campaign.

The White House says the intelligence wasn't confirmed or brought to Trump's attention, but his vast chorus of critics are skeptical and maintain the president should have been aware.

The reports have alarmed even pro-Trump Republicans who see Russia as a hostile global foe meddling with nefarious intent in Afghanistan, the Middle East, Ukraine and Georgia, a waning former superpower trying to regain its Soviet-era influence by subverting democracy in Europe and the United States with disinformation and election interference.

Trump's overtures to Putin have unsettled longstanding U.S. allies in Europe, including Britain, France and Germany, which have expressed concern about the U.S. commitment to the NATO alliance, which was forged to counter the Soviet threat, and robust democracy on the continent.

But Trump has defended his perspective on Russia, viewing it as a misunderstood potential friend, a valued World War II ally led by a wily, benevolent authoritarian who actually may share American values, like the importance of patriotism, family and religion.

Trump's approach to Russia was at center stage in the impeachment proceedings, when U.S. officials testified that the president demanded political favors from Ukraine in return for military assistance it needed to combat Russian aggression. But the issue ended up as a largely partisan exercise, with House Democrats voting to impeach Trump and Senate Republicans voting to acquit.

Within the Trump administration, the national security establishment appears torn between pursuing an arguably tough approach to Russia and pleasing the president. Insiders who have raised concern about Trump's approach to Russia — including at least one of his national security advisers, defense secretaries and secretaries of state, but especially lower-level officials who spoke out during impeachment — have nearly all been ousted from their positions.

Suspicious about Trump and Russia go back to his 2016 campaign. His appeal to Moscow to dig up his

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opponent's emails, his plaintive suggestions that Russia and the United States should be friends and a series of contacts between his advisers and Russians raised questions of impropriety that led to special counsel Robert Mueller's investigation. The investigation ultimately did not allege that anyone associated with the campaign illegally conspired with Russia.

Mueller, along with the U.S. intelligence community, did find that Russia interfered with the election, to sow chaos and also help Trump's campaign. But Trump has cast doubt on those findings, most memorably in a 2018 appearance on stage with Putin in Helsinki.

Yet despite Trump's rhetoric, his administration has plowed ahead with some of the most significant actions against Russia by any recent administration.

Dozens of Russian diplomats have been expelled, diplomatic missions closed, arms control treaties the Russians sought to preserve have been abandoned, weapons have been sold to Ukraine despite the impeachment allegations and the administration is engaged in a furious battle to prevent Russia from constructing a new gas pipeline that U.S. lawmakers from both parties believe will increase Europe's already unhealthy dependence on Russian energy.

At the same time, Trump has compounded the uncertainty by calling for the withdrawal or redeployment of U.S. troops from Germany, angrily deriding NATO allies for not meeting alliance defense spending commitments, and now apparently ignoring dire intelligence warnings that Russia was paying or wanted to pay elements of the Taliban to kill American forces in Afghanistan.

On top of that, even after the intelligence reports on the Afghanistan bounties circulated, he's expressed interest in inviting Putin back into the G-7 group of nations over the objections of the other members.

White House officials and die-hard Trump supporters have shrugged off the obvious inconsistencies, but they have been unable to staunch the swell of criticism and pointed demands for explanations as Russia, which has vexed American leaders for decades, delights in its ability to create chaos.

Museum or mosque? Turkey debates iconic Hagia Sofia's status

By SUZAN FRASER and AYSE WIETING undefined

ISTANBUL (AP) — In its more than 1,400-year existence, the majestic domed structure of Hagia Sophia in Istanbul has served as the Byzantine Empire's main cathedral, a mosque under the Ottoman Empire and a museum under modern Turkey, attracting millions of tourists each year.

The 6th-century building is now at the center of a heated debate between nationalist, conservative and religious groups who are pressing for it to be reconverted back into a mosque and those who believe the UNESCO World Heritage site should remain a museum, underscoring Istanbul's status as a bridge between continents and cultures.

On Thursday, Turkey's Council of State, the country's highest administrative court, begins reviewing a request by a group devoted to reverting Hagia Sophia into a mosque. They are pressing to annul a 1934 decision by the Council of Ministers, led by secular Turkey's founder Mustafa Kemal Ataturk, that turned the historic structure into a museum. A decision could come later Thursday or within two weeks, the state-run Anadolu Agency reported.

President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, who leads an Islamic-oriented party, has previously spoken about possibly changing Hagia Sophia's status to a mosque but has said his government would await the Council of State's decision.

Analysts believe that Erdogan — a populist, polarizing leader who in nearly two decades in office has frequently blamed Turkey's secular elites for the country's problems — is using the Hagia Sophia debate to consolidate his conservative base and to distract attention from Turkey's substantial economic woes.

"This is not just a debate about a building," said Soner Cagaptay, Turkey analyst for the Washington Institute. "Ataturk established Hagia Sophia as a museum to underline his vision of secularizing Turkey. And nearly 100 years later, Erdogan is trying to do the opposite."

"(Erdogan) feels the pressure of popular support dwindling and therefore he wants to use issues that he hopes will remobilize his right-wing base around nativist, populist, anti-elitist topics," said Cagaptay,

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author of the book "Erdogan's Empire."

Built under Byzantine Emperor Justinian, Hagia Sophia was the main seat of the Eastern Orthodox church for centuries, where emperors were crowned amidst ornate marble and mosaic decorations.

Four minarets were added to the terracotta-hued structure with cascading domes and the building was turned into an imperial mosque following the 1453 Ottoman conquest of Constantinople — the city that is now Istanbul.

The building opened its doors as a museum in 1935, a year after the Council of Ministers' decision.

Islamist groups, however, regard the symbolic structure as a legacy of Ottoman Sultan Mehmet the Conqueror and strongly object to its status as a museum. Large crowds have gathered outside Hagia Sophia on the May 31 anniversary of the city's conquest to pray and demand that it be restored as a place of Muslim worship.

In the past few years, Turkey has been allowing readings from the Quran inside Hagia Sophia and Erdogan himself has recited prayers there. This year, he oversaw by video conference the recital of the "prayer of conquest" on the anniversary of the Ottoman conquest.

On Tuesday, Istanbul-based Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew I, considered the spiritual leader of the world's Orthodox Christians, noted that Hagia Sophia had served as a place of worship for Christians for 900 years and for Muslims for 500 years.

"As a museum, Hagia Sophia can function as a place and symbol of encounter, dialogue and peaceful coexistence of peoples and cultures, mutual understand and solidarity between Christianity and Islam," he said.

Bartholomew added: "the potential conversion of Hagia Sophia into a mosque will turn millions of Christians across the world against Islam."

Greece also strongly objects to attempts to change Hagia Sophia into a mosque, arguing that its designation as a historic monument must be maintained.

"I hope that President Erdogan does not proceed with something that will deeply hurt Turkey," Greek Foreign Minister Nikos Dendias said. "This monument has endured many things and it will always return, but Turkey's image will take a severe blow."

Turkish media reports say the government was considering the possibility of keeping Hagia Sophia open to tourists even if it were turned into a mosque. That status would be similar to Istanbul's Blue Mosque, which sits right across from Hagia Sophia and functions both as a house of worship and a tourist spot.

Hurriyet and other media have reported that Hagia Sophia could be reconverted into a mosque by a public holiday on July 15, when the country marks the fourth anniversary of the foiling of an attempted coup.

Cagaptay, the analyst said, the Hagia Sophia issue would likely have a "temporary impact in keeping Erdogan's base with him."

"(But) if he does not deliver economic growth, I can't see him winning elections as he did in the past," Cagaptay said.

Suzan Fraser reported from Ankara, Turkey. Elena Becatoros in Athens contributed.

Hollowed out public health system faces more cuts amid virus

By LAUREN WEBER, LAURA UNGAR, MICHELLE R. SMITH, HANNAH RECHT and ANNA MARIA BARRY-JESTER Associated Press and KHN

The U.S. public health system has been starved for decades and lacks the resources to confront the worst health crisis in a century.

Marshaled against a virus that has sickened at least 2.6 million in the U.S., killed more than 126,000 people and cost tens of millions of jobs and \$3 trillion in federal rescue money, state and local government health workers on the ground are sometimes paid so little, they qualify for public aid.

They track the coronavirus on paper records shared via fax. Working seven-day weeks for months on end, they fear pay freezes, public backlash and even losing their jobs.

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Since 2010, spending for state public health departments has dropped by 16% per capita and spending for local health departments has fallen by 18%, according to a KHN and Associated Press analysis of government spending on public health. At least 38,000 state and local public health jobs have disappeared since the 2008 recession, leaving a skeletal workforce for what was once viewed as one of the world's top public health systems.

KHN, also known as Kaiser Health News, and AP interviewed more than 150 public health workers, policymakers and experts, analyzed spending records from hundreds of state and local health departments, and surveyed statehouses. On every level, the investigation found, the system is underfunded and under threat, unable to protect the nation's health.

Robert Redfield, the director of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, said in an interview in April that his "biggest regret" was "that our nation failed over decades to effectively invest in public health."

So when this outbreak arrived — and when, according to public health experts, the federal government bungled its response — hollowed-out state and local health departments were ill-equipped to step into the breach.

Over time, their work had received so little support that they found themselves without direction, disrespected, ignored, even vilified. The desperate struggle against COVID-19 became increasingly politicized and grew more difficult.

States, cities and counties in dire straits have begun laying off and furloughing their limited staff, and even more devastation looms, as states reopen and cases surge. Historically, even when money pours in following crises such as Zika and H1N1, it disappears after the emergency subsides. Officials fear the same thing is happening now.

"We don't say to the fire department, 'Oh, I'm sorry. There were no fires last year, so we're going to take 30% of your budget away.' That would be crazy, right?" said Dr. Gianfranco Pezzino, the health officer in Shawnee County, Kansas. "But we do that with public health, day in and day out."

Ohio's Toledo-Lucas County Health Department spent \$17 million, or \$40 per person, in 2017.

Jennifer Gottschalk, 42, works for the county as an environmental health supervisor. When the coronavirus struck, the county's department was so short-staffed that her duties included overseeing campground and pool inspections, rodent control and sewage programs, while also supervising outbreak preparedness for a community of more than 425,000 people.

When Gottschalk and five colleagues fell ill with COVID-19, she found herself fielding calls about a COVID-19 case from her hospital bed, then working through her home isolation. She only stopped when her coughing was too severe to talk on calls.

"You have to do what you have to do to get the job done," Gottschalk said.

Now, after months of working with hardly a day off, she says the job is wearing on her. So many lab reports on coronavirus cases came in, the office fax machine broke. She faces a backlash from the community over coronavirus restrictions and there are countless angry phone calls.

Things could get worse; possible county budget cuts loom.

But Toledo-Lucas is no outlier. Public health ranks low on the nation's financial priority list. Nearly two-thirds of Americans live in counties that spend more than twice as much on policing as they spend on nonhospital health care, which includes public health.

More than three-quarters of Americans live in states that spend less than \$100 per person annually on public health. Spending ranges from \$32 in Louisiana to \$263 in Delaware, according to data provided to KHN and AP by the State Health Expenditure Dataset project.

That money represents less than 1.5% of most states' total spending, with half of it passed down to local health departments.

The share of spending devoted to public health belies its multidimensional role. Agencies are legally bound to provide a broad range of services, from vaccinations and restaurant inspections to protection against infectious disease. Distinct from the medical care system geared toward individuals, the public health system focuses on the health of communities at large.

"Public health loves to say: When we do our job, nothing happens. But that's not really a great badge,"

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said Scott Becker, chief executive officer of the Association of Public Health Laboratories. "We test 97% of America's babies for metabolic or other disorders. We do the water testing. You like to swim in the lake and you don't like poop in there? Think of us."

But the public doesn't see the disasters they thwart. And it's easy to neglect the invisible.

A HISTORY OF DEPRIVATION

The local health department was a well-known place in the 1950s and 1960s, when Harris Pastides, president emeritus of the University of South Carolina, was growing up in New York City.

"My mom took me for my vaccines. We would get our injections there for free. We would get our polio sugar cubes there for free," said Pastides, an epidemiologist. "In those days, the health departments had a highly visible role in disease prevention."

The United States' decentralized public health system, which matches federal funding and expertise with local funding, knowledge and delivery, was long the envy of the world, said Saad Omer, director of the Yale Institute for Global Health.

"A lot of what we're seeing right now could be traced back to the chronic funding shortages," Omer said. "The way we starve our public health system, the way we have tried to do public health outcomes on the cheap in this country."

In Scott County, Indiana, when preparedness coordinator Patti Hall began working at the health department 34 years ago, it ran a children's clinic and a home health agency with several nurses and aides. But over time, the children's clinic lost funding and closed. Medicare changes paved the way for private services to replace the home health agency. Department staff dwindled in the 1990s and early 2000s. The county was severely outgunned when rampant opioid use and needle sharing sparked an outbreak of HIV in 2015.

Besides just five full-time and one part-time county public health positions, there was only one doctor in the outbreak's epicenter of Austin. Indiana's then-Gov. Mike Pence, now leading the nation's coronavirus response as vice president, waited 29 days after the outbreak was announced to sign an executive order allowing syringe exchanges. At the time, a state official said that only five people from agencies across Indiana were available to help with HIV testing in the county.

The HIV outbreak exploded into the worst ever to hit rural America, infecting more than 230 people.

At times, the federal government has promised to support local public health efforts, to help prevent similar calamities. But those promises were ephemeral.

Two large sources of money established after Sept. 11, 2001 — the Public Health Emergency Preparedness program and the Hospital Preparedness Program — were gradually chipped away.

The Affordable Care Act established the Prevention and Public Health Fund, which was supposed to reach \$2 billion annually by 2015. The Obama administration and Congress raided it to pay for other priorities, including a payroll tax cut. The Trump administration is pushing to repeal the ACA, which would eliminate the fund, said Carolyn Mullen, senior vice president of government affairs and public relations at the Association of State and Territorial Health Officials.

Former Iowa Sen. Tom Harkin, a Democrat who championed the fund, said he was furious when the Obama White House took billions from it, breaking what he said was an agreement.

"I haven't spoken to Barack Obama since," Harkin said.

If the fund had remained untouched, an additional \$12.4 billion would eventually have flowed to local and state health departments.

But local and state leaders also did not prioritize public health over the years.

In Florida, for example, 2% of state spending goes to public health. Spending by local health departments in the state fell 39%, from a high of \$57 in inflation-adjusted dollars per person in the late 1990s to \$35 per person last year.

In North Carolina, Wake County's public health workforce dropped from 882 in 2007 to 614 a decade later, even as the population grew by 30%.

In Detroit, the health department had 700 employees in 2009, then was effectively disbanded during

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the city's bankruptcy proceedings. It's been built back up, but today still has only 200 workers for 670,000 residents.

Many departments rely heavily on disease-specific grant funding, creating unstable and temporary positions. The CDC's core budget, some of which goes to state and local health departments, has essentially remained flat for a decade. Federal money currently accounts for 27% of local public health spending.

Years of such financial pressure increasingly pushed workers in this predominantly female workforce toward retirement or the private sector and kept potential new hires away.

More than a fifth of public health workers in local or regional departments outside big cities earned \$35,000 or less a year in 2017, as did 9% in big city departments, according to research by the Association of State and Territorial Health Officials and the de Beaumont Foundation.

Even before the pandemic, nearly half of public health workers planned to retire or leave their organizations for other reasons in the next five years. Poor pay topped the list of reasons.

Armed with a freshly minted bachelor's degree, Julia Crittendon took a job two years ago as a disease intervention specialist with Kentucky's state health department. She spent her days gathering detailed information about people's sexual partners to fight the spread of HIV and syphilis. She tracked down phone numbers and drove hours to pick up reluctant clients.

The mother of three loved the work, but made so little money that she qualified for Medicaid, the federal-state insurance program for America's poorest. Seeing no opportunity to advance, she left.

"We're like the redheaded stepchildren, the forgotten ones," said Crittendon, 46.

Such low pay is endemic, with some employees qualifying for the nutrition program for new moms and babies that they administer. People with the training for many public health jobs, which can include a bachelor's or master's degree, can make much more money in the private health care sector, robbing the public departments of promising recruits.

Dr. Tom Frieden, a former CDC director, said the agency "intentionally underpaid people" in a training program that sent early-career professionals to state and local public health departments to build the workforce.

"If we paid them at the very lowest level at the federal scale," he said in an interview, "they would have to take a 10-20% pay cut to continue on at the local health department."

As low pay sapped the workforce, budget cuts sapped services.

In Alaska, the Division of Public Health's spending dropped 9% from 2014 to 2018 and staffing fell by 82 positions in a decade to 426. Tim Struna, chief of public health nursing in Alaska, said declines in oil prices in the mid-2010s led the state to make cuts to public health nursing services. They eliminated well-child exams for children over 6, scaled back searches for the partners of people with certain sexually transmitted infections and limited reproductive health services to people 29 and younger.

Living through an endless stream of such cuts and their aftermath, those workers on the ground grew increasingly worried about mustering the "surge capacity" to expand beyond their daily responsibilities to handle inevitable emergencies.

When the fiercest of enemies showed up in the U.S. this year, the depleted public health army struggled to hold it back.

A DECIMATED SURGE CAPACITY

As the public health director for the Kentucky River District Health Department in rural Appalachia, Scott Lockard is battling the pandemic with 3G cell service, paper records and one-third of the employees the department had 20 years ago.

He redeployed his nurse administrator to work round-the-clock on contact tracing, alongside the department's school nurse and the tuberculosis and breastfeeding coordinator. His home health nurse, who typically visits older patients, now works on preparedness plans. But residents aren't making it easy on them.

"They're not wearing masks, and they're throwing social distancing to the wind," Lockard said in mid-June, as cases surged. "We're paying for it."

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Even with more staff since the HIV outbreak, Indiana's Scott County Health Department employees worked evenings, weekends and holidays to deal with the pandemic, including outbreaks at a food packing company and a label manufacturer. Indiana spends \$37 a person on public health.

"When you get home, the phone never stops, the emails and texts never stop," said Hall, the preparedness coordinator.

All the while, she and her colleagues worry about keeping HIV under control and preventing drug overdoses from rising. Other health problems don't just disappear because there is a pandemic.

"We've been used to being able to 'MacGyver' everything on a normal day, and this is not a normal day," said Amanda Mehl, the public health administrator for Boone County, Illinois, citing a TV show.

Pezzino, whose department in Kansas serves Topeka and Shawnee County, said he had been trying to hire an epidemiologist, who would study, track and analyze data on health issues, since he came to the department 14 years ago. Finally, less than three years ago, they hired one. She just left, and he thinks it will be nearly impossible to find another.

While epidemiologists are nearly universal in departments serving large populations, hardly any departments serving smaller populations have one. Only 28% of local health departments have an epidemiologist or statistician.

Strapped departments are now forced to spend money on contact tracers, masks and gloves to keep their workers safe and to do basic outreach.

Melanie Hutton, administrator for the Cooper County Public Health Center in rural Missouri, pointed out the local ambulance department got \$18,000, and the fire and police departments got masks to fight COVID-19.

"For us, not a nickel, not a face mask," she said. "We got (5) gallons of homemade hand sanitizer made by the prisoners."

Public health workers are leaving in droves. At least 34 state and local public health leaders have announced their resignation, retired or been fired in 17 states since April, a KHN/AP review found. Others face threats and armed demonstrators.

Ohio's Gottschalk said the backlash has been overwhelming.

"Being yelled at by residents for almost two hours straight last week on regulations I cannot control left me feeling completely burned out," she said in mid-June.

Many are putting their health at risk. In Prince George's County, Maryland, public health worker Chantee Mack died after, family and co-workers believe, she and several colleagues contracted the disease in the office.

A DIFFICULT ROAD AHEAD

Pence, in an op-ed in The Wall Street Journal on June 16, said the public health system was "far stronger" than it was when coronavirus hit.

It's true that the federal government this year has allocated billions for public health in response to the pandemic, according to the Association of State and Territorial Health Officials. That includes more than \$13 billion to state and local health departments, for activities including contact tracing, infection control and technology upgrades.

A KHN/AP review found that some state and local governments are also pledging more money for public health. Alabama's budget for next year, for example, includes \$35 million more for public health than it did this year.

But overall, spending is about to be slashed again as the boom-bust cycle continues.

In most states, the new budget year begins July 1, and furloughs, layoffs and pay freezes have already begun in some places. Tax revenues evaporated during lockdowns, all but ensuring there will be more. At least 14 states have already cut health department budgets or positions or were actively considering such cuts in June, according to a KHN/AP review.

