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



OPEN: Recycling Trailer in Groton

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

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Groton Jr. Teeners advance to title game with win over Clark

SDVFW 14U Clark had trouble keeping up with SDVFW 14U Groton in an 18-1 loss on Tuesday.

SDVFW 14U Groton got things moving in the first inning. Logan Ringgenberg drew a walk, scoring one run.

In the bottom of the first inning, SDVFW 14U Clark tied things up at one when Jack Helkenn grounded out, scoring one run.

SDVFW 14U Groton pulled away for good with one run in the second inning. In the second Bradin Althoff singled on a 1-1 count, scoring one run.

SDVFW 14U Groton scored nine runs in the third inning. SDVFW 14U Groton batters contributing to the big inning included Kaleb Hoover, Ringgenberg, and Hoover, all driving in runs in the inning.

Althoff got the start for SDVFW 14U Groton. He lasted five innings, allowing one hit and one run while striking out ten.

Mason Mcelhone was on the mound for SDVFW 14U Clark. He allowed seven hits and 11 runs over three innings, striking out two. Waylon Olson threw two innings in relief out of the bullpen.

Collin Gaikowski went 1-for-2 at the plate to lead SDVFW 14U Clark in hits.

SDVFW 14U Groton collected 14 hits. Althoff, Teylor Diegel, Ryan Groeblichhoff, and Colby Dunker each racked up multiple hits for SDVFW 14U Groton. Althoff led SDVFW 14U Groton with five hits in five at bats. SDVFW 14U Groton stole nine bases during the game as two players stole more than one. Althoff led the way with two.



Kaleb Antonsen tried to steal third, but was caught out on the play. (Photo by Paul

Kosel)



Bradin Althoff was the winning pitcher for Groton.

(Photo by Paul Kosel)



Brevin Flihs was walked as the ball was thrown high. (Photo by Paul Kosel)

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Jr. Teener Regions

Groton	1	1	9	3	4	X	X	18	14	1
Clark	1	0	0	0	0	X	X	1	1	7

SDVFW 14U GROTON

LINEUP	AB	R	H	RBI	BB	SO
B Althoff (P)	5	3	5	5	0	0
R Groebl...ff (C, LF)	3	1	2	0	2	0
C Dunker (3B)	4	1	2	2	0	1
K Hoover (SS)	3	1	0	0	1	0
L Ringgenberg (1B)	3	1	0	0	1	0
J Zak (1B)	0	2	0	0	1	0
B Flihs (2B)	1	2	0	0	1	1
K Kucker (2B)	2	0	0	0	0	0
T Diegel (CF)	4	3	3	0	0	0
K Antonsen (RF)	1	2	1	0	2	0
C McInerney (RF)	1	0	0	0	0	0
D Abeln (LF, C)	2	2	1	1	0	0
Totals	29	18	14	8	8	2

2B: C Dunker

TB: B Althoff 5, T Diegel 3, C Dunker 3, R Groeblinghoff 2, D Abeln 1, K Antonsen 1

HBP: C Dunker, B Flihs, K Hoover

SF: D Abeln

SB: B Althoff 2, K Hoover 2, D Abeln, K Antonsen, T Diegel, L Ringgenberg, J Zak

CS: B Althoff, K Antonsen

E: B Althoff

PITCHING	IP	H	R	ER	BB	SO
B Althoff	5.0	1	1	0	4	10
Totals	5.0	1	1	0	4	10

Pitches-Strikes: B Althoff 96-59

Batters Faced: B Althoff 20

SDVFW 14U CLARK

LINEUP	AB	R	H	RBI	BB	SO
K Vandersnick (LF)	1	0	0	0	0	1
C Pommer (LF)	1	0	0	0	1	1
T Huber (C)	3	0	0	0	0	1
M Mcelh...e (P, SS)	1	1	0	0	1	1
C Mudg...t (SS, 3B)	0	0	0	0	1	0
D Langten (2B)	1	0	0	0	0	1
J Helkenn (1B)	1	0	0	0	0	0
A Peterson (1B)	1	0	0	0	0	1
E Larson (CF)	1	0	0	0	0	1
J Orthaus (CF)	1	0	0	0	0	1
J Kanne...(3B, 2B)	2	0	0	0	0	1
W Olson (2B, P)	1	0	0	0	1	0
C Gaikowski (RF)	2	0	1	0	0	1
Totals	16	1	1	0	4	10

TB: C Gaikowski 1

SB: M Mcelhone 2

E: M Mcelhone 3, C Gaikowski, T Huber, C Mudgett, J Kannegieter

PITCHING	IP	H	R	ER	BB	SO
M Mcelhone	3.0	7	11	8	5	2
W Olson	2.0	7	7	7	3	0
Totals	5.0	14	18	15	8	2

WP: M Mcelhone, W Olson 3

HBP: M Mcelhone, W Olson 2

Pitches-Strikes: M Mcelhone 79-43, W Olson 56-26

Batters Faced: M Mcelhone 23, W Olson 19



Base for new flag poured

Todd McGannon and Joe Foertsch are pictured pouring concrete in the new base for the flag pole in the City Park. The old flag pole at the elementary school will be moved to the park in the near future. (Photo by Doug Hamilton)

South Dakota Economy Second Least Impacted by COVID-19 in First Quarter in the United States

PIERRE, S.D. – Yesterday, the Bureau of Economic Analysis (BEA) announced state gross domestic product (GDP) decreases for all 50 states. The South Dakota economy contracted by 2.2%, the second smallest amount in the country, for the first quarter of 2020, which covers January to March.

"The credit here goes to the people of South Dakota," said Governor Kristi Noem. "Obviously, our low taxes and reasonable regulatory environment put us in a really good position to bounce back from this pandemic. We have trusted our people to do the right things for themselves, their loved ones, and – in turn – their communities, and we will continue to do so."

Governor Noem Signs Executive Order

PIERRE, S.D. - Today, Governor Kristi Noem signed an executive order to adapt as South Dakota continues to get "Back to Normal" in the fight against COVID-19.

Executive Order 2020-30 restates the COVID-19 emergency period to be from July 1 to December 30 for purposes of federal law related to coronavirus funding. However, several state agencies are working to get back to normal, so some previously suspended regulations will once again become enforceable. Of note, titling and registration of motor vehicles and manufactured homes must be done before August 1, and driver's licenses that are expiring during the emergency need to be renewed before the end of the year.

THINKING ABOUT HEALTH

Health Insurance Law Under Siege Again

By Trudy Lieberman, Community Health News Service

At the height of the pandemic, many Americans are experiencing firsthand the flaws in the Affordable Care Act and the health insurance it guaranteed. They are also facing the possibility that even the protection it does afford may be stripped away.

The fate of the Affordable Care Act (ACA), also known as Obamacare, is again uncertain. The 2010 law that began to whittle down the large number of uninsured Americans is back at the U.S. Supreme Court awaiting a decision – most likely next year – about whether it is constitutional. The court has upheld the law against court challenges twice before.

In late June the Justice Department filed a brief asking the court to overturn the Act. The Administration argued that the entire law is invalid because Congress eliminated the individual mandate in 2017, which had required almost all Americans to carry health insurance. Therefore, the ACA can no longer be considered a “tax,” which was the basis on which the court found it constitutional in 2012.

The Administration also argued that two other provisions make the law unconstitutional. One calls for insurance companies to sell coverage to people who have preexisting conditions, so-called guaranteed issue policies. The other requires community rating.

Community rating prevents insurers from varying premiums based on geography, age, and other factors. The Administration said in its legal brief that without those three provisions the Affordable Care Act cannot survive.

If the Court sides with the group of Republican attorneys general who brought the case and strikes down the law, that means the millions of Americans with preexisting health conditions will be in the same pickle they were in before the law took effect in 2013.

They will have trouble buying new insurance that covers medical conditions they already have since insurers would no longer be required to offer them coverage. People with common ailments like diabetes, heart disease, mental illness, and cancer would be out of luck once again. But so would people with more minor problems like recurrent ear or sinus infections.

A new group of Americans may also find it impossible to get coverage. Those who have recovered from COVID-19 may face long-lasting health challenges resulting from their illness.

Reports are coming in that detail such problems as blood clots, strokes, heart and lung damage, and neurological problems such as numbness and muscle weakness. It’s unlikely any insurance company would voluntarily issue coverage to people with those medical problems.

Like sick people before the Affordable Care Act took effect, COVID-19 survivors will be uninsured.

Do Americans really want to go back to the days when sick people, the very ones who need insurance coverage, are thrown out of the marketplace? I would argue they don’t. The last four months have taught us that we are all vulnerable to the possibility of long-lasting medical harm from the coronavirus. Insurance to help cover whatever ills show up is essential.

The Affordable Care Act, however, was not a perfect solution for uninsured Americans. Millions of people who’ve had to turn to the ACA because they lost their employer-provided coverage during the pandemic shutdown are learning about its shortcomings, which were given short shrift for years by politicians and the media advocates for the law.

“With health insurance in particular we have a social support system that really isn’t very functional when you have job loss,” Ben Zipperer, an economist with the Economic Policy Institute in Washington, D.C., told Bloomberg News. That’s a problem in the best of times, he said, adding, “It’s a real disaster when you have tens of millions of workers suddenly lose their jobs.”

Some 27 million workers may have lost their job-based coverage as of the first of May.

Many of those newly uninsured have experienced the weaknesses that were baked into the law. Policies with cheaper premiums come with high deductibles, often \$7,000 or \$8,000 a year or more. Paying that much out of pocket is a

heavy lift for those out of work.

The trade-off is paying higher premiums. That's hard, too. Some people who've lost coverage might qualify for Medicaid, or they may qualify for subsidies under the ACA that help pay premiums or required cost sharing. Those are options people in that predicament should investigate, but many people won't qualify.

If the ACA survives this latest challenge and everyone sick or well can still buy insurance, maybe the country can begin to make sure no American goes without coverage when another disaster strikes.

What improvements would you like to see in health insurance? Write to Trudy at trudy.lieberman@gmail.com.

The arts build bridges in a divided society

By Jim Speirs, Executive Director, Arts South Dakota

As a musician, I'm aware of the unique way that music draws people together. As we play, musicians look out on audiences that are diverse—all ages, races, genders—and yet all moving to the beat of the same tune.

The arts do that—bring us together around a single expression of creative inspiration. We don't all like exactly the same music—yet we all share a common connection to rhythm, harmony and the emotion inherent in all styles of music. Every painting may not reach out to us, touch something emotional within us and make us see the world differently—but we're willing to consider the possibility. That's the way the arts work in the modern world. Creativity bridges the gaps between us and helps us understand how much we have in common.

Here in South Dakota, we celebrate the rich diversity of our cultural traditions. The colors of the sky, the drumbeat of the rolling thunder, the variety of dialects and accents that blend in our language—these things make us South Dakotans and make us appreciate our heritage and our togetherness. Those connecting points are equally celebrated in our art, from the sound of a red cedar flute echoing across the hills to a painting of the big bluestem prairie.

Sometimes it takes an effort, a purposeful reaching out from people to people, and art is there to do that, too. A musician intentionally studies the unique rhythms of other cultures as a way to express new ideas in his own musical traditions. Actors immerse themselves in the words and mannerisms of their subject. A painter puts her vision out there for the whole world to see and share and get lost in.

I believe that's what will always pull us together. Being inclusive in programming and support is vital, as we encourage the artists who can articulate our thoughts, express our emotions and explore our vast common ground. No matter how divided our society can sometimes look, the arts are there, like a familiar tune, to get us back singing together. We all need to see the world a little more like an artist, especially today.

