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Chicken Soup
for the Soul

“TRUE SELF-
DISCOVERY
BEGINS
WHERE YOUR
COMFORT
ZONE ENDS.”

-ADAM BRAUN

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.

A photograph of a red sports car, possibly a Mazda Miata, with its hood open, parked on a grassy area. In the background, there are other cars and a sign for the Groton Lions Club. The scene is outdoors with trees and a clear sky.

4th Annual SUMMER FEST
9am-4pm Sunday, July 12, 2020
Groton City Park  Groton, SD Lions Club

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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New Laws in Effect

There have been some major bills that passed during the legislature and have now taken effect of as July 1. This is a listing of a few I thought everyone should be aware of:

SB 164 changes the state's Move Over Law. The new provisions include the minimum fine for a violation increasing from \$122.50 to \$270, if a driver fails to move over and causes a crash with an emergency vehicle, the offense increases to a Class 1 Misdemeanor, and traffic is now required to move over for authorized vehicles that use a blue light as well as emergency vehicles.

SB 186 adds paid family leave to state employees benefits. It will provide parents 60% of their normal salary for up to eight weeks when they welcome a new child through birth or adoption.

HB 1047 protects and helps victims of human trafficking. This legislation received unanimous support from both chambers of the legislature. This law protects South Dakotans from human trafficking by ensuring traffickers are prosecuted for their crimes by amending the criminal code to add "purchaser" and prevents a defense of "consent" or "mistake of age," by paving a path to a clean record for minor victims with convictions for crimes they were forced to commit, and by increasing access to victim resources that include reimbursement of expenses like hospital stays and mental health counseling.

Several reforms to occupational licensing have taken effect:

SB 10 revises certain provisions regarding cosmetology licenses

SB 11 revises certain provisions regarding third-party insurance plan administrators

SB 12 revises certain provisions regarding comity licensure in the technical professions

SB 13 revises certain educational requirements for the practice of barbering

SB 23 repeals the high school graduation or equivalent requirement for certain licensed professionals

SB 157 is a law that reforms the county zoning and appeals process. It creates a process for getting economic growth projects sited and permitted. The bill also defines a "person aggrieved" using established case law to ensure those with legitimate concerns have standing to appeal permitting decisions. The bill does not limit either county permitting criteria or state environmental requirements.

On Thursday, June 25 Governor Noem announced that South Dakota is utilizing Coronavirus Relief Fund (CRF) dollars to replenish the South Dakota Unemployment Compensation Trust Fund. The State transferred \$45.6 million to the trust fund. The CARES Act allows for states to utilize CRF dollars to replenish depleted unemployment trust funds, and doing so will allow South Dakota to avoid a tax increase on South Dakota employers.

Governor Noem also signed two executive orders on Thursday, June 25 to give flexibility as South Dakota continues to fight the spread of COVID-19.

Executive Order 2020-28 suspends the implementation of SB 113, which changes statutes related to minor driver's permits. This bill was set to go into effect on July 1, 2020. This suspension will help relieve the backlog on driver's license offices across the state.

Executive Order 2020-29 extends the deadline for the compilation of a report by the South Dakota Commission on Child Support to Dec. 31, 2021.

Legislative bills and executive orders can be read in their entirety on the State of South Dakota website. As always, please reach out with any questions or comments on how this have been going. Stay safe.

Representative

Steven D McCleerey

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AGENDA
REGULAR MEETING
BROWN COUNTY COMMISSION
COMMISSION CHAMBERS, COURTHOUSE ANNEX
25 MARKET STREET, ABERDEEN SD

Appointment can be made to attend meetings or attend via teleconference.

TUESDAY
July 7th, 2020

8:45 a.m. – 8:55 a.m. – Roxy Hilgenberg, Welfare Director – Discuss 2021 Budget

8:55 a.m. – 9:05 a.m. – Dirk Rogers, Hwy Superintendent – 3 R-O-W's for Northern Electric & Dept. Update

9:05 a.m. – 9:15 a.m. – Pat Wolberg, IT Director – Discuss 2021 Budget

- Approve General Meeting Minutes of June 30, 2020
- Claims/Payroll
- HR Report
- Claim Assignment
- Leases
- Landfill Tonnage Report
- SD Dept. of Health – Mosquito Grant
- Fireworks Permit
- Summer Fest Discussion of Leases
 - Mosbrucker Rodeo
 - Hub City Radio
 - Dueling Pianos Fundraiser
 - Stacy Gossman
 - Wrangler Team Roping

Public Comment and any other matters to come before the Commission for discussion

Immediately following meeting: Site visit to south dumpsters near fire station

County Commission Meeting:

County Commission 7.7.2020
Tue, Jul 7, 2020 8:30 AM - 11:30 AM (CDT)

Please join my meeting from your computer, tablet or smartphone.

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Dr. Brandon Steger

New medical director at Avantara Groton

Avantara Groton recently welcomed new Medical Director, Dr. Brandon Steger, who will oversee their day-to-day clinical practices.

"I'm thrilled to join the Avantara Groton team," says Steger. "My great-grandmother lived at this facility for a few years, so this specific facility holds a special place in my heart."

Originally from the Aberdeen area, Steger is a graduate from Central and has a wife and three children. Steger is a board-certified Family Physician currently on staff at Avera.

Kurtz graduates from Minnesota State Community and Technical College

The following area students are among the 745 2020 Spring Semester graduates of Minnesota State Community and Technical College, with campuses in Detroit Lakes, Fergus Falls, Moorhead and Wadena: Courtney Kurtz, Groton, graduated with a degree in dental hygiene.

As a member of the Minnesota State system, M State serves more than 8,000 students in credit courses each year in 80 career and liberal arts programs online and at its campuses in Detroit Lakes, Fergus Falls, Moorhead and Wadena. By partnering with communities, the college also provides workforce development services and other responsive training programs.

Minnesota State Community and Technical College is a member of the Minnesota State system and is an equal opportunity educator / employer.

Highway Patrol Says Safe Driving A Must During Fourth of July Holiday

PIERRE, S.D. – South Dakota's Highway Patrol has a simple message for this Fourth of July: Stay safe. "Being a safe driver is everyone's responsibility," Colonel Rick Miller of the Highway Patrol said. "Our troopers will be out this weekend reminding drivers to slow down, pay attention, don't drink and drive and to wear their seatbelt."

The Highway Patrol also reminds drivers to be aware of the new no texting bill, Senate Bill 1169, that became law July 1. The bill can be found here: https://sdlegislature.gov/Legislative_Session/Bills/Bill.aspx?File=HB1169P.html&Session=2020&Version=Introduced&Bill=1169.

Last year there was one fatality during the July 4th reporting period; a passenger in a motor vehicle who was not wearing a seatbelt. Eleven highway deaths were reported over the July 4th period in 1967, the state's worst year on record.

The Highway Patrol is part of the Department of Public Safety.

West Nile Update

US WNV (as of June 16): 5 cases (AR, AZ, NM) and 0 deaths.

SD WNV (as of June 30): 0 cases

1 county with positive mosquito pools (Brown)

12% of all mosquitos trapped in the last week have been Culex tarsalis.

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#130 in a series

Covid-19 Update: by Marie Miller

Worse and worse. Another record-breaking day adding 54,400 new cases, so that now all four of the worst days have all been in the last week. Not a trend we wish to continue. We are now at 2,756,100 cases in the US, a 2.0% increase in total cases over yesterday. And we're at 128,758 deaths, 661 more than yesterday, a 0.5% increase. I see 38 states with increasing trends, 13 holding, and just two decreasing.

Utah reported over 550 new cases today with an 18.3% positivity rate, the second consecutive day with a rate over 18%. Hospitalizations in California have been increasing; now over 5000 are in the hospital as cases have risen. The state has set one-day records for new cases four times in the last two weeks, and hospitals are implementing surge capacity plans. The state's new case report declined substantially from yesterday, but still puts it 124% above its previous seven-day average. Montana, the second lowest state for total cases, reported a record number of new cases today and passed 1000 total cases yesterday. Florida set another record for new cases today, breaking a record set just Saturday. Alabama has averaged over 1000 new cases per day. Mississippi is averaging 600 new cases per day over the past week and last week hit 1000 in a single day for the first time. Georgia had a record number of new cases today, as did South Carolina, Arkansas, Oregon, Alaska, and the US Virgin Islands, which broke 100 cases today. Record hospitalizations were reported for Texas, Mississippi, Tennessee, Nevada, and Arizona. New case averages increased by more than 40% in the US Virgin Islands, Florida, Montana, and Nevada. And, sadly, the last state-level jurisdiction in North America with no reported cases, the Canadian territory of Nunavut above the Arctic Circle, reported its first one. This virus leaves no stone unturned.

The tagline on a story in the New York Times was, "If June was the month the pandemic spiraled out of control in the U.S. July may show how bad it can get." Say what you like about headline writers; this one nailed it. Look at new case reports for, first, June 1 and then July 1 for these states: Florida – 667, 6500; Texas – 1100, 8100. Georgia – 706, 2300; California – 2500, 7600. Ohio, Kansas, and Louisiana which had wrestled this pandemic earlier in the spring were back in spring peak territory for new daily case reports; North Carolina, Tennessee, and Texas all set records.

We've talked each night about the increasing number of states showing increasing growth and the spikes in hospitalizations. This is well beyond what can be accounted for by increased testing; in fact, one of our continuing problems is that we are still, after all these months, not doing anything like enough testing. Test positivity rates are going up. Only just over a dozen states have kept growth flat or declining. That's not a pretty picture.

We've been seeing a trend in many of our current hot spots toward a younger demographic turning up with infections. In Oregon, for example, the fastest growth is in the 10-and-younger age group which has nearly caught up with the 80-and-overs in the state. Authorities there say some of this may be due to increased testing, but this does not explain most of the rise. There have been outbreaks in day care centers, but it is believed most of these cases are unidentified community spread. Officials there are warning that this increase could threaten the planned opening of schools scheduled for later this summer.

There's even been a fair amount of self-congratulation at this in some quarters because young people are the folks who seem to be least affected; and for the most part, that's still true. However, we are seeing a disturbing pattern: higher numbers of children who are really, really sick. Eight of those Oregon cases are hospitalized and five are hospitalized in Alabama, including a four-month-old. Another, a cancer patient,

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is four years old; and today an 11-year old died in Florida.

It isn't only young children either. Hospitals in states with big surges in cases are reporting patients are coming in younger and sicker than before. One ICU medical director in Miami said his typical patient had been above 65 years of age, but now is between 25 and 45. Another physician, this one in San Antonio, also mentioned he had been accustomed to seeing patients in their 50s and 60s and now is seeing them in their 20s, saying, "I've lost track of how many people in their 20s." Then he added this: "Yesterday was probably one of my worst days that I've ever had. I got 10 calls, all of whom (were) young people who otherwise would be excellent candidates to be able to put on ECMO (life support). They're so sick that if they don't get put on, they don't get that support, they're probably going to die. I had three beds."

These serious cases are still less common in the young, but the more young people turn up with infections, the more we're going to see of this sort of thing. Which makes this next piece of news about a phenomenon called the Covid party doubly concerning. We talked months ago about Covid parties like the old-timey chicken pox parties where parents would get their children together to get them infected and "get it over with." This is not that thing; it's something else: groups of college kids in Alabama (so far) who throw these parties for themselves. Apparently, the way it works is you pay into a "pot" a fee to attend the party with people who have confirmed positive tests. You mingle and enjoy the evening, and then the first person to be diagnosed in coming days wins the pot. There have been several such parties in the Tuscaloosa area (home to the University of Alabama), and authorities are concerned. This can't end well.

Some interesting things are showing up in autopsies of patients who've died of Covid-19, things we didn't expect. We expected to see damage to lungs, kidneys, and liver, and that was there. Given the abnormal blood clotting reported in clinical findings, we expected to see signs of multiple blood clots, and that was there too. But we also expected to see signs of virus having invaded heart and brain tissue, and that was not there.

Patients have been showing a cardiac complication that looked clinically like myocarditis, inflammation of the walls of the heart muscle that causes the tissue to sort of harden so it can no longer pump efficiently. And nope. Not there. There should have been lymphocytes (white blood cells) surrounding the areas of damaged heart tissue; that's the classic sign of inflammation in heart tissue. There were no lymphocytes, just the damaged heart tissue. What they saw instead was very mild inflammation and a bunch of cells called megakaryocytes. You don't generally find megakaryocytes in the heart at all. Most of them are in your bone marrow where they hang out throughout your life, producing other kinds of white blood cells and giving off little pieces of themselves when needed as little fragments called platelets that circulate in your blood and help with blood clotting. Normally, we might see a few megakaryocytes in your lungs, but not in your heart; yet here they are. The lung tissue in these patients also showed abnormally large numbers of megakaryocytes. No one is too sure what to make of this, but it has given rise to the idea that maybe we should try treating Covid-19 patients with anti-platelet drugs as well as anticoagulants (anti-clotting agents, or blood thinners). One clinical trial has already been modified to include this possibility. We'll see what turns up.

Brain autopsy findings were also surprising. Many neurological manifestations of this infection have been noted, starting with the disordered sense of taste and smell and progressing through altered mental status, sleepiness, stroke, seizures, coma, delirium. Blood clots were expected, virus in the tissue was expected, and inflammation was expected. We got the clots and the virus—although only in tiny quantity; but there were only small areas of inflammation, nothing like would produce the kinds of signs being observed. But there were large areas damaged by oxygen deprivation, and it was turning up even in people who died suddenly. This is a picture that appears as if the damage occurs over a period of time, so folks are starting to wonder about what sort of effect this virus may be having, unsuspected, on the brains of people who

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never get very sick—and what happens to survivors after they recover-- whether these groups of people will have lingering effects on the brain. This is not a happy thought.

It is this sort of information that will give us a clearer picture of just how this virus does its damage and inform future treatment decisions. This is the way progress is made, by gathering as much information as we can and then working to figure out what it means and how we deal with it.

The Empowerment Plan is an organization in Detroit that seeks to help some of our most vulnerable citizens in two ways. The Plan hires homeless to give them the stability of a job and a place to go every day with the goal of getting back into permanent housing. Their product is a pretty ingenious coat that unfolds into a sleeping bag, and these are donated to homeless people sleeping on the street in Detroit's harsh winter weather. When founder, Veronika Scott, started the Plan up in 2011, people told her this idea would never work, not because she lacked business experience (which she did lack), but because the homeless women she hired would not be "capable." She went out and gathered funding anyhow: from Carhartt (who knows a thing or two about warm winter apparel), The Women's Foundation, ACME Mills, and GM. She explained in a TEDx talk, "If our job that we want isn't here, and isn't being offered, we make it here for ourselves. We can really drastically change our environment and the community around us, and here in Detroit, we're doing that all the time."

To date, they have created 90 jobs and distributed 43,000 coats. Their corporate and organization support page lists 32 such partners. Scott says, "Every day I enjoy proving that the homeless women I hire are powerful and driven. I am so privileged to be a part of their lives." Nice story, right?

Then came the pandemic. Like the gentleman in Denver (something about cities with D-names???) we discussed last night, the Plan wanted to protect those jobs they'd so painstakingly provided. So they went out and got help from the Detroit Lions to get a grant, retool, and purchase materials to sew isolation gowns to protect local health care workers. Production manager, Alfonso Marcano told the The Detroit News, "We're happy to be helping our community and happy to be doing this."

Two birds with one stone: helping others, helping ourselves. OK, three birds: helping our community too. We can all do a little bit of that, can't we? There is so much need. Doesn't have to be money: Give what you have where you see the need. Plenty of opportunities. Go find one, please. You'll like your life better afterward, and we all need a little of that these days.

Keep yourself well. I'll touch base tomorrow.

South Dakota's Unemployment Claims Have Experienced the 5th Fastest Recovery in the U.S.

Some states are pausing their reopening processes, but new unemployment claims last week were 79% below the peak during the COVID-19 pandemic, according to the latest jobs report. To help add some context to that statistic, WalletHub just released updated rankings for the States Whose Unemployment Claims Are Recovering the Quickest.

To identify which states' workforces are experiencing the quickest recovery from COVID-19, WalletHub compared the 50 states and the District of Columbia across three metrics based on changes in unemployment claims. Below, you can see highlights from the report, along with a WalletHub Q&A.

Change in South Dakota Unemployment Claims (1=Quickest Recovery, 25=Avg.):

220.00% Change in Unemployment Claims (Latest Week vs Last Year)

576 the week of June 22, 2020 vs 180 the week of June 24, 2019

5th quickest recovery in the U.S.

44.72% Change in Unemployment Claims (Latest Week vs Start of 2020)

576 the week of June 22, 2020 vs 398 the week of January 1, 2020

2nd quickest recovery in the U.S.

2,129.10% Change in Unemployment Claims (Since Start of COVID-19 Crisis vs. Last Year)

55,378 between the week of March 16, 2020 and the week of June 22, 2020 vs 2,601 between the week of March 18, 2019 and the week of June 24, 2019

10th slowest recovery in the U.S.

Continued State Unemployment Claims Decrease

PIERRE, S.D. – The latest number of continued state claims is 17,163 for the week ending June 13, a decrease of 8,023 from the pandemic high of 25,186 for the week ending May 9. This indicates the number of unemployed workers eligible for and receiving benefits after their initial claim.

"Claimants are being called back to work or accepting other employment and no longer collecting unemployment benefits, which are meant to be temporary in nature," said state Labor and Regulation Secretary Marcia Hultman. "Additional benefits under the CARES Act helped bridge the gap between the COVID-19 outbreak and the return to normal."

During the week of June 21-27, a total of 576 initial weekly claims for state unemployment benefits were processed by the Department of Labor and Regulation. This is a decrease of 334 claims from the prior week's total of 910.

A total of \$3.5 million was paid out in state benefits, in addition to \$10.4 million paid out in Federal Pandemic Unemployment Compensation (FPUC), \$771,000 in Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA) and \$94,000 in Pandemic Emergency Unemployment Compensation (PEUC) benefits.

The Unemployment Insurance Trust Fund balance June 30 was \$129.9 million.

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Groton's Damian Bahr was welcomed as the new sheriff of Marshall County on July 1.

Shari Schock posted this photo of Damian on her facebook page.

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Area COVID-19 Cases

	July 1	July 2	July 3
Minnesota	36,303	36,716	37,210
Nebraska	19,177	19,310	19,452
Montana	967	1016	1083
Colorado	32,715	33,029	33,352
Wyoming	1184	1203	1233
North Dakota	3576	3615	3657
South Dakota	6764	6826	6893
United States	2,629,372	2,686,587	2,739,879
US Deaths	127,322	128,062	128,740

Minnesota	+442	+413	+494
Nebraska	+135	+133	+142
Montana	+48	+49	+67
Colorado	+204	+314	+323
Wyoming	+33	+19	+30
North Dakota	+37	+39	+42
South Dakota	+48	+62	+67
United States	+46,475	+57,215	+53,292
US Deaths	+1149	+740	+678

	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 2nd COVID-19 UPDATE

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from State Health Lab Reports

Four deaths were recorded in South Dakota. One in Beadle, one in Buffalo, one in Pennington and Lyman County recorded its first death. Two were in the 60-69 age group and two were in the 80+ age group. One was female and three were males.

We lost Douglas County in the fully recovered list.

The active cases in South Dakota went up by 14 to 814. Those currently hospitalized are down by one to 64.

Brown County has one less active case as the county has three recovered and two positive cases. Day County has a new positive case so their active case list is now at four.

Brown County:

Active Cases: -1 (20)

Recovered: +3 (322)

Total Positive: +2 (344)

Ever Hospitalized: 0 (18)

Deaths: 2

Negative Tests: +41 (3025)

Percent Recovered: 93.6% (+.3)

South Dakota:

Positive: +67 (6893 total)

Negative: +931 (75048 total)

Hospitalized: +9 (683 total). 64 currently hospitalized (1 less than yesterday)

Deaths: +4 (97 total)

Recovered: +49 (5982) total)

Active Cases: +14 (814)

Percent Recovered: 86.8% down .1

Counties with no positive cases report the following negative tests: Butte +12 (480), Campbell 63, Haakon +1 (230), Harding 39, Jones +2 (33), Perkins +1 (90), Potter +3 (176), unassigned -524 (3496).

Beadle: +5 positive, +7 recovered (460 of 532 recovered)

Brookings: +3 positive, +2 recovered (53 of 68 recovered)

Brown: +2 positive, +3 recovered (322 of 344 recovered)

Brule: +2 positive (15 of 26 recovered)

Buffalo: +1 positive, +4 recovered (60 of 72 recovered)

Charles Mix: +1 positive (36 of 86 recovered)

Clay: +2 positive, +2 recovered (75 of 85 recovered)

Codington: +2 positive (48 of 72 recovered)

Custer: +1 positive, +1 recovered (5 of 10 recovered)

Davison: +2 positive (34 of 43 recovered)

Day: +1 positive (13 of 17 recovered)

Dewey: +1 positive (1 of 6 recovered)

Douglas: +1 positive (4 of 5 recovered)

Fall River: +1 recovered (6 of 12 recovered)

Hanson: +1 positive, +1 recovered (6 of 8 recovered)

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Hughes: +2 positive, +1 recovered (37 of 60 recovered)
 Hutchinson: +1 positive (10 of 13 recovered)
 Lake: +1 positive (16 of 22 recovered)
 Lincoln: +5 positive, +3 recovered (317 of 352 recovered)
 Lyman: +3 positive (40 of 68 recovered)
 Meade: +1 recovered (39 of 49 recovered)
 Mellette: +1 positive (3 of 5 recovered)
 Minnehaha: +11 positive, +12 recovered (3365 of 3638 recovered)
 Oglala Lakota: +1 positive, +3 recovered (52 of 88 recovered)
 Pennington: +13 positive, +4 recovered (397 of 536 recovered)
 Todd: +1 recovered (49 of 57 recovered)
 Tripp: +1 positive, +2 recovered (13 of 17 recovered)
 Union: +2 positive, +2 recovered (112 of 126 recovered)
 Walworth: +1 positive (6 of 14 recovered)
 Yankton: +1 positive (65 of 78 recovered)

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

The NDDoH & private labs report 3,625 completed tests today for COVID-19 with 43 new positive cases, bringing the statewide total to 3,657. NDDoH reports no new deaths.

State & private labs have reported 188,414 total completed tests.
 3,235 ND patients are recovered.

RACE/ETHNICITY OF SOUTH DAKOTA COVID-19 CASES

Race/Ethnicity	# of Cases	% of Cases
Asian, Non-Hispanic	707	10%
Black, Non-Hispanic	976	14%
Hispanic	1095	16%
Native American, Non-Hispanic	1025	15%
Other	713	10%
White, Non-Hispanic	2377	34%

County of Residence	# of Deaths
Beadle	7
Brown	2
Buffalo	3
Faulk	1
Jackson	1
Jerauld	1
Lake	1
Lincoln	1
Lyman	1
McCook	1
Meade	1
Minnehaha	58
Pennington	17
Todd	1
Union	1

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County	Positive Cases	Recovered Cases	Negative Cases
Aurora	34	33	283
Beadle	532	460	1429
Bennett	4	3	423
Bon Homme	11	11	589
Brookings	68	53	1708
Brown	344	322	3025
Brule	26	15	494
Buffalo	72	60	474
Butte	0	0	480
Campbell	0	0	63
Charles Mix	86	36	728
Clark	15	12	321
Clay	85	75	951
Codington	72	48	1927
Corson	18	15	142
Custer	10	5	544
Davison	43	34	1638
Day	17	13	404
Deuel	3	2	293
Dewey	6	1	907
Douglas	5	4	320
Edmunds	7	5	303
Fall River	12	6	722
Faulk	23	17	122
Grant	13	13	536
Gregory	4	1	233
Haakon	0	0	230
Hamlin	12	9	459
Hand	7	6	188
Hanson	8	6	134
Harding	0	0	39
Hughes	60	37	1129
Hutchinson	13	10	692

Hyde	3	3	95
Jackson	6	2	345
Jerauld	39	36	233
Jones	0	0	32
Kingsbury	6	5	412
Lake	22	16	677
Lawrence	19	16	1347
Lincoln	352	317	4432
Lyman	68	40	689
Marshall	5	4	293
McCook	10	6	489
McPherson	4	3	163
Meade	49	39	1300
Mellette	5	3	206
Miner	9	4	198
Minnehaha	3638	3365	19875
Moody	23	19	469
Oglala Lakota	88	52	2429
Pennington	536	397	6816
Perkins	0	0	90
Potter	0	0	176
Roberts	47	41	1047
Sanborn	12	12	172
Spink	11	8	889
Stanley	12	12	144
Sully	1	1	46
Todd	57	49	1142
Tripp	17	13	429
Turner	25	23	687
Union	126	112	1366
Walworth	14	6	399
Yankton	78	65	2382
Ziebach	1	1	153
Unassigned****	0	0	3496

SEX OF SOUTH DAKOTA COVID-19 CASES

Sex	# of Cases	# of Deaths
Female	3329	53
Male	3564	44

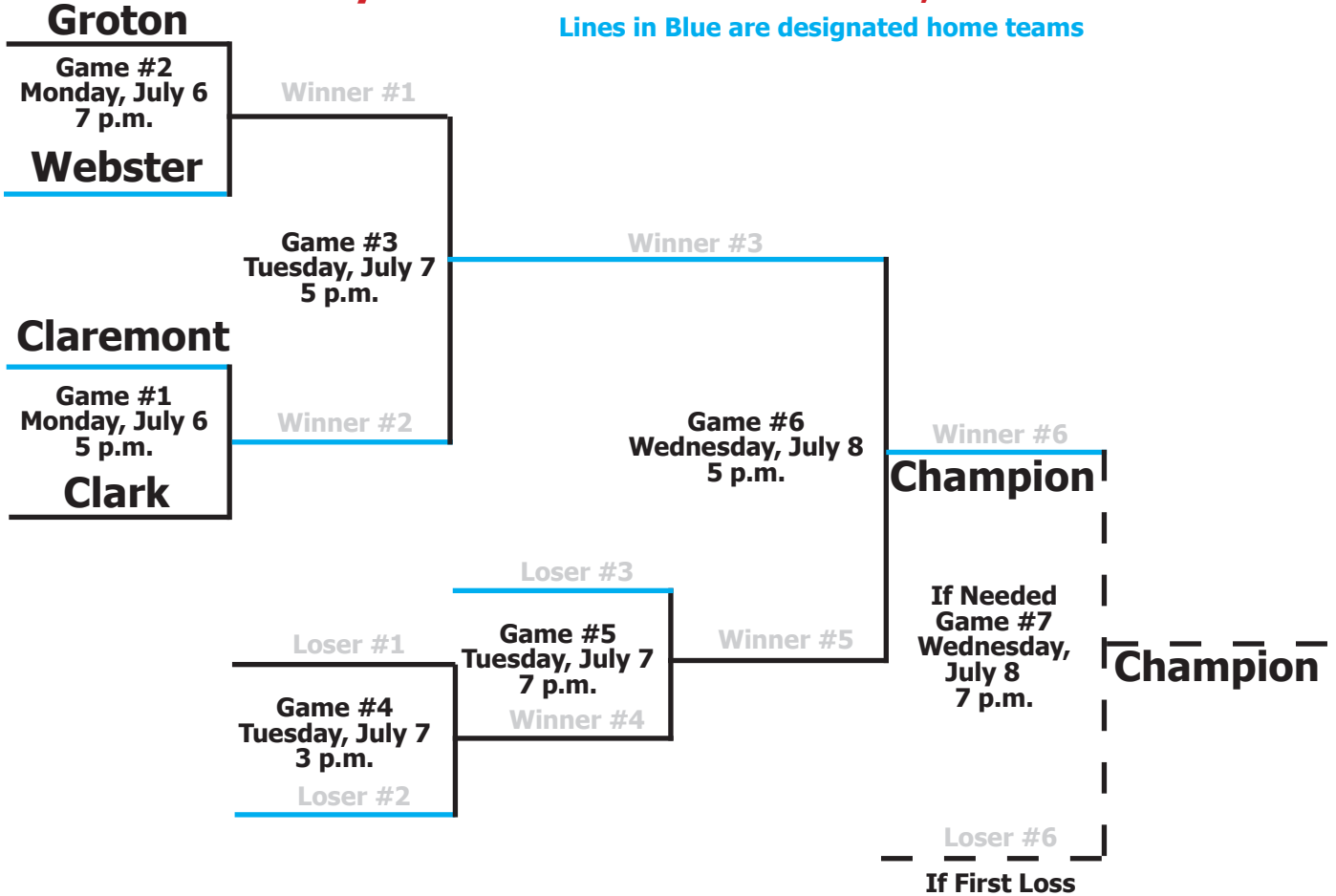
Age Range	# of Cases	# of Deaths
0-19 years	715	0
20-29 years	1426	1
30-39 years	1468	3
40-49 years	1114	7
50-59 years	1086	12
60-69 years	635	17
70-79 years	244	13
80+ years	205	44

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Region 6 U14 Jr. Teener Tournament July 6-7-8 at Locke-Karst Field, Groton