Since the pandemic began, Michigan temporarily cut most of its state health workers' hours by one-fifth. Pennsylvania required more than 65 of its 1,200 public health workers to go on temporary leave, and oth-

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ers lost their jobs. Knox County, Tennessee, furloughed 26 out of 260 workers for eight weeks.

Frieden, formerly of the CDC, said it's "stunning" that the U.S. is furloughing public health workers amid a pandemic. The country should demand the resources for public health, he said, just the way it does for the military.

"This is about protecting Americans," Frieden said.

Cincinnati temporarily furloughed approximately 170 health department employees.

Robert Brown, chair of Cincinnati's Primary Care Board, questions why police officers and firefighters didn't face similar furloughs at the time or why residents were willing to pay hundreds of millions in taxes over decades for the Bengals' football stadium.

"How about investing in something that's going to save some lives?" he asked.

In 2018, Boston spent five times as much on its police department as its public health department. The city recently pledged to transfer \$3 million from its approximately \$60 million police overtime budget to its public health commission.

Looking ahead, more cuts are coming. Possible budget shortfalls in Brazos County, Texas, may force the health department to limit its mosquito-surveillance program and eliminate up to one-fifth of its staff and one-quarter of immunization clinics.

Months into the pandemic response, health departments are still trying to ramp up to fight COVID-19. Cases are surging in states including Texas, Arizona and Florida.

Meanwhile, childhood vaccinations began plunging in the second half of March, according to a CDC study analyzing supply orders. Officials worry whether they will be able to get kids back up to date in the coming months. In Detroit, the childhood vaccination rate dipped below 40%, as clinics shuttered and people stayed home, creating the potential for a different outbreak.

Cutting or eliminating non-COVID activities is dangerous, said E. Oscar Alleyne, chief of programs and services at the National Association of County and City Health Officials. Cuts to programs such as diabetes control and senior nutrition make already vulnerable communities even more vulnerable, which makes them more likely to suffer serious complications from COVID. Everything is connected, he said.

It could be a year before there's a widely available vaccine. Meanwhile, other illnesses, including mental health problems, are smoldering.

The people who spend their lives working in public health say the temporary coronavirus funds won't fix the eroded foundation entrusted with protecting the nation's health as thousands continue to die.

Contributing to this report were: Associated Press writers Mike Stobbe in New York; Mike Householder in Toledo, Ohio; Lindsay Whitehurst in Salt Lake City, Utah; Brian Witte in Annapolis, Maryland; Jim Anderson in Denver; Sam Metz in Carson City, Nevada; Summer Ballentine in Jefferson City, Missouri; Alan Suderman in Richmond, Virginia; Sean Murphy in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma; Mike Catalini in Trenton, New Jersey; David Eggert in Lansing, Michigan; Andrew DeMillo in Little Rock, Arkansas; Jeff Amy in Atlanta; Melinda Deslatte in Baton Rouge, Louisiana; Morgan Lee in Santa Fe, New Mexico; Mark Scolforo in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania; and AP Economics Writer Christopher Rugaber in Washington.

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Russian vote on extending Putin's rule until 2036 nears end

By VLADIMIR ISACHENKOV and DARIA LITVINOVA Associated Press

MOSCOW (AP) — Russia's vote on constitutional amendments that could allow President Vladimir Putin to extend his rule until 2036 entered its final day Wednesday amid widespread reports of pressure on

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voters and other irregularities.

For the first time in Russia, the polls were kept open for a week to help reduce crowds on election day and to bolster turnout amid the coronavirus pandemic — a provision that Kremlin critics saw as just another way to manipulate the vote.

Putin is all but guaranteed to get the result he wants following a massive state propaganda campaign and the changes and the opposition's failure to mount a coordinated challenge. Ironically, however, the plebiscite aimed at consolidating Putin's grip could end up eroding his position because of the unconventional methods used to boost participation and the dubious legal basis for the ballot.

By Wednesday morning, the turnout already exceeded 55%, according to election officials. But Kremlin critics and independent election observers questioned official figures showing that in some regions up to 85% of eligible voters had turned out.

Grigory Melkonyants, co-chair of the independent election monitoring group Golos, called the overall vote numbers "suspicious in general."

"We look at neighboring regions, and anomalies are obvious — there are regions where the turnout is artificially (boosted), there are regions where it is more or less real," Melkonyants told The Associated Press.

The ballot completes a convoluted saga of concealment, deception and surprise that began in January, when Putin first proposed the constitutional changes in a state-of-the-nation address. He offered to broaden the powers of parliament and redistribute authority among the branches of the Russian government, stoking speculation he might continue calling the shots as parliamentary speaker or as chairman of the State Council when his presidential term ends in 2024.

The Russian leader's intentions became clear only hours before a decisive vote in parliament, when legislator Valentina Tereshkova, a Soviet-era cosmonaut who was the first woman in space in 1963, suddenly proposed a measure to let him run two more times. The amendments, which also emphasize the priority of Russian law over international norms, outlaw same-sex marriages and mention "a belief in God" as a core value, quickly sailed through the Kremlin-controlled legislature.

Putin, who has been in power for more than two decades — longer than any other Kremlin leader since Soviet dictator Josef Stalin — said he would decide later whether to run again in 2024. He argued that resetting the term count was necessary to keep his lieutenants from "darting their eyes in search for possible successors instead of normal, rhythmical work."

Gleb Pavlovsky, a political analyst and former Kremlin political consultant, said Putin's unrelenting push to hold the vote despite the fact that Russia is reporting thousands of new coronavirus infections each day reflected the Russian leader's potential vulnerabilities.

"Putin lacks confidence in his inner circle and he's worried about the future," Pavlovsky said. "He wants an irrefutable proof of public support."

Even though parliamentary approval was enough to make it law, the 67-year-old Russian president put his constitutional plan to voters in a bid to showcase his broad support and add a democratic veneer to the changes. His maneuver backfired weeks later when the coronavirus pandemic engulfed Russia, forcing Putin to postpone the plebiscite originally scheduled for April 22.

The delay made Putin's campaign blitz lose momentum and left his constitutional reform plan hanging as the damage from the virus mounted and public discontent grew. Plummeting incomes and rising unemployment during Russia's outbreak have dented Putin's approval ratings, which sank to 59% during Russia's outbreak, the lowest level since his ascent to power, according to the Levada Center, Russia's top independent pollster.

Amid the uncertainty, Putin rescheduled the vote immediately upon seeing the first signs of a slowdown in Russia's infection rate even though the daily confirmed cases remains high.

Moscow-based political analyst Ekaterina Schulmann said the Kremlin had faced a difficult dilemma. Holding the vote sooner would have brought accusations of jeopardizing public health for political ends, while delaying it further raised the risks of defeat, she said.

"A late vote could have been lost. Holding it in the autumn would have been too risky," Schulmann said.

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Schulmann argued that the Kremlin's focus isn't so much on boosting overall turnout but rather on increasing attendance by public sector workers.

The authorities have mounted a sweeping effort to persuade teachers, doctors, workers at public sector enterprises and others who are paid by the state to cast ballots. Reports surfaced from many corners of the vast country that managers were coercing people to vote.

Kremlin critics and independent monitors pointed out that the relentless pressure on voters coupled with new opportunities for manipulations from a week of early voting eroded the standards of voting to a new low.

The Golos monitoring group noted unusual differences between neighboring regions: in the Siberian republic of Tyva over 73% voted during the first five days, while in the neighboring Irkutsk region the turnout was around 22% and in the neighboring republic of Altai it was under 33%.

"These differences can be explained only by forcing people to vote in certain areas or by rigging," Golos said.

Monitoring the vote became more challenging due to hygiene requirements and more arcane rules for election observers. The Kremlin also has used other tactics to increase turnout and support for the amendments.

Prizes ranging from gift certificates to cars and apartments were offered as an encouragement, giant billboards went up across Russia and celebrities posted ads for the "yes" vote on social media. Two regions with large numbers of voters — Moscow and Nizhny Novgorod — allowed electronic balloting and voters with Russian passports from eastern Ukraine were brought across the border in buses to vote.

Most observers expect the Kremlin to get its way, regardless of the opposition's strategies.

"People are angry at the government, but they still don't have any alternative to Putin," Pavlovsky said.

He noted, however, that the unusual methods used by authorities to boost turnout and get the result Putin wants will undermine the legitimacy of the vote.

"The procedure has been distorted and simplified to the point when it would be difficult to trust the figures," Pavlovsky said.

Turkey: Up to 60 migrants feared dead after boat sinks

By SUZAN FRASER Associated Press

ANKARA, Turkey (AP) — Up to 60 migrants may have been trapped in a boat that sank in an eastern lake last week, Turkey's interior minister said Wednesday.

Turkey launched a search-and-rescue mission involving helicopters and boats after the boat carrying migrants across Lake Van was reported missing on June 27. So far rescue teams have recovered six bodies.

Interior Minister Suleyman Soylu, who traveled to Van to oversee the rescue operation, told reporters Wednesday that authorities estimated the boat was carrying between 55 and 60 migrants when it went down in stormy weather.

A total of 11 other people have detained in connection with the tragedy, he said. A village administrator has been removed from office for delaying reporting the incident, he added.

Soylu says experts think the sunken boat is under 110-120 meters (360-394 feet) of water. An underwater imaging system was dispatched from Ankara to locate the wreck, he added.

HaberTurk television said the migrants are believed to be from Pakistan, Afghanistan and Iran.

Last year, seven migrants drowned while 64 others were rescued when their boat capsized in the lake, which is close to the border with Iran but lies within Turkey's borders. Smugglers are believed to be transporting migrants across the lake to escape police checkpoints on nearby roads.

Turkey, which hosts about 3.7 million Syrian refugees, is a main crossing point for migrants trying to reach Europe.

Earlier this year, thousands of migrants arrived at Turkey's border with Greece trying to cross illegally after Turkey made good on a threat to open its borders for those seeking to cross into Europe. The move triggered days of violent clashes between the migrants and Greek border authorities.

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Soylu said Turkey had detained 454,000 migrants last year. This year, Turkish authorities prevented some 16,000 migrants from reaching Turkey through the Turkey-Iran border and detained 4,500 others who managed to cross into Van province.

COVID-19 cases mount at the ends of the Earth in Timbuktu

By BABA AHMED Associated Press

TIMBUKTU, Mali (AP) — Harandane Toure started taking malaria pills when he first spiked a fever but as the days passed his illness only worsened.

Doctors ultimately told him he was among the hundreds now infected with the coronavirus in this town long fabled for being inaccessible from the rest of the world.

There are no commercial flights to Timbuktu, whose remote location in the Sahara Desert has long made the town's name synonymous with the ends of the Earth.

Health officials say the global pandemic has managed to reach here all the same. Already there are more than 500 cases including at least nine deaths, making it Mali's largest outbreak outside the capital.

At the local hospital, a cluster of tents set up outside now houses 32 COVID-19 patients. There isn't a single ventilator available. Temperatures regularly soar above 45 degrees Celsius (113 degrees Fahrenheit), adding to the patients' misery as they battle fever.

"I've been on the brink of death because there were times I was gasping for air like a fish that's just been taken out of the river," said Toure, a teacher in his 50s who can't pinpoint where exactly he might have contracted the virus.

"At night I couldn't sleep, I feel like there was a rock weighing a ton on my chest that was choking me and keeping me awake. I could hardly breathe," he said. "For a moment, I asked to die so that I could be at peace because of the suffering I was going through, but God, inexplicably, miraculously, gave me a reprieve."

COVID-19 first arrived in Mali back in March, when two cases emerged — one in the capital of Bamako, where international flights land, and the other in Kayes, a city with strong ties to the Malian diaspora in Europe.

By April, the virus made its way 1,000 kilometers (620 miles) from the capital to Timbuktu, a more than 24-hour journey by road. There are just a few buses a week from the capital, though cars used as public transport also make the trip.

The official death toll has reached nine, but at least six others who died later tested positive too.

So far the hospital here has had enough oxygen tanks to treat its patients battling COVID-19. But having enough nurses to administer it remains a struggle especially now that there are 32 COVID-19 patients too sick to recover at home under confinement.

Medical specialists remain woefully few to treat those with the coronavirus, whose complications have baffled doctors around the globe. There are no radiologists to read the chest X-rays, no lung specialists with experience in respiratory diseases or doctors specialized in kidney issues, which have emerged as one of COVID-19's grave complications.

"We don't have a public health doctor, let alone an epidemiologist," laments Djibril Kassogué, the regional health director for Timbuktu.

The location isn't an easy one, either, when it comes to recruiting more health professionals. The risk of violence remains high in this region where Westerners have long been kidnapped for ransom by extremist groups. Regular U.N. peacekeeping patrols are a daily reminder of just how unstable northern Mali still is more than seven years after Islamic extremists were chased from power here.

From the surrounding desert, extremists continue to plant roadside bombs across the north, adding to the isolation. The U.N. mission does run flights to and from Bamako, and often transports COVID-19 tests from distant locales to the capital.

When that's not possible, local health officials have resorted to sending them aboard public buses, adding delays to the processing time anytime a bus breaks down.

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This month Mali's health ministry sent a mobile laboratory to Timbuktu and a team capable of conducting more than 100 tests a day.

It's a major step in Mali, where two months into its outbreak in May the International Rescue Committee said the country was still only conducting 173 tests per 1 million people. By comparison, the United States at that time was carrying out 38,394 tests per 1 million amid widespread criticism that was far too few.

There is also concern about what could happen if the virus were to infect even more remote parts of northern Mali, where the presence of extremists makes it too difficult for health teams to venture out and test. An outbreak among the nomadic populations in the north could be particularly difficult to track, experts warn.

In Timbuktu, life has changed little amid the virus. Groups of people still pray at the mosque, mask use is not enforced and many doubt that COVID-19 is what's killing people.

Moussa Hama Sankaré, the head of the hospital, has expressed concern about people making secret visits at night to see COVID-19 patients confined to their homes.

Toure, the patient now recovering, worries people are not taking the virus seriously enough.

"People have started leaving the masks behind and are going out in public without them," he says. "If people don't protect themselves I'm afraid this disease is going to hit Timbuktu hard."

Associated Press writer Krista Larson in Dakar, Senegal, contributed to this report.

Women taken from African mothers by Belgium now want redress

By SAMUEL PETREQUIN Associated Press

NEDER-OVER-HEEMBEEK, Belgium (AP) — Monique Bitu Bingi was only 4 years old when she was taken from her family in Belgian Congo and locked up in a religious mission run by Catholic nuns. Her friend Lea Tavares Mujinga was even younger the day her mother was forced to give her up: just a 2-year-old toddler.

Born from a white settler father and a Black mother — and despised because of their biracial heritage — both girls were seized from their mothers and separated from their African roots by Belgian authorities that ruled over the area from 1908-1960.

During colonial times, they, like thousands of other biracial children known as "métis," were taken away and raised in Belgian institutions as the colonial power promoted a strict separation of white and Black people and systematically tried to prevent interracial unions.

At the St. Vincent de Paul sisters' mission, they went through years of deprivation and abuse that have left indelible scars.

"We have been destroyed, both morally and psychologically," Bitu Bingi told The Associated Press on Monday, the eve of the 60th anniversary of Congo's independence on June 30, 1960. "We have lost our identities. Excuses are not enough."

Now in their 70s, Bitu Bingi and Tavares Mujinga want reparations. Along with three other biracial women born between 1945 and 1950 in the African country, they have filed a lawsuit in Brussels targeting the Belgian state for crimes against humanity.

Their complaint comes amid growing demands that Belgium reassess its colonial past. In the wake of protests against racial inequality in the United States, several statues of King Leopold II, who is blamed for the deaths of millions of Africans during Belgium's colonial rule, have been vandalized and a petition has demanded that Belgium remove all of his statues.

Last year, the Belgian government apologized for the state's role in taking thousands of babies from their African mothers. And for the first time in the country's history, a reigning king expressed regret Tuesday for the violence carried out by the former colonial power. In a letter to Congolese President Felix Tshisekedi, Belgium's King Philippe conveyed his "deepest regrets" for the "acts of violence and cruelty" and "suffering and humiliation" inflicted on Belgian Congo.

Bitu Bingi, Tavares Mujinga and the three other women now live in Belgium and France after emigrating from Congo and have requested compensation of 50,000 euros (\$55,000) each but are also seeking

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broad reparations for all children seized from their mothers and placed in institutions during the colonial era.

"There were official documents from the administration, it's a state crime that was organized by the Belgian colonial administration," said Christophe Marchand, a lawyer representing the women.

Tavares Mujinga said she was taken away from her family while her father, a Portuguese man who worked in the cotton industry, had left the country for a holiday. Bitu Bingi's father worked for the Belgian administration.

According to legal documents, in all five cases the fathers did not exercise parental authority and the Belgian administration threatened the children's Congolese families with reprisals if they refused to let them go.

Time has passed since the five women were forced to cut ties with their relatives, but the trauma they went through has never been fully addressed, and their pain remains immense. None of them have ever received psychological assistance.

"When we talk about it, we cry," Noelle Verbeeken, one of the five plaintiffs, told the AP on the outskirts of Brussels.

"We have no identity. We don't know where we come from. ... We are nothing. Just the 'children of sin,'" Verbeeken said, quoting the expression used to describe the children when they arrived at the religious mission in the Congolese town of Katende. There, Tavares Mujinga was reunited with her older brother, who had been seized a few years earlier.

The women lived in the mission with 20 other biracial children and Black orphans in very harsh conditions. Bitu Bingi recalls that food was scarce, and rare were the days when she could properly wash.

"We did not know how chicken tasted. And one of the doors of our dormitory was overlooking the morgue," she said.

The girls did receive an education. Tavares Mujinga, who went on to marry a Belgian airplane pilot, became a primary teacher while Verbeeken studied Greek humanities and became a nurse.

"They wanted to make nuns out of us. We had other plans," Bitu Bingi said.

The women's traumatic journey took a turn for the worse several months after independence, when they and the other children were abandoned by both the Belgian authorities and the Catholic Church. The nuns and other mission personnel were evacuated amid political upheaval and the children were left on their own.

"There was no room for us," Bitu Bingi said, recalling mutilated bodies around the mission during the post-independence unrest.

She doesn't dwell on the sexual abuse and rape by Congolese militia fighters after the nuns left that is described in the lawsuit, which says the militiamen sent to the abandoned mission to look after the young girls molested them instead. Bitu Bingi was only 11.

To this day, she says she can't help but think of the militia trucks whenever she hears the sound of a truck engine.

She found solace during a trip to South America decades later after finding out that her father had emigrated to Argentina to start a new life. She traveled there and finally met that branch of her family, a trip she said eased her suffering.

"My father was already dead, but I received a warm welcome," she said.

Bitu Bingi and the women she calls "sisters" now hope their lawsuit will lead Belgium to finally recognize its responsibility in their suffering and in the pain of the thousands of other children who were snatched away.

"What we expect, and what they expect, is a reparation law, a strong decision," said Jehosheba Bennett, another lawyer for the women. "Telling the stories of what happened during the colonization is really important, because now there is not much awareness about this."

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

'You broke my wrist!' Police sued for taking down wrong man

By RUSS BYNUM Associated Press

SAVANNAH, Ga. (AP) — Body camera video shows Antonio Arnelo Smith handing his driver's license to a Black police officer and answering questions cooperatively before a white officer walks up behind him, wraps him in a bear hug and slams him face-first to the ground.

"Oh my God, you broke my wrist!" the 46-year-old Black man screams as two more white Valdosta officers arrive, holding him down and handcuffing him following the takedown. One eventually tells Smith he's being arrested on an outstanding warrant, and is immediately corrected by the first officer: They've got the wrong man.

Clutching his wrist and whimpering, Smith was let go without charges after the violent encounter on Feb. 8 in Valdosta, Georgia, near the Florida state line.

Now he's suing all four officers, as well as Valdosta's police chief, mayor and others, saying police used excessive force and violated his civil rights.

"When you see that video, you can't help but say this is a travesty," said Nathaniel Haugabrook, one of Smith's attorneys. "Nobody should be done that way."

The federal lawsuit comes during a national outcry over police brutality against people of color, sparked by the killing of George Floyd in Minneapolis. Haugabrook said police stopped Smith for questioning after a drug store employee reported him for panhandling outside.

"Obviously it has some racial tones to it," Haugabrook said Thursday.

Smith's encounter with police went largely unnoticed for more than four months, until he filed suit June 19. The city of Valdosta issued a statement three days after that, saying police are conducting an internal investigation and that Smith never filed a complaint.

City officials also released one of the four body camera recordings — that of the officer who grabbed Smith, which doesn't show the takedown because the camera is pressed to Smith's back. Valdosta officials didn't release body camera videos with a clearer view until after the Valdosta Daily Times published one received from Smith's attorneys.