Arts South Dakota shares new online weekly arts events and opportunities on social media, and the only calendar in South Dakota devoted solely to the arts on our website, www.ArtsSouthDakota.org.



#135 in a series

Covid-19 Update: by Marie Miller

We did it—topped three million cases—by quite a lot. We're at 3,011,500, an increase of 54,300 or 1.8%. This is our third-worst day yet, and now the last eight days are all on our list of the eight worst ever. Half a million cases have been reported since June 26, 11 days ago. We are reporting new cases at twice the rate we did in the middle of June and are in our 29th consecutive record-setting day for rolling new case average nation-wide with California, Texas, Georgia, and Florida leading the way. At that rate, it should not come as a surprise that we have 40 states and territories with new case 14-day rolling averages that are increasing, 12 that are holding steady, and just two declining.

There have been 131,266 deaths, 963 more than yesterday, a 0.8% increase. This is considerably more than yesterday's 395 deaths. The University of Washington's Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation (IHME) now projects many states will have "significant increases in cases and deaths in September and October" with the country topping 200,000 deaths by November without strict face-mask requirements across the US. You will want to remember the IHME is the organization that was criticized in the spring for overly optimistic projections after they predicted in April the death toll would reach 60,000 by August 1—that's the August 1 that is still nearly a month away. They claim to have remedied the problem, and this projection certainly doesn't feel optimistic. On the positive side, their model also projects 95% adoption of face masks could reduce that number of deaths by 45,000.

Six states set records for new cases, Hawaii, California, Montana, Oklahoma, Texas, and Missouri. Three more, Arizona, Texas, and Mississippi, added record numbers of deaths. Arizona had record hospitalizations as well as deaths today. Texas hit 10,000 new cases in a day for the first time today. Hospitalizations in Texas also set a record today. Cases, hospitalizations, deaths: That's the trifecta, I guess. Florida is approaching a hospital capacity crisis with two-thirds of hospitals reporting at full capacity and one-third 90% full. An issue in Florida, Texas, and many of the other states currently setting records is not just hospital capacity—number of beds available, but staffing. Covid-19 patients tend to be very labor-intensive, and trained personnel must be available to care for these people or the number of unoccupied beds doesn't really matter much.

I spent my career educating people who had chosen health care careers, so I know a great many people doing this kind of work today. As a result, for months—really since the start—I have watched the case numbers among these workers with dismay. I have heard it asserted today that health care workers "don't get infected because they take appropriate precautions. They engage in social distancing, they wear facial coverings, they use good personal hygiene." And I have to publicly take issue with the ignorance or malevolence—whichever—that underlies such claims. The CDC's records include the person's profession for only 25% of the cases they have recorded, and of those alone, they report 85,000 health care workers have been infected and 500 have died. You can do the math from there. Shortages of PPE have played a significant role in producing this sort of outcome, and so I repudiate any claim that health care workers are getting a pass on the infections. It is irresponsible to make such statements.

While we're on the subject of the PPE shortage, I will point out that one strategy to address the shortage is to decontaminate used items and reuse them. While many hospitals are employing their own methods to do this, there are some companies providing decontamination services. One such is a nonprofit operating out of Ohio with nearly 50 facilities set up nation-wide. They are using a hydrogen peroxide vapor for decontamination, followed by aeration to remove the vapor so that wearers are not breathing the gas when a mask is later worn. Decontamination and reuse is a fairly common procedure these days; a survey of 14,000 nurses nation-wide finds that 43% of them report their hospitals are reusing N95 respirators. 79% reported they were being asked to use items for longer than recommended or to reuse them.

Sterilization professionals have had some difficulty accepting this practice; one said, "It changed things for me, because I had to defend a practice that was technically wrong, as far as our standards go." The FDA has released emergency authorizations for reuse of items, something that is normally not permitted, and their laboratory has tested and approved a number of techniques now in use.

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Nurses do report feeling unsafe as a result; much of the concern is with the potential for off-gassing, the emission of lingering decontamination gas so that the wearer inhales it. There have also been concerns expressed about deterioration of the materials and proper fit for N95s. When these are not fitted snugly to the face, they do not provide a sufficient level of protection. 3M, the manufacturer of N95s, has not been eager to endorse decontamination due to these concerns, but has recently released an evaluation stating it is safe to decontaminate up to 20 times. Most hospitals stop short of 20 cycles. No one thinks this situation is ideal, but going without PPE isn't ideal either. We are putting these workers at risk, and no amount of you're-a-hero applause and cheering compensates for illness and death.

The trend toward younger people being infected continues; and for those thinking this is a good thing because, after all, young people don't get that sick, the proportion of hospitalized people who are between 18 and 49 increased from 27% in early March to 35% at the end of last month. N.B. They don't put mildly ill or asymptomatic people in the hospital. A whole lot of young people are getting very sick from this infection.

There's been another outbreak associated with Greek housing, this one at Georgia Tech. Even with the campus mostly empty and all summer classes online, there have been 11 cases diagnosed among residents of fraternity houses. The school has had 72 positive tests overall, about half of which have been reported since June 1. Three of those were staff members in athletics, and we've discussed the issues with athletics programs across the country.

Last night, I reported on a public letter from scientists pressuring the WHO to acknowledge the evidence supporting transmission of Covid-19 via the airborne route. The letter pointed out that airborne transmission is a particular problem in indoor settings that are crowded or poorly ventilated and that the current guidelines recommending measures to limit droplet infection would be only partially effective against an airborne pathogen. I guess public pressure is one way to get their attention because today they indicated a statement on the matter will soon be forthcoming. Benedetta Allegranzi, an infectious disease specialist with the agency, acknowledged airborne transmission "cannot be ruled out." We'll see where this leads.

The CDC has recommended that voters consider alternatives to in-person voting in November. The Election Assistance Commission, a federal agency, has issued guidance that those voting in person should come at off-peak times, bring their own pens or a touch-screen pen for voting machines, and wash hands before entering and after leaving the polling place. They also note that everyone should be wearing face masks, workers and voters. The guidelines were based on issues that arose during primaries, including a shortage of poll workers, many of whom have traditionally been retired persons who are, of course, at increased risk from Covid-19, and on information from public health experts calling on recent research.

I fielded a question today about the eyes as a possible entry route for this virus and whether we need to think about face shields. If you've been along for this entire ride, you will recall that, early on, we talked about how things that get into your eyes tend to end up in your respiratory system because your tear ducts drain to your nasal passages (which is why, when you cry, your nose runs). This means most respiratory infections can enter through the eyes and end up in the respiratory tract; it is not unique to this virus.

Something new since our last talk about this is that it turns out the thin, transparent layer of corneal epithelium that covers the visible part of your eyeball actually has ACE2 receptors in it. Apparently, no one had looked for them in this tissue before, but now we know. You may recall that the ACE2 receptor is the virus's entry point to our cells; cells that lack these receptors cannot be infected by this virus. The presence of them may mean the virus can actually infect these cells, not just hang out in your eye before draining to your nasal passages. This is probably not something to get too excited about; there have been no reports of eye damage as a part of Covid-19, although some people have experienced conjunctivitis (pink-eye) while infected. So the main issue here appears to be the drainage thing, not an eye infection.

The most likely way to become infected via your eyes is probably a direct hit from a droplet, likely from a cough or sneeze. There doesn't seem to be any evidence supporting airborne transmission (via tiny particles floating around in the air) through this route; at this point, seven months in, there should be at least a hint in the literature of infections acquired in this manner, and there really isn't. Eyes are not considered to be a primary means of transmission overall.

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Hospital workers use full eye protection if they're going to perform any sort of aerosol-generating procedure because that provides a good chance for a direct hit. If I were a dentist or physician in a situation where I was going to get close-up with patients, I would consider using eye protection. There is one case of transmission on an airplane that seems somewhere between possible and likely to have been acquired through the eyes—most likely a direct hit too, so I would also consider using eye protection if I were going to be in close proximity to others, for example, on an airplane (a place you're not going to find me for a good long while yet). But for the average citizen walking around the grocery store, eye protection is likely overkill. I do choose to wear my glasses instead of contact lenses when I'm out and about, but I do this mostly to discourage myself from touching my eyes while I'm in public. Unless some evidence emerges indicating we have a problem here, I don't think I'll be worrying about eye protection.

I've seen some discussion about people wearing face shields, but expert opinion has not at this time coalesced around recommending them. They don't really substitute for a mask, and they seem unnecessary if you're wearing one. I have seen suggestions face shields might offer some protection for those unable to wear masks; but they are not going to do as good a job of blocking respiratory emissions as a mask will. The only recommendation I've seen for eye protection for the general public is based on studies in health care workers, which really is a different can of worms. At this time, there really isn't a coalescence of opinion around recommending them.

Mike Smith is a guy who's seen pandemics before; he was living in San Francisco back in the '80s at the height of the AIDS pandemic. He describes himself in 1987 as "a little heartbroken, a little bit lost" and said, "You know, I don't think I'm the only one with a little bit of PTSD these days." Probably not.

What do you do? He recommends turning grief into action.

What he did with his heartbreak last time around was to get together with some friends and begin an enterprise that turned into the largest community art project in the world, the AIDS Memorial Quilt. This piece of art grew over the years into a 54 ton behemoth with 48,000 panels, each one commemorating a life lost. Pieces of the Quilt are included in over a thousand displays a year, so the NAMES Foundation, the group that started the Quilt, has a sewing workshop to sew pieces together. Smith pointed out that more people have worked on the Quilt than built the Pyramids. That's a legacy.

Smith explained, "In the middle of all this, COVID, when it first happened, I wasn't the only one that was kind of looking for a way to be helpful, a way to do something." Gert McMullin, who'd also been involved in the Quilt from the start and had done a lot of the sewing over the years was sad because, unlike back in the '80s when she would go into hospital rooms and be with dying friends, she "couldn't touch people and she couldn't be up close with people." So she hit the workshop and started sewing face masks to give away. Smith found an organization that needed them for a homeless shelter, a youth rehab program, and other vulnerable people. And away they went.

I think I'll just let Mr. Smith take us home from here:

"The AIDS Memorial Quilt has gone from a protest banner and something we were going to take to Washington to make a difference for one day, to a national treasure. . . .

"And a lot of what we did at the time was not just the fabric. We inspired people to do something, anything, to express what they were going through, to tell their stories.

"And I think now about where we are with this mask project, and it's the same thing. We may make 2,000 or 3,000 masks, and that may save some lives. I'd much rather have this be a catalyst for other people to feel like, I can find something to do. I can get out of my house and go help stuff food at the food bank.

"If we can do something simple like make masks, you can do something simple, like find a way to be helpful. And that's what I'd much rather be remembered for, that—being the catalyst, than for just doing some sewing."

You could do worse.

Stay healthy. I'll be back tomorrow.



Yard of the Week

The Clark yard at 506 West Third Ave. has been chosen as this week's Yard of the Week by members of the Groton Garden Club. Pictured are Emily, Ethan, Laura and Shane Clark. (Photo

by Paul Kosel)

Penning hired as softball coach

The Groton City Council had a short meeting Tuesday evening at the Groton Community Center. Janel Penning was hired as a softball coach.

A plat was approved for L and S Frohling Addition. The Frohlings want to build a garage adjacent to their house.

Kristie Fliehs will attend the 2020 elected officials workshop.

Dacotah Bank and South Dakota FIT were approved as official banks and The Groton Independent was approved as the official newspaper.

Ken Hier of Clark Engineering came before the council to discuss the contracts for the new water tower and to introduce one of his new bosses from the Sioux Falls office.

