

Groton Daily Independent

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



OPEN: Recycling Trailer in Groton

The recycling trailer is located at 10 East Railroad Ave. It takes cardboard, papers and aluminum cans.

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Groton Jr. Teeners Can't Catch Up To Lake Norden

Groton Jr. Teeners fell behind early and couldn't come back in an 11-6 loss to Lake Norden on Wednesday. Lake Norden scored on a walk by Dawson Noem and a groundout by Christian Rodriguez in the first inning.

Despite the loss, Groton Jr. Teeners did collect four hits in the high-scoring affair. Unfortunately, Lake Norden had five hits on the way to victory.

Lake Norden fired up the offense in the first inning. Caden Mcinerney's wild pitch allowed one run to score for Lake Norden.

Groton Jr. Teeners put up five runs in the third inning. The offensive onslaught came from a walk by Mcinerney, a single by Korbin Kucker, a groundout by Colby Dunker, and a fielder's choice by Kaleb Antonsen.

Lake Norden scored four runs in the fifth inning. Lake Norden offense in the inning was led by Noem, Ryker Warrington, and Evan Stormo, who all drove in runs.

George Jensen led things off on the hill for Lake Norden. He allowed four hits and five runs over two innings, striking out two.

Mcinerney was on the mound for Groton Jr. Teeners. He surrendered four runs on one hit over two and a third innings, striking out two. Ryan Groeblichhoff and Antonsen entered the game as relief, throwing two innings and two-thirds of an inning respectively.

Jacob Zak, Teylor Diegel, Kaleb Hoover, and Kucker all had one hit to lead Groton Jr. Teeners. Groton Jr. Teeners tore up the base paths, as three players stole at least two bases. Diegel led the way with two.

Tyson Stevenson went 2-for-2 at the plate to lead Lake Norden in hits. Luke Fraser led Lake Norden with three stolen bases, as they ran wild on the base paths with eight stolen bases.

Jr. Teeners Clinches Lead In Fourth Inning To Defeat Lake Norden

Groton Jr. Teeners ran off with the lead late in the game in a 5-2 victory over Lake Norden on Wednesday. The game was tied at two with Groton Jr. Teeners batting in the bottom of the fourth when Dillon Abeln singled on the first pitch of the at bat, scoring one run.

Lake Norden fired up the offense in the first inning. An error scored one run for Lake Norden.

Colby Dunker got the start for Groton Jr. Teeners. He went three and a third innings, allowing two runs on two hits and striking out four.

Ryker Warrington started the game for Lake Norden. He lasted two innings, allowing three hits and zero runs while striking out four and walking zero. Luke Fraser threw two innings in relief out of the bullpen.

Bradin Althoff led Groton Jr. Teeners with two hits in three at bats. Groton Jr. Teeners stole nine bases during the game as two players stole more than one. Althoff led the way with three.

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Lake Norden 2 - 5 Groton Jr. Teeners

📍 Home 🎪 Exhibition 📅 Wednesday July 01, 2020

	1	2	3	4	5	R	H	E
LKNR	1	0	1	0	0	2	2	2
GRTN	0	0	0	5	X	5	7	3

BATTING

Lake Norden	AB	R	H	RBI	BB	SO	LOB
T Stevenso...	2	1	0	0	0	1	0
G Jensen (3B	3	0	1	0	0	1	0
D Noem (SS	2	0	0	0	0	1	1
C Rodrigue...	1	0	0	0	1	0	1
L Fraser (CF...	2	0	0	0	0	0	3
R Warringto...	2	0	1	0	0	0	0
E Stormo (L...	2	0	0	0	0	1	0
C Stormo (1...	0	0	0	0	1	0	0
T Stevenso...	2	0	0	0	0	0	3
T Sarff	1	1	0	0	0	0	0
Totals	17	2	2	0	2	4	5

TB: G Jensen, R Warrington, **HBP:** T Sarff, C Stormo, T Stevenson, **LOB:** 5

PITCHING

Lake Norden	IP	H	R	ER	BB	SO	HR
R Warrington	2.0	3	0	0	0	4	0
L Fraser	2.0	4	5	1	2	1	0
Totals	4.0	7	5	1	2	5	0

P-S: R Warrington 34-24, L Fraser 36-20, **WP:** R Warrington, **BF:** R Warrington 9, L Fraser 13

Groton Jr. Te	AB	R	H	RBI	BB	SO	LOB
B Althoff (3B	3	0	2	0	0	0	0
K Kucker (2...	3	0	0	0	0	1	2
R Groebing...	1	1	0	0	1	0	1
C Dunker (P...	2	1	0	0	0	1	1
K Hoover (SS	1	0	1	0	0	0	0
K Antonsen...	2	1	1	0	0	0	0
T Diegel (CF	2	1	1	1	0	1	0
C Mcinern...	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
J Zak (1B	2	0	1	0	0	1	2
D Abeln (RF...	2	1	1	1	0	1	1
B Imrie	1	0	0	0	1	0	0
Totals	19	5	7	2	2	5	5

TB: D Abeln, J Zak, K Hoover, B Althoff 2, K Antonsen, T Diegel, **SAC:** K Hoover, **SB:** D Abeln 2, J Zak, B Althoff 3, R Groebinghoff, B Imrie, T Diegel, **LOB:** 5

Groton Jr. Te	IP	H	R	ER	BB	SO	HR
C Dunker	3.1	2	2	0	2	4	0
D Abeln	1.2	0	0	0	0	0	0
Totals	5.0	2	2	0	2	4	0

P-S: D Abeln 14-12, C Dunker 83-48, **WP:** C Dunker, **HBP:** C Dunker 3, **BF:** D Abeln 4, C Dunker 18

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Lake Norden 11 - 6 Groton Jr. Teeners

📍 Home 🏠 League 📅 Wednesday July 01, 2020

	1	2	3	4	5	R	H	E
LKNR	2	0	4	1	4	11	5	2
GRTN	0	0	5	1	0	6	4	3

BATTING

Lake Norden	AB	R	H	RBI	BB	SO	LOB
T Stevenco...	2	2	2	0	2	0	0
G Jensen (P...	2	1	0	0	2	0	4
D Noem (C	3	2	1	2	0	2	6
C Rodrigue...	2	2	0	1	0	1	2
L Fraser (CF	1	1	0	0	2	1	0
R Warringto...	1	1	0	1	3	0	1
E Stormo (L...	4	1	1	2	0	0	4
C Stormo (2B	3	1	0	0	1	1	3
T Stevenson	2	0	1	1	1	0	2
T Sarff (RF	3	0	0	2	0	1	5
Totals	23	11	5	9	11	6	12

Groton Jr. Te	AB	R	H	RBI	BB	SO	LOB
T Diegel (SS	2	1	1	0	0	0	2
J Zak (C	3	1	1	0	0	0	1
B Flihs (1B	1	1	0	0	1	1	1
K Antonsen...	3	1	0	0	0	1	4
B Althoff (CF	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
D Abeln (CF	1	1	0	0	1	1	1
K Kucker (3B	3	1	1	1	0	2	3
C Mcinerne...	2	0	0	1	1	2	4
B Imrie (LF	0	0	0	0	1	0	0
C Dunker (...	1	0	0	1	0	0	2
R Groebing...	1	0	0	0	1	1	3
K Hoover (RF	2	0	1	0	0	1	3
Totals	19	6	4	3	5	9	6

Korbin Kucker	0	1	0	0	0	0	0
Caden Mcinerney	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
2B: D Noem, TB: T Stevenson 2, D Noem 2, T Stevenson, E Stormo, HBP: L Fraser, D Noem, C Rodriguez 2, SB: L Fraser 3, T Stevenson 2, C Rodriguez 2, T Stevenson, LOB: 12	5	3					

C Carlson	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Z Evans	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
2B: K Hoover, TB: J Zak, K Hoover 2, T Diegel, K Kucker, CS: J Zak, HBP: T Diegel, B Flihs, B Althoff, SB: J Zak 2, T Diegel 2, B Flihs 2, LOB: 6	5	5					

PITCHING
2B: Bradin Althoff, Kaleb Hoover
TB: Dillon Abeln, Bradin Althoff 4, Taylor Diegel 2, Brevin Flihs 2, Ryan Groebinghoff, Kaleb Hoover, Braxton Imrie, Logan Ringgenberg 2, Jacob Zak
RBI: Bradin Althoff 4, Taylor Diegel, Colby Dunker, Brevin Flihs 3, Ryan Groebinghoff

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

Lake Norden	IP	H	R	ER	BB	SO	HR
G Jensen	2.0	4	5	5	5	2	0
E Stormo	3.0	0	1	0	0	7	0
Totals	5.0	4	6	5	5	9	0

Groton Jr. Te	IP	H	R	ER	BB	SO	HR
C Mcinerney	2.1	1	4	4	6	2	0
K Antonsen	0.2	2	3	2	4	1	0
R Groebling...	2.0	2	4	3	1	3	0
Totals	5.0	5	11	9	11	6	0

Team QAB: 19 (45.24%)
Dillon Abeln 3, Bradin Althoff 3, Kaleb Antonsen 2, Taylor Diegel, Colby Dunker, Brevin Flihs 2, Ryan Groebinghoff 2, Kaleb Hoover 2, Braxton Imrie, Logan Ringgenberg, Jacob Zak
P-S: G Jensen 65-24, E Stormo 44-27, **WP:** G Jensen 2, E Stormo, **HBP:** G Jensen 2, E Stormo, **BF:** G Jensen 17, E Stormo 10

Fielding
P-S: R Groebinghoff 45-28, C Mcinerney 67-25, K Antonsen 36-14, **WP:** R Groebinghoff 5, C Mcinerney 3, K Antonsen, **HBP:** R Groebinghoff, C Mcinerney 2, K Antonsen, **BF:** R Groebinghoff 12, C Mcinerney 16, K Antonsen 10

E: Bradin Althoff, Colby Dunker, Kaleb Hoover

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#129 in a series

Covid-19 Update: by Marie Miller

You knew this was coming, right? We're at 2,701,600 cases, which means 50,000 new cases were reported today—1.9% increase in total cases. Second worst day ever—and all of the three worst have come in the last week. I have 39 states with increasing growth rate over the past 14 days, only 10 holding their own, and just four with decreasing growth. Thirty-six states are showing R_e over 1. Plenty of bad there.

There were 672 new deaths reported today, well above where we've been running; we're now at 128,097 reported deaths. I've been waiting for this number to catch up to the increases in cases; looks like we might be there.

Setting records for new case reports today were North Carolina, Tennessee, and Texas, which reported over 8000 new cases today. Other states with big numbers today were Arizona, Georgia, Florida, North Carolina, and California, which has had 37,000 new cases in the last week. Texas hospitals are near capacity with ambulances in Houston waiting up to an hour to unload their patients. South Carolina's hospitalizations increased by 12% since Tuesday. Arizona had a record high number of reported deaths today.

45 states have seven-day averages of new infections higher than a week ago, and 17 of those were records. The average increased by at least 80% in Louisiana, Alaska, Florida, Montana, and Nevada; Louisiana's average doubled. Nationally, we have set a record for seven-day averages every day for 23 days now. This is ominous. With the Fourth of July right around the corner, there is a lot of concern about gatherings. One Nebraska public health official said, if you plan a gathering for the Fourth, hang on to the guest list; it will make contact tracing easier.

A matter that's been on many folks' minds lately as case numbers have surged is the effect on these trends of the recent (and ongoing) protests against police brutality. You have to admit it seems like a bad plan in the middle of a respiratory infection pandemic to gather with thousands of other people and holler; so a lot of people have, quite reasonably, been wondering whether that's what's behind this uptick in new case reports we've been seeing. The timing's about right, but it's also about right for attribution to the Memorial Day holiday and reopening in many states.

A research team at the Center for Health Economics and Policy Studies wondered about that too, so they did some work which is now available in pre-print (not peer-reviewed). They gathered anonymized cell phone location data; protest location, violence or peacefulness, persistence, and size; and CDC reports on local prevalence of infection for the 315 largest cities in the US. 281 of those cities had protests, and 34 did not, so we had a built-in control group. This was a well-designed study which looked at county infection rates to account for those from outside city limits who would have traveled to the protests. They found "no evidence that net COVID-19 case growth differentially rose following the onset of Black Lives Matter protests." In fact, they saw "modest" evidence of a small growth decline in those cities.

What could account for that? There were a couple of things there. First, the cell phone data showed that there was a small increase in people staying home rather than going places during the time when protests were occurring. This could have been because of reports of violence in some locations or simply because of the difficulty of getting around town when there were thousands of folks in the streets; but that increase in distancing could explain, at least in part, the decrease in case growth seen. Any time people stay home, it limits transmission. We also want to remember that participants skewed young, a

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group less likely to become ill if infected, so they may not have been feeling ill enough to turn up at testing centers to be diagnosed.

There were some protesters in South Carolina who tested positive after the marches, but the state has not tracked data about whether those cases were linked to the protests. It is possible the infections were acquired at a protest, but it is also possible they were acquired in the community at about the time of the protests—plenty of community spread in South Carolina these days. Some cities actively went out and looked for cases in protesters. Although Minnesota cases have been on a steady decline since the protests there, the Minneapolis Department of Health set up testing in communities where protests occurred. More than 15,000 people were tested, and only 1.7% of those came back positive. Health systems in the area also tested thousands of people with positivity rates showing less than 1%. Since the statewide average at the time was 3.6%, it seems unlikely the protests had any effect at all.

New York and Philadelphia have drawn similar conclusions, seeing no evidence of a spike in cases that fits this timeline. In some areas where there have been surges in cases at the appropriate time, Seattle, Portland, and Oakland, people testing positive are not reporting at any disproportionate rate that they were in attendance at protests. Alameda County officials (where Oakland is) say they have been able to identify no sign of a protest-related outbreak. In Seattle, only 34 of the 1000 people testing positive said they'd been at a protest, and 3000 protest participants tested returned a less than 1% positivity rate.

There are places where the evidence is not as definitive, for example, San Francisco and Houston, both of which experienced surges. Officials have been unable to link the spike in cases to the protests, but unable to say they are not linked either. It would require careful contact tracing to determine just what's happening in those locations. But the evidence from so many other cities makes it difficult to conclude there was much of an effect.

Explanations offered for these data include that the protests were outdoors where we know transmission is far less likely, that most protesters wore masks, and that people were in motion much of the time rather than standing around in groups where a single infected person would have time to infect those around him. Angela L. Rasmussen, a virologist at Columbia University, explained the diluting effect of open air, saying, "While outdoor transmission is certainly possible, it does seem like it happens less frequently and that's one of the reasons why: Your exposure is going to be higher indoors."

Now, let's talk about transmission; we haven't done that for a while. First up is asymptomatic transmission—transmission from people not experiencing symptoms. It's hard to know how many people are infected and never develop symptoms because we're not, for the most part, testing people who never develop symptoms. We don't have enough tests as it is, so it's unlikely we're going to waste too many of them on people who feel fine. There has been some surveillance work done—testing in a broad swath of the population—in an attempt to determine how many people like this there might be out there. The best estimates at the moment say that somewhere between 15 and 45% of infected people never develop symptoms.

We're fairly sure those folks can spread the infection, but there doesn't seem to be strong evidence they're driving the pandemic. We believe viral burden is related to severity of symptoms, so likely, people without symptoms have lower loads and, therefore, have less virus to spread. And all of the superspreader events we've looked at involved someone who either had symptoms at the time of spread or developed them afterward (so was presymptomatic). We know transmission is most efficient from two to three days before the onset of symptoms and carries on for several days after that. No cases of transmission have been identified more than eight days after onset, and it's likely asymptomatic people wouldn't shed virus much more than folks who got sick, so probably for no more than ten or eleven days total. We know

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presymptomatic people are a significant source of infection, and we think truly asymptomatic people are probably not.

So if someone is shedding virus, how do you catch it from them? There is growing evidence that contaminated surfaces are not the primary risk; although keeping up with disinfection is smart, there's no need to spend half your budget on it. It also is becoming more clear you probably don't have much risk of catching it from passing encounters with people outdoors.

The primary driver of transmission is person-to-person encounters that are close-up and extended in duration. People who are talking, especially loudly, or singing present more risk because they expel more matter from their mouths and noses than people who are not. People who are coughing or sneezing present even more risk because they expel more matter more forcefully so it will travel farther. Venues that are crowded or poorly ventilated increase the risk. We're sure respiratory droplets—those little moist bits you expel when you breathe, talk, cough, or sneeze—are the main means of transmission. There is not yet universal agreement, but there is growing evidence, that aerosols can transmit as well. An aerosol is composed of tiny bits of moisture you expel. These are distinguished from droplets because they are smaller and lighter and can evaporate their moisture to produce droplet nuclei. This means they contain less virus (because they're smaller), but they float nicely in the air for much longer than droplets, which are larger and heavier and fall out of the air relatively quickly.

Because infection is dose dependent (the more virus that enters your body, the more likely you are to get sick and the more likely it is to be severe), duration of exposure matters too. The general rule has been that exposures in excess of 15 minutes duration are considered close contact and more worrisome. Now, that doesn't mean it's impossible to become infected by a shorter encounter, but the odds get worse the longer you're in contact with the source.

There has been a number of so-called superspreader events, where one infected person transmitted to numerous others. There was the choir practice in Washington state where one person infected 53 of the 61 people present. This was a case where you had a lot of people close together in a fairly confined space for over two hours. They changed places several times, so there was ample opportunity for everyone present to spend time in proximity with the source. The people involved were also mostly older which increased their risk. And, of course, given it was choir practice, there was singing. A perfect storm.

There is growing evidence other similar situations can yield similar results—performances of one kind or another, gyms, business conferences, parties, and weddings. Bars are a good venue for this sort of spread, something we talked about a few days ago. Places where people will shout or sing or cheer will up the ante. It appears a small percentage of infected people may be responsible for the vast majority of cases. We're not sure whether some people have a higher viral load or shed more efficiently. Could be the circumstances alone can create these events, even if the source isn't unusual in any way.

Some good news is that it may require more viral particles (called virions) to establish infection than was previously thought. I've heard—and reported here—that it was believed as few as 1000 virions would be sufficient; but more recent work places the number somewhat higher, perhaps at one million. We're not sure of that, but some experts are leaning in that direction at the moment. Another piece of good news is that this virus seems to degrade rather rapidly in the environment. This might serve to limit the troublesome aspects of aerosol transmission somewhat. Again, no one's sure about that, but it would be nice to catch a break at some point. I'm sure further evidence will come along on these points.

Now, it seems like a long time since we've had much for good news, so I went on a hunt for good news

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stories for you tonight. I figure if I need some, you will too. So here goes.

First up, there is further evidence this virus doesn't seem to be mutating very fast at all. We've talked about mutation a few times over the months we've been doing this. The important thing to remember from that is everything mutates, and this virus does too. The vast majority of mutations don't make much difference either to this virus or to its host. Mutations that would be scary fall into two camps: those that make the virus better at causing disease and those that could render an eventual vaccine ineffective—and so far, so good on both fronts: There don't seem to be any of those scary mutations. A molecular epidemiologist at the University of Basel in Switzerland who's been looking at this virus's genome, Emma Hodcroft, says, "There's nothing alarming about the way the coronavirus is mutating or the speed at which it's mutating. We don't think this will be a problem [for vaccines] in the short term" Peter Thielen, senior scientist at Johns Hopkins Applied Physics Laboratory, concurs, saying, "To date, there have been very few mutations observed. And any mutations that we do see are likely not having an effect on the function of the virus itself."

Speaking of vaccines, Pfizer has published preliminary results on its phase 1 vaccine trial for one of its four vaccine candidates, an RNA vaccine with genes coding for spike protein. Word is the immune responses they're getting are stronger than those seen in people recovering from infection. They administered either a placebo or one of three different doses to participants, giving a second dose three weeks after the initial one. I want to emphasize the sample was small (only 45 people), the results are preliminary, and the paper hasn't been peer-reviewed; but things appear to be moving along nicely. They report there is sufficient evidence to support moving on to phase 2; data from this trial will be used in designing that next phase trial. While we still don't know for sure what antibody level is protective, it seems likely the level produced by natural infection would be a good starting place; this would mean levels above that look pretty good. There was one concerning finding; it is that most people given an intermediate dose developed some low-grade symptoms, fever and chills, for example, lasting a day or so. This doesn't necessarily mean the vaccine wouldn't be considered safe, as long as these symptoms are all that turns up. I'd take a day of feeling lousy—even really lousy—in exchange for protection from this virus; guessing most of you would too. The goal, if all continues to go well, is to have 100 million doses of a vaccine available by the end of the year and 1.2 billion doses next year.

The other piece of good news is a drug, ALZT-OP1. This drug, a combination of ibuprofen and cromolyn, an asthma drug, was developed as a therapeutic for people with Alzheimer's disease. It suppresses cytokine release, which is believed to cause some of the deterioration seen in that disease. The drug is in late phase 3 trials now for use in Alzheimer's disease; but the developer sees a place for it in Covid-19 too, so he is working now to put the drug in the hands of physicians treating the infection. The good news is that we know from the earlier trials already completed that the drug is safe to give for as long as a year and a half, so safety is already established for a much shorter course of treatment in cases of this infection. I'll keep an eye out for data on its use as we go along.

Andy Magel worked in business before moving into service-based non-profits and then, in 2014, founded the Mile High Workshop in Denver. He was interested in creative, employment-focused community development, and he saw a need in that sector to support "men and women who were transitioning from prison, recovering from addiction, and/or rebuilding from homelessness." The company does contract production work, packaging or making items for other companies who sell them. When the pandemic hit, the business presented challenges because they decided not to lay anyone off "because supporting people is our entire reason for existing and we couldn't justify letting anyone go when times were tough."

They realized there were needs they could meet, and so they donated a few thousand N95 masks to

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the city, then put their sewing operation to work making cloth face masks. They've kept the business going by producing thousands of them and donate half of their production to organizations working with vulnerable populations.

When he was interviewed for an ongoing series, "Heroes of the COVID Crisis," Magel had some interesting ideas on heroism. He said, "In my opinion, a hero is anyone who is willing to move outside of themselves for the sake of another. . . . [I]t involves risk of rejection and a willingness to think of someone else's needs before your own and that's the root of any flavor of heroism," adding, "I believe the motivation for all true acts of heroism is love."

And so this is what it takes: love. You have to care enough for others to move outside of yourself—care enough to notice a need and care enough to do something with that. This seems attainable for most of us, doesn't it? Let's all give that a shot this week and see how it goes, OK? We'll build a better world, one small act of heroism at a time.

Keep well. We'll talk again.

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Area COVID-19 Cases

	July 1	July 2
Minnesota	36,303	36,716
Nebraska	19,177	19,310
Montana	967	1016
Colorado	32,715	33,029
Wyoming	1184	1203
North Dakota	3576	3615
South Dakota	6764	6826
United States	2,629,372	2,686,587
US Deaths	127,322	128,062

Minnesota	+442	+413
Nebraska	+135	+133
Montana	+48	+49
Colorado	+204	+314
Wyoming	+33	+19
North Dakota	+37	+39
South Dakota	+48	+62
United States	+46,475	+57,215
US Deaths	+1149	+740

	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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July 1st COVID-19 UPDATE

Groton Daily Independent
from State Health Lab Reports

Our numbers remain pretty stable. I hope that the Fourth of July events going on through the state don't trigger a big outbreak, especially with President Trump coming to the state. It would be nice to have him come here and our crowd is very responsible. CNN now continues to bash South Dakota and I, for one, don't like their attitude. I thought it was the news business to report the news, now dictate policy.

Anyway, off my soap box. We recorded two more deaths in South Dakota and one more in North Dakota. In South Dakota, they are one male and one female, ages 40-49 and 70-79 and in Buffalo and Minnehaha counties.

The active number dropped by one to an even 800. There was just one more positive case over recovered cases in the state, 62-61. We lost Mellette County in the fully recovered list. The percent recovered in South Dakota ticked up by .1.

No new cases in Brown County with one fewer active case.

The big counties with the positive cases are Minnehaha with 17, Codington with seven and Pennington with five.

Brown County:

Active Cases: -1 (21)

Recovered: +1 (319)

Total Positive: 0 (342)

Ever Hospitalized: 0 (18)

Deaths: 2

Negative Tests: +14 (2984)

Percent Recovered: 93.3% (+.3)

South Dakota:

Positive: +62 (6826 total)

Negative: +793 (74117 total)

Hospitalized: +8 (674 total). 65 currently hospitalized (3 more than yesterday)

Deaths: +2 (93 total)

Recovered: +61 (5933) total)

Active Cases: -1 (800)

Percent Recovered: 86.9% up .1

Counties with no positive cases report the following negative tests: Butte +3 (468), Campbell 63, Haakon +2 (229), Harding 39, Jones 30, Perkins +3 (89), Potter +2 (173), unassigned -168 (4020).

Beadle: +3 positive, +5 recovered (453 of 527 recovered)

Brookings: +3 positive, +4 recovered (51 of 65 recovered)

Brown: +1 recovered (319 of 342 recovered)

Brule: +1 positive, +2 recovered (15 of 24 recovered)

Charles Mix: +3 positive, +9 recovered (36 of 85 recovered)

Clark: +1 recovered (12 of 15 recovered)

Clay: +1 positive, +1 recovered (73 of 83 recovered)

Codington: +7 positive, +1 recovered (48 of 70 recovered)

Corson: +1 recovered (15 of 18 recovered)

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Custer: +1 positive (4 of 9 recovered)
 Davison: +1 recovered (34 of 41 recovered)
 Deuel: +1 recovered (2 of 3 recovered)
 Dewey: +1 positive (2 of 3 recovered)
 Gregory: +1 positive (1 of 4 recovered)
 Hamlin: +1 positive (9 of 12 recovered)
 Hanson: +1 recovered (5 of 7 recovered)
 Hughes: +3 positive, +3 recovered (36 of 58 recovered)
 Jerauld: +1 recovered (36 of 39 recovered)
 Lincoln: +4 positive (314 of 347 recovered)
 Lyman: +3 positive, +1 recovered (40 of 65 recovered)
 Meade: +1 positive (38 of 48 recovered)
 Mellette: +1 positive (3 of 4 recovered)
 Minnehaha: +17 positive, +11 recovered (3353 of 3627 recovered)
 Moody: +1 positive (19 of 23 recovered)
 Oglala Lakota: +2 positive, +1 recovered (49 of 87 recovered)
 Pennington: +5 positive, +12 recovered (393 of 523 recovered)
 Tripp: +1 recovered (11 of 16 recovered)
 Turner: +1 positive (23 of 25 recovered)
 Union: +1 positive, +1 recovered (110 of 124 recovered)
 Walworth: +1 positive, +1 recovered (6 of 13 recovered)
 Yankton: +1 recovered (65 of 77 recovered)

Fully recovered from positive cases (Lost Mellette): Bon Homme 11-11, Douglas 4-4, Grant 13-13, Hyde 3-3, Sanborn 12-12, Stanley 12-12, Sully 1-1, Ziebach 2-2.

The NDDoH & private labs report 2,505 completed tests today for COVID-19 with 39 new positive cases, bringing the statewide total to 3,615. NDDoH reports one new death (80 total)
 State & private labs have reported 184,792 total completed tests.
 3,210 ND patients are recovered.