Lines in Blue are designated home teams



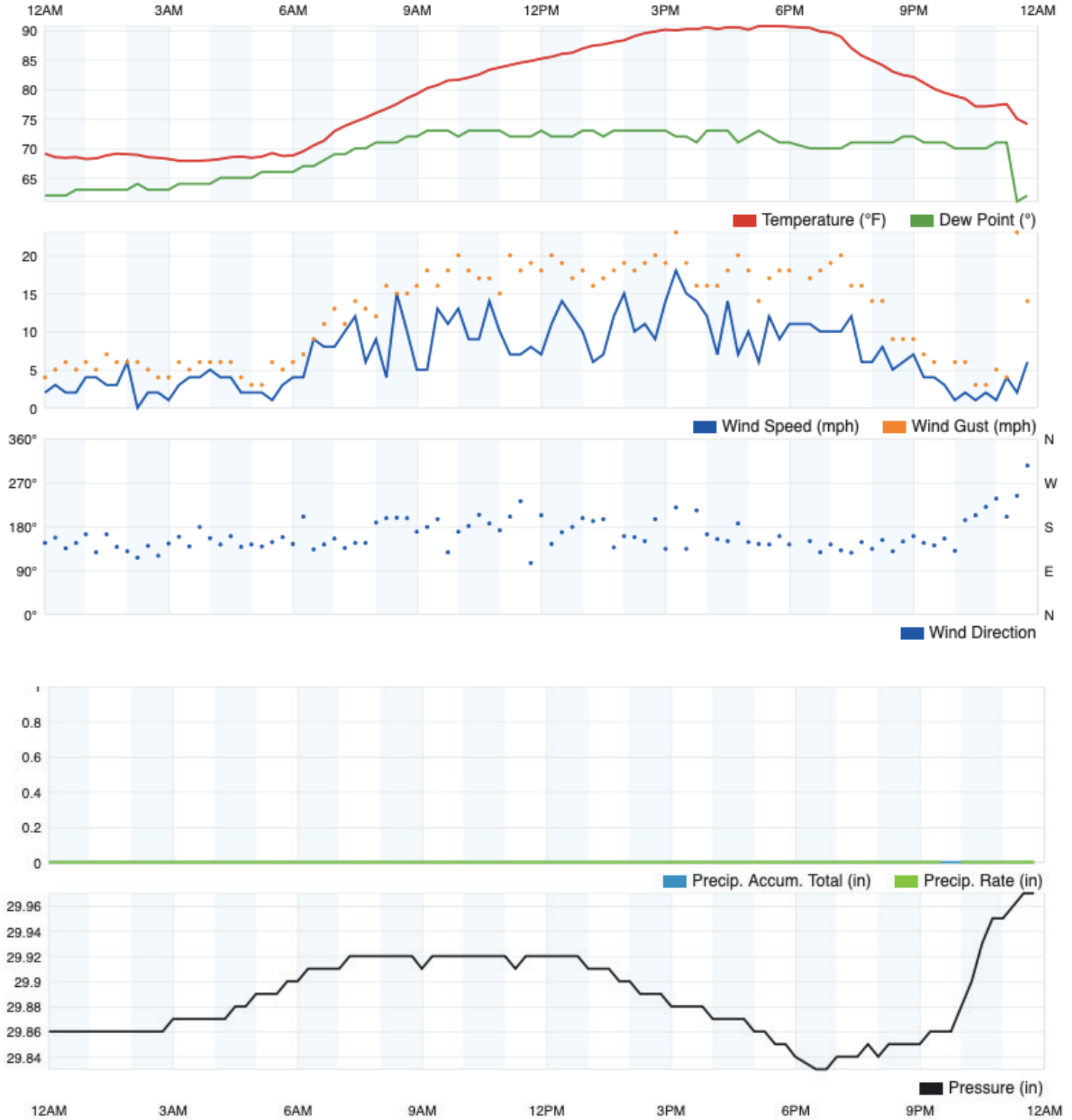
Baseball Schedule

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

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Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs



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Today	Tonight	Independence Day	Saturday Night	Sunday
				
Hot	Mostly Clear then Slight Chance T-storms	Chance T-storms	Chance T-storms	Slight Chance T-storms then Chance T-storms
High: 92 °F	Low: 70 °F	High: 91 °F	Low: 69 °F	High: 90 °F

Hot, Unsettled Weather Pattern

Multiple rounds of thunderstorms, some strong


Today



AM thunderstorms across north central SD. Dry conditions through the afternoon. Then additional thunderstorms in the evening mainly for central and northern SD.


Upper 80s to Low 90s



4th of July



Thunderstorms possible across much of the area, although best chances across central SD during the evening hours.

Low to mid 90s



National Weather Service – Aberdeen, SD
weather.gov/Aberdeen  National Weather Service Aberdeen  @NWSAberdeen

North central South Dakota will see showers and thunderstorms through the morning hours today. Severe storms are not expected. Once this area of precipitation dissipates, the rest of the afternoon will feature hot and dry conditions. However, another round of thunderstorms is possible this evening, mainly for north central to northeastern South Dakota. Some storms tonight could produce gusty winds and hail. The unsettled weather pattern continues through the holiday weekend. Stay up to date on the latest forecasts.

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Today in Weather History

July 3, 1959: An estimated F2 tornado moved northeast after destroying a farm building at the western edge of Java, Walworth County. Elsewhere in the area, high straight line winds caused property damage while hail damaged crops. The largest hailstone was 2.75 inches in diameter and was observed 9 miles NNW of Timber Lake.

July 3, 2003: A supercell thunderstorm moved southeastward across western Jackson County and Bennett County. The storm dropped up to golf ball sized hail and produced an F2 tornado north of Tuthill in Bennett County. The tornado touched down about a mile north of the junction of highways 18 and 73, where it destroyed a garage. The tornado moved south-southeast and destroyed a mobile home just to the southeast of the highway intersection and then dissipated just north of Tuthill. No one was injured.

Also on this day, a line of severe thunderstorms with hail up to the size of golf balls and winds over 80 mph at times brought widespread property and crop damage to far northeast Brown, across Marshall and Roberts counties. The wind and hail caused the most damage to crops in a 20 mile to a 70-mile long area from north of Britton over to Sisseton and into west central Minnesota. Much of the plants were shredded to the ground. In fact, approximately 30 percent (70,000 acres) of Marshall County's 227,000 acres of crops were damaged or destroyed. Cities receiving the most damage from the line of storms were, Hecla, Andover, Britton, Kidder, Veblen, Roslyn, Langford, Lake City, Claire City, Sisseton, Waubay, Rosholt, and Wilmot. Storm damage mostly included trees and branches down, power lines and poles down, roof and siding damage from hail and fallen trees, some farm outbuildings damaged or destroyed, and many windows broke out of homes and vehicles. Also, many boats, docks, and campers received some damage in the path of the storms. An aerial crop spraying plane at the Sisseton airport was picked up and thrown 450 feet and landed upside down. In Claire City, a 55,000-bushel grain bin was blown off of its foundation and flattened. On a farm five miles north of Amherst, three large grain bins were blown over and damaged.

July 3, 2010: Severe thunderstorms brought damaging winds to parts of central South Dakota, especially to Lyman County. Eighty mph winds moved a building off the foundation at the Presho Municipal Airport. Eighty mph winds also destroyed or damaged many grain bins and caused damage to several other buildings in and around Presho. A large sign, twenty power poles, along with many trees were downed in Presho. There were also several broken houses and car windows from hail and high winds. Seventy mph winds tore a garage door loose, bent a flagpole over, and downed many large tree branches in Kennebec. The winds also caused some damage to homes, sheds, and grain bins in Kennebec.

1873: A tornado in Hancock County, in far west central Illinois, destroyed several farms. From a distance, witnesses initially thought the tornado was smoke from a fire. A child was killed after being carried 500 yards; 10 other people were injured.

1975: Up to 3 inches of rain caused flash flooding throughout Las Vegas, NV. The main damage occurred to vehicles at Caesars Palace with approximately 700 damaged or destroyed with several cars found miles away. North Las Vegas was hardest hit with \$3.5 million in damage. Two people drowned in the flood waters.

2000: There is a certain irony about one of the driest places getting the greatest rainfall, and yet that is what happened at usually rain-sparse Vanguard, Saskatchewan on July 3 when a carwash-like down-pour flooded the community of 200 people, some 65 km southeast of Swift Current. As much as 375 mm (14.76") of rain fell in eight hours, the greatest storm for that duration on the Canadian Prairies and one of the most substantial rainfall intensities ever recorded in Canada.

The spectacular thunderstorm produced more cloud-to-ground lightning strikes than that part of southern Saskatchewan would expect in two years. A year's amount of rain left crops in the field drowning and rotting, and roads and rail lines under water. The force of the water crushed cars and farm implements swept away grain bins and soaked large bales. Stranded residents had to be rescued by boat, which rapidly became the carrier of choice on the main street in Vanguard. The flash flood also carried away herds of cattle and drowned dozens of deer and antelope. Some further irony, when millions of liters of contaminated water submerged the water-treatment plant and backed up into homes and businesses, officials had to ship in bottled water from Swift Current.

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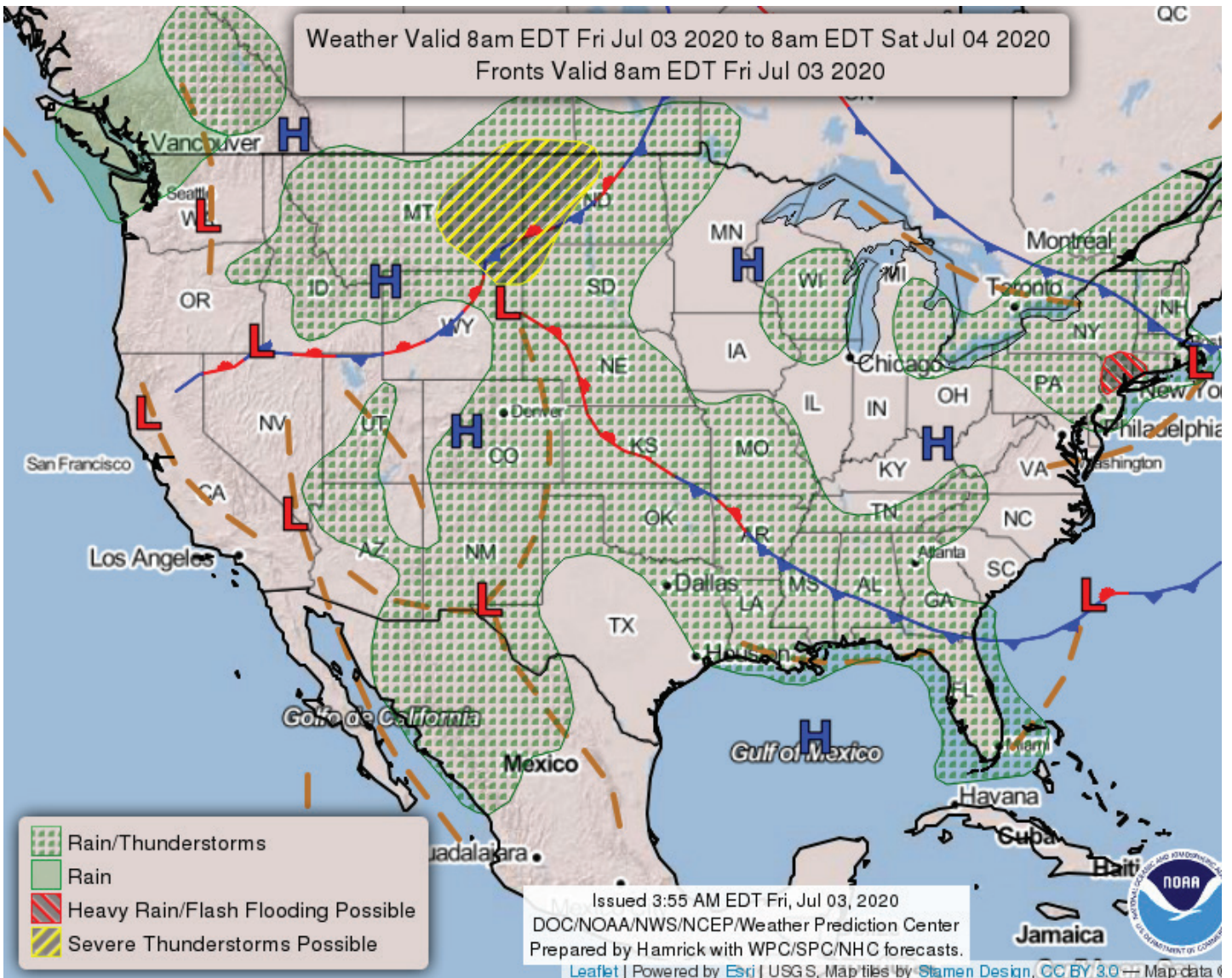
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Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 91 °F at 4:05 PM
Low Temp: 68 °F at 3:35 AM
Wind: 26 mph at 11:17 PM
Precip: .06

Today's Info

Record High: 107° in 1949
Record Low: 39° in 1917
Average High: 82°F
Average Low: 58°F
Average Precip in July.: 0.21
Precip to date in July.: 0.13
Average Precip to date: 11.05
Precip Year to Date: 8.45
Sunset Tonight: 9:25 p.m.
Sunrise Tomorrow: 5:51 a.m.



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STRAIGHT FROM AZALEA AVENUE

Jane was particular in each prayer she offered to God. Her "This Is What I'm Asking You For, Jesus" list contained extremely detailed information about each person or item that she had written on her prayer list.

One night following her "In Jesus' Name, Amen" end of her prayer, she paused for a moment and then added the words: "Lord, these requests come directly to You from 417 Azalea Avenue, Savannah, Georgia!"

It would be interesting if we knew in detail what was on Jane's prayer list. But it does not matter. What we do know is that whatever was on her list was asked for "In Jesus' Name."

When Jesus said that we could "ask for anything in My name," we must always remember that our "asking" must be consistent with the character of God and will of God. We cannot expect God to grant our requests if they are contrary to whom we know He is.

We know without any doubt that our God is a holy God, a righteous God, a caring God, and a God who loved us so much that He sent His Son into the world to die for us and become our Savior and Lord. Indeed, when we consider these four primary characteristics of God, we realize that they lead to a significant fact about our God: He will bless what honors Him. A simple way to evaluate each of our requests is to ask: Will what I'm asking God for, honor Him?

Prayer: Father, we know that You want us to have the desires of our hearts. Help us understand Your will so that our requests will receive Your blessings. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today : Yes, ask me for anything in my name, and I will do it! John 14:13-14

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2020 Groton SD Community Events

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

News from the Associated Press

Trump's Rushmore trip draws real and figurative fireworks

By STEPHEN GROVES Associated Press

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — President Donald Trump will begin his Independence Day weekend on Friday with a patriotic display of fireworks at Mount Rushmore before a crowd of thousands, but even in a part of the country where many remain supportive of the president, the event has drawn controversy and protests.

Trump is expected to speak at the event, which has issued 7,500 tickets to watch fireworks that he previewed on Thursday as a "display like few people have seen." The president will likely enjoy a show of support, with the state Republican Party selling T-shirts that feature Trump on the memorial alongside George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, Abraham Lincoln and Theodore Roosevelt. But concern about the coronavirus risk and wildfire danger from the fireworks, along with protests from Native American groups, will also greet the president.

Republican Gov. Kristi Noem, a Trump ally, has said social distancing won't be required during the event and masks will be optional. Event organizers will provide masks to anyone who wants them and plan to screen attendees for symptoms of COVID-19.

The Republican mayor of the largest city near the monument, Rapid City, said he is watching for a spike in cases after the event, the Rapid City Journal reported.

"We're going to have thousands of people, shoulder to shoulder at these events — someone in line to see a president and being able to see fireworks at Mount Rushmore — they are probably not likely to disqualify themselves because they developed a cough the day of or the day before," Rapid City Mayor Steve Allender said.

Leaders of several Native American tribes in the region also raised concerns that the event could lead to coronavirus outbreaks among their members, who they say are particularly vulnerable to COVID-19 because of an underfunded health care system and chronic health conditions.

"The president is putting our tribal members at risk to stage a photo op at one of our most sacred sites," said Harold Frazier, chairman of the Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe.

Some Native American groups are using Trump's visit to protest the Mount Rushmore memorial itself, pointing out that the Black Hills were taken from the Lakota people against treaty agreements.

Protests are expected in Keystone, the small town near the monument. Chase Iron Eyes, a spokesman for the Oglala Sioux president, said protesters would like to make their voice heard at the memorial itself, but it's not clear they'll be able to get close.

Security is expected to be tight, with the road leading up to Mount Rushmore shut down. The governor's spokesperson, Maggie Seidel, would not say whether the South Dakota National Guard was being deployed, but said organizers are making sure it is a safe event.

But several people who once oversaw fire danger at the national memorial have said setting off fireworks over the forest is a bad idea that could lead to a large wildfire. Fireworks were called off after 2009 because a mountain pine beetle infestation increased the fire risks.

Noem pushed to get the fireworks resumed soon after she was elected, and enlisted Trump's help. The president brushed aside fire concerns earlier this year, saying, "What can burn? It's stone."

The National Park Service studied the potential effect of the fireworks for this year and found they would be safe, though it noted that in a dry year, a large fire was a risk. Organizers are monitoring the fire conditions and were to decide Friday if the fireworks are safe.

Trump made no mention of the fire danger in fresh comments Thursday.

"They used to do it many years ago, and for some reason they were unable or unallowed to do it," he said. "They just weren't allowed to do it, and I opened it up and we're going to have a tremendous July 3 and then we're coming back here, celebrating the Fourth of July in Washington, D.C."

Locals: South Dakota police removed Confederate flag emblem

By STEPHEN GROVES Associated Press

GETTYSBURG, S.D. (AP) — A South Dakota police department has removed a decal from its squad cars that featured a Confederate battle flag next to an American flag, according to local residents.

Dave Mogard, the police chief in Gettysburg, a small city named after the famous Civil War battle, declined to confirm that the decal had been removed, saying Thursday that the City Council would discuss the issue at a meeting Monday.

But several locals, including Selwyn Jones, an uncle of George Floyd, said the decal had been removed from the department's squad cars and station doors.

Jones called for the change after his nephew, who was Black and handcuffed, died May 25 while being arrested by police in Minneapolis. A white police officer used his knee to pin Floyd's neck for nearly eight minutes as Floyd begged for air and eventually stopped moving. Floyd's death led to charges against four officers who took part in the arrest and to worldwide protests over police brutality and racial injustice.

Gettysburg, which is in central South Dakota and about 190 miles (305 kilometers) west of the state's largest city, Sioux Falls, was named after the famous 1863 battle in and around Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, that many view as the turning point of the Civil War.

The police department adopted the emblem in 2009. Bill Wuttke, the mayor of the city of roughly 1,200, has defended the emblem, arguing that it pays tribute to the community's history and isn't racist. The city was founded by Civil War veterans, but local historians say they know of only one who fought for the Confederacy.

Wuttke didn't immediately respond to a Thursday phone message or email seeking comment about the apparent decision to ditch the emblem.

Jones, who has spoken out publicly about his nephew's death and racial injustice, said he has faced a backlash from members of the community for calling for the emblem's removal, including abusive comments posted on social media.

The city has faced calls for its removal before, including in 2015 after a white supremacist shot and killed nine people at a historically Black church in Charleston, South Carolina.

Follow Stephen Groves on Twitter: <https://twitter.com/stephengroves>

Mission man accused of beating man to death with metal bat

RAPID CITY, S.D. (AP) — Authorities say a Mission man is accused of beating a man to death with a metal bat.

Nathan Blue Bird Sr., 37, is charged in federal court with second-degree murder and assault with a dangerous weapon. He has pleaded not guilty, the Rapid City Journal reported.

Blue Bird is accused of killing 21-year-old Joshua Bordeaux on May 30 in the South Antelope community on the Rosebud Sioux Reservation. No further details have been released.

Blue Bird faces up to life in prison if convicted.

South Dakota reports 4 COVID-19 deaths, 67 new cases

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — South Dakota health officials on Thursday reported four deaths from COVID-19, along with 67 new cases, according to the Department of Health.

Two people over 80 and two people in their 60s died. They were residents of Beadle, Buffalo, Lyman and Pennington counties. So far, 97 people in the state have died from COVID-19.

Health officials have tallied a total of 6,893 cases of the virus, but nearly 87% of those have recovered.

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.

Meanwhile, the Department of Labor and Regulation reported that layoffs appeared to be declining. 576

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people made claims for unemployment benefits during the week ending June 27. It was a decrease from previous weeks, but 17,163 people were still receiving unemployment benefits during the week ending June 13.

Fine for drivers failing to move over increase in SD

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) — South Dakota's new 'move over' driving law has gone into effect. It increased the minimum fine for violators from \$122.50 to \$270.

If a driver fails to move over on the roadway and causes a crash with an emergency vehicle, the offense is now a Class 1 misdemeanor, according to the Department of Public Safety.

Another provision requires drivers to move over for vehicles that use an authorized blue light while working along a highway.

"There are more people working in emergency services such as tow truck drivers, ambulance personnel, and just motorists that are pulled over and stopped on the side of the road for an emergency, so this new law is more geared towards protecting all of those individuals," Watertown Police Department, Captain Steve Rehorst tells KELO-TV.

Moving over still applies for emergency vehicle with flashing amber lights. And, all traffic must still stop for emergency vehicles with flashing red lights.

Earlier this year, two truck employee Dale Jones was working near Watertown when a car lost control and hit him.

"In the case of Dale Jones this year where he was helping a motorist and pull them out of the ditch, you don't know what that emergency service worker is doing on the side of the road," Rehorst said.

Asia Today: Kim urges North Koreans to keep up virus fight

SEOUL, South Korea (AP) — North Korean leader Kim Jong Un urged officials to maintain alertness against the coronavirus, warning that complacency risked "unimaginable and irretrievable crisis," state media said Friday.

Despite the warning, Kim reaffirmed North Korea's claim to not have had a single case of COVID-19, telling a ruling party meeting Thursday that the country has "thoroughly prevented the inroad of the malignant virus" despite the worldwide health crisis.

Outsiders widely doubt North Korea escaped the pandemic entirely, given its poor health infrastructure and close trade and travel ties to China, where COVID-19 emerged late last year.

Describing its anti-virus efforts as a "matter of national existence," North Korea earlier this year shut down nearly all cross-border traffic, banned tourists and mobilized health workers to quarantine anyone with similar symptoms to the disease.

Experts say the country's self-imposed lockdown is hurting an economy already battered by stringent U.S.-led sanctions over its nuclear weapons and missile program.

The Korean Central News Agency said Kim during the politburo meeting of the Workers' Party "stressed the need to maintain maximum alert without a slight self-complacency or relaxation" as the virus continues to spread in neighboring countries.

The agency said Kim sharply criticized inattentiveness among officials and violations of emergency anti-virus rules and warned that a "hasty relief of anti-epidemic measures will result in unimaginable and irretrievable crisis."

The North's official Rodong Sinmun newspaper published several photos of Kim at the meeting, which were the first state media images of him in weeks. Neither Kim nor the ruling party officials who participated were wearing masks.

In other developments in the Asia-Pacific region:

— Authorities in Thailand are urging vigilance as the country celebrates its first long holiday weekend after lifting most coronavirus restrictions. Many Thais are expected to return from the cities where they work to their family homes in rural areas over the July 4-7 holiday, which incorporates two Buddhist holy

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days. Such reunions usually take place during the traditional Songkran New Year's holiday in April, but this year those celebrations were canceled and travel restricted because of the pandemic. Asked about the risk of the virus spreading over the long weekend, the spokesman for the Center for Covid-19 Situation Administration, Taweasin Witsanuyothin, said "This is our real concern." The Transport Ministry says it is preparing for 7.6 million people to travel between provinces. As part of the easing of restrictions, Bangkok's elevated Skytrain system and subway relaxed their rules this week and no longer require social distancing, including an empty seat between passengers. Thailand has had 3,180 confirmed cases, including 58 deaths. For more than five weeks, the small number of new cases has been limited to infected Thais returning from abroad.

— Tokyo Gov. Yuriko Koike said the capital confirmed 124 new coronavirus cases on Friday, exceeding 100 for a second day in a row. She urged extra caution and asked residents to stay away from nightlife districts linked to half of the cases. It was the most new cases in a day since 154 were confirmed May 2, when Japan was under a pandemic state of emergency. Koike said the increase reflects more testing, but expressed concern about a significant number of untraceable cases that increase the risk of more infections. Koike said a reinstatement of business closure requests is a possibility if the government issues another state of emergency, but in specific establishments or districts of Tokyo instead of the entire capital. Japan reported a total of 19,068 cases, including 976 deaths, as of Thursday. Tokyo accounts to about one-third of the national total.

— Australian authorities are considering locking down more suburbs in Melbourne, where 66 new coronavirus cases were reported. Victoria state Premier Daniel Andrews said suburbs with more than five cases and a high infection rate could be added to the 36 suburbs that have been locked down since Wednesday. Sydney, Australia's largest city, said a man who recently tested positive had been working in a Balmain supermarket. Around 50 supermarket staff have gone into isolation. Health authorities have urged people who have visited the supermarket and show symptoms to be tested.

— South Korea reported 63 new cases of COVID-19 as health authorities scramble to mobilize public health tools to the southwestern city of Gwangju, where an outbreak is growing. Thirty-one of the new cases were from the Seoul area, and 13 were from the southeastern city of Daegu, both centers of earlier outbreaks. Six of the new cases came from Gwangju, which had one of the smallest caseloads among major South Korean cities before this week. The municipal government has shut hundreds of schools and banned many large gatherings. Neighboring provinces are providing dozens of hospital beds and planning to send medical personnel to help Gwangju.

— China on Friday reported five new cases of coronavirus, two of them in the capital Beijing and three brought from outside the country, according to the National Health Commission. Strict quarantine, social distancing and case tracing measures have helped radically bring down infections and mask wearing is still universal in indoor spaces, while many venues also require proof on a mobile phone app that the person is healthy. Beijing has tested 10 million people as it battles its now dwindling outbreak that infected more than 300 people, officials said Friday. They announced that Beijing would lift a requirement starting Saturday that anyone leaving the city must have a negative coronavirus test result within the past seven days.

English pubs are reopening — they won't be the same

By PAN PYLAS Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — Asking people in English pubs to keep their distance is going to be tough after they've had a few of their favorite tipples.

Pub managers will have to be resourceful come Saturday when they and other parts of the hospitality industry in England open their doors to customers for the first time since March 20, provided they meet COVID safety requirements.

The British government has been accused of being reckless in allowing pubs to open again, given coronavirus infection and death rates are still high and amid evidence that reopening bars in countries like the U.S. has led to new outbreaks. The U.K. has recorded nearly 44,000 virus-related deaths, third behind

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the United States and Brazil.

Many cash-starved pubs will take the plunge anyway, though they will be very different from what they were when they shut down given the need to ensure everyone is safe — from registering customers upon entrance to making sure tables are far enough apart to meet social distancing rules.

"I'm nervous," said Are Kolltveit, who runs the Chandos Arms in north London with his wife Emily. They have turned around the fortunes of the pub in the past few years by taking it back to the community, offering activities like live music — in addition to a finely poured pint of ale. It was voted Best Local in the 2019 British Pub Awards.

"It won't be the same, but we'll do our best to make it just as great as ever," he said.

The pandemic is an existential threat to most of England's 37,500 pubs. The Chandos, and countless others, have benefited from government measures, notably a wage support scheme that prevented mass firings. Around 90% of pub staff were furloughed under the scheme, according to the Beer and Pub Association.

Reopening — as early as 6 a.m. if they wish, the government confirmed Friday — offers hope to publicans like Kolltveit, but margins are tight.

Kolltveit wants to think people will abide by the rules, given the pandemic is still ongoing, and says his pub can survive for around five months without further help — provided it runs at 50% of maximum capacity and there's no second spike in contagions or a new lockdown on businesses.

"The best pubs are extensions of the landlord's personality and the atmosphere of the pub is going to be massively challenged, but I think the best publicans will find ways of reinventing it in some way," said Pete Brown, an award-winning beer writer.

When they reopen, pubs will need to ensure table service, a move that halts the cherished tradition of the English boozier — crowding and chatting around the bar. Guests will be limited to groups of six and, where possible, sit side by side to reduce any risk of contagion that may come from shouting too loudly.

They will be spaced at least one meter (3.3 feet) apart and be encouraged to take other measures to keep safe, such as using hand sanitizers. Wearing masks, even by staff, is optional.

Pub staff will also have to register the names of customers at the door — and keep them for 21 days — to assist in any efforts to trace virus contagions.

Tim Sheehan, co-owner of Franklins, a pub and restaurant in southeast London, is annoyed by the effective enrolment of the hospitality industry in the effort to track and trace contagions and wonders how he is meant to verify anyone's health or identity.

"How many Mr. and Mrs. Presleys are we going to get? And how do you go about asking people personal questions?," he said. "I'm dreading it in that respect."