Low Volatility at the Pump as the National Average Pushes One Penny Higher

July 6, 2020 - The national gas price average increased just one cent to \$2.18 on the week despite a dip in U.S. demand for gasoline and gasoline stocks increasing by 1 million bbl. The slight drop in demand – 47,000 b/d - amid the increase in stocks comes as many states report increases in COVID-19 cases, potentially causing Americans to reconsider outings. However, for motorists who hit the road for the Independence Day holiday, gas prices were a welcome sight.

South Dakota Gas Prices

Today \$2.11
Yesterday \$2.11
Last week \$2.07
Last month \$1.89
Last year \$2.69

"Independence Day weekend gas prices were nearly 60 cents cheaper than last year and on top of that, they were the most inexpensive prices seen for the holiday since 2004," said Marilyn Buskohl, AAA spokesperson.

Beyond typical fluctuation at the pump, on the week a few states saw prices jump due to fuel tax increases on July 1. This includes California, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Nebraska, South Carolina and Maryland.

Quick Stats

The nation's top 10 largest weekly changes: Florida (+8 cents), Washington, D.C. (+6 cents), Nebraska (+6 cents), Indiana (-5 cents), South Dakota (+3 cents), Utah (+3 cents), Ohio (-3 cents), Kentucky (-3 cents), Michigan (-3 cents) and California (+2 cents).

The nation's top 10 least expensive markets: Mississippi (\$1.82), Louisiana (\$1.84), Arkansas (\$1.86), Texas (\$1.87), Alabama (\$1.88), Missouri (\$1.88), Oklahoma (\$1.88), South Carolina (\$1.91), Tennessee (\$1.93) and Kansas (\$1.96).

Central States and Great Lakes Region

Gas prices are fluctuating across the region with some Great Lakes and Central States seeing increases and decreases of as much as a nickel. These six states rank among the top 10 with the largest weekly changes in the country this week: Nebraska (+6 cents), Indiana (-5 cents), South Dakota (+3 cents), Ohio (-3 cents), Kentucky (-3 cents) and Michigan (-3 cents). Part of Nebraska's jump can be attributed to gas taxes that increased from 29.3 cents a gallon to 33.2 cents on July 1.

For a second week, gasoline stocks decreased but not as dramatically as the previous week. This is contributing to dips in gas prices for many states. The latest EIA report shows stocks dipped by just 120,000 bbl to drop levels to 52.4 million bbl.

Oil Market Dynamics

At the end of Friday's formal trading session, WTI increased by 83 cents to settle at \$40.65 per barrel. Domestic crude prices increased after EIA's weekly report revealed that total domestic crude inventories fell by 7.2 million bbl to 533.5 million bbl. Decreasing crude stocks could mean that crude production is meeting demand as it continues to recover amid new coronavirus outbreaks around the world, which could suppress global crude demand during the second half of 2020.

Motorists can find current gas prices along their route with the free AAA Mobile app for iPhone, iPad and Android. The app can also be used to map a route, find discounts, book a hotel and access AAA roadside assistance. Learn more at AAA.com/mobile.

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Area COVID-19 Cases

	July 1	July 2	July 3	July 4	July 5	July 6	July 7
Minnesota	36,303	36,716	37,210	37,624	No Update+	38,136	38,569
Nebraska	19,177	19,310	19,452	19,660	19,827	19,929	20,046
Montana	967	1016	1083	1,128	1167	1,212	1249
Colorado	32,715	33,029	33,352	33,612	33,866	34,065	34,257
Wyoming	1184	1203	1233	1267	1289	1312	1349
North Dakota	3576	3615	3657	3722	3779	3816	3849
South Dakota	6764	6826	6893	6978	7028	7063	7105
United States	2,629,372	2,686,587	2,739,879	2,795,163	2,839,917	2,888,729	2,938,624
US Deaths	127,322	128,062	128,740	129,437	129,676	129,947	130,306
Minnesota	+442	+413	+494	+414		+512	+433
Nebraska	+135	+133	+142	+208	+167	+102	+117
Montana	+48	+49	+67	+45	+39	+45	+37
Colorado	+204	+314	+323	+260	+254	+199	+192
Wyoming	+33	+19	+30	+34	+22	+23	+37
North Dakota	+37	+39	+42	+65	+57	+37	+33
South Dakota	+48	+62	+67	+85	+50	+35	+42
United States	+46,475	+57,215	+53,292	+55,284	+44,754	+48,812	+49,895
US Deaths	+1149	+740	+678	+697	+239	+271	+359
	July 8						
Minnesota	39,133						
Nebraska	20,201						
Montana	1,327						
Colorado	34,664						
Wyoming	1,378						
North Dakota	3898						
South Dakota	7,163						
United States	2,994,776						
US Deaths	131,626						
Minnesota	+564						
Nebraska	+155						
Montana	+78						
Colorado	+407						
Wyoming	+29						
North Dakota	+49						
South Dakota	+58						
United States	+56,152						
US Deaths	+1,320						

+ The Minnesota Department of Health took July 4th off so there is no update available.

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July 7th COVID-19 UPDATE

Groton Daily Independent
from State Health Lab Reports

This is almost exciting - we have stuff to report today! Some good, some not so good. First the good. We had more recoveries today than positive cases (127-58), resulting in a reduction of the active cases down to 875. The percent recovered went up by 1.1 to 86.4 percent.

It was so close today in the number of counties that had only recoveries to those that has positive cases. There were 15 counties that only had recoveries and 19 that had additional positive cases with one county (Mellette) having a negative positive count with an assignment. We gained Bon Homme back in the fully recovered category, but lost Grant County.

Brown and Day counties each had one positive case. The active cases in Brown County dipped by three to 17.

There was one death reported in Minnehaha County, a male age 70-79, bringing the state's death toll to 98. North Dakota reported four more deaths, bringing its death total to 84.

Brown County:

Active Cases: -3 (17)
Recovered: +4 (331)
Total Positive: +1 (350)
Ever Hospitalized: 0 (18)
Deaths: 2
Negative Tests: +65 (3198)
Percent Recovered: 94.6% (+.9)

South Dakota:

Positive: +58 (7163 total)
Negative: +1004 (78,202 total)
Hospitalized: +7 (699 total). 64 currently hospitalized (Up 5 from yesterday)
Deaths: +1 (98 total)
Recovered: +127 (6190 total)
Active Cases: -70 (875)
Percent Recovered: 86.4 up 1.1

Counties with no positive cases report the following negative tests: Butte +29 (527), Harding 40, Jones +1 (37), Perkins +1 (91), Potter +1 (183), unassigned -467 (2798).

Don't be disappointed if your county is not listed - it means they do not have any new positive cases; but on the other hand, they also do not have any additional recovered cases.

Beadle: +4 positive, +18 recovered (483 of 545 recovered)
Bon Homme: +1 recovered (12 of 12 recovered)
Brookings: +2 positive, +4 recovered (58 of 83 recovered)
Brown: +1 positive, +4 recovered (331 of 350 recovered)
Brule: +6 recovered (22 of 29 recovered)
Buffalo: +1 positive, +5 recovered (65 of 77 recovered)
Charles Mix: +1 positive, +2 recovered (38 of 90 recovered)
Clark: +1 recovered (13 of 15 recovered)
Clay: +1 positive, +1 recovered (76 of 90 recovered)

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Codington: +2 positive, +9 recovered (60 of 85 recovered)
 Corson: +1 recovered (16 of 19 recovered)
 Custer: +2 recovered (7 of 10 recovered)
 Davison: +2 recovered (36 of 47 recovered)
 Day: +1 positive (13 of 19 recovered)
 Dewey: +1 positive (1 of 9 recovered)
 Douglas: +1 positive (4 of 10 recovered)
 Fall River: +1 recovered (8 of 12 recovered)
 Grant: +1 positive (13 of 14 recovered)
 Gregory: +1 recovered (2 of 4 recovered)
 Hamlin: +1 recovered (10 of 13 recovered)
 Hanson: +2 positive (6 of 12 recovered)
 Hughes: +8 recovered (46 of 65 recovered)
 Hutchinson: +2 recovered (12 of 15 recovered)
 Lincoln: +5 positive, +9 recovered (331 of 371 recovered)
 Lyman: +2 positive, +4 recovered (45 of 72 recovered)
 Meade: +1 positive, +1 recovered (41 of 52 recovered)
 Mellette: -1 positive (3 of 6 recovered)
 Minnehaha: +18 positive, +17 recovered (3402 of 2685 recovered)
 Oglala Lakota: +1 positive, +5 recovered (59 of 100 recovered)
 Pennington: +25 positive, +14 recovered (423 of 590 recovered)
 Spink: +1 recovered (10 of 12 recovered)
 Tripp: +1 recovered (14 of 18 recovered)
 Union: +3 recovered (118 of 137 recovered)
 Yankton: +1 recovered (72 of 82 recovered)

Fully recovered from positive cases (Gained Bon Homme, lost Grant): Bon Homme 12-12, Hyde 3-3, Kingsbury 6-6, Sanborn 12-12, Sully 1-1, Ziebach 1-1.

The NDDoH & private labs report 1,989 completed tests today for COVID-19 with 52 new positive cases, bringing the statewide total to 3,898. NDDoH reports four new deaths.

State & private labs have reported 204,526 total completed tests.

3,413 ND patients are recovered.

RACE/ETHNICITY OF SOUTH DAKOTA COVID-19 CASES

Race/Ethnicity	# of Cases	% of Cases
Asian, Non-Hispanic	713	10%
Black, Non-Hispanic	978	14%
Hispanic	1113	16%
Native American, Non-Hispanic	1094	15%
Other	738	10%
White, Non-Hispanic	2527	35%

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	59
Pennington	17
Todd	1
Union	1

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County	Positive Cases	Recovered Cases	Negative Cases
Aurora	34	33	292
Beadle	545	483	1499
Bennett	4	3	430
Bon Homme	12	12	611
Brookings	83	58	1849
Brown	350	331	3198
Brule	29	22	534
Buffalo	77	65	520
Butte	0	0	527
Campbell	1	0	64
Charles Mix	90	38	786
Clark	15	13	327
Clay	90	76	1003
Codington	85	60	2017
Corson	19	16	147
Custer	10	7	584
Davison	47	36	1701
Day	19	13	426
Deuel	4	2	305
Dewey	9	1	936
Douglas	10	4	330
Edmunds	8	6	305
Fall River	12	8	747
Faulk	23	19	130
Grant	14	13	545
Gregory	4	2	251
Haakon	1	0	238
Hamlin	13	10	480
Hand	7	6	200
Hanson	12	6	140
Harding	0	0	40
Hughes	65	46	1235
Hutchinson	15	12	722

Hyde	3	3	99
Jackson	6	2	355
Jerauld	39	37	237
Jones	0	0	37
Kingsbury	6	6	424
Lake	22	18	691
Lawrence	19	18	1468
Lincoln	371	331	4699
Lyman	72	45	707
Marshall	5	4	309
McCook	14	8	500
McPherson	5	4	169
Meade	52	41	1396
Mellette	6	3	225
Miner	10	6	204
Minnehaha	3685	3402	20626
Moody	23	19	485
Oglala Lakota	100	59	2499
Pennington	590	423	7471
Perkins	0	0	91
Potter	0	0	183
Roberts	52	41	1126
Sanborn	12	12	175
Spink	12	10	913
Stanley	14	13	157
Sully	1	1	48
Todd	57	49	1337
Tripp	18	14	463
Turner	27	23	712
Union	137	118	1452
Walworth	15	6	424
Yankton	82	72	2454
Ziebach	1	1	149
Unassigned****	0	0	2798