RACE/ETHNICITY OF SOUTH DAKOTA COVID-19 CASES

Race/Ethnicity	# of Cases	% of Cases
Asian, Non-Hispanic	703	10%
Black, Non-Hispanic	971	14%
Hispanic	1092	16%
Native American, Non-Hispanic	1012	15%
Other	706	10%
White, Non-Hispanic	2342	34%

County of Residence	# of Deaths
Beadle	6
Brown	2
Buffalo	2
Faulk	1
Jackson	1
Jerauld	1
Lake	1
Lincoln	1
McCook	1
Meade	1
Minnehaha	58
Pennington	16
Todd	1
Union	1

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County	Positive Cases	Recovered Cases	Negative Cases
Aurora	34	33	282
Beadle	527	453	1415
Bennett	4	3	417
Bon Homme	11	11	585
Brookings	65	51	1684
Brown	342	319	2984
Brule	24	15	482
Buffalo	71	56	466
Butte	0	0	468
Campbell	0	0	63
Charles Mix	85	36	710
Clark	15	12	320
Clay	83	73	946
Codington	70	48	1906
Corson	18	15	141
Custer	9	4	527
Davison	41	34	1620
Day	16	13	402
Deuel	3	2	290
Dewey	5	1	861
Douglas	4	4	320
Edmunds	7	5	299
Fall River	12	5	714
Faulk	23	17	119
Grant	13	13	533
Gregory	4	1	231
Haakon	0	0	229
Hamlin	12	9	453
Hand	7	6	187
Hanson	7	5	133
Harding	0	0	39
Hughes	58	36	1124
Hutchinson	12	10	686

Hyde	3	3	95
Jackson	6	2	336
Jerauld	39	36	231
Jones	0	0	30
Kingsbury	6	5	407
Lake	21	16	673
Lawrence	19	16	1322
Lincoln	347	314	4383
Lyman	65	40	671
Marshall	5	4	290
McCook	10	6	483
McPherson	4	3	161
Meade	49	38	1263
Mellette	4	3	195
Miner	9	4	192
Minnehaha	3627	3353	19699
Moody	23	19	468
Oglala Lakota	87	49	2156
Pennington	523	393	6593
Perkins	0	0	89
Potter	0	0	173
Roberts	47	41	1028
Sanborn	12	12	171
Spink	11	8	881
Stanley	12	12	140
Sully	1	1	46
Todd	57	48	949
Tripp	16	11	406
Turner	25	23	677
Union	124	110	1353
Walworth	13	6	389
Yankton	77	65	2365
Ziebach	2	2	146
Unassigned****	0	0	4020

SEX OF SOUTH DAKOTA COVID-19 CASES

Sex	# of Cases	# of Deaths
Female	3299	52
Male	3527	41

CASES

Age Range	# of Cases	# of Deaths
0-19 years	705	0
20-29 years	1407	1
30-39 years	1461	3
40-49 years	1102	7
50-59 years	1078	12
60-69 years	628	15
70-79 years	242	13
80+ years	203	42

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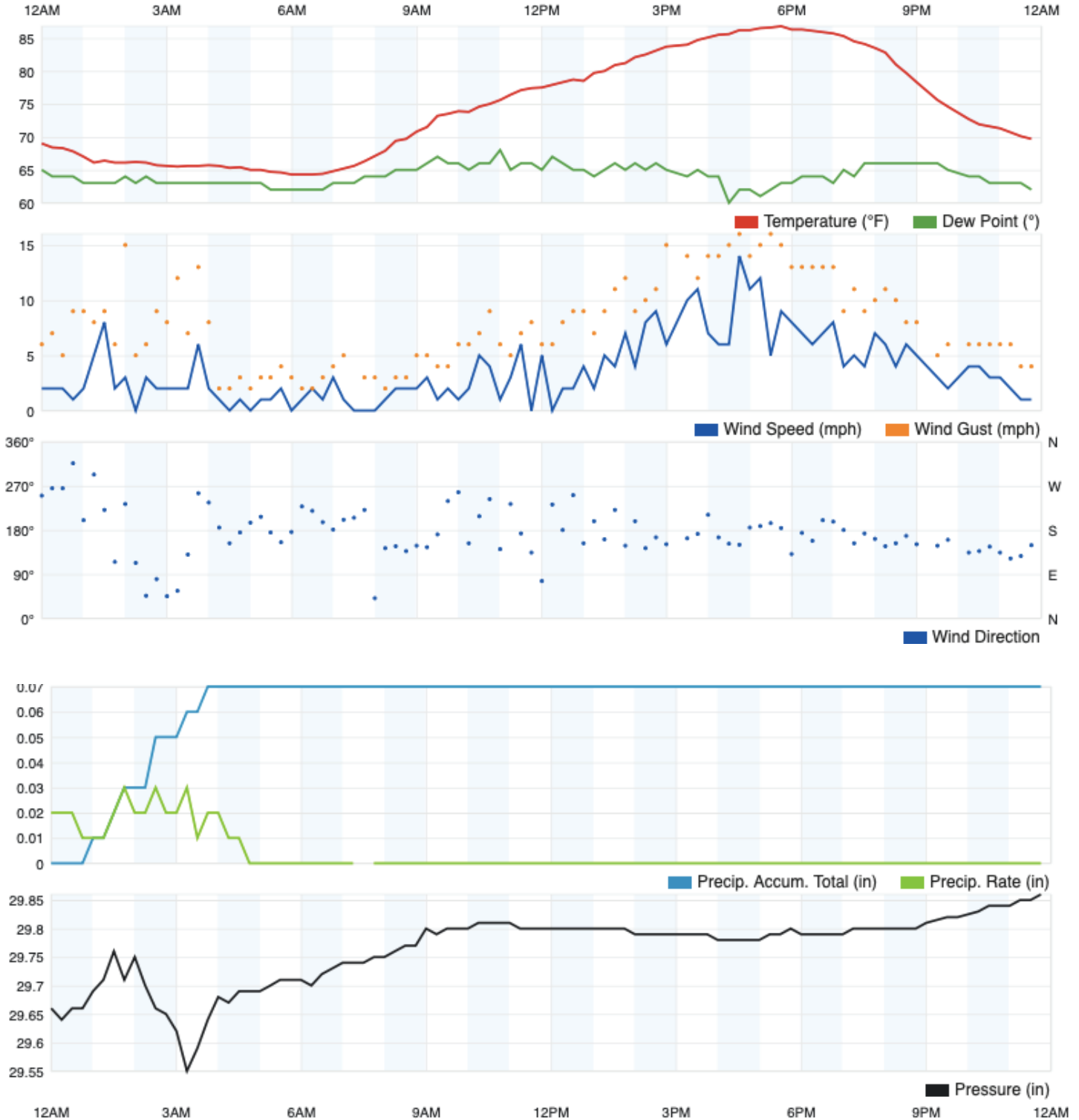
Baseball Schedule

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

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Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs



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Today



Hot

High: 91 °F

Tonight



Mostly Clear
then Slight
Chance
T-storms

Low: 69 °F

Friday



Chance
T-storms

High: 91 °F

Friday
Night



Chance
T-storms

Low: 70 °F

Independence
Day



Chance
T-storms

High: 91 °F



Mostly sunny and hot today. Showers and thunderstorms will develop over western South Dakota later this afternoon. These storms could be strong to severe as they track eastward into the Missouri River Valley later this evening. The storms should diminish as they push east of the river tonight. Additional showers and thunderstorms will be possible on Friday.

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Today in Weather History

July 2, 1921: Barns were destroyed on two farms near Frederick in Brown County. A boy who could not make it to the cellar was killed in the open near a barn. This death is one of the earliest known from a significant, estimated F2 tornado in Brown County.

July 2, 1960: Hail shredded corn flattened grain and hay and pounded soybeans into the ground in a strip extending from Clinton to Montevideo in Minnesota. Leaves and bark were stripped from trees. Hailstones were reported to pile up to a depth of four feet in low spots. One farmer lost 2000 turkeys. Twelve barns demolished, many outbuildings destroyed and several homes damaged by winds. Near Appleton, 45 cars of a moving 174 car freight train derailed by the wind, one hanger destroyed, and two planes were damaged. In Big Stone County alone, the cost to repair power lines and poles estimated to be near 10,000 dollars. Total crop acreage affected was near 64,000 acres. The three counties of Big Stone, Swift, and Chippewa Counties, was designated a disaster area.

July 2, 2005: A line of severe thunderstorms with powerful straight-line winds moved from northeast Wyoming and southeast Montana across northwest South Dakota during the evening. Widespread wind gusts of 60 to 80 mph affected northwestern South Dakota; breaking tree limbs, downing trees, and knocking down snow fences. The high winds capsized a boat on the Belle Fourche Reservoir near Orman Dam. Five people, including an infant, were rescued by emergency personnel with no one injured. The strongest winds were reported north of Newell, near Castle Rock, where gusts estimated at 100 mph damaged a barn roof and ripped a chimney off a house. Hail to the size of quarters was also reported across parts of the area, and combined with the wind, caused some minor damage.

1833: The following is from the "History and Description of New England" published in 1860: "On the 2nd of July, 1833, this town (Holland, Vermont) was visited by a violent tornado, which commenced on Salem Pond in Salem, and passed over this place in a northeasterly direction. It was from half to three-quarters of a mile wide and prostrated and scattered nearly all the trees, fences, and buildings in its course. It crossed the outlet of Norton Pond and passed into Canada, and its path could be traced through the forests nearly to Connecticut River."

1843: An alligator reportedly fell from the sky onto Anson Street in Charleston, SC during a thunderstorm.

2001: In Michigan, frost and freezing temperatures were observed in some locations with Grant dropping to 29 degrees. Muskegon reported their coldest July temperature on record with 39 degrees. Other daily record lows included: Lansing: 38, Muskegon: 39, Flint: 40, Youngstown, Ohio: 40, and Grand Rapids, Michigan: 43 degrees.

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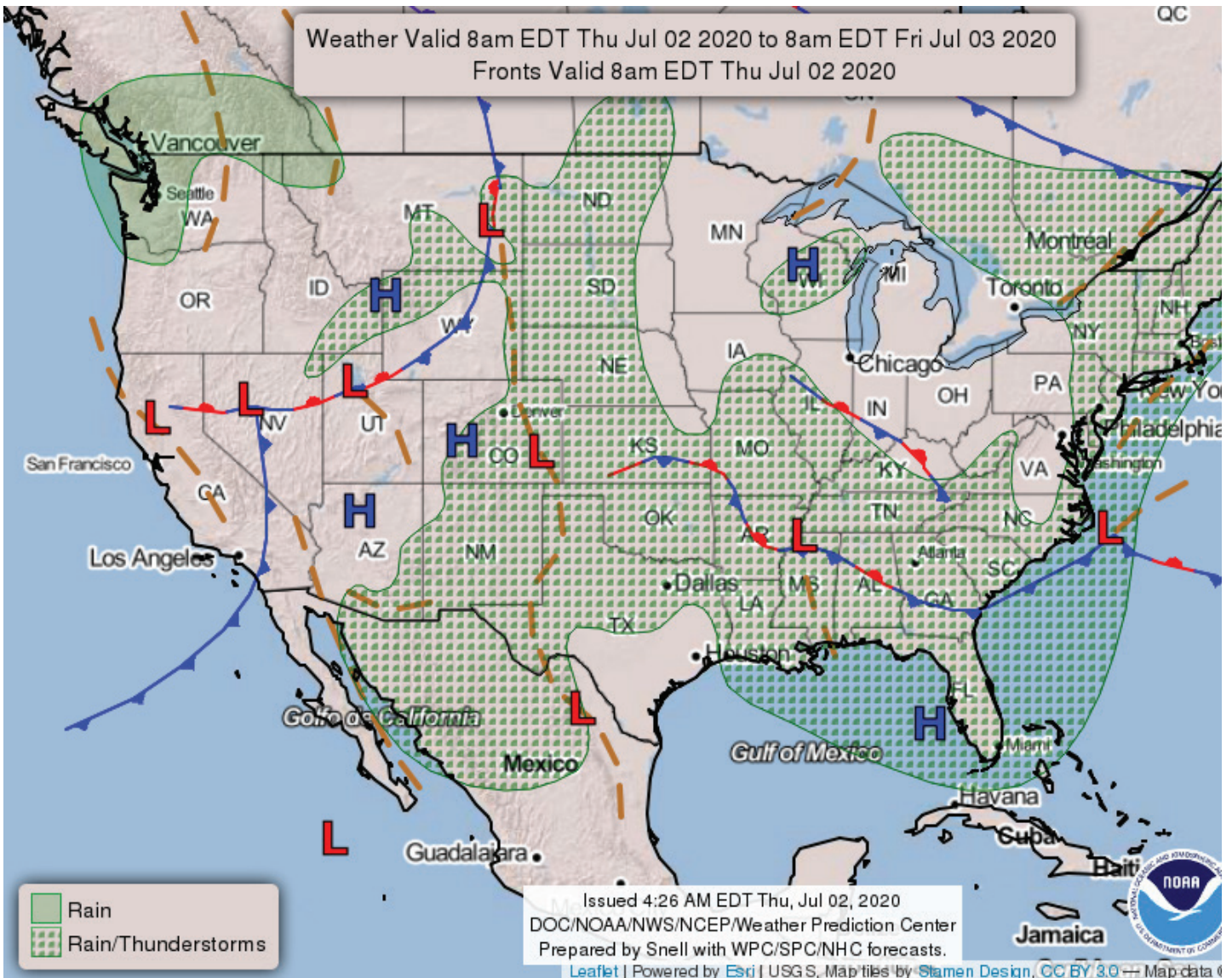
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Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 87 °F at 5:21 PM
Low Temp: 64 °F at 6:00 AM
Wind: 19 mph at 4:06 PM
Precip: .07

Today's Info

Record High: 103° in 1949
Record Low: 37° in 1945
Average High: 82°F
Average Low: 58°F
Average Precip in July.: 0.10
Precip to date in July.: 0.07
Average Precip to date: 10.94
Precip Year to Date: 8.39
Sunset Tonight: 9:25 p.m.
Sunrise Tomorrow: 5:51 a.m.



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"FOR US OR AGAINST US?"

It was the final football game of the season. The winning team would win the conference championship. Every player was giving their best and fighting with all their strength to win. Unfortunately, the quarterback of one team was severely injured and had to be carried off the field. His backup walked confidently onto the field to take his place.

On the first play, he fumbled the ball but quickly fell upon it and avoided a costly mistake. Then he threw an incomplete pass. On his third play, he threw an interception, and the player who caught the ball ran the length of the field, giving the opposing team a victory and the championship.

After the game, when the team assembled in the locker room, the coach said to the losing quarterback, "Son, which side were you on?"

In the book of Exodus, we read of a situation where Moses confronted the people after Aaron allowed them to get entirely out of control. He refused to let things remain as they were and challenged them by saying: "All of you who are on the Lord's side, come here and join me!"

Perhaps each of us needs to respond to that very same statement. We may attend church, carry a Bible, sing hymns, and even pray. But when we get into the "game of life," do those around us know, "which side we are on?" Does what we say and do represent the Lord favorably? What we do and how we do it is what proves to others whose side we are on.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, we know that there have been times when the world does not know which side we are on. Give us courage and strength to represent You. For Jesus' sake! Amen.

Scripture For Today: All of you who are on the Lord's side, come here and join me. Exodus 32:25-26

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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 Wednesday:

Dakota Cash

03-13-18-20-28

(three, thirteen, eighteen, twenty, twenty-eight)

Estimated jackpot: \$39,000

Lotto America

04-22-24-30-35, Star Ball: 7, ASB: 4

(four, twenty-two, twenty-four, thirty, thirty-five; Star Ball: seven; ASB: four)

Estimated jackpot: \$3.25 million

Mega Millions

Estimated jackpot: \$62 million

Powerball

15-28-52-53-63, Powerball: 18, Power Play: 4

(fifteen, twenty-eight, fifty-two, fifty-three, sixty-three; Powerball: eighteen; Power Play: four)

Estimated jackpot: \$51 million

Sioux Falls group calling for more police accountability

STYON FALLS, S.D. (AP) — Advocates for police reform gathered on the front steps of Sioux Falls' city hall on Wednesday to announce they had created a new coalition to advocate for changes to the Sioux Falls Police Department.

The group, called the South Dakota Coalition for Justice and Equity, said it would be advocating for greater transparency around incidents of police force, including an independent, community-led process for reviewing complaints against the police. While Mayor Paul TenHaken has largely defended the police department's record, calling it one of the best in the country, the group argues that several incidents in the last few weeks show the need for changes at the police department.

Laura Renée Chandler, a spokeswoman for the group, pointed to one incident in which police, searching for people who burglarized during a riot on May 31, executed a search warrant at the home of a Black teenager who they later found was not connected to the crime.

"When police officers make mistakes, our community must fully understand and revisit the responsibility and power that we invest in our law enforcement," said Chandler.

The Sioux Falls police department have defended their handling of the investigation into vandalism and burglaries that happened in connection with protests. The Argus Leader reported that a police spokesman said the investigation is not getting any more attention than other crimes it investigates.

But Chandler called the response to the riots excessive and "militarized." Gov. Kristi Noem deployed the National Guard to back up the police as protests turned violent.

Chandler also pointed to another incident in which a police officer threatened to shoot someone in a car who had fled from officers. The police department is reviewing the incident, but has not released video footage.

The group plans to invite city leaders to a virtual forum later this month to discuss ways to change criminal justice in the city.

Trump at Rushmore: Jets and fireworks, but masks optional

By STEPHEN GROVES Associated Press

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STIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — When President Donald Trump speaks at the Mount Rushmore national memorial before the first fireworks show there in years, he'll stand before a crowd of thousands of people who won't be required to socially distance or wear masks despite the coronavirus pandemic.

Friday night's event, with 7,500 tickets issued, will feature a patriotic display at a monument known as "the Shrine of Democracy" in a swath of country largely loyal to Trump. But it has also sparked controversy and concern. Public health experts say the lack of social distancing and enforced mask wearing could lead to a surge in the disease, while the fireworks risk setting the surrounding forest ablaze.

Native American tribal leaders and activist groups have also spoken out against the memorial, saying it desecrates an area they consider sacred and that the mountains on which it is carved were wrongfully taken from them.

Event organizers said this week that space was so tight they had to strictly limit the number of journalists who could cover it. The 7,500 people who received tickets will be ushered into two seating areas: A group of about 3,000 will watch from an amphitheater and viewing decks near the base of the monument, while the rest will have to bring lawn chairs to watch the fireworks from a gravel parking lot outside the memorial grounds.

Many without tickets are expected to crowd into other areas around the monument where they can get a glimpse of the president and the fireworks. The pyrotechnics alone will run \$350,000, with the state bearing the cost.

Republican Gov. Kristi Noem, a Trump ally who has largely avoided ordering restrictions during the pandemic, said this week that the event wouldn't require social distancing or masks, though masks will be available to anyone who wants one. She cast it as a personal choice for attendees, telling Fox News: "Every one of them has the opportunity to make a decision that they're comfortable with."

Most of the thousands of attendees at Trump's June 20 rally in Tulsa, Oklahoma, didn't wear masks or practice social distancing, though unlike the Mount Rushmore event, that one was held indoors, where experts say the virus is more likely to spread.

South Dakota has had declining rates of confirmed cases of COVID-19 and hospitalizations from the disease over the last two weeks.

But surges in cases in many Southern and Western states prompted Dr. Anthony Fauci, the government's top infectious disease expert, to warn senators on Tuesday that the country is "going in the wrong direction" and needs to redouble efforts to get people to take precautions against infections, especially by wearing masks.

Dr. Benjamin C. Aaker, president of the South Dakota State Medical Association, told The Associated Press that events like the Rushmore fireworks don't just pose a risk to people who attend. The health of the entire community could be threatened if people unknowingly catch the virus at the event and then spread it at their homes and workplaces, he said.

"If we continue to have these events, we worry that it's going to be a much more significant outbreak," Aaker said. "We know that if that outbreak were to occur, it would not take very long to run out of (hospital) beds and to run out of personal protective equipment."

Western South Dakota has seen less of the virus than other parts of the state so far, with 518 confirmed cases and 16 deaths in Pennington County, where Mount Rushmore is located. But Monument Health, which runs the largest hospital in the region, is preparing for a surge in cases due to the the influx of tourists, said Dr. Shankar Kurra, the vice-president of medical affairs at Monument Health.

The pandemic isn't the only thing that has some locals concerned. Several former officials who oversaw the wildfire danger at Mount Rushmore have spoken out against the pyrotechnics display. Fireworks displays were canceled after 2009 because a mountain pine beetle infestation had dried out trees near the memorial and in the national forest that surrounds it.

"Some people are very excited about it, they were sad to see the fireworks end," said Cheryl Schreir, who retired from serving as the Superintendent at Mount Rushmore National Memorial last year. "But the people who truly understand the preservation and protection understand that this is not a good idea to light fireworks in the middle of a forest."

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Schreir said that testing by the National Park Service has also revealed that drinking water at the memorial has high levels of perchlorate, a chemical found in fireworks.

The National Park Service conducted an environmental assessment to study the potential impact of the fireworks and found that it would not significantly damage the memorial or forests around it. But it did note that in a dry year, pyrotechnics could start a large wildfire that would impact the entire ecosystem and landscape of the monument.

Bill Gabbert, a local wildfire expert who oversaw wildfire management at Mount Rushmore between 1998 and 2003, said conditions are dry this year and the region is experiencing a moderate drought. He described how in previous years, park officials would have dozens of firefighters on site who had to work through the night, scrambling up steep, rocky slopes to put out small fires from the fireworks.

Ian Fury, the governor's spokesman, said firefighters will have a 20-person crew onsite, along with extra fire engines.

Event organizers are monitoring the fire conditions leading up to the event and will make a decision on Friday about whether the fireworks would be safe. The National Park Service has also carried out controlled fires in the memorial grounds to burn off dry material. Organizers are working with a "Go/No Go" checklist, but the National Park Service has not released the checklist, citing security concerns.

Fury said that it's rained in the region in recent days, adding, "The team on the ground is feeling good about our ability to put on a safe and celebratory event."

South Dakota reports 2 more deaths, 62 positive COVID cases

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — South Dakota health officials on Wednesday reported two more deaths and 62 new positive cases of COVID-19.

According to the South Dakota Department of Health, the state's death toll from the coronavirus has risen to 93. Of the two new deaths, one was a person between the ages of 40-49 and the other was a person between the ages of 70-79. One was in Buffalo County and one in Minnehaha County, the Argus Leader reported.

Minnehaha County, the state's most populous county, has the most COVID-19 deaths confirmed in South Dakota, with 58.

Minnehaha County reported 17 of the new cases, while Pennington County recorded five new cases.

The newly confirmed cases push the total number of positive cases in South Dakota to 6,826. Officials say 5,933 patients have recovered, leaving 800 active cases in the state.

Currently 65 patients are hospitalized for the disease in South Dakota, occupying 3% of the state's hospital bed capacity. COVID-19 patients were occupying 6% of South Dakota's intensive care unit beds.

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

Midwest Economy: June state-by-state glance

OMAHA, Neb. (AP) — The Institute for Supply Management, formerly the Purchasing Management Association, began formally surveying its membership in 1931 to gauge business conditions.

The Creighton Economic Forecasting Group uses the same methodology as the national survey to consult supply managers and business leaders. Creighton University economics professor Ernie Goss oversees the report.

The overall index ranges between 0 and 100. Growth neutral is 50, and a figure greater than 50 indicates growth in that factor over the next three to six months. A figure below 50 indicates decline.

Here are the state-by-state results for June:

Arkansas: The state's overall index rose to 50.9 from May's 43.7. Components of the June index were: new orders at 58.7, production or sales at 55.2, delivery lead time at 47.4, inventories at 54.4, and employment at 38.8. "Since the onset of COVID-19, Arkansas has lost 88,000 jobs, or almost 7% of its employment.

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Our surveys point to a flattening of employment with only slight job gains in the months ahead," Goss said.

Iowa: The overall index once again slumped below growth neutral. However, the reading climbed to a weak 47.1 from 41.9 in May. Components of the index were: new orders at 50.2, production or sales at 56.1, delivery lead time at 43.2, employment at 35.7, and inventories at 50.2. Iowa has lost 161,000 jobs, or approximately 10%, of its employment since the outbreak began earlier this year, Goss said.

Kansas: The state's index increased to 45.1 from May's 42.8. Components of the index were: new orders at 57.1, production or sales at 30.1, delivery lead time at 46.6, employment at 38.2, and inventories at 53.6. Kansas has lost more than 108,000 jobs, or approximately 7.6%, of its employment during the pandemic, Goss said.

Minnesota: The overall index increased to 45.0 from 39.8 in May. Components were: new orders at 45.4, production or sales at 56.5, delivery lead time at 40.9, inventories at 47.9, and employment at 34.0. Goss said the state has lost more than 350,000 jobs, or almost 12%, of its employment. Only slight job gains are expected in the months ahead, he said.

Missouri: The overall index climbed to 50.5 from 42.3 in May. Components were: new orders at 51.3, production or sales at 56.0, delivery lead time at 49.8, inventories at 50.8, and employment at 44.6. "Since the onset of COVID-19, the state has lost 262,000 jobs, or approximately 9.0% of its employment. Our surveys point to a flattening of employment with only slight job gains in the months ahead," Goss said.

Nebraska: The state's overall index for June rose to 52.6 from 43.9 in May. Components were: new orders at 59.1, production or sales at 55.2, delivery lead time at 55.5, inventories at 54.6, and employment at 38.9. Nebraska has lost almost 77,000 jobs, or approximately 7.5%, of its employment since the outbreak began, Goss said.

North Dakota: The overall index climbed to 51.6 from 43.4 in May. Components were: new orders at 55.1, production or sales at 55.6, delivery lead time at 57.1, employment at 37.5, and inventories at 52.6. North Dakota has lost approximately 41,000 jobs, or roughly 9.4% of its employment since the onset of the pandemic, Goss said.

Oklahoma: The state's index moved above growth neutral in June, to 53.1 from May's 43.0. Components were: new orders at 59.9, production or sales at 55.1, delivery lead time at 56.2, inventories at 55.0, and employment at 39.2. Oklahoma has lost almost 108,000 jobs in this period.

South Dakota: The index increased to 52.4 from May's 43.8. Components were: new orders at 57.7, production or sales at 55.3, delivery lead time at 56.7, inventories at 53.9, and employment at 38.4. The state has lost approximately 34,000 jobs in this period.

Business leaders say area's economy improving with reopening

OMAHA, Neb. (AP) — Business leaders say the economy has begun to recover as businesses reopened in the past month in nine Midwest and Plains states, but it remains weaker than before the coronavirus outbreak began, according to a monthly survey released Wednesday.

The overall index for the region jumped into positive territory at 50.3 in June from May's 43.5. The survey results are compiled into a collection of indexes ranging from zero to 100. Survey organizers say any score above 50 suggests growth. A score below 50 suggests decline.

Creighton University economist Ernie Goss said the region's overall index will have to remain above 50 for many months before the economy reaches the level it was at before states began imposing restrictions because of the coronavirus.

The confidence index improved to 65.3 in June from May's 56.6 showing that business leaders expect the economy to continue improving over the next six months.

The monthly survey covers Arkansas, Iowa, Kansas, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, Oklahoma and South Dakota.

Job losses continue in the region. The employment index declined to 38.9 in June from May's 40.

Businesses were paying higher wholesale prices over the past month. The wholesale price index increased to 59.7 in June from May's 48.6.

Vermilion woman killed in crash following deputy pursuit

YANKTON, S.D. (AP) — The South Dakota Department of Public Safety has identified the woman who died in a crash following a pursuit by law enforcement officers.

Adrienne Whitefeather, 35, was behind the wheel of a car being pursued by Yankton County deputies Monday night. The vehicle had been reported stolen.

Whitefeather missed a curve and collided with a pickup truck in Yankton, agency officials said.

Whitefeather and the pickup driver, a 32-year-old Yankton man, were both taken to the hospital, where Whitefeather later died of her injuries, the Argus Leader reported.

Neither person was wearing a seat belt.

The South Dakota Highway Patrol is continuing to investigate the crash.

Landslide at Myanmar jade mine kills at least 123 people

By ZAW MOE HTET and PYAE SONE WIN Associated Press

HPAKANT, Myanmar (AP) — At least 123 people were killed Thursday in a landslide at a jade mine in northern Myanmar, the worst in a series of deadly accidents at such sites in recent years.

A statement from the Ministry of Information said 123 bodies had been recovered from the site of the landslide in Hpakant, while the Myanmar Fire Service Department, which coordinates rescues and other emergency services, put the total at 126.

“The jade miners were smothered by a wave of mud,” a statement from the fire service said.

A crowd gathered in the rain around corpses shrouded in blue-and-red plastic sheets, laid in a row on the ground.