He's also concerned it will be "like New Year's Eve" in some pubs, particularly those that cater to younger people, and that social distancing guidelines "may go out of the window after people have had a few shandies."

"We are moving to the stage where the advice is to essentially use common sense," said Jon Cross, a 40-year-old accountant in north London.

"Most people will trust their local to make the right choices," added Cross who said he'd happily frequent his local pub, The Wrestlers, if it isn't busy.

The guidelines are the same whatever the size and layout of the pub. But the challenges are likely to be very different for a huge venue like JD Wetherspoon's The Moon Under Water in Manchester and a quaint country pub like The George at Burpham, tucked between a church and a cricket pitch in southern England.

Pubs like The George are inherent to the rhythm of their rural surrounding. It is starting with an outside barbecue on Saturday, followed by a traditional Sunday roast service indoors and out.

"Not since the Duke of Norfolk opened Arundel Railway Station on his land in August 1863 has a summer event been more eagerly awaited by Sussex locals than the re-opening of The George," said Robert Essex, a 59-year-old marketing services executive and one of the locals who bought the pub in 2013.

Not everyone is reopening. The Tollington Arms, a pub near Arsenal's soccer stadium in north London thinks the government is ignoring expert scientific advice and voiced worries about "contributing to a

second wave of this pandemic.”

Prime Minister Boris Johnson said Friday that people are “appreciably less likely now to be in close proximity” with someone with the virus and that the latest easing of the lockdown had been carefully thought through.

“Let’s not blow it now,” he said.

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

Activist leaves Hong Kong after new law to advocate abroad

By ZEN SOO Associated Press

HONG KONG (AP) — Prominent Hong Kong democracy activist Nathan Law has left the city for an undisclosed location after testifying in a U.S. congressional hearing about a tough new security law imposed by mainland China on the semi-autonomous territory.

Law, who declined to disclose his whereabouts for safety, said in an interview with The Associated Press on Friday that he left because Hong Kong needs an advocate for democracy who can work internationally.

Under the new security law, activists and politicians in Hong Kong who speak to foreign media or testify in foreign hearings can be arrested for secessionism or colluding with foreign forces, Law said.

“For me leaving the place that I love, that I grew up in, that I spent most of my life in, it’s definitely a really difficult decision, but this is more than a personal choice,” he said. “I miss everything from it.”

The security law, which took effect Tuesday night, targets secessionist, subversive or terrorist acts, as well as collusion with foreign forces intervening in the city’s affairs.

Under Beijing’s direction, local authorities have moved swiftly to implement the law’s sweeping conditions, with police arresting about 370 people Wednesday, including 10 on suspicion of directly violating the law, as thousands took to the streets in protest.

In some cases, suspects were carrying items advocating Hong Kong’s independence, police said.

China’s Cabinet on Friday appointed a veteran Communist Party cadre who rose to prominence during a crackdown on villagers seeking land rights in 2011 as head of a new central government national security office in Hong Kong. Zheng Yanxiong and his department will report directly to Beijing without oversight from Hong Kong’s courts or any requirement that they answer to local authorities.

Law, 26, rose to prominence in Hong Kong as one of the student leaders of the pro-democracy Umbrella Revolution in 2014. In 2016, he became the youngest lawmaker elected to the city’s legislature but was later disqualified after he raised his tone while swearing allegiance to China during the oath, making it sound like a question.

He was a leader of pro-democracy group Demosisto with fellow activists Joshua Wong and Agnes Chow. All three resigned Tuesday ahead of the security law coming into effect. With the loss of its top members, Demosisto dissolved.

The Hong Kong government announced Thursday night that the popular protest slogan “Liberate Hong Kong, Revolution of Our Time” connotes a call for Hong Kong’s independence or its separation from China, and those using it or displaying it on flags or signs could be in violation of the new law.

Critics including Law say the legislation effectively ends the “one country, two systems” framework under which the city was promised a high degree of autonomy when it reverted from British to Chinese rule in 1997.

“That is blatantly eradicating ‘one country, two systems,’ it’s blatantly putting the last nail in the coffin,” Law said.

He urged the international community to prioritize human rights over trade interests, and to present a united front to “combat or contain the authoritarian expansion of China.”

Under the security legislation, the maximum punishment for serious offenses is life imprisonment, and suspects in certain cases may be sent to the mainland for trial if Beijing deems it has jurisdiction.

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A 24-year-old man who was arrested for allegedly stabbing a police officer during the protests on Wednesday has been charged with wounding with intent, police said Friday. He was arrested on board a plane to London, apparently trying to flee the territory. Police wouldn't say if the man would face additional charges under the security law.

Separately, police charged a 23-year-old man with incitement to secession and terrorist activities on Friday, making him the first person to be prosecuted under the new law. Tong Ying-kit is accused of crashing a motorcycle into a group of police during Wednesday's protests while possessing a flag with the newly banned slogan.

Associated Press video journalist Alice Fung contributed to this report.

This story has been corrected to show that the Hong Kong government statement outlawing the protest slogan was issued Thursday.

Modi visits military base close to China amid standoff

By AIJAZ HUSSAIN Associated Press

SRINAGAR, India (AP) — Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi made an unannounced visit Friday to a military base in a remote region bordering China where troops from the two countries have been facing off for nearly two months.

Modi, accompanied by India's military leadership, interacted with troops in Ladakh region. A photo on his Instagram account showed him sitting in a camouflage tent at the base. "Interacting with our brave armed forces personnel," he wrote.

Modi's visit comes in the backdrop of a massive Indian army buildup in Ladakh following hand-to-hand combat between Indian and Chinese soldiers on June 15 that left 20 Indians dead and dozens injured in the Galwan Valley, the worst confrontation in over four decades between the Asian giants.

Indian officials say there were casualties on the Chinese side as well, but there has been no confirmation by Beijing.

Modi chanted "Long live mother India!" while addressing troops at the Nimu military base, insisting that "after every crisis, India has emerged stronger."

He praised the valor of Indian soldiers and said: "Enemies of India have seen your fire and fury."

"Days of expansionism are over. Expansionism creates danger for world peace. This is an era of development. Expansionist force have either lost or forced to turn back," he said in an oblique reference to China.

Modi's speech, which lasted for 26 minutes, was punctuated by nationalist fervor and praise for Indian soldiers. He said the bravery shown by troops was "a message of India's prowess" to the world. "The weak can never accomplish peace, the brave do. The world is praising the bravery shown by Indian soldiers in Galwan Valley."

Later Friday, Modi also visited a military hospital where he met injured soldiers.

Both India and China have provided little information officially, but media in the two countries have given large coverage to the escalating tensions, much of it replayed on television news channels and social media.

The leader of Modi's Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party, B.L. Santhosh, tweeted Friday that the visit was a "big, big booster to soldiers morale. He leads from front."

Modi has faced public pressure for a stern response to Chinese actions along the contested frontier.

Indian protesters have been calling for a boycott of Chinese goods. On Monday, the government banned 59 Chinese-owned apps, including TikTok, citing privacy concerns that it said pose a threat to India's sovereignty and security. The ban was largely symbolic since the apps can't be automatically erased from devices where they are already downloaded.

China has insisted that Indian forces provoked the border incident and the blame lies entirely with New Delhi.

On Friday, Chinese foreign ministry spokesperson Zhao Lijian said the countries need to maintain their

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relations while seeking to de-escalate tensions through military and diplomatic channels. "Against such a backdrop, no party should take any actions that may complicate the border situation," he said.

Zhao called it "the evil way that two sides are suspicious of each other and engaged in friction continuously."

"The Indian side should get along with China to jointly safeguard the overall situation of bilateral relations. The pragmatic cooperation between China and India is in nature mutually beneficial and win-win," he said. "To deliberately set obstacles for pragmatic cooperation between the two countries violates the relevant WTO rules and will harm the interests of India itself."

Indian officials say the current standoff began in early May when large contingents of Chinese soldiers entered deep inside Indian-controlled territory at three places in Ladakh, erecting tents.

They say the soldiers ignored repeated verbal warnings, triggering a yelling match, stone-throwing and even fistfights in at least one place along the Pangong Lake, the site of several such confrontations in the past.

But the situation turned deadly when the rival troops engaged in a nightly medieval clash in the Galwan Valley, where India is building a strategic road connecting the region to an airstrip close to China.

According to Indian officials, Chinese troops atop a ridge at the mouth of the narrow valley threw stones, punched and pushed Indian soldiers down a ridge at around 4,500 meters (15,000 feet.)

Since then, India has sent huge reinforcements of soldiers, military equipment and fighter jets into the already highly militarized area.

The disputed border covers nearly 3,500 kilometers (2,175 miles) of frontier that the two countries call the Line of Actual Control and that stretches from Ladakh in the north to the Indian state of Sikkim in the northeast.

India and China fought a border war in 1962 that also spilled into Ladakh. The two countries have been trying to settle their border dispute since the early 1990s, without success.

India unilaterally declared Ladakh a federal territory while separating it from disputed Kashmir in August 2019, ending the territory's semi-autonomous status and straining the already prickly relationship between New Delhi and Beijing. China was among the countries to strongly condemn the move, raising it at international forums including the U.N. Security Council.

Several rounds of military and diplomatic talks to end the current crisis in Ladakh have been unsuccessful.

Associated Press writer Ashok Sharma in New Delhi contributed to this report.

Follow Aijaz Hussain on Twitter at twitter.com/hussain_aijaz

AP Interview: Barcelona mayor wants Columbus statue debate

By RENATA BRITO and JOSEPH WILSON Associated Press

BARCELONA, Spain (AP) — Christopher Columbus has been decapitated, defaced, or quietly removed for his own good from pedestals across the United States in the wake of the protests for racial justice sweeping the country.

In Spain, however, he is still safe atop his many perches.

Barcelona Mayor Ada Colau is one of only a few public officials who say Spain must revisit its colonial legacy — though she doesn't back timid calls to remove the city's monument to Columbus located at the end of its famous Las Ramblas promenade.

Instead, she wants to encourage a public discussion about the Italian explorer whose landing in the Caribbean in 1492 gave birth to Spain's overseas empire. That empire transformed Spain into a world power and spread Christianity and European education across the Americas, while in turn decimating Indigenous populations through disease and war.

"Was Columbus a slave trader? No, but he does represent the colonial era. There is an open debate and we think that is positive and necessary," Colau told The Associated Press in an interview on Thursday.

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"We are consulting the experts and listening to voices from citizen organizations to see how we can explain this monument," said Colau.

"We are not going to rewrite history, but we have to explain history in its entirety because history was usually told by the winners and has avoided telling about the bloodshed, the exploitation and the slavery also associated with that age."

The city hall headed by Colau, a housing activist-turned-politician, in 2018 removed a statue of Barcelona aristocrat Antonio López who had made fortunes from slave trading.

But in Colau's view, the monument commemorating the encounter between Columbus and Spanish monarchs Ferdinand and Isabella on his return from his first voyage in 1493, should undergo a redo, not a removal.

Colau said that she would back removing some figures on the nearly 200-foot-tall pedestal that lifts Columbus above Barcelona's old port because they could be considered offensive for their depiction of native peoples. She also would like to put up explanatory plaques that would balance Columbus' achievements and the negative impacts of the period of European colonialism his explorations inaugurated.

"That was an age when there were positive things, but there was also exploitation of people who were living happily, and there were authentic massacres of indigenous peoples, and if you believe in human rights and democracy that is not defensible," Colau said.

In the U.S., statues of Columbus have been toppled by crowds or removed by authorities in the wake of protests for the death of George Floyd, as the demands for social and racial justice spread beyond the plight of African Americans to the legacy of European colonialism. Tensions reached dangerous levels in Albuquerque, New Mexico, where a man was shot when armed men fired at protesters who were trying to tear down a bronze statue of a Spanish conquistador.

In Spain there have been rallies supporting the Black Lives Matter movement since Floyd's death. Some were organized by a group of Spaniards of African origin along with African migrants and they drew crowds of several thousand. African migrants wanted to raise awareness of the precarious economic situation and the discrimination they suffer.

But while Spaniards are largely sympathetic with the BLM movement in the U.S., many are puzzled by the extension of the demands to remove Confederate-era statues to include figures of the colonial past that has successfully reached European countries like Britain and Belgium.

Barcelona-based newspaper La Vanguardia ran a photo of a Cervantes statue that had been sprayed with red paint in San Francisco on its front page. The accompanying story mentioned that the author of Don Quixote, who had no involvement in Spain's colonies, was himself enslaved by Barbary pirates for several years.

Last month, a statue of Spanish priest Junípero Serra was pulled down in San Francisco's Golden Gate Park. Three days later, another statue of Serra was defaced on the island of Mallorca, his 18th-century birthplace, in a rare incident in Spain against its colonial-era monuments.

One government minister supported the questioning of Serra's figure, but the government has defended Serra's legacy, saying he was a pioneer in the defense of the Indigenous population, a claim disputed by his critics.

In 2016, a statue to Hernan Cortés in his hometown of Medellín in western Spain was doused with red paint by a group of activists for the conquistador's bloody conquest of present-day Mexico. That protest, however, did not gain momentum. Nor have the other statues to Columbus — who many Spaniards consider a discoverer and not a colonizer — become sources of contention now.

Spain's government is actively using its diplomatic weight in the U.S., writing letters to authorities to counter the narratives against what it considers the "Hispanic legacy" in the country.

David García, a history professor specialized in Spain's American colonies, lamented what he called the "superficial" view of history held by some protesters.

"There are people in Spain worried for where this will lead because the future cannot be based on ignorance. Junípero Serra held ideas that were considered progressive for his time, while Cervantes wrote

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one of the most moving works of all time," García said. "We are all children of our past. What we cannot do is judge what happened centuries ago by our own standards."

Jordi Guixé, professor of history of the University of Barcelona and an expert in public memorials as director of the European Observatory of Memories, believes that Spain has not reckoned with its imperial past because its society is still painfully absorbed by its conflicting memories of its 1936-39 civil war.

Many Franco-era monuments and place names have been removed, but the debate still rages over what to do with the tens of thousands of civilian victims of the war and the subsequent right-wing repression that still lie in mass graves.

"The focus of collective memory is always drawn to the most recent trauma. There is a never-ending debate about the memory (...) of the Civil War," Guixé said. "(The colonial period) has gone overlooked in our society, so how can a society react to something that it ignores?"

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

Only verified intelligence? A look at presidents' briefings

By ERIC TUCKER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The White House says President Donald Trump was never briefed on intelligence that Russia had put a bounty on U.S. soldiers in Afghanistan because there wasn't corroborating evidence.

But former intelligence officials say presidents are routinely informed about intelligence even when it's not definitively confirmed. Intelligence that may be on shaky ground today may foreshadow tomorrow's calamity.

Some questions and answers about how presidents are briefed on intelligence, what sort of information they receive and how this applies to the situation with Russia:

HOW DO PRESIDENTS RECEIVE NATIONAL SECURITY INFORMATION?

Both orally and through a written document known as the President's Daily Brief.

The PDB, as it is known, is a compilation of intelligence and national security assessments from government analysts. It's material the intelligence community thinks the president should know.

The document has been provided to presidents in some form since Harry Truman occupied the White House. Some presidents are said to have been voracious consumers of their briefings; Trump, by contrast, is known to demand only the sparest details.

Today, the PDB is coordinated by the Office of the Director of National Intelligence and includes contributions from the CIA and other members of the intelligence community who effectively pitch stories for inclusion, said Rodney Faraon, a former CIA analyst who served from 1999 to 2001 on the briefing team for the White House.

"It's not unlike what you would see in a journalistic newsroom," he said.

WHAT SORT OF INFORMATION GETS BRIEFED TO A PRESIDENT, AND HOW DO AGENCIES KNOW IF IT'S CREDIBLE?

Depending on the day, and the particular interests of a president, the PDB could include the latest inside information about a country a president is preparing to visit, intelligence about potential national security threats or other secrets relating to current events.

"There's no mathematical formula" for deciding what gets briefed to the president, said David Priess, a former CIA intelligence briefer and author of "The President's Book of Secrets: The Untold Story of Intelligence Briefings to America's Presidents."

"The job of the analysts is to decide, 'does the president need to know this today?' You are writing for the president," he added.

There's also no mathematical formula for evaluating the credibility of intelligence. Sometimes, information is deemed reliable because it comes from a trusted source, because it matches up with a separate piece of intelligence or fits into a pattern, or because it derives from surveillance or intercepted recordings.

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"A lot of it comes down to the source of the information: Did the source have first-hand access?" said former CIA officer Cindy Otis. Or, conversely, "Is it a person with fourth-hand access who heard it from a dude who heard it from a dude and so on down the chain?"

"You're not going to put garbage in front of the president," she added.

DO PRESIDENTS RECEIVE INTELLIGENCE ONLY WHEN IT'S CONFIRMED?

Absolutely not. If that were the case, the PDB would be both brief — since intelligence deals more often with uncertainty than fact — but also boring, restricted to observations that are obvious and likely already known to the president, Priess said.

"Because it's intelligence, that means it deals with the unknown, things that are uncertain — but things that are of grave importance to U.S. national security and worthy of the president's attention," he said. "Nothing in there says that it has to be fully verified or certain because intelligence is rarely certain."

Modern history is loaded with examples of briefings to presidents that contained warnings, or informed suppositions, but not certifiable facts.

One month before the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks, President George W. Bush was famously warned in a PDB that Osama bin Laden was determined to strike the U.S. The intelligence, including chatter picked up by counterterrorism analysts, was seen as urgent and credible enough to bring to the president's attention though it lacked details about date, location and method.

Nearly a decade later, President Barack Obama's advisers alerted him to their belief that bin Laden was in a compound in Pakistan — despite disagreement over the strength of that intelligence. Obama still approved the operation that killed bin Laden.

In his book, "The Great War of Our Time: The CIA's Fight Against Terrorism from al-Qaida to ISIS," former CIA Deputy Director Michael Morell writes that his confidence level was at 60 percent. Other analysts felt more secure.

When Obama asked about the disparity, Morell said it reflected differences in individual experiences but not differences in the information people had.

WHY WOULD A PRESIDENT RECEIVE UNCORROBORATED INFORMATION?

Intelligence that may be on shaky ground today may precede an actual crisis, so briefers are expected to ensure that presidents have the fullest possible picture to prepare for something that may soon require maximum attention.

That's especially true when even unclear or uncorroborated intelligence indicates that American lives or infrastructure could be at risk.

"The president is going to get hard decisions, and those hard decisions normally come with murky facts and gray areas," said Larry Pfeiffer, a 32-year intelligence community veteran who held positions as CIA chief of staff and senior director of the White House Situation Room.

To account for the uncertainty, briefers will caveat the information and detail internal disagreements among different intelligence agencies so that presidents understand a situation's nuance.

HOW DOES THIS APPLY TO THE SITUATION WITH RUSSIA?

White House officials have repeatedly insisted that the president hadn't been briefed that Russia offered bounties to Taliban-linked fighters in Afghanistan to kill American troops, though officials have told The Associated Press and other news organizations that the information was included in the President's Daily Brief.

The AP, citing officials familiar with the matter, also has reported that national security adviser Robert O'Brien had discussed the matter with Trump and that former national security adviser John Bolton told colleagues that he had done the same last year. O'Brien has denied that, and Bolton has declined to comment.

O'Brien has said the CIA and Pentagon did pursue the lead and briefed international allies. But he said the intelligence wasn't brought to Trump's attention initially because it was unverified and there was no

consensus among the intelligence community.

After news broke about the intelligence, Trump was briefed, the White House said.

Former intelligence officials say it's a matter Trump absolutely should have been briefed on earlier, whether corroborated or not.

"The safety and security of American troops posted in a war zone is of the highest importance," said Faraon, a partner at the Martin + Crumpton Group, a business intelligence firm.

South Africa's hospitals bracing for surge of virus patients

By ANDREW MELDRUM Associated Press

JOHANNESBURG (AP) — The nurse started crying when describing her work at a Johannesburg hospital: The ward for coronavirus patients is full, so new arrivals are sent to the general ward, where they wait days for test results. Already 20 of her colleagues have tested positive.

"A lot, a lot, a lot of people are coming in every day. With COVID-19," said the nurse, who spoke on condition of anonymity because she is not authorized to speak to the media. "Each day, it becomes more difficult to cope."

South Africa's reported coronavirus cases more than quadrupled in June — though some of that is due to efforts to clear a testing backlog, the rate of increase of new cases is picking up. Its hospitals are now bracing for an onslaught of patients, setting up temporary wards and hoping advances in treatment will help the country's health facilities from becoming overwhelmed.

The surge comes as the country has allowed businesses to reopen in recent weeks to stave off economic disaster after a strict two-month stay-at-home order worsened already high unemployment — it reached 30% in June — and drastically increased hunger. In Johannesburg, the largest city, health officials said they are considering reimposing some restrictions to try to slow the quickening spread of the virus.

"We're seeing a spike in infections in Johannesburg. The number of people that we are diagnosing on a daily basis now is absolutely frightening," said Shabir Madhi, professor of vaccinology at Johannesburg's University of the Witwatersrand, who is leading a vaccine trial in South Africa in cooperation with Britain's University of Oxford. "Who we are finding positive now is an indication of who will be in hospital three weeks from now."

The vaccine trial began last week, and Madhi said he's surprised by the high number of prospective participants who have been disqualified because they are positive for the virus.

"It is hard to see how our hospitals will be able to cope," he said. "Our facilities are reaching a tipping point."

COVID-19 has highlighted South Africa's inequalities, he said. "Everyone is at risk from the virus," he said. "But the poor, living in higher density areas, without good access to running water, access to health care, the poorest will suffer the most."

South Africa, with 58 million people and nearly 40% of all the cases on the entire continent, has seen the number of confirmed infections rise from 34,000 at the start of June to more than 168,000 on Friday.

Overnight it reported its largest daily number of new confirmed cases — 8,728.

As of Friday, 2,844 people had died, according to official statistics. But forecasts by health experts have warned that South Africa could see from 40,000 to more than 70,000 deaths from COVID-19 before the end of 2020.

Other African countries are watching warily as the country with the continent's best-equipped and best-staffed health system hurtles toward a peak that may overwhelm it.

South Africa's health minister, Dr. Zwelini Mkhize, issued a sobering warning recently about an expected flood of cases, especially in urban centers as many return to work.

"It is anticipated that, while every province will unfortunately witness an increase in their numbers, areas where there is high economic activity will experience an exponential rise," Mkhize said this week.

Concerns about the virus spreading in the minibus taxis that millions of South Africans use to commute grew this week when the taxi association said the minivans would run at full capacity of up to 15 pas-

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sengers, despite government orders to carry just 70% capacity.

For weeks Cape Town has been the country's epicenter of the disease, but Johannesburg is rapidly catching up.

Mkhize said Gauteng province, which also includes the nation's capital of Pretoria, will quickly surpass Cape Town and will need more hospital beds.

Gauteng hospitals already have 3,000 COVID-19 patients, the province's premier David Makhura told reporters Thursday. He denied reports that patients have been turned away and said bed capacity would be significantly increased by the end of July. He said the reopening of schools set for next week may be postponed and warned that restrictions may be reimposed to combat the surge.

To increase its hospital capacity, South Africa has converted convention centers in Cape Town and Johannesburg, built wards in huge tents, and turned a closed Volkswagen car manufacturing plant into a 3,300-bed treatment center. Still, finding staff to tend to those beds is a challenge: The factory remains empty for lack of health workers.

In Khayelitsha township, one of Cape Town's poorest areas with some 400,000 residents, the district hospital has 300 beds. Anticipating increased demand on the overstretched facility, an external wing was created across the street. Built in a month, the new ward opened at the start of June with 60 beds. By this week only two beds were empty.

"It's overwhelming," said Dr. Hermann Reuter of his work in the external ward, run by Khayelitsha District Hospital with assistance from Doctors Without Borders.

Reuter said advances in treatment — including giving patients oxygen masks and nasal inhalers earlier and turning them often in order to keep them off ventilators — has yielded encouraging results, even though many are severely ill when they arrive. Crucially, many can be discharged in two weeks — freeing up much-needed bed space, said Reuter, who normally runs community substance abuse clinics but volunteered to work in the field hospital.

As South Africa heads into its coldest time of year, the media have warned of a "dark winter" over fears cases will peak in July and August in the Southern Hemisphere country. President Cyril Ramaphosa recently counseled the nation to prepare for tough times ahead, saying that many may find themselves "despondent and fearful" in the weeks and months to come.

"It may be that things have gotten worse, but we are certain that they will get better," he said.

For the nurse at the Johannesburg hospital, those dark days already appear to have arrived.

"Nursing is a calling, and we are working to help people in this corona crisis," she said. "But we are becoming overwhelmed."

Mogomotsi Magome in Johannesburg contributed.

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Move to rename 'Bloody Sunday' bridge has critics in Selma

By JAY REEVES Associated Press

SELMA, Ala. (AP) — Thousands gathered in this river city in 1940 to dedicate a new bridge in honor of white supremacist Edmund Pettus, a Confederate general and reputed Ku Klux Klan leader. Just 25 years later, the bridge became a global landmark when civil rights marchers were beaten at its base.

Today, with thousands protesting nationwide against racial injustice, a years-old push is gaining steam to rename the Edmund Pettus Bridge in honor of Rep. John Lewis, who led the 1965 marchers on "Bloody Sunday." But the idea is drawing opposition in Selma, including from some who marched with Lewis that day.

Pettus' name has ironically come to also symbolize Black freedom and shouldn't be painted over, some say. Others oppose the move because Lewis was an outsider who followed in the footsteps of locals who had worked to end segregation for years before he arrived. Still others fear a change would hurt tourism

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in a poor town with little going for it other than its civil rights history.

Lynda Lowery, who was 14 and received 35 stitches in her head on Bloody Sunday, doesn't want the bridge renamed for anyone. She said the span over the muddy Alabama River "isn't a monument, it's a part of history."

"They need to leave my bridge alone," said Lowery, 70.

Lowery's younger sister Jo Ann Bland, who also was among the estimated 600 marchers on March 7, 1965, long opposed renaming the bridge. But amid widespread demonstrations since the police killing of George Floyd in Minnesota, she now tentatively supports renaming the span for local "foot soldiers," not Lewis.

"John Lewis is my hero; he's been my hero since I was a child," said Bland. "I followed him up on that Edmund Pettus Bridge. But I and John were not the only ones there."

The bridge was named for Pettus, who fought for the Confederacy and was a reputed KKK grand wizard who served in the U.S. Senate at a time when Jim Crow laws gave white people near-total control in Alabama. He died in 1907.

On the day of the 1940 bridge dedication, which some 7,000 attended, a parade included a float depicting slaves. The town newspaper printed a laudatory biography which said Pettus was "devoted wholly to the upbuilding of our state and the bringing of order out of the chaos of carpetbagging and negro dominance" after the Civil War.

Online petitions to rename the bridge have been around since at least 2015, the year then-President Barack Obama and former President George W. Bush visited Selma to mark the 50th anniversary of Bloody Sunday, when state troopers beat voting rights marchers as they crossed the bridge on the way to Montgomery, the capital.

Lewis, a native of southeast Alabama, was at the front of the long column and was badly injured. Hospitalized briefly, he went on to a career in politics and has represented Atlanta in Congress since 1987.

In 2015, Lewis and Democratic U.S. Rep. Terri Sewell, the lone African American in Alabama's congressional delegation, co-authored an opinion piece opposing any change to the bridge's name.

"Changing the name of the Bridge would compromise the historical integrity of the voting rights movement," they said.

But much has changed since then. Lewis was diagnosed with advanced pancreatic cancer in December, and the drive to eradicate Confederate symbols gained momentum after Floyd's death; multiple rebel monuments have come down since.

With one online petition to rename the bridge for Lewis gaining more than 285,000 signatures, Sewell recently said she'd changed her mind and now supports removing Pettus' name. Sewell, who is from Selma, personally favors naming the bridge for Lewis but said the decision should be up to townspeople.

"While I believe the historical significance of the bridge transcends the man for which it was named, I also acknowledge that in this moment everything must be on the table, and that includes renaming the bridge," Sewell said in a statement.

An aide to Lewis did not respond to requests for comment.

Southern heritage groups oppose the removal of any rebel reminder, and a Facebook group for Selma residents has had spirited debates on the topic. AC Reeves, who is white and conducts tours in the city, said the surviving veterans of the Selma civil rights movement should make the decision.

"I think white people should just shut up about it," she said.

Alabama's Legislature, controlled by white Republicans, would have to approve any change, said Tony Harris, a state transportation agency spokesman.

The Alabama House killed a 2015 resolution that would have allowed the bridge to be renamed; the former state senator who sponsored that measure, Hank Sanders, now wants to rename the span "The Bridge to Freedom" rather than for Lewis.

While conservative Republicans may hesitate to rename the bridge in a mostly white state where President Donald Trump is overwhelmingly popular among GOP voters, each side of the renaming debate appears to have biracial support in Selma, a town of roughly 17,000 that is more than 80% Black.