SEX OF SOUTH DAKOTA COVID-19 CASES

Sex	# of Cases	# of Deaths
Female	3469	53
Male	3694	45

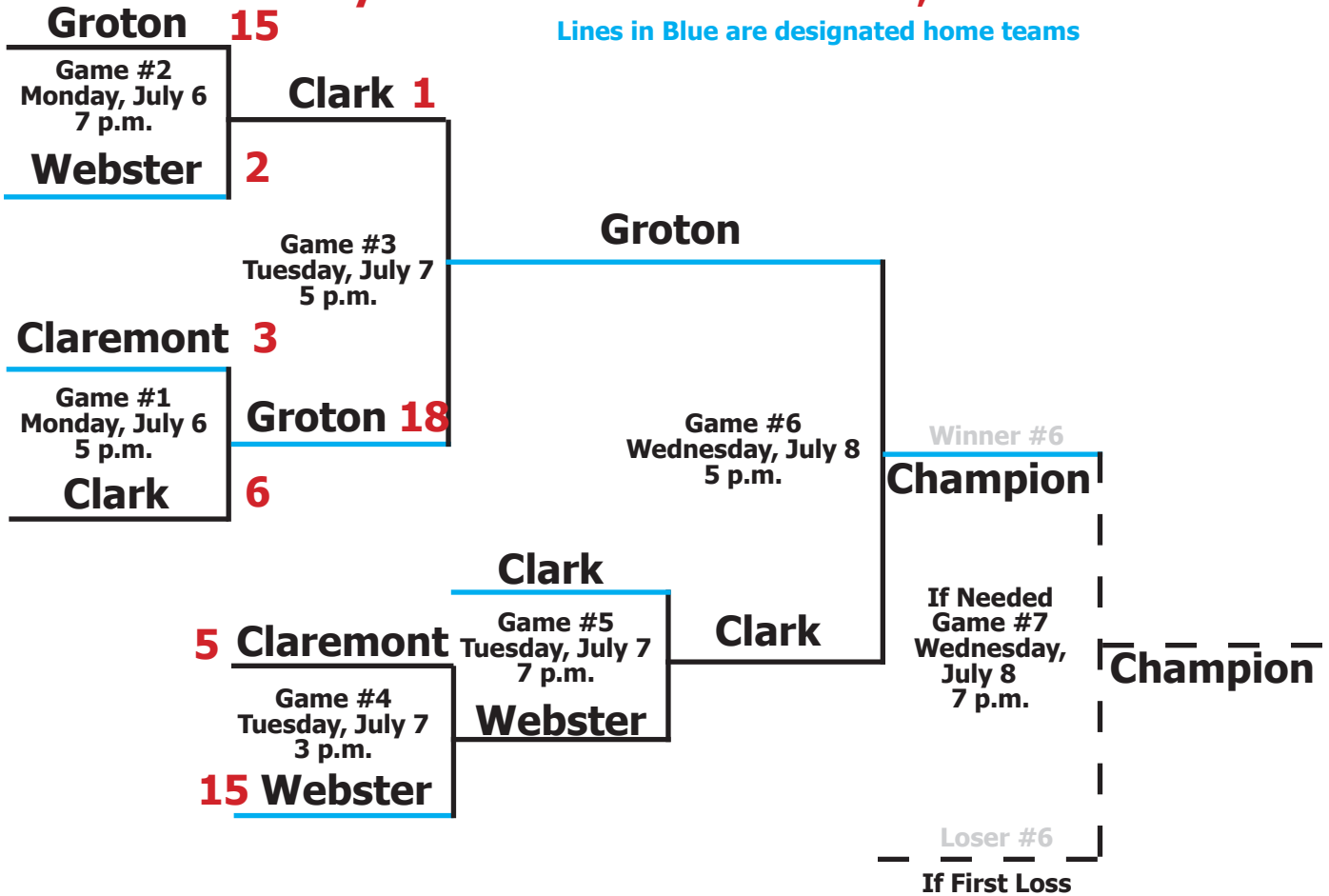
Age Range	# of Cases	# of Deaths
0-19 years	754	0
20-29 years	1485	1
30-39 years	1503	3
40-49 years	1148	7
50-59 years	1122	12
60-69 years	670	17
70-79 years	258	14
80+ years	223	44

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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



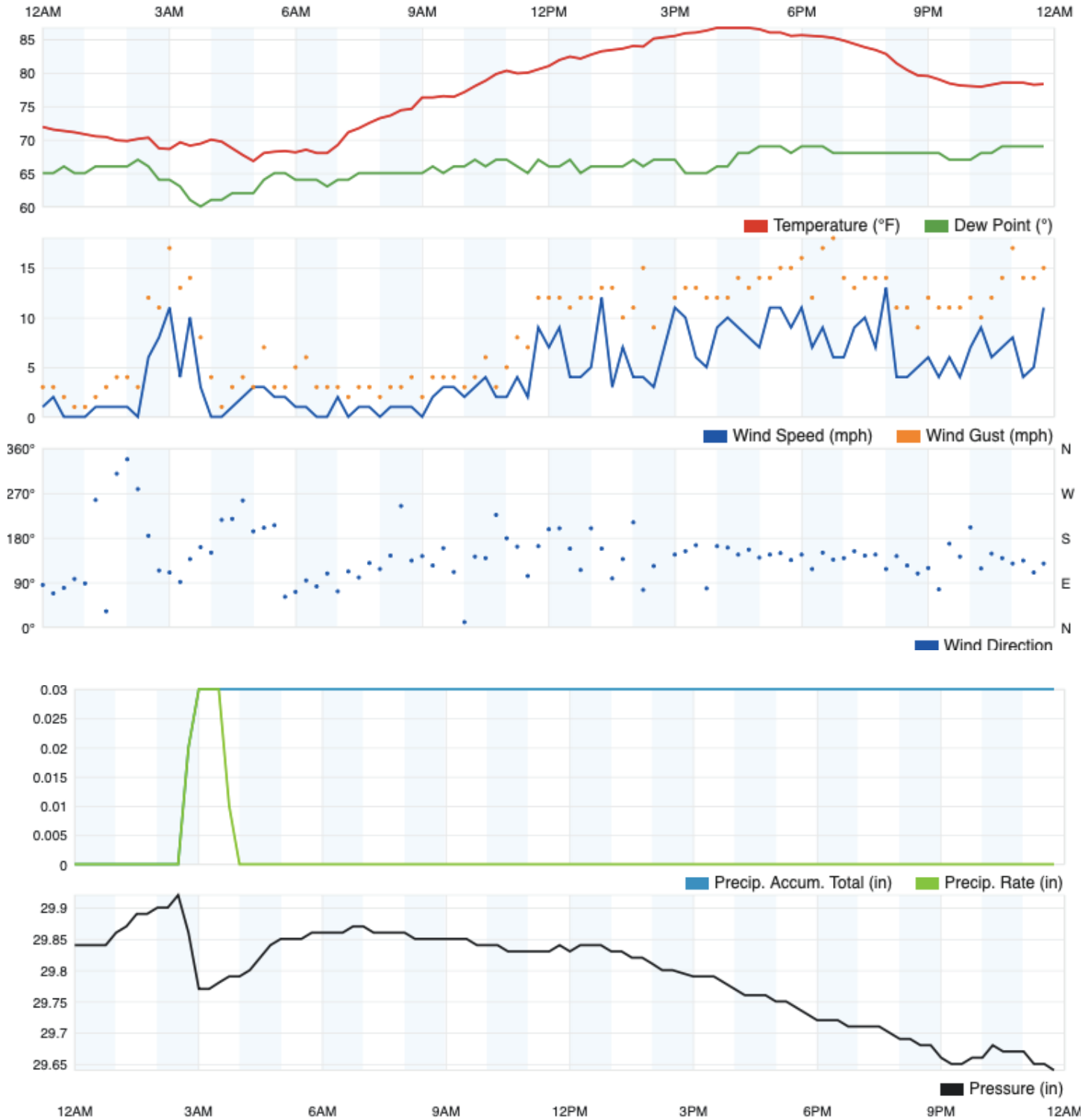
Baseball Schedule

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

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Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs



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Today

Tonight

Thursday

Thursday
Night

Friday



Mostly Sunny

High: 88 °F



Increasing
Clouds

Low: 64 °F



Becoming
Sunny

High: 87 °F



Clear

Low: 60 °F



Sunny

High: 87 °F

SLIGHT RISK

of Severe T-Storms Today

ISSUED: 6:08 AM - Wednesday, July 08, 2020

WHAT

Scattered severe thunderstorms possible. These storms could produce wind gusts of 60+ mph, quarter+ sized hail size, and heavy rain

WHERE

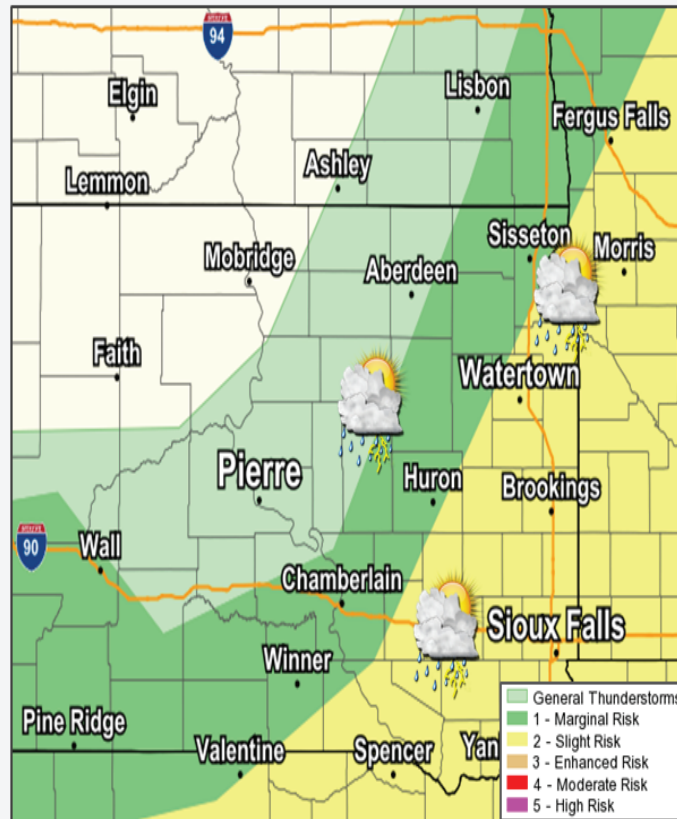
The greatest risk will be from west central Minnesota south and west into east central and southeast South Dakota.

WHEN

Storms may develop during the late afternoon/early evening and then shift slowly south and east through the evening and night.

ACTION

Monitor the weather and have a plan of action in case storms threaten your area.



A storm system will continue to move through the region today with a cold front slowly making its way eastward across the area this afternoon. Scattered thunderstorms are expected to develop along the front by late this afternoon and evening. If storms can maintain strength or become stronger, severe weather will be possible. Large hail and strong winds will be the main threats with any storms tonight. After these storms exit to the south and east overnight, more quiet conditions look to move in for Thursday.

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Today in Weather History

July 8, 1922: Two tornadoes occurred near the southern border of South Dakota, with one at St. Charles in Gregory County, and the other on the south shore of Lake Andes, in Charles Mix County. The distance apart was about 30 miles. The tornado in Gregory County missed the town of Lake Andes. However, it destroyed about 29 cottages and five large barns. Fifteen people were injured, but no one was killed.

July 8, 1951: An F2 touched down in open country and moved northeastward, passing three miles northwest of Corona in Roberts County. Thirteen buildings were destroyed on a farm with only the house left standing. Three cows and 20 pigs were killed.