Emergency workers had to slog through heavy mud to retrieve bodies by wrapping them in the plastic sheets, which served as makeshift body bags that were then hung on crossed wooden poles shouldered by the recovery teams.

Khin Maung Myint, a lawmaker from Hpakant, earlier said that in addition to the dead, another 54 people were injured and sent to hospitals.

The Hpakant area in Kachin state is 950 kilometers (600 miles) north of Myanmar’s biggest city, Yangon, and is the center of the world’s biggest and most lucrative jade mining industry.

Thursday’s death toll surpasses that of a November 2015 accident that left 113 dead and was previously considered the country’s worst. In that case, the victims died when a 60-meter (200-foot)-high mountain of earth and waste discarded by several mines tumbled in the middle of the night, enveloping more than 70 huts where miners slept.

Those killed in such accidents are usually freelance miners who settle near giant mounds of discarded earth that has been excavated by heavy machinery. The freelancers who scavenge for bits of jade usually work and live at the base of the mounds of earth, which become particularly unstable during the rainy season.

Most scavengers are unregistered migrants from other areas, making it hard to determine exactly how many people are actually missing after such accidents and in many cases leaving the relatives of the dead in their home villages unaware of their fate.

Local activists have complained that the profitability of jade mining has led businesses and the government to neglect enforcing already very weak regulations in the industry.

According to Global Witness, a London-based group that investigates misuse of revenues from natural resources, Myanmar’s jade industry generated about \$31 billion in 2014, with most of the wealth going to individuals and companies tied to the country’s former military rulers.

Global Witness made its estimate in a detailed report, and more recent reliable figures are not readily available.

“Large companies, many of them owned by families of former generals, army companies, cronies and

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drug lords, are making tens or hundreds of millions of dollars a year through their plunder of Hpakant," Mike Davis of Global Witness said when the group released its report in 2015.

"Their legacy to local people is a dystopian wasteland in which scores of people at a time are buried alive in landslides," said Davis.

Jade mining also plays a role in the decades-old struggle of ethnic minority groups in Myanmar's borderlands to take more control of their own destiny.

The area where members of the Kachin minority are dominant is poverty stricken despite hosting lucrative deposits of rubies as well as jade.

The Kachin believe they are not getting a fair share of the profits from deals that the central government makes with mining companies that critics charge are cronies of the military — a major player in the country's administration.

Kachin guerrillas have engaged in intermittent but occasionally heavy combat with government troops.

Pyae Son Win reported from Yangon.

British judge denies Venezuela access to gold in bank vault

By DANICA KIRKA Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — A British judge on Thursday refused to give Venezuela control of over \$1 billion in gold sitting in a Bank of England vault, ruling that it is unlawful to give it to President Nicolás Maduro since Britain does not recognize him as president of the Latin American nation.

Maduro has demanded the gold to help his cash-starved nation fight the coronavirus pandemic. But the central bank for the United Kingdom, whose government recognizes Venezuelan opposition leader Juan Guaidó as his country's legitimate leader, had refused to hand it over to Maduro's socialist administration.

The ruling clarifies the question of who is Venezuela's legitimate leader — at least in the eyes of one world power.

Guaidó has sought to preserve the gold stash at the Bank of England to keep it out of the hands of the Maduro government, which it contends is illegitimate and corrupt. His lawyers reiterated during a recent four-day hearing their stance that the National Assembly leader became Venezuela's rightful leader under provisions of the country's constitution.

The dispute hinged on the British stance toward Venezuela, a country in economic and political crisis where both Maduro and Guaidó have been claiming presidential powers for more than a year.

Banco Central de Venezuela sought to release the gold, which it says now that it wants to sell for food and medical equipment that is desperately needed to tackle the COVID-19 pandemic. But it had also sought the gold before the pandemic began.

A lawyer representing Maduro's side promised to appeal. Sarosh Zaiwalla said in a statement that the judgment "entirely ignores the reality of the situation on the ground" in Venezuela.

"Mr Maduro's government is in complete control of Venezuela and its administrative institutions, and only it can ensure the distribution of the humanitarian relief and medical supplies needed to combat the coronavirus pandemic," he said. "This outcome will now delay matters further, to the detriment of the Venezuelan people whose lives are at risk."

The U.K. recognizes the claim of Guaidó, who heads Venezuela's congress, as does the United States and about five dozen other governments. Guaidó proclaimed himself the interim president in early 2019, months after Maduro declared victory in an election that his critics say was rigged in his favor.

Despite its support for Guaidó, the U.K. continues to have diplomatic ties with Maduro's government. The British have not granted diplomatic credentials to the envoy that Guaidó has named ambassador to the U.K.

U.S., South Africa report new record coronavirus rises

By DAVID RISING and JAKE COYLE undefined

BERLIN (AP) — The United States and South Africa have both reported record new daily coronavirus

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infections, with U.S. figures surpassing 50,000 cases a day for the first time, underlining the challenges still ahead as nations press to reopen their virus-devastated economies.

The U.S. recorded 50,700 new cases, according to a tally kept by Johns Hopkins University, as many states struggled to contain the spread of the pandemic, blamed in part on Americans not wearing masks or following social distancing rules.

Surging numbers in California prompted Gov. Gavin Newsom to announce just ahead of the Fourth of July weekend that he was closing bars, theaters and indoor restaurant dining over most of the state, a region that includes about 30 million people and Los Angeles County.

"The bottom line is the spread of this virus continues at a rate that is particularly concerning," Newsom said.

Confirmed cases in California have increased nearly 50% over the past two weeks, and COVID-19 hospitalizations have gone up 43%. Newsom said California had nearly 5,900 new cases and 110 more deaths in just 24 hours.

Infections have been surging in many other states as well, including Florida, Arizona and Texas. Florida recorded more than 6,500 new cases and counties in South Florida were closing beaches to fend off large July Fourth crowds that could further spread the virus.

"Too many people were crowding into restaurants late at night, turning these establishments into breeding grounds for this deadly virus," Miami-Dade Mayor Carlos Gimenez said.

Despite the fact that the U.S. has the highest number of infections and deaths in the world by far, President Donald Trump seemed confident the coronavirus would soon subside.

"I think we are going to be very good with the coronavirus," he told Fox Business. "I think that, at some point, that's going to sort of just disappear, I hope."

The U.S. has now reported nearly 2.7 million cases and more than 128,000 dead. Globally there have been 10.7 million coronavirus cases and more than 516,000 dead, according to Johns Hopkins' count. The true toll of the pandemic is believed to be significantly higher, in part because of limited testing and mild cases that have been missed.

In South Africa on Thursday, authorities reported 8,124 new cases, a new daily record. The country has the most cases in Africa with more than 159,000, as it loosens what had been one of the world's strictest lockdowns.

Johannesburg is a new hot spot with hundreds of health workers infected and Gauteng province, which includes Johannesburg, has more than 45,000 confirmed cases. The African continent has more than 405,000 confirmed cases overall.

India, the world's second-most populous country with more than 1.3 billion people, surpassed 600,000 infections on Thursday after over 19,000 new cases were reported. India has reported nearly 100,000 new cases in the past four days alone.

Despite the surging numbers, the western beach of state of Goa, a popular backpacking destination, allowed 250 hotels to reopen Thursday after being closed for more than three months. Tourists will either have to carry COVID-19 negative certificates or get tested on arrival.

Many industries and businesses have reopened across the country, and Indians have cautiously returned to the streets. Schools, colleges and movie theaters are still closed.

On the medical front, the World Health Organization says smoking is linked to a higher risk of severe illness and death from the coronavirus in hospitalized patients, although it was unable to specify exactly how much greater those risks might be.

In a scientific brief published this week, the U.N. health agency reviewed 34 published studies on the association between smoking and COVID-19, including the probability of infection, hospitalization, severity of disease and death.

WHO noted that smokers represent up to 18% of hospitalized coronavirus patients and that there appeared to be a significant link between whether or not patients smoked and the severity of disease they suffered, the type of hospital interventions required and patients' risk of dying.

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In Japan, the capital of Tokyo confirmed 107 new cases of coronavirus, nearly triple that of June 24, just before the number began to spike. Tokyo Gov. Yuriko Koike said many cases were linked to nightclubs and bars, and urged their workers to proactively be tested and take further safety measures.

"We need to use caution against the spread of the infections," Koike said.

South Korea confirmed 54 more COVID-19 cases as the coronavirus continued to spread beyond the capital region and reach cities like Gwangju, which has shut schools and tightened social restrictions after dozens fell sick this week.

Despite the spike in many U.S. states, several eastern states have seen their new infections slow down significantly, including New York, Massachusetts, Connecticut, Rhode Island and New Jersey, which was going ahead Thursday with allowing its famous Atlantic City casinos to reopen.

Strict social distancing and other measures will be in place. Gamblers will not be allowed to smoke, drink or eat anything inside the casinos. They will have to wear masks in public areas of the casino and have their temperatures checked upon entering.

Coyle reported from Los Angeles.

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

Asia Today: India's virus cases surpass 600,000, curve rises

NEW DELHI (AP) — India's number of coronavirus cases passed 600,000 on Thursday with the nation's infection curve rising and its testing capacity being increased.

The 19,148 new cases reported in the past 24 hours raised the national total to 604,641, with nearly 100,000 of them in the past four days.

A total of 17,834 people have died so far due to the virus, according to India's Health Ministry.

More than 60% of the cases are in the worst-hit Maharashtra state, Tamil Nadu state, and the capital territory of New Delhi.

However, the western beach of state of Goa, a popular backpacking destination, opened for tourism on Thursday with the state government allowing 250 hotels to reopen after more than three months. Tourists will either have to carry COVID-19 negative certificates or get tested on arrival.

The state has reported 1,387 positive cases with four deaths.

Many industries and businesses have reopened since the country eased its strict lockdown in early June, and Indians have cautiously returned to the streets. Schools, colleges and movie theaters remain shuttered.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi said in a live address Tuesday that the death rate is under control but the country is at a "critical juncture." He urged more stringent enforcement of distancing and other health guidelines.

The Health Ministry said testing has been ramped up to more than 200,000 every day, with 8.8 million test conducted so far. The recovery rate is 59.43%.

In other developments around the Asia-Pacific region:

— Tokyo Gov. Yuriko Koike warned Thursday that the spread of the coronavirus is beginning to accelerate again in Japan's capital as daily confirmed new infections jumped to a two-month high of 107. She urged residents to take more precautions and stay away from nightlife districts. Thursday's rise in new cases spiked from 67 the day before and is the highest since 154 on May 2, when Japan was under a state of emergency for the pandemic. The number tripled from 31 in just over a week. Tokyo now has 6,399 cases with 325 deaths, accounting for about one-third of Japan's national total. Koike said, however, that she has no plans to ask for business closures across Tokyo. "Nobody wants to go back to that situation," she said. "We are now in the phase of living with the coronavirus. Our policy is to balance the economy and social activity with disease prevention." The majority of recent cases were younger people in their 20s and 30s, and about 40% were linked to nightlife establishments, Koike said.

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— A coronavirus outbreak in Australia's second-largest city continued to grow, and the Northern Territory detected its first case in three months. The man from the Northern Territory had traveled overseas and stayed in the virus hot spot of Melbourne recently. The territory's health minister did not say whether the man was likely infected in Melbourne or overseas. Most of Melbourne's 77 latest cases were in suburbs that were put under a one-month lockdown Wednesday night.

— The Philippine government is shifting defense spending and putting on hold military modernization projects to help finance the response to COVID-19. Defense Secretary Delfin Lorenzana told a news forum that \$260 million from his department's budget was shifted to the pandemic campaign. Defense spokesman Arsenio Andolong told The Associated Press the country's military modernization program may be set back by up to three years after its annual allocation was also slashed by \$348 million, which will be used to fight the virus. It's a tough balancing act for a country with a surfeit of security concerns, including Muslim and communist insurgencies and South China Sea territorial conflicts. Its coronavirus cases exceed 38,500, including 1, 270 deaths.

— South Korea reported 54 new cases as the virus continues to spread beyond the capital area and reach cities like Gwangju, which has shut schools and tightened social restrictions after dozens were found infected this week. Health Minister Park Neung-hoo during a virus meeting expressed alarm over the rise of infections in Gwangju, which had one of the smallest caseloads among major South Korean cities before this week. Park urged the city's residents to refrain from unnecessary gatherings, maintain distance from others and wear masks.

— China reported three new cases of coronavirus, including just one case of local transmission in the capital Beijing, appearing to put the country where the virus was first detected late last year on course to eradicating it domestically, at least temporarily. The other two cases were brought from outside the country, according to the National Health Commission. China credits strict quarantine, social distancing and case tracing policies with reducing its cases. Masks are required for entry into many buildings, sometimes along with proof on a mobile phone app that the person is healthy.

— New Zealand's health minister resigned following a series of personal blunders during the coronavirus pandemic. David Clark had earlier described himself as an "idiot" for breaking the nation's lockdown measures and then last week appeared to blame a beloved health official for border lapses, generating an angry response from the public. Clark said he was becoming a distraction from the country's virus response.

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. **JOB SURGE EXPECTED IN JUNE REPORT** Economists forecast that 3 million jobs — a record high — were added, but recent data suggests that a resurgent coronavirus in the U.S. will limit further gains.

2. **'CONGREGATION AT A BAR IS BAD NEWS'** In recent weeks, college towns across America have seen clusters of cases that have been traced back to bars, which by nature do not lend themselves to social distancing.

3. **BLACK-OWNED BUSINESSES SUPPORTED** They are enjoying a surge in backing and custom amid the national reckoning on racism sparked by George Floyd's killing in Minneapolis.

4. **'I HOPE THAT THIS IS REAL'** A small but growing number of Republican congressional candidates, like Colorado's Lauren Boebert, have links to the far-right conspiracy theory known as QAnon.

5. **DEADLY LANDSLIDE RAVAGES MYANMAR TOWN** Rescue workers say at least 113 people have been killed at a jade mining site in Kachin state, a site renowned as the world's biggest and most lucrative in the industry.

Black-owned businesses see sales surge amid racism reckoning

By PHILIP MARCELO Associated Press

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BOSTON (AP) — When Mahdi Hashemian was looking for a bicycle for his 7-year-old daughter Zeynab last week, the Cambridge, Massachusetts, resident decided to skip his local cycle shops in favor of a Black-owned one a few miles away in Boston's Dorchester neighborhood.

At Spokehouse, a bike shop with "Black Lives Matter" painted in large bold letters outside, the pair picked out a simple, white-colored model and had training wheels and a white basket for its handlebars installed.

Hashemian, who is set to earn his doctorate from MIT, said he's been reminded in recent weeks of the outpouring of support he felt from the campus community when President Donald Trump imposed a ban on travelers from Muslim majority countries in 2017, including his native Iran.

"It seems small," he said of his bike purchase, "but a little show of support can mean a lot."

As the May killing of George Floyd by a white police officer in Minneapolis has fueled a worldwide outcry against racism and police brutality, many on social media are encouraging people to spend their money at Black-owned businesses. Lists of local retailers, artisans and manufacturers have been circulating on Instagram, Facebook and Twitter, helping Black-owned businesses raise their profile at a time when the coronavirus pandemic has ravaged the economy.

According to Google, searches for "Black owned businesses near me" reached an all-time high last month in the U.S. Yelp has also made it easier for customers to search for Black-owned establishments on the restaurant review site, and Uber Eats says it'll waive delivery fees for purchases from Black-owned restaurants through the end of the year.

"It's great seeing people realize that where they shop can be another form of activism, that it's a way to put your money where your mouth is," said Randy Williams, founder of Talley & Twine, a Black-owned watch company in Portsmouth, Virginia. "You're helping Black businesses become self-sustaining, and that helps the whole ecosystem."

Sales at Talley & Twine these past few months are up more than 300% from the same period last year, partly because more people are shopping online during the pandemic, he said. But the company was also recently mentioned on a number of social media lists of Black-owned businesses, and its Juneteenth-themed watch sold out before the June 19 holiday commemorating the emancipation of enslaved African Americans, Williams said.

In Los Angeles, cupcake sales and shipping orders on other sweets are up at Southern Girl Desserts after it was also mentioned on social media lists, said Catarah Coleman, co-owner of the bakery in the city's Baldwin Hills neighborhood.

"It's not nearly the level of business we had before the virus, but it's something," she said. "If we only depended on foot traffic and folks just stayed in their own neighborhoods, I'm not sure we'd be able to keep going."

At Slade's Bar and Grill in Boston's historically Black Roxbury neighborhood, online gift card purchases and take-out orders are up significantly as the long running soul food and live music venue — which boasted Malcolm X, Muhammad Ali and Martin Luther King, Jr. as patrons in its heyday — is just starting to reopen after shuttering during the pandemic, said Shawn Hunter, the managing partner.

"We're definitely seeing white customers and customers from outside the neighborhood that we would probably have never seen before," Hunter said.

In nearby Dorchester, Kerri Thibodeau said she drove about half an hour from suburban Stoughton to shop at Pure Oasis, the state's lone Black-owned retail marijuana shop and one of the few in the nation.

The 35-year-old mother of two, who is white, said there's a marijuana shop about five minutes from her house but she decided to support Pure Oasis after hearing that more than \$100,000 worth of marijuana products were stolen from the shop during a large Black Lives Matter protest through Boston last month.

"We really need to come together and show that it doesn't matter the color of our skin," Thibodeau said after buying some marijuana flower and pre-rolled joints last week.

But the business boon hasn't been without growing pains for some companies. Black-owned bookstores have struggled to keep up with a surge in orders, many of them for a handful of sold-out titles on race relations.

In Boston, the owners of Frugal Bookstore, the city's only Black-owned bookshop, say customers are

already seeking to cancel orders and complaining about delays and poor customer service. The Roxbury shop, which raised more than \$40,000 through an earlier social media campaign to help it weather the economic downturn, said in a note to customers that went viral last week that 75% of the more than 20,000 purchases it's received are for the same 10 books.

At Spokehouse, the Boston bike shop, owner Noah Hicks hopes the interest isn't a passing fad and that it leads to more concrete efforts to address the challenges facing Black entrepreneurs, including access to capital.

Hicks said his nearly five-year-old shop's sales have tripled this month, compared to last June, in part because bike shops are enjoying brisk business during the pandemic .

The shop also received about \$16,000 in donations after it was robbed during last month's unrest, though Hicks ended up donating about half to efforts benefiting the local Black community, including covering the costs for a "Ride for Black Lives," a cycling rally in Boston this past weekend.

"People being intentional about their economic purchases is refreshing," he said. "But we also want them to help tear down the systems that make it hard for us, not just spend their dollars with us."

Analysis: Trump fights to keep a job Dems say he isn't doing

By JULIE PACE AP Washington Bureau Chief

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump is asking Americans to let him keep his job. His critics are questioning how much of that job he's actually doing.

The questions have gotten louder in recent days following revelations Trump didn't read at least two written intelligence briefings about Russia paying bounties to the Taliban for the deaths of Americans in Afghanistan.

He also appeared to either downplay or miss repeated warnings about the coronavirus included in intelligence briefings, and he's been reluctant to amplify some of his own government's recommendations for reducing transmission, including wearing masks.

"He is not doing his job," said Michael Hayden, former director of the CIA and the National Security Agency.

Such assessments put Trump in a precarious position four months from Election Day and risk undercutting the central argument most incumbents make to voters when seeking reelection: Keep me on the job because I've proved I can do it.

Instead, Trump's uneven handling of the crises battering the nation, and the new revelations about his lack of attention to intelligence, have given Democrats an opening to argue to voters the president has proved he's ill-equipped to lead the nation through tough times, or outright absent in moments that demand leadership.

"It seems like our wartime president surrendered, waved the white flag and left the battlefield," said Joe Biden, Trump's Democratic opponent in the presidential race. Biden, who spent more than three decades as a senator and eight years as vice president, pitches himself to voters as a steady and experienced hand.

Trump came to power without any experience in governing, making the case to voters the go-with-your-gut decisions that helped him in business and as a reality television star would serve him as president. For some Americans disillusioned with career politicians in both parties, his outsider credentials were part of the appeal.

Trump has indeed taken an unconventional approach to the presidency. He's known to demand only the sparsest detail in his briefings, and his workdays frequently include hours watching cable news and posting on Twitter. White House aides have at times been leery of delivering bad news to him for fear of sparking an angry reaction, according to current and former advisers. They said there's particular concern in the West Wing about discussing Russia because the subject can send Trump into a tirade about accusations he has a too-cozy relationship with Vladimir Putin and about the special counsel investigation into Russian interference in the 2016 election.

The current and former advisers insisted on anonymity to discuss their private dealings with the president.

Trump's tweets for any occasion and obsession with dominating the news cycle, even if it involves some-

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thing negative, has sustained him for much of his presidency, when many of the crises were of his own making or fleeting in nature. Republicans often bristled at his tone and tweets but justified their support for him by pointing to the strong economy and the new generation of conservative judges he nominated to the courts.

But 2020 has been a year that's demanded more substance than style from the president. More than 125,000 Americans have died from COVID-19, and known infections are rising in several states. The strong economy Trump hoped to run on has cratered. And the deaths of several Black Americans has sparked a national reckoning over race and police brutality.

On each of those matters, Trump's critics — and some of his allies — argue he's fallen short rather than rising to the moment.

He's all but declared the pandemic over and has focused aggressively on reopening the economy, even as some Republican allies in key states start rolling back those efforts in a bid to contain outbreaks. Just 37% of Americans say they approve of Trump's handling of the pandemic, down from 44% in March, according to a recent poll from The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research.

The president has also been largely absent from the discussion of systemic racism in America following the death of George Floyd, a Black man who died when a white police officer pressed his knee into Floyd's neck for several minutes. Trump has focused much of his energy on the subject of racism on defending the prominent placement of memorials to Confederate figures.

Democrats also say the revelations over the past week that the president may not have read or absorbed intelligence briefings have put a finer point on the questions they're raising about his competency. The White House insisted Trump was unaware of assessments that Russia had put a bounty on U.S. service members in Afghanistan, though intelligence officials told the AP that the matter was included in at least two written briefings over the past year and that senior advisers alerted the president to the intelligence.

"At best, our commander in chief is utterly derelict in his duties, presiding over a dangerously dysfunctional national security process that is putting our country and those who wear its uniform at great risk," Susan Rice, who was President Barack Obama's national security adviser and is under consideration to be Biden's running mate, wrote in a New York Times opinion piece.

Some Republicans have defended Trump, including Texas Sen. John Cornyn, who told reporters the president "can't single-handedly remember everything, I'm sure, that he's briefed on." And White House press secretary Kayleigh McEnany stated: "The president does read."

"This president is the most informed person on planet Earth," she declared.

To Democrats, what's transpired in the White House was foreshadowed during the 2016 campaign, when Hillary Clinton argued Trump simply wasn't prepared for the presidency. Voters still chose him over the experienced former senator and secretary of state.

Now, Democrats believe their case about competency is more compelling given Trump has a record in office to defend.

"His actions and inactions directly impact people's lives now," said Josh Schwerin, spokesman for the Democratic super PAC Priorities USA.

Associated Press writer Jonathan Lemire in New York contributed to this report.

EDITOR'S NOTE — Julie Pace has covered the White House and politics for AP since 2007. Follow her at <https://twitter.com/jpaceDC>.

Photo of toddler sitting on slain grandpa angers Kashmiris

By AIJAZ HUSSAIN Associated Press

SRINAGAR, India (AP) — A photo of a toddler sitting on the chest of his dead grandfather has outraged residents of Indian-controlled Kashmir after the victim's family accused government forces of shooting the 65-year-old man during a clash with rebels in the disputed region.

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Suhail Ahmed, the victim's son, said on Thursday that his father, Bashir Ahmed Khan, was "dragged out of his car and shot in cold blood" in front of his 3-year-old grandson during a gunbattle Wednesday between Indian troops and rebels in northwestern Sopore town. He said troops later placed the child on his father's chest and took pictures.

A series of pictures by an unidentified photographer were widely shared on social media shortly after the gunbattle. Hundreds of angry people staged anti-India protests, accusing the government forces of using the child's images as PR stunt.

Police said the man was killed when rebels fighting against Indian rule shot at paramilitary soldiers from a mosque attic in Sopore. They said the attack killed one soldier and wounded three others.

Kashmir's inspector-general of police, Vijay Kumar, denied the family's account, saying the man was killed by militant firing. He said troops rescued the child during the fighting and accused the family of blaming the government forces under militant pressure.

According to the family, Khan was driving in his car with his grandson from his home in the main city of Srinagar.

"The police version is a blatant lie. If he was caught in crossfire, his body would have been inside his car or his car would have suffered some damage. There's not even a scratch or a bullet mark on his car," Ahmed said, as he wailed. "This is such heartlessness, such cruelty."

One of the photos showed a policeman holding the child in his lap and another showed the crying toddler, blood stains on his shirt and cookies in both of his hands, inside a police jeep.

The Indian chapter of Amnesty International criticized the police for disclosing the child's identity, saying it was a violation of juvenile justice and the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Despite the coronavirus outbreak, violence has escalated in Kashmir in recent months as India has stepped up its counterinsurgency operations. Militants have also continued attacks on government forces and alleged informants.

At least 143 rebels, 54 government troops and 32 civilians have been killed in more than 100 military operations across Kashmir since January, the Jammu-Kashmir Coalition of Civil Society, a prominent local rights group, said in a recent report.

India and Pakistan both claim the territory in its entirety. Kashmiris support the rebels' goal of uniting the territory, either under Pakistani rule or as an independent country.

India accuses Pakistan of arming and training the anti-India rebels. Pakistan denies this, saying it offers only moral and diplomatic support to the militants and to Kashmiris who oppose Indian rule.

Rebels have been fighting Indian rule since 1989. About 70,000 people have been killed in the uprising and the ensuing Indian military crackdown.

Court considers status of Istanbul's iconic Hagia Sophia

ANKARA, Turkey (AP) — A state attorney on Thursday recommended that Turkey's highest administrative court reject a request that Istanbul's iconic Hagia Sophia, which now serves as museum, be turned back into a mosque, state-run media reported.

The 6th-century structure was the Byzantine Empire's main cathedral before it was changed into an imperial mosque following the Ottoman conquest of Istanbul. Mustafa Kemal Ataturk, the founder of the modern Turkish republic, then turned into a museum that attracts millions of tourists each year.

Nationalist and religious groups have long been pressing for the landmark, which they regard as an Muslim Ottoman legacy, to be converted back into a mosque. Others believe the UNESCO World Heritage site should remain a museum, as a symbol of Christian and Muslim solidarity.

On Thursday, Turkey's Council of State, began considering a request by a group that wants Hagia Sophia to revert back into a mosque.

The lawyer of the group argued that the building was the personal property of Ottoman Sultan Mehmet II, who conquered Istanbul, and pressed for the annulment of a 1934 Council of Ministers' decision that turned it into a museum, the Anadolu Agency reported.

A state attorney, meanwhile, argued that the 1934 decision was legal, Anadolu reported. He recommended the request be rejected, arguing that a decision on restoring the structure's Islamic heritage was up to the government, the agency said.

A decision is expected within two weeks.

Greece as well as the Istanbul-based Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew I, considered the spiritual leader of the world's Orthodox Christians, have urged Turkey to keep Hagia Sophia as a museum. Bartholomew warned this week that its conversion into a mosque "will turn millions of Christians across the world against Islam."

U.S. State Secretary Mike Pompeo waded into the debate Wednesday, urging Turkey to keep Hagia Sophia as a museum "to serve humanity as a much-needed bridge between those of differing faith traditions and cultures." His comments sparked a rebuke from Turkey's Foreign Ministry, which said Hagia Sophia was a domestic issue of Turkish national sovereignty.

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.

Does wearing a mask pose any health risks?

By The Associated Press undefined

Does wearing a mask pose any health risks?

No, not for most people. Babies and toddlers should not wear masks because they could suffocate. The same goes for anyone who has trouble removing a mask without help.

Others can wear masks without risking their health, according to experts, despite false rumors to the contrary.

In areas where COVID-19 is spreading, health experts agree that wearing masks or other face coverings in public helps reduce the risk of spreading the virus when people can't socially distance by staying 6 feet apart.