The city's statement said police responding to a report that a man was harassing customers and asking for money outside the drug store simultaneously found two suspects nearby who fit the description. Officers questioning one of them learned he had an outstanding arrest warrant. The other was Smith.

The city's statement says that an officer, identified in the lawsuit as Sgt. Billy Wheeler, approached Smith mistakenly believing he was the wanted man, and "advised him to place his hands behind his back." Smith "began to resist by pulling his arms forward and tensing his body," prompting Wheeler to take him to the ground, the city said.

This is not an accurate description of what the officers' body cameras recorded.

The video shows Wheeler walk up silently behind Smith, grab his right wrist and pin both of his arms to his sides in a bear hug. Only then does he order Smith to put his pinned hands behind his back, and Wheeler slams him to the ground almost immediately thereafter.

Asked about this discrepancy, a city spokeswoman, Ashlyn Johnson, said the city had no further comment. She said she did not know the status of the officers involved.

"The City of Valdosta and the Valdosta Police Department take any report of any injury to a citizen seriously," the statement said.

The videos, recorded at noon on a clear, sunny day, show the encounter from beginning to end. Smith cries out in pain that his wrist is broken, and Wheeler says: "Yeah, he might be broke." The officers remove the handcuffs within about a minute and call for an ambulance. Still on the ground, Smith asks why he's being arrested.

"We have a warrant for your arrest," one officer tells Smith.

That prompts the officer who first stopped Smith, identified in court records as Dominic Henry, to correct them.

"Hey, this was another guy," Henry says. "The guy with the warrant's over there. No, there's two different people."

Smith leaves the scene before paramedics arrive. His lawyer said Smith wanted to get away from the officers as quickly as possible, and the wrist never healed properly.

Smith's lawsuit in U.S. District Court seeks unspecified monetary damages. In a letter sent to Valdosta officials seeking a settlement before the lawsuit was filed, Smith's attorneys asked for \$700,000. But he also wants something more, his lawyer said: A commitment by the Valdosta Police Department to reform.

Oklahoma voters narrowly approve Medicaid expansion

By SEAN MURPHY Associated Press

OKLAHOMA CITY (AP) — Oklahoma voters narrowly decided on Tuesday to expand Medicaid health insurance to tens of thousands low-income residents, becoming the first state to amend its Constitution to do so.

With 100% of precincts reporting unofficial results, State Question 802 passed by less than 1 percentage point. The question fared well in metropolitan areas, including Oklahoma City and Tulsa, but was overwhelmingly opposed in rural counties.

Idaho, Maine, Nebraska and Utah have all expanded Medicaid through ballot questions, but did so by amending state statutes, according to the nonpartisan Kaiser Family Foundation.

Amending the Oklahoma Constitution will prevent the Republican-controlled Legislature, which has resisted Medicaid expansion for a decade, from tinkering with the program or rolling back coverage. Missouri voters also will decide on a constitutional amendment on Aug. 4.

State Question 802 will extend Medicaid health insurance to those earning up to 138% of the federal poverty level, which is about \$17,200 for an individual or \$35,500 for a family of four.

Oklahoma was one of 14 states, along with neighboring Texas and Kansas, that had not expanded Medicaid under the 2010 federal Affordable Care Act. Republican Gov. Kevin Stitt and his predecessor, Mary Fallin, have opposed expansion, citing uncertainty about future costs for the state.

"We have a billion-dollar shortfall next year," Stitt said recently at a forum hosted by Americans for Prosperity, a conservative political advocacy group that opposes the measure. The state would have to "either raise taxes or to cut services somewhere else like education, first responders, or roads and bridges" to cut additional Medicaid costs, he said.

After years of legislative inaction on health insurance proposals, supporters of Medicaid expansion launched an initiative petition last year to get the measure on the ballot, and collected a record number of signatures. The plan was endorsed by several politically powerful groups, including chambers of commerce, medical trade groups, the Oklahoma Education Association and the Oklahoma Conference of Churches.

Some Republican opposition to Medicaid expansion has eroded in recent years, particularly in rural areas where hospitals have suffered financial problems or closed.

Kevin Penry, a Republican and retired pastor from Edmond, said that before going on Medicare last month he had to buy expensive insurance on the federal marketplace, which "really made me feel for folks who are in a difficult financial situation." He said he voted for the expansion.

The Oklahoma Health Care Authority has projected that about 215,000 residents would qualify for a Medicaid expansion, for a total annual cost of about \$1.3 billion. The estimated state share would be about \$164 million. But those numbers could be considerably higher given the number of Oklahomans who have lost their jobs and work-related health insurance because of the economic shutdown amid the coronavirus pandemic.

To help fund the proposal, the Legislature is expected to increase a fee that hospitals pay from 2.5% to 4%, which would generate about \$134 million annually. Stitt vetoed such a measure earlier this year.

Dems: Nursing home virus effort 'chronicle of deadly delay'

By RICARDO ALONSO-ZALDIVAR Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Trump administration was slow to comprehend the scale of COVID-19's impact on nursing homes and a disjointed federal response has only compounded the devastating toll, according

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to a report from Senate Democrats.

The report due out Wednesday, a copy of which was provided to The Associated Press, finds a lack of coordination among government agencies hindered access to coronavirus testing and protective equipment, among other problems.

"Unfortunately for the nation, it is a chronicle of deadly delay, and a lack of urgency, and the lack of a strategy," said Sen. Bob Casey of Pennsylvania, ranking Democrat on the Aging Committee. "What we see in the way the administration handled this reflects the administration's failure in responding to the pandemic generally."

Sens. Ron Wyden, D-Ore., and Gary Peters, D-Mich., joined in the report.

The head of the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, the lead federal agency on nursing homes, defended the administration's record. "The report is disingenuous," said Seema Verma. "I think the agency has had a historic and unprecedented response and should be commended for its efforts." Verma cited numerous agency alerts and guidance documents directed to nursing homes. CMS also says it has re-doubled emphasis on inspections for infection control.

Investigative agencies like the Government Accountability Office and the Health and Human Services inspector general are also focusing on nursing homes, which house a tiny share of the population but represent a large proportion of COVID deaths. The issue could have political repercussions for President Donald Trump as he tries to persuade older Americans to back him for a second term.

Even now, four months after the first nursing home outbreak was reported in Kirkland, Washington, on Feb. 29, there's no consensus estimate of the extent of suffering and death.

Statistics reported by nursing homes to the federal government as of June 14 show nearly 30,800 residents have died, according to an AP analysis.

Several news organizations have reported higher numbers. An AP count that includes nursing homes and other long-term care facilities finds nearly 52,500 deaths, combining residents and staff. Either way, that's a disproportionate share of the total 127,000 deaths nationwide.

The report, prepared by Democratic Senate staff, found that:

— It took the administration several months — until early May — to require that nursing homes report data on coronavirus cases and deaths to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and CMS. The data remains incomplete, the report says, because it lacks demographic details and may not include cases early in the pandemic. Verma said such data collection efforts can take years to set up, and that CMS may well ask for demographic details.

— Urgent recommendations from the White House and guidance from CMS to test nursing home residents and staff did not translate to results on the ground because there was no system in place to guarantee the availability of tests and supplies. Verma said CMS tried to help by changing its rules to allow labs to go into nursing homes and collect samples.

— A FEMA initiative launched at the end of April to distribute supplies to nursing homes involved unnecessary delays, delivered faulty and unusable personal protective equipment to some locations, and initially left other facilities off the distribution list though they appeared to be eligible.

— Although Congress allocated \$175 billion in emergency funding for health care facilities and service providers, nursing homes appear to have gotten a relatively small share, delivered in recent weeks. An initial \$4.9 billion was provided in late May, and more money was sent out this month, in a distribution geared to facilities serving Medicaid patients.

The report largely avoids criticism of the nursing home industry, which has been cited for poor infection control practices and chronic staffing shortages. Staff members often work at multiple facilities and may have unwittingly contributed to spreading the virus, since people can be contagious without any noticeable symptoms. Once inside a nursing home, the coronavirus encounters an ideal environment in which to spread.

Defending the administration, Republican lawmakers suggest at least part of the blame lies with several Democratic governors who required nursing homes in their states to accept recovering coronavirus patients.

CMS has impaneled a 25-member commission to analyze what happened in nursing homes and make recommendations to better protect elderly and frail residents.

The report from Senate Democrats also includes some recommendations, among them promoting strategies that have worked to allow nursing homes to safely care for coronavirus patients, accelerating the ongoing shift to home- and community-based care, and raising the pay and status of nursing home staff.

"I'm not saying that government can wave a magic wand and eliminate the threat, because the context of a nursing home is challenging," Casey said. But "there's no excuse for having this many deaths under any circumstances."

Associated Press data editor Meghan Hoyer and investigative researcher Randy Herschaft contributed to this report.

Judge temporarily blocks tell-all book by Trump's niece

By LARRY NEUMEISTER Associated Press

Distribution of a tell-all book by President Donald Trump's niece was blocked by a judge Tuesday after the president's brother said its publication would violate a pact among family members, but a publisher's chief executive says the book has already been shipped and could not be stopped.

New York state Supreme Court Judge Hal B. Greenwald in Poughkeepsie, New York, issued an order requiring the niece, Mary Trump, and her publisher to explain why they should not be blocked from publishing the book: "Too Much and Never Enough: How My Family Created the World's Most Dangerous Man." A hearing was set for July 10.

The book, scheduled to be published July 28, was written by Mary Trump, the daughter of Fred Trump Jr., the president's elder brother, who died in 1981. An online description of it says it reveals "a nightmare of traumas, destructive relationships, and a tragic combination of neglect and abuse."

The judge said no portion of the book can be distributed before he decides the validity of Robert Trump's claims. Robert Trump argues Mary Trump must comply with a written agreement among family members that such a book cannot be published without permission from other family members.

Mary Trump's lawyer, Theodore J. Boutrous Jr., and her publisher, Simon & Schuster, immediately challenged the order. Hours later, Simon & Schuster Chief Executive Officer Jonathan Karp said in court papers that the publisher was unaware of allegations of any agreement between Mary Trump and her family until two weeks ago.

"To take the unprecedented action of enjoining the publication of this Book, even temporarily, would interfere with Simon & Schuster's constitutionally protected rights and its mission to inform the American public about newsworthy topics," he said. "It would also interfere with Simon & Schuster's readers' constitutionally protected rights to receive newsworthy reporting."

Karp said Mary Trump offered "a personal and never-before-seen perspective on President Trump" in the book, which had become No. 1 on the Amazon Best Seller List.

In court papers filed Tuesday night, the publisher's lawyers said thousands of the 75,000 copies of the book that have been printed have already been shipped to sellers.

They noted that the shipping schedule was set far in advance of the court action and was not expedited because of it and that Simon & Schuster had provided multiple booksellers with key information about the book and some of them have published it.

"The trial court's temporary restraining order is only temporary but it still is a prior restraint on core political speech that flatly violates the First Amendment," Boutrous said.

"This book, which addresses matters of great public concern and importance about a sitting president in election year, should not be suppressed even for one day," Boutrous said in a statement.

Adam Rothberg, a Simon & Schuster spokesperson, said the publisher was disappointed but looks forward "to prevailing in this case based on well-established precedents regarding prior restraint."

Charles Harder, an attorney for Robert Trump, said his client was "very pleased."

He said in a statement that the actions by Mary Trump and her publisher were "truly reprehensible."

"We look forward to vigorously litigating this case, and will seek the maximum remedies available by law for the enormous damages," he said. "Short of corrective action to immediately cease their egregious conduct, we will pursue this case to the very end."

In court papers, Robert Trump maintained Mary Trump was part of a settlement nearly two decades ago that included a confidentiality clause explicitly saying they would not "publish any account concerning the litigation or their relationship," unless they all agreed, the court papers said.

Associated Press writer Michael Balsamo contributed to this report from Washington.

Baseball's minor leagues cancel 2020 seasons

By RONALD BLUM AP Baseball Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Baseball's minor leagues canceled their seasons Tuesday because of the coronavirus pandemic, and the head of their governing body said more than half of the 160 teams were in danger of failing without government assistance or private equity injections.

The National Association of Professional Baseball Leagues, the minor league governing body founded in September 1901, made the long-expected announcement. The minors had never missed a season.

"We are a fans-in-the-stands business. We don't have national TV revenues," National Association president Pat O'Conner said during a digital news conference. "There was a conversation at one point: Well, can we play without fans? And that was one of the shortest conversations in the last six months. It just doesn't make any sense."

O'Conner estimated 85-90% of revenue was related to ticket money, concessions, parking and ballpark advertising. The minors drew 41.5 million fans last year for 176 teams in 15 leagues, averaging 4,044 fans per game.

MLB teams are planning for a 60-game regular season and most of their revenue will derive from broadcast money.

"I had a conversation with the commissioner, and we weren't unable to find a path that allowed us to play games," O'Conner said. "It wasn't an acrimonious decision on our part."

O'Conner said many minor league teams had received money through the federal Paycheck Protection Program Flexibility Act.

"That was a Band-Aid on a hemorrhaging industry," he said. "Many of our clubs have gone through one, two, maybe three rounds of furloughs. In our office here, we've had varying levels of pay cuts between senior management, staff, and we've furloughed some individuals, as well, and are just about to enter in a second round of furloughs."

He hopes for passage of H.R. 7023, which would provide \$1 billion in 15-year federal loans from the Federal Reserve to businesses that had 2019 revenue of \$35 million or less and "have contractual obligations for making lease, rent, or bond payments for publicly owned sports facilities, museums, and community theaters."

In addition, the Professional Baseball Agreement between the majors and minors expires Sept. 30, and MLB has proposed reducing the minimum affiliates from 160 to 120.

"There's no question that what the pandemic has done is made us somewhat weaker economically," O'Conner said. "I don't think it's challenged our resolve. I don't think it's impacted our desire to stick together and get a good deal."

There have not been substantive talks for about six weeks.

"There are very many teams that are not liquid, not solvent, not able to proceed under normal circumstances, and these are anything but normal circumstances given the PBA and the uncertainty of the future for some of these ballclubs," O'Conner said. "So I think the coronavirus has really cut into many clubs' ability to make it. And I think that we're looking at without some government intervention, without doing something to take on equity partners, you might be looking at half of the 160 who are going to

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have serious problems.”

MLB already has told clubs to retain expanded 60-player pools, of which 30 players can be active during the first two weeks of the season starting in late July.

Conner said the financial impact of the pathogen might extend until 2023.

“As serious as the threat from Major League Baseball was,” O’Conner said, “this threat from the coronavirus, it transcends any list that anybody wants to make with respect to the possibility of teams not being around in the future.”

More AP MLB: <https://apnews.com/MLB> and https://twitter.com/AP_Sports

Carl Reiner, comedy’s rare untortured genius, dies at 98

By HILLEL ITALIE AP National Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — No one in the world of comedy was more admired, and loved, than Carl Reiner.

Reiner was the rare untortured genius of comedy, his career a story of laughter and camaraderie, of innovation and triumph and affection. His persona was so warm and approachable — everyone’s friend or favorite uncle — that you could forget that he was an architect of modern comedy, a “North Star,” in the words of Billy Crystal.

As a writer and director, he mastered a genial, but sophisticated brand of humor that Steve Martin, Jerry Seinfeld and others emulated. As an actor, he was the ideal straight man for such manic performers as Mel Brooks and Sid Caesar and dependably funny on his own. As an all-around talent, he helped perfect two standard television formats — sketch and situation comedy.

Reiner’s death Monday at 98 from natural causes prompted an outpouring from those he inspired, a group that included Brooks, Dick Van Dyke, George Clooney and Billy Eichner and millions more.

Tall and agile, equally striking whether bald or toupeed, he entertained in every medium available to him, from movies and vinyl records to Broadway and Twitter. But he will be remembered best for “The Dick Van Dyke Show,” the landmark series which aired from 1961-66 and was a master class of wit, ensemble playing, physical comedy and the overriding good nature of Reiner himself.

Based on his time in the 1950s with Sid Caesar’s “Your Show of Shows,” the forerunner to “Saturday Night Live,” it was among the first sit-coms about TV itself and inspired such future hits as “Mad About You” and “30 Rock.”

As millions of fans know, Van Dyke starred as comedy writer Rob Petrie, who worked for the demanding, eccentric Alan Brady (Reiner) and lived on Bonnie Meadow Road in suburban New Rochelle with his wife Laura (Mary Tyler Moore, in her first major TV role) and young son. Petrie’s fellow writers were veteran character actors Morey Amsterdam as Buddy Sorrell and Rose Marie as Sally Rogers. Reiner originally had a very different title and cast in mind. The pilot was called “Head of the Family,” which starred Reiner and Barbara Britton, and aired as a single episode in July 1960. But CBS executives worried that Reiner would make Petrie seem too Jewish, so Van Dyke was cast instead.

Reiner likely needed the time spared from playing the lead. Besides acting in and producing the “Van Dyke” series, he wrote or co-wrote dozens of episodes — a feat that exhausted Reiner and amazed the cast and others in the business. Some of the more notable shows: Laura inadvertently revealing to the public that Alan Brady was bald; Rob on a radio marathon, delirious from lack of sleep, calling out to a kitten he’s learned is stuck in a tree; Rob as a jury foreman, clumsily smitten by the attractive defendant (Sue Ann Langdon), and unaware that Laura is in the courtroom.

“I can explain ... nothing,” a sheepish Rob later tells his wife.

“Although it was a collaborative effort,” Van Dyke wrote in “My Lucky Life In and Out of Show Business, a memoir published in 2011, “everything about the show stemmed from his (Reiner’s) endlessly and enviably fascinating, funny, and fertile brain and trickled down to the rest of us.” On Tuesday, Van Dyke called Reiner “kind, gentle, compassionate, empathetic and wise.”

Reiner and Co. had parodied current events and popular culture on the Caesar program, but for the Van

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Dyke show he deliberately avoided topical references, hoping it would seem timeless. The sitcom remained highly popular in re-runs, with Laura Petrie's plaintive "Oh, Rob!" a lasting catchphrase. One famous fan, Orson Welles, was known for rushing to his bedroom in the afternoon so he could be near a TV set when the show was on. First lady Michelle Obama once joked that she preferred watching "Dick Van Dyke" to viewing her husband's debates.

Reiner had broken through in television's early days, before he even owned a TV: He joined "Your Show of Shows" in 1950 after performing in several Broadway plays, and much of his early work came as a "second banana." Reiner was part of an extraordinary writing team that included Brooks, Neil Simon and Larry Gelbart, and a performing cast featuring Caesar and Imogene Coca. He was never funnier than as an unhinged mechanical figure from a Bavarian clock, never steadier than in a spoof of "This Is Your Life," in which he is the host and Caesar a surprise honoree who desperately — violently — doesn't want the honor. "

As second banana," Reiner told TV Guide, "I had a chance to do just about everything a performer can ever get to do. If it came off well, I got all the applause. If it didn't, the show was blamed."

Off stage, Reiner and Brooks had a rapport which launched a comic franchise. During the "Show of Shows" years, they started improvising skits which became the basis for "The 2000 Year Old Man." Reiner was the interviewer, Brooks the old witness to history.

Reiner: "Did you know Jesus?"

Brooks: "I knew Christ, Christ was a thin lad, always wore sandals. Hung around with 12 other guys. They came in the store, no one ever bought anything. Once they asked for water."

Their routine was an instant favorite at parties, and Reiner recalled that Steve Allen insisted they should turn their banter into a record. "2000 Years with Carl Reiner and Mel Brooks" came out in 1960 and was so popular that Reiner would later tell NPR even Britain's Queen Mother, "the biggest shiksa in the world," loved it. The duo updated their shtick over time and won a Grammy in 1998 for their "The 2000 Year Old Man in the Year 2000," the same year Reiner received the Kennedy Center Mark Twain Prize for Humor. When the sound system failed at the start of the ceremonies, Reiner called from the balcony, "Does anybody have four double-A batteries?"

After the Van Dyke show, Reiner appeared in such hit movies as "The Russians Are Coming, the Russians Are Coming" and the "Ocean's Eleven" films that starred George Clooney. He directed George Segal and Ruth Gordon in "Where's Poppa?," George Burns in "Oh, God!" and Steve Martin in "The Jerk" and "All of Me." He took pride in his books, notably "Enter Laughing," a "bio-novel" which later became a film and Broadway show.

Reiner was the father of actor-director Rob Reiner, who starred as Archie Bunker's son-in-law on "All in the Family" and directed "When Harry Met Sally..." Rob Reiner said in a tweet Tuesday that his "heart is hurting. He was my guiding light."