July 8, 2009: A tornado passed through the city of Dickinson, ND, on the far south side, mainly just south of the Heart River. From their eyewitness accounts, and from video obtained from the Dickinson Police Department, it is likely that this was a rain-wrapped tornado, and very difficult if not impossible to see. The tornado occurred before sunset, yet it was described as being as dark as night during the event. Over 450 structures were damaged, of which nearly 100 were declared destroyed or beyond repair. Numerous vehicles were damaged or destroyed; some were on their roofs. From that, it was determined that peak wind speeds in the tornado were on the order of 150 mph.

July 8, 2011: Historical releases on the Oahe Dam of 160,000 CFS kept the Missouri River from Pierre to Chamberlain at record flood levels throughout July. Extensive sandbagging and levee building had been done earlier to hold back the river. Residents in the Pierre, Fort Pierre, and Oacoma areas continued to be the most affected by the river. Many homes, along with roads, crop, and pastureland remained flooded throughout the month. The Missouri River at Pierre continued from 5 to 6 foot above flood stage throughout July. The Missouri River at Chamberlain reached a record stage of 75.1 feet on July 8th. Flood stage at Chamberlain is 65 feet. The flooding on the river began in late May and continued into August.

July 8, 2013: A thunderstorm complex moving across central and north central South Dakota produced gusty winds up to 70 mph. These strong winds brought down several tree branches around the area with Dewey County the hardest hit location. In Timber Lake, downed tree branches fell on houses and vehicles causing damage.

1680: The first confirmed tornado death in the United States occurred in Cambridge, Massachusetts. The funnel was filled with, stones, bushes, and other things. The tornado also unroofed a barn and snapped many large trees.

1816 - Frost was reported in low places throughout New England. (David Ludlum)

1950 - The town of York, NE, was deluged with 13.15 inches of rain in 24 hours to establish a state record. (The Weather Channel)

1975 - Three people were killed and six others were injured when lightning struck a walnut tree near Mayo, FL. The nine people were stringing tobacco under a tin shed when the bolt hit the nearby tree. (The Weather Channel)

1987 - Thunderstorms in the central U.S. produced wind gusts to 90 mph at Waterloo, IA, 6.38 inches of rain at Tescott, KS, and twenty-five minutes of ping-pong ball size hail at Drummond, OK. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1988 - Thirty cities in the north central and northeastern U.S. reported record high temperatures for the date. Beckley, WV, equalled their all-time record with a high of 93 degrees. Afternoon and evening thunderstorms spawned seven tornadoes in Adams and Logan counties of eastern Colorado, and hail caused 2.3 million dollars damage in Adams, Logan and Washington counties. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

2003: What may be the world's highest dew point temperature was recorded at Dhahran, Saudi Arabia, in the Persian Gulf. A dew point of 95 degrees was recorded at 3 PM while the air temperature was 108 degrees. The apparent temperature at that time would have been 172 degrees.

2009: An intense cold front brings heavy snow, hail, high winds and unusually cold temperatures to southern Peru. The severe conditions were blamed for the deaths of more than 246 children due to cold-related illnesses.



ONE PRAYER - DIFFERENT ANSWERS?

Janie had been rude and disobedient and refused to follow her mother's instructions. Wanting her to learn the importance of being obedient, and the necessity of prayer, her mother sent her to her room asking her to talk with God and pray for His help. In a few moments, she returned to the kitchen, where her mother was preparing the evening meal.

"Mom," she announced, "I prayed about my disobedience."

"Good," said her mother. "Did you ask God to help you to be kind and obedient?"

"No, Mom, I didn't," she answered. "Instead, I asked Him to help you put up with me."

Jesus said something important about obedience: "Whoever has my commands and obeys them, he is the one who loves me." He also said, "If you love Me, you will keep my commands." There is always a connection in Scripture between love and obedience.

If we say that we love God, we will demonstrate that love by being obedient to Him and following His teachings. When we look at the life of Jesus, we see a relationship between a Father and His Son, founded on love and reflected in obedience. His life set the standard for us to follow.

It was the sinless and sacrificial life of Jesus that ultimately shows us what obedience to God requires. When we waver in our willingness to obey Christ, we must examine our commitment to Him and be willing and courageous to do what He asks us to do no matter what it costs us.

Prayer: Help us, Heavenly Father, in our struggle to be obedient to You. We know that self-centeredness often overwhelms us. Give us Your strength to persevere. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today : Whoever has my commands and obeys them, he is the one who loves me. John 14:21

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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

Judge rejects Dakota Access request for emergency order

FARGO, N.D. (AP) — A federal judge on Tuesday rejected a request for an emergency order to delay the process of shutting down the Dakota Access pipeline while attorneys appeal a ruling to shutter the pipeline during the course of an environmental review.

Pipeline attorneys filed the motion — along with a notice of appeal — late Monday after U.S. District Judge James Boasberg ruled to stop the flow of oil by Aug. 5. In denying the request for an expedited ruling, Boasberg said he will schedule a status hearing to discuss scheduling when he receives the Dakota Access motion to keep the pipeline running.

Boasberg ordered the pipeline shuttered while the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers fulfills his demand to conduct a more extensive environmental review than the one that allowed the pipeline to start moving oil near the Standing Rock Indian Reservation three years ago. Boasberg cited the “potential harm” that the pipeline could cause before the Corps finishes its survey.

Dakota Access attorney William Scherman said in his motion filed Monday that shutting down the pipeline requires a number of time-consuming and expensive steps that would take “well more” than 30 days.

Jan Hasselman, the EarthJustice attorney representing Standing Rock and other tribes who have signed onto the lawsuit, said in a court filing that the proposed “rushed briefing schedule” wasn’t appropriate because it would not have given attorneys a chance to argue the motion in court.

The \$3.8 billion, 1,172-mile (1,886-kilometer) pipeline crosses beneath the Missouri River, just north of the reservation. The tribe draws its water from the river and fears pollution. Backers of the pipeline say it’s state-of-the-art equipment that has function for three years without any issues.

Corrects story to show review allowed the pipeline to start moving oil “near” the Standing Rock Indian Reservation, not “on” it.

SD Lottery

By The Associated Press undefined

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

Mega Millions

16-20-25-30-43, Mega Ball: 18, Megaplier: 3

(sixteen, twenty, twenty-five, thirty, forty-three; Mega Ball: eighteen; Megaplier: three)

Estimated jackpot: \$73 million

Powerball

Estimated jackpot: \$69 million

Noem reimposes some regulations loosened during pandemic

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — South Dakota Gov. Kristi Noem has reimposed some regulations that were loosened during the early weeks of the coronavirus pandemic.

The Republican governor signed an executive order Tuesday rescinding previous orders she signed as part of South Dakota’s COVID-19 response. Noem’s new order keeps a state of emergency in place for purposes of federal coronavirus funding, the Argus Leader reported.

Under Noem’s new executive order, South Dakotans whose driver’s licenses, permits and nondriver’s identification cards expired have until Dec. 30 to renew them. Driver’s license stations have reopened, but there is a backlog and limited appointments.

Anyone who was unable to take care of titling and registration of motor vehicles, manufactured homes and boats while county buildings were closed needs to take care of it by Aug. 1, under Noem’s new order.

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Noem lifted restrictions on overweight vehicles if they were carrying COVID-19 relief supplies, but weight requirements for roads are now back in place, under her order.

South Dakota's death toll from COVID-19 increased by one to a total of 98, the South Dakota Department of Health reported Tuesday. The latest death was a Minnehaha County man in his 70s.

Confirmed coronavirus cases in South Dakota increased by 58 to a total of 7,163 on Tuesday, the department said.

Excerpts from recent South Dakota editorials

By The Associated Press undefined

The Huron Daily Plainsman, July 5

Anti-social media

I honestly don't remember my first true social media account.

I've been active in online chatrooms and message board communities since I was in high school in the mid-1990s in Wolsey. I do know that along the way, I was an early adopter to MySpace and then Facebook in college. Twitter informed me late last year that I'd been on that platform for 10 years now.

Social media often has its place. We can keep in touch with family and friends who may be many miles away. Sharing pictures and videos of children, grandchildren, nieces, nephews, and pets is so much easier on the format as you can connect a host of people in one quick share rather than needing the phone number of many people to send a large group text.

I spent multiple years working heavily on social media for jobs to promote articles written by staffers under my editorial purview. Scheduling when a particular article would be broadcast on social media to gain the most eyes was a game that could make or break an article, and with each writer paid by the clicks on his or her article, that could mean a successful or not successful article.

Yes, social media does have its place.

But it has overgrown that place.

Perhaps, better put, the ability to regulate the interactions and influences on the increasing advertising going on in social media spaces has outgrown the original intent of social media.

The 2016 election has already been widely marked as a significant point of intrusion, where outside influences changed how we thought and felt about issues based on the things that were shown on social media pages. Nothing has let up since.

This year opened with impeachment debates dominating social media. It seems like almost a simpler time to be so unilaterally focused in a debate.

That lasted just until late January, however, as the first case of COVID-19 in the United States was confirmed in Washington state. Within a month, that state had a full-blown outbreak, and a month later, Huron had lost a teacher, a representative, and more importantly, two very special people to their families and their community.

Of course, debates on the validity of COVID-19 were just part of the social media coverage of the virus. As proactive measures to ensure public safety were taken, outcry erupted over the lack of ability to get a haircut or sit at a bar for a shot of bourbon. You know, the important things in life.

The death of Breonna Taylor in March greased the outrage wheels that fully turned after the video of George Floyd's death at the hands of Minneapolis police was made public. That sparked a long-needed public outcry and reflection over race, police brutality, and so many other topics in this country.

All along, rather than using these monumental opportunities to have healthy, meaningful discussions across the distances with friends and family that we've kept connected with on our social media platforms, polarization ensued.

The answers to many of the issues confronting society are hard, exhausting, and will take time and effort to truly process and work through. That's led to many seeking out "quick fixes" to these issues, not all that different to the way I look for the next fad diet.

Sadly, those fad diets haven't worked. Neither will these quick fixes.

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The conspiracy theories that the COVID-19 virus has anything to do with an election, the “quick fix” that bad behavior causes all issues with policing nationwide, or that all “of this” is the working of either party ... well, that’s all fad dieting.

They are a quick solution, and each pulls its followers to an extreme camp that does little to converse with the opposite side, instead putting together cat memes to emphasize their particular side of the argument. Nothing gets done, other than frustration with the world around us.

So, today, instead of Facebook, Twitter, TikTok, Instagram, Snapchat, or any of the rest, unplug. Take time to have a real, open conversation with someone who disagrees with you and attempt to come to a compromised position.

You might find that it’s an easier thing to do than you were led to believe.

Perhaps then, we can remember how to put the social back into social media.

Madison Daily Leader, July 6

AAA credit rating helps local finances

Moody’s Investors Service recently announced that South Dakota’s AAA Issuer Credit Rating has been affirmed. It’s the highest rating available.

The announcement won’t make many headlines. Reaffirming something that’s already in place won’t do it. A downgrade of a rating would certainly be noticed.

Even so, it’s worth a tip of the cap to state government for responsibly managing its finances. Here are just a few ways that responsibility will pay off:

1) Even though the state doesn’t borrow much money, when it does, it generally pays lower interest rates than other states. The South Dakota Housing Authority borrows money in the public market and loans it to first-time homebuyers, among others. The lower the interest rate the state can borrow, the lower the rate it can charge homebuyers.

The state Legislature passed a bill earlier this year authorizing the Board of Regents to borrow money for repair and maintenance on campuses. Dakota State University in Madison will likely use part of that money to finish off the renovation of East Hall.