The coronavirus mainly spreads through droplets that are emitted when people talk, laugh, sing, cough and sneeze. Masks lower the likelihood of those droplets reaching other people. Even if you don't have symptoms, you could be carrying the virus and could spread it.

When it's humid outside, it could feel like it's harder to breathe if you're not used to wearing a mask, said Benjamin Neuman, a professor of biology at Texas A&M University-Texarkana. But he said masks don't meaningfully decrease oxygen in the body.

"The body is quite good at adjusting to keep oxygen levels where they need to be," he said.

There's also no evidence that the use of masks causes fungal or bacterial infections, according to Davidson Hamer, an infectious disease expert at Boston University. Disposable face masks are meant to be used once, then thrown in the garbage. With cloth masks, it's a good idea to wash them regularly.

Wearing a mask may be uncomfortable, but health officials say you should resist any urge to touch your face. That could bring germs from your hands into your nose, mouth or eyes.

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

Read previous Viral Questions:

How risky is flying during the coronavirus pandemic?

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

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

Russian officials: 78% of voters back extending Putin's rule

MOSCOW (AP) — Almost 78% of voters in Russia have approved amendments to the country's constitution that will allow President Vladimir Putin to stay in power until 2036, Russian election officials said Thursday after all the votes were counted. Kremlin critics said the vote was rigged.

In the week-long balloting that concluded on Wednesday, 77.9% voted for the changes, and 21.3% voted against, with 100% of the precincts counted by Thursday morning, Russia's Central Election Commission said. The turnout exceeded 64%, according to officials.

The reported numbers reflect the highest level of voter support for Putin in ten years. In the 2018 presidential election, 76.7% of voters supported his candidacy, while in the 2012 election only 63.6% did.

But Kremlin critics say the numbers alone show they are false, with an unrealistic approval rating for the Russian leader amid wide frustration in the country over declining living standards.

"A record in falsifying votes has been set in Russia," opposition politician Alexei Navalny said in a Facebook post on Thursday. "The announced result has nothing whatsoever to do with the people's opinion."

Putin's approval rating was at 59% in May, according to the Levada Center, Russia's top independent pollster. That was the lowest in two decades.

The week-long plebiscite was tarnished by widespread reports of pressure on voters and other irregularities, with independent election observers criticizing the voting procedure as having a complete lack of transparency and independent control.

For the first time in Russia, polls were kept open for an entire week to bolster turnout and avoid election-day crowds amid the coronavirus pandemic — a provision that Kremlin critics denounced as an extra tool to manipulate the outcome, as ballot boxes remained unattended for days at night.

Observers also pointed to the relentless pressure that state and private employers put on their staff to vote, monitoring that was hindered by bureaucratic hurdles and virus-related restrictions, and the dubious legal standing of the early voting.

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

Sudan's bid to ban genital mutilation sparks hope, caution

By SAMY MAGDY and MARIAM FAM Associated Press

CAIRO (AP) — It's been more than 60 years. But the scene is seared still into Kawthar Ali's mind. The women pinned her down on a bed. She was maybe 5 1/2 or 6 years old. Holding her knees, they spread her legs open, her genitals exposed.

At the time, she didn't fully understand what followed. But that day Ali joined the many Sudanese girls who had undergone female genital mutilation, a practice that involves partial or total removal of the external female genitalia for non-medical reasons.

"It's the one incident that has affected my life the most," said Ali. "It feels shameful for people to expose your body and do this to you, like a rape."

The anguish unleashed that day led to an unwavering conviction: No daughter of hers should ever endure that pain. That decision pitted Ali against her own mother and a society where nearly 87% of women between 15 and 49 years old are estimated to have undergone a form of FGM, according to a U.N.-backed 2014 survey.

Soon, Ali and others like her might have the law on their side. Sudan's transitional authorities are expected to outlaw the procedure and set punishments of up to three years in prison and fines for those who carry out FGM, according to a draft bill obtained by The Associated Press. The Cabinet has approved a set of amendments that includes criminalizing FGM. Procedures to pass the law are expected to be completed, by the sovereign council and council of ministers, in the coming few days, Minister of Justice NasrEdeen Abdulbari said in a statement sent in response to AP questions.

"I'm very excited, very proud," said Nimco Ali, co-founder of The Five Foundation, which works to end

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FGM. "Those are the kind of things that we need to be celebrating because that was a part of democracy coming to Sudan."

Although she lauds the move, Kawthar Ali is not celebrating yet. "This thing will die very slowly," she said of FGM. "It's an issue related to our traditions and the Sudanese culture."

Like many in Sudan, Ali was subjected to an extreme form of FGM known as infibulation, which involves the cutting and repositioning of the labia, sometimes through stitching, to narrow the vaginal opening.

The World Health Organization says FGM constitutes an "extreme form of discrimination" against women. Nearly always carried out on minors, it can result in excessive bleeding and death or cause problems including infections, complications in childbirth and depression.

Millions of girls and women have been cut in countries in Africa, the Middle East and Asia. Reasons differ. Many believe it keeps women clean and protects their chastity by controlling sexual desire. The opinions of religious leaders run the spectrum. Some condone the practice, others work to eliminate it and others consider it irrelevant to religion.

Mohammed Hashim al-Hakim, a Sudanese Muslim cleric who opposes FGM, said religious leaders must confront attempts to put a veneer of religion on a custom largely rooted in culture.

The practice, he said, predates Islam and crosses religious lines. "No one in their right mind can say that a harmful practice ... belongs to religion."

Under the rule of longtime autocrat Omar al-Bashir, who was ousted in April last year, some Sudanese clerics said forms of FGM were religiously allowed, arguing that the only debate was over whether it was required or not.

It was fear of what people would say, rather than religious beliefs, that led Kawthar Ali's mother to fight her decision not to subject her own daughter to FGM. Ali even feared her mother would have someone commit it on her daughter while she was at work. She armed her child with a plan: Run to a nearby police station.

Now 35, the daughter wonders if the police would have helped. She said she is grateful for her mother's battle. Among high school classmates, she was "the abnormal one" for not getting cut. A rights defender, she spoke on condition she not be identified by name because of the sensitivity of her work.

The practice of FGM, she argued, is interwoven with a patriarchal mentality that connects a man's sexual pleasure to a woman's pain and exerts control over women.

"Customs, traditions and culture are much stronger than written laws," she said, adding that anti-FGM campaigners need to engage men more.

Neighboring Egypt shows how difficult it is to end the practice. Egypt banned FGM in 2008 and elevated it to a felony in 2016, allowing tougher penalties. Some of Egypt's top Islamic authorities have said FGM is forbidden.

Still, a 2015 government survey found that 87% of Egyptian women between the ages of 15 and 49 had undergone FGM, though the rate among teens did fall 11 percentage points from a 2008 survey.

Reda el-Danbouki, executive director of the Women's Centre for Guidance and Legal Awareness, said there have been cases where judges handed down minimum sentences on doctors who broke the law, giving the impression doctors can keep doing so with impunity.

As Sudan's law is implemented, there is the risk that FGM will go underground, said Othman Sheiba, secretary general of Sudan's National Council for Child Welfare. But criminalization sends a strong message, he said: "The government of the revolution will not accept this harm to girls."

Women were at the forefront of the protests against al-Bashir. Transitional authorities have since taken steps to roll back his legacy, which activists say disenfranchised women in particular.

For FGM truly to end, women must be empowered, Nimco Ali said. "You bring in the legislation and then you start having the conversation and then real change happens." A more "awoken" generation of young Sudanese rejects the practice and wants equality, she said.

A British activist of Somali origin, 37-year-old Ali underwent FGM in Djibouti at age 7. She remembers feeling angry. A severe kidney infection — a complication from the procedure — almost killed her at 11,

she said.

"I lost the concept of innocence," she said. "I felt so broken and so alone."

For her own procedure, Kawthar Ali was dolled up "like a bride." Her body was rubbed with oil and she wore a new dress and gold bracelets.

Although she had anesthesia, she remembers the cries of a relative who did not.

Physical pain lasted about a month, but the psychological pain has endured a lifetime, she said.

"It's like something getting ripped from inside of me," she said. "Something was forcefully taken from me."

Fam reported from Winter Park, Florida.

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

Long-shut factory helps COVID-struck Afghans breathe free

By TAMEEM AKHGAR Associated Press

KABUL, Afghanistan (AP) — Seven years ago, Najibullah Seddiqi closed his oxygen factory, frustrated with power cuts and with rampant corruption that kept him from getting contracts with hospitals.

But as the coronavirus raced through Afghanistan, he knew he had to help.

"I saw a man crying for his wife who died from coronavirus due to lack of oxygen," Seddiqi said. "That moment I made the decision to reopen my factory."

Now relatives of Afghans ailing with COVID-19 line up at his factory in the capital city of Kabul for free refills that can keep their loved ones alive.

Afghanistan has struggled with shortages of medical oxygen under the pandemic. The country gets its oxygen cylinders from abroad. Until recently, imports were halted by sealed borders.

Prices for new canisters have skyrocketed 10-fold, to 20,000 Afghanis (\$250). With people stockpiling as much as they can, the price to refill a canister is now 2,000 Afghanis, or \$25, five times what it once was. Many accuse retailers of price gouging and the government of failing to ensure a supply.

So Seddiqi's free service is a godsend for the many poor hit by the virus. Minivans of people bringing cylinders roll in as word of the distribution spreads on social media.

"This factory is doing great work offering it for free," said Bilal Hamidi as he waited on the crumbling concrete floor.

Hamidi said he fills three small cylinders a day for his brother, who was infected while caring for their mother. She died of COVID-19 in early June.

The factory, closed and long idle, is dusty. Parts are run-down. But when Seddiqi reopened the doors to resume production, everything still worked.

"I'm happy I didn't sell these machines," said Seddiqi, who also owns an ice factory.

He hired 12 men, working in two shifts. Seddiqi even moved in temporarily so he's always on hand: "I'm worried that I go home and someone in intense need comes late at night and doesn't find anyone to help them."

His factory refills 200 to 300 small cylinders a day free for COVID-19 patients. For hospitals and retail sellers, he fills close to 700 large cylinders a day for 300 Afghanis each, or \$3.80. That's far cheaper than the going rate but it's enough to cover his free distribution, he said.

Retailers insist they are not jacking up prices. Imports of cylinders from the United Arab Emirates and China stopped for months amid pandemic restrictions. They recently resumed, but "unbalanced supply and demand has caused prices to rise," said Khanjan Alkozai, a board member at the Afghanistan Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

Afghan media reported last week that several COVID-19 patients died in government hospitals due to lack of oxygen, though the government denied it.

Lawmaker Fatima Aziz, who has been infected by the coronavirus, posted a video from her bed, an

oxygen tube in her nose. She blamed corruption and government failures.

"People lose their life for two drops of oxygen," she said. "I curse all the mafias in this business that take advantage."

The Health Ministry's deputy spokeswoman, Masooma Jafari, said shortages at hospitals are being resolved. She said the Health Ministry ordered oxygen factories to give the health sector priority over industry.

Seddiqi's factory is one of six in Kabul that produce oxygen — but his is the only one giving free refills.

"My only aim is to save as many lives as I can," he said. "When the virus spread ends, then I'll go home."

Lives Lost: Brazilian toddler was saying her first words

LEO CORREA and ALAN CLENDENNING Associated Press

RIO DE JANEIRO (AP) — Vitoria Gabrielle crawled all the time and was starting to walk this year with a little help, hanging on to her 4-year-old brother's arm while exploring her mother's small apartment on a cobblestone street in Rio de Janeiro's working-class Piety neighborhood.

The girl with a constant smile celebrated her first birthday in February, slept and ate well and was enthusiastically saying her first words: "mamãe" and "vovó" (mama and grandma), said her mother, Andréa de Sousa.

But after recovering from viral meningitis, Vitoria Gabrielle suffered gastrointestinal problems that sent her from her mother's barely furnished hilltop home back to the hospital several times for treatment. It was during an April hospital stay that de Sousa suspects her daughter was infected with the coronavirus that was just starting to circulate in Rio and Brazil.

Vitoria Gabrielle died last month — 1 year, 2 months and 21 days after she was born — as COVID-19 cases surged in Latin America's largest and most populous nation, which is now the hardest-hit country globally after the U.S. for virus cases and deaths.

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

Only de Sousa and the child's stepfather were allowed to attend Vitoria Gabrielle's funeral in a cemetery where the gravediggers referred to the child and others recently buried there as "little angels" because their lives were cut short long before they could sin. No words were said at the event, kept brief to avoid more infections; the only sounds were de Sousa's sobs.

"My heart is destroyed with the loss of my daughter," de Sousa, 20, said later in an interview. "You are not ready to lose anybody but, a child? I'm not used to being without her. I miss her a lot."

At home these days, de Sousa loses herself as if she were in another world, spending much of her time gazing at a slideshow on her phone of pictures of her daughter set to the song "Law of Life" by Brazilian pop music star Sabrina Lopes.

"Everything that is born, dies. Everything that comes, goes. Today a dream died ... On the road of life, we are passengers. But God protects every extra star in the sky," Lopes sings.

It was on April 9 when Victoria Gabrielle was admitted to Jesus Municipal Hospital to undergo tests to determine why she had been vomiting.

By April 20, de Sousa said she realized that her daughter was constantly tired and having difficulty breathing, a condition she had never suffered before. The child was put in intensive care on April 24, diagnosed a short time later with the coronavirus and died on May 4.

A death certificate that de Sousa showed to The Associated Press said her daughter's causes of death were "Bilateral pneumonia, infected by COVID-19" along with a buildup of fluid in the brain and swelling of the liver and spleen.

While de Sousa is convinced her daughter was infected at the hospital, Rio's Municipal Health Secretariat said in a statement said it wasn't possible to identify the origin of infection because the virus had been spreading throughout Brazil when Vitoria Gabrielle was infected. The statement added that the child re-

ceived proper care while hospitalized.

De Sousa said her son, Gabriel, had always been very close to his sister and doesn't understand why he hasn't seen her for so long. He just wants to play with her.

"He asks about her all day. He says, 'Mom, I miss Gabrielle, why is she living with Jesus Christ?'"

De Sousa added: "And I say to him, 'God took her, God wanted her close to him.' Then he says, 'Wow, but I want to go see my sister.'"

"I'm asking God for strength and it's not easy," de Sousa said. "So I'm looking at her photos and I'm really missing her."

Clendenning reported from Rio de Janeiro. Associated Press senior television producer Yesica Fisch contributed to this report from Rio de Janeiro.

LAPD funding slashed by \$150M, reducing number of officers

LOS ANGELES (AP) — City leaders voted Wednesday to slash the Los Angeles Police Department budget by \$150 million, reducing the number of officers to a level not seen for more than a decade amid nationwide demands to shift money away from law enforcement agencies during America's reckoning over police brutality and racial injustice.

About two-thirds of the funding was earmarked for police overtime and will be used to provide services and programs for communities of color, including a youth summer jobs program. The City Council's 12-2 vote will drop the number of officers from 9,988 as of last month to 9,757 by next summer, abandoning a goal of 10,000 officers touted by political leaders and only reached in 2013.

"This is a step forward, supporting minority communities in ways in which they deserve — with respect, dignity and an even playing field," Councilman Curren Price said.

It's a big change in the nation's second largest city, where the 1992 acquittal of white officers in the beating of black driver Rodney King set off violent unrest that has been compared to the chaos during some protests over the death of George Floyd at the hands of Minneapolis police.

Other cities around the country also have cut police budgets or are moving to do so, including an effort in Minneapolis to disband the city's force. New York City lawmakers approved an austere budget Wednesday that will shift \$1 billion from policing to education and social services in the coming year. In California, liberal Berkeley passed a budget Wednesday that cuts \$9.2 million from police, while Oakland leaders last week slashed \$14.6 million from law enforcement and they are considering steeper reductions.

The Los Angeles vote reduces the LAPD's nearly \$2 billion budget. Democratic Mayor Eric Garcetti had proposed increasing it in April to help preserve the staffing level of 10,000 officers before facing intense pushback after Floyd's death invigorated a nationwide campaign to "defund" police.

There was no immediate comment from the LAPD. However, Police Chief Michel Moore tweeted Wednesday night that "we remain as resolved as ever to the conversation around reform, and continuing to walk forward together."

"The success of the city's future is grounded in bridging the divide, and we will never stop working to do just that," he wrote.

In a statement last month, Moore had said the cut would require "a top-to-bottom assessment, including how we go about our most basic operations" and said the department already had begun to identify potential cost savings and service reductions.

The move comes a day after the board of the Los Angeles Unified School District voted to immediately cut its school police budget by a third. The \$70 million budget for the force of more than 470 officers will be reduced by about \$25 million and the money dedicated to "support African American student achievement to the extent of the law," according to the resolution.

Some 65 officers will be laid off and nearly 40 vacant positions won't be filled, Police Chief Todd Chamberlain told the school board. He resigned Wednesday.

The school board also called for officers to give up their uniforms and patrol off campus. Board Presi-

dent Richard Vladovic opposed the move on safety grounds, urging a delay.

"We're walking right into this without knowing where we're going, and how we're going to get there," Vladovic said.

Mass protests nationwide have demanded shrinking or eliminating police departments, with activists saying police disproportionately arrest Black people and are seen as repressive figures rather than protectors in communities of color.

"We need to rethink what it is that makes people safer and makes communities stronger," the City Council resolution said. "We cannot just look at the police in isolation. There is no doubt that communities of color suffer disproportionately from negative interactions with the police."

The LAPD cut was part of a budget modification measure for the fiscal year beginning July 1 that comes amid the coronavirus pandemic. Months of social distancing measures, including closing many businesses, have left the city with a drastically reduced tax revenue and a potential shortfall of \$45 million to \$409 million, according to finance department estimates.

Video: Florida police laugh about shooting rubber bullets

FORT LAUDERDALE, Fla. (AP) — Florida police officers can be heard laughing and celebrating after shooting protesters with rubber bullets during a May protest against police brutality, according to newly released body camera footage.

In response to a story by the Miami Herald, Fort Lauderdale police posted a video on its official YouTube channel Wednesday taken from the body camera of Detective Zachary Baro, who was leading the department's SWAT team unit on May 31. It was less than a week after the death of George Floyd in Minneapolis police custody, which sparked protests through the U.S.

At one point in the video, Baro can be heard saying, "Beat it" and using a profanity, after officers shot less lethal projectiles.

LaToya Ratlieff was shot in the face during what had been a largely peaceful protest, suffering a fractured skull and requiring 20 stitches. She couldn't eat for a week and still has trouble seeing out of one eye that is filled with blood.

She has asked to sit down with the police department to discuss ways to change the system and make sure there's accountability going forward.

"I'm heartbroken. We deserve better," she said in response to the video late Wednesday night.

A Fort Lauderdale police officer was charged for an incident during that same protest after video showed he pushed a kneeling woman to the ground. Witnesses said the peaceful gathering turned after that as angry protesters responded by throwing bottles. The officer's colleagues quickly pushed him away from the woman and down the street.

During another section of the video, an officer approaches Baro behind the police line and asks if his body camera is off. After Baro replies incorrectly that his camera is in stand-by mode and not recording, the two officers begin laughing and joking about the people they had shot with rubber bullets.

Fort Lauderdale Police Chief Rick Maglione said in a statement that the department was conducting an exhaustive review of nearly 8,000 minutes of body camera footage, with a report to be completed within the next month.

"The entire video clearly demonstrates our officers were under attack by a group of people who chose to use violence instead of peace to antagonize the situation," Maglione said. "Although the language is extreme, and offensive to some, our officers were dealing with the chaos of a developing situation."

Closing bars to stop coronavirus spread is backed by science

By CARLA K. JOHNSON AP Medical Writer

Authorities are closing honky tonks, bars and other drinking establishments in some parts of the U.S. to stem the surge of COVID-19 infections — a move backed by sound science about risk factors that go

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beyond wearing or not wearing masks.

In the words of one study, it comes down to the danger of "heavy breathing in close proximity."

Crowded indoor spaces filled with people yelling, leaning close to hear one another and touching the same sticky surfaces are "the opposite of social distancing," said Dr. David Hamer of the Boston University School of Medicine.

"Can you do social distancing at a bar? Can you wear a mask while drinking?" Hamer said. "Bars are the perfect place to break all those rules."

The rapid spread of a bar outbreak can swamp public health workers. In East Lansing, Michigan, an outbreak tied to a large brewpub near Michigan State University has spread to nearly 140 people in 12 counties, causing authorities to recruit nursing students and retirees to help with contact tracing.

"In 12 days, we went from two identified cases to 128, and, honestly, I don't have today's numbers yet," Ingham County health officer Linda Vail said Wednesday before cases shot up again. She described her outlook as "shocked and overwhelmed."

Michigan Gov. Gretchen Whitmer responded by closing indoor seating in bars in parts of the state. Taverns will not have to close completely. They can sell to-go cocktails and keep outdoor patios open.

In California, Gov. Gavin Newsom took similar action, ordering bars and indoor restaurant dining to close again for the next three weeks in most of the state. New York Mayor Bill de Blasio delayed the city's resumption of indoor dining.

Two other factors at play in bars make them potential virus flashpoints. Alcohol lowers inhibitions, so people forget precautions, said Natalie Dean, an infectious diseases expert at the University of Florida.

Plus, the attractive, healthy person buying you a drink could be a silent carrier, shedding contagious virus with each breath.

"Young people have less severe illness, so they may be infected and able to infect others inadvertently," Dean said, noting outbreaks in Japan and South Korea associated with restaurants, bars and karaoke parties.

In recent weeks, college towns across America have seen clusters of cases that have been traced back to bars. Bars and restaurants near the University of Iowa and Iowa State University closed only weeks after the governor allowed them to reopen.

As of last week, 90% of cases in the county that is home to Kansas State University involved people ages 18 to 24. Health officials said most of them spent time in a bar and restaurant district known as "Aggieville."

Citing a similar spike, the Kansas county that includes the city of Lawrence and the University of Kansas also ordered bars and nightclubs to close beginning Friday for the next two weeks.

"Congregation at a bar, inside, is bad news," Dr. Anthony Fauci told a Senate panel Tuesday. "We really have got to stop that."

Texas, Arizona, Los Angeles and some Pennsylvania counties are closing bars to slow the spread of the virus. Florida and Colorado have told bars they cannot serve alcohol on site.

Most bar owners and employees feel that they have been unfairly singled out, particularly because restaurants are still open and serving alcohol. In Texas, bar owners said that on Friday after they were forced to close their doors, they noticed restaurants were still packed.

"You can go into a restaurant and they have bars, and you can have as many drinks as you want," said Nikki Forsberg, owner of the Old Ironhorse Saloon in Blanco, Texas. "It doesn't seem fair. Restaurants get this pass and the bars don't."

The bar's manager, Tami Cooley, said although she did not wear a mask at work, she felt the tavern was taking every precaution to safely stay open. No one was allowed to drink or order at the bar, and tables were limited to six people. They closed for a few days after finding out one of the bartenders had been in contact with someone who tested positive for the virus.

"We were cautious at our bar. We social-distanced, sanitized the tables, chairs, bathrooms, doorknobs," she said. "We did everything right."

In the Michigan bar outbreak investigation, "huge concern" now centers on the parents and grandparents exposed to the virus by their offspring who partied at the brewpub, Vail said. She worries about "a climb in secondary cases if the people we asked to self-quarantine didn't do that ... Where is this secondary

transmission going to land?"

Saskia Popescu, an infectious diseases expert in Phoenix, said it's difficult to disinfect surfaces at a bar enough to make a difference. Even sitting at a table with friends at a bar involves loud talking and laughing that could spread virus. It's not worth it, she concludes.

"You can make a cocktail at home," Popescu said.

Associated Press Writer John Seewer in Toledo, Ohio, contributed to this report.

The Associated Press Health and Science Department receives support from the Howard Hughes Medical Institute's Department of Science Education. The AP is solely responsible for all content.

A predicted surge in US job growth for June might not last

By CHRISTOPHER RUGABER AP Economics Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — U.S. employers likely rehired several million more workers in June, thereby reducing a Depression-level unemployment rate, but the most up-to-date data suggests that a resurgent coronavirus will limit further gains.

Economists have forecast that businesses, governments and nonprofits added 3 million jobs — a record high — and that the unemployment rate fell a full percentage point to 12.3%, according to data provider FactSet. The predicted hiring gain would be up from 2.5 million jobs in May. Even so, the combined job growth for May and June would recover only a fraction of the 22 million jobs that were lost in March and April, when the virus forced business shutdowns and layoffs across the country.

And even a jobless rate above 10% wouldn't fully capture the scope of the pandemic's damage to the job market and the economy. Millions more people are working part time but would prefer full-time work. And an unusually high proportion of workers have been subject to pay cuts, research has found.

With confirmed coronavirus cases spiking across the Sun Belt, a range of evidence suggests that a nascent recovery is stalling. In states that are suffering the sharpest spikes in reported virus cases — Texas, Florida, Arizona and others — progress has reversed, with businesses closing again and workers losing jobs, in some cases for a second time.

On Wednesday, California re-closed down bars, theaters and indoor restaurant dining across most of the state. And Arizona's outbreak grew more severe by nearly every measure. Florida has closed some beaches.

Credit and debit card data tracked by JPMorgan Chase show that consumers have slowed their spending in just the past week, after spending had risen steadily in late April and May. The reversal has occurred both in states that have seen surges in reported COVID cases and in less affected states, said Jesse Edgerton, an economist at J.P. Morgan.

Nationwide, card spending fell nearly 13% last week compared with a year ago. That was worse than the previous week, when year-over-year card spending had declined just under 10%.

Real-time data from Homebase, a provider of time-tracking software for small businesses, shows that the number of hours worked at its client companies has leveled off after having risen sharply in May and early June. Business re-openings have also flattened. The economic bounce produced by the initial lifting of shutdown orders may have run its course.

Still, Thursday's jobs report will be based on data gathered in the second week of June, so it will still likely reflect an improving hiring trend. Last week's plateau in hours worked will instead affect the July jobs figures, to be released in early August.

"Whatever picture the jobs report gives us, things have become worse since then," said Julia Pollak, a labor economist at ZipRecruiter.

In addition to the renewed shutdowns across the Sun Belt, New York City has postponed plans to reopen indoor seating at restaurants in the face of more confirmed virus cases. Such moves are causing another round of layoffs or will limit future hiring.

McDonald's has paused its reopening efforts nationwide. And Apple said it will re-close 30 more of its

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U.S. stores, on top of 47 it had already shut down for a second time.

Economists have long warned that the economic benefits of allowing businesses to reopen would prove short-lived if the virus wasn't brought under control. Until most Americans feel confident enough to dine out, travel, shop or congregate in groups without fear of infection, restaurants, hotels and retailers won't have enough demand to justify rehiring all their previous workers.

"The path forward for the economy is extraordinarily uncertain and will depend in large part on our success in containing the virus," Federal Reserve Chair Jerome Powell told a House committee this week. "A full recovery is unlikely until people are confident that it is safe to re-engage in a broad range of activities."

Still, some bright spots in the economy may emerge in Thursday's jobs report. Manufacturers expanded in June after three months of shrinking, the Institute for Supply Management, a trade group, said Wednesday. New orders are flowing in and factories are adding more jobs, the ISM said.

And record-low mortgage rates are encouraging more home buyers. Purchases of new homes rose sharply in May. And a measure of signed contracts to buy existing homes soared by a record amount in May, a sign that sales should rebound after falling for three straight months.

24 shot to death in attack on drug rehab center in Mexico

MEXICO CITY (AP) — Gunmen burst into an unregistered drug rehabilitation center in central Mexico and opened fire Wednesday, killing 24 people and wounding seven, authorities said.

Police in the north-central state of Guanajuato said the attack occurred in the city of Irapuato. Three of the seven wounded were reported in serious condition.

Apparently the attackers shot everyone at the rehab center. State police said nobody was abducted. Photos purporting to show the scene suggest those at the center were lying down when they were sprayed with bullets.