Local leaders see tourism as a way to bring new money into Selma, where 41% of residents live in poverty and large employers are scarce, and they're concerned that changing the bridge's name might give people one less reason to visit town.

"The bridge is a huge piece of the tourism industry here in the city of Selma, so it's really important that we also consider the potential economic impact that changing the name could have," said Lydia Chatmon, who is Black and works with a group promoting tourism.

Bland also worries about the effect on tourism and doubts anything will happen quickly. That's OK, she said, given that there's something delicious in how the name of a white supremacist has come to symbolize freedom for Black people, who still cross the old bridge each year to commemorate the events of 1965.

"What happened on that bridge changed the whole meaning of the Edmund Pettus Bridge, of Edmund Pettus to me," Bland said. "I bet he's rolling in his grave every time we walk across that bridge."

First coronavirus then Trump order split Indian families

By EMILY SCHMALL and SOPHIA TAREEN Associated Press

NEW DELHI (AP) — The March day that his father died, Karan Murgai boarded a plane to India.

The coronavirus was spreading, so Murgai's wife and their two young children stayed home in Dallas.

Their separation — due to last three weeks — became indefinite after President Donald Trump signed an executive order that suspends applications for H-1B and other high-skilled work visas from abroad.

Trump said the June 22 order would protect jobs amid high U.S. unemployment because of the pandemic.

But Murgai and at least 1,000 others like him, whose American visas are tied to their jobs in the U.S., are now stranded in India — the order's "collateral damage," he said.

He contacted the offices of Texas Sen. John Cornyn and Texas Rep. Van Taylor, Indian government officials and the U.S. Consulate in New Delhi. No one could help.

An IT management consultant for a multinational, Murgai handles his father's affairs in New Delhi during the day and his U.S. job overnight, worrying about his 4-year-old daughter who has lost her appetite and started throwing fits.

India, with the world's fourth worst-highest virus caseload, is tallying nearly 20,000 new infections each day, but restrictions on travel have begun to ease, with international commercial flights set to resume in July.

"Every day she has this one question to ask me: when am I coming back? I get heartbroken at that point. First, it was July. Now I don't know. We're getting hit from all sides," Murgai said.

The H-1B visa program allows U.S. employers to hire high-skilled foreign workers, mainly for tech jobs. Employers first have to determine there are no American candidates, and then undertake a lengthy sponsorship process that costs as much as \$15,000, making the program highly competitive.

Indians account for 75% of the applications for the H-1B program, U.S. government data show. Nearly 85,000 H-1B visas are awarded each year.

Nasscom, a trade association in the Indian information technology industry, called Trump's order "misguided and harmful to the U.S. economy."

Indian companies provide technology staff and services to U.S. hospitals, drugmakers and biotechnology companies, Nasscom pointed out. As a result, Indian companies may redirect Indian talent to Canada or Mexico.

India's foreign ministry spokesman Anurag Srivastava said the order would "likely affect movement of Indian skilled professionals," and that the government was assessing the impact on Indian nationals and industry.

The H1-B program has created a pathway for a generation of skilled Indian and other foreign workers to build lives in the U.S., but the Trump order places years of investment in education, property and communities at risk, said Murgai. He arrived in Dallas with an H-1B visa in 2010 and now owns a house and land there.

"When you're in a place for a decade, you think you've settled down," he said.

"If new H-1Bs are being stopped, I get it. But then for people who already have jobs, who have already

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established themselves in their fields and have given the government a reason to keep them in the country, why upend lives like this?"

In suburban Dallas, Sandeep Vudayagiri, a big data analytics engineer, has been home alone since February, when his wife and daughter went to visit family in Hyderabad, India.

Vudayagiri's wife, Arpana Takkalapally, holds an H-4 visa, given to immediate family of H-1B visa holders. Even though Takkalapally isn't allowed to work on her visa, without a renewal stamp from a U.S. consulate, she can't go back.

"It is indirectly punishing the people who are working here," he said. "How is my 2-year-old an employment threat in the U.S.? Which country does this?" Vudayagiri said.

Takkalapally spends her days in Hyderabad feeding and playing with her daughter, and cooking and cleaning for her parents, bookended by morning and evening calls with her husband.

This is the longest the couple have been separated since they met as graduate students at San Jose State University in 2010.

Takkalapally watched as Indian friends and neighbors flocked to Houston last year for a rally with Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Trump. The leaders extolled the closeness of India-U.S. ties in a stadium filled with 50,000 people.

A similar rally was staged in February in Modi's home state of Gujarat.

"Now it seems like some backstabbing," Takkalapally said.

Immigration attorneys in the U.S. said they have been inundated with emails and phone calls seeking help.

"The stress level that this causes on the number of people in the U.S. in legal working status is massive," said Nell Barker, an attorney in Chicago. "It is causing mental health issues. It is causing productivity issues in a situation where businesses are already struggling to get through these shutdowns and economic downturn."

Tareen reported from Chicago.

White Mich. couple arrested after gun pulled on Black family

By COREY WILLIAMS Associated Press

A white couple was arrested after at least one handgun was pulled on a Black woman and her daughters during a videotaped confrontation in a restaurant parking lot in Michigan, authorities said Thursday.

Jillian Wuestenberg, 32, and Eric Wuestenberg, 42, were charged Thursday with felonious assault, Oakland County Prosecutor Jessica Cooper said in a release. It was not immediately clear when they would be arraigned or if they have attorneys who could comment on the allegations.

Cellphone video captured the confrontation Wednesday outside a Chipotle in Orion Township, about 40 miles (64 kilometers) northwest of Detroit.

Jillian Wuestenberg can be seen outside her vehicle shouting, "Get the (expletive) away! Get away!" while pointing a handgun.

She eventually gets back in her vehicle which is driven away by her husband.

Sheriff Michael Bouchard told reporters that the couple is from Independence Township and both have concealed pistol licenses. Deputies seized two handguns from the couple after they were detained Wednesday night following the encounter.

The Detroit News first reported on the three-minute video posted online that shows part of the interaction. Takelia Hill, who is Black, told the newspaper that it happened after the white woman bumped into Hill's teenage daughter as they were entering the fast food restaurant.

The video footage starts after that, in the parking lot. A woman since identified as Jillian Wuestenberg is heard arguing with Hill and her daughters. Wuestenberg climbs into the vehicle, rolls down the window and says, "White people aren't racist," and, "I care about you," before the vehicle she was in starts to back away.

Her husband, who had led his wife to the vehicle, turns to the camera and asks, "Who ... do you think

you guys are?" using an expletive.

Then, as someone is standing behind the vehicle, Jillian Wuestenberg jumps out and points a handgun in the direction of a person who's recording. She screams at people to get away from her and her vehicle. A woman shouts, "She's got a gun on me!" and urges someone in the parking lot to call the police.

Wuestenberg then lowers the gun, climbs into the passenger seat and the vehicle drives off.

Cooper, the prosecutor, told The Associated Press that her office viewed the available video and looked at the facts before filing charges.

"It is an unfortunate set of circumstances that tempers run high over, basically, not much of an incident," she said of the initial alleged spark that caused the confrontation.

Bouchard said people are "picking sides" and that threatening calls were made to the sheriff's office dispatch center after the videos were posted online.

"We don't see sides. We see facts," he said. "There's a lot of tension in our society, a lot of tension among folks and people with each other. I would just say this, we are asking and expect our police — and rightfully so — to deescalate every situation they possibly can, and we should be doing that. But I would say that needs to happen with us individually in our own lives and situations, that we interact with each other and deescalate those moments."

Virus concerns grow — as do crowds flocking to Jersey Shore

By WAYNE PARRY Associated Press

BELMAR, N.J. (AP) — As coronavirus-related restrictions are eased and temperatures climb, people are flocking back to the Jersey Shore.

And with the July Fourth holiday weekend upon us, that's making some people nervous, particularly given the large crowds that have surfaced at some popular shore spots recently and poor compliance with mandated measures to help slow the spread of the virus.

"I am really concerned," said Paul Kanitra, mayor of Point Pleasant Beach, a popular shore town that was unexpectedly overrun by thousands of tourists who swarmed the beach and boardwalk a few weeks ago at a "pop-up party," paying little heed to social distancing or masks.

"We're seeing spikes across the country in states that opened up weeks ago, and while we're doing a good job in New Jersey, there are a lot of people that are way too cavalier about social distancing," he said. "There's inherent risk in all of this."

Large crowds are expected at the shore for the holiday weekend: New Jersey's casinos have reopened, along with amusement rides and water parks. Beaches are open, though at reduced occupancy levels. Restaurants can offer limited outdoor dining, and stores and shopping malls have reopened.

But not everyone is following rules designed to prevent the spread of the virus, including wearing masks and keeping 6 feet (2 meters) apart. In late June, large crowds swarmed D'Jais, a popular oceanfront nightclub in Belmar in scenes reminiscent of pre-pandemic days. Few patrons wore face coverings, and fewer still kept their distance from others on a packed dance floor.

Gov. Phil Murphy saw videos of the packed club and warned the state will not hesitate to reimpose harsher restrictions if people don't behave.

"We cannot let up on our social distancing or our responsibility just because the sun is out," the governor said. "We can't be lulled into complacency and think it's OK to crowd around a bar. That is how flare-ups happen."

Skyler Walker, a woman from Scotch Plains in her early 20s, was on the Belmar beach last week on a sunny day with temperatures brushing 90 degrees.

"I definitely think people are starting to care less about" the virus, she said. But the face mask she wore on the boardwalk while waiting in line to buy beach badges indicated she does not share that view. "They act like it's over now."

She was at the beach with a friend who is a nurse in a Jersey Shore hospital filled with coronavirus patients. The friend, who would not give her name, was adamant that the virus is not over, based on what

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she sees at work every day. She is scheduled to work at the hospital on July Fourth.

Michael Scott, another 20-something on the Belmar beach, said he and his friends have modified their behavior this summer, including at nightclubs.

"I try to just hang out with my people," he said. "I'm not all about looking to meet new people. We have a close group of friends that all kind of quarantined together."

Ocean City Mayor Jay Gillian pleaded with residents and visitors to wear masks during the long holiday, including on the boardwalk, noting, "Ocean City is already very crowded."

Although New Jersey's hospitalization rate is down drastically from a peak a few months ago, officials fear hospitalizations for the virus will rise again if people become lax about taking precautions.

"We are especially concerned after the gatherings we saw at the Jersey Shore," added the state's health commissioner, Judith Persichilli. "Individuals were packed together, which raises the risk of spreading the virus."

A big test is happening this weekend with the reopening of eight of Atlantic City's nine casinos. The Borgata is remaining closed due to smoking, drinking and indoor eating bans Murphy imposed on the gambling halls.

Most casinos scan guests temperatures upon entering, hand sanitizer dispensers are placed throughout the premises, and everyone inside must wear a mask.

The first day of operations, on Thursday, appeared to go well, with widespread compliance with virus precautions. In 2 1/2 hours on the gambling floor of the Hard Rock casino, an Associated Press reporter did not see a single person without a mask.

Follow Wayne Parry at <http://twitter.com/WayneParryAC>. ____

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

White Mich. couple arrested after gun pulled on Black family

By COREY WILLIAMS Associated Press

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Paraguay controls coronavirus, while its neighbors struggle

By JORGE SAENZ and ANDREA RODRIGUEZ Associated Press

ASUNCION, Paraguay (AP) — As nearby nations grapple with uncontrolled spread of the novel coronavirus, the poor, landlocked nation of Paraguay appears to be controlling the disease, with just a few thousand confirmed cases and a few dozen deaths.

Along with Paraguay's relative isolation, experts credit the country with creating a network of quarantine centers in military academies, motels, and religious institutions where citizens arriving home must isolate for at least 14 days and pass two consecutive coronavirus tests before being able to move about the country freely.

With only 7 million people, a stagnant economy, high poverty and a weak public health system, Paraguay moved to slow coronavirus in March by closing borders and imposing the quarantine restrictions, along with closing schools and public events and declaring a nighttime curfew.

Some 8,500 have passed through the quarantine system already, some complaining about poor food and housing and the requirements that the 14-day clock starts again for everyone in a shelter if one person tests positive for the coronavirus. There are also complaints of delays from many of the 15,000 Paraguayans still waiting outside the country in neighboring nations like Brazil and Argentina.

"It was a horrible experience the entire time," said a 21-year-old who insisted on speaking anonymously out of fear of being discriminated against for having been infected. "There were 100 men together in my (quarantine) center, of all ages. When I arrived home my mother was excited to see me but didn't touch me. She first disinfected me all over with alcohol and a home remedy. I bathed and only then did she hug me."

Paraguay built two hospitals to handle a possible surge in coronavirus cases, but a recent visit by an Associated Press journalist showed both are empty, which authorities cited as evidence of their success in slowing the spread of the virus.

"Striking a balance is a great challenge for the government," presidential adviser Federico González said. "The shelters are full and the population is safe."

Observers worry, however, that the uncontrolled surge of cases in Brazil, many close to Paraguay's border, means the smaller country's success may be short-lived.

Adding to concerns are a predicted 5% drop in gross domestic product for an economy that was already struggling, and a health system that remains unprepared for a large-scale epidemic.

"I think the government's measures have been the right ones," said leftist Sen. Esperanza Martínez, a former health minister. "The problem is that they haven't been accompanied by longer-term solutions ... I think we're going to have problems in the next months that it will be hard to reverse, and the health system isn't prepared."

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Associated Press photojournalist Jorge Saenz reported this story in Asuncion and AP writer Andrea Rodríguez reported from Havana.

Only verified intelligence? A look at presidents' briefings

By ERIC TUCKER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The White House says President Donald Trump was never briefed on intelligence that Russia had put a bounty on U.S. soldiers in Afghanistan because there wasn't corroborating evidence.

But former intelligence officials say presidents are routinely informed about intelligence even when it's not definitively confirmed. Intelligence that may be on shaky ground today may foreshadow tomorrow's calamity.

Some questions and answers about how presidents are briefed on intelligence, what sort of information they receive and how this applies to the situation with Russia:

HOW DO PRESIDENTS RECEIVE NATIONAL SECURITY INFORMATION?

Both orally and through a written document known as the President's Daily Brief.

The PDB, as it is known, is a compilation of intelligence and national security assessments from government analysts. It's material the intelligence community thinks the president should know.

The document has been provided to presidents in some form since Harry Truman occupied the White House. Some presidents are said to have been voracious consumers of their briefings; Trump, by contrast, is known to demand only the sparest details.

Today, the PDB is coordinated by the Office of the Director of National Intelligence and includes contributions from the CIA and other members of the intelligence community who effectively pitch stories for inclusion, said Rodney Faraon, a former CIA analyst who served from 1999 to 2001 on the briefing team for the White House.

"It's not unlike what you would see in a journalistic newsroom," he said.

WHAT SORT OF INFORMATION GETS BRIEFED TO A PRESIDENT, AND HOW DO AGENCIES KNOW IF IT'S CREDIBLE?

Depending on the day, and the particular interests of a president, the PDB could include the latest inside information about a country a president is preparing to visit, intelligence about potential national security threats or other secrets relating to current events.

"There's no mathematical formula" for deciding what gets briefed to the president, said David Priess, a former CIA intelligence briefer and author of "The President's Book of Secrets: The Untold Story of Intelligence Briefings to America's Presidents."

"The job of the analysts is to decide, 'does the president need to know this today?' You are writing for the president," he added.

There's also no mathematical formula for evaluating the credibility of intelligence. Sometimes, information is deemed reliable because it comes from a trusted source, because it matches up with a separate piece of intelligence or fits into a pattern, or because it derives from surveillance or intercepted recordings.

"A lot of it comes down to the source of the information: Did the source have first-hand access?" said former CIA officer Cindy Otis. Or, conversely, "Is it a person with fourth-hand access who heard it from a dude who heard it from a dude and so on down the chain?"

"You're not going to put garbage in front of the president," she added.

DO PRESIDENTS RECEIVE INTELLIGENCE ONLY WHEN IT'S CONFIRMED?

Absolutely not. If that were the case, the PDB would be both brief — since intelligence deals more often with uncertainty than fact — but also boring, restricted to observations that are obvious and likely already known to the president, Priess said.

"Because it's intelligence, that means it deals with the unknown, things that are uncertain — but things

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that are of grave importance to U.S. national security and worthy of the president's attention," he said. "Nothing in there says that it has to be fully verified or certain because intelligence is rarely certain."

Modern history is loaded with examples of briefings to presidents that contained warnings, or informed suppositions, but not certifiable facts.

One month before the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks, President George W. Bush was famously warned in a PDB that Osama bin Laden was determined to strike the U.S. The intelligence, including chatter picked up by counterterrorism analysts, was seen as urgent and credible enough to bring to the president's attention though it lacked details about date, location and method.

Nearly a decade later, President Barack Obama's advisers alerted him to their belief that bin Laden was in a compound in Pakistan — despite disagreement over the strength of that intelligence. Obama still approved the operation that killed bin Laden.

In his book, "The Great War of Our Time: The CIA's Fight Against Terrorism from al-Qaida to ISIS," former CIA Deputy Director Michael Morell writes that his confidence level was at 60 percent. Other analysts felt more secure.

When Obama asked about the disparity, Morell said it reflected differences in individual experiences but not differences in the information people had.

WHY WOULD A PRESIDENT RECEIVE UNCORROBORATED INFORMATION?

Intelligence that may be on shaky ground today may precede an actual crisis, so briefers are expected to ensure that presidents have the fullest possible picture to prepare for something that may soon require maximum attention.

That's especially true when even unclear or uncorroborated intelligence indicates that American lives or infrastructure could be at risk.

"The president is going to get hard decisions, and those hard decisions normally come with murky facts and gray areas," said Larry Pfeiffer, a 32-year intelligence community veteran who held positions as CIA chief of staff and senior director of the White House Situation Room.

To account for the uncertainty, briefers will caveat the information and detail internal disagreements among different intelligence agencies so that presidents understand a situation's nuance.

HOW DOES THIS APPLY TO THE SITUATION WITH RUSSIA?

White House officials have repeatedly insisted that the president hadn't been briefed that Russia offered bounties to Taliban-linked fighters in Afghanistan to kill American troops, though officials have told The Associated Press and other news organizations that the information was included in the President's Daily Brief.

The AP, citing officials familiar with the matter, also has reported that national security adviser Robert O'Brien had discussed the matter with Trump and that former national security adviser John Bolton told colleagues that he had done the same last year. O'Brien has denied that and Bolton has declined to comment.

O'Brien has said the CIA and Pentagon did pursue the lead and briefed international allies. But he said the intelligence wasn't brought to Trump's attention initially because it was unverified and there was no consensus among the intelligence community.

After news broke about the intelligence, Trump was briefed, the White House said.

Former intelligence officials say it's a matter Trump absolutely should have been briefed on earlier, whether corroborated or not.

"The safety and security of American troops posted in a war zone is of the highest importance," said Faraon, a partner at the Martin + Crumpton Group, a business intelligence firm.

US jobs surge: Trump sees sunshine, Biden 'no victory yet'

By STEVE PEOPLES AP National Political Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — The U.S. economy just posted its best single-month job gain in history.

U.S. unemployment is at one of its worst points since the Great Depression.

Both are true.

As Republicans and Democrats fought to spin Thursday's jobs numbers to their advantage, both sides face tremendous political risks in navigating a delicate and defining issue heading into the presidential campaign's final months.

Democrats, led by presumptive nominee Joe Biden, seized on the growing threat presented by coronavirus after the better-than-expected numbers were released, a stance the Republicans called rooting against America's recovery. President Donald Trump claimed a major economic victory and played down the health threat, even as an explosion of new infections threatened to stall, or even reverse, the economic gains.

Deep uncertainty lies ahead, experts warn, despite two months of record job growth. And with only two more monthly jobs reports expected before the Nov. 3 election, the dueling visions of America's economy establish a new frame for the high-stakes debate ahead.

"Today's announcement proves that our economy is roaring back," Trump exulted to reporters at the White House after the June numbers were released. He later added, "The crisis is being handled."

Two hours later, Biden offered a darker assessment.

"There's no victory to be celebrated," the former vice president said in a video recorded at his home in Delaware. "We're still down nearly 15 million jobs and the pandemic is getting worse not better."

"Today's report is positive news and I'm thankful for it -- for real," Biden continued. "But make no mistake, we're still in a deep, deep job hole because Donald Trump has so badly bungled the response to coronavirus."

Thursday's data showed a surge of 4.8 million new jobs last month, a snapshot of the economy as of three weeks ago. The U.S. unemployment rate improved from 13.3% in May to 11.1% in June as many Americans thrown out of work by COVID-19 were called back.

But the jobs numbers were announced just as the nation's confirmed coronavirus infections soared to an all-time daily high of 50,700, more than doubling over the past month, according to the count kept by Johns Hopkins University.

The spike, centered primarily in the South and West, has led states such as California, Texas, Arizona and Florida to re-close or otherwise clamp down again on bars, restaurants, movie theaters, beaches and swimming pools, throwing some workers out of jobs for a second time. Those losses will show up in next month's government unemployment report.

The Trump campaign believes that nothing matters more to the president's reelection than the state of the economy. With many Americans reporting that the country is moving in the wrong direction under his leadership, he has a lot of work to do.

Still, the president's strongest ratings center on the economy, as has been the case throughout his tenure. About half of Americans say they approve of Trump's handling of the economy, according to a poll released last month from The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research.

Justin Wolfers, a professor of economics and public policy at the University of Michigan, said that Thursday's numbers confirmed that the economy is in "slightly less" of a "dreadful economic hole."

"You just look out the window and you know things are grim," he said. "The first, second and third most important things for the economy right now are the progress of the disease."

Michael Strain, director of economic policy studies at the American Enterprise Institute, said the virus continues to pose a "major potential threat" to the nation's economic comeback, especially in light of new reports that hospital systems in some states are reaching capacity.

Given the uncertainty, Strain said he's confused by Trump's apparent resistance to plans from both Republicans and Democrats to inject another round of major economic stimulus into what he called "a fragile economy."

Trump highlighted his support for a Social Security tax cut on Thursday, but Vice President Mike Pence,

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in an interview with CNBC, reiterated the administration's opposition to extending enhanced unemployment payments to out-of-work Americans when they expire at the end of July.

Biden, meanwhile, has yet to come out with a specific jobs plan, which his campaign said Thursday would be released in a matter of weeks. Jared Bernstein, a Biden economic adviser, encouraged Congress to adopt a new round of fiscal stimulus for unemployed Americans immediately.

Bernstein predicted the pace of economic growth would slow considerably in the coming months because of the Trump administration's inability to contain the pandemic. Trump has not employed a coordinated national response to the health threat, preferring instead to let state and local leaders adopt their own strategies.

Biden has released his own plan to combat coronavirus, which calls for a massive surge in testing and required face masks for all people in public.

"The absence of effective virus control from the top is reversing reopenings in states across the land, and my grave concern is that that will be reflected in upcoming jobs reports," Bernstein said.

Trump, however, focused on the best of the new news, declaring that it would die with a Biden victory in November.

"These are not numbers that other presidents will have. They won't have it," Trump said from the White House. "The only thing that can kill it is a bad president."

He added, patting himself and his administration on the back: "This is not just luck what's happening. This is a lot of talent."

Supreme Court blocks curbside voting in Alabama

By KIM CHANDLER Associated Press

MONTGOMERY, Ala. (AP) — The U.S. Supreme Court in a 5-4 decision Thursday blocked a lower court ruling allowing curbside voting in Alabama and waiving some absentee ballot requirements during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Conservative justices granted Alabama's request to stay a federal judge's order that would allow local officials to offer curbside voting in the July runoff and loosen absentee ballot requirements in three of the state's large counties. The order will remain stayed while the court decides whether to hear Alabama's appeal.

Alabama Attorney General Steve Marshall said he was pleased the court acted quickly so that Alabama voting rules remain in place for the July 14 runoff.

"Alabama is again able to enforce laws that help ensure the fairness and integrity of our elections," the Republican said.

The court rulings stem from a lawsuit filed by the NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund, the Southern Poverty Law Center and the Alabama Disabilities Advocacy Program. A group of voters had sought more voting options because of health concerns.

U.S. District Judge Abdul K. Kallon last month issued a preliminary injunction after finding that Alabama's election rules will cause sick or elderly voters to "likely face a painful and difficult choice between exercising their fundamental right to vote and safeguarding their health, which could prevent them from casting a vote in upcoming elections."

Kallon said Alabama can't prevent local election officials from offering curbside voting at in-person polling locations in the July 14 runoff. Kallon also ruled Alabama can't require some absentee ballot voters in three counties to submit photocopies of their identification and witness signatures if it is dangerous for them to get out during the pandemic because of their age and underlying health conditions.

The three counties are where plaintiffs in the lawsuit live.

Alabama appealed the decision. The state argued that it would be confusing to change absentee ballot rules in three of Alabama's 67 counties and that curbside voting would be a major change done right before the election.

The state also argued that Alabama's rules are needed to combat voter fraud and are not unreasonable.

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"But this dichotomy between voting and safety is false, even during COVID-19. The individual plaintiffs in this case regularly see at least one other person. Can they really not find a safe way to have a second person watch them sign a piece of paper?" lawyers for the state wrote in their petition to the Supreme Court.

The court's five conservative justices ruled in favor of Alabama while the four more liberal justices indicated they would deny the state's application for a stay. The justices did not offer an explanation for their decision in the brief order handed down late Thursday.

"Unfortunately, this means that Alabama voters who are at greater risk of severe illness or death from COVID-19 will be required to risk their health and violate CDC recommendations in order to vote on July 14," Deuel Ross, senior counsel at the NAACP Legal Defense & Educational Fund, Inc., said in a statement.

The plaintiffs said they were disappointed by the decision, and will continue to pursue the ongoing litigation in federal court in Alabama.

The Latest: South Korea has 63 newly confirmed virus cases

By The Associated Press undefined

SEOUL, South Korea -- South Korea has reported 63 newly confirmed cases of COVID-19 as health authorities scramble to mobilize public health tools to the southwestern city of Gwangju, where more than 50 people were found sickened over the past week.

The figures announced by the Korea Centers for Disease Control and Prevention on Friday brought the national caseload to 12,967 infections, including 282 deaths.

Thirty-one of the new cases were reported from the Seoul metropolitan area, which has been at the center of a virus resurgence since late May.

Six of the new cases came from Gwangju, where officials have raised concern over possible shortages in hospital capacities, while 13 of them came from the southeastern city of Daegu, which had been the epicenter of a major outbreak in February and March.

The municipal government of Gwangju, which had one of the smallest caseloads among major South Korean cities before this week, has shut hundreds of schools and banned gatherings at wedding halls, banquet facilities and senior welfare centers to stem the transmissions.

Neighboring provinces are providing dozens of hospital beds and planning to send medical personnel to help Gwangju deal with the spike of infections.

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

— Four U.S. states — Arizona, California, Florida and Texas — reported a combined 25,000 new confirmed coronavirus cases heading into the July Fourth holiday weekend.

— California has gone from a coronavirus success story to a cautionary tale.

— US unemployment falls to 11%, but new shutdowns are underway

— Texas governor issues mask order to fight coronavirus

— Closing bars to stop coronavirus spread is backed by science.

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

HERE'S WHAT ELSE IS HAPPENING:

SEOUL, South Korea -- North Korean leader Kim Jong Un urged officials to maintain "maximum alert" against the coronavirus pandemic, criticizing unspecified complacencies in the country's anti-virus campaign that he said risked "unimaginable and irretrievable crisis."

Despite the warnings, state media said Friday that Kim reaffirmed government claims that there hasn't been a single case of COVID-19 in North Korea. Kim told a ruling party meeting that the country has "thoroughly prevented the inroad of the malignant virus and maintained stable anti-epidemic situation despite the worldwide health crisis."

The North's claim of being COVID-19 free has been questioned by outside experts, who say a major

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outbreak in the country could possibly have dire consequences because of its chronic lack of medical supplies and poor health care infrastructure.

Describing its anti-virus efforts as a “matter of national existence,” the country has shut down nearly all cross-border traffic, banned tourists, intensified screening at entry points and mobilized tens of thousands of health workers to monitor residents and isolate those with symptoms. Experts say the country’s self-imposed lockdown is also hurting an economy already battered by stringent U.S.-led sanctions over its nuclear weapons and missile program.

SACRAMENTO, Calif. — Gov. Gavin Newsom urged Californians to turn to their “better angels” and use common sense by wearing masks and skipping traditional gatherings with family and friends during the holiday weekend.

California had been on a good trajectory with its virus efforts until mid-June, but infections and hospitalizations are now rising rapidly in many parts of the state.

Los Angeles and 18 other counties with the most troubling virus increases have been forced to shutter bars, forbid inside restaurant dining and close movie theaters.

Dr. Mark Ghaly, the state’s top health official, called the Fourth of July holiday weekend a “big deal” for efforts to contain the virus. He urged people to behave differently than they did on Memorial Day weekend, when many gathered socially. Authorities say that behavior helped spur the latest surge of cases.

“This is another time for Californians to pay attention to what happened over the last month and make a different set of decisions now,” he said.