Carl Reiner, a son of Jewish immigrants, was born in 1922 in New York City, and raised in a three-room apartment. He loved to mimic voices and tell jokes, and, after high school, attended drama school. He then joined a small theater group. "It was a terrific experience, but I wasn't getting any money for it," he told the Akron Beacon Journal in 1963. "I got uppity one day — after all, the audience was paying from 22 to 88 cents for admission — and I demanded to be paid. They settled for \$1 a performance and I ... became their highest-priced actor."

During World War II, Reiner served in the Army and toured in GI variety shows. After the war, he landed several stage roles, breaking through on Broadway in "Call Me Mister." He married Estelle Lebst, in 1943. Besides son Rob, the couple had another son, Lucas, a film director; and a daughter, Sylvia, a psychoanalyst and author. Estelle, who died in 2008, had a memorable role in "When Harry Met Sally..." — as the woman who overhears Meg Ryan's ersatz ecstasy in a restaurant and says, "I'll have what she's having."

Reiner, winner of multiple Emmys and other awards, was in the business for life. In the 1990s, he won an Emmy by reprising Alan Brady for an episode of "Mad About You" and more recently made appearances on "Two and a Half Men" and "Hot in Cleveland." In the 21st century, he was writing books and

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commenting daily through his Twitter feed, venting anger at the presidency of Donald Trump. Most nights, Brooks came over and the two ate dinner together. In the mornings, Reiner had a ritual that provided the title for the 2017 documentary he hosted and received an Emmy nomination for, "If You're Not in the Obit, Eat Breakfast."

"Every morning before having breakfast," Reiner said in the movie, "I pick up my newspaper, get the obituary section and see if I'm listed. If I'm not, I'll have my breakfast."

Associated Press writer Mike Stewart contributed to this report

With a pen stroke, Mississippi drops Confederate-themed flag

By EMILY WAGSTER PETTUS Associated Press

JACKSON, Miss. (AP) — With a stroke of the governor's pen, Mississippi is retiring the last state flag in the U.S. with the Confederate battle emblem — a symbol that's widely condemned as racist.

Republican Gov. Tate Reeves signed the historic bill Tuesday at the Governor's Mansion, immediately removing official status for the 126-year-old banner that has been a source of division for generations.

"This is not a political moment to me but a solemn occasion to lead our Mississippi family to come together, to be reconciled and to move on," Reeves said on live TV just before the signing. "We are a resilient people defined by our hospitality. We are a people of great faith. Now, more than ever, we must lean on that faith, put our divisions behind us, and unite for a greater good."

Mississippi has faced increasing pressure to change its flag since protests against racial injustice have focused attention on Confederate symbols in recent weeks.

A broad coalition of legislators on Sunday passed the landmark legislation to change the flag, capping a weekend of emotional debate and decades of effort by Black lawmakers and others who see the rebel emblem as a symbol of hatred.

Among the small group of dignitaries witnessing the bill signing were Reuben Anderson, who was the first African American justice on the Mississippi Supreme Court, serving from 1985 to 1991; Willie Simmons, a current state Transportation Commissioner who is the first African American elected to that job; and Reena Evers-Everette, daughter of civil rights icons Medgar and Myrlie Evers.

Medgar Evers, a Mississippi NAACP leader, was assassinated in the family's driveway in 1963. Myrlie Evers was national chairwoman of the NAACP in the mid-1990s and is still living.

"That Confederate symbol is not who Mississippi is now. It's not what it was in 1894, either, inclusive of all Mississippians," Evers-Everette said after the ceremony. "But now we're going to a place of total inclusion and unity with our hearts along with our thoughts and in our actions."

Reeves used several pens to sign the bill. As he completed the process, a cheer could be heard from people outside the Governor's Mansion who were watching the livestream broadcast on their phones. Reeves handed the pens to lawmakers and others who had worked on the issue.

The Confederate battle emblem has a red field topped by a blue X with 13 white stars. White supremacist legislators put it 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.

Critics have said for generations that it's wrong for a state where 38% of the people are Black to have a flag marked by the Confederacy, particularly since the Ku Klux Klan and other hate groups have used the symbol to promote racist agendas.

Mississippi voters chose to keep the flag in a 2001 statewide election, with supporters saying they saw it as a symbol of Southern heritage. But since then, a growing number of cities and all the state's public universities have abandoned it.

Several Black legislators, and a few white ones, kept pushing for years to change it. After a white gunman who had posed with the Confederate flag killed Black worshipers at a South Carolina church in 2015, Mississippi's Republican speaker of the House, Philip Gunn, said his religious faith compelled him to say that Mississippi must purge the symbol from its flag.

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The issue was still broadly considered too volatile for legislators to touch, until the police custody death of an African American man in Minneapolis, George Floyd, set off weeks of sustained protests against racial injustice, followed by calls to take down Confederate symbols.

A groundswell of young activists, college athletes and leaders from business, religion, education and sports called on Mississippi to make this change, finally providing the momentum for legislators to vote.

Before the bill signing Tuesday, state employees raised and lowered several of the flags on a pole outside the Capitol. The secretary of state's office sells flags for \$20 each, and a spokeswoman said there has been a recent increase in requests.

During recent news conferences, Reeves refused to say whether he thought the Confederate-themed flag properly represents present-day Mississippi, sticking to a position he ran on last year, when he promised that if the flag design was going to be reconsidered, it would be done in another statewide election.

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

Reeves said before signing over the flag's demise, "We are all Mississippians and we must all come together. What better way to do that than include 'In God We Trust' on our new state banner."

He added: "The people of Mississippi, black and white, and young and old, can be proud of a banner that puts our faith front and center. We can unite under it. We can move forward — together."

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

Police say missing kids' mom helped keep their bodies hidden

By REBECCA BOONE Associated Press

BOISE, Idaho (AP) — Prosecutors say the mother of two children who were found dead in rural Idaho months after they vanished in a bizarre case that captured worldwide attention had conspired with her new husband to hide or destroy the kids' bodies.

The new felony charges against Lori Vallow Daybell came late Monday, the latest twist in a case tied to the mysterious deaths of the couple's former spouses and their beliefs about zombies and the apocalypse that may have affected their actions.

A judge set Daybell's bail at \$1 million during her first court appearance on the new felony charges Tuesday. The judge asked if she understood the allegations and that if convicted she could be sentenced to up to 10 years behind bars. Daybell, who wiped her eyes occasionally with a tissue, answered "yes."

Daybell is already charged with abandoning or deserting 7-year-old Joshua "JJ" Vallow and 17-year-old Tylee Ryan, but because police found their remains buried in her husband's yard, it's not clear if those allegations will stand. She's also charged with obstructing a police investigation, asking a friend to lie to police on her behalf and contempt of court for failing to follow a order to produce the kids.

Daybell's attorney has indicated that she intends to defend herself against the charges, but she hasn't yet had a chance to enter a plea.

Her husband, Chad Daybell, was charged this month with concealing evidence by destroying or hiding the children's bodies. He's pleaded not guilty.

Prosecutors are using the same behavior alleged in Lori Daybell's older charges to support the conspiracy charge, saying she aided Chad Daybell's efforts to hide the bodies by asking her friend to lie to police about JJ's whereabouts and lying to police herself when she told them JJ was in Arizona and Tylee was attending college.

Authorities have not yet said how exactly the children died or who caused their deaths. Court documents suggest JJ was buried in a pet cemetery on Chad Daybell's property and that Tylee's remains were dismembered and burned. Investigators found the remains by tracking the movements of Lori Daybell's brother, Alex Cox, using cellphone data. Authorities searched Chad Daybell's home again Monday but haven't said what they were looking for.

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Cox is also dead, succumbing to an apparent blood clot in his lung at his home in Arizona last December. In the newest court documents filed in Lori Daybell's conspiracy case, Rexburg police Lt. Ron Ball wrote that Cox also was involved in the conspiracy to hide the kids' remains by taking JJ to Chad Daybell's property the day the child was buried and by later telling police the boy was visiting his grandparents in Louisiana.

The documents also reference claims that the Daybells believed dark spirits, or "zombies," would possess people. Lori Daybell reportedly told her friend Melanie Gibb at different times in 2019 that both JJ and Tylee had become zombies. Gibb said the Daybells also believed the only way to rid a person of a dark spirit was by killing them so the person could be at rest in the afterlife.

"Gibb was informed by Vallow that when a person became a 'zombie,' their original spirit left their body and entered 'limbo' and is trapped and cannot progress to 'paradise,'" Ball wrote in an affidavit. "Vallow then informed Gibb that for the person's original spirit to be freed from limbo the person's physical body had to die. Despite the teaching that a physical body needed to die, Gibb reports she was never told by Vallow or Daybell that they planned to carry out a physical killing themselves."

The complex case began last summer with Cox shooting and killing Lori's estranged husband, Charles Vallow, in suburban Phoenix in what he asserted was self-defense. Vallow was seeking a divorce, saying Lori believed she had become a god-like figure who was responsible for ushering in the biblical end times.

Shortly after Vallow's death, Lori and the children moved to Idaho, where Chad Daybell lived. He ran a small publishing company, putting out many fiction books he wrote about apocalyptic scenarios loosely based on the theology of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. He also recorded podcasts about preparing for the apocalypse, and friends said he claimed to be able to receive visions from "beyond the veil."

He had been married to Tammy Daybell, who died in her sleep last October of what her obituary said were natural causes. Authorities grew suspicious when Chad Daybell married Lori just two weeks later, and they had Tammy Daybell's body exhumed in Utah in December. The results of that autopsy have not been released.

Police began searching for Tylee and JJ in November after relatives raised concerns. Police say the Daybells lied to investigators about the children's whereabouts before quietly leaving Idaho. They were found in Hawaii months later.

Sunbelt states rush to line up hospital beds, not barstools

By TAMARA LUSH and JOHN SEEWER Associated Press

ST. PETERSBURG, Fla. (AP) — Florida and other states across the Sunbelt are thinning out the deck chairs, turning over the barstools and rushing to line up more hospital beds as they head into the height of the summer season amid a startling surge in confirmed cases of the coronavirus.

With newly reported infections running about 40,000 a day in the U.S., Dr. Anthony Fauci, the nation's top infectious-disease expert, warned on Tuesday that the number could rocket to 100,000 if Americans don't start following public health recommendations.

Over the past few days, states such as Florida, Arizona, Texas and California have reversed course, closing or otherwise clamping down on bars, shutting beaches, rolling back restaurant capacity, putting limits on crowds at pools, or taking other steps to curb a scourge that may be thriving because of such factors as air conditioning and resistance to wearing masks.

"Any time you have these reopenings, you're depending on people to do the right things, to follow the rules. I think that's where the weak spots come in," said Dr. Cindy Prins, a University of Florida epidemiologist. She warned that things are likely to get worse before they get better.

Hospitals in the new hot spots are already stretched nearly to the limit and are scrambling to add intensive care unit beds for an expected surge in COVID-19 cases in the coming weeks.

Newly confirmed cases in Florida have spiked over the past week, especially in younger people, who may be more likely to survive the virus but can spread it to the Sunshine State's many vulnerable older residents.

The state reported more than 6,000 new confirmed cases Tuesday. More than 8,000 were recorded on

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each of three days late last week. Deaths have climbed past 3,500. Floridians ages 15 to 34 now make up 31% of all cases, up from 25% in early June. Last week, more than 8,000 new confirmed cases were reported in that age group, compared with about 2,000 among people 55 to 64 years old.

Hospital ICUs are starting to fill up in South Florida, with a steadily increasing number of patients requiring ventilators. Miami's Baptist Hospital had only six of its 82 ICU beds available, officials said.

In hard-hit Arizona, hospitals are looking for ways to cram more beds into their facilities and hiring out-of-state nurses. State officials have authorized "crisis standards of care" telling hospitals which patients should get a ventilator or other scarce resources if there is a shortage.

Dignity Health, which operates several hospitals in the Phoenix area, is converting more areas to treat COVID-19 patients and preparing to put multiple patients in private rooms, spokeswoman Carmelle Malovich said. It's bringing nurses from underutilized hospitals in its system to Arizona, and hiring traveling nurses and respiratory therapists throughout July.

Republican Gov. Doug Ducey shut down bars, movie theaters and gyms and banned groups larger than 10 at swimming pools.

Air conditioning could be a factor in hot-weather states where new cases have been spiking, because it recirculates air instead of bringing it in fresh from outside, said Dr. Kristin Englund, an infectious-disease physician at Cleveland Clinic.

"I definitely think the air conditioning and the oppressive heat in the South is going to play a role in this," she said.

The coronavirus has been blamed for over a half-million deaths worldwide, including about 130,000 in the U.S., where the number of new cases per day has soared over the past month, primarily in the South and West.

"I would not be surprised if we go up to to 100,000 a day if this does not turn around, and so I am very concerned," Fauci said on Capitol Hill.

Van Johnson, mayor of the tourism-dependent city of Savannah, Georgia, announced he is requiring the wearing of masks, with violators subject to \$500 fines.

Savannah, population 145,000, becomes one of the first cities in Georgia to take such a step. Republican Gov. Brian Kemp has largely prohibited local governments from imposing rules stricter than the state's.

After talking with the governors of Arizona and Texas, Colorado Gov. Jared Polis said Tuesday that his state will rein in previously set rules for bars and nightlife. Under the modifications, bars that had been allowed to operate at 25% capacity will be closed for in-person service if they don't serve food.

The new round of shutdowns across the country is likely to cause another spike in layoffs.

Nikki Forsberg said she is relying on government loans to keep the Old Ironhorse Saloon, the only bar in the Texas Hill Country town of Blanco, afloat after it was closed for two months beginning in mid-March and then shut down again Friday by the governor's order.

She said money got so tight for some of her eight employees during the first shutdown that she told them to go the bar and take whatever they needed — petty cash, toilet paper, even one of the refrigerators.

"That's how desperate it got," she said. "By the time we had opened back up, we had stripped the bar of all the non-liquor inventory."

Health officials say the next several weeks will be critical in Florida. The Fourth of July, the reopening of Walt Disney World on July 11, and the Republican National Convention in Jacksonville at the end of August promise to draw crowds and create the potential for person-to-person spread.

While cities like Miami, Fort Lauderdale, St. Petersburg and Sarasota have mandated masks, some people in Florida have been resistant.

In The Villages retirement community near Orlando, tension has developed among residents who wear masks and those who don't. And the split has been along political lines.

Ira Friedman, who along with wife, Ellen, is active in the local Democratic Party, said that at first, he would just make an exaggerated cough to get his point across if he saw someone without a mask. But he said he has become more vocal about it as the number of cases has grown.

"Unfortunately, we don't find that the Republicans are following the same protocols as we are," his wife

said.

Elsewhere, the European Union will reopen on Wednesday to visitors from 14 countries — but not the U.S., which has barred most Europeans. The EU also kept its ban in place for visitors from China and from countries such as Russia, Brazil and India where infections are running high.

Americans make up a big share of Europe's tourism industry, and summer is a key period. More than 15 million Americans travel to Europe each year, while some 10 million Europeans head across the Atlantic.

"Americans were 50% of my clientele," lamented Paola Pellizzari, who owns a mask and jewelry shop on the Saint-Louis island in the heart of Paris and heads its business association. "We can't substitute that clientele with another."

Across the English Channel, things are also headed in reverse in places.

Britain reimposed a lockdown in Leicester, a city of 330,000 that officials said accounted for 10% of all new coronavirus cases in the nation last week. Stores closed their doors, and schools prepared to send children home.

Seewer reported from Toledo, Ohio. Associated Press reporters from around the world contributed to this report.

McGrath wins Kentucky Dem primary; McConnell showdown awaits

By BRUCE SCHREINER Associated Press

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (AP) — Former Marine pilot Amy McGrath overcame a bumpier-than-expected Kentucky primary to win the Democratic U.S. Senate nomination Tuesday, fending off progressive Charles Booker to set up a bruising, big-spending showdown with Republican Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell.

Voting ended June 23, but it took a week until McGrath could be declared the winner due to the race's tight margins and a deluge of mail-in ballots. The outcome seemed a certainty early in the campaign but became tenuous as Booker's profile surged as the Black state lawmaker highlighted protests against the deaths of African Americans in encounters with police.

It was a narrow victory for McGrath. She outlasted Booker by 15,149 votes out of more than 544,000 votes cast. Several other candidates attracted tens of thousands of votes. McConnell, a key ally to President Donald Trump, already breezed to victory in the GOP primary in his bid for a seventh term.

Kentucky switched to widespread absentee voting amid the coronavirus pandemic, and election officials needed days to count ballots. In Lexington, the state's second-largest city, about 6,000 absentee ballots were thrown out on technicalities ranging from unsigned envelopes to detached security flaps, said Fayette County Clerk Don Blevins.

Since last summer, McConnell and McGrath had looked past their respective primaries to skirmish with each other. Those attacks will now intensify heading into the fall campaign.

Declaring victory, McGrath reached out to Booker's supporters to try to unite the party for the challenge ahead against McConnell, who has dominated Kentucky's political landscape for decades.

"There is far too much at stake," McGrath said in a statement. "The differences that separate Democrats are nothing compared to the chasm that exists between us and the politics and actions of Mitch McConnell. He's destroyed our institutions for far too long."

McConnell's campaign said McGrath's narrow victory showed her candidacy is damaged heading into the general election. McConnell campaign spokeswoman Kate Cooksey portrayed McGrath as a "tool" for the national Democratic establishment and said the challenger was out of step with Kentucky with her support for abortion rights and "government-run health care."

Booker conceded later in the day and called on Democrats to dedicate themselves "to the work of beating Mitch, so ... we can get him out of the way." But his statement mentioned McGrath only briefly, focusing instead on his campaign for economic and racial justice.

"We've proven Kentuckians are hungry for a new kind of leadership, one that puts working people and

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their struggles before corporate special interests and the corrupt politicians who serve them," he said. "We've proven you don't have to pretend to be a Republican to run as a Democrat in Kentucky, and that people want big, bold solutions to the enormous crises our state is facing."

McGrath has raised prodigious amounts of campaign cash, capitalizing on the disdain national Democrats have for McConnell. It places her in a position to go toe-to-toe with the always-well-funded McConnell.

Despite her advantages, McGrath sweated out her victory against the hard-charging Booker.

Booker's long-shot bid surged amid the national eruption of protests against police brutality. He joined demonstrations in his hometown of Louisville to demand justice for Breonna Taylor, who was fatally shot by Louisville police in her own home. Booker gained the backing of leading national progressives as he supported a universal basic income and Medicare for All — ideas that McGrath resisted.

McGrath charted a more moderate course inside Democratic politics. She supports adding a public health insurance option as part of the Obama-era Affordable Care Act and supports expanded access to Medicare for people 55 and older.

She portrays McConnell as an overly partisan, Washington insider who exemplifies what's wrong with national politics. She accuses McConnell of undermining labor unions, awarding tax cuts for the wealthy and cozying up to pharmaceutical companies while people struggle to afford prescription drugs.

McConnell accuses her of being too liberal for Kentucky on issues ranging from abortion to border security. He promotes his work with Trump — who remains popular in Kentucky — to appoint conservatives to fill federal court seats. McConnell also plays up his Senate leadership role and his ability to steer federal money back to the Bluegrass State.

Trump could turn into a focal point in the Senate race.

McConnell led the effort to defend the president after House Democrats impeached him. McGrath has said she would have voted to convict Trump on both impeachment counts. She accused of the GOP-led Senate of lacking "the guts" to put a check on "out-of-control presidential power."

Associated Press Writer Piper Hudspeth Blackburn contributed to this report.

Republicans, with exception of Trump, now push mask-wearing

By AAMER MADHANI and LAURIE KELLMAN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — In Republican circles -- with the notable exception of the man who leads the party -- the debate about masks is over: It's time to put one on.

As a surge of infections hammers the South and West, GOP officials are pushing back against the notion that masks are about politics, as President Donald Trump suggests, and telling Americans they can help save lives.

Sen. Lamar Alexander, a Tennessee Republican, on Tuesday bluntly called on Trump to start wearing a mask, at least some of the time, to set a good example.

"Unfortunately, this simple, lifesaving practice has become part of a political debate that says: If you're for Trump, you don't wear a mask. If you're against Trump, you do," Alexander said.

It's a rare break for Republicans from Trump, who earlier this month told the Wall Street Journal that some people wear masks simply to show that they disapprove of him. And the Republican nudges for the public -- and the president -- to embrace mask-wearing are coming from all corners of Trump's party and even from friendly conservative media.