Guanajuato is the scene of a bloody turf battle between the Jalisco cartel and a local gang, and the state has become the most violent in Mexico.

No motive was given in the attack, but Gov. Diego Sinhue Rodríguez Vallejo said drug gangs appeared to have been involved.

"I deeply regret and condemn the events in Irapuato this afternoon," the governor wrote. "The violence generated by organized crime not only takes the lives of the young, but it takes the peace from families in Guanajuato."

Mexican drug gangs have killed suspected street-level dealers from rival gangs sheltering at such facilities in the past. It was one of the deadliest attacks on a rehab center since 19 people were killed in 2010 in Chihuahua city in northern Mexico. More than a dozen attacks on such facilities have occurred since then.

Mexico has long had problems with rehab centers because most are privately run, underfunded and often commit abuses against recovering addicts. The government spends relatively little money on rehabilitation, often making the unregistered centers the only option available for poor families.

In addition, addicts and dealers who face attacks from rivals on the streets sometimes take refuge at the rehab clinics, making the clinics themselves targets for attack. Still other gangs have been accused of forcibly recruiting recovering addicts at the centers as dealers, and killing them if they refused.

Appeals court lifts restraint against Trump book publisher

By LARRY NEUMEISTER Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — A New York appeals court cleared the way Wednesday for a publisher to distribute a tell-all book by President Donald Trump's niece over the objections of the president's brother.

The New York State Supreme Court Appellate Division said it was lifting a temporary restraint that a judge put on Simon & Schuster a day earlier that sought to block distribution of "Too Much and Never Enough: How My Family Created the World's Most Dangerous Man."

Although the book was scheduled to be published on July 28, Simon & Schuster said thousands of copies of the 75,000-copy first run of the book had already been sent to bookstores and others.

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The appeals ruling, written by Judge Alan D. Scheinkman, left in place restraints against Mary Trump, the book's author and the president's niece, after the president's brother, Robert Trump, said she agreed with family members not to write about their relationships without permission.

Robert Trump had sued Mary Trump to block publication of a book promoted to contain an "insider's perspective" of "countless holiday meals," "family interactions" and "family events."

An email seeking comment was sent to Robert Trump's lawyer Wednesday. The appeals court noted it was ruling after hearing oral arguments from lawyers for Mary Trump and Simon & Schuster and before lawyers for Robert Trump submitted opposition papers.

Scheinkman left in place a restraint that blocked Mary Trump and any agent of hers from distributing the book, but the court made clear it was not considering the publisher to be an agent, though that issue could be decided in further proceedings at the lower court.

"The evidence submitted is insufficient for this Court to determine whether the plaintiff is likely to succeed in establishing that claim," the appeals court said in an opinion written by Judge Alan D. Scheinkman.

In court papers, the publisher said it was not aware of an agreement between Mary Trump and her relatives until she was sued.

In a statement, Simon and Schuster said it was gratified with the ruling, which it said would let Mary Trump tell her story. The publisher said the book was of "great interest and importance to the national discourse that fully deserves to be published for the benefit of the American public."

It added: "As all know, there are well-established precedents against prior restraint and pre-publication injunctions, and we remain confident that the preliminary injunction will be denied."

Mary Trump's lawyer, Theodore Boutros Jr., said in a statement it was "very good news that the prior restraint against Simon & Schuster has been vacated." He added that he believed a similar finding was necessary for Mary Trump, "based on the First Amendment and basic contract law."

In ruling, Scheinkman said people are free to negotiate away their First Amendment rights, especially if they are compensated well, which Robert Trump maintains that she was.

But he noted that "while parties are free to enter into confidentiality agreements, courts are not necessarily obligated to specifically enforce them."

The judge wrote that "whatever legitimate public interest there may have been in the family disputes of a real estate developer and his relatives may be considerably heightened by that real estate developer now being President of the United States and a current candidate for reelection."

He added: "Stated differently, the legitimate interest in preserving family secrets may be one thing for the family of a real estate developer, no matter how successful; it is another matter for the family of the President of the United States."

Associated Press writers Michael Balsamo in Washington and Jennifer Peltz in New York contributed to this story.

The Latest: South Korea worries as virus resurgence spreads

By The Associated Press undefined

SEOUL, South Korea — South Korea says it has confirmed 54 more COVID-19 cases as the coronavirus continues to spread beyond the capital region and reach cities like Gwangju, which has shut schools and tightened social restrictions after dozens fell sick this week.

The figures reported Thursday brought the national case total to 12,904, including 282 deaths.

Twenty-two of the new cases are in Gwangju, a southwestern city where infections were tied to various places, including office buildings, public libraries, welfare centers and a Buddhist temple.

Twenty-three of the new cases came from the densely popular Seoul metropolitan area, which has been at the center of a virus resurgence since late May amid increased economic activity and eased attitudes on social distancing.

Health Minister Park Neung-hoo is expressing alarm over the rise of infections in Gwangju, which had one of the smallest case loads among major South Korean cities before this week.

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

- Cases are spiking in the Sunbelt, leading states to back off reopening
- Trump says he'll now wear mask in public, thinks it makes him look like Lone Ranger
- Egypt reopens airports, museums, Giza Pyramids.
- Hollowed out public health system faces more cuts amid virus.

HERE'S WHAT ELSE IS HAPPENING:

BEIJING — China is reporting three newly confirmed cases of coronavirus, and says just one of them involved local transmission in the capital of Beijing.

The report Thursday appears to put the country where the virus was first detected late last year on course to eradicating it domestically, at least temporarily.

The National Health Commission says the other two cases were brought from outside China. No new deaths were reported, leaving the toll at 4,634 among 83,537 total cases of COVID-19.

China credits strict quarantine, social distancing and case tracing policies with helping radically lower the number of cases.

China is moving swiftly to re-open its economy, but mass employment looms as the heavily indebted government is reluctant to spend lavishly on stimulus programs.

HARRISBURG, Pa. — Pennsylvania's high court has rejected an effort by Republican state lawmakers to end Democratic Gov. Tom Wolf's pandemic shutdown orders.

A divided court ruled Wednesday that a resolution passed with mostly GOP votes was a "legal nullity" because it was not sent to Wolf to sign or veto.

Republican majorities in both chambers, along with a few Democrats, voted early last month to end the emergency disaster declaration that has led to closure of "non-life-sustaining" businesses, bans on large gatherings and orders that people stay at home.

Wolf has gradually been reopening the state, although a recent uptick in coronavirus infections in some parts of the state has produced some additional restrictions.

The Republican leaders of the state House and Senate filed suit seeking to enforce the resolution, and the high court ruled without hearing oral argument.

RACINE, Wis. — A Wisconsin judge has thrown out the city of Racine's coronavirus ordinance, ruling its limits on gatherings violate the state constitution.

Racine County Circuit Judge Jon Fredrickson said Wednesday that the plan interfered with the right to assemble. The judge also said the ordinance was so broadly written that "no average person of ordinary intelligence can make sense of its sprawling breadth."

The owner of a CrossFit gym brought the lawsuit, saying the rules threatened his business. The judge said Racine could adopt a new plan if it is written more narrowly.

Racine Mayor Cory Mason says the city has asked for an immediate stay of the decision. In a statement, the mayor calls the ruling irresponsible and says it jeopardizes the city's ability to protect the health of residents.

COLUMBIA, S.C. — South Carolina's top infectious disease expert said the state's spike in COVID-19 cases is overwhelming the ability of health workers to track infected people.

Contact tracing is a critical part of slowing the virus and quickly isolating people who may be infected, so the inability to investigate cases could mean the virus keeps spreading quickly, state Epidemiologist Dr. Linda Bell said Wednesday.

South Carolina has reported more than 1,000 newly diagnosed cases in 11 of the past 13 days. At that level, contact tracing is virtually impossible, Bell said.

The spike started after the Memorial Day weekend, and if people act irresponsibly and don't social distance and wear masks while celebrating Independence Day, South Carolina will face a crisis, Bell said.

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"If we don't take that action now, if we don't social distance, if we don't wear our masks, we are going to see more of our friends, our family members, our loved ones who will continue to become ill, who will be hospitalized — and many will die," Bell said.

South Carolina set a record reporting 24 deaths Wednesday. The state had 1,160 people hospitalized Wednesday with COVID-19, the most since the pandemic began, health officials said.

TOPEKA, Kan. — Kansas will hold its state fair in September despite opposition from the state's top public health official and a recent surge in new coronavirus cases.

The spread of the disease slowed in Kansas from mid-May until mid-June, but it has since had a resurgence, according to health department statistics. The state has reported nearly 15,000 cases and 272 deaths overall.

Dr. Lee Norman, top administrator at the state health department, told the State Fair Board on Tuesday that it would be difficult to enforce mask wearing, social distancing and smaller crowd sizes at a fair, The Hutchinson News reported.

"There will be new cases and it will be dangerous," Norman said. "We're going, clearly, in the wrong direction."

The board nevertheless voted to hold the fair Sept. 11-20 in Hutchinson, with some precautions. Patrons will be required to wear masks at indoor commercial and competitive exhibit spaces, and will be encouraged to wear them elsewhere. Crowds won't be limited.

Citing a spike in Covid 19 cases, a local health official said Wednesday he will order bars and nightclubs to close beginning Friday for the next two weeks in a northeast Kansas county that is the home to the University of Kansas.

SACRAMENTO, Calif. — California Gov. Gavin Newsom has ordered bars and indoor operations of restaurants to close for the next three weeks in most parts of the state.

The Democratic governor's order comes amid a troubling increase of California coronavirus cases and hospitalizations. The order applies to 19 counties covering 72% of the state's population, including Los Angeles County.

The order also applies to the indoor operations of movie theaters, wineries, tasting rooms, family entertainment centers, zoos and museums. Newsom ordered parking lots closed at beaches in Southern California and in the San Francisco Bay area to limit overcrowding.

In Michigan, Gov. Gretchen Whitmer on Wednesday said she was closing indoor seating in bars in parts of the state, including a city with a bar that has been linked to about 140 infections.

Whitmer also signed a bill allowing bars and restaurants to sell cocktails-to-go in an effort to help those businesses.

ATLANTA — Just in time for the July 4th weekend, the nation's top public health agency is advising Americans to wear face coverings when they are at the beach.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention posted the guidance on Wednesday. The CDC said people should not wear masks or cloth face coverings in the water, but should cover at all other times. People should also try to stay at least six feet away from others they don't live with, whether it's in or out of the water. It reiterated that people should stay home if they are feeling ill.

The CDC guidance is designed to prevent the spread of new coronavirus.

PHOENIX — A masked Vice President Mike Pence has arrived in Arizona on Wednesday where the state leads the nation in new coronavirus cases per capita.

Pence's visit comes as Arizona broke its own records in newly reported COVID-19 cases, hospitalizations, emergency room visits and deaths. There have been roughly 558 new cases per 100,000 people in Arizona over the past two weeks, ranking the state first in the country for new cases per capita, according

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to Johns Hopkins University.

State health officials reported 4,878 new confirmed cases — a number comparable to recent daily case totals in larger states such as Florida and California, which have three to six times as many people as Arizona.

Pence was met on a tarmac by Arizona Gov. Doug Ducey, where the men exchanged an elbow bump.

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

BATON ROUGE, La. — Louisiana is seeing its largest daily coronavirus case spike since April, during the height of the state's outbreak.

Nearly 2,100 new cases of the COVID-19 disease were confirmed over the last day in Louisiana. Hospitalizations continued to tick upward.

The trend is concerning public health experts, who noted Louisiana's once successful efforts to slow infections are being undermined by the public ignoring recommended precautions.

Baton Rouge mayor Sharon Weston Broome says she's signing an executive order that requires people to wear face coverings when they are inside businesses.

"My message is simple. Save a life, save our economy and wear a face covering," Broome wrote on Twitter.

New Orleans already has a mask requirement for nearly all activities in the city

INDIANAPOLIS — Indiana Gov. Eric Holcomb will keep capacity limits in place for restaurants, bars and entertainment venues because of concerns about a possible increase in coronavirus cases across the state.

The state's reopening plan called for those restrictions to be lifted this weekend, but Holcomb says he'll keep them in place until at least July 18. The state will keep its current 250-person limit on social gatherings.

Holcomb, a Republican, says he was concerned about recent increases in hospitalizations across Indiana involving COVID-19 cases and other states that have seen fresh outbreaks after lifting restrictions on bars and other businesses.

Since June 12, restaurants have been allowed 75% capacity in their dining rooms. Bars, nightclubs, bowling alleys, museums and amusement parks have been open at half capacity.

FORT LAUDERDALE, Fla. — Experts say Florida residents should brace themselves for further coronavirus restrictions, warning the Sunshine State and other southern U.S. states didn't adopt strong enough measures to control outbreaks early on and are now paying the price.

Dr. Kristin Englund, an infectious disease physician at Cleveland Clinic, said Wednesday that once the virus is widespread in states with "huge numbers" of confirmed cases, "it's going to be almost impossible to control."

Referring to Florida's one-day high reported last week, Englund said: "The public health system can't track 9,000 cases a day and do any kind of reasonable contact tracing ... It's uncontrollable from a public health standpoint."

She added: "Everyone in our country is going to have to be prepared for stronger measures in the future, for shelter in place, for if not pausing, then taking back some of the measures we had been doing to open our economy."

Jackson Health System, the largest hospital in Florida's hardest-hit county in the coronavirus pandemic announced Wednesday it is scaling back elective surgeries and other procedures because of a new surge in cases.

Miami-Dade County and others in South Florida are closing beaches for the Fourth of July holiday in hopes of preventing further virus spread due to large crowds.

ROME — Italy's hard-hit northern region of Lombardy accounted for considerably more than half of the nation's latest confirmed coronavirus cases.

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The Health Ministry says 187 new cases of COVID-19 were confirmed in the 24-hour-period ending Wednesday night and 109 in Lombardy. There were 21 deaths, raising to 34,788 the total of known deaths.

Authorities say many elderly with COVID-19 symptoms who died in nursing facilities or their own homes didn't get tested, so the overall death toll is likely higher.

Italy counts 240,760 cases nationwide in its outbreak. The number of people with the coronavirus needing intensive care beds was 87 on Wednesday. In early April, that daily figure topped 4,000.

UNITED NATIONS — The United Nations Security Council is demanding an "immediate cessation of hostilities" for at least 90 days in key conflicts including Syria, Yemen, Libya, South Sudan and Congo to tackle COVID-19.

The U.N.'s most powerful body voted unanimously Wednesday to adopt the resolution after the United States and China resolved a lengthy dispute over mentioning the World Health Organization.

Germany's U.N. Ambassador Christoph Heusgen, the council president for July, announced the result calling it "a sign for hope for all people currently living in conflict zones around the world."

"It is now the obligation of the council – and all parties to armed conflicts – to implement this resolution in our work this month and beyond," he said.

The resolution backs Secretary-General Antonio Guterres' March 23 call for global cease-fires to tackle the pandemic. It calls on all warring parties to pause and allow safe and unhindered delivery of humanitarian aid and medical evacuations.

JERUSALEM — The Palestinian Authority has announced a five-day total lockdown in the West Bank in response to a major increase in coronavirus cases and deaths in recent days.

The Palestinian government says the lockdown will take effect Friday, and people will be required to shelter at home. A two-month total lockdown of the Palestinian territory was lifted in late May.

In the past two weeks, Palestinian health authorities have reported more than 1,700 confirmed coronavirus cases in the West Bank city of Hebron and hundreds more in Bethlehem and Nablus.

The occupied West Bank has a total of 3,045 confirmed cases and 11 deaths from the coronavirus since the beginning of the pandemic.

BANGKOK — The spokesman for the government body coordinating Thailand's response to COVID-19 outbreaks has expressed pride that the European Union selected Thailand as one of just 14 countries whose travelers it will once again welcome.

Taweasin Witsanuyothin of the Center for COVID-19 Situation said Wednesday that he was proud that Thailand's efforts to contain the coronavirus were recognized.

Thailand has confirmed 3,173 coronavirus cases and 58 virus-related deaths, and during the past five weeks new cases only have been found among repatriated Thais.

The E.U.'s decision has little immediate practical effect since Thailand has kept in effect a ban on regularly scheduled international flights with no set end date.

A limited number of foreign visitors in categories covering families, residency and business were being allowed into Thailand beginning Wednesday on flights carrying Thai citizens back home.

JOHANNESBURG — Africa's confirmed coronavirus cases have surpassed 400,000 and deaths have crossed 10,000 as health officials warn the pandemic is picking up speed on the continent of 1.3 billion people.

The Africa Centers for Disease Control and Prevention say confirmed cases are now above 404,000 on the 54-nation continent, while testing capabilities remain low because of shortages of materials.

The new milestones come as some countries loosen their lockdowns and even reopen airports for international flights.

South Africa leads the continent with more than 151,000 confirmed cases. An emerging hot spot is in Gauteng province, containing Johannesburg, with 28% of the country's cases.

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

Stonewall Jackson removed from Richmond's Monument Avenue

By DENISE LAVOIE and ALAN SUDERMAN Associated Press

RICHMOND, Va. (AP) — Work crews wielding a giant crane, harnesses and power tools wrested an imposing statue of Gen. Stonewall Jackson from its concrete pedestal along Richmond, Virginia's famed Monument Avenue on Wednesday, just hours after the mayor ordered the removal of all Confederate statues from city land.

Mayor Levar Stoney's decree came weeks after Virginia Gov. Ralph Northam ordered the removal of the most prominent and imposing statue along the avenue: that of Confederate Gen. Robert E. Lee, which sits on state land. The removal of the Lee statue has been stalled pending the resolution of several lawsuits.

The Jackson statue is the latest of several dozen Confederate symbols to be removed from public land in the U.S. in the five weeks since the death of George Floyd at the hands of police sparked a nationwide protest movement.

In most instances, state or local governments moved to take down monuments in response to impassioned demonstrators, but in a few cases — including several other Virginia Confederate statues — protesters toppled the figures themselves. Also this week, Mississippi retired the last state flag in the U.S. that included the Confederate battle emblem.

Confederate statues were erected decades after the Civil War, during the Jim Crow era, when states imposed new segregation laws, and during the "Lost Cause" movement, when historians and others tried to depict the South's rebellion as a fight to defend states' rights, not slavery. In Richmond, the first major monument — the Lee statue — was erected in 1890.

Work crews spent several hours Wednesday carefully attaching a harness to the massive Stonewall Jackson statue and using power tools to detach it from its base. A crowd of several hundred people who had gathered to watch cheered as a crane lifted the figure of the general atop his horse into the air and set it aside.

"This is long overdue," said Brent Holmes, who is Black. "One down, many more to go."

Eli Swann, who has lived in Richmond for 24 years, said he felt "an overwhelming sense of gratitude" to witness the removal of the statue after he and others have spent weeks demonstrating and calling for it and others to be taken down. He said that as a Black man, he found it offensive to have so many statues glorifying Confederate generals for "fighting against us."

"I've been out here since Day 1," Swann said. "We've been seeing the younger people out here, just coming and constantly marching and asking for change. And now finally the change is coming about."

Flatbed trucks and other equipment were spotted Wednesday at several other monuments as well. The city has roughly a dozen Confederate statues on municipal land, including one of Confederate Gen. J.E.B. Stuart. Mayor Stoney said it will take several days to remove them.

The mayor said he also is moving quickly because he is concerned that people could be hurt trying to take down the gigantic statues themselves. In Portsmouth last month, a man was seriously injured when protesters tried to pull down a Confederate statue.

"Failing to remove the statues now poses a severe, immediate and growing threat to public safety," he said, noting that hundreds of demonstrators have held protests in the city for 33 consecutive days.

Stoney said the removal of the statues is "long overdue" and sends a message that the city of Richmond — the onetime capital of the Confederacy — is no longer a place with symbols of oppression and white supremacy.

"Those statues stood high for over 100 years for a reason, and it was to intimidate and to show Black and brown people in this city who was in charge," Stoney said.

"I think the healing can now begin in the city of Richmond," he said.

Stoney's move came on the day a new state law took effect granting control of the monuments to the city. The law outlines a removal process that would take at least 60 days to unfold.

But during a City Council meeting Wednesday morning, the mayor balked as the council scheduled a special meeting for Thursday to formally vote on a resolution calling for the immediate removal of the statues.

"Today, I have the ability to do this through my emergency powers," Stoney said. "I think we need to act today."

Work crews arrived at the Jackson statue about an hour later.

This story has been edited to correct that the mayor has ordered all Confederate statues removed from city land, not all Confederate statues in the city; and to clarify that there are several lawsuits pending against the Lee statue removal, not just two.

Trump says he looks like Lone Ranger in a mask and likes it

By AAMER MADHANI and DARLENE SUPERVILLE Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — After long resisting wearing a mask in public, President Donald Trump said Wednesday he thinks it makes him look like the Lone Ranger — and he likes it.

"I'm all for masks. I think masks are good," Trump told Fox Business in an interview. "People have seen me wearing one."

Trump's comments came a day after Republican lawmakers suggested that he wear a mask in public to set a good example for Americans.

"If I were in a tight situation with people, I would absolutely," Trump said in the interview.

Trump has long resisted being photographed in a mask. In early April, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommended that people wear cloth face coverings in public settings where other social distancing measures were difficult to maintain.

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 a mask as he meets with heads of state.

On Wednesday, he sounded a different tone, saying, "I had a mask on. I sort of liked the way I looked. OK. I thought it was OK. It was a dark black mask, and I thought it looked OK.

"It looked like the Lone Ranger," he continued, a reference to the fictional law-and-order character from the American Old West who wore a black eye mask. "I have no problem with that, and if people feel good about it, they should do it."

In recent days, many Republicans and members of the White House coronavirus task force have been more outspoken in advocating for Americans to wear face masks in public settings as infections have surged in huge swaths of the South and West.

The presumptive Democratic presidential nominee, former Vice President Joe Biden, said last week that he would pursue a federal mask mandate, if elected. In the interview, Trump suggested a federal mandate was unnecessary and continued to frame mask wearing as a matter of choice.

Even so, Trump criticized Biden for wearing a mask while he is some distance away from his audience and for speaking through the covering at times.

"When there's nobody around, I don't see any reason to be wearing it," Trump said in a separate interview Wednesday on "America This Week."

About the virus, Trump continued to characterize it as a nuisance that he hopes will just go away.

"I think we are going to be very good with the coronavirus. I think that, at some point, that's going to sort of just disappear, I hope," Trump said on Fox Business.

White House senior adviser Kellyanne Conway noted Wednesday that Trump is regularly tested for the coronavirus, as are his aides. White House visitors and members of the news media who are in close proximity to him and Vice President Mike Pence are also tested.

"I've said wear them, the first lady has said wear them, the president's administration has said wear them," Conway said.

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Trump also told Fox Business that people have seen him wearing a mask. But only one image has surfaced of the president wearing a mask. He donned it for a behind-the-scenes tour of a Ford facility in Michigan in May. Reporters were not allowed to accompany Trump on the tour.

Afterward, he told reporters he had worn a mask in a "back area" only because "I didn't want to give the press the pleasure of seeing it."

Other world leaders, including Canada's Justin Trudeau and France's Emmanuel Macron, have worn masks in public to encourage their use.

Trump on Wednesday also continued to push back against the notion that some states may have been too quick to open up. Several states, including Florida, New York and Texas, have paused or slowed down reopening amid the recent increase in confirmed cases.

Trump suggested Democrats are hyping concerns about the spike to politically damage him.

"I think the Democrats would like to see the country stay closed as long as possible because they figure that's probably good for the election, because it would be bad a little bit for jobs, and maybe a lot for jobs," Trump said.

House approves \$1.5T plan to fix crumbling infrastructure

By MATTHEW DALY Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Democratic-controlled House approved a \$1.5 trillion plan Wednesday to rebuild the nation's crumbling infrastructure, pouring hundreds of billions of dollars into projects to fix roads and bridges, upgrade transit systems, expand interstate railways and dredge harbors, ports and channels.

The bill also authorizes more than \$100 billion to expand internet access for rural and low-income communities and \$25 billion to modernize the U.S. Postal Service's infrastructure and operations, including a fleet of electric vehicles.

Lawmakers approved the Moving Forward Act by a 233-188 vote, mostly along party lines. It now goes to the Republican-controlled Senate, where a much narrower bill approved by a key committee has languished for nearly a year. Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, R-Ky., has not attempted to schedule a floor debate and none appears forthcoming.

The idea of "Infrastructure Week" in the Trump era has become a long-running inside joke in Washington because there was little action to show for it. Still, Wednesday's vote represented at least a faint signal of momentum for the kind of program that has traditionally held bipartisan appeal.

Democrats hailed the House bill, which goes far beyond transportation to fund schools, health care facilities, public utilities and affordable housing.

Rep. Peter DeFazio, D-Ore., chairman of the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee and a sponsor of the legislation, called it a "transformational investment in American infrastructure that will create millions of jobs."

Republicans ridiculed the bill for what they called a Green New Deal-style focus on climate.

"Instead of seeking bipartisan solutions, this bill adds \$1.5 trillion to the nation's debt and disguises a heavy-handed and unworkable Green New Deal regime of new requirements as an 'infrastructure bill,'" said Missouri Rep. Sam Graves, the top Republican on the transportation panel.

Graves blamed House Speaker Nancy Pelosi and other Democrats for turning what has traditionally been a bipartisan issue in Congress — infrastructure — into what he called "a partisan wish list."

Republicans scored a rare procedural victory, winning approval of an amendment to block money from the bill going to Chinese state-owned enterprises or companies responsible for building internment camps for the nation's Uighur minority.

The White House promised a veto if the measure reaches the president's desk. In a statement this week, the White House said the bill "is heavily biased against rural America," is based on debt financing and "fails to tackle the issue of unnecessary permitting delays" that have long impeded infrastructure projects.

President Donald Trump has frequently declared his support for infrastructure projects and pledged during the 2016 campaign to spend at least \$1 trillion to improve infrastructure. Since taking office, Trump

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has repeatedly called for enactment of an infrastructure package — but those efforts have failed to result in legislation.

Hopes were dashed last year when Trump said he wouldn't deal with Democrats if they continued to investigate him. The House later impeached him.

Trump said after signing a \$2 trillion coronavirus relief package that low interest rates made it a good time to borrow money to pay for an infrastructure bill. No formal proposal has emerged, although the White House has suggested the next virus response bill could include an infrastructure component.

The centerpiece of the House legislation is a nearly \$500 billion, 5-year surface transportation plan for roads, bridges and railways. The White House said in its veto threat that the proposal is "heavily skewed toward programs that would disproportionately benefit America's urban areas." The bill would divert money from the Highway Trust Fund to transit and rail projects that "have seen declining market shares in recent years," the White House statement said.

Democrats countered that the bill would rebuild the nation's transportation infrastructure, not only by fixing crumbling roads and bridges, but also by investing in public transit and the national rail network, boosting low- and zero-emission vehicles and cutting carbon pollution that contributes to climate change.

The bill also authorizes \$130 billion in school infrastructure targeted at high-poverty schools with facilities that endanger the health and safety of students and educators, Democrats said. The schools portion alone could create more than 2 million jobs, they said.

The bill would spend more than \$100 billion to create or preserve at least 1.8 million affordable homes. "These investments will help reduce housing inequality, create jobs and stimulate the broader economy," Democrats said in a "fact sheet" promoting the bill.

The measure also would upgrade child care facilities and protect access to safe drinking water by investing \$25 billion in a state revolving fund that ensures communities have clean drinking water and remove dangerous contaminants from local water systems.

Three Republicans voted in favor of the bill: Rep. Brian Fitzpatrick of Pennsylvania and Reps. Jeff Van Drew and Chris Smith, both of New Jersey. Two Democrats opposed it: Reps. Collin Peterson of Minnesota and Ben McAdams of Utah.

Associated Press writer Andrew Taylor contributed to this story.

Movement for Black Lives plans virtual national convention

By AARON MORRISON Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Spurred by broad public support for the Black Lives Matter movement, thousands of Black activists from across the U.S. will hold a virtual convention in August to produce a new political agenda that seeks to build on the success of the protests that followed George Floyd's death.