BEIJING — China reported five newly confirmed cases of coronavirus, two of them in the capital Beijing and three brought from outside the country, according to the National Health Commission.

No new deaths were registered Friday, leaving the toll at 4,634 among 83,542 total cases of COVID-19 reported since the virus was first detected in the central city of Wuhan late last year. Another 103 people were in isolation being monitored as suspected cases or for having tested positive for the virus without showing symptoms.

Strict quarantine, social distancing and case tracing measures have helped radically bring down infections. Mask wearing is still universal in indoor spaces, while many venues also require proof on a mobile phone app that the person is healthy. Even with the opening of the economy, however, millions are faced with job losses and government assistance has been limited due to already massive levels of debt.

U.S. officials said airlines should consider limiting capacity on planes to promote social distancing, but they are not considering making the airlines do it.

The officials also recommended — but did not move to require — that travelers wear face coverings in airports and on planes. All leading U.S. airlines now require passengers to wear masks, but regulators have refused a request by the airlines to make it a federal rule.

The Transportation, Homeland Security, and Health and Human Services departments made those and other recommendations in a report containing guidelines for reducing the risk of spreading the new coronavirus by air travel.

The agencies said airlines and airports should take steps to increase social distancing, clean surfaces touched by passengers, and ask passengers about their health to discourage people who may be ill from traveling.

The issue of limiting capacity on planes gained new urgency this week when American Airlines joined United Airlines in trying to fill every seat on every flight. The move was criticized by the government’s top expert on infectious diseases, Dr. Anthony Fauci, and Dr. Robert Redfield, director of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

TÓPEKA, Kan. — Kansas’ governor and its top public health official worry that the state won’t be able to reopen its K-12 schools for the new school year in August if it doesn’t reverse a recent surge in reported

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coronavirus cases.

Democratic Gov. Laura Kelly told legislative leaders Thursday that a desire to reopen schools is a key reason she issued an executive order requiring Kansas residents to wear masks in public and at their workplaces. The order takes effect at 12:01 a.m. Friday, with a fine of up to \$2,500 possible for violators.

Kelly and other state officials don't expect strict enforcement with decisions about pursuing violations left up to prosecutors in each of the state's 105 counties. Republican Attorney General Derek Schmidt can pursue violations but said he will leave them to local officials.

Also, counties can opt out of the order under a new pandemic law that took effect in June and resulted from a compromise between Kelly and lawmakers.

The governor and state health secretary and Dr. Lee Normans said the goal is to increase people's use of masks to control the novel coronavirus' spread. Norman told legislative leaders that Kansas could prevent more than 11,500 new coronavirus cases between now and Oct. 1 with a mask mandate.

CHICAGO — People traveling to Chicago from 15 states with increasing numbers of confirmed cases of the coronavirus will have to quarantine for two weeks upon arrival or face possible fines, city officials announced Thursday.

To comply with the order that takes effect Monday, travelers must stay at a single home or other dwelling for 14 days except to seek medical care or be tested for COVID-19.

Mayor Lori Lightfoot said on Twitter that the order is intended to "preserve the gains Chicago had made."

The city has reported 52,569 confirmed cases and 2,611 deaths since the start of the pandemic. Both categories have trended down in recent weeks and the city has allowed many businesses to reopen, including bars and restaurants with limits on customers.

The city's Department of Public Health Commissioner said the specific states listed are based on the rate of new confirmed cases per 100,000 residents.

As of Thursday, that means people coming from Alabama, Arkansas, Arizona, California, Florida, Georgia, Idaho, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, Nevada, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, and Utah will be affected.

The order also applies to city residents returning from a visit to a designated state.

It wasn't immediately clear how Chicago officials will enforce the order.

According to a website explaining the change, people could face fines of between \$100 and \$500 per day, totaling up to \$7,000.

TAMPA, Fla. — Vice President Mike Pence met with Gov. Ron DeSantis to discuss the coronavirus situation on the same day Florida health officials reported a new single-day record total of 10,000 new cases.

Pence and DeSantis encouraged everyone, especially young adults, to wear masks in public spaces and avoid large gatherings. Both wore masks when not speaking.

"It is not an either/or choice," Pence said Thursday. "We can slow the spread. We can flatten the curve, but it will take all of us to do it."

Pence also said Republicans are "excited" about coming to Jacksonville in August for the Republican National Convention, noting that unspecified "sophisticated plans" are in the works to protect attendees.

Democrats criticized the White House and DeSantis for what they said was needlessly endangering lives by opening the economy too soon and not mandating masks. "They have put politics ahead of public health," said U.S. Rep. Donna Shalala, President Bill Clinton's Health and Human Services secretary.

ATLANTA — Georgia added nearly 3,500 confirmed coronavirus cases to its total count on Thursday, the largest single-day increase the state has experienced.

Georgia has seen a sharp increase in confirmed cases as well as people hospitalized in recent weeks.

Nearly 88,000 total confirmed cases of the virus have been recorded by the Georgia Department of Public Health. At least 2,849 people in Georgia have died.

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There were 1,649 people hospitalized with the virus in Georgia Thursday, up from 1,135 a week earlier. "We are in exponential growth with rapidly rising infections," Dr. Carlos del Rio, an infectious disease expert at Emory University, tweeted Thursday. "I am very concerned of our trajectory as we head into the 4th of July weekend," del Rio said as he urged people to wear a mask and practice social distancing.

AUSTIN, Texas — Texas Gov. Greg Abbott ordered that face coverings must be worn in public across most of the state, a dramatic ramp up of the Republican's efforts to control spiking numbers of confirmed coronavirus cases and hospitalizations.

Abbott, who had pushed Texas' aggressive reopening of the state economy in May, had previously said the government could not order individuals to wear masks. His prior virus-related orders had undercut efforts by local governments to enforce mask requirements.

But faced with dramatically rising numbers of both newly confirmed cases of the COVID-19 virus and the number of patients so sick they needed to be hospitalized, Abbott changed course with the statewide mask order on Thursday.

The order requires "all Texans to wear a face covering over the nose and mouth in public spaces in counties with 20 or more positive COVID-19 cases, with few exceptions."

JOHANNESBURG — The World Health Organization says more than 6,000 health workers have been infected with the coronavirus in 38 countries across its Africa region since the pandemic began.

Hundreds of health workers already have been infected in the latest hot spot of South Africa's Gauteng province, which includes Johannesburg and the capital, Pretoria. Across South Africa, more than 2,000 health workers across have been infected. In Nigeria, nearly 1,000 have been sickened.

The WHO's 47-country Africa region has the most severe health workforce shortage in the world, and concerns about adequate personal protective gear against the coronavirus are widespread. Already a handful of countries have seen more than 10% of their health workers infected as of Tuesday: Guinea-Bissau, Sierra Leone, Niger, Mozambique and Burundi.

UNITED NATIONS — France and Germany's top diplomats are urging stepped-up action to quickly implement a new U.N. Security Council resolution demanding cease-fires in major global conflicts to tackle the COVID-19 pandemic.

French Foreign Minister Jean-Yves Le Drian told a virtual council meeting Thursday that "we now need to redouble our efforts," pointing to conflicts in Syria, Yemen, Libya, Africa's Sahel region and Afghanistan where "the situation remains extremely unstable and civilian populations continue to suffer the consequences."

Germany's Foreign Minister Heiko Maas, who chaired the council meeting, urged its often-divided members to implement the "long overdue" resolution by working together toward cease-fires in specific countries, which he stressed can lead to access for health and humanitarian workers and political talks.

Peter Maurer, president of the International Committee of the Red Cross, told the council that conflict zones are "the sharp end" of pandemics where people already live on a knife edge.

OKLAHOMA CITY — Coronavirus cases in Tulsa have been rising but officials say it's too early to directly link the increase to a June 20 campaign rally held there by President Donald Trump.

The county has reported more than 1,300 confirmed cases of the virus in the 11 days since the rally drew about 6,200 people to a sports arena.

"Frankly (we) probably won't see until next week just because of the lag from symptoms to testing to reporting," Bruce Dart, the director of the Tulsa Health Department, said Thursday.

The incubation period for the virus is two to 14 days. Dart said previously health officials would be watching closely for six weeks for infections linked to the weekend of the president's rally.

Dart said the increase has so far been traced to smaller gatherings such as at bars, gyms, restaurants, weddings and funerals. The Oklahoma State Department of Health on Thursday said there are a reported

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14,539 cases statewide.

NEW ORLEANS -- A study of New Orleans area residents infected with the coronavirus indicates 75 percent had no symptoms.

The study released Thursday by researchers at New Orleans-based Ochsner Health was done in May. It looked at testing of residents in New Orleans and neighboring Jefferson Parish. The study indicated a death rate among those infected of 1.63%, much more deadly than the flu.

Researchers selected 2,640 people, representing varied demographic groups from Orleans and Jefferson, from among 25,000 volunteers. They received nasal swab tests for the virus and blood tests for antibodies.

Another finding in the study: Infection rates were higher among Black residents (10.3%) than white residents (5.9%). The death rates of 1.72% and 1.58%, respectively, were not considered statistically significant.

Ochsner's chief medical officer, Dr. Robert Hart, says the study demonstrated the need for masking and social distancing as the virus shows signs of resurgence in Louisiana and around the country.

"We need to assume that we could all potentially be carriers," Hart said.

WEST HOLLYWOOD, Calif. — Sheriff's deputies in the Southern California city of West Hollywood will issue citations to people who don't wear masks in public, ramping up enforcement of a rule largely without penalties.

The West Hollywood station of the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department says the increased enforcement would begin this month.

The non-criminal citations come with a fine of \$250 for a first offense.

LONDON — The World Health Organization says it is still trying to understand how often people without symptoms of the coronavirus spread the disease.

WHO's technical lead on COVID-19, Maria Van Kerkhove, says it was clear some people not sickened by it were still spreading the virus.

"What we're really trying to understand is the relative importance of when people transmit and how they transmit," Van Kerkhove said. "This virus transmits through respiratory droplets, most often when they have symptoms, but it can happen just before they develop symptoms...And so that makes control measures that much more challenging."

Van Kerkhove says WHO was concerned by a number of recent superspreading events, including in long-term living facilities, meat packing facilities, religious gatherings and expat dormitories.

HARRISBURG, Pa. — Pennsylvania has reported 830 confirmed coronavirus cases, its highest one-day total since May.

Allegheny County, home to Pittsburgh and 1.2 million residents, reported more than 230 cases, its highest one-day total of positive tests.

Health officials in Philadelphia and Allegheny County attribute the rising numbers to people socializing in bars, returning from beach vacations and traveling to coronavirus hot spots in other parts of the U.S.

Officials say the statewide confirmed total cases is more than 88,000. It also reported another 25 coronavirus-related deaths for a statewide total of 6,712 since early March.

While the state's hospitalizations for the virus continue to fall, officials say the percentage of people testing positive has been rising the last two weeks.

CORVALLIS, Ore. — An Oregon State Trooper is on paid administrative leave after an employee of a coffee shop complained he didn't wear a mask when entering the establishment.

It's required under a statewide order by the governor to slow the spread of the coronavirus. The Oregonian/OregonLive reports the assistant manager Allan's Coffee & Tea in Corvallis said the trooper on

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Wednesday told him Gov. Kate Brown had no authority to take away civil liberties and uttered a vulgarity directed toward the governor.

State police spokesman Capt. Timothy Fox said the trooper has been placed on leave and an internal investigation has begun.

ROME — Five Italian regions reported slight increases in coronavirus infections, for a total of 201 new confirmed cases, nearly two months after Italy began easing its lockdown.

Officials say the situation is under control and the new cases are being traced. Nationwide, the number of people hospitalized dipped below 1,000 for the first time in weeks.

Hard-hit Lombardy had the most new cases with 98. Lombardy accounted for 21 of 30 deaths nationwide. Lombardy's welfare chief Giulio Gallera suggested the high day-to-day death toll might have been due to delayed reporting by hospitals and city offices.

Nationwide, Italy has 240,961 confirmed cases. The official death toll in the onetime epicenter of Europe's outbreak stood at 34,818 on Thursday.

BATON ROUGE, La. — Louisiana Gov. John Bel Edwards says a member of his staff has tested positive for the coronavirus and is in self-quarantine, along with a dozen other governor's office employees who were in close contact with the person.

Edwards' office says the governor isn't isolating because epidemiologists deemed he wasn't at risk because he hadn't recently been within 6 feet of the person for at least 15 minutes.

The Democratic governor says the employee confirmed to have COVID-19 disease is asymptomatic.

"We are monitoring our team and, should it become necessary, will be offering testing to our staff members and tracing their contacts to determine who needs to self-quarantine and who could be at risk," Edwards said in a statement.

One of Edwards' staff members, April Dunn, died from a coronavirus infection three months ago.

LONDON — The World Health Organization says the world is "lucky" there is a broad pipeline of experimental COVID-19 vaccines, with more than 150 at early stages of testing.

At the end of a two-day research meeting, the U.N. health agency says 17 vaccine candidates are in human trials and some might prove effective by the end of the year, although that the timeline of a licensed vaccine was still uncertain.

"We are very encouraged by the progression of these candidate vaccines and we are looking forward to have the results," said Ana Maria Henao Restrepo, a vaccines expert at WHO.

She says the pharmaceuticals planning advanced tests in humans shared their protocols for proposed trials with the agency; all were randomized experiments. Several experimental vaccines, including one developed by Oxford University and made by AstraZeneca, are expected to soon move into large-scale trials that could provide data about whether they are effective.

"Whether or not we will have a vaccine in the anticipated timeline is still unknown," Restrepo said.

MEXICO CITY — The governor of the Mexican border state of Tamaulipas says he's tested positive for the coronavirus, becoming the fourth state leader in the country to be infected.

Gov. Francisco Cabeza de Vaca says on his official Twitter account that he'll keep working and the area is passing through "a critical moment of infections."

The state has recorded more than 6,000 confirmed cases and at least 356 deaths, though low rates of testing mean the actual number of infections is likely higher.

México has reported more than 231,000 confirmed cases and 28,510 deaths.

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Sponsor FedEx asks Redskins to change their name

WASHINGTON (AP) — The title sponsor of the Washington Redskins' stadium wants the NFL team to change its name.

"We have communicated to the team in Washington our request that they change the team name," FedEx said in a statement Thursday.

The company paid the team \$205 million in 1999 for the naming rights to FedEx Field in Landover, Maryland.

In addition to the stadium name and sponsorship agreement, FedEx CEO Frederik Smith is a minority owner. Majority owner Daniel Snyder has shown no indications he'll change the name since buying the team in 1999.

Amid the national debate over race, pressure has been mounting on the organization to abandon the name called a "dictionary-defined racial slur" by experts and advocates.

Investors this week wrote to FedEx, PepsiCo and other sponsors asking them to request a change. FedEx is believed to be the first to take action.

On Thursday night, Nike appeared to remove all Redskins gear from its online store. The other 31 NFL teams were listed and a search for "Redskins" came up with no results. Nike did not immediately respond to an email message seeking comment.

Asked about Snyder changing the name, a spokesman said recently the team had no comment. The team last week removed the name of racist founder George Preston Marshall from its Ring of Fame at FedEx Field, and a monument to him was removed from the site of the old RFK Stadium.

Washington, D.C., mayor Muriel Bowser also said the name was an "obstacle" to the team returning to the District. The team's lease at FedEx Field expires in 2027, and it is still talking to Washington, Virginia and Maryland about building a new stadium.

More AP NFL: <https://apnews.com/NFL> and https://twitter.com/AP_NFL

How California went from success story to virus hot spot

By KATHLEEN RONAYNE Associated Press

SACRAMENTO, Calif. (AP) — Heading into Memorial Day weekend, California's mood was celebratory. The state had avoided dire predictions of a coronavirus surge, hospitalizations were starting to decline and restaurants and most other businesses had reopened.

As July 4th approaches, the mood has soured. Infection rates and hospitalizations are rising fast. Most bars have been ordered closed along with inside dining at restaurants. Many beaches are off-limits or have restrictions to limit crowds. Fireworks shows are canceled and Gov. Gavin Newsom is imploring residents to avoid the holiday tradition of backyard barbecues and other gatherings of relatives and friends.

In about five weeks, the nation's most populous state went from success story to cautionary tale. Health experts say no single thing went wrong, but contributing factors included a populace made complacent by a long stretch of positive trends, the rapid reopening of businesses, a confusing patchwork of local rules and enforcement, and Newsom's late adoption of a mandatory mask rule, on June 18.

"On Memorial Day, why did we just unleash the floodgates without a statewide mask order in place? I wish I had an answer to that, and it's alarming to us," said Stephanie Roberson, government relations director for the California Nurses Association.

Just before that holiday, about 3,000 people were in the hospital due to the virus; now it's more than 5,000. Far more people are being tested and in the last two weeks that has helped fuel a nearly 50% jump in confirmed cases to 230,000. But the infection rate also has risen sharply from just over 4% of those tested around Memorial Day to 6% now.

A data-driven governor, Newsom earned plaudits for issuing the nation's first statewide stay-at-home order in mid-March and rapidly moving to shore up the statewide health care system. The first-term Democrat has been loathe to admit any mistakes during the pandemic, saying all of his decisions were based on the

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best information available at the time, always in consultation with public health officials.

"It's easy to criticize but the response in the state, with exception to a few counties, has been thoughtful, responsible, evidence-based, and where it's been confusing it's because it's confusing," said Dr. Bob Wachter, chair of the Department of Medicine at the University of California-San Francisco.

Signs of trouble began to emerge last week. Newsom resumed the near-daily press conferences he'd abandoned and pleaded with Californians to wear face masks. On Sunday he pulled back on his mid-June decision to reopen all bars because health experts say they are particularly prone for virus spread. On Wednesday, he broadened his order and shuttered more bars, wineries, indoor restaurant dining, movie theaters and other indoor entertainment venues for at least three weeks. He also said there should be no more singing at religious services.

"We're in a very precarious situation," said Anne Rimoin, a professor of epidemiology at the University of California-Los Angeles's Fielding School of Public Health.

She noted that May produced a rapid reopening leading into Memorial Day weekend and then Father's Day. Many people gathered as they have in the past.

"All of these things together gave ample opportunity for this virus to spread, and I think that this just really demonstrates how quickly we can lose all of the gains that we made," Rimoin said.

Dr. Mark Ghaly, secretary of the California Health and Human Services Agency, said he has no regrets on how California moved forward. But he said there was "poor execution" of the state's reopening plan by some businesses and individuals who were more focused on when they could reopen instead of how to do it safely.

"We tried to give people the tools to reduce transmission, and I think in many ways it wasn't followed," he said.

Newsom, Ghaly and local health officials now are trying to get the public to again understand the gravity of the situation and the personal responsibility needed to reverse the trend.

The message resonated with Tyler Bertao, a 26-year-old from San Francisco who said he's "extremely scared" by California's rising case numbers.

"I think we're going to have to go into another major lockdown," he said.

When Newsom issued the stay-at-home order on March 19, the public largely listened and the state fared far better than places such as New York City and New Jersey. Even President Donald Trump, a frequent critic of California, heralded Newsom.

But the one-size-fits-all approach started to face resistance in a massive state with nearly 40 million residents and the world's fifth-largest economy. By early May, after rolling out a methodical reopening process and under pressure from rural counties with few infections, Newsom began ceding more control to counties to determine which businesses and activities could resume.

"Bottom line is: People can go at their own pace, and we are empowering our local health directors and county officials that understand their local communities and conditions," Newsom said May 18. "We're going to start seeing a lot more activity, let's just make sure we do it thoughtfully and very, very strategically."

But the shift toward local control created a patchwork of rules. Rachel Michelin, president of the California Retailers Association, said her organization that represents grocery chains, big box stores and others, had long requested more consistency. On masks, she pointed to an Orange County shopping complex with stores in two separate cities with different rules on masks, which made it hard for store workers to deal with an annoyed public.

"Literally you would go from Macy's furniture store which is in Irvine, which is where you would have to have your mask on, to Best Buy across the street and you wouldn't," she said. "Our perspective has always been it's easier to have one statewide ordinance or mandate that we all follow that we can all enforce."

Wachter, of the University California-San Francisco, said a monolithic set of rules wouldn't have been workable in a state as sprawling as California. But he's been surprised at how quickly California's fortunes turned, when cases started to climb in mid-June. That was right around the time when bars, gyms and other high-risk businesses were cleared to open in most counties, and about two weeks after Memorial

Day and widespread protests against police violence.

Californians may have adopted a false sense of security when the state didn't experience the horror facing New York City, he said. More than 30,000 people have died in New York; in California, about 6,000.

"The virus couldn't care less what the policy of the state is. The virus cares whether it can get to the back of your nose or the back of your throat," he said.

Going into the weekend, Newsom said the state will create strike teams to enforce the mask order at businesses. As cases surge, that's one of the most important things the state can do, Rimoim said.

"The mask order of course should have been in place earlier but you also have to be willing to enforce the mask order," she said.

Confirmed coronavirus cases are rising in 40 of 50 states

By JAKE COYLE and TERRY SPENCER undefined

FORT LAUDERDALE, Fla. (AP) — Four U.S. states — Arizona, California, Florida and Texas — reported a combined 25,000 new confirmed coronavirus cases Thursday as the infection curve rose in 40 of the 50 states heading into the July Fourth holiday weekend.

With the number of daily confirmed coronavirus cases nationwide climbing past 50,000, an alarming 36 states saw an increase in the percentage of tests coming back positive for the virus.

"What we've seen is a very disturbing week," Dr. Anthony Fauci, the government's top infectious-disease expert, said in a livestream with the American Medical Association.

In a major retreat that illustrated how dire things have become in Texas, Republican Gov. Greg Abbott ordered the wearing of masks across most of the state after refusing until recently to let even local governments impose such rules.

The surge has been blamed in part on Americans not covering their faces or following other social distancing rules as states lifted their lockdowns over the past few weeks. Fauci warned that if people don't start complying, "we're going to be in some serious difficulty."

The U.S. recorded 51,200 new confirmed cases Wednesday, according to a tally kept by Johns Hopkins University. That represents a doubling of the daily total over the past month and is higher even than what the country witnessed during the most lethal phase of the crisis in April and May, when the New York metropolitan area was easily the worst hot spot in the U.S.

All but 10 states are showing an upswing in newly reported cases over the past 14 days, according to data compiled by the volunteer COVID Tracking Project. The outbreaks are most severe in Arizona, Texas and Florida, which together with California have reclosed or otherwise clamped back down on bars, restaurants and movie theaters over the past week or so.

Nebraska and South Dakota were the only states outside the Northeast with a downward trend in cases.

While some of the increases may be explained by expanded testing, other indicators are grim, too, including hospitalizations and positive test rates. Over the past two weeks, the percentage of positive tests has doubled in Georgia, Kansas, Montana, Michigan, Missouri, Tennessee, Mississippi, South Carolina and Ohio. In Nevada, it has tripled. In Idaho, it is five times higher.

In Texas, where new cases in the past two weeks have swelled from about 2,400 a day to almost 8,000 on Wednesday, the positive rate ballooned from 8% to 14.5%. In Arizona, it has gone from 5.7% to 10.3%.

Abbott, who in May began one of the most aggressive reopening schedules of any governor, ordered the wearing of masks in all counties with at least 20 COVID-19 cases.

Abbott said in a video posted on Twitter that the state's lower infection rate and case counts after his stay-home order in April might have led some to think the "coast was clear."

But the number of people hospitalized in Texas because of COVID-19 has quadrupled since late May, after businesses began reopening.

"We are now at a point where the virus is spreading so fast, there is little margin for error," Abbott said. "I know that wearing a face covering is not the convenient thing to do, but I also know that wearing a face covering will help us to keep Texas open for business. And it will help Texans earn the paycheck they need."

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The surge comes as Americans head into a Fourth of July holiday that health officials warn could add fuel to the outbreak by drawing big crowds. Many municipalities have canceled fireworks displays. Beaches up and down California and Florida have been closed.

Florida reported more than 10,000 new confirmed cases for the first time Thursday. That is six times higher than the daily count of less than a month ago. The state also reported 67 deaths for the second time in a week and 325 new hospitalizations, one of the biggest 24-hour jumps in Florida yet. Georgia likewise saw its biggest single-day increase yet, nearly 3,500 cases.

"I'm discouraged because we didn't act fast enough to shut things down, and we could have done a much better job getting a handle on the virus," said Megan Archer, a 39-year-old woman from West Palm Beach, Florida, who lost her job with a county parks department during the outbreak.

Meanwhile, the government reported that U.S. unemployment fell to 11.1% in June as the economy added a solid 4.8 million jobs. But that figure may be outdated: The data was collected during the second week of June, before many states began to backtrack on restarting their economies.

Several Northeastern states have seen new infections slow down significantly, including New York, Massachusetts, Connecticut, Rhode Island and New Jersey, which allowed its Atlantic City casinos to reopen Thursday, though with no smoking, drinking or eating.

Pennsylvania, an outlier among Northeastern states, reported its highest one-day total of new cases since May, with more than 830, more than one-quarter of them in Pittsburgh's Allegheny County, which will impose a one-week shutdown of bars and restaurants and all gatherings of more than 25 people starting Friday.

Other states, like Colorado, a major summer destination where increases in infections have been less dramatic, are keeping a close eye on their neighbors.

"I've been watching that map. ... We're well aware of what's going on around us and we're very anxious," said Dr. Michelle Barron, medical director of infection prevention and control at UHealth University of Colorado Hospital. "The next couple of weeks are critical."

President Donald Trump on Wednesday seemed confident the virus would soon subside, telling Fox Business: "I think that, at some point, that's going to sort of just disappear, I hope."

The U.S. has reported at least 2.7 million cases and more than 128,000 dead, the highest toll in the world. Globally there have been 10.7 million confirmed cases and over 517,000 deaths, according to Johns Hopkins' count. The true toll is believed to be significantly higher, in part because of limited testing and mild cases that have been missed.

Other countries are also reporting an upswing in cases.

"We have now entered a new and treacherous phase in the life cycle of this pandemic," South African President Cyril Ramaphosa warned in a broadcast to the nation, which recorded more than 8,100 new infections, a one-day record, and has the biggest caseload on the continent.

India, the world's second-most populous country with more than 1.3 billion people, has reported nearly 100,000 new cases in the past four days alone.

Associated Press' Adriana Gomez Licon in Miami; Kelli Kennedy in Fort Lauderdale; Cara Anna in Johannesburg; and David Rising in Berlin contributed to this report. Coyle reported from New York.

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

Hugh Downs, genial presence on TV news and game shows, dies

By DAVID BAUDER AP Media Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Hugh Downs, the genial, versatile broadcaster who became one of television's most familiar and welcome faces with more than 15,000 hours on news, game and talk shows, has died at age 99.

Downs died of natural causes at his home in Scottsdale, Arizona, on Wednesday, said his great-niece, Molly Shaheen.

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"The Guinness Book of World Records" recognized Downs as having logged more hours in front of the camera than any television personality until Regis Philbin passed him in 2004.

He worked on NBC's "Today" and "Tonight" shows, the game show "Concentration," co-hosted the ABC magazine show "20/20" with Barbara Walters and the PBS series "Over Easy" and "Live From Lincoln Center."

His signature sign-off at the end of "20/20" told viewers: "We're in touch, so you be in touch."

"I've worked on so many different shows and done so many shows at the same time," Downs said in a 1986 Associated Press interview. "I once said I'd done everything on radio and television except play-by-play sports. Then I remembered I'd covered a boxing match in Lima, Ohio, in 1939."

Downs began his broadcasting career at the age of 18 as a \$12-a-week announcer on a small Ohio radio station. When television came along, he at first looked on it as a gimmick, but quickly realized "it was probably a juggernaut, and I'd better be in on it."

He was an announcer in Chicago, which was a television incubator in the 1950, for "Kukla, Fran & Ollie" and "Hawkins Falls," which he said was television's first soap opera. In 1954, he went to New York for "The Home Show."

In 1961, Newsweek described him as "a gluttonous reader with a first-rate brain that he keeps curried and exercised like a prize poodle."

His reputation was such that he even won the right to approve any commercial he was assigned to read, striving to keep dubious claims off the air.

"My loyalty was with the person tuning in," he said. "It was expedient. If I lost my credibility, what use would I be to a client?"

He showed his principled side again in 1997, when he took a vacation day on "20/20" rather than be part on a show that included an interview with Marv Albert after the sportscaster was caught in a lurid sexual assault scandal.

On Twitter Thursday, CBS News political correspondent Ed O'Keefe noted: "He retired from '20/20' in 1999 and died at age 99 in the year 2020. Sweet symmetry. Rest easy, Hugh Downs. One of the best."

Downs had a particular interest in science, once launching into a monologue on the Paar show on the science underlying water-skiing. It prompted Paar to quip, "Well, Hugh, when you drown, you'll know the reason why."

His interest in problems of the aging — he even earned a postgraduate degree in gerontology — was highlighted in his Public Broadcasting Service series "Over Easy" as well as many of his "20/20" pieces.

"We all suffer in our culture from the idea ... that youth was the big thing," he said.