Both Vice President Mike Pence and Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell in recent days have urged Americans to wear one when they are unable to maintain social distance. Sen. Mitt Romney, a Utah Republican, told reporters it would be "very helpful" for Trump to encourage mask usage.

"Put on a mask -- it's not complicated," McConnell, R-Ky., urged Americans during his weekly news conference Tuesday.

Last week, Republican Rep. Liz Cheney of Wyoming tweeted a photo of her father, former Vice President Dick Cheney, wearing a disposable mask and a cowboy hat. She included the message: "Dick Cheney says

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WEAR A MASK #realmenwearmasks," a hashtag that echoed words spoken earlier by the Democratic House Speaker Nancy Pelosi.

Steve Doocy, co-host of a Trump friendly morning show "Fox & Friends," said during an interview with House Minority Leader Kevin McCarthy that he doesn't "see any downside in the president being seen more often wearing it."

McCarthy, R-Calif., responded that, for the upcoming holiday, "we could all show our patriotism with a red, white and blue mask."

Jacksonville, the Florida city where Trump is scheduled to accept his renomination as Republicans' presidential candidate in August, announced a mask requirement for indoor public spaces this week. The president's eldest son said the new requirements were no big deal.

"You know, I don't think that it's too complicated to wear a mask or wash your hands and follow basic hygiene protocols," Donald Trump Jr. told Fox Business on Tuesday.

Trump aides have defended the president's refusal to wear a mask by noting that he is regularly tested for the coronavirus, as are his aides. Those outside the administration -- including White House visitors and members of the media who are in close proximity to him and Pence -- are also tested.

White House press secretary Kayleigh McEnany didn't directly address Republican calls for Trump to wear a mask in public more often, but noted that the president has said in the past he has no problem wearing one when necessary.

But even with safeguards, the virus has found its way into the White House. A top aide to Pence, as well as a military valet to Trump, in May tested positive for the virus.

Still, mask usage remains rare in the West Wing, said Rep. Brad Sherman, a California Democrat who attended an intelligence briefing at the White House on Tuesday with senior members of the president's staff.

At the briefing, which he said included about eight White House staffers, only national security adviser Robert O'Brien wore a mask, Sherman said. He added that no one in the secure briefing room was able to maintain 6 feet (1.8 meters) of social distancing, as recommended by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

"I learned something major, and that is the White House is a mask-free zone," Sherman told The Associated Press. "The president is consistent. He's fine with people not wearing masks."

Polls show how the partisan divide on masks has seeped into public opinion.

The vast majority of Democrats think people in their community should wear a mask when they are near other people in public places at least most of the time, including 63% who say they should always, according to a Pew Research Center poll published in early June. Among Republicans, 29% say masks should be worn always, and 23% say they should be worn most of the time. Another 23% say masks should rarely or never be worn.

Trump has been caught on camera once wearing a mask. But Pence and members of the White House coronavirus task force frequently appear in public wearing masks.

"If you want the return of college football this year, wear a face covering. If you want a chance at prom next spring, wear a face covering," Surgeon General Jerome Adams urged Americans.

Over the course of the crisis, the government has sent mixed messages on masks. As the first COVID-19 cases were identified on U.S. soil, top public health officials insisted masks should be reserved for front-line workers.

In early April, the CDC issued a recommendation that people wear cloth face coverings in public settings where other social distancing measures were difficult to maintain.

But Trump immediately undercut the CDC guidance by flatly stating that he wouldn't be following it, suggesting it would be unseemly for the commander in chief to wear one as he meets with heads of states.

Other world leaders, including Canada's Justin Trudeau and France's Emmanuel Macron, have worn masks in public and urged their citizens to do the same when they can't maintain social distance.

Lawrence Gostin, a public health expert at Georgetown University, says he worries Republican calls for wearing masks "might be too late."

"The public has received such mixed messages from the administration," Gostin said. "I fear we may be

stuck with coronavirus until it burns through the American population and leaves hundreds of thousands dead.”

Associated Press writers Jill Colvin, Darlene Superville and Hannah Fingerhut in Washington contributed to this report.

High court sparks new battle over church-state separation

By DAVID CRARY and ELANA SCHOR Associated Press

The Supreme Court elated religious freedom advocates and alarmed secular groups with its Tuesday ruling on public funding for religious education, a decision whose long-term effect on the separation of church and state remains to be seen.

In *Espinoza v. Montana Department of Revenue*, the high court ruled 5-4 that states must give religious schools the same access to public funding that other private schools receive, preserving a Montana scholarship program that had largely benefited students at religious institutions.

It prompted a jubilant reaction from the reelection campaign of President Donald Trump, who counts religious conservatives as a core part of his base. The campaign lauded the decision as “a victory for educational freedom,” underscoring its importance for a White House that often spotlights religious liberty.

Sister Dale McDonald, public policy director for the National Catholic Education Association, said the ruling has the potential to stem nationwide enrollment declines at Roman Catholic schools that are forcing the closure of hundreds of institutions.

“This is a chance to get public schools and religious schools on equal footing,” McDonald said, adding that the extent of change would depend on how many state legislatures opt to expand tuition assistance.

Critics assailed the decision as another in a series of setbacks for a principle with long roots in the U.S. legal system.

It is “the latest in a disturbing line of Supreme Court cases attacking the very foundations of the separation of church and state,” said Daniel Mach, director of the American Civil Liberties Union’s freedom of religion program.

Tuesday’s ruling focused on a program that offered indirect tuition assistance through tax credits rather than direct state aid to religious schools. The court left unresolved the extent to which religious schools may use public funding for explicitly religious activities, such as worship services and religious-education courses. Mach said that issue likely would be the focus of future litigation, given that many religious schools consider doctrinal education to be at the core of their mission.

Others tracking the Montana case stopped short of predicting a major expansion of state funding for religious education.

Douglas Laycock, a law professor at the University of Virginia who co-authored a brief supporting the plaintiffs on behalf of multiple religious groups, described the decision as “incremental” and “building cautiously” on a 2017 case that ruled a Missouri church could use a state grant to resurface its playground.

“But incremental moves have been accumulating since 1986, and what would pretty clearly have been unconstitutional in the ’70s and early ’80s is now, sometimes, constitutionally required,” Laycock wrote in an email.

At least two faith-based organizations joined secular counterparts in opposing the ruling on principles of church-state separation, saying public money for religious education forces people to fund faiths to which they do not subscribe.

“Government funding to religious schools requires taxpayers to support religious institutions and beliefs that may violate their own, something the First Amendment was intended to avoid,” Rabbi Jonah Pesner, director of the Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism, said in a statement.

Rachel Laser, president of Americans United for Separation of Church and State, contended that many of the religious schools participating in Montana’s program had discriminatory policies.

“Members of the faith should fund those religious schools, not the taxpayers,” said Laser, who is Jewish.

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"It would offend my religious freedom to fund a school that requires belief that Jesus Christ is necessary for my salvation."

Another attorney who co-authored a brief supporting the plaintiffs, Becket Fund for Religious Liberty vice president and senior counsel Eric Baxter, predicted the ruling will not result in significant new funds flowing to religious schools.

"Legislatures are not compelled to provide this funding," Baxter said, pointing to language in Chief Justice John Roberts' majority opinion saying most states with provisions barring aid to religious schools still let them participate in public scholarship programs.

"If they do provide this funding to the private sphere," Baxter said of states, "then they just have to treat everybody equally."

Institute of Justice vice president Tim Keller, whose group represented the plaintiffs, told reporters that Idaho, Texas, South Dakota and Missouri were among the states most likely to create school choice programs that include religious education.

Arizona has had such programs in place for several years, enabling Catholic schools there to reverse enrollment declines that were due at least in part to parents' inability to afford tuition.

McDonald, of the Catholic education association, also predicted that the ruling would bring swift changes in Maine and Vermont, where parents have been able to get public funds for tuition at secular private schools, but not at faith-based schools.

Associated Press reporter Mark Sherman in Washington contributed.

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Dem climate plan would end greenhouse gas emissions by 2050

By MATTHEW DALY Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — House Democrats on Tuesday unveiled a plan to address climate change that would set a goal of net-zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050, while pushing renewable energy such as wind and solar power and addressing environmental contamination that disproportionately harms low-income and minority communities.

The election-year plan backed by House Speaker Nancy Pelosi and other leaders is less ambitious than a sweeping Green New Deal that a group of progressive Democrats outlined last year to combat climate change and create thousands of jobs in renewable energy.

The Green New Deal, championed by Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, D-N.Y., calls for dramatic steps to virtually eliminate U.S. greenhouse gas emissions by 2030 with a goal of meeting "100% of the power demand in the United States through clean, renewable and zero-emission energy sources," including nuclear power.

The new plan, put forth Tuesday in a 538-page report, offers similar goals but at a slower pace. It sets a range of targets, including a 45% reduction by 2030 of greenhouse gas emissions, which cause global warming.

The plan also would require that by 2035 new cars emit no greenhouse gases, while heavy-duty trucks would eliminate those emissions by 2040. The plan would eliminate overall emissions from the power sector by 2040 and all but eliminate greenhouse emissions from all economic sectors by 2050.

Supporters say the plan, presented by Democrats on the House Select Committee on the Climate Crisis, by 2050 would save more than 60,000 American lives every year thanks to reduced air pollution, as well as nearly \$8 trillion thanks to health and climate benefits.

"Democrats know the climate crisis is the essential crisis of our time, threatening public health, jobs and the economy, national security and values," Pelosi said Tuesday at a Capitol news conference.

"We are here today to provide hope and vision," said Rep. Kathy Castor, D-Fla., chairwoman of the

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climate panel. She called the Democratic plan a “transformative road map for solving the climate crisis,” and pledged it would address environmental justice and vulnerable communities that are suffering from the effects of air and water pollution and industrial waste.

“The health of our families and the air we breathe are at the heart of our plan,” Castor said, adding that it would create good-paying jobs in solar and wind energy, manufacturing electric vehicles and ensuring that communities are more resilient to flooding, extreme heat, intense hurricanes and wildfires.

While likely to win approval in the Democratic-controlled House, the plan faces insurmountable opposition in the Republican-controlled Senate. Democrats are hoping to make inaction on climate change by congressional Republicans and the Trump administration a key campaign issue in November’s election.

GOP lawmakers immediately slammed the plan as a job-killer. The Democratic plan “punishes the American economy” and “gives a free pass to China” to pollute, said House Minority Leader Kevin McCarthy, R-Calif.

President Donald Trump and congressional Republicans have expanded responsible, clean-energy technologies “while the Democrats continue to push radical Green New Deal-like policies that would cripple America’s economy and crush the poorest communities across the globe,” said White House spokesman Judd Deere.

The Democratic plan is similar to one proposed by former Vice President Joe Biden, the presumptive Democratic nominee for president. Biden’s plan also sets a goal for net-zero greenhouse emissions by 2050 and pledges an enforcement mechanism that includes milestone targets no later than 2025.

A Biden spokesman applauded Pelosi and House Democrats and said that as president, Biden “will work with Congress to implement a bold agenda that addresses the climate emergency, achieves environmental justice and creates good-paying jobs.”

The new plan received immediate support from more than 90 outside organizations, including major environmental groups and leaders in environmental justice, agriculture, public health and transportation.

The Sunrise Movement, a progressive group that helped develop the Green New Deal, said the plan did not go far enough, fast enough to halt climate change.

“This plan is more ambitious than anything we have seen from Democratic leadership so far, but it still needs to go further to match the full scale of the crisis,” said Lauren Maunus, the group’s legislative manager.

“There’s nothing to lose by going bigger,” Maunus said. “Taking action at the scale of the crisis will help lift our economy out of recession and put millions of people back to work building a more just and resilient society.”

In a sign of the changed political environment, the Democratic plan heavily emphasizes environmental justice and notes that the report’s release comes as the nation is reeling from a cascade of crises, including the COVID-19 pandemic, which has killed more than 120,000 Americans; stay-at-home orders and business closures that have put 40 million Americans out of work; and nationwide protests in response to the police killing of an unarmed Black man, George Floyd.

Throughout these crises, Trump has “failed to lead the country in a unified and compassionate response, instead choosing to fan the flames of discord and distrust,” the report said.

Cornell University climate scientist Natalie Mahowald, lead author of a 2018 report on climate change for the United Nations, said the House committee’s report got the science correct. “If you want to keep temperatures low, we need to act quickly. The emission cuts required are really quite dramatic, as they say here,” Mahowald said in an email.

Pennsylvania State University climate scientist Michael Mann called the report “an excellent starting point” that offers a sensible mix of subsidies for renewable energy and a price on carbon emissions.

The report was released as the Trump administration pushed a plan to spur production of fossil fuels even higher. In a 56-page report that did not mention the word “climate,” the Energy Department on Tuesday urged building up four Appalachian states as a petrochemical production and manufacturing hub, while delaying market-driven retirements of the region’s coal plants. The four targeted states — Pennsylvania, Ohio, West Virginia and Kentucky — are the heart of Appalachian energy production. Pennsylvania is a key battleground in the 2020 election, and recent polls show Biden narrowly leading Trump in Ohio.

Trump has mocked the science of climate change, and his administration has dismantled Obama-era

initiatives to cut greenhouse gas emissions, while throwing a series of financial and regulatory breaks to the coal, oil and gas sectors.

Associated Press writers Seth Borenstein and Ellen Knickmeyer contributed to this report.

Ex-Atlanta officer who killed Rayshard Brooks granted bond

By KATE BRUMBACK Associated Press

ATLANTA (AP) — The former Atlanta police officer who fatally shot Rayshard Brooks can be free on bond while his case is pending, a judge ruled Tuesday.

Fulton County Superior Court Judge Jane Barwick set a bond of \$500,000 for Garrett Rolfe, who faces charges including felony murder in the killing of Brooks, a 27-year-old Black man. The shooting by the white officer happened against the backdrop of demonstrations nationwide over police brutality and systemic racism after George Floyd died under a Minneapolis officer's knee.

Appearing via teleconference because of the coronavirus, lawyers for Rolfe argued that he is a native Georgian with strong ties to the community who is not at risk of fleeing or failing to show up for court and is not a danger to the community. A prosecutor argued that Rolfe, 27, had committed an unjustified fatal shooting and was a flight risk and might intimidate witnesses.

Brooks' wife, Tomika Miller, sobbed throughout an emotional plea to the judge, asking her not to grant bond for Rolfe.

"I say no to it," she said. "I say no because, mentally, I'm not able to handle it."

Barwick thanked Miller, noting that her appearance required a lot of bravery, but said she found that Rolfe met the conditions required for bond. The judge said Rolfe "is not a flight risk and I do not believe he is a danger to the community."

The conditions of his bond include wearing an ankle monitor, complying with a curfew, surrendering his passport, not possessing any guns and having no contact with victims, witnesses or Atlanta police officers.

Police body cameras showed Rolfe and another officer having a calm and respectful conversation with Brooks for more than 40 minutes after complaints that Brooks had fallen asleep in his car in a Wendy's drive-thru lane on June 12.

But when officers told him he'd had too much to drink to be driving and tried to handcuff him, Brooks resisted. A struggle was caught on dash camera video. Brooks grabbed one of their Tasers and fled, firing the Taser at Rolfe as he ran away.

An autopsy found Brooks was shot twice in the back.

During Tuesday's hearing, one of Rolfe's attorneys, Noah Pines, denied the district attorney's accusations that Rolfe shouted "I got him!" and kicked Brooks after shooting him. Pines called on Fulton County District Attorney Paul Howard to release video of the alleged kick. Howard had made the allegations when he announced the charges five days after Brooks' death.

Executive Assistant District Attorney Clint Rucker said video footage shows Rolfe's kick and a witness confirmed that it happened.

Rolfe was fired shortly after the shooting and the other officer, Devin Brosnan, was placed on desk duty. The police chief stepped down less than 24 hours after the shooting.

Rolfe now faces 11 charges in all. Felony murder is punishable by a minimum sentence of life in prison, with or without the possibility of parole. Brosnan, 26, is charged with aggravated assault and violating his oath and is free on bond.

Lawyers for both men have said their actions were justified.

Rolfe's attorneys had asked the judge for a \$50,000 signature bond, which would have meant he wouldn't have had to pay anything unless he failed to show up for court.

Rolfe's attorneys gave the judge nearly 30 letters attesting to his good character. They also said he was a police officer doing his job, not someone who went out with the intention of committing a violent crime.

"If Garrett Rolfe isn't entitled to a bond under the statute, then nobody is, nobody for a murder case,"

Pines said.

Rucker had asked the judge to deny bond, but when she asked what bond would be reasonable if she chose to grant one, he said \$1 million with a string of conditions.

Rucker argued that Brooks was running away and posed no threat when he was shot in the back.

In a statement, attorneys for Brooks' family said they were "disappointed" by the judge's ruling, but said it was "just one step in the long quest for justice for Rayshard."

"Rather than looking at this process as a series of 'wins' or 'losses,' it's imperative that we continue to push for systemic change within our criminal justice system," attorneys L. Chris Stewart and Justin Miller said. "From hate crime laws being passed to increasing oversight of members of law enforcement, our job is to ensure that positive change comes from this tragic situation."

Trump faces pressure over Russia bounties to kill US troops

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

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump on Tuesday came under growing pressure to respond to allegations that Russia offered bounties for killing American troops in Afghanistan, with Democrats demanding answers and accusing Trump of bowing to Russian President Vladimir Putin at the risk of U.S. soldiers' lives.

Frustrated House Democrats returning from a briefing at the White House said they learned nothing new about American intelligence assessments that suggested Russia was making overtures to militants as the U.S. and the Taliban held talks to end the conflict in Afghanistan. Senate Republicans who attended a separate briefing largely defended the president, arguing along with the White House that the intelligence was unverified.

The intelligence assessments were first reported by The New York Times, then confirmed to The Associated Press by American intelligence officials and others with knowledge of the matter.

White House press secretary Kayleigh McEnany said Tuesday that Trump had been briefed on the intelligence, a day after saying he hadn't because it had not been verified. McEnany added that there were still reservations within the intelligence community on the veracity of the allegations.

"Make no mistake. This president will always protect American troops," she said.

Majority Leader Steny Hoyer and a small group of other House Democrats met with White House officials as Trump downplayed the allegations. The Democrats questioned why Trump wouldn't have been briefed sooner and pushed White House officials to have the president make a strong statement about the matter.

House Intelligence Committee Chairman Adam Schiff, one of the Democrats who attended the briefing, said it was "inexplicable" why Trump won't say publicly that he is working to get to the bottom of the issue and why he won't call out Putin. He said Trump's defense that he hadn't been briefed was inexcusable.

"Many of us do not understand his affinity for that autocratic ruler who means our nation ill," Schiff said.

Rep. Mikie Sherrill, D-N.J., a freshman and former Navy helicopter pilot and Russia policy officer, said White House chief of staff Mark Meadows briefed the group. She said the Democrats told the White House briefers that the president should make a statement.

"These are very concerning allegations and if they're true, Russia is going to face repercussions," Sherrill said. "We really pushed that strongly in the meeting."

She wouldn't say how the White House officials reacted or say if the briefers told the Democrats that in fact Trump had been briefed.

Trump and his aides set a high bar for briefing a president 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 might apply to briefing lawmakers than for bringing information to the president.

Some House Republicans who were briefed by the White House on Monday also said they left with questions.

Texas Rep. Mac Thornberry, the top Republican on the Armed Services Committee, said the panel would

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"leave no stone unturned" in seeking further information. Rep. Liz Cheney of Wyoming insisted there would be "ramifications" for any targeting of Americans.

But Senate Republicans seemed less concerned and questioned the media reports. Majority Leader Mitch McConnell said he didn't think Trump should be "subjected to every rumor."

"Conclusions, apparently, were not reached," McConnell said.

The White House was working to schedule a briefing for Wednesday with McConnell, House Speaker Nancy Pelosi and the top Republicans and Democrats on the two intelligence committees according to a person familiar with the talks. The person declined to be identified because the so-called "Gang of 8" briefing will be classified. That group receives the most sensitive information in regular meetings with administration officials.

A separate group of Senate Republicans briefed in the White House Situation Room on Tuesday appeared mostly satisfied with the answers they received. Senate Armed Services Chairman Jim Inhofe of Oklahoma said he was "convinced" Trump hadn't known about the intelligence. Wisconsin Sen. Ron Johnson, chairman of the Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee, said Trump "can't be made aware of every piece of unverified intelligence."

Senate Intelligence Committee Chairman Marco Rubio said he believed the U.S. was prepared "to do everything possible to protect our men or women stationed abroad, from a variety of threats."

Some Republican senators did express frustration.