2) If the state borrows for another purpose, even if it’s a revenue bond that doesn’t need the AAA rating (like residence halls on college campuses), it could pay a lower interest rate. Investors like to do business with institutions that manage their finances well and won’t hesitate to lend the state money.

3) Vendors of all sorts like to do business with a well-managed state, knowing that payments for goods or services won’t be held up in a cash crunch. This does happen in other states.

Former S.D. Gov. Dennis Daugaard pushed during his term in office for the state to achieve the AAA rating. There were a number of things that needed to be done at the state level to achieve this.

Gov. Kristi Noem has worked to keep the rating. “Forcing state government to live within its means is a fundamental tenet of my administration,” she said. “Between our high credit rating, low taxes and reasonable regulations, I’m pleased to see Moody’s acknowledge South Dakota’s very healthy financial position.”

We’re glad to see it, as well. Clearly, the top rating helps us statewide and locally.

Yankton Daily Press & Dakotan, July 6

Rushmore rally bill: Who should pay?

South Dakota made national news last week, which is almost never a good thing. This time, it was all in the eye of the beholder, as President Donald Trump was the featured speaker at the return of the massive Independence Day fireworks display at Mount Rushmore on July 3.

Many issues came with this, such as whether reviving the fireworks show was a good idea — it was discontinued in 2009 because of environmental and fire concerns — and whether holding the rally was wise during the current pandemic, especially with no social distancing or face masks mandated.

But one issue deserves local attention: how the bill for the pyrotechnics show will actually be paid.

According to reports from the South Dakota Public Radio and KELO-TV, it was originally announced that

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the \$350,000 bill for a California pyrotechnics firm to present the show would be raised from private business sponsorships. However, that didn't pan out.

Instead, the state dipped into the South Dakota Futures Fund, which is funded by businesses in the state. The fund was created after the deep 1980s recession to support "the workforce development and technical assistance programs which help train employees, retrain employees during layoffs and support business recruitment, economic development initiatives, and research and entrepreneurial activities."

Apparently, funding fireworks displays is also included in that mission.

Gov. Kristi Noem's office justified tapping the fund in this instance by saying the funds were redirected for purposes of economic development, since the Mount Rushmore show helped market the state. Policy Director Maggie Seidel said the show represented \$2 million worth of state investment to that end. "The hills are flooded with people," she told KELO. "And given all that COVID has done to hurt this community, this is a huge step forward toward returning to normal."

That's a terribly loose and ill-advised interpretation of the spirit of the fund.

The money was basically used to cover the pyrotechnic cost (for an out-of-state company) for a political rally. And that's what President Trump's speech was Friday night, given his criticism of "left-wing fascism" and "liberal Democrats." That's not exactly nonpartisan fare that public money was supporting.

As far as returning to normal, showcasing the fact that the governor of this state decided to forgo social distancing and face mask recommendations — all under the guise of "personal responsibility" — didn't exactly send the most practical message to outside visitors and businesses. The impact of whatever message was sent by the rally remains to be seen as the incubation period for the virus unfolds.

At the very least, the Futures Fund should be fully compensated, either by the aforementioned private business donations or perhaps by the Trump campaign.

Creating some legislative oversight on the usage of such funds might not be a bad idea, either. With public funding forever at a premium, accountability is always essential and needed.

Corps decreasing water flowing into lower Missouri River

OMAHA, Neb. (AP) — The amount of water being released into the Missouri River from a dam on the Nebraska-South Dakota border is being decreased because less water is expected to flow into the river this year, so the risk of a repeat of last year's massive flooding along the river has been reduced, officials said Tuesday.

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers said the amount of water flowing out of Gavins Point Dam is being reduced to 30,000 cubic feet (849.50 cubic meters) per second. That's down from last month's 33,000 cubic feet (934.46 cubic meters) per second.

That reduction is possible because the region received less precipitation than expected this spring and the summer is expected to be drier than normal. The corps now estimates that 31.2 million acre feet (38.48 cubic kilometers) of water will flow down the river this year. That is roughly 1 million acre feet lower than the previous forecast although it is still above the average of 25.8 million acre feet (31.82 cubic kilometers).

Flooding caused more than \$3 billion in damage along the lower Missouri River last year as releases from dams upstream combined with heavy runoff from rain and melting snow to damage levees and inundate land along the river.

Sturgis preps to protect against COVID-19 spread after rally

STURGIS, S.D. (AP) — Up to 1,300 coronavirus tests will be available for Sturgis residents following the annual motorcycle rally in August, which typically draws hundreds of thousands of riders to the city.

Sturgis city manager Daniel Ainslie briefed the City Council Monday night on the plan to protect local residents from contracting COVID-19 when the rally is held Aug. 7-16.

Besides regular testing for people with symptoms, the report says asymptomatic front-line residents would be able to be tested following the rally, the Rapid City Journal reported.

The proposal is meant "to identify asymptomatic residents following the events so that they can self-

isolate to avoid inadvertent spread.”

Monument Health would be able to conduct up to 1,300 tests to identify asymptomatic patients. The testing would happen after the average incubation period following the event, which according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention is thought to be 14 days with a median time of 4-5 days.

The report notes the city would spend \$195,000 for the tests, a cost which may be reimbursed through federal funding.

Confederate flag emblem removed in South Dakota community

GETTYSBURG, S.D. (AP) — Officials have confirmed that a logo that included a Confederate flag has been removed from police department cars, buildings and patches in a small South Dakota community named for the 1863 Battle of Gettysburg.

Mayor Bill Wuttke and the City Council issued a joint statement Monday night that said police Chief Dave Mogard has removed the logo from all uniforms, vehicles and buildings.

Local residents had earlier said that the department removed decals from its squad cars that featured a Confederate battle flag next to an American flag. Mogard last week had declined to confirm that the decal had been removed.

The council on Monday took no formal action on the emblem, saying it was a decision for the police chief.

“The patch that has been the focus of media coverage in 2020 was applied in 2009 solely by the authority of the office of police chief,” the statement said. “This officer is no longer employed by the city of Gettysburg.”

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 battle in and around Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, that many view as the turning point of the Civil War.

Several local residents, including Selwyn Jones, an uncle of George Floyd, wanted the decal to be removed because they viewed it as a symbol of oppression and hatred. Jones called for the change after Floyd, a Black man, died after police arrested and restrained him on a Minneapolis street May 25.

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.

Two COVID-ravaged NY churches take different recovery paths

By DAVID CRARY and LUIS ANDRES HENAO Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — The paths of two New York City churches diverged this week — one reopened and one stayed closed. But they have shared a tragic fate, together losing at least 134 members of their mostly Hispanic congregations to the coronavirus.

Saint Bartholomew Roman Catholic Church in Queens, where at least 74 parishioners have died from COVID-19, on Monday hosted its first large-scale in-person services since mid-March: an English-language midday Mass and a Spanish one in the evening. At Saint Peter’s Lutheran Church in Manhattan, with a death toll nearly as high, the pastors say it’s too risky to open any time soon.

In Saint Bartholomew’s, which normally can hold 800 people, every other row of pews was roped off to facilitate social distancing as about 60 worshippers attended the English service. Except for an infant, all wore face masks.

“It’s great to see you again — you should give yourselves a round of applause,” said the pastor, the Rev. Rick Beuther.

He prayed for the parishioners who recently died, and assured those present that God’s love for them “is a bond that can never be broken, even in tragic situations.”

Beuther had set the tone for the service beforehand, on the church’s Facebook page. “This will not be a celebratory opening,” he said. “This will be a slow start out of an abundance of caution.”

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Caution also is the watchword at Saint Peter's, which serves churchgoers from across the city, but with a different result. It is still not ready to set a date for resuming in-person services while a parish task force, advised by experts, studies how to reopen safely.

Saint Peter's officials say 60 members of the congregation — which numbered about 800 before the pandemic — have died of COVID-19, almost all of them part of the community of some 400 who attend services in Spanish.

Under city guidelines, Saint Peter's could have reopened this week for 125 people at a time, or 25% of capacity. But senior pastor Jared Stahler said that would be irresponsible given uncertainties about health risks.

"For a church that has lost so many people, it would be a moral violation to go ahead and reopen right now," he said. "We would give people a false sense of comfort."

At both churches, pastors remain deeply concerned for the well-being of their parishioners, many of them immigrants living in the country without legal permission and lacking access to health care. Some lost jobs; others risked their health to work because they couldn't afford to shelter at home without getting paid.

"They've been through a nuclear-like experience. ... Most of their families are in another place, and they're coming to a church again that is like their second home," Beuther said.

Among those in the pews at Saint Bartholomew's on Monday evening was Claudia Balderas. Above all, she came to pray for her 63-year-old brother, Porfirio Balderas, who died May 12 from coronavirus complications.

"This is a special place that helps me a lot," said Balderas, 51, who also contracted COVID-19 and was hospitalized for weeks.

Balderas said lockdown restrictions kept the family from having a funeral for Porfirio, and they couldn't afford to send his ashes to their native Mexico. Instead, relatives in the city of Atlixco placed a wooden cross carved with his name next to his mother's grave; the ashes are in an urn with his wife.

Saint Bartholomew's known COVID-19 death toll among parishioners is 74, a count based on emails from community members since March. But Beuther said they haven't spoken with everyone in the large congregation, and he fears dozens more may have died.

"As we begin to open, the impact will become clearer," he said. "It will be tsunami-like in terms of deaths, sicknesses, and especially for the undocumented, those who haven't been able to return to work and need food."

Saint Bartholomew's and Saint Peter's maintained active ministries during the lengthy lockdown, providing emergency food assistance, helping grieving parishioners with funeral and burial costs, and holding a full schedule of online worship services.

On Sunday evening, for the first time since the pandemic took hold, Saint Peter's relaunched online its decades-old tradition of "jazz vespers," in which Stahler's reading of the liturgy was backed by a bass player and jazz singer.

"Saint Peter's Church has been a holy example of how our buildings may be closed, but our church has always been open," said Bishop Paul Egensteiner, who oversees New York City-area congregations of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.

Stahler and fellow pastor Fabian Arias depicted the planning for Saint Peter's future reopening as "step-by-step, health-focused and data-driven," studying safety measures such as attendance limits, new protocols for entry, even removing some furniture that might tempt people to congregate.

"If there is anything we have learned from this pandemic," the pastors said in a joint message to the parish, "it is that we are only as well as the most vulnerable in our midst."

Arias said many who lost loved ones to the virus hope to have funerals in the church after it reopens. For now, he's been offering prayers for the deceased during online services every Wednesday and Sunday.

The pandemic has hit families that are among the most active in Saint Peter's. Parish secretary Alejandra Mendez, for example, lost her father and brother, both church members, as well as her aunt.

"We've not been able to be together and mourn the loss collectively," said the congregation's president, Christopher Vergara.

At Saint Bartholomew's, one of the staff members on the front lines has been Sister Lucy Mendez, who runs the religious education program. When Claudia Balderas was hospitalized, the nun sent her spirit-boosting text messages.

"I told her that we were with her, that we're praying for her," Mendez said.

Mendez herself became infected and at one point feared she was going to die. She recalled the relentless heartbreak as she and other staffers learned of so many parishioners being hospitalized, with families unable to visit them as the pandemic raged.

"It was very painful," Mendez said.

On Monday she welcomed people back to Saint Bartholomew's with a broad smile under her mask — and squirts of sanitizer on their hands.