"There has been kind of a loss of respect for older people, and we lose gleaning wisdom from older people. We lose the ability to see that impairment and decrepitude don't necessarily go along with age."

His work on "20/20" also showed his adventurous spirit, such as the time he got to ride a killer whale, and another time he put on breathing apparatus to swim near a great white shark. There was a hazardous expedition to the South Pole in which one participant nearly fell to his death.

"I'm interested in science, the environment, medicine and certain personalities," he said. "I just do the stories I want to do. I don't want to be just the anchor."

Downs began his work as Paar's second banana in 1957, after a stint as host of NBC's "The Home Show."

In a highly publicized incident in February 1960, Paar stormed off the air in a dispute involving network cutting a Paar "water closet" (toilet) joke the censors disliked. Downs won praise for calmly telling the audience "I'd like to think this is not final" and keeping the live show running until signoff time.

Downs said later that he expected that Paar would at any minute return to the stage "with some punch line or something. He didn't." But Downs said he was eventually grateful for the boost the brouhaha gave his career.

Paar finally returned to the show a few weeks later.

Paar's departure from "Tonight" in 1962 paved the way for Johnny Carson. Downs, meanwhile, began his nine-year run as host of the "Today" show. Walters was a "Today" colleague for part of that time. She admired Downs and praised his generosity and collegiality.

He expressed his views modestly in the 1995 book "The Box: An Oral History of Television, 1920-1961":

"In a way the less talent you have or deploy, the less chance you have of overexposure. That may be why I have been on network television more than anybody in the world."

Epstein pal arrested, accused of luring girls for sex abuse

By JIM MUSTIAN and LARRY NEUMEISTER Associated Press

British socialite Ghislaine Maxwell was arrested Thursday on charges she helped lure at least three girls — one as young as 14 — to be sexually abused by the late financier Jeffrey Epstein, who was accused of victimizing dozens of girls and women over many years.

According to the indictment, Maxwell, who lived for years with Epstein and was his frequent companion on trips around the world, facilitated his crimes and on some occasions joined him in sexually abusing the girls.

Epstein, 66, killed himself in a federal detention center in New York last summer while awaiting trial on sex trafficking charges.

Maxwell has, for years, been accused by many women of acting as a madam for Epstein, helping him scout young girls for abuse, then hiring them to give him massages, during which the girls were pressured into sex acts. In one lawsuit, a woman alleged Maxwell was the "highest-ranking employee" of Epstein's alleged sex trafficking enterprise. Those accusations, until now, never resulted in criminal charges.

The 58-year-old was arrested in Bradford, New Hampshire, where she was living on a wooded estate she purchased for \$1 million last December. The FBI had been keeping tabs on her after she disappeared from public view following Epstein's arrest a year ago.

"More recently we learned she had slithered away to a gorgeous property in New Hampshire, continuing to live a life of privilege while her victims live with the trauma inflicted upon them years ago," William Sweeney, head of the FBI's New York office, told a news conference Thursday.

Jennifer Araoz, who says Epstein raped her when she was 15, said she feared the financier's ring of conspirators for years.

"Now that the ring has been taken down, I know that I can't be hurt anymore," Araoz, now 33, said in a statement. "Day after day, I have waited for the news that Maxwell would be arrested and held accountable for her actions. Her arrest is a step in that direction, and it truly means that the justice system didn't forget about us."

The indictment, which was unsealed Thursday, included counts of conspiracy to entice minors to travel to engage in illegal sex acts, enticement of a minor to travel to engage in illegal sex acts, conspiracy to transport minors with intent to engage in criminal sexual activity, transportation of a minor with intent to engage in criminal sexual activity.

She was also accused of perjuring herself during a deposition in a civil lawsuit over alleged abuse.

"Maxwell lied because the truth, as alleged, was almost unspeakable," Audrey Strauss, the acting U.S. attorney in Manhattan, said.

Messages were sent Thursday to several of Maxwell's attorneys seeking comment. She has previously repeatedly denied wrongdoing and called some claims against her "absolute rubbish."

At a brief hearing Thursday, a magistrate judge ordered Maxwell to remain in custody while she is transferred to New York for a detention hearing there.

Among the most sensational accusations was a claim by Virginia Roberts Giuffre that Maxwell arranged for her to have sex with Britain's Prince Andrew at her London townhouse. Giuffre bolstered her allegations with a picture of her, Andrew and Maxwell that she said was taken at the time.

Andrew denied her story and Maxwell said in a deposition that Giuffre was "totally lying."

The prince was not mentioned in the indictment, and the charges covered Maxwell's dealings with Epstein only from 1994 through 1997, a period well before his alleged encounters with Giuffre in 2001.

Strauss said she would "welcome Prince Andrew coming in to talk with us," but did not answer further questions pertaining to these charges and Andrew.

The indictment focused on Epstein's alleged abuse of three specific girls at his Manhattan mansion

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and other residences in Palm Beach, Florida; Santa Fe, New Mexico, and London. Their names were not revealed in court filings.

Prosecutors' allegations mirrored many claims from civil lawsuits against Maxwell, saying she would "entice and groom" minor girls by asking them about their lives, their schools and their families.

"Through this process, Maxwell and Epstein enticed victims to engage in sexual activity with Epstein. In some instances, Maxwell was present for and participated in the sexual abuse of minor victims," according to the indictment.

Maxwell is the daughter of a British publishing magnate Robert Maxwell, who died in 1991 after falling off his yacht near the Canary Islands. At the time, he was facing allegations that he had illegally looted pension funds from his businesses.

Maxwell was in an intimate relationship with Epstein for years and also was paid by him to manage his various properties, according to the indictment, which included a photograph of Epstein with his arm around Maxwell and his head nuzzling hers. Strauss, at the news conference, stood silent, pointing at the picture as news crews captured the moment.

Strauss promised the investigation was continuing and urged other victims to come forward.

In a memo seeking Maxwell's detention, prosecutors wrote that she "poses an extreme risk of flight." Maxwell has three passports, is wealthy with lots of international connections, and has "absolutely no reason to stay in the United States and face the possibility of a lengthy prison sentence," they wrote.

Epstein was initially investigated in Florida and pleaded guilty to state charges in 2008 that allowed him to avoid a lengthy prison sentence. He was free a little after a year in prison.

At the time, a federal prosecutor in Florida signed off on an agreement, initially filed in secret, that barred the federal government from charging "any potential co-conspirators of Epstein."

But Geoffrey Berman, the U.S. attorney in Manhattan until he was fired last month, argued that federal prosecutors in New York were not bound by that agreement and brought a sweeping indictment against Epstein.

Maxwell's indictment was celebrated by lawyers for some Epstein accusers.

"Today is a very good day," said Brad Edwards, an attorney representing Giuffre and several other accusers.

Spencer T. Kuvin, who represents some of the women, said Maxwell was "hopefully ... the first of many co-conspirators to face the consequences of this horrific crimes."

Associated Press writer Curt Anderson contributed to this report from Miami and Danica Kirka contributed from London.

House judiciary panel to interview ousted NY prosecutor

By MARY CLARE JALONICK Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The ousted former U.S. attorney for Manhattan will sit down with the House Judiciary Committee next week for a closed-door interview as the panel investigates politicization in the Justice Department.

Geoffrey Berman, the former U.S. attorney for the Southern District of New York who led investigations into allies of President Donald Trump, will appear in person for the transcribed interview July 9, according to a person familiar with the meeting who requested anonymity because it hasn't yet been announced. The committee plans to publicly release the transcript.

Berman left his job last month after an extraordinary standoff in which he refused to resign until Trump himself fired him. Attorney General William Barr had attempted to force him to resign under pressure, but he refused to go.

Justice officials said Berman's investigations would remain undisturbed, but Democrats on Capitol Hill have accused Barr of politicizing the agency and acting more like Trump's personal lawyer than the country's chief law enforcement officer. The Judiciary Committee is investigating the politicization and is scheduled

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to hear from Barr himself at the end of the month.

House Judiciary Committee Chairman Jerrold Nadler, D-N.Y., said last week that "the effort to remove Mr. Berman is part of a clear and dangerous pattern of conduct that began when Mr. Barr took office and continues to this day."

Among the most high profile investigations Berman oversaw was into the business dealings of Rudy Giuliani, Trump's personal lawyer. The Southern District has also prosecuted a number of Trump associates, including Trump's former personal lawyer and fixer Michael Cohen, who served a prison sentence for lying to Congress and campaign finance crimes.

Berman has overseen the prosecution of two Florida businessmen, Lev Parnas and Igor Fruman, who were associates of Giuliani and tied to the Ukraine impeachment investigation. The men were charged in October with federal campaign finance violations, including hiding the origin of a \$325,000 donation to a group supporting Trump's reelection.

The White House nominated Securities and Exchange Commission Chairman Jay Clayton, a well-connected Wall Street lawyer with virtually no experience as a federal prosecutor, to replace Berman.

But Sen. Lindsey Graham, R-S.C., the chairman of the Senate Judiciary Committee and a close Trump ally, said he was unlikely to proceed with Clayton's nomination unless New York's senators, Democrats Chuck Schumer and Kirsten Gillibrand, gave their consent to the pick. They have both said that they will not.

Herman Cain treated for COVID-19 after attending Trump rally

By AAMER MADHANI Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — 2012 GOP presidential candidate Herman Cain is being treated for the coronavirus at an Atlanta-area hospital, according to a statement posted on his Twitter account Thursday.

It's not clear when or where Cain was infected, but he was hospitalized less than two weeks after attending President Donald Trump's campaign rally in Tulsa, Oklahoma. He did not meet with Trump there, according to the campaign.

Cain, 74, was hospitalized after developing "serious" symptoms but is "awake and alert," according to the statement.

The former pizza company executive has been an outspoken backer of the president and was named by the campaign as a co-chair of Black Voices for Trump.

"I realize people will speculate about the Tulsa rally, but Herman did a lot of traveling the past week, including to Arizona where cases are spiking," Dan Calabrese, who has been editor of HermanCain.com, wrote on the website. "I don't think there's any way to trace this to the one specific contact that caused him to be infected. We'll never know."

Cain took part in a Trump campaign livestream before the rally with campaign senior adviser Katrina Pierson and Texas state Rep. James White.

Asked whether Cain met at the rally with other senior campaign or administration officials, Trump campaign spokesperson Tim Murtaugh responded that "contact tracing was conducted after the Tulsa rally but we do not comment regarding the medical information of individuals."

"Regardless, Mr. Cain did not meet with the President," Murtaugh added.

At least six campaign staffers and two members of the Secret Service working in advance of the Tulsa rally tested positive for COVID-19. An Oklahoma-based journalist has also confirmed testing positive soon after attending the rally.

Trump faced criticism for holding the big-arena event despite warnings from public health experts that it is not yet safe to hold mass gatherings. More than 6,000 people attended the rally at the BOK Center, an arena that can seat more than 19,000.

Cain's official Twitter account on Wednesday included a posting of an article about South Dakota Gov. Kristi Noem declining to impose mask-wearing or social distancing rules at Friday's fireworks display at Mount Rushmore, an Independence Day weekend event that Trump is scheduled to attend. The Twitter posting included the addendum, "Masks will not be mandatory for the event, which will be attended by President Trump. PEOPLE ARE FED UP!"

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

Cain briefly rose to the top of polls during the 2012 race for the Republican presidential nomination by highlighting a plan to simplify the tax code with what he called the 9-9-9 plan. On the campaign trail, he spoke about being diagnosed in 2006 with stage 4 liver cancer and his doctors giving him slim hope for long-term survival.

More recently, he has kept involved in conservative politics as a commentator on Newsmax.

As Florida virus numbers rise, NBA arrivals draw closer

By TIM REYNOLDS AP Basketball Writer

The coronavirus numbers kept climbing Thursday, with a single-day record for new cases being set in Florida and the NBA revealing that the count of players and staff from the 22 remaining teams that have confirmed diagnoses of COVID-19 continues to grow.

The NBA numbers: nine more positive players from tests conducted between June 24-29 to bring the total to 25 who have been positive since mandated testing began June 23, as well 10 positive-testing staff members from the teams that will start arriving at the Disney complex near Orlando, Florida next week for the resumption of the season.

And statewide, health departments around Florida got more than 10,000 new positive cases back on Wednesday, a single-day record for a state that remains very much under siege from the virus and likely a troubling sign for the NBA — which remains hopeful that highly restrictive rules at Disney will keep players and staff safe.

"It's so much uncertainty," San Antonio guard DeMar DeRozan said Thursday. "Name me a player who can give you an answer on anything. I wish I could give you an answer. It's tough, man. It's tough. I sit up here and tell guys on my team we've just got to take things day by day, because it becomes overwhelming and frustrating at times when you try to look at the whole spectacle of things and try to figure it out."

Percentage-wise, the NBA numbers are much lower than the rate of positive tests in many hotspot areas, including the average in Florida. With 351 players tested through June 29, the league had 25 positives for a 7.1% rate. Among 884 team staff tested between June 23 and June 29, the rate was minuscule — the 10 positives equate to a mere 1.1% positive rate.

Under NBA policy, "any player, coach or team staff member who tested positive will remain in self-isolation until they satisfy public health protocols for discontinuing isolation and have been cleared by a physician."

Still, it is an issue that, as NBA Commissioner Adam Silver has said many times, the league cannot outrun. Thursday marked the 113th day since the league suspended its season after Utah's All-Star duo of Rudy Gobert and Donovan Mitchell tested positive; they may have largely recovered physically, but there is still clearly a strain in the relationship, something Mitchell discussed in a teleconference Thursday.

"I wasn't happy in the beginning," Mitchell said. "I've said that publicly. It's no secret. ... And on top of that, it really took away from like what guys were working on. We've talked about what we've been working on for the past two months, and I feel like that's really been hijacked because of this whole thing."

As the numbers rise, the games get closer.

At Disney, preparations continued for the arrivals that start on Tuesday. Practice courts have been put into place in what typically are hotel ballrooms. The arenas that will play host to games are being set up for NBA needs, and some staff were getting set to arrive to begin their quarantines.

"I trust the NBA, and the bubble," New Orleans rookie Zion Williamson said. "We're going to be in a safe environment. We're taking advice from certain situations. It's crazy — we're actually about to go. It's a lot to process, but I am excited."

So is Los Angeles Lakers forward Anthony Davis, whose team is going to Disney with serious title hopes. That said, Davis is also very aware of what's happening with the numbers.

"For the safety of the league, for the safety of all the players and the people there, I think everyone

would be mindful of following the rules," Davis said. "Obviously, the numbers are spiking in Orlando and I don't think anyone wants to get COVID — so I don't think that guys will put themselves or other players and staff that's going to be in the bubble in jeopardy. I know the NBA and Adam Silver talked about doing as much as they can to keep the bubble as safe as possible. I trust in them."

More AP NBA: <https://apnews.com/NBA> and https://twitter.com/AP_Sports

Buttigieg, South Carolina mayor teaming up on COVID effort

By MEG KINNARD Associated Press

COLUMBIA, S.C. (AP) — Former South Bend, Indiana, mayor and presidential candidate Pete Buttigieg has teamed up with the mayor of South Carolina's capital city to help municipalities stem the spread of the coronavirus.

Columbia, South Carolina, Mayor Steve Benjamin said Thursday that he and Buttigieg have been co-chairing the Pandemic Resilience Working Group for America's Mayors. The group is organized by the COVID-19 Study Group at the Edmond J. Safra Center for Ethics at Harvard University.

The guidelines are important for cities, which have different concerns and needs amid the outbreak, Benjamin said. According to the mayor, his effort with Buttigieg has focused on providing accessible guidance to both policymakers and the public on how to target and suppress the spread of COVID-19, including a color-coded map to categorize an area's risk level based on the number of new daily cases.

"The roadmap that we've been able to lay out with the leadership of these amazing researchers, public health and policy can stop the spread of the virus, save lives and our economy," Benjamin said. "I'm also excited to work with Pete Buttigieg again. As America was able to see over the course of last year, he's one of the brightest minds in our country."

He added that other mayors' insights on what works — and what doesn't work — in their cities helped determine variant ways to stamp out the virus.

Benjamin is among other South Carolina mayors who have implemented regulations intended to stem the spread of coronavirus more stringent than at the state level, including a curfew intended to keep residents at home and a requirement that people wear facial coverings in public spaces. South Carolina Gov. Henry McMaster, who has stressed the need to wear a mask in public, has said a statewide mandate is unenforceable.

Recent escalating numbers have placed South Carolina third in the nation in newly diagnosed cases over the past 14 days adjusted by population.

Health officials on Thursday reported 19 additional people in the state had died after contracting coronavirus, for a total of 777 confirmed deaths since the pandemic began. More than 39,500 positive tests for the virus have been conducted, and more than 1,100 people were hospitalized in South Carolina after developing COVID-19.

Benjamin's relationship with Buttigieg initially developed when Benjamin served as president of the U.S. Conference of Mayors. Reportedly considered to be a top choice for VP on Hillary Clinton's 2016 presidential campaign, Benjamin — one of South Carolina's highest-profile Black politicians — played an outsized role in the 2020 race, ultimately endorsing former New York City Mayor Mike Bloomberg.

Struggling to connect with Black voters who comprise a large majority of Democrats in South Carolina, Buttigieg departed the 2020 Democratic presidential nominating contest shortly after garnering only 8% in the state's February 29 primary.

Last month, the University of Notre Dame announced it hired Buttigieg for the 2020-2021 academic year. Buttigieg will serve as a faculty fellow in the Notre Dame Institute for Advanced Study, working on two research projects: one that explores how to restore trust in political institutions and another that considers the forces shaping the 2020s. He will also teach an undergraduate course on the importance of trust in different fields.

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Meg Kinnard can be reached at <http://twitter.com/MegKinnardAP>

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

This story has been corrected to show that Buttigieg received 8% of the vote in the South Carolina primary, not 2%.

AP Explains: 5 key takeaways from a strong June jobs report

By PAUL WISEMAN AP Economics Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — At first glance, the June employment report was a blockbuster.

The U.S. economy produced a record 4.8 million added jobs last month, walloping expectations. And the unemployment rate sank from 13.3% all the way to 11.1%.

"Today's announcement," President Donald Trump declared Thursday after the report was released, "proves that our economy is roaring back."

Maybe. But most economists warn that the risks ahead outweigh the reasons to cheer as the economy and the job market struggle to emerge from a devastating meltdown triggered by the coronavirus.

Further hiring gains are imperiled by a resurgence of COVID-19 cases throughout the South and West. And despite a solid rebound in employment, the job market remains badly damaged — by the pandemic itself, by the lockdowns imposed to contain it and by a loss of confidence among Americans fearful of returning to shops and restaurants until a vaccine or an effective treatment for the virus is available.

Even after superb hiring reports for May and June, the economy has regained only about one-third of the 22 million jobs it lost to the pandemic recession, according to Thursday's jobs report. And the unemployment rate still exceeds the highest rate during the 2009-2009 Great Recession.

Here are five major takeaways from a jobs report that was surprisingly robust yet may not fully reflect a fast-evolving employment market.

THE GOOD NEWS MAY BE OLD NEWS

Just as the economy seemed to be gathering momentum after springtime lockdowns of businesses, confirmed virus cases began resurging throughout the South and the West. The spike in cases forced state and local governments that had allowed many businesses to reopen to suddenly suspend or reverse those plans.

Many bars and restaurants, newly reopened in late May and early June, shut down again and laid off workers — again. The June report didn't include those job cuts.

"Remember that the (June jobs) data are capturing the data from the middle of May through the middle of June, given the survey period," economists at Bank of America Global Research cautioned. "It captures the state of the labor market before the economy was hit by the rise in virus cases in the Sun Belt."

Researchers who track business activity in real time have detected evidence of a slump. Homebase, a provider of time-tracking software for small businesses, discovered that the number of hours worked at its client companies has leveled off after having risen sharply in May and early June.

Likewise, the data firm Womply found that the proportion of bars that are closed in Texas, Florida, Tennessee and some other states grew last week after having declined steadily since April or early May.

What's more, the government reported Thursday that the number of laid-off Americans seeking unemployment benefits last week remained at an elevated pace — 1.43 million, down slightly from the previous week but alarmingly high by historical standards.

"With the number of COVID-19 cases accelerating and some states delaying re-opening or imposing new restrictions, we are concerned that a significant number of individuals may become furloughed again," Jay Bryson, chief economist at Wells Fargo Securities, wrote in a research report. "The outsized gains in payrolls that were registered in May and June likely won't be repeated in the next few months."

JOB MARKET FACES A LONG CLIMB BACK

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Despite the April-May bounce-back, the employment market remains in dire shape: 137.8 million Americans were working in June — 14.7 million fewer than in February, before the pandemic began to inflict deep economic damage. Even May's 11.1% unemployment rate was the third-highest, behind April and May, in monthly records that go back to 1948.

And the vast majority of May's job gains appeared to come from businesses that had recalled employees who were provisionally let go during the virus lockdowns: The number of Americans on temporary layoffs sank by a record 4.8 million last month.

Ominously, by contrast, the number of people labeled "permanent job losers" surged by 588,000 last month. That was the biggest such jump since February 2009, in the depths of the Great Recession. These people will likely find it more difficult to regain employment.

Joe Biden, the presumptive Democratic presidential nominee, denounced Trump for declaring what Biden said was a premature victory over job losses:

"President Trump has spiked the ball and made this about him. He doesn't seem to realize he's not even on the 50-yard line."

RACIAL DISPARITIES PERSIST

White workers continue to fare better than Black workers.

In June, the jobless rate for white Americans fell from 12.4% in May to 10.1%. For African Americans, the rate dropped less, from 16.8% to 15.4%. Historically, the unemployment rate for Black workers has been 1.5 to 2 times the rate for white workers.

That gap had narrowed in the early stages of the pandemic because African Americans work disproportionately in many front-line jobs in warehouses, grocery stores and takeout eateries. Such businesses were generally regarded as "essential" and so managed to retain most of their employees.

But in the past couple of months, the racial gap has widened again.

"The pandemic has really shone a spotlight on how lopsided our economic system is, particularly in terms of the labor market," said Steve Rick, chief economist at the insurer CUNA Mutual Group. "It's clear that Black communities have been disproportionately affected by this recession."

WAGES SHRANK

Average hourly earnings at private companies fell 1.2% to \$29.39 in June. For rank-and-file workers specifically, hourly earnings dropped 0.9% to \$24.74.

The reason wasn't so much that employers imposed pay cuts. Rather, the workers who were rehired in June, at bars, restaurants and other such establishments, disproportionately work in lower-paying occupations. That trend pulled down average wages for the month.

"The decline reflects the extent to which June's job gains were skewed toward lower-wage, lower-hour industry groups, such as retail trade and leisure and hospitality services," said Richard Moody, chief economist at Regions Financial.

A job-quality index produced by Cornell University's law school found that nearly 87% of June's growth in private sector hiring came from "low quality" jobs — non-management positions that offer below-average weekly earnings.

JOB GAINS WERE BROAD-BASED

Employers were hiring all over the economy last month.

Restaurants, bars, hotels and other leisure and hospitality businesses, hard hit by closures in the spring, added 2.1 million jobs in June. Even so, they employ 4.8 million fewer people than they did in February.

Retailers added 740,000 jobs, health care 475,000, manufacturers 356,000 and construction firms 158,000. "Job gains in June were broad-based across 75% of the private sector," noted Kathy Bostjancic of Oxford Economics.

AP Economics Writers Martin Crutsinger and Christopher Rugaber contributed to this report.

Landslide at Myanmar jade mine kills at least 162 people

By ZAW MOE HTET and PYAE SONE WIN Associated Press

HPAKANT, Myanmar (AP) — At least 162 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 that critics blame on the government's failure to take action against unsafe conditions.

The Myanmar Fire Service Department, which coordinates rescues and other emergency services, announced about 12 hours after the morning disaster that 162 bodies had been recovered from the landslide in Hpakant, the center of the world's biggest and most lucrative jade mining industry.

The most detailed estimate of Myanmar's jade industry said it generated about \$31 billion in 2014. Hpakant is a rough and remote area in Kachin state, 950 kilometers (600 miles) north of Myanmar's biggest city, Yangon.

"The jade miners were smothered by a wave of mud," the Fire Service said.

It said 54 injured people were taken to hospitals. The tolls announced by other state agencies and media lagged behind the fire agency, which was most closely involved. An unknown number of people are feared missing.

Those taking part in the recovery operations, which were suspended after dark, included the army and other government units and local volunteers.

U.N. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres expressed deep sadness at the deaths, sent condolences to families of the victims and Myanmar's government and people.

Guterres reiterated "the readiness of the United Nations to contribute to ongoing efforts to address the needs of the affected population," said his spokesman, Stephane Dujarric.

The London-based environmental watchdog Global Witness said the accident "is a damning indictment of the government's failure to curb reckless and irresponsible mining practices in Kachin state's jade mines."

"The government should immediately suspend large-scale, illegal and dangerous mining in Hpakant and ensure companies that engage in these practices are no longer able to operate," Global Witness said in a statement.

At the site of the tragedy, a crowd gathered in the rain around corpses shrouded in blue and red plastic sheets placed 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 were then hung on crossed wooden poles shouldered by the recovery teams.

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

"The multi-billion dollar sector is dominated by powerful military-linked companies, armed groups and cronies that have been allowed to operate without effective social and environmental controls for years," Global Witness said. Although the military is no longer directly in power in Myanmar, it is still a major force in government and exercises authority in remote regions.

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, covering 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 in abandoned mining pits 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.

Global Witness, which investigates misuse of revenues from natural resources, documented the \$31 billion estimate for Myanmar's jade industry in a 2015 report that said most of the wealth went to individuals and

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companies tied to the country's former military rulers. More recent reliable figures are not readily available.

It said at the time the report was released that the legacy to local people of such business arrangements "is a dystopian wasteland in which scores of people at a time are buried alive in landslides."

In its statement Thursday, Global Witness blamed the civilian government of Aung San Suu Kyi's National League for Democracy party, which came to power in 2016, for failing "to implement desperately needed reforms, allowing deadly mining practices to continue and gambling the lives of vulnerable workers in the country's jade mines."

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.

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

Pyae Son Win reported from Yangon, Myanmar.

NASCAR and IndyCar collide for racing extravaganza at Indy

By JENNA FRYER AP Auto Racing Writer

INDIANAPOLIS (AP) — The once-frosty schism between the two biggest racing series in the United States has finally thawed and the result is a blockbuster event at Indianapolis Motor Speedway — even without fans.

NASCAR's elite Cup Series will share a venue with IndyCar on the same weekend for the first time, a doubleheader conveniently forced by the frantic rescheduling required by the coronavirus pandemic. Even so, it is an important step in putting forth a united front for the sake of motorsports.

"We're all racers. We want racing to be successful," said Kevin Harvick, the current NASCAR points leader and a winner at the Brickyard last year. "I know it's kind of had that stigma for a number of years there's the IndyCar guys and there's the NASCAR guys ... racers are racers. Everybody wants to see a good race and be part of a cool event."

The fracture between the two leagues dates to at least 1954 when NASCAR founder Bill France Sr. was allegedly told by IMS security he'd been ordered to leave the speedway. France was already working on his own big race track, Daytona International Speedway, and he vowed it would give Indianapolis a run for its money.

The battle was on and neither side had any desire to build a working relationship. IndyCar, called CART in its heyday, dwarfed the Southern-based stock car series. But the open wheel racing split the mid 1990s in which Tony George created his own series gave NASCAR an opening to capitalize as CART and the Indy Racing League fractured its base. NASCAR exploded in popularity and blew past its bitter rival as the place to race.

As years passed and NASCAR became an annual staple at Indianapolis, the relationship between the two series has improved. Jay Frye, who spent decades working in NASCAR, is now president of IndyCar. Steve Phelps, just the fifth president in NASCAR history, has never held a longstanding vendetta against the series.

Most important, though, is that motorsports titan Roger Penske now owns IndyCar and the speedway and has the juice to broker such a weekend. When the coronavirus pandemic blew holes in both series' schedules, Penske plopped the IndyCar road course race originally scheduled for May on the shared weekend with NASCAR.

IndyCar will open the spectacle on Saturday with its second event of the season, then NASCAR's second-tier Xfinity Series will make its debut later that day on the same road course. The Cup Series races Sunday on the 2.5-mile oval. COVID-19 restrictions mean IndyCar and NASCAR teams and drivers will not mingle,

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use different entry points at the speedway and work from different garages.

The inability to open the gates to spectators is the one downside to what is an otherwise monumental moment for both series.

"To me, that's the unfortunate part, we don't get to have fans in here," Penske said. "But I went to Jim France and Steve Phelps and said, 'Look, the Brickyard has not been able to be what you have hoped, and now that we run the series and the speedway, we can make the decisions and we can get this done and it will be good for everyone.'"

This new pairing could ultimately smooth the road ahead for an entire industry battling for attendance, television ratings and sponsorship. NBC Sports is IndyCar's broadcast partner and begins its portion of the NASCAR season this weekend. Sam Flood, executive producer and president of production, has tried to move away from head-to-head scheduling that forced viewers to choose which race to watch.