Nebraska Republican Ben Sasse, a member of the intelligence panel, said Monday evening that Congress should focus on finding out who knew what, and when, "and did the commander in chief know? And if not, how the hell not?"

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. 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.

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 on that matter, and the White House did not respond to questions.

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

Trump's Democratic general election rival, former Vice President Joe Biden, accused the president Monday of 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 writers Lisa Mascaró, Alan Fram, and Deb Riechmann contributed to this report.

The revolution comes again: Miranda and Kail on 'Hamilton'

By JAKE COYLE AP Film Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Lin-Manuel Miranda likes to picture the millionaire, Mr. Howell, from "Gilligan's Island," saying the brag. You know the one. "Well, I saw it with the original cast."

On Friday, Miranda will steal that boast from anyone who ever saw "Hamilton" in its blistering first year and a half on Broadway. A live capture taken from two of the last performances with most of the original cast in June 2016 will premiere on Disney+, opening a new (and far less expensive) chapter in Miranda's ever-evolving pop-culture phenomenon. In just a weekend, over Independence Day, more people will see "Hamilton" than ever before.

"There's a part of me that just likes taking the brag away from people," says Miranda, speaking from his home in Manhattan's Washington Heights. "I wanted the world to have that brag."

"Hamilfilm," as it's been nicknamed, will land in homes just days after Broadway announced that its shutdown will continue through at least the end of the year due to the pandemic. Disney, which acquired the film for \$75 million, will sacrifice whatever the box-office returns might have come for a major boost to its streaming service and a rush of virtual togetherness. With the stage all to itself, "Hamilton" arrives as a godsend to theatergoers.

"That was a big reason we pushed up the release," says Miranda of the film originally set to open in theaters in October 2021. "We need a reminder of how magical live theater is."

One of the first things that hits you watching "Hamilton" is the sensation of being in the midst of applause, with a full house all around. Director Thomas Kail, who also shepherded the stage show, dispersed nine cameras and some 100 microphones around the Richard Rodgers Theatre to document two performances: a Sunday matinee and a Tuesday night show. Tracking and close-up shots were done in between.

For Kail, who spoke by Zoom alongside Miranda, it means giving everyone the same seat — and a chance to dig even deeper into "Hamilton."

"There's a level of inspection of the show that can be quite different than the endorphin rush of watching it knowing that might be your one chance," says Kail. "In some ways, this will allow it to settle because now it's yours."

Since "Hamilton" was first performed at the Public Theater in January 2015 and moved to Broadway that August, the words mostly haven't changed (though two expletives have been scrubbed to make the film PG-13). But as a rhyming, hip-hop omnibus of national history and identity, slavery and immigration, its power has resonated differently at different times.

Now, the "Rise up!" verses of "My Shot" will sound to many like they're channeling the protest spirit that has swept across the country since the death of George Floyd. "Hamilton" remains a story of revolution — a triumphant and tragic one told passionately by performers of color. Everyone who perishes in "Hamilton," Miranda points out, dies from gun violence.

"Everything present at the founding is still present," says Miranda. "When I am sitting still and listening right now, it's to the young people who are leading these protests who are saying: This is what we stand for and this is what we won't stand for. I'm struck by a section that was always treated as comic relief when the show first came out where there's Samuel Seabury and he's telling everyone to remain calm. And there's Hamilton saying there's nothing calm about what's happening."

"The revolution is coming," Hamilton says.

"Hamilton" has already been woven into contemporary history. Miranda's first performance of a song from it came at Barack Obama's White House. Ever since, the history-making musical been indelibly linked to the Obama era. Michelle Obama called it "the best piece of art in any form that I have ever seen in my life."

But after the election of Donald Trump, "Hamilton" took on a more magnified aura of resistance. Just days after polls closed, Mike Pence, then the vice-president elect, attended a show. The cast, doubting Trump and Pence's support for minorities, read a letter from the stage asking him to "uphold our American values and to work on behalf of all of us."

Trump's angry response in a series of tweets, Miranda considers "a very early glimpse of the Trump

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playbook." Soon, the line "Immigrants, they get the job done" became a more pronounced rallying cry.

"I wrote it as kind of a throwaway line and in the Trump administration it gets this roar of approval," says Miranda. "You almost feel the audience trying to say, 'This anti-immigrant sentiment embodied by the current administration is not who we in the audience are.' Things hit differently than they did in the Obama administration. And they'll hit differently next year."

Kail can't sit in the back of a theater to see how this version of "Hamilton" plays. There were no test screenings except for one a few weeks ago for the cast, including original members Daveed Diggs, Leslie Odom Jr., Jonathan Groff and Renée Elise Goldsberry. But through Disney's subscription streaming service, it will be out there — somewhere, everywhere — to meet another moment in American history.

"Maybe it can be of use and of service in a way that was totally different than when we played our last performance two months ago or opened four months ago," says Kail. "Access was always the challenge for us. Access is always the challenge for theater. Here was a chance for us to make the door wider and lower the barrier."

For Miranda, it couldn't come soon enough. He wanted the movie out, he says, as soon as he saw Kail's first cut in late 2016.

"The conversation has always been: Have we played enough cities? Have we given enough people a chance to see the show live before releasing this?" says Miranda. "In a lot of ways, the question was answered for us."

Follow AP Film Writer Jake Coyle on Twitter at: <http://twitter.com/jakecoyleAP>

As virus roars back, so do signs of a new round of layoffs

By PAUL WISEMAN, TRAVIS LOLLER and KELLI KENNEDY Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The reopening of Tucson's historic Hotel Congress lasted less than a month.

General manager Todd Hanley on June 4 ended a two-month coronavirus lockdown and reopened the 39-room hotel at half-capacity, along with an adjoining restaurant for outdoor dining. Yet with reported COVID-19 cases spiking across Arizona, Hanley made the painful decision last weekend to give up, for now.

"We are closing everything," he said. "We are going to live to fight another day."

The move means that once again, most of Hanley's employees will lose their jobs, at least temporarily. Except for roughly a dozen who are needed to maintain the century-old property, more than 50 workers he had recalled will be laid off for a second time.

A resurgence of confirmed COVID cases across the South and West — and the suspension or reversal of re-openings of bars, hotels, restaurants and other businesses — is endangering hopes for an economic rebound in the region and perhaps nationally. At stake are the jobs of millions of people who have clung to hopes that their layoffs from widespread business shutdowns this spring would prove short-lived.

On Thursday, the government is expected to issue another robust monthly jobs report. Economists have forecast that employers added 3 million jobs in June, on top of 2.5 million added in May, clawing back a portion of the record-high 21 million that vanished in April at the height of the viral shutdowns.

Yet any such news might already be outdated: The jobs report won't fully capture the impact of the COVID upsurge in the South and West and the desperate steps being pursued to try to control it. The re-closings of restaurants and bars, and resulting job cuts, mark an about-face from what appear to have been premature efforts to restart the economy before the pandemic had been contained.

"We're still in a very deep hole," said Diane Swonk, chief economist at the firm Grant Thornton. "This makes the June employment report backward-looking instead of forward-looking."

Eager to jump-start their economies, governors in several states across the Sun Belt had lifted their lockdowns before their states had met reopening guidelines that were set — yet largely shrugged off — by the White House.

Reported infections quickly spiked. From April 9 to June 8, the five-day daily average of confirmed new cases had dropped from 32,150 to below 19,400. Then it began rising again, surging past the April level to nearly 42,100 on Sunday before dipping to 41,000 on Monday. The number of infections is thought to be

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far higher because many people have not been tested, and studies suggest that people can be infected with the virus without feeling sick.

The governors began to backtrack. Texas Gov. Greg Abbott last week ordered all bars closed. Arizona Gov. Doug Ducey told residents to stay home and declared that the state was "on pause" as the COVID cases stacked up. Florida also banned alcohol consumption at its bars.

Kylie Davis, a 23-year-old bartender in Tampa, Florida, had returned to work May 23 after two months without a job, struggling to collect unemployment benefits from Florida's backlogged system. The tips, she said, were good.

"People were so understanding," she said, "that we had been out of work for a while and were extremely generous."

Yet after a few weeks, Davis was coughing and exhausted and had lost her sense of taste and smell. On June 12, she tested positive for the virus and couldn't return to work when Florida bars reopened. Neither, it turns out, could many others. As Florida's reported cases spiked to record highs the past two weeks, with 9,000 cases recorded in one day last week, Gov. Ron DeSantis ordered bars to shut down again.

And just like that, Davis and others found themselves unemployed for the second time this year.

The jarring reversal underscores what many economists had been stressing for months: That the economy and the job market can't regain their health until business shutdowns have lasted long enough to reduce infections and most Americans feel confident enough to return to restaurants, bars, hotels, shopping malls and airports.

In the meantime, a resurgence of cases and re-closings of businesses is increasingly evident. The data firm Womply found that the proportion of bars that are closed in Texas, Florida, Tennessee and some other states started climbing last week after having declined fairly steadily since April or early May.

In many cases, it seems, customers themselves, rather than government edict, have driven that trend. A study by Austan Goolsbee and Chad Syverson of the University of Chicago found that Americans chose to stay home or avoid crowded stores this spring not so much because authorities told them to as out of fear stemming from reports of COVID deaths. Their study used cellphone data to track consumer traffic.

"It is the virus, not lockdowns, that dictates the course of the economy," said Yongseok Shin, an economist at Washington University and a research fellow at the Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis. "We cannot have a full economic recovery without reining in the epidemic.

He added:

"We were worried about a second wave in the fall, but it now appears that we may have one very long wave. With the number of new cases high and rising, people will be slow to return to normal activities for fear of infection, and businesses will delay hiring and investment, lockdown or no lockdown."

Even before Texas's governor shut down bars in the states again last week, Michael Neff had decided to re-close his, the Cottonmouth Club in Houston. In March, Neff had initially closed the Cottonmouth and laid off his 10 employees. Late last month, he reopened. He brought back two employees with precautions — requiring customers to wear masks except when seated, eliminating bar seating, developing a contactless menu and erecting a barrier at the bar's entrance.

It didn't work. After being cooped up for months, bar-goers appeared in no mood for social distancing, especially when they could visit other bars with fewer restrictions. Employees at the Cottonmouth were spending most of their time monitoring customers' behavior.

"You can't create an environment people want to be in if you are scolding them the whole time," Neff said.

Then he began hearing of bars where the entire staff had tested positive for the coronavirus. Two weeks ago, Neff decided to shut down again on his own.

"We couldn't just be a magical COVID-free zone," he said.

Financially, it has been difficult. But Neff said his landlord has allowed him to pay what he can so far.

Likewise, Omar Yeefoon reopened his Dallas restaurant June 10 to "a pretty good reception," after having been shuttered for three months. The comeback was fleeting. After four days, Yeefoon had to shut down again in the face of a COVID-19 resurgence in Texas and lay off two of the four workers he'd brought back.

"People's minds — they still don't feel comfortable," Yeefoon said. "Psychologically, forcing this reopening

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and forcing everyone to go out -- I don't know how it is playing out ... We in Texas have not been doing this right."

Some business people have voiced frustration over the often contradictory and evolving directives from government authorities and by the impossible situation the virus has put them in.

"You open too soon, and people die," said Dawn Nielsen, chief operating officer at Kolache Factory, which has 27 bakeries mostly around Houston. "You don't open soon enough, and businesses die."

Kolache Factory had reopened dining rooms for two weeks, then shut them back down on June 19 and returned to takeout and delivery only.

The re-closings are complicating prospects for a enduring economic recovery from the sudden and deep U.S. economic downturn. In a worst-case scenario, economists at IHS Markit warn, after a brief rebound, the economy could slip back into recession by the end of the year.

Economists Mark Vitner and Charlie Dougherty at Wells Fargo Securities note that the uptick in reported viral cases is occurring in cities like Dallas, Houston and Atlanta that have accounted for a disproportionate share of economic growth in recent years.

"The second-half economic recovery will be weaker and more sluggish than what we hoped for," Shin of Washington University said, "precisely because we failed to contain the epidemic as effectively as we should have."

Loller reported from Nashville, Tennessee, and Kennedy from Fort Lauderdale, Florida. AP Business Writer Tali Arbel contributed to this report from New York.

Ex-wife of 'Da Vinci Code' author alleges he led double life

By MICHAEL CASEY Associated Press

BOSTON (AP) — The ex-wife of "The Da Vinci Code" author Dan Brown has filed a lawsuit alleging the man known for writing about conspiracies and secret societies led a double life during their marriage that included a tryst with a Dutch horse trainer and other affairs.

In her lawsuit filed Monday in New Hampshire, Blythe Brown also claimed credit for inspiring much of his work and coming up with the premise for "The Da Vinci Code." She also alleged that Brown hid scores of future projects worth "millions" from her, including a television series as well as a children's book due out in September.

The most explosive allegations, however, are the extramarital affairs. Describing Brown's behavior as "unlawful and egregious," Brown said she only learned about it after the pair divorced in 2019 after 21 years of marriage.

She accuses the best-selling author of secretly diverting funds to pay for gifts to an unnamed horse trainer, including several Friesian horses and financing for his lover's horse training business. She alleges the "illegal behavior" took place in New Hampshire, Europe and the Caribbean.

"Dan has lived a proverbial life of lies for at least the past six years, seeming to be the epitome of a world-famous novelist leading a simple life in his home state of New Hampshire, while in reality he was something quite different," the lawsuit claims. "For years, Dan has secretly removed substantial funds from his and Blythe's hard-earned marital assets to conduct sordid, extra-marital affairs with women — one half his age — and to pursue a clandestine life."

Dan Brown, in a statement, said he was "stunned" by the allegations and called the complaint "written without regard for the truth." He said he never misled his ex-wife on their finances during their divorce and that she ended up with half their holdings after they divorced.

"For reasons known only to her and possibly her lawyer, Blythe Brown has created through this suit a fictional and vindictive account of aspects of our marriage designed to hurt and embarrass me," Brown said in a statement Tuesday.

Blythe Brown, a horse enthusiast who is involved in horse and carriage driving competitions, insisted she was only filing the lawsuit to stand up for herself and assert her "self-worth."

"We worked so hard together, struggling to build something meaningful. With great success came our

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promises to each other that we would not let it change us or our life together," she said in a statement Tuesday. "I don't recognize the man that Dan has become. It is time to reveal his deceit and betrayal. After so much pain, it is time for truth. It is time to right these wrongs."

Brown, a New Hampshire native, has had a string of bestsellers but is best known for "The Da Vinci Code," a puzzle-filled thriller that introduced readers to the notion that Jesus Christ and Mary Magdalene were married with children. The plot outraged church officials and scholars.

In her lawsuit, Blythe Brown portrayed herself as inspiring Brown to give up songwriting after the pair met in 1990 and recognizing his "unlimited potential as a writer of fiction." She also alleges she helped craft key themes and ideas for many of his books, "served as lead researcher, first-line editor, and critic, and was Dan's literary partner in the fullest sense."

"Indeed, Blythe and Dan formed a partnership in the literary world that was to last for nearly thirty years, taking them places that they could never have imagined," according to the lawsuit, in which she seeks unspecified damages.

Brown said he always recognized his ex-wife's contributions.

"The allegation that I failed to fairly acknowledge the literary contributions of my former wife is wrong," he said.

During a 2006 trial against the publisher of the "The Da Vinci Code," the court heard how Blythe Brown was an essential contributor to his million-selling historical thriller. Two authors unsuccessfully sued, claiming that Brown "appropriated the architecture" of their book in a high-profile London court case.

According to witness statements and court testimony, Blythe Brown led the massive research effort, supplied countless notes and suggestions and offered an invaluable "female perspective" for a book immersed in "the sacred feminine."

Facebook bans violent 'boogaloo' groups, not the term itself

By BARBARA ORTUTAY AP Technology Writer

OAKLAND, Calif. (AP) — Facebook has banned an extremist anti-government network loosely associated with the broader "boogaloo" movement, a slang term supporters use to refer to a second Civil War or a collapse of civilization.

But the platform didn't try to name the group, underscoring the difficulty of grappling with an amorphous network linked to a string of domestic terror plots that appears to obfuscate its existence. Among other complications, its internet-savvy members tend to keep their distance from one another, frequently change their symbols and catch phrases and mask their intentions with sarcasm.

The move by Facebook designates this group as a dangerous organization similar to the Islamic State group and white supremacists, both of which are already banned from its service. The social network is not banning all references to "boogaloo" and said it is only removing groups, accounts and pages when they have a "clear connection to violence or a credible threat to public safety."

The loose movement is named after "Breakin' 2: Electric Boogaloo," a 1984 sequel to a movie about breakdancing. "Boogaloo" supporters have shown up at protests over COVID-19 lockdown orders, carrying rifles and wearing tactical gear over Hawaiian shirts — themselves a reference to "big luau," a homophone for "boogaloo" sometimes favored by group members. Facebook said the movement dates back to 2012 and that it has been tracking it closely since last year.

Earlier in June, Steven Carrillo, an Air Force sergeant with ties to the boogaloo movement, fatally shot a federal security officer and wounded his partner outside a U.S. courthouse, ambushed and killed a California sheriff's deputy and injured four other officers in Oakland, California. According to the criminal complaint, Carrillo posted in a Facebook group, "It's on our coast now, this needs to be nationwide. It's a great opportunity to target the specialty soup bois. Keep that energy going."

The statement was followed by two fire emojis and a link to a YouTube video showing a large crowd attacking two California Highway Patrol vehicles. According to the FBI "soup bois" may be a term that followers of the boogaloo movement used to refer to federal law enforcement agents.

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While the “boogaloo” term has been embraced by white supremacist groups and other far-right extremists, many supporters insist they aren’t racist or truly advocating for violence.

Violent and extremist groups are increasingly turning to encrypted communications networks and fringe social platforms with no content moderation to congregate, which makes them more difficult to track.

As part of Tuesday’s announcement, Facebook said it has removed 220 Facebook accounts, 95 Instagram accounts, 28 Pages and 106 groups that that comprise the violent Boogaloo-affiliated network. It also took down 400 other groups and 100 pages that hosted similar content as the violent network but were maintained by accounts outside of it.

The company said it has so far found no evidence of foreign actors amplifying “boogaloo”-related material. Social media companies are facing a reckoning over hate speech on their platforms. , Reddit, an online comment forum that is one of the world’s most popular websites, on Monday banned a forum that supported President-Donald Trump as part of a crackdown on hate speech.

Live-streaming site Twitch, which is owned by Amazon, also temporarily suspended Trump’s campaign account for violating its hateful conduct rules. YouTube, meanwhile, banned several prominent white nationalist figures from its platform, including Stefan Molyneux, David Duke and Richard Spencer.

Civil rights groups have called on large advertisers to stop Facebook ad campaigns during July, saying the social network isn’t doing enough to curtail racist and violent content on its platform and several major advertisers have signed on to the boycott.

Associated Press Writer Michael Kunzelman contributed to this story from Silver Spring, Md.

Trump’s two Russias confound coherent US policy

By MATTHEW LEE AP Diplomatic Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — When it comes to Russia, the Trump administration just can’t seem to make up its mind.

For the past three years, the administration has careered between President Donald Trump’s attempts to curry favor and friendship with Vladimir Putin and longstanding deep-seated concerns about Putin’s intentions. As Trump has repeatedly and openly cozied up to Putin, his administration has imposed harsh and meaningful sanctions and penalties on Russia.

The dizzying, often contradictory, paths followed by Trump on the one hand and his hawkish but constantly changing cast of national security aides on the other have created confusion in Congress and among allies and enemies alike. To an observer, Russia is at once a mortal enemy and a misunderstood friend in U.S. eyes.

Even before Trump took office questions about Russia abounded. Now, nearing the end of his first term with a difficult reelection ahead, those questions have resurfaced with a vengeance. Intelligence suggesting Russia was encouraging attacks on U.S. and allied forces in Afghanistan by putting bounties on their heads has thrust the matter into the heart of the 2020 campaign.

The White House says the intelligence wasn’t confirmed or brought to Trump’s attention, but his vast chorus of critics are skeptical and maintain the president should have been aware.

The reports have alarmed even pro-Trump Republicans who see Russia as a hostile global foe meddling with nefarious intent in Afghanistan, the Middle East, Ukraine and Georgia, a waning former superpower trying to regain its Soviet-era influence by subverting democracy in Europe and the United States with disinformation and election interference.

Trump’s overtures to Putin have unsettled longstanding U.S. allies in Europe, including Britain, France and Germany, which have expressed concern about the U.S. commitment to the NATO alliance, which was forged to counter the Soviet threat, and robust democracy on the continent.