Associated Press video journalist Jessie Wardarski contributed to this report

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

The Latest: German Red Cross fears drownings as pool shunned

By The Associated Press undefined

BERLIN — The German Red Cross says it fears more people will drown this summer due to a number of factors arising from the coronavirus pandemic.

The group said Wednesday that more people are likely to go swimming in lakes and rivers this year because public swimming pools have limited visitor numbers to ensure social distancing.

The Red Cross, which provides lifeguard services at pools, lakes and seaside beaches in Germany, also noted that many children didn't have swimming lessons this spring due to the pandemic.

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

- Window into virus surge: Death, recovery at Houston hospital
- Australia isolates virus-prone state, Serbs oppose lockdown
- Trump pushes state, local leaders to reopen schools in fall
- Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro says he is confident that he will swiftly recover from the new coronavirus thanks to treatment with hydroxychloroquine, the anti-malaria drug that has not been proven effective against COVID-19.
- Six months after COVID-19 started spreading around the globe, desperation rather than information is still driving many decisions about how to treat the disease. Two drugs have been shown to help but key questions remain about their use.
- Africa now has more than a half-million confirmed coronavirus cases. The continent-wide total is now over 508,000 after South Africa recorded another day of more than 10,000 confirmed cases as a new global hot spot.

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

HERE'S WHAT ELSE IS HAPPENING:

BERLIN — Austrian authorities are warning against travel to Bulgaria, Romania and Moldova amid increasing concern about travelers infected with the coronavirus coming to Austria.

Wednesday's decision follows last week's travel warning for six countries in the western Balkans — Bosnia, Kosovo, North Macedonia, Albania, Montenegro and Serbia -- in view of high coronavirus figures.

The Austria Press Agency reported that Chancellor Sebastian Kurz said his country "is experiencing more and more importations (of the virus) from abroad -- hence the urgent appeal not to travel to these

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countries." People who do enter Austria from countries subject to a travel warning are required to self-quarantine for 14 days.

Kurz said that Austria will step up checks on its eastern borders for people arriving from the Balkans in particular.

JAKARTA, Indonesia — Indonesia has reported another record high of 1,863 coronavirus cases, exceeding the national total of 68,000 while the government expects to slowly reopen the tourist island of Bali.

Fifty people died in the last 24 hours, bringing the death toll to 3,359, the highest in Southeast Asia.

Bali Governor I Wayan Koster says the island will gradually reopen its spots to local and foreign tourists who have been stranded there since the outbreak starting Thursday. It will open to Indonesians from other parts of the country on July 31 and foreigners on Sept. 11.

Bali has reported 1,971 confirmed cases and 25 deaths.

MADRID — Spain's northeastern Catalonia region will make mandatory the use of masks outdoors even when social distancing is maintained.

Regional chief Quim Torra says the measure will be implemented from Thursday following outbreaks in and around the city of Lleida that have led to the lockdown of more than 200,000 residents since Saturday.

Some 500 infections in Lleida have so far been linked to the summer fruit harvest, which attracts many migrant laborers.

Spain has made masks mandatory in shared indoor spaces and also outdoors when a social distance of 1.5 meters (5 feet) can't be kept. Catalonia, population 7.5 million, is the first region to mandate the use of masks regardless of distancing.

Nationwide there have been 118 small outbreaks since May 11, 67 of them currently active. Spain has had 252,130 confirmed infections and at least 28,300 people have died.

LONDON — In the wake of America's official departure from the World Health Organization, a former senior director at the U.N. health agency predicted that other countries, particularly Germany, would likely step in to fill any void left by the single-biggest financial contributor.

At a briefing on Wednesday morning, Dr. David Heymann, a former assistant WHO director-general and an American, said he was "very disappointed" at the U.S. decision to exit the agency.

He says the U.S. has been behind incredibly important activities at WHO, noting it was the U.S. and its Cold War enemy Russia that spearheaded the global initiative to eradicate smallpox.

Heymann said, however, that WHO would likely just get on with its work.

He says Germany has become an important partner in global health recently and other countries are stepping up as well.

He says: "As much as it would be terrible if the U.S. leaves WHO and leaves (with) that expertise it has provided throughout the years, the WHO would continue to function."

WHO Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus had also been scheduled to appear at the briefing, but pulled out moments before it began. Heymann dismissed the idea that Tedros was unwilling to face questions over the U.S. departure.

JERUSALEM — Israeli Defense Minister Benny Gantz says he is going into quarantine over concerns he was recently exposed to a COVID-19 carrier.

Gantz, who also serves as alternative prime minister, says he feels well and is isolating out of a sense of responsibility. He says he will work remotely until he receives his coronavirus test result and an epidemiological investigation is concluded.

The announcement comes as Israel is coping with a fresh wave of infections. The government this week reimposed new restrictions on the public to quell contagion. Gatherings have been limited and reception halls, restaurants, bars, theaters, fitness centers and pools have been ordered to shut down again.

Just weeks ago, Israel appeared to have contained its initial outbreak after imposing strict measures early

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on during a first wave of infections. But after reporting just a handful of new cases a day in early May, it has experienced a steady uptick in cases following an easing of restrictions. Currently, Israel is reporting upward of 1,000 new cases a day, higher than its peak during the previous wave.

BELGRADE, Serbia — Serbian police say 23 people have been detained and scores of police officers and demonstrators injured in clashes that erupted over announced return of lockdown measures against the new coronavirus.

Police director Vladimir Rebic told the state RTS television that police are working to identify more people who took part in the rioting in central Belgrade that left 43 police officers and 17 demonstrators injured.

Thousands of people came out in the streets on Tuesday evening after autocratic President Aleksandar Vucic announced that a curfew will be imposed for the entire weekend in Belgrade. Serbia on Tuesday reported the highest single-day death toll of 13 amid 299 new COVID-19 cases.

Clashes erupted after some supporters of right-wing groups stormed the parliament during protests. Police responded by throwing loads of tear gas.

Vucic has described the virus situation in Belgrade as "alarming," saying hospitals in Belgrade were full. But many in Serbia blame the populist strongman for lifting the previous lockdown measures just so he would cement his grip on power after parliamentary elections. He has denied those claims.

Rebic says "hooligans" threw rocks, bottles and other objects at police and set on fire five police vehicles. Videos from the scene showed police beating up some of the demonstrators and detaining them.

NEW DELHI — Authorities in Mumbai, one of India's worst-hit cities, are allowing people to get tested for COVID-19 without a doctor's prescription.

Other major Indian cities are still requiring a prescription, even though low testing rates have been a concern in the country that now has the third most cases in the world.

"We want to test as many people as possible," said Iqbal Singh Chahal, a senior administrative official in Mumbai.

More than 5,000 people have died because of the virus in Mumbai, a western coastal city known as India's financial capital and home to the Bollywood film industry.

India has started to improve its testing rates though it still needs to do more as its outbreak surges. A country of 1.3 billion people, India has been conducting a little less than 7,400 tests per million population.

More than 200,000 samples are being tested every day now, compared to just a few hundred when the exercise had begun in March, according to the Indian Council of Medical Research, India's top medical research body.

India reported 482 new deaths in the last 24 hours, taking the toll to 20,642. It also recorded 22,752 new infections, increasing the total to 742,417. Only the United States and Brazil have more.

ISLAMABAD — Pakistan's daily infection rate dropped below 3,000 for the second straight day, though medical experts caution it may be due to less testing.

Barely 21,000 tests for the coronavirus are carried out each day, compared to a peak of nearly 33,000. Still some medical professionals, particularly in the eastern city of Lahore, the capital of Pakistan's Punjab province where nearly 60% of the country's 220 million people live, are suggesting the virus may have peaked in June.

Pakistan's prime minister has mandated masks but enforcement and use are erratic and social distancing is limited. Still the government has implemented lockdowns on at least 800 markets, businesses and residential areas where hotspots of the infection have emerged.

As of Wednesday, Pakistan has recorded 237,489 infections with 2,980 new cases recorded in the last 24 hours among 21,951 tests conducted. So far 4,922 people have died of the virus, with 80 deaths recorded in the last 24 hours.

Prime Minister Imran Khan has resisted complete lockdowns, saying they would hit the poorest hardest.

The poverty rate in Pakistan has climbed from around 30% to 40%, according to economists.

CANBERRA, Australia — Prime Minister Scott Morrison says a shutdown of Australia's second-largest city is necessary and promised continuing financial support for businesses that fear they won't survive a second lockdown.

The Victoria state government said Melbourne and part of its surrounds will lock down for six weeks from Wednesday night because the rate of coronavirus spread was unsustainable. The state also reported another 134 coronavirus cases.

Morrison said the federal government's medical advice concurred the move was necessary but he hoped the time frame could be shorter.

Australia's seven other states and territories would continue to relax pandemic restrictions, the prime minister said.

"Let's remember that seven states and territories around the country remain in a very strong position when it comes to our response to COVID-19," Morrison said. "That's what we're seeking to continue to protect."

Breaches of infection controls at Melbourne hotels where international travelers are required to isolate for 14 days have been blamed for much of the disease spread. Morrison said he wanted to reduce the numbers of exemptions from Australia's travel ban because of the strain on hotel quarantine.

Australia deals with virus spike; Serbia erupts in violence

By MENELAOS HADJICOSTIS, DUSAN STOJANOVIC and ROD McGUIRK Associated Press

BELGRADE, Serbia (AP) — The reimposition of coronavirus lockdown measures in Serbia touched off violent clashes in the capital Belgrade that left at least 60 police and protesters hurt amid renewed warnings that the virus is still gathering pace.

Australia grappled with a COVID-19 spike in the city of Melbourne that prepared on Wednesday for a second lockdown to contain the virus' spread. Melbourne's virus woes contrasted sharply with other areas of the country that have been reporting low or no daily infections.

Africa surpassed the half million mark of coronavirus infections according to figures released Wednesday by the Africa Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. South Africa picked up the mantle as the world's new virus hot spot with another day of more than 10,000 confirmed cases.

There's no way to know the real number of confirmed virus cases among Africa's 1.3 billion people as its 54 countries continue to face a serious shortage of testing materials for the virus.

In Serbia, angry protesters spilled out in the streets of Belgrade and tried to storm parliament after health officials reported the highest single-day death toll of 13 amid 299 new COVID-19 cases. Protesters hurled rocks, bottles and other objects and set fire to five police vehicles while video footage of the clashes showed police beating up some demonstrators.

Around two dozen demonstrators have been arrested while a law enforcement official said authorities are trying to identify more people who took part in the rioting.

Serbia President Aleksandar Vukic's concession that easing virus restrictions too soon possibly led to an infection spike recast the global dilemma of when to open up and by how much without igniting another virus flare-up.

Many blame the autocratic Serbian leader for lifting the previous lockdown measures just so he would cement his grip on power after parliamentary elections. He has denied those claims.

Belgrade's virus resurgence reflected a general trend in the Balkans where infections are keeping a high trajectory. In Albania, 50-70 new cases are reported every day — many times over the daily number of infections reported during the country's lockdown through March and April.

Authorities in the Australian state of Victoria announced another 134 coronavirus cases in the latest 24 hours, down from a daily record 191 cases on Tuesday.

The rest of Australia recorded 13 cases including three Melbourne-linked infections in the national capital

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Canberra. The Canberra infections are the first recorded there in almost a month.

Prime Minister Scott Morrison said the entire nation was behind Melbourne as it locked down for six weeks from Wednesday night.

"We're all Melburnians now when it comes to the challenges we face," Morrison said. "We're all Victorians now because we're all Australians and that's where the challenge is right now."