"We think it's a really important crossover to have people watch racing ... to get people to sample different series, and you shouldn't just be a NASCAR fan, you should be a racing fan," Flood said. "I think this is a great celebration of motorsports. The interest in motorsports is high. We just need people to watch each other's forms of racing and grow the overall pool of racing fans.

"And that's why this is so valuable, and that's why we're so lucky Roger stepped in here."

There are no drivers scheduled to compete in both series, but NBC Sports analyst Townsend Bell will call the IndyCar race and then fly to Daytona to race in the IMSA sports car event. Seven-time NASCAR champion Jimmie Johnson plans to drive five-time IndyCar champion Scott Dixon's car in a test on the road course next week.

Both IndyCar and the Cup Series will work from the garages once used by Formula One, and the NASCAR group can't even enter the facility until IndyCar has cleared out. It means drivers can't socialize the way initially imagined on a weekend such as this, and they'll have to watch the other series' on television.

"I don't think I'll be able to watch the race. I wish I could have. It's the situation we're in," said Simon Pagenaud, winner of both the road course race and the Indianapolis 500 last year. He indicated IndyCar will be exiting the speedway grounds before the Xfinity Series goes green.

"At the end of the day, it's a historical moment, I think not just for American racing but for worldwide racing. I look forward to the weekend and seeing the reaction afterward."

Coronavirus concerns freeze Vanilla Ice show

By JIM VERTUNO Associated Press

AUSTIN, Texas (AP) — Vanilla Ice cooled off plans for a concert in Texas after taking considerable heat for an event that sought to gather hundreds of fans in one of the nation's coronavirus hot spots.

The 1990s rapper with the hit single "Ice Ice Baby" had been scheduled to play a lakeside show just outside Austin on Friday, but on Thursday he announced it was being postponed.

"Due to the increase in COVID-19 numbers in Austin we're gonna move the concert to a better date," Vanilla Ice tweeted. "We were hoping for better Coronavirus numbers by July but Unfortunately the numbers have increased quite a bit so for the safety and health of everyone we're going to stay home."

Barrett Brannam, who owns the venue where Vanilla Ice had been scheduled to play, said the performer — real name Robert Van Winkle — had expressed concern about the health of his fans and himself. Brannam said Saturday's planned appearance by 1990s R&B group Color Me Badd also was postponed. He said both Vanilla Ice and Color Me Badd would perform at a later date, but he didn't know when.

"Hard to say. Could be later this summer or not until next summer. We don't know how long this virus will be around," he said.

Texas Gov. Greg Abbott last week shut down bars and clubs in an effort to halt what he called a "massive spread" of the coronavirus. But the Emerald Point Bar & Grill is still open and hosting live music because it is a restaurant and performances can take place outside.

The Vanilla Ice show drew widespread attention — and criticism — when the rapper posted about it on social media Wednesday. Only 84 tickets had been sold before the online ticket broker suspended sales,

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Brannam said.

"I take the coronavirus serious. But we can't live in a bubble," the rapper tweeted before canceling Thursday. "I think at this point we all understand the severity of it. (P)ractice social distancing and wear a mask. This is an outside venue, Fourth of July on the lake with fireworks. Plenty of room for distancing."

The rapper's management company didn't immediately respond to messages seeking comment.

Brannam said he hadn't come under any pressure to cancel the show from state or local governments but he has been swamped with calls of complaints.

Vanilla Ice played the same venue last year in front of 1,800 people and is booked for the holiday weekend for the next two years, Brannam said. Friday's concert was booked in 2019, he said.

"I didn't know about COVID when I booked this show. Nobody did," Brannam said.

Brannam said the rapper had committed to asking fans to wear masks and follow proper social distancing guidelines. The venue was going to be checking patrons' temperatures at the entrance and giving a mask to anyone who needed one, he said.

The restaurant has been hosting live music performances since it reopened in May. Brannam said no one complained until it was a Vanilla Ice concert.

Brannam said he postponed upcoming concerts by Coolio and Tone Loc next weekend because he wouldn't lose money.

"Vanilla Ice, he's poised for people to poke fun at. Nobody was saying anything until he made his post. That's when everything went crazy," Brannam said. "I'm the most hated person on the planet right now over a Vanilla Ice show."

US, Russia share a complex and bloody history in Afghanistan

By KATHY GANNON Associated Press

ISLAMABAD (AP) — Moscow and Washington are intertwined in a complex and bloody history in Afghanistan, with both suffering thousands of dead and wounded in conflicts lasting for years.

Now both superpowers are linked again over Afghanistan, with intelligence reports indicating Russia secretly offered bounties to the Taliban to kill American troops there.

But analysts suggest that despite these apparent differences, the two adversaries actually have much in common, especially when it comes to what a postwar Afghanistan should look like: Both want a stable country that does not serve as a base for extremists to export terrorism.

"The Russian endgame is an Afghanistan which will neither support jihadi movements in the former U.S.S.R. nor host American bases that might one day be used against Russia," says Anatol Lieven, a Georgetown University professor in the Middle Eastern state of Qatar and a senior fellow at the New American Foundation.

Even the Pentagon said this week in a report to the U.S. Congress that Russia backed Washington's deal with the Taliban as the best path forward, while at the same time the Kremlin has sought to cultivate interest with the group, limit the West's military presence and encourage operations against Islamic State militants.

Lieven, who studied the Soviet Union's invasion of the country in 1979 and its subsequent occupation, defeat and withdrawal a decade later, said Moscow would "prefer to see a mixed government in Afghanistan, with Taliban power limited."

He says Moscow has not forgotten its experience in Afghanistan, where at least 15,000 Soviet troops were killed in fighting that began as an effort to prop up a communist ally and soon became a grinding campaign against the U.S.-backed mujahedeen insurgency.

But in today's Afghanistan, the threat facing Russia is the Islamic State affiliate and its allies known as the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan, a terrorist organization that has taken aim at Russia's Muslim regions and was born of brewing discontent in Muslim-dominated Central Asia.

Even as Russia and the U.S. vie for influence in Afghanistan, they are aligned in their opposition to IS. Lieven says Moscow regards the Taliban as the lesser evil and, like Washington, sees it as an ally in the fight against both IS and the IMU.

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Remnants of the mujahedeen groups in Afghanistan are now warlords-turned-political leaders in the Kabul government and also are in the ranks of the Taliban. The chief Taliban negotiator in peace talks with the United States, Mullah Abdul Ghani Baradar, fought in the 1980s on the side of the U.S.-backed mujahedeen, as did Mullah Mohammed Omar, the founder of the Taliban.

"A humiliating defeat of the U.S. and NATO forces in Afghanistan by the Taliban would provide some in Moscow with a feel-good sense of revenge for the U.S. support to mujahedeen groups in the 1980s that led to the humiliating defeat and withdrawal of Soviet forces," says Andrew Wilder, vice president of the Asia Program at the U.S. Institute of Peace.

Wilder said Moscow's vision of a postwar Afghanistan is much the same as Washington's.

"They would prefer an end state not that different from what the U.S. desires – a political settlement that leads to the withdrawal of U.S. and NATO forces but leaves behind a relatively stable and ethnically inclusive government that can ensure Afghanistan doesn't again become a safe haven for transnational terrorist groups," he said.

He said Afghanistan's neighbors, including the strategically sensitive nations of Central Asia bordering Russia, would be "the biggest losers" if a withdrawal of U.S. and NATO forces led to a collapse of the country and a return to the anarchy of the 1990s.

As for the reports of bounties being paid to the insurgents, analysts also say that cash from abroad has flowed into Afghanistan for years. Loyalties are fluid in the country and money has been used to buy influence, curry favor or manipulate government officials since the collapse of the Taliban in 2001.

As far back as 2013, suitcases of cash given to the Afghan government by the CIA was being blamed for runaway corruption. Washington's own watchdog, the Special Inspector general for Afghan Reconstruction (SIGAR) has alleged that billions of dollars have been pocketed by government officials, warlords, drug lords and insurgents.

The money was pumped into Afghanistan by the U.S., Iran, Pakistan, Russia and India.

In Kabul's Sherpur neighborhood, the multistory marble mansions owned by warlords, drug lords and Kabul's political elite were built by corruption, according to Afghans who stage anti-graft protests. Last month, a group of lawyers and economists asked the International Monetary Fund not to lend money to Afghanistan because it would be pocketed by officials.

Insurgents also benefit from the exploding drug trade and have taken payments from countries seeking to buy influence, analysts say.

"U.S. military officials have often suggested that Russia is funneling arms to the Taliban, but the evidence hasn't been nearly as strong as it is for Pakistani and, more recently, Iranian support for the Taliban," said Michael Kugelman, deputy director of the Asia Program at the Wilson Center.

"While Moscow has sought to scale up its engagement with the Taliban in recent years, much of this has been meant to promote support for peace and reconciliation. And this is part of a broader Russian objective to increase its influence in Afghanistan," he said.

But for Brian G. Williams, author of "Counter Jihad. The America Military Experience in Afghanistan, Iraq and Syria," and a former employee of the CIA's Counter Terrorism Center, Russia's endgame in Afghanistan is to hand Washington a humiliating defeat.

"The generals in the FSB (Federal Security Service) and GRU (Main Intelligence Directorate) would again be toasting should American Chinooks be forced to chaotically evacuate U.S. personnel from the U.S. Embassy in Kabul," he said,

Williams said President Vladimir Putin "has always seen America as its primary competitor for power in post-Soviet Eurasia."

Democrats say US needs to address protective gear shortage

By GEOFF MULVIHILL Associated Press

A congressional committee criticized President Donald Trump's administration on Thursday for a series of problems in distributing personal protective and testing equipment during the coronavirus pandemic

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and called on the administration to come up with a better plan.

"We need urgent action from the federal government now, before this virus spins further out of control," said Rep. James Clyburn, a South Carolina Democrat and chair of a House committee overseeing the nation's pandemic response.

He said that associations of doctors and nurses and others have noted a continuing shortage of N95 masks and other protective gear. Democratic committee members also said the federal government has been at times too hands-off in leaving procurement up to state and local governments and individual health care providers, and at other times they have steered purchases to a specific contractor.

In a sometimes testy hearing before the committee, administration officials defended their work. Rear Adm. John Polowczyk, for instance, outlined how the federal government worked with the industry from late March through April to fly in shipments of gear from overseas to hand out to hospitals and others. Without taking that approach, he said, equipment would have taken far longer to get in place.

Polowczyk said that most states have at least a month's worth of protective gear on hand now, and some are working on building up to a 120-day supply. He also said the federal government, whose stockpile was depleted in April, is on course to build a 90-day supply.

Some Democrats questioned an earlier report he made projecting that federal supplies would fall short of demand. But he said that didn't take into account equipment bought by states — and that the demand included gear for some industries, such as janitors, who may not need medical-grade equipment.

Democrats on the committee questioned the federal response in the earliest days of the coronavirus outbreak.

"The administration completely and utterly failed to provide the private sector with critical guidance" on how to prioritize distribution of gear from January through March, said Rep. Carolyn Maloney, a New York Democrat.

Republicans on the committee tried to change the subject, saying the Democrats who control it were not looking at the right places as it digs into the coronavirus pandemic. Rep. Jim Jordan, an Ohio Republican, for instance, called on the committee to investigate whether China withheld information about the virus as the outbreak started.

Jordan also called for a probe of how some states sent patients with the virus to nursing homes and denounced the way Democratic governors and mayors kept churches closed in some places in the name of public health while not stopping protests over racial injustice. He specifically cited New York Mayor Bill de Blasio breaking up the funeral of a rabbi in Brooklyn in April.

"You go to someone's funeral, you can get arrested," Jordan said. "You can protest in the streets, not maintaining social distancing."

Follow Mulvihill at <http://www.twitter.com/geoffmulvihill>

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.

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 a 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. Muslim Kashmiris generally support the rebels' goal of uniting the territory, either under Pakistani rule or as an independent country.

Rebels have been fighting Indian rule since 1989, with tens of thousands of lives lost, including civilians, militants and government forces.

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.

Relations between India and Pakistan have been strained further over Kashmir since last August, when India stripped the portion of Kashmir it administers of its status as a semi-autonomous state.

Security forces imposed blockades and a communications blackout on internet and phone service that officials said were necessary to stop anti-India protests and better integrate Kashmir.

The tensions in Kashmir come after a deadly face-off between Indian and Chinese soldiers June 15 along the Asian giants' disputed border in Ladakh that left 20 Indian soldiers dead.

Study: World's pile of electronic waste grows ever higher

BERLIN (AP) — The world's mountain of discarded flat-screen TVs, cellphones and other electronic goods grew to a record high last year, according to an annual report released Thursday.

The U.N.-backed study estimated the amount of e-waste that piled up globally in 2019 at 53.6 million metric tonnes (59.1 million tons) - almost 2 million metric tons more than the previous year.

The authors of the study calculated the combined weight of all dumped devices with a battery or a plug last year was the equivalent of 350 cruise ships the size of the Queen Mary 2.

Among all the discarded plastic and silicon were large amounts of copper, gold and other precious metals — used for example to conduct electricity on circuit boards. While about a sixth of it was recycled, the remainder of those valuable components — worth about \$57 billion — weren't reclaimed, the study found.

Discarded electronic equipment also poses a health and environmental hazard, as it contains substances such as mercury that can damage the nervous system.

The authors of the study, which is produced by the U.N. University, the International Solid Waste Association and others, predicted that global e-waste could grow to 74 million metric tons by 2030.

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From big cities to backyards, July 4 not usual blowout bash

By BRIAN MAHONEY Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — The idea sounds almost un-American.

The Fourth of July was always a time for communities to come together, daylong celebrations with patriotic parades in the morning and fireworks finales to cap it off.

This year, people are being urged to stay home.

If they want a show, watch it on TV.

"This is traditionally a weekend for gathering in large groups for historic ceremonies and social events," Boston Mayor Marty Walsh said. "This is not something that we can do this year here in Boston or in Massachusetts."

Or in many cities around the U.S., where leaders grapple with how to honor the country's Independence Day while forced because of coronavirus concerns to limit some freedoms their citizens so deeply covet.

The Fourth of July remains a party, though America's 244th birthday won't be the usual blowout bash.

Fireworks will still crackle over the National Mall in Washington and other places, though with fewer people packed together watching them.

Backyard barbecues will replace some traditional trips to beaches or ballparks, as virus fears keep some home for this holiday.

Marching bands blaring tunes while kids wave their handheld flags can't happen as usual with the virus refusing to let go of its grip on some places and even strengthening in others.

So, no live Boston Pops performance on the Charles River Esplanade, no live concert from the West lawn of the U.S. Capitol in Washington, and no Navy Pier fireworks show in Chicago.

Even personal events will have a different look. Jason Wanzer has hosted a party in Danbury, Connecticut, for more than a decade, with a professional disc jockey, organized games and fireworks.

He trimmed this year's guest list from 100 to 30, fearing bringing older people more susceptible to the disease or young children who could easily spread it. And the activities he spends days setting up are on a hiatus.

"This year is basically just the food," he said.

But whether it's big cities or small towns bursting with pride, there's a desire to make sure some show goes on, no matter what it looks like.

In New York, the Macy's annual summer spectacle was replaced by a series of smaller, surprise shows. They've been ringing out all week, leading into the televised finale Saturday.

By not announcing the locations and keeping the performances to five minutes, crowds can't gather in large numbers like they usually do along the riverfront.

Crowds are being welcomed on the National Mall, where U.S. Secretary of the Interior David L. Bernhardt promised a fireworks display that would be "the largest in recent memory," with more than 10,000 to be launched following a Defense Department air show.

But while President Donald Trump is eager for excess, Washington's mayor is not. The city's parade is canceled and Muriel Bowser reminded those considering the National Mall show — held on federal grounds and not under the city's jurisdiction — to "Ask yourself, do you need to be there?"

That was never a concern, when July 4 was a day for dressing up in red, white and blue, coming out to salute military heroes, then staying out until dark to watch fireworks light up the sky.

This year, many celebrations will be virtual. Outdoor events such as the Boston Pops performance or Philadelphia's fireworks will have to be watched on TV or streaming devices — and some will be replays.

Bryan Williams is ready for either.

The owner of the Keller Feed & Wine Company in Cottonwood Falls, Kansas, is advertising items such as ribs and pulled pork for people who want to order catering for an at-home holiday weekend. But with the virus numbers low in his county even as they climb elsewhere in the state, his town's fireworks are still on and he thinks people will be eager to go.

"Unfortunately tourism is down, and with so many large area events canceled, and so many locals still furloughed or without work, I think our town is really looking forward to celebrating the Fourth this week-

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end," Williams said. "It will be the first real chance for this tight-knit community to get together — with social distancing of course — since March."

Some places won't have that option.

Beaches are closed in parts of Southern California and South Florida, where many fireworks shows are canceled and everyone who attends the ones that remain are being told to watch them from inside their cars.

Bars aren't serving alcohol there, either.

Beer may be out in Miami but hot dogs are still on the menu in New York — probably dozens of them for champion chomper Joey Chestnut.

The Nathan's Famous Fourth of July International Hot Dog-Eating Contest will be held in Coney Island, but without the usual crowd of live spectators on the boardwalk. A private venue will stage the competition, which will feature five eaters in the men's and women's competitions instead of the usual 15, allowing for more social distancing.

For Steve Edenbo, this Fourth of July is the biggest challenge of his career.

The professional actor portrays Thomas Jefferson and for the last 19 years has been at the National Archives in Washington to read the Declaration of Independence. That's a Zoom performance this year, one he couldn't practice in front of a live audience with theaters shut since March.

Plus, he knows he needs to dig deeper into Jefferson's role as a slave owner, as the Black Lives Matter movement forces Americans to re-examine the country's past.

"It's, how do we deal with the Fourth of July?" Edenbo said. "This is unlike anything I've had in my career for those deeper reasons."

Visa lottery winners feel cheated by Trump's visa ban

By SAMY MAGDY and JULIE WATSON Associated Press

CAIRO (AP) — Noha, an Egyptian engineer, should feel lucky after winning a visa lottery that randomly selects people from a pool of more than 14 million applications for about 55,000 green cards that would let them live permanently in the United States.

But the hopes she and her husband had of moving with their two children to New York vanished last week when President Donald Trump extended a ban on many green cards issued outside the United States to the end of the year, including the lottery's "diversity visas," which have been issued every year since 1990 to people from underrepresented countries.

This year's recipients learned of their good fortune about a year ago, but many had not yet completed the vetting process when American consulates closed in March due to the coronavirus pandemic. Now the administration's latest step to reduce legal immigration has upended their lives, and many find themselves stuck in a worse situation than the one they were trying to escape.

The lottery requires that green cards be obtained by Sept. 30 or they will be voided. The State Department says no exceptions are made for those who do not yet have one in hand.

Noha and her children got their visas in February. But her husband, Ahmed, is still waiting, and the family fears his visa will never come.

The situation forces Noha to make an impossible choice between going alone to New York to seek a better life for the couple's 7-year-old daughter and 9-year-old son, or giving up that dream so the family can stay together. She said she felt angry and cried for days after learning of Trump's order.

"All my plans were collapsed in an instant," said Noha, who spoke on the condition that her last name not be used for fear that speaking publicly could hurt her family's case. "I felt that all what we have achieved went for nothing."

Trump's decision to extend the ban marked the first time the visa program has been interrupted since it was created to attract immigrants from diverse backgrounds. U.S. immigration lawyers are considering challenging the move in court.

Only about 13,000 of the roughly 55,000 lottery visas have been issued so far this year, said Simon Paul,

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a diversity visa recipient who now runs a blog helping other immigrants at britsimon.com. Even those who obtained a visa have found it tough to get to the U.S. because of pandemic travel restrictions.

Noha's family spent nearly \$10,000 on the vetting process.

After being told by a U.S. official in February that the entire family was approved, the couple started making plans for their new life. Noha and her husband, also an engineer, resigned from their jobs, sold their car, notified their landlord they were moving and stopped paying tuition at their children's school for next year.

The embassy in May told her husband his visa just needed to be printed, so "we even packed our bags," she said. Her kids watched videos on YouTube about life in the U.S.

The administration put the hold on the visas as part of efforts to free up jobs in the coronavirus-wracked economy — a reason the president has used to achieve many of the cuts to legal immigration that eluded him before the pandemic. The president's move also applies to other green-card applicants and to people seeking temporary work visas at high-tech companies, summer camps and multinational corporations.

Long before the pandemic, Trump criticized the lottery, falsely claiming it has been "a horror show" because countries put in "some very bad people."

The U.S. government runs the program, and citizens of qualifying countries are the ones who decide to bid for the visas. Foreign governments do not choose who applies or ultimately receives a visa.

Applicants must have graduated from high school or have two years of experience in a selection of fields identified by the U.S. Labor Department. The winners cannot have a criminal record, and they must have a U.S. sponsor willing and able to support them until they get established. More than 80,000 applicants were named winners so they had to race against each other to get the visas made available.

Dozens of the 2020 winners reached out to The Associated Press in response to a request to tell their stories. Many are highly educated but hindered by the lack of opportunities in their homelands.

Among those selected this year were an infectious disease doctor, an agricultural engineer, a software developer, a post-doctorate researcher, a businesswoman and a middle school teacher. They come from Egypt, Turkey, and Albania, among other countries.

Mahmoud Elrweny, who works as a production manager at the Hershey Co. in Memphis Tennessee, said he was elated when he heard the lottery had awarded visas that would let his brother join him in the U.S.

Egypt's high unemployment had forced his brother to move to Saudi Arabia, where he was teaching, though he did not want to stay because he has two daughters and felt they would be restricted as women.

His brother had to do the visa interview in his native country. Five days after he got to Egypt, the U.S. embassy canceled it, and then Trump issued the order. His Saudi school fired him for leaving and refused to give him his last paycheck. Saudi Arabia canceled his visa to go back. He also left his car there.

He and his wife are now both unemployed in Egypt, living with family.

Elrweny wants to help him but doesn't know how.

"I'm really stressed out and depressed," he said. "His dream was to come to America."

The lottery changed Alma Mandija's life in 1997, when her homeland of Albania was gripped by civil unrest that resulted in the toppling of the government and the deaths of more than 2,000 people.

"It was very unsafe," she said. The visa allowed her to go to college. She went on to become an immigration lawyer in New York.

Her cousin, Eldis Bushati, was among this year's lottery winners after trying for 16 years. Mandija and her parents agreed to support him, his wife and 3-year-old daughter and found several companies in New York that expressed interest in hiring him as a plumber.

Bushati, 31, was waiting for U.S. officials to email him his interview date when Trump ordered the ban. He is still holding out hope.

"Time will pass soon. The virus will be away, and we shall end this process and be in America soon," he said.

Nataly Savenkova, 27, who works at the Russian branch of an American bank, is not banking on anything. She got her green card in January and decided to move to the U.S. even though her husband has

not received his visa yet.

The couple had hoped to build a "new and exciting future together." But now her "big luck and happiness appeared to be a total disaster," Savenkova wrote in an email to the AP.

Noha had similar aspirations for her family.

"All this was for the future of our children," she said, fighting back tears as she talked outside her home in Cairo. "Now we do not know what to do."

Watson reported from San Diego. Associated Press Writer L Lazar Semini in Albania contributed to this report.

Robert E. Lee statue becomes epicenter of protest movement

By DENISE LAVOIE Associated Press

RICHMOND, Va. (AP) — Just a little over a month ago, the area around Richmond's iconic statue of Confederate Gen. Robert E. Lee was as quiet and sedate as the statue itself.

But since the May 25 police killing of George Floyd in Minneapolis, the area has been transformed into a bustling hub of activity for demonstrators protesting against police brutality and racism.

The giant concrete pedestal of the statue is now covered by colorful graffiti, with many of the hand-painted messages denouncing police and demanding an end to systemic racism and inequality. Clashes between police and protesters gathered near the statue have become a regular occurrence.

In response to the protests, Virginia Gov. Ralph Northam has pledged to take down the statue. But its removal has been at least temporarily blocked by a lawsuit, one of several complaints filed by people who want the monument to stay where it has stood since it was erected in 1890 in this former capital of the Confederacy.

The statue is located on Richmond's Monument Avenue, a boulevard of stately homes that also features several other Confederate monuments targeted for removal.

On Wednesday and Thursday, work crews used giant cranes, harnesses and power tools to remove imposing statues of Gen. Stonewall Jackson and Navy officer Matthew Fontaine Maury from their pedestals as hundreds of onlookers cheered. The statues were taken away after Mayor Levar Stoney ordered the immediate removal of all Confederate monuments from city land.

Several dozen Confederate symbols have been 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.

At the Lee statue, a new vibe has emerged alongside the raucous atmosphere of protests, one that is more reminiscent of the hippie love and peace festivals of the 1960s. Each day, hundreds of people of all ages and races visit the statue, located on a busy traffic circle and surrounded by grass.

A barbecue grill cooks up hot dogs and burgers, while signs direct visitors to free snacks and drinks. Children play at a basketball hoop. Volunteers at a voter registration table urge people to get involved. Music is heard blasting from cars parked on nearby streets. A T-shirt decorating table gives visitors a chance to express themselves.

"There's just a feeling of community and family. All around the circle, you have all different people coming around and doing different things. It's really inspiring," said Joseph Rogers, a descendant of slaves and an organizer with Virginia Defenders for Freedom, Justice and Equality, a volunteer organization that works on social justice issues.

Some meet here to begin a daily protest march; others come to gawk and take selfies. Still others come to see a piece of history while they still can.

Lance Jennings, 18, made the 40-minute drive to Richmond with his family right after his high school graduation in King William, Virginia, because he wanted to get his photo taken in front of the statue.

"It was like people were hanging out at a park. It was so peaceful," he said, adding later, "If it's like that and people can sit out there and there's no trouble, it should be a sign to people. It's very important to Black people and to people who believe that every life matters. They'll see people are not just out there

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trying to destroy everything.”

Lorenzo Nicholson and his wife tried to make a visit to the statue on a recent weekday afternoon a teachable moment for their three young boys. Nicholson said the whole family was moved by the stories of Black people killed by police. Some of those stories are reflected on laminated signs and photos that form a circle around the statue, where visitors regularly leave flowers, candles and other trinkets to honor the memory of those who died.

“All of these pictures you’re seeing around the statue: It’s about their lives and the injustice that has occurred,” he said. “You can’t be human and not feel this.”

Nighttime gatherings near the statue have been more volatile, as protesters have clashed with police using tear gas, pepper spray and rubber bullets. Police say they have been repeatedly attacked by protesters throwing bottles, bricks and other objects.

A group of civilian volunteers armed with handguns and rifles has been patrolling the area near the statue to keep protesters safe. The Richmond Times-Dispatch reports that members of the security force communicate on walkie-talkies and sometimes identify themselves with code names.

Hand-painted messages cover concrete barriers that were put in place after protesters toppled several other Confederate statues and state officials became concerned that people could get hurt if they tried to do the same with the 12-ton (11-metric-ton) Lee statue. Many of the graffiti messages contain profanity and are strong condemnations of police. But other messages are more mellow. “Love Wins,” reads one message painted inside a heart. “No More Hate,” reads another.

“I don’t necessarily agree with defacing property, but it’s an expression of their anger,” Nicholson said. “At the end of the day, it is in a way bringing people together from all backgrounds for a cause they’re very passionate about.”

Russian opposition denounces vote extending Putin’s rule

By DARIA LITVINOVA Associated Press

MOSCOW (AP) — A vote that cleared the way for President Vladimir Putin to rule Russia until 2036 was denounced Thursday by his political opponents as a “Pyrrhic victory” that will only further erode his support and legitimacy.

Putin himself thanked voters for their “support and trust,” and repeated a message that was often a hallmark of his presidential campaigns.

“We need internal stability and time for the reinforcing of the country, of all of its institutions,” the 67-year-old Putin said in a televised statement.

According to election officials, nearly 78% of voters approved the constitutional amendments in seven days of balloting that concluded Wednesday. Turnout across the vast country was put at almost 68%.

The amendment that allows Putin to run for two more six-year terms after his current one expires in 2024 were 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 decide on the individual amendments but only on the entire group.

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said the results were “a triumphant referendum on trust in President Putin.”

Putin’s critics argued the results were rigged and didn’t reflect the dwindling enthusiasm for the once-popular president.

“A record in falsifying votes has been set in Russia,” opposition politician Alexei Navalny said in a Facebook post. “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. The lowest in two decades, the numbers have been steadily going down in the past five years amid growing frustration over declining living standards.

Critics pointed to widespread reports of pressure on voters and other irregularities, as well as a lack of transparency and independent control of the balloting that they said tarnished its validity.

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"Putin is weaker because it took so much effort, and unlawful effort at that, to get this vote," said Masha Lipman, an independent political analyst.

For the first time in Russia, polls were kept open for an entire week, with ballot boxes unattended at night. Independent monitoring was hindered by bureaucratic hurdles and coronavirus-related restrictions. Voting also took place outside polling stations — in some instances on street benches, tree stumps and in the trunks of cars — as well as online in some places, including Moscow.