But Trump has defended his perspective on Russia, viewing it as a misunderstood potential friend, a valued World War II ally led by a wily, benevolent authoritarian who actually may share American values, like the importance of patriotism, family and religion.

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Trump's approach to Russia was at center stage in the impeachment proceedings, when U.S. officials testified that the president demanded political favors from Ukraine in return for military assistance it needed to combat Russian aggression. But the issue ended up as a largely partisan exercise, with House Democrats voting to impeach Trump and Senate Republicans voting to acquit.

Within the Trump administration, the national security establishment appears torn between pursuing an arguably tough approach to Russia and pleasing the president. Insiders who have raised concern about Trump's approach to Russia — including at least one of his national security advisers, defense secretaries and secretaries of state, but especially lower-level officials who spoke out during impeachment — have nearly all been ousted from their positions.

Suspicious about Trump and Russia go back to his 2016 campaign. His appeal to Moscow to dig up his opponent's emails, his plaintive suggestions that Russia and the United States should be friends and a series of contacts between his advisers and Russians raised questions of impropriety that led to special counsel Robert Mueller's investigation. The investigation ultimately did not allege that anyone associated with the campaign illegally conspired with Russia.

Mueller, along with the U.S. intelligence community, did find that Russia interfered with the election, to sow chaos and also help Trump's campaign. But Trump has cast doubt on those findings, most memorably in a 2018 appearance on stage with Putin in Helsinki.

Yet despite Trump's rhetoric, his administration has plowed ahead with some of the most significant actions against Russia by any recent administration.

Dozens of Russian diplomats have been expelled, diplomatic missions closed, arms control treaties the Russians sought to preserve have been abandoned, weapons have been sold to Ukraine despite the impeachment allegations and the administration is engaged in a furious battle to prevent Russia from constructing a new gas pipeline that U.S. lawmakers from both parties believe will increase Europe's already unhealthy dependence on Russian energy.

At the same time, Trump has compounded the uncertainty by calling for the withdrawal or redeployment of U.S. troops from Germany, angrily deriding NATO allies for not meeting alliance defense spending commitments, and now apparently ignoring dire intelligence warnings that Russia was paying or wanted to pay elements of the Taliban to kill American forces in Afghanistan.

On top of that, even after the intelligence reports on the Afghanistan bounties circulated, he's expressed interest in inviting Putin back into the G-7 group of nations over the objections of the other members.

White House officials and die-hard Trump supporters have shrugged off the obvious inconsistencies, but they have been unable to staunch the swell of criticism and pointed demands for explanations as Russia, which has vexed American leaders for decades, delights in its ability to create chaos.

No smoking, drinking or eating as Atlantic City casinos open

By WAYNE PARRY Associated Press

ATLANTIC CITY, N.J. (AP) — Atlantic City tried Prohibition once before. It worked so well that Nucky Johnson, the legendary politician and racketeer, built a Boardwalk empire immortalized on HBO nearly a century later.

It also tried banning smoking, too. That lasted for 20 days as smokers stayed away, sending casino revenue plummeting.

But New Jersey will ban both, again, when Atlantic City's nine casinos reopen after more than three months of coronavirus-related shutdowns.

The late-night announcements from Gov. Phil Murphy landed like a one-two punch on Atlantic City's casino industry, already reeling from lost revenue during the pandemic, and making plans to creak back to life at the state-mandated 25% of normal capacity.

"No booze? No one's coming," said Bob McDevitt, president of a casino employees union. "I really don't even think they should open. Why would they?"

Many casinos had planned to reopen Thursday, the first day the state will let them. But that was before

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they knew they could not let their customers smoke, drink alcohol or anything else, or eat inside the casinos. The top-performing casino, the Borgata, almost immediately folded what it saw as a losing hand, announcing it was scrapping its reopening plans for the immediate future. Instead, it will wait until conditions are more favorable.

On Tuesday, casino executives huddled in staff meetings, looking for more information and trying to decide whether it made sense to reopen at all.

By mid-afternoon, all except the Borgata announced plans to reopen in the coming days. Resorts, Tropicana, Ocean, Golden Nugget and Hard Rock all said they will reopen Thursday. Harrah's, Caesars and Bally's will reopen Friday.

Borgata had no estimate of when it might reopen.

Jim Allen, president of Hard Rock International, said the company and its thousands of workers are eager to reopen and start making up for some of the losses they have experienced since March.

"People are really desperate for a job and a paycheck," he said.

Murphy said Tuesday casinos will just have to endure a new reality until conditions improve.

"It's not a life sentence," he said. "We would like to be full-bore open; we're just not there yet."

Before the pandemic, Atlantic City had started to regain its groove, reclaiming its former spot at the nation's No. 2 gambling market behind Nevada in terms of annual gambling revenue.

Nevada casinos reopened nearly a month earlier than those in New Jersey, with many of the same health protocols: temperatures checks for guests and workers, mandated masks after being optional for a time, and hand sanitizer stations. Smoking was still allowed.

Within minutes of Murphy's announcements, made in a news release issued shortly before 10 p.m. Monday, social media lit up with complaints.

Some grumbled that the governor had sucked the fun out of the casino experience, even as a smaller number defended the decision on public health grounds. Some said they were scrapping long-planned trips, and others said they would take their business to Pennsylvania casinos.

Some vowed to come anyway, mixing drinks in their rooms and bringing sandwiches for dinner.

The bans will also reduce the number of laid-off workers who will return. Drink servers and indoor restaurant workers were to comprise a significant portion of the force that had been envisioned.

McDevitt said 60% of his union members had been scheduled to return to work this week. Now, as few as 30% may go back.

Casinos can offer outdoor dining, and those with beach bars, outdoor decks or Boardwalk seating still plan to offer it. And alcohol will still be sold in liquor stores and non-casino businesses. But the last thing casinos want is their patrons leaving the premises, for any reason.

Murphy said he reversed course on indoor dining because of the continuing outbreaks in parts of the country, even though New Jersey has seen a significant reduction in the number of its virus cases.

A significant portion of Atlantic City's casino customers comes from New York, which leads the nation in total virus cases. Murphy also said crowds at popular spots at the Jersey Shore and elsewhere have not been following social distancing rules or wearing masks.

That angered many in the casino industry.

"This is like Catholic school: A handful of people misbehaves, and the entire class gets punished," McDevitt said.

Follow Wayne Parry at <http://twitter.com/WayneParryAC>.

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

Belgium takes down statue, king regrets colonial violence

By SAMUEL PETREQUIN Associated Press

BRUSSELS (AP) — Belgium confronted its colonial past and looked toward reconciliation Tuesday, with the king expressing regret for the violence carried out by the country when it ruled over what is now Congo. Later in the day, the bust of a former monarch held responsible for the death of millions of Africans was taken off public display.

As Belgium marked the 60th anniversary of the end of its colonial rule in Congo, King Philippe's words had resounding significance since none of his predecessors went so far as to convey remorse.

In a letter to the Congolese president, Felix Tshisekedi, Philippe stopped short of issuing a formal apology, but proclaimed his "deepest regrets" for the "acts of violence and cruelty" and the "suffering and humiliation" inflicted on Belgian Congo.

The removal of King Leopold II's statue took place only hours after Philippe's letter was published. The monarch, who ruled Belgium from 1865-1909, plundered Congo as if it were his personal fiefdom, forcing many of its people into slavery to extract resources for his own profit.

The early years after he laid claim to the African country are especially infamous for killings, forced labor and other forms of brutality that some experts estimate left as many as 10 million Congolese dead.

Following a short ceremony punctuated by readings, Leopold's bust in Ghent was attached to a crane with a strap and taken away from the small park where it stood amid applause. It will be transferred to a warehouse of a Ghent city museum pending further decision from a city's commission in charge of decolonization projects.

"Removing statues does not erase history, it rectifies history and makes new history that rightly calls into question dominant narratives," said Mathieu Charles, an activist from the Belgian Network for Black Lives.

Belgium has long struggled to come to terms with its colonial past, instead focusing on the so-called positive aspects of the colonization. But the international protests against racism that followed the May 25 death of George Floyd in the United States have given a new momentum to activists fighting to have monuments to Leopold removed.

Earlier this month, about 10,000 people gathered in Brussels despite the social distancing measures implemented to fight the spread of COVID-19, with many protesters chanting anti-colonialist slogans.

The Leopold statue in Ghent was vandalized several times in the past and again after Floyd, a handcuffed Black man, died after a white Minneapolis police officer knelt on his neck. Several other monuments of the former king scattered across Belgium were defaced over the past few weeks and a statue of the monarch in the port of Antwerp was removed from a marketplace by local authorities.

Meanwhile, regional authorities also promised history course reforms to better explain the true character of colonialism while the federal Parliament 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 Tuesday. "Any work of truth and memory begins with the recognition of suffering. Acknowledging the suffering of the other."

After Leopold's claimed ownership of Congo ended in 1908, he handed it over to the Belgian state, which continued to rule over the colony 75 times Belgium's size until the African nation became independent in 1960.

In his letter 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. "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,"

Philippe also congratulated Tshisekedi on the anniversary of Congo's independence, ruing that he was not able to attend the 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/Racialinjustice>

Motion alleges Brown violated sports gender equity agreement

By MARK PRATT Associated Press

Attorneys have filed a motion alleging that Brown University violated a 22-year-old agreement to provide gender equity in varsity sports in order to comply with federal Title IX law by recently eliminating several women's athletic teams.

Attorneys for Public Justice and the American Civil Liberties Union of Rhode Island allege in the motion filed in federal court Monday that the Ivy League school violated terms of the 1998 agreement when it announced last month it would cut women's fencing, golf, squash, skiing and equestrian teams in an effort to streamline its athletic department.

Several men's sports were also cut, although some were later restored.

Brown said it would add co-ed and women's varsity sailing teams to stay in compliance with the agreement.

But the Providence-based school can't comply with the original settlement based on "teams that do not exist," according to the ACLU and Public Justice.

"Defendants' decision to eliminate five women's intercollegiate athletic varsity teams, and with them meaningful participation opportunities for women, constitutes a gross and willful violation of the Joint Agreement to the immediate and irreparable harm of the class," according to the motion. It asks the court to enforce the agreement and stop Brown from cutting sports unless it can prove that it is not violating the agreement.

The 1998 agreement stems from a lawsuit filed after Brown dropped women's gymnastics and volleyball as varsity sports in 1991.

Amy Cohen, a Brown gymnast named as a plaintiff in the original lawsuit, was listed as a plaintiff in the new motion.

"More than two decades after first being called out for blatant discrimination against its women athletes, Brown University is once again using fuzzy math, and counting non-existent athletes, in order to avoid equality and accountability in its athletics programs," Leslie Brueckner, a senior attorney for Public Justice, said in a statement.

Brown, in a statement emailed Tuesday by university spokesman Brian Clark, touted its commitment to women's sports and said it is confident it will remain in compliance with the original agreement and Title IX, if the coronavirus pandemic does not prompt the cancellation of intercollegiate sports.

"The plaintiff in this case is taking the unusual step of asking Brown to see into the future to provide data on rosters for the coming year, and is doing this at a time when a pandemic has created tremendous and unprecedented uncertainty around college enrollments and the status of athletic competition for the fall season," the school's statement said.

Anna Susini, a current member of the fencing team, called Brown's latest sports cuts a betrayal.

The 1998 agreement was a key reason she decided to attend Brown, Susini said in a statement.

"Now, its betrayal of that promise has left countless women athletes, including me, without the opportunities we believed we could count on finding here," she said.

Fauci: US 'going in wrong direction' in coronavirus outbreak

By LAURAN NEERGAARD AP Medical Writer

The U.S. is "going in the wrong direction" with the coronavirus surging badly enough that Dr. Anthony Fauci told senators Tuesday some regions are putting the entire country at risk — just as schools and

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colleges are wrestling with how to safely reopen.

With about 40,000 new cases being reported a day, Fauci, the government's top infectious disease expert, said he "would not be surprised if we go up to 100,000 a day if this does not turn around."

"I am very concerned," he told a hearing of the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions committee.

Infections are rising rapidly mostly in parts of the West and South, and Fauci and other public health experts said Americans everywhere will have to start following key recommendations if they want to get back to more normal activities like going to school.

"We've got to get the message out that we are all in this together," by wearing masks in public and keeping out of crowds, said Fauci, infectious disease chief at the National Institutes of Health.

Connect the dots, he told senators: When and how school buildings can reopen will vary depending on how widely the coronavirus is spreading locally.

"I feel very strongly we need to do whatever we can to get the children back to school," he said.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention plans more guidelines for local school systems, Director Robert Redfield said.

But in recommendations for colleges released Tuesday, the agency said it won't recommend entry testing for all returning students, faculty and staff. It's not clear if that kind of broad-stroke testing would reduce spread of the coronavirus, CDC concluded. Instead, it urged colleges to focus on containing outbreaks and exposures as students return.

Lawmakers also pressed for what Sen. Patty Murray of Washington, the committee's top Democrat, called a national vaccine plan — to be sure the race for the COVID-19 vaccine ends with shots that really are safe, truly protect and are available to all Americans who want, one.

"We can't take for granted this process will be free of political influence," Murray said. She cited how President Donald Trump promoted a malaria drug as a COVID-19 treatment that ultimately was found to be risky and ineffective.

The Food and Drug Administration released guidelines Tuesday saying any vaccine that wins approval will have to be at 50% more effective than a dummy shot in the final, required testing. That's less effective than many of today's vaccines but independent experts say that would be a good start against the virus.

FDA Commissioner Stephen Hahn said vaccine makers also must test their shots in diverse populations, including minorities, the elderly, pregnant women and those with chronic health problems.

"We will not cut corners in our decision-making," Hahn told senators.

About 15 vaccine candidates are in various stages of human testing worldwide but the largest studies -- including 30,000 people each -- needed to prove if a shot really protects are set to begin in July. First up is expected to be a vaccine created by the NIH and Moderna Inc., followed closely by an Oxford University candidate.

At the same time, the Trump administration's "Operation Warp Speed" aims to stockpile hundreds of millions of doses by year's end, so they could rapidly start vaccinations if and when one is proven to work.

Redfield said the CDC already is planning how to prioritize who is first in line for the scarce first doses and how they'll be distributed.

But a vaccine is at the very least many months away. For now, the committee's leading Republican stressed wearing a mask -- and said Trump, who notoriously shuns them, needs to start because politics is getting in the way of protecting the American people.

"The stakes are too high for the political debate about pro-Trump, anti-Trump masks to continue," said Sen. Lamar Alexander of Tennessee, who chaired Tuesday's hearing.

Alexander said he had to self-quarantine after a staff member tested positive for the virus but that he personally was protected because his staffer was wearing a mask.

"The president has plenty of admirers. They would follow his lead," Alexander said. "The stakes are too high" to continue that fight.

AP writers Ricardo Alonso-Zaldivar and Matthew Perrone in Washington, Collin Binkley in Boston and

Mike Stobbe in New York contributed to this report.

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From Powerball winner to scandal: Jack Whittaker dies at 72

By JOHN RABY Associated Press

CHARLESTON, W.Va. (AP) — Andrew "Jack" Whittaker Jr., whose life became rife with setbacks and tragedy after winning a record \$315 million Powerball jackpot on Christmas night in 2002, has died. He was 72.

The Ronald Meadows Funeral Parlor in Hinton confirmed it. A funeral home official who declined to give his name said Tuesday that Whittaker died of natural causes, but he refused to say when or where, and he said a service would be private.

Whittaker became an instant celebrity at 55 when he claimed what was then the largest U.S. lottery jackpot won by a single ticket. He opted for the lump-sum payout of \$113.4 million after taxes, and flew off to New York with his family in a private jet to appear on network TV morning shows.

But he quickly fell victim to scandals, lawsuits and personal setbacks as he endured constant requests for money, leaving him unable to trust others. Several times, he was quoted as saying he wished he had torn up the ticket.

His wife left him. A friend of his drug-addicted granddaughter was found dead at his home in 2004. Three months later, his 17-year-old granddaughter was gone, too.

His daughter, Ginger Whittaker Bragg, died in 2009 at age 42 after struggling for years with cancer.

And in 2016, he lost a Virginia home to a fire.

He struggled with drinking and gambling. His home and car were repeatedly burglarized. At a strip club, thieves broke into his Lincoln Navigator and stole a briefcase stuffed with \$245,000 and three \$100,000 cashiers' checks.

That time, at least, he caught a break — the briefcase was later found, with the money still inside.

Whittaker was charged twice with driving while under the influence and sued repeatedly, once by three female casino employees who accused him of assault.

In a 2007 interview with The Associated Press, Whittaker knew his legacy was already written.

"I'm only going to be remembered as the lunatic who won the lottery," Whittaker said. "I'm not proud of that. I wanted to be remembered as someone who helped a lot of people."

At that point, Whittaker said he still had plenty of money. How much remained at his death, and who might benefit from his estate, was not immediately clear on Tuesday.

Known for wearing cowboy hats and western-style clothing, Whittaker was a self-made millionaire long before he won the lottery, having built construction businesses worth \$17 million.

A regular Powerball player, Whittaker, who then lived in Scott Depot, already had concrete plans to share his prize with churches and his family when he claimed his winnings.

"I've had to work for everything in my life. This is the first thing that's ever been given to me," Whittaker said then.

A foundation started in Whittaker's name spent \$23 million building two churches in the years after his jackpot win, and his family donated food, clothing and college scholarships to local students.

Whittaker also put his granddaughter, Brandi Bragg, on his payroll. But his plans to give his inheritance to her were vanquished just before Christmas in 2004, when her body was found in a junked van, hidden by a boyfriend who panicked when he found her dead. An autopsy didn't pinpoint a cause.

"She was going to inherit everything," Whittaker said.

NY adds states to quarantine list, sends monitors to NYC

By MARINA VILLENEUVE Associated Press

ALBANY, N.Y. (AP) — New York is urging travelers from eight additional states to self-quarantine for 14 days as it awaits a decision on the reopening of indoor dining in New York City.

Gov. Andrew Cuomo said in a Tuesday television interview that he plans to send state police and health and liquor officials to New York City Tuesday night ahead of his decision expected Wednesday.

The governor said he worries about lack of compliance with requirements to wear a mask and keep 6 feet (2 meters) away from others amid reports that dining in closed, indoor areas with air-conditioned systems could lead to spikes in COVID-19.

"Tonight we're going to have state police, we're going to have department of health monitors, we're going to have State Liquor Authority monitors, but they're going to be looking all throughout the city to see if New Yorkers are complying," Cuomo said. "And I've said to the local governments in New York, also on Long Island we have an issue, they have to enforce the compliance ... I don't want to be a hard-edge, but it's the law."

The Democratic governor's concerns about indoor dining and lack of compliance with distancing and masks rules come as he raises repeated worries about travelers visiting New York from states where COVID-19 appears to be spreading.

Cuomo, along with his counterparts in New Jersey and Connecticut, announced a travel advisory last week that requires individuals from states with "increased prevalence of COVID-19" to quarantine for 14 days. Cuomo's advisory applies to states with a positive test rate higher than 10 per 100,000 residents, or a test positivity rate higher than 10%.

Cuomo's office announced Tuesday that California, Georgia, Iowa, Idaho, Louisiana, Mississippi, Nevada and Tennessee now meet the metrics under New York's travel advisory. Those states join Alabama, Arkansas, Arizona, Florida, North Carolina, South Carolina, Texas and Utah.

Cuomo has warned that those out-of-state travelers could lead to a rise in infections in a state that's seen a gradual decline in COVID-19 reported hospitalizations, fatalities and cases.

Nearly 900 people are hospitalized with COVID-19 in hospitals in New York, according to the state Department of Health, and 13 individuals who had tested positive for COVID-19 died Monday in hospitals or nursing homes.

Just 1% — or 524 — of 52,025 individuals tested for COVID-19 on Monday were positive, an amount that has shrunk even as the state has tested tens of thousands more people since the spring.

Individuals who violate a state or local quarantine or isolation order under the advisory can face a civil penalty of up to \$10,000, according to Cuomo's executive order.

Cuomo said he wants a "snapshot" of compliance with mask and distancing requirements in New York City, where he said he has chastised people not following the rules.

"And I say to people on the street, when I see they don't have a mask or I see these groups of people in front of a bar: 'What are you thinking? How short a memory. Learn the lesson. Give me a break,'" Cuomo said.

Supreme Court lifts ban on state aid to religious schooling

By MARK SHERMAN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — States can't cut religious schools out of programs that send public money to private education, a divided Supreme Court ruled Tuesday.

By a 5-4 vote with the conservatives in the majority, the justices upheld a Montana scholarship program that allows state tax credits for private schooling in which almost all the recipients attend religious schools.