The 2020 Black National Convention will take place Aug. 28 via a live broadcast. It will feature conversations, performances and other events designed to develop a set of demands ahead of the November general election, according to a Wednesday announcement shared first with The Associated Press.

The convention is being organized by the Electoral Justice Project of the Movement for Black Lives, a coalition of more than 150 organizations. In 2016, the coalition released its "Vision for Black Lives" platform, which called for public divestment from mass incarceration and for adoption of policies that can improve conditions in Black America.

"What this convention will do is create a Black liberation agenda that is not a duplication of the Vision for Black Lives, but really is rooted as a set of demands for progress," said Jessica Byrd, who leads the Electoral Justice Project.

At the end of the convention, participants will ratify a revised platform that will serve as a set of demands for the first 100 days of a new presidential administration, Byrd said. Participants also will have access to model state and local legislation.

"What we have the opportunity to do now, as this 50-state rebellion has provided the conditions for

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change, is to say, 'You need to take action right this minute,'" Byrd said. "We're going to set the benchmarks for what we believe progress is and make those known locally and federally."

Wednesday's announcement comes at a pivotal moment for the BLM movement. A surge in public support, an influx in donations and congressional action to reform policing have drawn some backlash.

President Donald Trump lashed out again Wednesday on Twitter over plans to paint "Black Lives Matter" in yellow across New York City's famed Fifth Avenue, calling the words a "symbol of hate." White House press secretary Kayleigh McEnany said Trump "agrees that all Black lives matter" but disagrees with an organization that would make derogatory statements about police officers. McEnany was referring to an oft-cited chant of individual protesters from five years ago.

The Black National Convention was originally planned to happen in person, in Detroit, the nation's Blackest major city. But as the coronavirus pandemic exploded in March, organizers quickly shifted to a virtual event, Byrd said. The first-ever Black Lives Matter convention was held in Cleveland in 2015.

The most recent AP analysis of COVID-19 data shows Black people have made up more than a quarter of reported virus deaths in which the race of the victim is known.

Initial work to shape the new platform will take place Aug. 6 and 7, during a smaller so-called People's Convention that will virtually convene hundreds of delegates from Black-led advocacy groups. The process will be similar to one that produced the first platform, which included early iterations of the demand to defund police that now drives many demonstrations.

Other platform demands, such as ending cash bail, reducing pretrial detention and scrapping discriminatory risk-assessment tools used in criminal courts, have become official policy in a handful of local criminal justice systems around the U.S.

Cliff Albright, co-founder of Black Voters Matter, which organizes in 15 states, said the 2020 Black National Convention will deepen the solutions to systemic racism and create more alignment within the movement.

"We're in this stage now where we're getting more specific about how all of this is connected to our local organizing," Albright said. "The hope is that, when people leave the convention, they leave with greater clarity, more resources, connectivity and energy."

The coalition behind the convention includes Color of Change, BYP100, Dream Defenders and the Black Lives Matter Global Network, which has 16 official chapters nationwide.

Convention organizers said this year's event will pay tribute to the historic 1972 National Black Political Convention in Gary, Indiana, which concluded with the introduction of a national Black agenda. The Gary gathering included prominent Black leaders such as the Rev. Jesse Jackson, the Rev. Al Sharpton, Rep. Shirley Chisholm, who ran for president, as well as Black Panther Party co-founder Bobby Seale, Coretta Scott King and Betty Shabazz.

That convention came after several tumultuous years that included the assassinations of Malcolm X and the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. and outbreaks of civil unrest, all of which were seen as blows to the civil rights movement.

The upcoming convention builds on more than a century of Black political organizing.

In 1905, civil rights activist and scholar W.E.B. Du Bois formed the Niagara Movement after a national conference of Black leaders near Buffalo, New York. In a written address to the country, Du Bois and others decried the rise of institutionalized racial inequality in voting, criminal justice systems and public education.

In the 1950s, William Patterson, founder of the now-defunct Civil Rights Congress, led the effort to charge the U.S. with genocide of African Americans using legal standards set by the United Nation. The resulting petition, "We Charge Genocide," is an oft-cited document in conversations about fatal shootings of Black people by police in the U.S.

And in 1998, organizers of the Black Radical Congress in Chicago met to strategize ways to beat back attacks on affirmative action policies that helped to diversify higher education and other facets of American life.

Like any large political gathering, consensus is not guaranteed. The National Black Political Convention caused divisions between participating organizations over the Black agenda's position on busing to

integrate public schools and statements on global affairs that some viewed as anti-Israel. Ultimately, the agenda prompted a leader of the NAACP, the nation's oldest civil rights organization, to sever ties with the convention.

Somewhat similarly, the Vision for Black Lives platform and its characterization of Israel as an "apartheid state" committing mass murder against Palestinian people drew allegations of anti-Semitism from a handful of Jewish groups, which had otherwise been supportive of the Black Lives Matter movement.

The Black Lives Matter movement's coalition has more than doubled in size in the years since the first platform, largely because of organizers' laser focus on issues central to Black freedom, Byrd said.

"That actually is the Black self determination that our politics require," Byrd said, "that we don't just respond to the Democratic Party. That we don't just respond to the Republican Party. We don't just say 'Black lives matter' and beg people to care. We build an alternative container for all of us to connect, outside of the white gaze, to say this is what we want for our communities."

The August convention will happen on the same day as a commemorative, in-person march on Washington that is being organized by Sharpton, who announced the march during a memorial service for Floyd, a Black man who died May 25 after a white Minneapolis police officer held a knee to his neck.

The Black National Convention will broadcast after the march, Byrd said.

August "is going to be a huge month of Black engagement," she said.

Associated Press Writer Darlene Superville in Washington and news researchers Randy Herschaft in New York and Monika Mathur in Washington contributed to this report. Morrison is a member of the AP's Race and Ethnicity team. Follow him on Twitter at <https://www.twitter.com/aaronlmorrison>.

GOP candidate is latest linked to QAnon conspiracy theory

By JIM ANDERSON, NICHOLAS RICCARDI and ALAN FRAM Associated Press

DENVER (AP) — When Lauren Boebert was asked in May about QAnon, she didn't shy away from the far-right conspiracy theory, which advances unproven allegations about a so-called deep state plot against President Donald Trump that involves satanism and child sex trafficking.

"Everything that I've heard of Q, I hope that this is real because it only means that America is getting stronger and better, and people are returning to conservative values," she said.

At the time, Boebert was on the political fringe, running a campaign largely focused on her gun-themed restaurant and resistance to coronavirus lockdowns. She is now on a path to becoming a member of Congress after upsetting five-term Rep. Scott Tipton in Tuesday's Republican primary. The GOP-leaning rural western Colorado district will likely support the party's nominee in the November general election.

Boebert is part of a small but growing list of Republican candidates who have in some way expressed support for QAnon. They include Marjorie Taylor Greene, who is advancing to a runoff for a congressional seat in a GOP-dominated Georgia congressional district, and Jo Rae Perkins, the party's Senate nominee in Oregon.

The trend pales in comparison to previous movements that have swept Capitol Hill, such as the 2010 tea party wave. But at a time when the GOP is facing steep headwinds among women and in the suburbs, the QAnon candidates could add extra headaches.

"The more times you have candidates who are crazy, the more it hurts your brand," said John Feehery, a Republican consultant and former House leadership aide. "The trick is for Republicans to embrace the anti-establishment mood without embracing the crazy."

Republican leaders have distanced from some candidates, such as Greene. But now that Boebert is the nominee in Colorado, the GOP made clear Wednesday it would support her.

"Lauren won her primary fair and square and has our support," Minnesota Rep. Tom Emmer, the chair of the House Republican campaign arm, said in a statement. "This is a Republican seat and will remain a Republican seat as Nancy Pelosi and senior House Democrats continue peddling their radical conspiracy theories and pushing their radical cancel culture."

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Boebert's campaign manager, Sherronna Bishop, said the campaign was ignoring the headlines tying the candidate to the QAnon conspiracy.

"We know exactly what we're about and that's the Constitution and freedom," Bishop said. "We are not into conspiracy theories."

She said Boebert was not available for an interview until Sunday because she is traveling to South Dakota for a Bikers for Trump event near Trump's Independence Day rally at Mount Rushmore.

The QAnon theory has ricocheted around the darker corners of the internet since late 2017. It is based around an anonymous, high-ranking government official known as "Q" who purportedly tears back the veil on the "deep state," often tied to satanism, child molestation and even cannibalism.

Trump has retweeted QAnon-promoting accounts. Followers flock to Trump's rallies wearing clothes and hats with QAnon symbols and slogans.

Republican voters may not know the details of the theory, but they've become more amenable to the notion of conspiracies because Trump exploited them during his own campaign and administration, said Joseph Uscinski, a political scientist at the University of Miami who studies conspiracy theories.

"Just as that worked for him, there are going to be copycats, too," he said.

Uscinski stressed that Democrats also believe in conspiracy theories — he cited Vermont Sen. Bernie Sanders' insistence that the 1% run politics and that his 2016 losses in Democratic presidential primaries showed the system was "rigged."

And Uscinski said there's nothing in the QAnon theory that's inherently conservative, and Boebert was nowhere near as enthusiastic about it as other candidates.

For example, Perkins, the GOP's Senate nominee in Oregon, repeated the QAnon oath in a recent video. She took down a video backing the movement, then said she'd been duped by her own campaign staff and supported it again.

Still, Perkins has almost no chance in reliably Democratic Oregon. Boebert is running in a seat that leans Republican and stands the best chance of any of the candidates who have flirted with QAnon to end up in Congress.

"I shouldn't have to guess if my congressperson believes in satanic, baby-eating child molesters," Uscinski said.

Boebert owns Shooters Grill, an eatery where servers carry handguns in the aptly named western Colorado town of Rifle. She ended up on Fox News after confronting Democratic presidential hopeful Beto O'Rourke in a Denver suburb last year over his plans to confiscate assault-style rifles.

Boebert's sole known comments on QAnon came during a May interview with internet journalist Ann Vandersteel, whose site highlights other conspiracy theories. Vandersteel asked Boebert what she thought of "the Q movement."

Boebert said she knew about it from her mother, who was "a little fringe." Pressed, she added, "If this is real, it could be really great for our country."

Some Republican candidates have referred to the conspiracy theory in social media posts but say they're not believers. Angela Stanton-King, the GOP's nominee in Georgia's solidly Democratic 5th Congressional District, said in a statement that a post linking to a QAnon video on Instagram that begins: "This would explain why they tried so hard to make us hate him..." was just questioning the movement. She also said that her use of QAnon hashtags in tweets didn't mean she was an adherent, explaining she peppers her social media with various hashtags to extend her reach.

Meanwhile, in Washington, the defeated Tipton was seen Wednesday sitting alone in the massive Capitol Rotunda. He said his campaign focused on the district's issues and didn't attack his opponent.

Asked if, in retrospect, he believed that was a winning tactic, he said: "I don't know. Maybe we're in a different world right now."

Fram reported from Washington. Associated Press writer Lisa Mascaro in Washington contributed to this report.

Seattle police forcibly clear 'lawless' protest zone

By MARTHA BELLISLE and LISA BAUMANN Associated Press

SEATTLE (AP) — Wearing helmets and wielding batons and rifles, Seattle police turned out in force at dawn Wednesday in the city's "occupied" protest zone after the mayor ordered it cleared following two recent fatal shootings.

Officers stood shoulder-to-shoulder on several streets while others created a makeshift fence with their bicycles, using it to push dozens of protesters back away from the center of the "Capitol Hill Occupied Protest" zone just east of downtown. The group had occupied several blocks around a park for about two weeks after police abandoned a precinct station following standoffs and clashes that were part of the nationwide unrest over the killing of George Floyd in Minneapolis.

As residents in the neighborhood watched from balconies, police cleared out the protesters' tents from the park and made sure no one was left in the park's bathrooms.

More than three dozen people were arrested, charged with failure to disperse, obstruction, assault and unlawful weapon possession.

"Our job is to support peaceful demonstration but what has happened on these streets over the last two weeks is lawless and it's brutal and bottom line it is simply unacceptable," Police Chief Carmen Best said.

One protest organizer, Derrek Allen Jones II, said some demonstrators attempted to stay but were surprised by the early intervention by officers who were "trampling everything I seen in sight, flipping tables."

"People were trying to hold their ground but you could see the cops literally storm through people's beds while they were sleeping. And literally say 'If you don't get out, we will force you out or arrest you,'" he said.

One man dressed in black was peacefully led away in handcuffs and other demonstrators sat on the wet ground until their small group was handcuffed and detained.

Police also tore down fences that protesters had erected around their tents and used batons to poke inside bushes, apparently looking for people who might be hiding. One officer took down a sign saying "We are not leaving until our demands are met: 1. Defund SPD by 50% now. 2. Fund Black Communities. 3. Free all protesters."

After police evicted the protesters, heavy equipment was used to remove concrete barriers, cart away debris from the encampments while officers strung yellow caution tape from tree to tree warning people not to reenter.

"I was just stunned by the amount of graffiti, garbage and property destruction," Best said after she walked around the area.

"The recent public safety threats have been well documented," Mayor Jenny Durkan said at a news conference Wednesday afternoon. "These acts of gun violence resulted in the tragic deaths of two teenagers, with multiple others seriously wounded. Despite continued efforts to deescalate and bring community together, this violence demanded action."

Durkan also said while she supported the police in making arrests Wednesday, she doesn't think many of those arrested for misdemeanors should be prosecuted. She also said she was committed to work that would dismantle systemic racism and build true community safety.

"Events in the Capitol Hill Organized Protest zone this morning, while necessary, should not diminish the cause of racial justice," Gov. Jay Inslee said in an emailed statement.

Best said in addition to the fatal shootings, robberies, assaults, violence and property crimes have occurred in the area in the last few weeks. She said she wanted police to move back into the precinct so officers could better respond to needs in the area. Protesters have said they should not be blamed for the violence in the area.

There had been mounting calls by critics, including President Donald Trump, to remove protesters. A group of local business owners sued the city, claiming that officials abandoned the area and made it impossible to run businesses because there was no police or fire protection.

U.S. Attorney General William Barr praised Best for what he called "her courage and leadership in restor-

ing the rule of law in Seattle.”

“Chief Best has rightly committed to continue the substantive discussion while ending the violence, which threatens innocent people and undermines the very rule-of-law principles that the protesters profess to defend,” he said in a statement.

Seattle Black Collective Voice, which was formed by people in the protest zone, said previously that their work would continue even if they were forced out of that area. On Wednesday afternoon the group said via Twitter, “We don’t end with CHOP.”

Associated Press video journalist Aron Ranen in Seattle and writer Rachel La Corte in Olympia, Washington, contributed to this report.

Florida felons seeking voting rights back face court setback

By BOBBY CAINA CALVAN Associated Press

TALLAHASSEE, Fla. (AP) — A federal appellate court has stayed a lower court ruling that gave impoverished Florida felons the right to vote. The order issued Wednesday disappointed voting rights activists and could have national implications in November’s presidential election.

In May, a federal judge in Tallahassee ruled that Florida law can’t stop an estimated 774,000 disenfranchised felons from voting because they can’t pay back any legal fees and restitution they owe. The ruling by U.S. District Judge Robert Hinkle called the law a “pay-to-vote system.”

But Republican Gov. Ron DeSantis immediately appealed that ruling to the Atlanta-based 11th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals, requesting a stay of Hinkle’s ruling and a review of the case by the full appeals court.

The appellate court, in a three-sentence order Wednesday, granted both requests. The court gave no timeline as to when it would hear the case.

“Today’s decision is a setback,” said Paul Smith, vice president of Campaign Legal Center, which is representing felons seeking access to the ballot box under Amendment 4, a voter-approved measure that sought to return voting rights to released felons.

“The district court’s decision to block Florida’s pay-to-vote system followed clear Supreme Court precedent,” he added. “We are hopeful that the court of appeals will follow suit and confirm once and for all that wealth cannot determine a person’s eligibility to vote.”

The governor’s spokeswoman, Helen Ferre, said there would be no comment on the litigation until it is settled.

Under Amendment 4, felons who have completed their sentences would have voting rights restored. But the legal dispute arose after state lawmakers moved to define what it means to complete a sentence. In addition to time served, lawmakers stipulated that all legal financial obligations, including unpaid fines and restitution, would also have to be settled before a felon could be eligible to vote.

Amendment 4 permanently bars convicted murderers and rapists from voting, regardless of financial debts.

The stay, if it extends into the fall, could influence the election outcome in November. Florida is considered a must-win state in President Donald’s Trump’s bid for re-election. Florida’s disenfranchised felons represent a significant bloc in a state well known for razor-thin election margins. Many of those felons are black and presumably Democrats.

“It doesn’t mean we’ve lost -- it’s just a stay,” said Sean Morales-Doyle of the Brennan Center for Justice, which is also among the groups representing plaintiffs.

“But it means there will be a lot of people who are unsure about their eligibility to vote,” he said, “and will be unable to figure out if they are eligible.”

Hinkle’s ruling said state elections officials were ill-prepared to review the hundreds of thousands of voter registration applications that could arrive ahead of the state’s August primary and the November presidential vote.

A pinch where it hurts: Can Facebook weather the ad boycott?

By BARBARA ORTUTAY AP Technology Writer

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On Wednesday, more than 500 companies officially kicked off an advertising boycott intended to pressure Facebook into taking a stronger stand against hate speech. CEO Mark Zuckerberg has agreed to meet with its organizers early next week.

But whether Zuckerberg agrees to further tighten the social network's carefully crafted rules probably boils down to a more fundamental question: Does Facebook need big brand advertisers more than the brands need Facebook?

In a broad sense, the current boycott, which will last at least a month, is like nothing Facebook has experienced before. Following weeks of protests against police violence and racial injustice, major brands have for the first time joined together to protest still-prevalent hate speech on Facebook's platforms by taking aim at the social network's \$70 billion in annual ad revenue.

After years of piecemeal measures to address hate, abuse and misinformation on its service, Facebook's critics hope that pinching the company where it hurts will push it toward more meaningful change. As of Wednesday, 530 companies have signed on — and that's not counting businesses like Target and Starbucks, which have paused advertising but did not formally join the "Stop Hate for Profit" campaign, which calls its action a "pause" rather than a boycott.

"Many businesses told us how they had been ignored when asking Facebook for changes," campaign organizers wrote in a letter to advertisers this week. "Together, we finally got Facebook's attention."

But Facebook's already-tarnished public image may sustain more damage than its business. If the ad pause lasts one month, Citi Investment Research analyst Jason Bazinet estimates, the likely impact on Facebook's stock will be \$1 per share. Based on Wednesday's closing price of \$237.92, that's a decline of less than half a percent.

If the businesses extend their boycott indefinitely, Bazinet suggests the likely impact would be \$17 a share, or about a 7% decline. That's less than the 8% drop Facebook shares sustained on Friday after global consumer-products maker Unilever said it would pause advertising on Facebook and Instagram for the rest of the year.

Also, Facebook shares have already bounced back from that dip.

On Wednesday, Nick Clegg, Facebook's vice president of global affairs and communications, tried to reassure businesses that Facebook "does not benefit from hate" and said the company has every incentive to remove hate speech from its service. He acknowledged that "many of our critics are angry about the inflammatory rhetoric President Trump has posted on our platform and others, and want us to be more aggressive in removing his speech."

Clegg, however, offered few concessions, and instead repeated Zuckerberg's frequent talking point that "the only way to hold the powerful to account is ultimately through the ballot box." He pointed to Facebook's get-out-the-vote efforts as evidence of the company's commitment, along with the billions of dollars, tens of thousands of content moderators and other investments it has made in trying to improve its platform.

While Facebook is making efforts to hear out its critics, it remains clear that ultimate decisions will always rest with its founder and CEO, who holds the majority of the company's voting shares and could effectively run the company for life, should he desire to.

It's not clear that he'll see any reason to bend further to meet protesters' demands.

"Data of past boycotts suggests the observable impact is relatively mild," said Brian Wieser, global president of business intelligence at GroupM, advertising holding company WPP's media agency arm.

At the same time, he added, given these "extraordinary times," it's possible that a long-term, pervasive boycott could shift advertising dollars away from Facebook to other companies.

Beyond bad PR, though, experts say the protest isn't likely to make a lasting dent in Facebook's ad revenue, in part because plenty of other advertisers can step in. Stifel analysts said in a note to investors this week that "well over" 70% of Facebook's advertising dollars come from small and medium-sized businesses and "these advertisers may be less concerned with the optics of where their ads are placed than large brands." Citing data from Pathmatics, Stifel said the top 100 brands spent roughly \$4.2 billion on Facebook ads last year, representing around 6% of the company's nearly \$70 billion of total ad revenue in 2019.

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Facebook hosts more than 8 million advertisers, according to JPMorgan. "We do not expect significant risk to numbers for Facebook as many other marketers ... will take advantage of potentially lower-priced inventory," JPMorgan analyst Doug Anmuth wrote in an investor note.

AP technology writer Mae Anderson contributed to this story.

Cases spike in Sunbelt, other states back off on reopening

By JAKE COYLE and JONATHAN J. COOPER Associated Press

PHOENIX (AP) — California closed bars, theaters and indoor restaurant dining all over again across most of the state Wednesday, and Arizona's outbreak grew more severe by nearly every measure as the surging coronavirus crisis across the South and West sent a shudder through the country.

The run-up in confirmed cases has been blamed in part on what's been called "knucklehead behavior" by Americans not wearing masks or obeying social-distancing rules as economies reopened from coast to coast over the past two months.

"The bottom line is the spread of this virus continues at a rate that is particularly concerning," California Gov. Gavin Newsom said in dramatically expanding the round of closings he announced over the weekend.

The shutdown announcement, which came just ahead of what is expected to be a busy Fourth of July weekend that could fuel the spread of the virus, applies to 19 counties encompassing nearly three-quarters of California's 40 million people, including Los Angeles County.

Confirmed cases in California have increased nearly 50% over the past two weeks, and COVID-19 hospitalizations have gone up 43%. Newsom reported nearly 5,900 new cases and 110 more deaths in 24 hours.

With one of the biggest weekends of the summer approaching, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention advised Americans to wear face coverings at the beach, though not in the water.

Despite the resurgence of coronavirus across the U.S., President Donald Trump spoke Wednesday about the virus as if it were a nuisance he hopes will eventually just go away.

"I think we are going to be very good with the coronavirus," he said in an interview with Fox Business. "I think that, at some point, that's going to sort of just disappear, I hope."

Meanwhile, a masked Vice President Mike Pence paid a visit to Arizona, where cases have spiked since stay-at-home orders expired in mid-May. The state reported record single-day highs for new cases (almost 4,900), deaths (88), ER visits (close to 1,300) and the number of people in the hospital (nearly 2,900).

In Florida, the biggest hospital in the hardest-hit county, Miami's Jackson Health System, scaled back elective surgeries and other procedures as it and others around the state braced for an influx of victims.

Florida recorded more than 6,500 new cases — down from around 9,000 on some days last week, but still alarming — and a running total of over 3,500 deaths. Counties in South Florida are closing beaches to fend off large July Fourth crowds that could spread the virus.

"Too many people were crowding into restaurants late at night, turning these establishments into breeding grounds for this deadly virus," Miami-Dade Mayor Carlos Gimenez said in forbidding restaurants with seating for more than eight people from serving customers inside from midnight to 6 a.m.

Louisiana saw its biggest daily spike since April, reporting 2,100 new cases in 24 hours. Georgia set a new daily record with nearly 3,000 new cases. Texas did too, with new infections skyrocketing past 8,000 in a single day for the first time.

Marilyn Rauth, a senior citizen in Punta Gorda, said Florida's reopening was "too much too soon" and blamed Republican Gov. Ron DeSantis.

"The sad thing is the COVID spread will probably go on for some time, though we could have flattened the curve with responsible leadership," she said. "Experience now has shown most people won't social distance at beaches, bars, etc. The governor evidently has no concern for the health of the state's citizens."

The soaring numbers across the Sunbelt have raised fears that many other states could see the same phenomenon if they reopen too, and that people from the South and West could spread the virus to other regions.

Some distant states and cities that seemed to have tamed their outbreaks, including Colorado, Virginia, Delaware and New Jersey, hit pause or backtracked on some of their reopening plans for bars and restaurants as they watched the crisis unfold from afar.

Also, New York and New Jersey are asking visitors from 16 states from the Carolinas to California to quarantine themselves for two weeks.

New York Mayor Bill de Blasio said the city is delaying its resumption of indoor dining at restaurants, and not because of any rise in cases there.

"Even a week ago, honestly, I was hopeful we could. But the news we have gotten from around the country gets worse and worse all the time," he said.

The number of confirmed cases in the U.S. per day has roughly doubled over the past month, hitting 44,800 on Tuesday, according to a count kept by Johns Hopkins University. That is higher even than what the nation witnessed during the deadliest stretch of the crisis in mid-April through early May.

Dr. Anthony S. Fauci, the nation's top infectious-disease expert, warned on Capitol Hill on Tuesday that the rise across the South and West "puts the entire country at risk" and that new infections could reach 100,000 a day if people don't start listening to public health authorities.

The virus in the U.S. is blamed for more than 2.6 million confirmed cases and over 127,000 deaths, the highest toll in the world, by Johns Hopkins' count. Worldwide, the number of infections is put at more than 10.6 million, with over a half-million deaths.

The real numbers in the U.S. and globally are believed to be significantly higher, in part because of limited testing and mild cases that have gone unrecorded.

The number of deaths per day in the U.S. has continued to drop over the past week and is down to an average of about 550, compared with a peak of around 2,200 a day in mid-April, according to an Associated Press analysis.

But experts note that deaths are a lagging indicator — it takes time for people to get sick and die — and they warn that the trend could reverse itself.

In New Jersey, where cases had been declining since late April, Gov. Phil Murphy announced a pause on Monday, in part because of people not wearing masks and social distancing.

"Unfortunately, the national scene, compounded by instances of knucklehead behavior here at home, are requiring us to hit pause on the restart of indoor dining for the foreseeable future," he said.

Associated Press reporters Adam Beam in Sacramento, California; Curt Anderson in St. Petersburg, Florida; Adriana Gomez in Miami; Kelli Kennedy in Fort Lauderdale, Florida; and Melinda Deslatte in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, contributed to this report. Coyle reported from New York.

Man charged with conspiring to hide kids' bodies in his yard

By REBECCA BOONE Associated Press

BOISE, Idaho (AP) — Prosecutors accused a man of conspiring with his new wife to keep the bodies of her children hidden on his rural Idaho property, adding to the charges he faces in the strange case that involves the couple's doomsday beliefs and the mysterious deaths of their former spouses.

In new charges filed Tuesday evening, prosecutors say Chad Daybell conspired with wife Lori Vallow Daybell to keep hiding the bodies of 7-year-old Joshua "JJ" Vallow and 17-year-old Tylee Ryan because they knew the remains would likely be used as evidence in a court case.

The children vanished in September and a search for them spanned months before their bodies were found last month in Chad Daybell's backyard. It's not clear how the kids died or who caused their deaths.

Chad Daybell is already in jail on previous charges that he buried or helped bury the kids, first dismembering and burning Tylee's body in an apparent attempt to hide the remains. He has pleaded not guilty to those charges and is being held on \$1 million bail.

Lori Daybell is also charged with conspiring to hide the remains and is being held on \$1 million bail. She was charged earlier this year with abandoning the children, obstructing the investigation into their disap-

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pearance and asking a friend to lie to police on her behalf. She has not yet entered a plea in either case. Relatives of Tylee and JJ thanked people for their support, expressed their grief and asked for privacy in a joint statement Wednesday.

"We are utterly devastated trying to comprehend how our children, full of brilliant light and jubilation for life, ended at the hands of those who were supposed to love and protect them," the families wrote.

The families said they have faith in the judicial system and are confident justice will prevail. They said public memorial services will be held at some point in Rexburg, Idaho, where the kids last lived; Phoenix, their home before Idaho; and Lake Charles, Louisiana, where JJ's grandparents live.