Abbas Gallyamov, a political analyst and former Kremlin speechwriter, said in a Facebook post that the victory cost the government "a serious dent in its legitimacy."

Opposition politicians argued it was hardly a win for the Kremlin.

"Did Putin impress us with the scale of the people's love (for him)? No, he just made a fool of himself," said Dmitry Gudkov, a former lawmaker and now an opposition leader, in a Facebook post. "Did he get the mandate from the people to reign forever? No, he just angered many by pressuring them to vote and started a rumor mill that will tell many people about this Pyrrhic victory."

Golos, Russia's top independent election monitoring group, deemed the results "falsified."

Gudkov pointed to independent exit polls that reported over 54% of more than 5,000 respondents in Moscow and 63% of nearly 3,000 respondents in St. Petersburg voted against the amendments.

A nationwide poll by Levada over the weekend showed that 68% of those who had cast their ballot by Saturday voted "yes," and 54% of those who hadn't would approve the amendments. The clause about resetting term limits for Putin, however, was only supported by 51% of the respondents.

Yulia Galyamina, one of the founders of the "No!" campaign, said in a Facebook post that people across Russia, even those who don't support any opposition group, voted against the amendments.

"People said their 'no'. And the authorities had to resort to unprecedented falsification, undermining the legitimacy of the president," she said.

In his blog, Navalny said Putin has "showed his inadequacy" in the 20 years he has ruled Russia.

"Everything (he does) is built on promises and lies. Around half of the people in the country understand that," Navalny wrote. "So every day, you should do something to advocate against this regime."

He urged his supporters to focus on regional elections in September and fight against candidates from the ruling United Russia party in 31 Russian regions. Ending the dominance of United Russia in regional parliaments and administrations will undermine "the formal mechanism" of Putin's rule, Navalny said.

"It is a real fight in which a real victory is possible," he added.

Lipman agreed that discontent exists in Russia, but it is unlikely to lead to unrest or any kind of drastic action right now.

"The mood is there. But from the mood and from grumbling and complaining, there's a long way to action," she said, adding that Putin is unlikely to lose his power any time soon.

"Putin is weaker, but still the strongest, by far the most powerful man in the country," Lipman said. "He is still in charge."

That attitude was reflected in a statement Tuesday by Ramzan Kadyrov, the powerful leader of the southern republic of Chechnya, who suggested that Putin should be president for life.

"Who can replace him today?" Kadyrov said. "There is no political leader on that scale globally."

—
Anna Frants contributed.

Justices keep hold on secret Russia investigation material

By MARK SHERMAN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Supreme Court is denying Congress access to secret grand jury testimony from special counsel Robert Mueller's Russia investigation through the November election.

The justices agreed on Thursday to hear the Trump administration's appeal of a lower court order for the material to be turned over to the Democratic-controlled House of Representatives. The high court's action will keep the documents out of congressional hands at least until the case is resolved, which is not

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likely to happen before 2021.

Arguments themselves might not even take place before Americans decide whether to give President Donald Trump a second term.

The delay is a victory for Trump, who also is mounting a Supreme Court fight against congressional efforts to obtain his banking and other financial records. Those cases are expected to be decided in the coming days or weeks.

The court's action also could mean the justices never have to reach a definitive ruling in a sensitive dispute between the executive and legislative branches of government, if either Trump loses reelection or Republicans regain control of the House next year. It's hard to imagine an administration of Democrat Joe Biden would object to turning over the Mueller documents or House Republicans would continue to press for them.

The House wants previously undisclosed details from the investigation of Russian interference in the 2016 election.

Rep. Jerrold Nadler, D-N.Y., chairman of the House Judiciary Committee, called the court's decision disappointing.

"Unfortunately, President Trump and Attorney General (William) Barr are continuing to try to run out the clock on any and all accountability. While I am confident their legal arguments will fail, it is now all the more important for the American people to hold the President accountable at the ballot box in November," Nadler said in a statement.

The federal appeals court in Washington ruled in March that the documents should be turned over because the House Judiciary Committee's need for the material in its investigation of Trump outweighed the Justice Department's interests in keeping the testimony secret.

Mueller's 448-page report, issued in April 2019, "stopped short" of reaching conclusions about Trump's conduct, including whether he obstructed justice, to avoid stepping on the House's impeachment power, the appeals court said.

The committee was able to persuasively argue that it needed access to the underlying grand jury material to make its own determinations about the president's actions, the court said.

The materials initially were sought last summer, but by the time the appeals court ruled in March, Trump had been impeached by the House and acquitted by the Senate.

The Justice Department said in its Supreme Court filings that the court's action was needed in part because the House hasn't given any indication it "urgently needs these materials for any ongoing impeachment investigation."

The House had opposed the delay on the grounds that its investigation of Trump was continuing and that time is of the essence because of the approaching election. The current session of the House will end Jan. 3, and lawmakers elected in November will take their seats.

Democrats have suggested that the grand jury materials could reveal new misconduct that could potentially form the basis of new articles of impeachment, but such a course would have been unlikely so close to the 2020 election even if the court had allowed the material to be turned over immediately.

The House impeached Trump for his efforts to get Ukraine to announce an investigation of Biden, but the Republican-controlled Senate acquitted the president in February.

It is also unclear how many new, or incendiary, revelations might be contained in the grand jury transcripts. Mueller's report, though redacted in parts, revealed more than a year ago significant information about the president's efforts to choke off the investigation and raised substantial questions about whether he had committed obstruction of justice.

Besides, many of the witnesses closest to Trump appeared voluntarily before Mueller's team of prosecutors, and the Justice Department in recent months has released written — albeit redacted — summaries of those interviews. That means the public already has insight into the accounts of key Trump associates, including son-in-law Jared Kushner and advisers like Steve Bannon and Hope Hicks.

Associated Press writer Eric Tucker contributed to this report.

Not so random acts: Science finds that being kind pays off

By SETH BORENSTEIN AP Science Writer

Acts of kindness may not be that random after all. Science says being kind pays off.

Research shows that acts of kindness make us feel better and healthier. Kindness is also key to how we evolved and survived as a species, scientists say. We are hard-wired to be kind.

Kindness "is as bred in our bones as our anger or our lust or our grief or as our desire for revenge," said University of California San Diego psychologist Michael McCullough, author of the forthcoming book "Kindness of Strangers." It's also, he said, "the main feature we take for granted."

Scientific research is booming into human kindness and what scientists have found so far speaks well of us.

"Kindness is much older than religion. It does seem to be universal," said University of Oxford anthropologist Oliver Curry, research director at Kindlab. "The basic reason why people are kind is that we are social animals."

We prize kindness over any other value. When psychologists lumped values into ten categories and asked people what was more important, benevolence or kindness, comes out on top, beating hedonism, having an exciting life, creativity, ambition, tradition, security, obedience, seeking social justice and seeking power, said University of London psychologist Anat Bardi, who studies value systems.

"We're kind because under the right circumstances we all benefit from kindness," Oxford's Curry said.

When it comes to a species' survival "kindness pays, friendliness pays," said Duke University evolutionary anthropologist Brian Hare, author of the new book "Survival of the Friendliest."

Kindness and cooperation work for many species, whether it's bacteria, flowers or our fellow primate bonobos. The more friends you have, the more individuals you help, the more successful you are, Hare said.

For example, Hare, who studies bonobos and other primates, compares aggressive chimpanzees, which attack outsiders, to bonobos where the animals don't kill but help out strangers. Male bonobos are far more successful at mating than their male chimp counterparts, Hare said.

McCullough sees bonobos as more the exceptions. Most animals aren't kind or helpful to strangers, just close relatives so in that way it is one of the traits that separate us from other species, he said. And that, he said, is because of the human ability to reason.

Humans realize that there's not much difference between our close relatives and strangers and that someday strangers can help us if we are kind to them, McCullough said.

Reasoning "is the secret ingredient, which is why we donate blood when there are disasters" and why most industrialized nations spend at least 20% of their money on social programs, such as housing and education, McCullough said.

Duke's Hare also points to mama bears to understand the evolution and biology of kindness and its aggressive nasty flip side. He said studies point to certain areas of the brain, the medial prefrontal cortex, temporal parietal junction and other spots as either activated or dampened by emotional activity. The same places give us the ability to nurture and love, but also dehumanize and exclude, he said.

When mother bears are feeding and nurturing their cubs, these areas in the brain are activated and it allows them to be generous and loving, Hare said. But if someone comes near the mother bear at that time, it sets off the brain's threat mechanisms in the same places. The same bear becomes its most aggressive and dangerous.

Hare said he sees this in humans. Some of the same people who are generous to family and close friends, when they feel threatened by outsiders become angrier. He points to the current polarization of the world.

"More isolated groups are more likely to be feel threatened by others and they are more likely to morally exclude, dehumanize," Hare said. "And that opens the door to cruelty."

But overall our bodies aren't just programmed to be nice, they reward us for being kind, scientists said.

"Doing kindness makes you happier and being happier makes you do kind acts," said labor economist

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Richard Layard, who studies happiness at the London School of Economics and wrote the new book "Can We Be Happier?"

University of California Riverside psychology professor Sonja Lyubomirsky has put that concept to the test in numerous experiments over 20 years and repeatedly found that people feel better when they are kind to others, even more than when they are kind to themselves.

"Acts of kindness are very powerful," Lyubomirsky said.

In one experiment, she asked subjects to do an extra three acts of kindness for other people a week and asked a different group to do three acts of self-kindness. They could be small, like opening a door for someone, or big. But the people who were kind to others became happier and felt more connected to the world.

The same occurred with money, using it to help others versus helping yourself. Lyubomirsky said she thinks it is because people spend too much time thinking and worrying about themselves and when they think of others while doing acts of kindness, it redirects them away from their own problems.

Oxford's Curry analyzed peer-reviewed research like Lyubomirsky's and found at least 27 studies showing the same thing: Being kind makes people feel better emotionally.

But it's not just emotional. It's physical.

Lyubomirsky said a study of people with multiple sclerosis and found they felt better physically when helping others. She also found that in people doing more acts of kindness that the genes that trigger inflammation were turned down more than in people who don't.

And she said in upcoming studies, she's found more antiviral genes in people who performed acts of kindness.

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.

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 a 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.

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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. Muslim Kashmiris generally support the rebels' goal of uniting the territory, either under Pakistani rule or as an independent country.

Rebels have been fighting Indian rule since 1989, with tens of thousands of lives lost, including civilians, militants and government forces.

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.

Relations between India and Pakistan have been strained further over Kashmir since last August, when India stripped the portion of Kashmir it administers of its status as a semi-autonomous state.

Security forces imposed blockades and a communications blackout on internet and phone service that officials said were necessary to stop anti-India protests and better integrate Kashmir.

The tensions in Kashmir come after a deadly face-off between Indian and Chinese soldiers June 15 along the Asian giants' disputed border in Ladakh that left 20 Indian soldiers dead.

Rights activists say Danes unaware of racism in their nation

By JAN M. OLSEN Associated Press

COPENHAGEN, Denmark (AP) — Rights activists on Thursday accused Danish officials of being unable to recognize racism after authorities said the killing of a biracial man by two white men was not racially motivated.

"In Denmark, white people are colorblind. They cannot see that racism exists. That is embarrassing," said Jette Moeller, head of the Danish chapter of SOS-Racism, an international association.

"Of course, racism exists (in Denmark). We know that. It has been documented for years," said Mira Chandhok Skadegaard, an assistant professor at Aalborg University in northern Denmark.

A biracial man was killed last month on a Danish Baltic Sea island. The Danish police, prosecutor, a defense lawyer and a white friend of the victim all say a personal relationship that went wrong between the victim and the perpetrators was the reason for the slaying, not racism.

The 28-year-old victim, who had Danish and African roots, was found on the island of Bornholm on June 23. Two white brothers in their 20s whom the victim reportedly knew have been detained until July 22 on suspicion of murder. None have been named by authorities.

Speculation that the killing could be racially motivated began after it emerged that the victim's death bore some similarities to that of George Floyd, a Black man who died May 25 in Minneapolis after a white police officer pressed a knee into his neck for several minutes even as Floyd pleaded for air. Floyd's death has sparked protests around the world demanding racial justice and condemning police brutality.

The Danish chapter of Black Lives Matter wrote on Facebook that "two brothers committed a racial murder on Bornholm" and posted a photo of a swastika tattoo, claiming it was on one suspect's leg.

"Let a judge decide" whether the slaying was racially motivated, Moeller told The Associated Press in an interview. "But it should be investigated as a racially motivated crime. Knowing those who killed him doesn't rule out it could include some racial elements."

Activists like Moeller see a pattern of denial in Denmark, which they attribute to rising anti-immigrant attitudes in the Nordic country. She also points out that Denmark's freedom of expression should not be used to denigrate people, and the miss-use of that right has previously brought the Scandinavian country of 10 million into the crosshairs of Muslims around the world.

"Racism is about the effect it has on other people ... One cannot use the liberty of expression as an excuse to taunt others, like Rasmus Paludan does by burning copies of the Quran," she said.

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For months, Paludan, a far-right provocateur, has been touring the country and tossing copies of the Islamic holy book in the air before burning them before immigrants. This has sometimes led to brief confrontations between onlookers and police who have been protecting Paludan.

Last month, Paludan was convicted of racism, among other things, with a court ruling that "his statements were derogatory and degrading toward a population group." He was given a three-month prison sentence, of which two were suspended, and his licence to practice law was suspended in part for three years. He has appealed the sentence.

In September 2005, the Danish newspaper Jyllands-Posten published 12 cartoons showing the Prophet Muhammad. This caused wide outrage among Muslims, who generally hold that any depiction of Muhammad is blasphemous and prompted often violent protests in Muslim countries. The newspaper — one of Denmark's largest — said it had wanted to test whether cartoonists would apply self-censorship when asked to portray Muhammad. No Danish laws were violated with the cartoons' publication.

It was the same daily that in January published a cartoon with the Chinese flag with what resembles viruses instead of the normal stars, sparking China's anger. In both cases, the Danish right to freedom of speech was invoked.

In 2017, a 16-year-old Afghan boy was set on fire by four schoolmates but race was ruled out as factor. The four teenagers were found guilty of gross violence and the Afghan boy survived with burns on his legs and chest.

A 2018 report by the European Union pointed out that hate crimes in Denmark had quadrupled over 11 years, from 35 reported cases in 2007 to 140 cases in 2016.

In Europe, "Denmark belongs to the tough group," Moeller told the AP. "I believe that we're on the right track as we start to discuss it, address it."

She noted that a racial justice demonstration in Copenhagen on June 7 drew at least 15,000 people.

Chandhok Skadegaard, who has been studying discrimination for decades, said Danes "are far behind when it comes to recognizing racism in our society. Sweden is several steps ahead of Denmark ... as is Norway, and Finland and England."

"People tend to not report discrimination, because they find it is not acknowledged or taken seriously by the authorities," she said.

In 2016, Denmark made international headlines when a law was passed requiring asylum-seekers to hand over valuables worth more than 10,000 kroner (\$1,500), to help cover housing and food costs while their cases were being processed. Although the center-right government behind the move said it was in line with rules for unemployed Danes seeking benefits, critics denounced the law as inhumane.

Still, the law has not been changed under Denmark's present Social Democratic government.

Wide shift in opinion on police, race rare in US polling

By HANNAH FINGERHUT Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — It's rare for public opinion on social issues to change sharply and swiftly. And yet in the wake of George Floyd's death, Americans' opinions about police brutality and racial injustice have moved dramatically.

About half of American adults believe police violence against the public is a "very" or "extremely" serious problem, according to a poll conducted earlier this month by The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research. Only about a third said the same as recently as last September, as well as in July 2015, just a few months after Freddie Gray, a Black man, died in police custody in Baltimore.

Floyd, a Black man, died on May 25 after a white Minneapolis police officer pressed his knee into Floyd's neck for nearly eight minutes. In the weeks that followed, protests erupted nationwide.

The recent shifts in public opinion stand out when compared with years of survey research conducted following similar slayings of Black people by police. They are distinct from slow and steady movement on other social issues, such as support for same-sex marriage. And there is evidence they may last.

"I think this seems to be something different from the gradual change that we often see with cultural

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and social issues," said Jennifer Benz, the deputy director of the AP-NORC Center.

The new poll and recent trends from NORC's General Social Survey, she said, are "suggestive that there's been something brewing for the past couple of years that could well be leading to lasting change, as opposed to situational change."

MORE ON THIS MOMENT

More Americans than in 2015 say police in most communities are more likely to use deadly force against a Black person than a white person, 61% today compared with 49% in 2015. Only about a third of Americans say the race of a person does not make a difference in the use of deadly force, compared with roughly half in 2015.

And 65% say that police officers who cause injury or death in the course of their job are treated too leniently by the justice system, compared with 41% in 2015. Fewer now think police are treated either fairly or too harshly.

The recent poll builds on marked changes in public attitudes toward race relations observed in the 2018 General Social Survey, a long-running poll of Americans that started in 1972. The percentage saying the country spends too little on improving conditions of Black Americans peaked at 52%, up dramatically from 30% in 2014. Republicans and Democrats alike were more likely to say that. The poll also found more Americans attributing racial disparities in income, jobs, housing and education to discrimination.

SLOW AND STEADY SOCIAL CHANGE

Opinion on social issues often change gradually over an extended period of time.

Just 11% of Americans said gay and lesbian people should have the right to marry in 1988, according to the General Social Survey. That grew to 31% by 16 years later, the next time the question was asked. But after that, support for gay marriage didn't rise by more than 10 percentage points from one survey to the next. Support instead grew steadily over two decades to become the majority opinion, most recently at 68% in 2018.

The trend is similar in support for marijuana legalization. In 1973, the General Social Survey found that just 19% of Americans said marijuana should be made legal. Support ticked up and down for most of the following three decades, never exceeding 30%. It reached 31% in 2000 and steadily rose to 44% in 2010 and 61% in 2018. Like for same-sex marriage, the share saying marijuana should be legal never rose more than 10 percentage points from one poll to the next.

REACTIVE CHANGE

Sometimes, public opinion responds to specific events that bring attention to a social issue, but then returns back to a "normal" in quiet moments. Polling by Gallup is evidence of how American views on gun laws are responsive to mass shootings, with somewhat more saying they want to see laws on the sale of firearms made more strict in the aftermath of such an attack.

Support for stricter gun laws ticked up from 60% in February 1999 to 66% in late April that year, just after the shooting at Columbine High School in Colorado, which killed 21 people. By the early 2000s, the percentage of Americans preferring stricter gun laws slipped back down — as low as 51% in October 2002.

Gallup polling shows the trend has oscillated regularly since. It fell as low as 43% in 2011 but rose again to 58% the next time the question was asked in December 2012, after the shooting at an elementary school in Newtown, Connecticut, that killed 28 people. A year later, support fell back to 49%.

A similar bump again happened after the high school shooting in Parkland, Florida, in February 2018.

POLITICAL CHANGE

Meanwhile, significant shifts in public opinion inevitably follow presidential and midterm elections. In April 2016, before President Donald Trump was elected, just 34% of Republicans considered the nation's economy to be in good shape, according to an AP-NORC poll. By March 2017, that figure rose to 63% and was 89% in January 2020 before taking a hit amid the economic fallout of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Meanwhile, according to Gallup polling, just 24% of Democrats in 2018 said they were satisfied with the country's global standing, down 32 percentage points from 2017. What changed? Trump's inauguration in 2017 following eight years of President Barack Obama's time in office.

PROFOUND MOMENTS

But events or crises that touch most Americans can often be agents of change.

Approval of President George W. Bush went from 51% in the days just before the Sept. 11 attacks to 86% in the days just after, according to Gallup polling.

And more recently, the pandemic has deeply affected Americans' views of their own lives. A May poll from NORC at the University of Chicago found the lowest percentage of Americans saying they are very happy in nearly five decades. Just 14% say they very happy today, down from 31% in 2018.

Virus ban gives tobacco illegal drug status in South Africa

By GERALD IMRAY Associated Press

CAPE TOWN, South Africa (AP) — The message was dropped into a WhatsApp group used by suburban moms in South Africa. Amid the grumblings over homeschooling during lockdown, one mom went off topic: "Does anyone know where to get illegal cigarettes? I just need a few. I'm desperate."

She emphasized her anguish with an emoji, a face with eyes bulging and tongue hanging out.

The "desperate mama," as she described herself, is one of 9 million smokers in South Africa affected by the government's decision in late March to ban the sale of all tobacco products, ostensibly to help protect citizens' health during the coronavirus pandemic. The ban remains even after South Africa eased most of its strict lockdown restrictions, including another contentious outlawing of alcohol sales.

Confirmed COVID-19 cases are rising rapidly in Africa's most developed economy. But that economy is suffering, and now restaurants, cinemas and even casinos are set to reopen. And allowing people to purchase alcohol again has led to an increase in drunken brawls and traffic accidents, putting added strain on hospitals as they deal with the virus. Yet it's still illegal to buy a pack of cigarettes.

"It makes no sense," said Sinenhlanhla Mnguni, chairman of the Fair Trade Independent Tobacco Association, which represents smaller manufacturers. The association challenged the ban in court and lost. Another case, with global industry giant British American Tobacco taking the government to court, has begun.

South Africa is the only country in the world to have a ban on tobacco sales in place after India and Botswana lifted theirs.

The government says it's putting the health of its people first as the respiratory disease spreads. The World Health Organization advises people to give up smoking during the pandemic and says smoking is linked to a higher risk of severe illness and death from COVID-19 in hospitalized patients, although it was unable to specify exactly how much greater those risks might be. But in the scientific brief published this week, the U.N. health agency also said there were currently no studies to show if smokers were more susceptible to actually contracting COVID-19.

The South African government has been hotly criticized for not publishing the science it said it relied on three months ago.

That showed a "Just do what we say, we know best" attitude from the government, said Joleen Steyn Kotze, an expert on democracy and governance in South Africa. She warned the lack of transparency might foster a general distrust when the government needs citizens more than ever to cooperate.

The ban, which outlaws selling tobacco but not the act of smoking, does have some backing.

"There are good reasons for people to quit, and especially at this time of COVID-19," said Catherine Egbe, a scientist at the Alcohol, Tobacco and Other Drugs Research Unit at the South African Medical Research Council. She agrees with the ban on the basis that COVID-19 "majorly affects the respiratory system."

South African smokers have two options, neither pleasant: Go cold turkey at a time of high stress. Or, like the desperate mom, go criminal. With prohibition comes bootlegging, often with links to organized crime.

Removed from all mainstream outlets, cigarettes have become the most sought after illicit drug in South Africa, more profitable than cocaine and heroin, some analysts say.

Cigarettes hidden in grocery bags are pushed across the counter at corner shops. Young men flash packs on sidewalks. A nod in their direction and even one cigarette to temporarily fend off withdrawal

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symptoms is available.

It comes at a high price. Sometimes \$11 for a box of 20 cigarettes that cost \$1.70 pre-lockdown. Some brands are smuggled into the country, others are hardly-known, bottom shelf local labels, but they'll do. There's even a VIP service if you make phone contact with illicit sellers. For \$350 you'll get 200 cigarettes delivered to your home, one promises, so you can avoid the risk of running into police. They normally cost about \$20.

Supporters of the ban say there has been some success in getting people to quit smoking, or at least cut down. But a survey of more than 12,000 smokers by the University of Cape Town found that 90% of them bought cigarettes illegally during lockdown.

Mnguni said it was "nonsense" to think smokers would suddenly give up. He fears that smokers now familiar with bootleg sources may stick with them when the ban is lifted and illicit cigarettes are cheaper again.

The repercussions for the economy are already felt. The tobacco industry contributes nearly \$100 million a month in excise taxes paid to the South African government, never mind jobs and livelihoods.

The fate of a legendary tobacco shop, a fixture on Cape Town's historic central square since 1793 and which had survived two centuries of challenges, has reinforced the new reality. Unable to trade for months, it packed up and moved out, its future uncertain.

Economist Mike Schussler knew it was always going to be hard for South Africa's economy, which was in recession before the pandemic.

"But we could have made it a little easier by not banning things like cigarettes and liquor," he said.

Today in History

By The Associated Press undefined

Today in History

Today is Friday, July 3, the 185th day of 2020. There are 181 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On July 3, 1863, the three-day Civil War Battle of Gettysburg in Pennsylvania ended in a major victory for the North as Confederate troops failed to breach Union positions during an assault known as Pickett's Charge.

On this date:

In 1608, the city of Quebec was founded by Samuel de Champlain.

In 1775, Gen. George Washington took command of the Continental Army at Cambridge, Massachusetts.

In 1944, during World War II, Soviet forces recaptured Minsk from the Germans.

In 1950, the first carrier strikes of the Korean War took place as the USS Valley Forge and the HMS Triumph sent fighter planes against North Korean targets.

In 1971, singer Jim Morrison of The Doors died in Paris at age 27.

In 1976, Israel launched its daring mission to rescue 106 passengers and Air France crew members being held at Entebbe (en-TEH'-bee) Airport in Uganda (yoo-GAHN'-dah) by pro-Palestinian hijackers; the commandos succeeded in rescuing all but four of the hostages.

In 1979, Dan White, convicted of voluntary manslaughter in the shooting deaths of San Francisco Mayor George Moscone (mahs-KOH'-nee) and Supervisor Harvey Milk, was sentenced to seven years and eight months in prison. (He ended up serving five years.)

In 1986, President Ronald Reagan presided over a gala ceremony in New York Harbor that saw the re-lighting of the renovated Statue of Liberty.

In 1988, the USS Vincennes shot down an Iran Air jetliner over the Persian Gulf, killing all 290 people aboard.

In 1996, Russians went to the polls to re-elect Boris Yeltsin president over his Communist challenger, Gennady Zyuganov (geh-NAH'-dee zhoo-GAH'-nahf), in a runoff.

In 2003, the U.S. put a \$25 million bounty on Saddam Hussein, and \$15 million apiece for his two sons.

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(The \$30 million reward for Odai and Qusai Hussein went to a tipster whose information led U.S. troops to their hideout, where the brothers were killed in a gunbattle.)

In 2005, a NASA space probe, Deep Impact, hit its comet target as planned in a mission to learn how the solar system formed.

Ten years ago: President Barack Obama announced the awarding of nearly \$2 billion for new solar plants that he said would create thousands of jobs. Vice President Joe Biden returned to Iraq to coax its government into picking a new prime minister. Mohammed Oudeh, 73, the key planner of the 1972 Munich Olympics attack that killed 11 Israeli athletes, died in Damascus. Serena Williams won her fourth Wimbledon title and 13th Grand Slam championship by sweeping Vera Zvonareva in straight sets, 6-3, 6-2, in the women's final.

Five years ago: The Solar Impulse 2, a plane powered by the sun's rays, landed in Hawaii after pilot Andre Borschberg made a record-breaking five-day journey across the Pacific Ocean from Japan.

One year ago: On a holiday-shortened trading day, the S&P 500 reached its third straight record high close; the Dow also closed at a record high of 26,966. Political figures and fellow officers joined family members at the funeral for Luis Alvarez, a former New York City police detective who had fought until his final days for the extension of health benefits for Sept. 11 responders. Actor Arte Johnson, best known for his comedy sketch work on "Laugh-In" in the 1960s, died of heart failure in Los Angeles; he was 90. A Florida prosecutor said the woman who had taken her estranged husband's guns after his arrest and turned them over to police would be charged with misdemeanor trespassing instead of theft and burglary.

Today's Birthdays: Playwright Tom Stoppard is 83. Writer-producer Jay Tarses is 81. Actor Michael Cole (TV: "The Mod Squad") is 80. Attorney Gloria Allred is 79. Folk singer Judith Durham (The Seekers) is 77. Actor Kurtwood Smith is 77. Country singer Johnny Lee is 74. Humorist Dave Barry is 73. Actress Betty Buckley is 73. Actress Jan Smithers is 71. Actor Bruce Altman is 65. Talk show host Montel Williams is 64. Country singer Aaron Tippin is 62. Rock musician Vince Clarke (Erasure) is 60. Actor Tom Cruise is 58. Actor Thomas Gibson is 58. Actress Hunter Tylo is 58. Actress Connie Nielsen is 56. Actress Yearley Smith is 56. TV chef Sandra Lee is 54. Singer Ishmael Butler is 51. Rock musician Kevin Hearn (Barenaked Ladies) is 51. Actress-singer Shawnee Smith is 51. Actress-singer Audra McDonald is 50. WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange is 49. Actor Patrick Wilson is 47. Country singer Trent Tomlinson is 45. Actress Andrea Barber is 44. Singer Shane Lynch (Boyzone) is 44. Actor Ian Anthony Dale is 42. Actress/comedian Jule Klausner is 42. Actress Elizabeth Hendrickson is 41. Rhythm-and-blues singer Tonia Tash (Divine) is 41. Country singer-songwriter Sarah Buxton is 40. Actress Olivia Munn is 40. Actress Shoshannah Stern is 40. Rock singer-songwriter Elle King is 31. Actor Grant Rosenmeyer is 29. Actress Kelsey Batelaan is 25.