The Montana Supreme Court had struck down the K-12 private education scholarship program that was created by the Legislature in 2015 to make donors eligible for up to \$150 in state tax credits. The state court had ruled that the tax credit violated the Montana constitution's ban on state aid to religious schools.

Chief Justice John Roberts wrote the opinion that said the state ruling itself ran afoul of the religious

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freedom, embodied in the U.S. Constitution, of parents who want the scholarships to help pay for their children's private education. "A state need not subsidize private education. But once a state decides to do so, it cannot disqualify some private schools solely because they are religious," Roberts wrote.

In a dissent, Justice Sonia Sotomayor described the ruling as "perverse."

"Without any need or power to do so, the Court appears to require a State to reinstate a tax-credit program that the Constitution did not demand in the first place," she said.

Parents whose children attend religious schools sued to preserve the program. The high court decision upholds families' rights "to exercise our religion as we see fit," said Kendra Espinoza, the lead plaintiff in the lawsuit whose two daughters attend the Stillwater Christian School in Kalispell, Montana, near Glacier National Park.

Roughly three-dozen states have similar no-aid provisions in their constitutions. Courts in some states have relied on those provisions to strike down religious-school funding.

Two states with existing private education programs, Maine and Vermont, could see quick efforts to force them to allow religious schools to participate.

Attorney General William Barr praised the ruling as "an important victory for religious liberty and religious equality in the United States." The Trump administration supported the parents' Supreme Court appeal.

Advocates for allowing state money to be used in private schooling said the court recognized in its decision that parents should not be penalized for sending their children to schools that are a better fit than the public schools.

"This opinion will pave the way for more states to pass school choice programs that allow parents to choose a school that best meets their child's individual needs, regardless of whether those schools are religious or nonreligious," said Erica Smith, a senior attorney with the Institute for Justice, which represented the parents in their court fight.

But the president of the Montana Federation of Public Employees, which counts more than 12,000 teachers and other school workers as union members, called the decision "a slap in the face" to its members and the communities they serve.

"Today's decision violates Montana's commitment to public education, our children, and our constitution. Extremist special interests are manipulating our tax code to rob Montana children of quality education while padding the pockets of those who run exclusive, discriminatory private schools," union president Amanda Curtis said.

In a separate concurring opinion, Justice Samuel Alito pointed to evidence of anti-Catholic bigotry that he said motivated the original adoption of the Montana provision and others like it in the 1800s, although Montana's constitution was redone in 1972 with the provision intact. Justice Brett Kavanaugh, whose two daughters attend Catholic schools, made a similar point during arguments in January when he talked about the "grotesque religious bigotry" against Catholics that underlay the amendment.

The decision was the latest in a line of decisions from the Supreme Court, which now includes Trump appointees Neil Gorsuch and Kavanaugh, that have favored religion-based discrimination claims. In 2014, the justices allowed family-held, for-profit businesses with religious objections to get out from under a requirement to pay for contraceptives for women covered under their health insurance plans. In 2017, the court ruled for a Missouri church that had been excluded from state grants to put softer surfaces in playgrounds.

The high court also is weighing a Trump administration policy that would make it easier for employers to claim a religious or moral exemption and avoid paying for contraceptives for women covered by their health plans. Still another case would shield religious institutions from more employment discrimination claims.

The Supreme Court also has upheld some school voucher programs and state courts have ratified others.

Ex-husband of 'Real Housewives' star is charged in assault

NEWARK, N.J. (AP) — The ex-husband of a "Real Housewives of New Jersey" cast member hired a reputed mobster to carry out an assault of the woman's current husband in exchange for a lavish wedding reception, federal prosecutors in New Jersey said Tuesday.

Thomas Manzo, 55, of Franklin Lakes, and John Perna, 43, of Cedar Grove, were each charged with conspiracy and committing a violent crime in aid of racketeering activity. Manzo is the ex-husband of Dina Manzo, while Perna was identified as a soldier in the Lucchese crime family, according to prosecutors.

Perna was also charged with conspiracy to commit wire and mail fraud related to the submission of a false car insurance claim, while Thomas Manzo was charged with falsifying and concealing records related to the federal investigation of the violent crime. Both men were arrested Tuesday and made their initial court appearances later in the day via videoconferencing.

Thomas Manzo hired Perna in the spring of 2015 to assault his ex-wife's then-boyfriend in exchange for a deeply-discounted wedding reception at a Paterson restaurant where Thomas Manzo is an owner, prosecutors said. The alleged assault occurred in July 2015.

The following month, Perna held a "lavish" wedding reception at the restaurant for a fraction of the price, prosecutors said. More than 330 people attended, including many members of the Lucchese Crime Family, authorities said.

Manzo's attorney, Michael Critchley, said his client is "absolutely innocent, and the allegations more resemble a fictionalized plot of a reality TV show, and will be proven to be nothing more than that."

An attorney representing Perna didn't return an email message Tuesday.

Hong Kong security law takes aim at protester actions

By ZEN SOO and KEN MORITSUGU Associated Press

HONG KONG (AP) — China on Tuesday approved a contentious national security law for Hong Kong that takes direct aim at some of the actions of anti-government protesters last year, in 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.

Details of the law remained under wraps until 11 p.m. (1500 GMT, 11:00 a.m. EDT), when it was published and took effect immediately.

The text specifies that those who destroy government facilities and utilities would be considered subversive. Damaging public transportation facilities and arson would constitute acts of terrorism. Any person taking part in secessionist activities, whether organizing or participating, will violate the law regardless of whether violence is used.

"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."

The law took effect ahead an hour before July 1, the 23rd anniversary of the territory's passing from Britain to China. Amid protests in Hong Kong last year, demonstrators broke into the legislative building on the anniversary, spray painted slogans on the walls and heavily damaged the electronic voting system.

During months of protests, they frequently smashed subway ticket machines and electronic sensors at entry gates, and disrupted service by holding doors open so trains couldn't leave the stations.

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

Under the law, those found guilty of inciting secessionist, subversive, terrorist activities and colluding with foreign forces could face life imprisonment if they are deemed masterminds of such activities.

The legislation also states that Hong Kong's government "shall take necessary measures to strengthen publicity, guidance, supervision and management" for schools, social groups, media, internet and other matters related to national security.

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Hong Kong will establish a committee responsible for maintaining national security in the city. It will be chaired by chief executive Carrie Lam and will be accountable to and supervised by the Chinese government.

Passage of the law came amid fears in Hong Kong and abroad that it would be used to curb opposition voices in the 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.

Speaking in a video message to the U.N. Human Rights Council in Geneva, 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.

A group of about 30 pro-China supporters gathered at Hong Kong's Tamar Park on Tuesday, waving Chinese flags. Organizers said that the rally was to show support of the national security law, and to celebrate Hong Kong's return to China.

Meanwhile, more than 100 protesters gathered at a luxury mall in Hong Kong's Central business district, chanting slogans including "Free Hong Kong, Revolution Now," with several holding 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 Joshua Rosenzweig, head of Amnesty International's China Team.

"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 also were 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 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" by reports of the law's passage, saying that would be a "grave step." Britain has said it could offer residency and possible citizenship to about 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.

He said China would take necessary measures to protect its national interests in response to "the wrong 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 opponents. Some have questioned the legal basis for 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 against it.

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

Chinese officials have railed against what they call foreign interference in the territory that they blame for encouraging the anti-government protests. Beijing condemned the protests as an attempt to permanently split Hong Kong 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 nongovernmental 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.

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 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.

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"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.

Venezuela sanctions set off fight for 'plundered' oil cargo

By JOSHUA GOODMAN Associated Press Writer

MIAMI (AP) — For two months, the Malta-flagged oil tanker Alkimos has been quietly floating off the Gulf Coast of Texas, undisturbed by the high-stakes legal fight playing out in a federal courtroom as a result

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of American sanctions on Venezuela.

The commercial dispute, which hasn't been previously reported, has all the drama of a pirate movie: a precious cargo, clandestine sea maneuvers and accusations of a high seas heist.

It pits Evangelos Marinakis, one of Greece's most powerful businessmen and owner of its most successful soccer club, Olympiakos, against a fellow shipping magnate from Venezuela, Wilmer Ruperti, who has a long history of helping the country's socialist leaders.

Round one appears to have favored Marinakis, whose Piraeus-based Capital Ship Management Corp, operates the Alkimos. On Wednesday, federal marshals in Houston are scheduled to auction off the ship's cargo: 100,266 barrels of high octane gasoline estimated to be worth more than \$5 million. The auction is in response to Judge Lynn Hughes' order seizing the cargo, which he said would've likely ended up in Venezuela, while arbitration over a \$1.7 million lien continues.

"This clearly demonstrates that sanctions work," said Russ Dallen, who closely monitors maritime traffic as the head of Miami-based Caracas Capital Markets. "But although this shipowner appears to have done the right thing, there are lots of other unscrupulous cockroaches in the shipping industry that won't hesitate to do business with Venezuela."

The U.S. has been trying for months to cut off fuel shipments to and from Venezuela, hoping to accelerate Nicolás Maduro's downfall by depriving him of the oil income that is the lifeblood of the socialist country. But so far the biggest losers have been regular Venezuelans, who are forced to wait in line for days to fill up their cars due to a lack of domestically-refined gasoline.

To date, the Trump administration has sanctioned more than 50 vessels found violating sanctions. This month it added five Iranian captains to a list of individuals blocked from doing business with the U.S. after Maduro leaned on his fellow anti-American ally to deliver gasoline that skittish commodity traders are increasingly unwilling to supply Venezuela.

The Alkimos' saga, which was pieced together from court filings reviewed by The Associated Press, began innocently enough. In late March, the Chinese-built carrier, which measures 156 meters (480 feet), was docked in Panama when it was hired to deliver the gasoline to Aruba.

But almost immediately something seemed off.

The shipping instructions indicated the cargo would be transferred at sea to another ship that had been visiting Venezuelan ports exclusively for the past year. And payment for the freight was wired from a third party, a company called Ultra Travel, which was purportedly based in Montenegro.

Moreover, ES Euroshipping AG, the Swiss-registered company that chartered the Alkimos, was owned by Ruperti, a businessman connected to Venezuela's government.

In 2002, Ruperti chartered a fleet of Russian tankers to help then President Hugo Chávez break a months' long strike at the state-run oil company PDVSA. Now, he was trying come to the rescue again.

In March, a separate Swiss company he controls billed PDVSA for a 12 million euros advance with which he planned to purchase up to 250,000 barrels of the same 95-octane gasoline he hired the Alkimos to transport, according to a copy of the invoice obtained by the AP. To get around the U.S. sanctions, the company opened a bank account in euros and rubles at Moscow-based Derzhava Bank.

The Alkimos tanker is owned by Brujo Finance Company, a company registered in the Marshall Islands. But its operator, whose name and corporate logo is painted on the ship, is Capital Ship Management, which operates a fleet of 54 tankers.

Capital's chairman, Marinakis, is the owner of football clubs Olympiakos in Greece and Nottingham Forest in England.

In 2018, prosecutors opened a preliminary investigation against him for drug trafficking stemming from the record seizure of 2.1 tons of heroin aboard one of his vessels. He has strongly denied the charges, saying they were an attempt by the leftist government at the time to silence dissent. In the past, he also faced match-fixing charges but was later cleared.

Marinakis did not respond to a request to comment made through his website and Capital.

While the arbitration between the two shipping magnates is likely to take months, U.S. officials see the

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case as a sign that sanctions on Venezuela are increasingly effective.

In May, the U.S. Departments of State and Treasury and the U.S. Coast Guard issued an advisory warning the maritime industry that such ship to ship transfers of the sort the Alkimos was being asked to perform are frequently used to evade sanctions. While the report focuses on Iran, North Korea and Syria—not Venezuela—it urges shippers to enhance due diligence and sanctions compliance practices to avoid running afoul of U.S. regulations

“The global shipping community is moving out of doing business with Venezuela,” Elliott Abrams, the Trump administration’s special representative for Venezuela, told the AP. “The most reputable firms, including the largest Greek shipping companies, have been cooperative and have shown that they value their reputations and their global businesses.”

In the case of the Alkimos, its owners suspected something was amiss. So its lawyers pressed ES Euroshipping for additional information, pointing out that the contract contained a “sanctions clause” giving the shipowner “absolute discretion” to refuse to carry out any trade that it deems exposes it, or its crew, to U.S. sanctions.

“Just to be clear in advance. Owner WILL NOT participate in any illegal trading,” according to an email sent March 31 by the shipowner’s broker.

Despite its misgivings, the ship departed Panama on April 9 — days after the AP reported that Ruperti had started purchasing oil in what he would later describe as a “humanitarian work” that didn’t violate the U.S. sanctions.

“I am 100% sure that I am doing this legally and that I am complying with the rules and obligations,” he told the AP in an April interview. He declined to comment when contacted this week about the seized cargo.

En route to Aruba, the back and forth continued—and the Alkimos’ owners grew more suspicious. The rendezvous point with the other ship, the Beauty One, was located in the open seas—50 miles west of Aruba off the northern coastline of Venezuela—rather than an area designated by Aruban authorities for ship-to-ship fuel transfers. Further, the supervisor of the risky procedure, ATM Marine Services, were unknown to the ship’s owners, without even a web page to identify it. No agents had been appointed to coordinate with Aruban authorities.

“URGENT responses to the above are requested. The matter is most serious,” the Alkimos’ broker wrote shortly before its scheduled arrival off Aruba on April 11.

Throughout the ordeal, tanker rates were surging — something that ES Euroshipping contends was driving the shipowner’s rush to unload its cargo and move on to the next job. With the world economy shutting down due to the COVID crisis, there was a glut of fuel being produced. The mammoth oil carriers, which in some cases saw their daily rates jump 10-fold, were suddenly in demand as floating storage devices even as crude prices were crashing.

After two deadlines to provide alternate voyage orders passed, the Alkimos turned around on April 26 and headed to Houston. But it first advised ES Euroshipping that it would seek a lien on the cargo for \$1.7 million to compensate for losses, including \$500,000 in fees it racked up being adrift for so long.

ES Euroshipping contends Capital Ship Management and the ship’s owners stole the cargo and is seeking damages worth \$2.3 million. In court filings, attorney Michael Volkov said that after much stonewalling by the ship owner, which refused to accept its assurances there was no sanctions risk, Euroshipping did provide alternate instructions — to take the cargo first to the Bahamas and then Trinidad.

But Ruperti’s company claims its instruction were nonetheless ignored and accused the ship owner of setting off on an illegal, 7-day voyage to Houston to find a favorable jurisdiction to legalize its “theft” when much closer ports existed for the parties — none of the U.S. nationals — to litigate their competing breach of contract claims. It also accused Alkimos of fleeing Aruban waters without notifying the harbormaster, leaving behind \$11,500 in fines and fees for the unauthorized departure.

“Brujo is but a pirate who plundered cargo at sea, fled the Aruban authorities without proper authorization, diverted its vessel to a port in this District, and then deceived this Court,” Volkov said in a May 29 filing.

Ruperti appears to have some powerful backers of his own. On May 1, Hans Hertell, a former U.S. Am-

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bassador to the Dominican Republic, wrote a letter to Ryan Patrick, the U.S. attorney for the southern district of Texas, calling on prosecutors to open a criminal probe against the shipowners.

"We were simply astounded to learn that the Vessel Owners had so brazenly stolen and converted our clients' cargo in this manner," according to the letter.

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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?

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 any 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.

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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.

Today in History

By The Associated Press undefined

Today in History

Today is Wednesday, July 1, the 183rd day of 2020. There are 183 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

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On July 1, 1863, the pivotal, three-day Civil War Battle of Gettysburg, resulting in a Union victory, began in Pennsylvania.

On this date:

In 1867, Canada became a self-governing dominion of Great Britain as the British North America Act took effect.

In 1912, aviator Harriet Quimby, 37, was killed along with her passenger, William Willard, when they were thrown out of Quimby's monoplane at the Third Annual Boston Aviation Meet.

In 1944, delegates from 44 countries began meeting at Bretton Woods, New Hampshire, where they agreed to establish the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank.

In 1946, the United States exploded a 20-kiloton atomic bomb near Bikini Atoll in the Pacific.

In 1961, Diana, the princess of Wales, was born in Sandringham, England. (She died in a 1997 car crash in Paris at age 36.)

In 1963, the U.S. Post Office inaugurated its five-digit ZIP codes.

In 1966, the Medicare federal insurance program went into effect.

In 1991, President George H.W. Bush nominated federal appeals court judge Clarence Thomas to the Supreme Court, beginning an ultimately successful confirmation process marked by allegations of sexual harassment.

In 1997, Hong Kong reverted to Chinese rule after 156 years as a British colony. Actor Robert Mitchum died in Santa Barbara, California, at age 79.

In 2002, the world's first permanent war crimes tribunal, the International Criminal Court, came into existence. A Russian passenger jet collided with a cargo plane over southern Germany, killing all 69 people, including 45 schoolchildren, on the Russian plane and the cargo jet pilots.

In 2004, actor Marlon Brando died in Los Angeles at age 80.

In 2009, Academy Award-winning actor Karl Malden, 97, died in Brentwood, California.

Ten years ago: California lawmakers approved a \$20 million settlement with the family of Jaycee Dugard, who was kidnapped as a girl and held captive in a secret backyard for 18 years by a paroled sex offender. At least two suicide bombers attacked a popular Muslim shrine in Pakistan's second largest city, Lahore, killing some three dozen people.

Five years ago: After more than a half-century of hostility, the United States and Cuba declared they would reopen embassies in each other's capitals, marking a historic full restoration of diplomatic relations between the Cold War foes. Episcopalians voted overwhelmingly at their General Convention in Salt Lake City to allow religious weddings for same-sex couples. San Francisco resident Kate Steinle, 32, was fatally shot in the back while walking along the city's popular waterfront. (Juan Francisco Lopez-Sanchez, a Mexican national who was in the U.S. illegally, acknowledged holding the gun that killed Steinle but said it fired accidentally after he found it. He was found not guilty of killing Steinle; a state appeals court threw out his conviction on a gun charge.)

One year ago: Fifteen-year-old Coco Gauff, the youngest player to qualify at Wimbledon in the professional era, defeated 39-year-old Venus Williams in the first round, 6-4, 6-4. Los Angeles Angels pitcher Tyler Skaggs, 27, was found dead in his room at the Texas hotel where the team was staying; the medical examiner found that Skaggs had a toxic mix of alcohol and the painkillers fentanyl and oxycodone in his body. Hundreds of protesters swarmed into Hong Kong's legislature, defacing portraits of lawmakers and spray-painting pro-democracy slogans in the chamber before vacating it as riot police cleared surrounding streets with tear gas; the three-hour occupation came on the 22nd anniversary of the former British colony's return to China.

Today's Birthdays: Actress Olivia de Havilland is 104. Actress-dancer Leslie Caron is 89. Actress Jean Marsh is 86. Actor Jamie Farr is 86. Actor David Prowse is 85. Cookiemaker Wally Amos is 84. Dancer-choreographer Twyla Tharp is 79. Actress Genevieve Bujold is 78. Rock singer-actress Deborah Harry is 75. Movie-TV producer-director Michael Pressman is 70. Actor Daryl Anderson is 69. Actor Trevor Eve is 69. Actor Terrence Mann is 69. Rock singer Fred Schneider (B-52's) is 69. Pop singer Victor Willis (Village People) is 69. Actor-comedian Dan Aykroyd is 68. Actress Lorna Patterson is 64. Actor Alan Ruck is 64.

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Rhythm and blues singer Evelyn "Champagne" King is 60. Olympic gold medal track star Carl Lewis is 59. Country singer Michelle Wright is 59. Actor Andre Braugher is 58. Actor Dominic Keating is 58. Actress Pamela Anderson is 53. Rock musician Mark Pirro is 50. Rock musician Franny Griffiths (Space) is 50. Actor Henry Simmons is 50. Hip-hop artist Missy Elliott is 49. Actress Julianne Nicholson is 49. Actress Melissa Peterman is 49. Actress/writer Jill Kargman is 46. Rock musician Bryan Devendorf (The National) is 45. Singer/songwriter Sufjan Stevens is 45. Actor Thomas Sadoski is 44. Actress Liv Tyler is 43. Bluegrass musician Adam Haynes (formerly w/Dailey & Vincent) is 41. Actress Hilarie Burton is 38. Actress Lynsey Bartilson is 37. Actress Lea Seydoux (LEE'-uh say-DOO') is 35. Actor Evan Ellingson is 32. Actors Andrew and Steven Cavarno are 28. Actress/singer Chloe Bailey is 22. Actress Storm Reid is 17.