Investigators found the children's bodies by tracking the movements of Lori Daybell's brother, Alex Cox, using cellphone data. Authorities haven't explained Cox's possible role in the children's disappearances or deaths and they searched Chad Daybell's home again Monday but haven't said what they were looking for.

Cox is also dead, succumbing to an apparent blood clot in his lung at his home in Arizona last December. In court documents, 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.

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 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.

Fed minutes show concerns about severity of downturn

By MARTIN CRUTSINGER AP Economics Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — Federal Reserve officials last month expressed concerns about the severity of the economic downturn triggered by the coronavirus pandemic, saying the drop in economic activity in the spring would likely be the steepest in the post-World War II period.

The minutes of the June 9-10 discussions, which were made public Wednesday, show officials grappling with economic disruptions that had already occurred and noting the crisis was "not falling equally on all Americans."

The minutes say that Fed officials discussed how the sharp rise in joblessness had been especially severe for lower-wage workers, women, African Americans, and Hispanics.

The Fed's policy-making committee voted 10-0 at the June meeting to keep central bank's benchmark interest rate at a record low near zero and officials expected that it would remain at that ultra-low level through 2022.

In an interview Wednesday with Fox Business Network, President Donald Trump, who was highly critical of Fed Chairman Jerome Powell for much of last year, said Powell has done a good job in dealing with the

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coronavirus.

"I would say I was not happy with him at the beginning, and I'm getting more and more happy with him. I think he stepped up to the plate. He's done a good job," Trump said. "I would say that, over the last period of six months, he's really stepped up to the plate."

Trump, however, declined to say whether he would nominate Powell for a second term as Fed chairman if he wins re-election. Powell's current four-year term is up in 2022.

The minutes of the June discussions show that officials had received a briefing from the Fed staff on possible ways to enhance the Fed's commitment to keeping rates low for an extended period. Those included the use of forward guidance in the policy statement and purchases of long-term bonds, both items the central bank is currently employing.

The Fed staff also briefed on a tool that the central bank has not used in seven decades: establishing caps on interest rates at certain maturity levels.

Under interest-rate caps, the Fed would purchase securities, such as three-year notes, to keep interest rates from rising above a certain limit. The central banks of Japan and Australia are currently employing that strategy.

However, the Fed minutes indicate little support for that approach, especially since rates are already so low. Several Fed officials indicated more support for possibly expanding the forward guidance language, possibly by tying future rate increases to specific economic outcomes, such as a rise in inflation or drop in unemployment.

"Whatever strategy the Fed ends up choosing, it is clear that interest rates will remain at near-zero for many years," Andrew Hunter, senior U.S. economist at Capital Economics., wrote in a research note.

The minutes show that even before the recent spike in virus cases in Western and Southern states, Fed officials worried at their June meeting about what a resurgence of cases might do to efforts to mount an economic recovery.

"A number of participants judged that there was a substantial likelihood of additional waves of outbreaks, which in some scenarios, could result in further economic disruptions and possibly a protracted period of reduced economic activity," the minutes say.

In recent public appearances, Fed Chairman Jerome Powell has stressed that the central bank plans to employ all of its tools to support a recovery from the current recession. He has also said that Congress, which has already approved record levels of support for laid-off workers and businesses, should consider doing more.

The Fed's next meeting is July 28-29.

Associated Press writer Darlene Superville contributed to this report.

MLB players begin reporting for tests as first workouts near

By DAVE SKRETTA AP Sports Writer

Yoán Moncada has spent the past couple of months working out in what he called a "controlled and limited environment" in Florida, where the White Sox slugger could continue to get at-bats while protecting himself from the coronavirus.

That's a good description of the environment that greeted him upon his return to Chicago.

Players began reporting to their teams and home ballparks Wednesday in the most significant step yet as Major League Baseball presses ahead with its plan for a 60-game sprint of a season. Most players underwent a battery of health checks, not only for COVID-19 but also for any other lingering ailments from spring training, ahead of planned workouts beginning Friday and Saturday.

"We were doing workouts by time, you know? You have to reserve a time. I wasn't interacting with a lot of people there," Moncada said of his sessions in Florida. "The last couple of weeks I started lifting a little bit. I was hitting with limitations that we had during this situation. But I feel good. I'm ready to go."

Much like other clubs, the White Sox intend to split their 60-man roster into two groups, one working out

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in the morning and the other in the afternoon. All players will have their temperatures checked multiple times each day, observe increased social distancing and get accustomed to stringent safeguards that MLB has put into place for the season.

"That's going to be different to see and feel as a team," Moncada said. "We'll have to wait and see Friday how it goes."

The Yankees won't hold their first full-team workout until Saturday, even though manager Aaron Boone said players began intake testing Wednesday. That's when he plans to address the team for the first time — also in waves.

"We'll have to get creative with how we communicate," said Boone, who plans to make the same speech three or four times.

Faced with the prospect of playing 60 games in 66 days, time-consuming safety protocols, the responsibility to remain diligent health-wise off the field and the general anxiety of working amid a pandemic, Boone believes focus and toughness can be as important to a team this season as baserunning or bullpen management.

"How do you deal with that mentally and emotionally?" Boone asked. "How you're able to separate that out when you take the field each and every night? There's an advantage to be had there."

After gauging workloads for pitchers during the shutdown, Boone expects his starters will be ready to face live hitters on the first day of summer camp. He plans to stay flexible on usage and may consider using a six-man rotation or openers, but nothing has been determined yet as all teams adjust to a new norm.

"An injury can wipe out a season in a hurry," Boone said, adding that he's likely to be cautious with players early after New York placed a major league record 30 players on the injured list a total of 39 times last season.

Orioles general manager Mike Elias said there had been no positive tests for COVID-19 among players and staff who were examined Wednesday, but he acknowledged that "it's going to be an ongoing process."

Elias has thus far named only 44 players of the 60 available to participate in the preseason workout. He will decide later which prospects will fill out the preseason roster in advance of a projected season-opener July 23 or July 24.

And despite rising numbers of COVID-19 across the country, and a few players opting out, most players and executives have been bullish on the season taking place. They believe in protocols hammered out during lengthy negotiations between MLB and its players' association and are eager to provide fans with some much-needed diversion.

"We've got to make sure we understand best practices in social distancing, make sure we know we are keeping ourselves not only apart from one another but also behaving in a way that's consistent to what's going to keep us all healthy," Mets general manager Brodie Van Wagenen said. "Provided we can all work together to comply with these protocols and respect — as I said earlier — respect each other and respect the rules, I'm optimistic that we can make this happen."

AP Sports Writers David Ginsburg, Jake Seiner and Mike Fitzpatrick contributed to this report.

Citing racial bias, San Francisco will end mug shots release

By OLGA R. RODRIGUEZ Associated Press

SAN FRANCISCO (AP) — San Francisco police will stop releasing the mug shots of people who have been arrested unless they pose a threat to the public, as part of an effort to stop perpetuating racial stereotypes, the city's police chief announced Wednesday.

San Francisco Police Chief Bill Scott and outside police experts said they believe the department would be the first in the nation to do so based on concerns about racial bias.

The booking photos taken by police when a person is arrested for a crime are often made public whether or not the person is prosecuted for the alleged crime. That can undermine the presumption of innocence and help perpetuate stereotypes, experts said.

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"This is just one small step but we hope this will be something that others might consider doing as well," Scott said.

Large cities like Los Angeles and New York already have policies against releasing booking photos but make exceptions. For example, the New York Police Department, the nation's largest, releases information on arrests but doesn't put out mug shots unless investigators believe that will prompt more witnesses to come forward or aid in finding a suspect. Georgia and New York stopped releasing booking photos in an effort to curtail websites that charge people to remove their picture and booking information.

Jack Glaser, a public policy professor at the University of California Berkeley who researches racial stereotyping and whose work Scott consulted, said data shows Black people who are arrested are more likely to have their cases dismissed by prosecutors.

"That may be just part and parcel of the same issue that police will stop and search Blacks at a lower threshold of suspicion in the first place and so, their arrests are more likely to be unsubstantiated," Glaser said.

But the mug shots live on.

Numerous websites post the mug shots, regardless of whether anyone was convicted of a crime, then charge a fee to those who want their photo removed. The phenomenon prompted California's attorney general to charge one of the biggest operators with extortion, money laundering and identity theft.

Scott said that contributes to Americans making an unfair association between people of color and crime. Adopting the new policy is part of an effort to stop spreading negative stereotypes of minorities, something that Scott, who is Black, said he has experienced when not in uniform.

"You walk into a department store and you get followed around and the security is looking at you suspiciously. I've experienced that," Scott said.

In San Francisco, the only exceptions will be if a crime suspect poses a threat or if officers need help locating a suspect or an at-risk person, Scott said. Under the policy, the release of photos or information on a person who is arrested will also require approval from the police department's public relations team.

Eugene O'Donnell, a former NYPD officer and professor at the John Jay College of Criminal Justice, said not every department that has a policy against releasing mug shots gives a reason. The San Francisco Police Department is the first he is aware of to say it is implementing the policy to stop racial bias, he said.

He said barring the publication of crime suspects' mug shots on television shows and elsewhere should be part of any meaningful justice reform in the country.

"For a democratic society, we're very cavalier about people's rights and the presumption of innocence," O'Donnell said. "We take people's freedom away and ruin people's reputations before anybody's ever made a decision as to whether or not the person committed the offense."

Nina Salarno, president of the advocacy group Crime Victims United of California, praised Scott's effort to address racial bias but expressed concern about how the department will decide which photos to release. She said releasing booking photos can help crime victims come forward.

"The only concern for the victims side of it is how are they categorizing and who is deciding which ones should be released to the public?" Salarno asked.

Russian voters agree to let Putin seek 2 more terms

By VLADIMIR ISACHENKOV and DARIA LITVINOVA Associated Press

MOSCOW (AP) — Russian voters approved changes to the constitution that will allow President Vladimir Putin to potentially hold power until 2036, but the weeklong plebiscite that concluded Wednesday was tarnished by widespread reports of pressure on voters and other irregularities.

With three-fourths of all precincts counted, 77.6% voted for the constitutional amendments, according to election officials.

For the first time in Russia, polls were kept open for a week to bolster turnout without increasing crowds casting ballots amid the coronavirus pandemic — a provision that Kremlin critics denounced as an extra tool to manipulate the outcome.

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A massive propaganda campaign and the opposition's failure to mount a coordinated challenge helped Putin get the result he wanted, but the plebiscite could end up eroding his position because of the unconventional methods used to boost participation and the dubious legal basis for the balloting.

The amendments that would allow Putin to run for two more six-year terms, in 2024 and 2030, are part of a package of constitutional changes that also outlaw same-sex marriage, mention "a belief in God as a core value" and emphasize the primacy of Russian law over international norms.

Voters could not cast ballots on the individual amendments, only on the entire group.

Nationwide turnout was reported at 65% of the electorate.

Kremlin critics and independent election observers questioned the turnout figures.

"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," Grigory Melkonyants, co-chair of the independent election monitoring group Golos, told The Associated Press.

Putin voted at a Moscow polling station, dutifully showing his passport to the election worker. His face was uncovered, unlike most of the other voters who were offered free masks at the entrance.

The vote completes a convoluted saga that began in January, when Putin first proposed constitutional changes including broadening the powers of parliament and redistributing authority among the branches of government. Those proposals stoked speculation he might seek to become parliamentary speaker or chairman of the State Council when his presidential term ends in 2024.

His intentions became clear only hours before a vote in parliament, when legislator Valentina Tereshkova, a Soviet-era cosmonaut who was the first woman in space in 1963, proposed letting him run two more times. The proposed changes were quickly passed by the Kremlin-controlled legislature.

The 67-year-old 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. He argued that resetting the term count was necessary to keep his lieutenants focused on their work instead of "darting their eyes in search for possible successors."

Analyst Gleb Pavlovsky, a former Kremlin political consultant, said Putin's push to hold the vote despite the fact that Russia has thousands of new coronavirus infections each day reflected his 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 the parliament's approval was enough to make it law, the 67-year-old Russian president put his constitutional plan to voters to showcase his broad support and add a democratic veneer to the changes. But then the coronavirus pandemic engulfed Russia, forcing him to postpone the April 22 plebiscite.

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 the outbreak have dented his approval ratings, which sank to 59%, the lowest level since he came to power, according to the Levada Center, Russia's top independent pollster.

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 raised the risks of defeat. "Holding it in the autumn would have been too risky," she said.

In Moscow, several activists briefly lay on Red Square, forming the number "2036" with their bodies in protest before police stopped them. Some others in Moscow and St. Petersburg staged one-person pickets and police didn't intervene.

Several hundred opposition supporters later rallied in central Moscow to protest the changes, defying a ban on public gatherings imposed for the coronavirus outbreak. Police didn't intervene and even handed masks to the participants.

Authorities 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 across the vast country of managers coercing people to vote.

The Kremlin has used other tactics to boost turnout and support for the amendments. Prizes ranging from gift certificates to cars and apartments were offered as an encouragement, voters with Russian

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passports from eastern Ukraine were bused across the border to vote, and two regions with large number of voters — Moscow and Nizhny Novgorod — allowed electronic balloting.

In Moscow, some journalists and activists said they were able to cast their ballots both online and in person in a bid to show the lack of safeguards against manipulations.

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 when ballot boxes stood unattended at night eroded the standards of voting to a striking new low.

In addition to that, the early voting sanctioned by election officials but not reflected in law further eroded the ballot's validity.

Many criticized the Kremlin for lumping more than 200 proposed amendments together in one package without giving voters a chance to differentiate among them.

"I voted against the new amendments to the constitution because it all looks like a circus," said Yelena Zorkina, 45, after voting in St. Petersburg. "How can people vote for the whole thing if they agree with some amendments but disagree with the others?"

Putin supporters were not discouraged by being unable to vote separately on the proposed changes. Taisia Fyodorova, a 69-year-old retiree in St. Petersburg, said she voted yes "because I trust our government and the president."

In a frantic effort to get the vote, polling station workers set up ballot boxes in courtyards and playgrounds, on tree stumps and even in car trunks — unlikely settings derided on social media that made it impossible to ensure a clean vote.

In Moscow, there were reports of unusually high numbers of at-home voters, with hundreds visited by election workers in a matter of hours, along with multiple complaints from monitors that paperwork documenting the turnout was being concealed from them.

At the same time, monitoring the vote became more challenging due to hygiene requirements and more arcane rules for election observers.

The Golos monitoring group pointed out at unusual differences between neighboring regions: in the Siberian republic of Tyva over 73% voted in the first five days, while in the neighboring Irkutsk region, turnout was about 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.

Observers warned that the methods used to boost turnout, combined with bureaucratic hurdles that hindered independent monitoring, would undermine the vote's legitimacy.

"There is a big question about the results of this vote," Melkonyants said, adding that its outcome "can't really bear any legal standing."

Associated Press writers Irina Titova in St. Petersburg and Jim Heintz in Moscow contributed to this report.

Background checks, a metric for gun sales, hit all-time high

By LISA MARIE PANE Associated Press

Historic numbers of background checks to purchase or possess a firearm were done in June, a trend in a year marked by uncertainty over the coronavirus pandemic, a subsequent economic recession, protests over racial injustice and calls to reduce police funding.

FBI numbers released Wednesday show that 3.9 million background checks were conducted last month, the most since the system was created in November 1998 to ensure felons and other prohibited people could not buy or possess a firearm. The previous monthly record came in March, when 3.7 million checks were done. Each week in June is now in the top 10 weeks for background checks.

Halfway through 2020, just over 19 million checks have been done, more than all of 2012 and each of the years before that.

Background checks are the key barometer of gun sales, but the FBI's monthly figures also incorporate

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checks for permits that some states require to carry a firearm. Each background check also could be for the sale of more than one gun.

Firearm sales traditionally increase during presidential election years, fueled by fears among gun owners that the next president could restrict their rights. But this year has seen a series of previously unheard-of numbers as one crisis after another has emerged: the coronavirus, demonstrations over racial inequality and police brutality, as well as deep political divisions among Americans.

Adjusted to reflect only gun purchases, the number of checks for June was up nearly 136% over June 2019, according to the National Shooting Sports Foundation, which represents gunmakers. That adjusted figure was 2.2 million, the group said.

"Civil unrest, rioting, looting and calls to defund police are unquestionably motivating factors of why this trend is increasing. Americans are right to be concerned for their personal safety," said Mark Oliva, director of public affairs for the group.

Oliva said gun purchases are a reasonable reaction to the political climate.

"Politicians who entertain notions of defunding police departments are the same ones who call for strict gun control and even outright confiscation," he said. "These figures aren't push polls. They are representative of Americans from all walks of life who are taking action and taking responsibility for their rights and their safety."

Gun control advocates worried that those buying a gun for personal safety may not have enough training to handle or store it correctly.

The eye-popping numbers began at the beginning of the year and continued to crush records amid the nation's crises. So far, this year has seen half of the 10 busiest days on record and seven of the 10 busiest weeks — half of them in June.

At the beginning of the pandemic, as states issued stay-at-home orders and worries emerged about economic turmoil, long lines snaked outside of some gun shops and people emptied shelves of ammunition. Protests that began in late May, with some calling for defunding law enforcement, stirred some people's worries about defending themselves if police are unable to respond to calls.

An estimated 40% of those purchasing firearms are first-time buyers, the National Shooting Sports Foundation said.

"I'm extremely concerned about those people who, in this time of uncertainty and fear, have been sold on the gun industry narrative that in uncertain times, when you're feeling out of control, your possession of a firearm will satisfy that fear," said David Chipman, senior policy director for the Giffords gun control group.

Chipman, a retired agent with the federal Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives, said the numbers are not mere blips.

"This can no longer be characterized as a spike. This is a sustained uptick in sales that has continued for an unprecedented amount of months now," he said.

Analysis: Trump fights to keep a job Dems say he isn't doing

By JULIE PACE AP Washington Bureau Chief

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump is asking Americans to let him keep his job. His critics are questioning how much of that job he's actually doing.

The questions have gotten louder in recent days following revelations that Trump didn't read at least two written intelligence briefings about Russia paying bounties to the Taliban for the deaths of Americans in Afghanistan.

He also appeared to either downplay or miss repeated warnings about the coronavirus that were included in intelligence briefings, and he has been reluctant to amplify some of his own government's recommendations for reducing transmission, including wearing masks.

"He is not doing his job," said Michael Hayden, the former director of both the CIA and National Security Agency.

Such assessments put Trump in a precarious position four months from Election Day, and risk undercutting the central argument most incumbents make to voters when seeking re-election: Keep me on the job

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because I've proven I can do it.

Instead, Trump's uneven handling of the crises battering the nation, as well as the new revelations about his lack of attention to intelligence, have given Democrats an opening to argue to voters that the president has proven he is ill-equipped to lead the nation through tough times, or outright absent in moments that demand leadership.

"It seems like our wartime president surrendered, waved the white flag and left the battlefield," said Joe Biden, Trump's Democratic opponent in the presidential race. Biden, who spent more than three decades as a senator and eight years as vice president, is pitching himself to voters as a steady and experienced hand.

Trump came to power without any experience in governing, making the case to voters that the go-with-your-gut decisions that helped him in business and as a reality television star would serve him as president, too. For some Americans disillusioned with career politicians in both parties, his outsider credentials were part of the appeal.

Trump has indeed taken an unconventional approach to the presidency. He's known to demand only the sparest detail in his briefings, and his workdays frequently include hours watching cable news and posting on Twitter. White House aides have at times been leery of delivering bad news to him for fear of sparking an angry reaction, according to current and former advisers. They said there is particular concern in the West Wing about discussing Russia because the subject can send Trump into a tirade about accusations that he has a too-cozy relationship with Vladimir Putin and about the special counsel investigation into Russian interference in the 2016 election.

The current and former advisers insisted on anonymity in order to discuss their private dealings with the president.

Trump's tweets for any occasion and obsession with dominating the news cycle, even if it involves something negative, has sustained him for much of his presidency, when many of the crises were of his own making or fleeting in nature. Republicans often bristled at his tone and tweets, but justified their support for him by pointing to the strong economy and the new generation of conservative judges he nominated to the courts.

But 2020 has been a year that has demanded more substance than style from the president. More than 120,000 Americans have died from COVID-19, and known infections are on the rise in several states. The strong economy Trump hoped to run on this year has cratered. And the deaths of several Black Americans has sparked a national reckoning over race and police brutality.

On each of those matters, Trump's critics — as well as some of his allies — argue he has fallen short rather than rising to the moment.

He's all but declared the pandemic over and has focused aggressively on reopening the economy, even as some Republican allies in key states start rolling back those efforts in a bid to contain outbreaks. Just 37% of Americans say they approve of Trump's handling of the pandemic, down from 44% in March, according to a recent poll from The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research.

The president has also been largely absent from the discussion of systemic racism in America following the death of George Floyd, a Black man who died when a white police officer pressed his knee into Floyd's neck for several minutes. Trump has focused much of his energy on the subject of racism on defending the prominent placement of memorials to Confederate figures.

Democrats also say the revelations over the past week that the president may not have read or absorbed intelligence briefings have put a finer point on the questions they are raising about his basic competency. The White House insisted Trump was unaware of assessments that Russia had put a bounty on U.S. servicemembers in Afghanistan, though intelligence officials told The Associated Press the matter was included in at least two written briefings over the past year and that senior advisers alerted the president to the intelligence.

"At best, our commander in chief is utterly derelict in his duties, presiding over a dangerously dysfunctional national security process that is putting our country and those who wear its uniform at great risk," Susan Rice, who served as President Barack Obama's national security adviser and is under consideration

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to be Biden's running mate, wrote in a New York Times opinion piece.

Some Republicans have defended Trump, including Texas Sen. John Cornyn, who told reporters the president "can't single-handedly remember everything, I'm sure, that he's briefed on." And White House press secretary Kayleigh McEnany stated: "The president does read."

"This president is the most informed person on planet Earth," she declared.

To Democrats, what's transpired in the White House was foreshadowed during the 2016 campaign, when Hillary Clinton argued that Trump simply wasn't prepared for the presidency. Voters still chose him over the experienced former senator and secretary of state.

Now, Democrats believe their case about competency is more compelling given that Trump has a record in office to defend.

"His actions and inactions directly impact people's lives now," said Josh Schwerin, spokesman for the Democratic super PAC Priorities USA.

AP writer Jonathan Lemire in New York contributed to this report.

EDITOR'S NOTE: Julie Pace has covered the White House and politics for AP since 2007. Follow her at <http://twitter.com/jpaceDC>

Right time to 'get stupid again': Beavis, Butt-Head comeback

By LYNN ELBER AP Television Writer

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Beavis and Butt-Head are coming back to TV in a reimagined version of the animated series about a pair of Gen X slackers.

"It seemed like the time was right to get stupid again," Mike Judge, the creator and voice of both characters, said in a statement.

"Beavis and Butt-Head," which debuted in 1993 on MTV, is moving in its new iteration to ViacomCBS corporate sibling Comedy Central, it was announced Wednesday.

The channel said it has ordered two seasons of the new series that will feature themes "relatable to both new and old fans," including Gen Z kids and their Gen X parents.

Judge will write and produce the series and again will voice the characters in a deal that includes other spin-offs and specials.

The original series, which drew praise for its social satire and criticism for its raunchy humor and violence, aired until 1997 and was briefly revived in 2011. The characters jumped to the big screen in 1996 with "Beavis and Butt-Head Do America."

"Beavis and Butt-Head were a defining voice of a generation, and we can't wait to watch as they navigate the treacherous waters of a world light-years from their own," Comedy Central executive Chris McCarthy said in the announcement, which didn't include an air date.

Judge's other TV series credits include "Silicon Valley" and "King of the Hill."

5 things to watch for in Thursday's jobs report for June

By CHRISTOPHER RUGABER AP Economics Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — With the viral outbreak worsening and unemployment at Depression-era levels, the government on Thursday will issue what will almost surely be another remarkable jobs report.

Hiring in June might have reached the highest monthly total on record — 3 million. Yet so deep were the layoffs this spring that a gain that large would still leave tens of millions of Americans out of work and the unemployment rate in double digits. And even a jobless rate above 10% wouldn't fully capture the scope of the pandemic's damage to the job market and the economy.

A nascent recovery, evident in some recently improved data, may be stalling, according to real time data tracked by Homebase, a provider of time-tracking software for small businesses. Nationally, the number of hours worked at Homebase's clients has leveled off after having risen sharply in May and early June.

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And business re-openings have flattened. The economic bounce produced by the initial lifting of shutdown orders may have run its course.

In states that are suffering the sharpest spikes in reported virus cases — Texas, Florida, Arizona and others in the Sun Belt — progress has reversed, with businesses closing again and workers losing jobs, in some cases for a second time.

Yet because Thursday's jobs report will be based on data gathered in the second week of June, it will still likely reflect an improving trend. The plateau of the past week will likely appear in the July jobs report.

Economists have forecast that employers added 3 million jobs in June and that the unemployment rate dropped to 12.3% from 13.3% in May, according to data provider FactSet. If they're correct, the job gain would top the surprise increase of 2.5 million in May, which was a record. But it would also mean that Americans have still recovered just one-quarter of the jobs they lost in March and April, when states engineered widespread shutdowns of restaurants, bars, stores, hotels movie theaters and other retail establishments.

In short, the jobs report is more important than ever but in some ways harder to read. Here are five things to look for when the report is released:

WILL THE GOVERNMENT COUNT EVERYONE CORRECTLY?

The three most recent jobs reports have been bedeviled by a unique problem created by the coronavirus: Millions of Americans are being counted as employed when they should be classified as temporarily out of work and therefore unemployed.

The government counts the number of unemployed through a monthly survey. Since March, its survey-takers have been classifying many Americans as employed even if their employers are closed because of the pandemic. In many cases, these people believe they still have jobs. But the Labor Department says that if they aren't working, they should be considered temporarily unemployed.

In May, 4.9 million people were counted as working when they should have been counted as unemployed. Had these people been properly classified, the unemployment rate would have been reported as 16.4%, not 13.3%.

Even accounting for the misclassification, unemployment is still declining, if only slowly. In April, if the same adjustment had been made, the jobless rate would have been 19.5% instead of 14.7%.

HOW MANY LAYOFFS ARE PERMANENT?

Another unique aspect of the coronavirus recession is that many more laid-off workers than usual consider their job losses to be only temporary and expect to return to their old employers. That's not surprising. Many restaurants, shops and gyms had expected to be closed for only a brief period to combat the pandemic before reopening for good.

And indeed, as states began reopening, many people were called back to their old jobs. In May, even among people who were still out of work, roughly three-quarters regarded their job losses as temporary.

But with many consumers still reluctant to dine out, travel, shop or congregate in groups, more business closures are becoming permanent. In May, the number of people who said their jobs were gone for good rose nearly 300,000 from April. If that figure keeps growing as the pandemic surges back, the job market and the economy would take longer to recover.

UNEQUAL JOB GAINS?

Did the unemployment gap between whites and African Americans widen?

Since the recession began in February, it has struck Black and Hispanic Americans harder than the overall U.S. population. According to a Census Bureau survey, 53% of Black households and nearly three-fifths of Latino households have lost income since the viral outbreak struck.

But the job losses aren't reversing at the same pace for everyone. While the unemployment rate for white Americans fell by 2 percentage points in May to 12.4%, it rose slightly for Black workers, to 16.8%. Unemployment for Latinos also fell but was still higher than for all other groups, at 17.6%.

WILL STATE AND LOCAL GOVERNMENTS SHED MORE JOBS?

In May, even as most large U.S. industries added jobs, state and local governments cut 550,000 workers, after having slashed 950,000 in April. The job losses have raised concerns that even as the economy slowly recovers, faltering sales tax and income tax revenues will force state and local governments to keep cutting jobs.

That would damage the recovery. In fact, most economists say that widespread state and local government layoffs weakened the recovery from the 2008-2009 Great Recession. Congress is debating whether to provide further aid to avoid such cuts.

WILL MORE AMERICANS STOP LOOKING FOR WORK?

Millions of Americans still have jobs but have been reduced to working part time rather than full time, leaving them with less money to spend and thereby slowing economic growth. In May, more than 10 million part-time workers would have preferred full-time work — more than double the number in February, before the virus struck.

And many of those who've lost jobs haven't looked for new ones. That's either because they are discouraged by high unemployment or they fear being infected by the virus. People who don't search for new jobs aren't counted as unemployed.

But including involuntary part-time workers and those who aren't looking for a job, the so-called under-employment rate was 21.2% in May, far above the official unemployment figure but down from a record 22.8% in April.

Ex-Bush officials launch super PAC backing Biden over Trump

By ALEXANDRA JAFFE Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — A group of former George W. Bush administration and campaign officials have launched a new super PAC supporting Democratic presidential candidate Joe Biden, the latest in a growing number of Republican groups to come out in support of Biden over President Donald Trump.

The group, 43 Alumni for Biden, has recruited at least 200 former White House officials, campaign aides and Cabinet secretaries who worked under Bush to join the push against the Republican incumbent. They're planning to roll out supportive testimonial videos featuring high-profile Republicans and launch a voter turnout effort in key states, aimed at turning out disaffected Republican voters. News of the group was first reported by Reuters.

Kristopher Purcell, who worked in the Office of Communications in the White House and in the State Department during the Bush administration, said many of the members of the group still consider themselves Republicans but see the need to defeat Trump as beyond their personal politics.

"You don't have to agree with a president on all of his policy decisions or agenda. We ask them to go to the White House and do what they think is in the best interest of the country. That's what we as alumni of George W. Bush did, and we think Joe Biden will deliver that as well," he said.

The group has been in touch with the Biden campaign and other GOP groups opposed to Trump to coordinate some of its activities going forward, and it's alerted Bush's office of their activities, though it remains unaffiliated with the former president directly.

In a statement, Erin Perrine, the Trump campaign's director of press communications, said "this is the swamp — yet again — trying to take down the duly elected president."

"President Trump is the leader of a united Republican Party where he has earned 94% of Republican votes during the primaries — something any former president of any party could only dream of," she said.

Still, this is just the latest group of Republicans supporting Biden to come out publicly amid criticism of Trump's handling of the coronavirus pandemic and race relations in the country.

Two groups, Republican Voters Against Trump and the Lincoln Project, have already been airing ads in key states boosting Biden and attacking Trump. And last month, a group of GOP operatives opposed to

Trump launched Right Side PAC, which is aimed at turning out disenchanting Republican voters.

Little evidence that protests spread coronavirus in US

By MIKE STOBBE and NICKY FORSTER Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — There is little evidence that the protests that erupted after George Floyd's death caused a significant increase in U.S. coronavirus infections, according to public health experts.

If the protests had driven an explosion in cases, experts say, the jumps would have started to become apparent within two weeks — and perhaps as early as five days. But that didn't happen in many cities with the largest protests, including New York, Chicago, Minneapolis, and Washington, D.C.

In what's considered the first systematic look at the question, a team of economists determined that only one of 13 cities involved in the earliest wave of protests after Memorial Day had an increase that would fit the pattern.

It was Phoenix, where experts say cases and hospitalizations surged after a decision by Gov. Doug Ducey to end Arizona's stay-at-home order on May 15 and eased restrictions on businesses. Arizona residents who were cooped up for six weeks flooded Phoenix-area bar districts, ignoring social distancing guidelines.

In many cities, the protests actually seemed to lead to a net increase in social distancing, as more people who did not protest decided to stay off the streets, said that study's lead author, Dhaval Dave of Bentley University.

"The large-scale protests can impact both the behavior of the protesters and the behavior of the non-protesters," said Dave. The paper was released last week by the National Bureau of Economic Research, but has not been published by a peer-reviewed journal.

Drawing from data compiled by Johns Hopkins University, The Associated Press reviewed trends in daily reported cases in 22 U.S. cities with protests. It found post-protest increases in several cities — including Houston and Madison, Wisconsin — where experts say other factors were more likely the main drivers.

Health officials are still investigating case surges in different states, and more data may come in. But experts believe that if the protests did have a big impact on cases, stronger signs would be apparent now.

Floyd was killed on May 25 by a Minneapolis police officer who used his knee to pin Floyd's neck to the ground. The killing of a Black man at the hands of a white officer touched off protests around the United States. Coincidentally, some states had begun to lift social distancing restrictions in late May.

Dave and his colleagues counted protests over three weeks in 281 cities with populations of at least 100,000. Most had protests lasting more than three days, and many had protests that had at least 1,000 participants.

It's not clear how many protesters participated, let alone how many of them wore masks or got tested after. That may have varied from place to place.

Houston is among a number of Texas cities that have recently seen steep increases in cases and hospitalizations. Dr. Umair Shah, executive director of the county health department, believes it was likely some cases could be traced to the protests.

"We just don't know how much," he said.

But it's hard to measure the protests' precise impact for a number of reasons, Shah and others said. Earlier business reopenings and more willingness to shrug off social distancing guidelines started the trend in the Houston area, Shah said.

Another factor: Many people don't get tested unless they feel symptoms. Many protesters were young adults, who generally are less likely to get severe illness, and therefore may not have gotten tested, experts said.

And some who do get tested may still not answer all the questions they are asked by outbreak investigators.

"I know of three people who told us 'Yes, I was at a protest.' That doesn't mean there was not another 25 or more who did attend a protest and just did not share that with us," said Dr. Mysheika Roberts, the public health commissioner for the city of Columbus, Ohio.

That city has seen increased cases in the last month, but health officials say they can't attribute it to any particular reason other than people socializing and returning to normal activities without wearing masks or taking other precautions. So far, protests don't seem to be a real factor.

"Most of the protests, at least in my jurisdiction, were outside," and the virus does not spread as well outside, Roberts said. "And I would say 50% of those at the protests were wearing a face mask."

The Associated Press Health and Science Department receives support from the Howard Hughes Medical Institute's Department of Science Education. The AP is solely responsible for all content.

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Suspect accused of football game threat enters guilty plea

By ANDREW WELSH-HUGGINS Associated Press

COLUMBUS, Ohio (AP) — A man who used Facebook to threaten a shooting at Ohio State University and vowed to hurt players on the football team and then-head coach Urban Meyer pleaded guilty Wednesday, authorities said.

An indictment unsealed late last year in federal court in Columbus accused Daniel Rippy of making the "electronic communication" threat from California during the game between Ohio State and the University of Michigan in 2018. The game was played in Columbus that year, and Ohio State won 62-39.

Rippy threatened a shooting at the school, saying in a Facebook message to the university, "I'm seriously going to hurt the students and all of the players from the football team," according to a statement of facts filed Wednesday with the plea agreement.

In separate messages, Rippy also threatened "to injure or kill specific players, their family members and the head coach," the document said.

Rippy previously entered a not guilty plea before Judge Algenon Marbley, who ordered him to remain in detention.

"Graphic threats of violence against anyone, but especially threats during high-profile events, are taken seriously and will be prosecuted," said David DeVillers, U.S. Attorney for the Southern District of Ohio.

Rippy faces five years in prison and a \$250,000 fine at sentencing, which has not been scheduled.

Rippy "understands and accepts" the terms of the plea agreement, his federal public defender, Soumyajit Dutta, said in a signed statement as part of Wednesday's plea agreement.

Rippy was arrested Dec. 28 in Livermore, California, released on bond, but then failed to report to the court's Pretrial Services division as required. Rippy also didn't report to a halfway house as required, court documents said.

He was rearrested in January and ordered sent to Ohio.

Hong Kong police make first arrests under new security law

By ZEN SOO Associated Press

HONG KONG (AP) — Hong Kong police made the first arrests Wednesday under a new national security law imposed by China's central government, as thousands of people defied tear gas and pepper pellets to protest against the contentious move on the anniversary of the former British colony's handover to Chinese rule.

Police said 10 people were arrested under the law, including a man with a Hong Kong independence

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flag and a woman holding a sign displaying the British flag and calling for Hong Kong's independence — all violations of the law that took effect Tuesday night. Others were detained for possessing items advocating independence.

Hong Kong police said on Facebook that they arrested some 370 people on various charges, including unlawful assembly, possession of weapons and violating the new law, which was imposed in a move seen as Beijing's boldest step yet to erase the legal firewall between the semi-autonomous territory and the mainland's authoritarian Communist Party system.

The law, imposed following anti-government protests in Hong Kong last year, makes secessionist, subversive, or terrorist activities illegal, as well as foreign intervention in the city's internal affairs. Any person taking part in 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 most serious offenders, such as those deemed to be masterminds behind these activities, could receive a maximum punishment of life imprisonment. Lesser offenders could receive jail terms of up to three years, short-term detention or restriction.

Wednesday's arrests came as thousands took to the streets on the 23rd anniversary of Britain's handover of Hong Kong to China in 1997. For the first time, police banned this year's annual march. Protesters shouted slogans, lambasted police and held up signs condemning the Chinese government and the new security law.

Some protesters set fires in Hong Kong's trendy shopping district, Causeway Bay, while others pulled bricks from sidewalks and scattered obstacles across roads in an attempt to obstruct traffic. To disperse protesters, police shot pepper spray and pepper balls, as well as deployed water cannons and tear gas throughout the day.

Hong Kong's leader strongly endorsed the new law in a speech marking the anniversary of the handover of the territory — officially called the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region.

"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.

Britain's foreign secretary, Dominic Raab, told reporters Wednesday the law "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.

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.

Pro-democracy lawmaker Claudia Mo said in a news conference that the security legislation does not follow 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 any flag or banner raised by protesters calling for Hong Kong's separation from China to be illegal as well as an expressions of support for independence for Tibet, Xinjiang or the self-governing island democracy of Taiwan that China claims as its own.

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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.

On Wednesday, Raab, the British foreign secretary, announced the UK would extend residency rights for up to 3 million Hong Kong residents eligible for British National Overseas passports to five years from the current six-month limit. After five years, they could apply for settled status and then apply for citizenship 12 months later.

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.

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.

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

Retired pope's elder brother, Georg Ratzinger, dies at 96

By DAVID RISING Associated Press

BERLIN (AP) — The Rev. Georg Ratzinger, the older brother of Emeritus Pope Benedict XVI who earned renown in his own right as a director of an acclaimed German boys' choir, has died. He was 96.

The Regensburg diocese in Bavaria, where Ratzinger lived, said that he died Wednesday. His death came

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just over a week after Benedict made a four-day visit to Regensburg to be with his ailing brother.

Ordained on the same day as his brother, Ratzinger proved to be a talented musician and went on to oversee the recording of numerous masterpieces and concert tours around the world by the Regensburger Domspatzen, a storied choir that traces its history back to the 10th century. But his reputation was tarnished as he apologized for using corporal punishment to discipline boys amid a wider investigation into sexual and physical abuse in the Church.

He remained extremely close to his brother throughout his career, expressing dismay when Joseph Ratzinger was elected pope that the stress would affect his health and that they would no longer spend so much time together.

The pope had his quarters in the Apostolic Palace modified with a special apartment for his brother, who traveled frequently from his home in the Bavarian city of Regensburg to Rome. Elected to the papacy in 2005, Benedict stepped down in 2013 and was succeeded by current Pope Francis.

The two came from a religious Catholic family, the sons of police officer Josef and Maria Ratzinger, and great nephews of the German politician Georg Ratzinger, a priest and social reformer who was a member of the Bavarian and Federal parliament.

Born Jan. 15, 1924 in the Bavarian town of Altoetting, Georg Ratzinger showed an early talent for music, playing the church organ at age 11. The family eventually settled outside nearby Traunstein in 1937, where he and his brother joined the seminary. During World War II, Ratzinger told The Associated Press in an interview that he remembered huddling with the blinds drawn with his younger brother and father listening to Allied radio broadcasts, because their father wanted them to know the truth about the Nazi regime.

Though the Ratzinger family was anti-Nazi, Georg Ratzinger was enrolled into the Hitler Youth in 1941. In his book, "Salt of the Earth," Benedict remarked on the time and his own subsequent enrollment at age 14. Official details of the boys' Hitler Youth days no longer exist, as all of the organization's archives for the area were burned ahead of the American advance at the end of the war.

In 1942, Ratzinger was drafted into a federal labor force, and the same fall entered the regular German armed forces as a radio operator in a signals unit. After serving in France, the Netherlands and Czechoslovakia, Ratzinger was sent in 1944 to Italy where he was wounded in fighting.

He was captured by U.S. forces and spent the rest of the war as a POW, returning to Traunstein in July 1945 — a day the then-Joseph Ratzinger recalled in his memoir "Milestones," remembering that the family had no idea if Georg were alive or dead.

"A quiet worry hung over our house..." he wrote. "Suddenly, on a hot July day, we steps were audible and he whom we had missed for so long was again standing in our midst, tanned from the Italian sun. Then he sat down at the piano, thankful and relieved, and intoned 'Holy God We Praise Thy Name.'"

Following the war, the brothers entered the seminary of the archdiocese of Munich and Freising to study for the priesthood. They were ordained together on June 29, 1951, in the Cathedral at Freising on the Feast of Saints Peter and Paul.

After working his way up as priest in the region, Georg Ratzinger was appointed musical director of St. Peter's Cathedral in Regensburg in 1964, becoming the conductor of the famed cathedral choir, the Regensburger Domspatzen.

As head of this world-renowned choir, whose name means "Cathedral Sparrows," Ratzinger helped build its reputation around the world, running tours that included trips to the Vatican, the United States, Canada, Poland and Japan and performances for Queen Elizabeth II and Pope John Paul II.

But well after his retirement from the post, revelations of sexual and physical abuse at the choir haunted him.

In 2010, Ratzinger apologized for using corporal punishment to discipline boys in the choir, saying he was aware of allegations of physical abuse at an elementary school linked to the choir but did nothing about it.

"At the beginning I also repeatedly administered a slap in the face, but always had a bad conscience about it," Ratzinger told the Passauer Neue Presse, adding that he was happy when corporal punishment was made illegal in 1980. "Of course, today one condemns such actions; I do as well. At the same time,

I ask the victims for pardon.”

He claimed he was completely unaware of allegations of sexual abuse, which he said dated from before his tenure as choir director.

“These things were never discussed,” Ratzinger said. “The problem of sexual abuse that has now come to light was never spoken of.”

His relationship with his brother always played a special role in his life.

Ratzinger once lamented in an interview that his brother’s role as pope would mean “family life might be a bit more limited” and acknowledged that he “had hoped that the cup would pass him by.”

Still, Georg traveled to the Vatican for his brother’s installation, and was given a prominent seat on the basilica esplanade.

While visiting the pope in August 2005, Ratzinger was hospitalized in Rome because of an irregular heartbeat and had a pacemaker implanted. Benedict visited him while he was in the hospital.

In October of that year, the brothers got together again. “Sanctus,” a piece Georg Ratzinger composed was played at a Vatican concert for the pope and sung by the Domspatzen, while both brothers watched on together.

As Ratzinger’s health failed, his brother came to Regensburg in mid-June to visit with him.

Benedict’s trip to Germany was his first trip outside Italy in over seven years. Benedict greeted old neighbors and prayed at his parents’ grave. He stayed at a seminary during his trip, visiting his brother twice a day.

Ratzinger’s only close living relative is Benedict. His sister Maria, died in 1991.

There was no immediate word on funeral arrangements, but the diocese said it wasn’t likely Benedict would be able to make the trip from Italy.

A previous version of this story was corrected to show that the diocese amended the day of Ratzinger’s death to Wednesday, not Tuesday.

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.

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.

Dr. 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

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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," 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

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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 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

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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."

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.

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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 others 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.

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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.

Michelle R. Smith is a correspondent for the AP, and Lauren Weber, Hannah Recht, Laura Ungar and Anna Maria Barry-Jester are writers for KHN.

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.

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

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VIRUS DIARY: Moving closer to grandsons they can barely see

By WILLIAM J. KOLE Associated Press

WARWICK, R.I. (AP) — A child's swing twists forlornly in the breeze beneath the behemoth maple tree that shades our home. It's become a symbol of our sad coronavirus exile.

A year and a half ago, we moved from what we thought was our forever home steps from Cape Cod Bay to Rhode Island, just so we could be close to our two young grandsons. They used to be an hour and 10 minutes' drive from us. Now we're 12 minutes away.

Empty nesters now, we gladly and giddily bought a bigger house than we needed, complete with a fenced-in yard and the swing.

But my wife's immune system was trashed by a nasty bout with Lyme disease, and we realized in the first days of the pandemic that we'd have to take extra precautions. Immunocompromised people and those aged 60 and older are among those most at risk of serious illness or death from COVID-19. It's a harsh and unforgiving demographic.

Until very recently, the best we could do since early March was to pull down our masks and make funny faces at the boys from the sidewalk during furtive drive-bys past their home. Anything more and we risked

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infecting or becoming infected.

Love had brought us all closer, until love forced us to stay apart.

We seldom saw each other until mid-June, when both families quarantined specially for a weekend reunion that could include hugs and horseplay on the lawn and a sleepover with the boys. I bought 3 1/2-year-old Parker a net, and we walked to a nearby cove to catch minnows. I shared a raspberry Popsicle with 1 1/2-year-old Cedar, who finally said my name in a glorious staccato burst: "Papa! Papa! Papa!"

We pushed both in the swing. Everyone giggled. Our hearts were full. It was the face time we'd ached for, and it was bliss — a brief respite from a long and wrenching separation.

"I missed you, Papa," Parker murmured that evening as we snuggled together on the sofa to watch cartoons.

But our grandchildren's day care has finally reopened, with masks and as much social distancing as can reasonably be managed with a roomful of wriggling preschoolers. Our daughter and son-in-law, both haggard after three months of attempting to work from home while juggling child care, were hesitant to re-enroll the boys. Life, though, must be lived, and its normal cadences and rhythms need to be reclaimed when it's reasonably safe to do so.

And therein lies our dilemma.

Our grandsons need to be in day care, but their return there — with all the attendant exposure to a vast network of other families whose infection could be telegraphed to us — is fraught with risk.

It's a morbid calculation that millions of Americans like us are having to make as our states steadily reopen their economies. Patio dining or takeout? Home hair coloring or masked salon visit? Quick grandson fix or resumed quarantine?

COVID-19 hasn't gone anywhere, so — for the most part — neither have we. We're back to masked drive-bys, separation, and a silenced swing. And it hurts.

There is hope, though, of sustained togetherness. Of sharing daily life in real time, the way we'd imagined it when we left the Cape. Of getting back into the swing of things.

In the meantime, we're taking our cues from Cedar, still a toddler, and making some baby steps: We're planning a few days in August when both families can reunite at the seashore.

We'll all have to quarantine for it. Again. But it will be worth it.

Virus Diary, an occasional feature, showcases the coronavirus pandemic through the eyes of Associated Press journalists around the world. William J. Kole is the New England editor for The Associated Press. Follow him on Twitter at <http://twitter.com/billkole>

AP-NORC poll: White Democrats grow more critical of police

By KAT STAFFORD and HANNAH FINGERHUT Associated Press

DETROIT (AP) — As a national reckoning over racism and policing grips the nation, white Democrats are far more likely now than they were a few years ago to think police brutality is a serious issue — a dramatic shift in public opinion that some say could shape the November presidential election.

A majority of white Democrats today say police officers are more likely to use deadly force against a Black person than against a white person, according to a recent poll from The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research, not unlike five years ago.

But for the first time, the poll shows significant changes in how white Democrats view police brutality and the consequences: 64% now describe police violence against the public as very or extremely serious, compared with 29% in July 2015.

Race and policing in America have been thrust into an international spotlight amid an already tumultuous presidential campaign after a series of high-profile police killings of Black Americans that has sparked global protests and demands for structural change. The campaign had already been fraught with racial tension fueled by the coronavirus pandemic and its ensuing economic fallout, which both have disproportionately impacted people of color.

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While racial inequity has long been a focal point of African Americans, experts say many white Americans, particularly white Democrats, are now grappling with the longstanding impacts of systemic racism in ways they never have before.

San Diego resident Chris Chapman, a white woman and a Democrat, said witnessing George Floyd's death was particularly jarring for her.

"I think the brutality of that event, it really raised the consciousness, at least for me," Chapman, 68, said. "It shocked people who really hadn't yet gotten to the place where they thought that could happen."

Most white Democrats say that they disapprove of President Donald Trump's handling of racial issues and that he has only sowed further division at a time of immense unrest. Trump on Sunday tweeted and later deleted a video showing one of his supporters chanting "white power," a racist slogan associated with white supremacists.

But the big question is whether this racial awakening among white Democrats translates into increased turnout at the polls favoring presumptive Democratic presidential nominee Joe Biden, said Ashley Jardina, assistant professor of political science at Duke University and author of the book "White Identity Politics."

"This kind of shift in public opinion is pretty unprecedented especially when it comes to matters of race," Jardina said. "If you just ask people who've become more racially progressive who they are they going to vote for, they're going to be more supportive of Joe Biden, but are they going to take the time to actually show up and vote? That's what we don't know, and that's what's really important."

The poll also found that Democrats are far more likely than they were in 2015 to say the justice system treats officers too leniently when they cause injury or death in their job, as compared with fairly or too harshly. The increase is especially sharp — 40 percentage points — among white Democrats. Now, 86% say the justice system is too lenient with officers, up from 46%. Black Democrats are even more likely than they were in 2015 to say that, 87% vs. 71%.

Massachusetts resident Krystyna Colborn said she's observed several police violence protests in her community, which she sees as a sign of an increased willingness to take action to usher in a new president following Americans witnessing "death upon death" of Black Americans at the hands of police.

"I don't think it will benefit Donald Trump," Colborn, a 74-year-old white Democrat, said. "I think he has people who are behind him solidly and they will not change, but I think there are white people who are going to vote against Donald Trump. I will vote for (Biden) because he's a Trump alternative, and I think there may be other people who are in that same position. It's the people who are beginning to realize this, who I think will have the most influence."

And tapping into those potential voters will be key looking toward November, Progressive Turnout Project Executive Director Alex Morgan said. The political action committee announced in late June a \$52.5 million effort to canvass key battleground states, including Wisconsin and Georgia, to reach voters who didn't turn out in 2016.

"Voters are recognizing that this is the most consequential election of our lifetimes," Morgan said. "We're standing with protesters and activists who are speaking out against police brutality and structural racism, and I think we're going to see folks turn this pain and outrage of this moment into lasting change at the ballot box."

Democrats continue to say overwhelmingly that police more commonly use deadly force against a Black person. White Democrats are now more likely than they were in 2015 to say police more commonly use force with Black people, 87% vs. 62%.

Jeffrey Boord-Dill, a 62-year-old white man and professor who lives in Kentucky, said his eyes have been opened in new ways in recent weeks to racism and it's pushing him toward action to make sure his voice is heard in November.

"I have been in a state of dissatisfaction and pretty much anger for almost four years because of what the Trump administration and Republican Party backing him up has done to this country in terms of race baiting and putting people against one another," Boord-Dill, a Democrat, said. "My students are the ones who I am so proud of who are going out and marching, and they're not pulling any punches at all. That's the change that I'm seeing and that makes me the most hopeful that maybe we'll be able to start to solve

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this problem.”

Fingerhut reported from Washington.

The AP-NORC poll of 1,301 adults was conducted June 11-15 using a sample drawn from NORC’s probability-based AmeriSpeak Panel, which is designed to be representative of the U.S. population. The margin of sampling error for all respondents is plus or minus 3.7 percentage points.

Online:

AP-NORC Center: <http://www.apnorc.org/>.

Today in History

By The Associated Press undefined

Today in History

Today is Thursday, July 2, the 184th day of 2020. There are 182 days left in the year.

Today’s Highlight in History:

On July 2, 1881, President James A. Garfield was shot by Charles J. Guiteau (gee-TOH’) at the Washington railroad station; Garfield died the following September. (Guiteau was hanged in June 1882.)

On this date:

In 1566, French astrologer, physician and professed prophet Nostradamus died in Salon (sah-LOHN’).

In 1776, the Continental Congress passed a resolution saying that “these United Colonies are, and of right ought to be, free and independent States.”

In 1917, rioting erupted in East St. Louis, Illinois, as white mobs attacked Black residents; nearly 50 people, mostly Blacks, are believed to have died in the violence.

In 1937, aviator Amelia Earhart and navigator Fred Noonan disappeared over the Pacific Ocean while attempting to make the first round-the-world flight along the equator.

In 1961, author Ernest Hemingway shot himself to death at his home in Ketchum, Idaho.

In 1963, President John F. Kennedy met Pope Paul VI at the Vatican, the first meeting between a Catholic U.S. chief executive and the head of the Roman Catholic Church.

In 1964, President Lyndon B. Johnson signed into law a sweeping civil rights bill passed by Congress.

In 1976, the U.S. Supreme Court, in *Gregg v. Georgia*, ruled 7-2 the death penalty was not inherently cruel or unusual.

In 1986, ruling in a pair of cases, the Supreme Court upheld affirmative action as a remedy for past job discrimination.

In 1987, 18 Mexican immigrants were found dead inside a locked boxcar near Sierra Blanca, Texas, in what authorities called a botched smuggling attempt; a 19th man survived.

In 2009, federal marshals took possession of disgraced financier Bernard Madoff’s \$7 million Manhattan penthouse, forcing Madoff’s wife, Ruth, to move elsewhere.

In 2018, rescue divers in Thailand found 12 boys and their soccer coach, who had been trapped by flooding as they explored a cave more than a week earlier.

Ten years ago: Gen. David Petraeus arrived in Afghanistan to assume command of U.S. and NATO forces after his predecessor, Gen. Stanley McChrystal, was fired for intemperate remarks he’d made about Obama administration figures in *Rolling Stone* magazine. The United States defeated Japan 7-2 to win its seventh consecutive world softball championships. British novelist Beryl Bainbridge, 77, died in London.

Five years ago: Trying to close the books on the worst offshore oil spill in U.S. history, BP agreed to provide billions of dollars in new money to five Gulf Coast states in a deal the company said would bring its full obligations to an estimated \$53.8 billion. A Philippine ferry, the *Kim Nirvana*, capsized after leaving port in Ormoc City, killing about 60 people.

One year ago: Lee Iacocca, the automobile executive who helped launch some of Detroit’s best-selling

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vehicles at Ford and then Chrysler, died in California at the age of 94. Fire erupted at a Jim Beam warehouse in Kentucky that was filled with about 45,000 barrels of aging bourbon; the warehouse and bourbon were a total loss and the bourbon leaked into nearby creeks and rivers. A decorated Navy SEAL, Edward Gallagher, was acquitted of murder in the killing of a wounded Islamic State captive in Iraq but was convicted of posing with the corpse. (Gallagher would be sentenced to four months' confinement, but was set free since he had spent more time in custody awaiting trial; the case led to a conflict between President Donald Trump and armed services leaders over military discipline and forced the ouster of Navy Secretary Richard Spencer.)

Today's Birthdays: Former Philippine first lady Imelda Marcos is 91. Jazz musician Ahmad Jamal is 90. Actor Robert Ito is 89. Actress Polly Holliday is 83. Racing Hall of Famer Richard Petty is 83. Former White House chief of staff John H. Sununu is 81. Former Mexican President Vicente Fox is 78. Writer-director-comedian Larry David is 73. Luci Baines Johnson, daughter of President Lyndon B. Johnson, is 73. Actor Saul Rubinek is 72. Rock musician Roy Bittan (Bruce Springsteen & the E Street Band) is 71. Rock musician Gene Taylor is 68. Actress Wendy Schaal is 66. Actress-model Jerry Hall is 64. Actor Jimmy McNichol is 59. Country singer Guy Penrod is 57. Rock musician Dave Parsons (Bush) is 55. Actress Yancy Butler is 50. Contemporary Christian musician Melodee DeVevo (Casting Crowns) is 44. Actor Owain (OH'-wyn) Yeoman is 42. Race car driver Sam Hornish Jr. is 41. NHL center Joe Thornton is 41. Singer Michelle Branch is 37. Actress Vanessa Lee Chester is 36. Figure skater Johnny Weir is 36. Actor Nelson Franklin is 35. Actress-singer Ashley Tisdale is 35. Actress Lindsay Lohan (LOH'-uhn) is 34. Actress Margot Robbie is 30.