The World Health Organization's emergencies chief, Dr. Michael Ryan, said the coronavirus is continuing to gain pace globally with daily reported cases rising to 200,000 — double the number of cases reported in April and May. Ryan warned that although the number of COVID-19 deaths appeared to be stable now, he warned that a spike in fatalities could soon follow.

Indonesia on Wednesday reported another record high of daily confirmed virus infections with 1,863 new cases, pushing the national total to more than 68,000.

National COVID-19 Task Force spokesman Achmad Yurianto said that 50 more people died of the disease, taking the country's death toll to 3,359 — the highest number of fatalities in Southeast Asia.

Spain's northeastern Catalonia region will make mandatory the use of face masks outdoors after worrisome outbreaks in and around the city of Lleida led to a lockdown of more than 200,000 residents since Saturday. Some of the 500 infections in Lleida have so far been linked to the summer fruit harvest, which attracts many migrant laborers that are often offered poor living and working conditions.

In Israel, Defense Minister Benny Gantz said he is going into quarantine over concerns he was recently exposed to a COVID-19 carrier.

Gantz, who also serves as alternative prime minister, says he feels well and is isolating out of a sense of responsibility. Gantz made the announcement as Israel is coping with a second wave of infections. The government this week reimposed new limits on public gatherings and ordered restaurants, bars, theaters and fitness centers to shut down again.

In China, where the pandemic appeared late last year, only seven new cases were confirmed Wednesday, all of them brought from outside the country. But South Korea reported 63 additional cases among a population twice the size of Australia's. South Korean authorities are scrambling to stem transmissions tied to places such as churches, temples, restaurants and workplaces.

Pakistan's daily infection rate dropped below 3,000 for the second straight day. Medical professionals are urging caution, noting testing has been cut by almost one third. Still some experts, particularly in the eastern city of Lahore, the capital of Pakistan's Punjab province where nearly 60% of the country's 220 million people live, are suggesting the virus may have peaked in June.

Menelaos Hadjicostis reported from Nicosia, Cyprus, and Rod McGuirk from Canberra, Australia. Associated Press journalists around the world contributed to this report.

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

Facebook civil rights audit: 'Serious setbacks' mar progress

By BARBARA ORTUTAY AP Technology Writer

A two-year audit of Facebook's civil rights record found "serious setbacks" that have marred the social network's progress on matters such as hate speech, misinformation and bias.

Facebook hired the audit's leader, former American Civil Liberties Union executive Laura Murphy, in May 2018 to assess its performance on vital social issues. Its 100-page report released Wednesday outlines a "seesaw of progress and setbacks" at the company on everything from bias in Facebook's algorithms to its content moderation, advertising practices and treatment of voter suppression.

The audit recommends that Facebook build a "civil rights infrastructure" into every aspect of the company, as well as a "stronger interpretation" of existing voter suppression policies and more concrete action on algorithmic bias. Those suggestions are not binding, and there is no formal system in place to hold

Facebook accountable for any of the audit's findings.

"While the audit process has been meaningful, and has led to some significant improvements in the platform, we have also watched the company make painful decisions over the last nine months with real world consequences that are serious setbacks for civil rights," the audit report states.

Those include Facebook's decision to exempt politicians from fact-checking, even when President Donald Trump posted false information about voting by mail. Facebook CEO Mark Zuckerberg has cited a commitment to free speech as a reason for allowing such posts to remain on the platform, even though the company has rules in place against voter suppression it could have used to take down — or at least add warning labels to — Trump's posts.

Last month, Facebook announced it would begin labeling rule-breaking posts — even from politicians — going forward. But it is not clear if Trump's previous controversial posts would have gotten the alert. The problem, critics have long said, is not so much about Facebook's rules as how it enforces them.

"When you elevate free expression as your highest value, other values take a back seat," Murphy told The Associated Press. The politician exemption, she said, "elevates the speech of people who are already powerful and disadvantages people who are not."

More than 900 companies have joined an advertising boycott of Facebook to protest its handling of hate speech and misinformation.

Civil rights leaders who met virtually with Zuckerberg and other Facebook leaders Tuesday expressed skepticism that recommendations from the audit would ever be implemented, noting that past suggestions in previous reports had gone overlooked.

"What we get is recommendations that they end up not implementing," said Rashad Robinson, the executive director of Color for Change, one of several civil rights nonprofits leading an organized boycott of Facebook advertising.

Sheryl Sandberg, Facebook's chief operating officer, said in a Facebook newsroom post that the company has a long way to go, but is making progress.

"This audit has been a deep analysis of how we can strengthen and advance civil rights at every level of our company — but it is the beginning of the journey, not the end," she wrote. "What has become increasingly clear is that we have a long way to go. As hard as it has been to have our shortcomings exposed by experts, it has undoubtedly been a really important process for our company."

Associated Press Writer Amanda Seitz contributed to this story.

5 Things to Know for Today

By The Associated Press undefined

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

1. WHERE TEXAS VIRUS SURGE IS HITTING HARD A small hospital in north Houston may soon fully turn over its 117-bed facility to coronavirus patients, AP finds.

2. 'GUNSLINGER MEDICINE' NOT SOUND SCIENCE Scientific shortcuts have slowed understanding of COVID-19 and delayed the ability to find out which drugs help, hurt or have no effect at all.

3. 'PERFECT STORM OF DISTRESS IN AMERICA' Experts point to high unemployment, the viral pandemic, stay-at-home orders and rising anger over police brutality as possible reasons for a surge in violent crime in America.

4. WHAT'S NEXT AS MONUMENTS, STATUES FALL Activists and towns are left wondering what to do with empty spaces that once honored historic figures tied to Confederate generals and Spanish conquistadors.

5. MARY KAY LETOURNEAU DEAD AT 58 The former suburban Seattle teacher became tabloid fodder when she pleaded guilty in 1997 to raping her former sixth-grade student, a boy she later married.

Trump pushes state, local leaders to reopen schools in fall

By COLLIN BINKLEY AP Education Writer

President Donald Trump launched an all-out effort pressing state and local officials to reopen schools this fall, arguing that some are keeping schools closed not because of the risks from the coronavirus pandemic but for political reasons.

"They think it's going to be good for them politically, so they keep the schools closed," Trump said Tuesday at a White House discussion on school plans for the fall. "No way. We're very much going to put pressure on governors and everybody else to open the schools."

The White House's roundtable gathered health and education leaders from across the nation who said schools and colleges are ready to open this fall and can do so safely. They argued that the risks of keeping students at home outweigh any risks tied to the coronavirus, saying students need access to meal programs and mental and behavioral health services.

"We want to reopen the schools," Trump said. "Everybody wants it. The moms want it, the dads want it, the kids want it. It's time to do it."

But that bright outlook was met with skepticism by some beyond the White House. The president of the nation's largest education union said Trump is more interested in scoring points for the November election than in keeping students safe.

"Trump has proven to be incapable of grasping that people are dying — that more than 130,000 Americans have already died," said Lily Eskelsen García, president of the National Education Association. "Educators want nothing more than to be back in classrooms and on college campuses with our students, but we must do it in a way that keeps students, educators and communities safe."

At the White House event, Trump repeated his claim that Democrats want to keep schools closed for political reasons and not health reasons. The Republican president made the same claim on Twitter a day before, saying: "They think it will help them in November. Wrong, the people get it!"

Trump offered no evidence for the allegation, which has been criticized by health experts who say politicizing the issue will make it harder to work toward reopening schools. Jennifer Nuzzo, of Johns Hopkins University's COVID-19 Testing Insights Initiative, said she was "deeply troubled" by the claim.

"When you make it about politics and just people trying to score points and get elected, I mean, I really think it's a disservice to how incredibly important this issue is," Nuzzo said in an interview. "And it really distracts from what I think we need, which is real solutions and a plan in order to make this happen."

Whether schools and colleges should open this fall and how has been a topic of growing debate as the coronavirus continues to surge in parts of the United States. Trump applauded Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis for his state's recent order to open public schools this fall. And Trump attacked Harvard University for its decision to hold instruction online for the fall term.

"I think it's ridiculous, I think it's an easy way out and I think they ought to be ashamed of themselves, if you want to know the truth," Trump said Tuesday.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has sent mixed signals on the issue, saying students should return to the classroom but also noting that virtual classes present the lowest risk of COVID-19 spread. Speaking at Trump's event, however, the agency's director said unequivocally that it's better for students to be in school than at home.

Dr. Robert Redfield noted that COVID-19 cases tend to be mild in young people, adding that the greatest risk is transmission from children to more vulnerable populations. He said the CDC encourages all schools to reopen with customized plans to minimize the spread of the coronavirus while giving students access to school services.

"It's clear that the greater risk to our society is to have these schools close," Redfield said. "Nothing would cause me greater sadness than to see any school district or school use our guidance as a reason not to reopen."

The CDC's guidance for schools recommends that students and teachers wear masks "as feasible," spread out desks, stagger schedules, eat meals in classrooms instead of the cafeteria, and add physical

barriers between bathroom sinks.

Some schools have announced plans to bring students back for only a few days a week, an option that Education Secretary Betsy DeVos on Tuesday said was unacceptable.

"It's clear that our nations schools must fully reopen and fully operate this school year. Anything short of that robs students, not to mention taxpayers, of their future," DeVos said.

During a call with governors, DeVos slammed plans by Virginia's Fairfax County Public Schools to have families decide between fully remote instruction or two days a week at school. "A choice of two days per week in the classroom is not a choice at all," DeVos said, according to audio of the call obtained by The Associated Press.

DeVos also criticized many schools' attempts at distance education after the pandemic prompted them to move classes online last spring. She said she was disappointed in schools that "didn't figure out how to serve students or who just gave up and didn't try."

The same thing can't happen again this fall, she said, urging governors to play a role in getting schools to reopen.

Among those joining Trump on Tuesday was the president of the American Academy of Pediatrics, which recently issued guidelines suggesting that schools aim to start the academic year "physically present in school." Keeping students at home can lead to social isolation, the organization said, and prevent schools from identifying learning deficits, abuse, depression and other issues.

Students' mental and emotional health — along with their parents' — was repeatedly raised in the argument to reopen schools.

"Children's mental health and social development must be as much of a priority as physical health," first lady Melania Trump said at the round-table. "The same is true for parents. Many will be forced to make stressful choices between caring for their children and going back to work."

But some are calling for greater caution. Arne Duncan, who served as education secretary under former President Barack Obama, has said the focus should be on making sure students can return safely.

"We all want children to go back to school," Duncan said on Twitter. "The question is whether we care enough about our children to ALLOW them to go to school safely. Our behavior, our commitment to shared sacrifice — or our selfishness — will determine what happens this fall for kids."

Associated Press writers Alan Suderman in Richmond, Virginia, and Carla Johnson in Washington state contributed to this report.

Window into virus surge: Death, recovery at Houston hospital

By NOMAAN MERCHANT Associated Press

HOUSTON (AP) — A few weeks after more than 100 people attended her husband's funeral, the widow herself was on the brink of death.

Her oxygen levels had fallen deadly low due to complications from COVID-19, and her heart stopped. Ten people, each in two layers of protective equipment, surrounded her hospital bed. Two climbed on opposite sides of the bed — one pressing on her chest, the other on her abdomen.

At the foot of the bed, Dr. Joseph Varon called out a rhythm: one-two, one-two, one-two.

"Keep on pumping!" he yelled.

But they couldn't save her.

At least 10 people who were at the funeral later developed coronavirus symptoms, according to her daughter, who fell sick herself. Most people weren't wearing masks. Her daughter says her mother told her she wished they had been more careful.

"We didn't take precautions like we should have," the daughter said. "We just got totally caught up in the moment."

Now, the 66-year-old Latina woman's death is a grim warning for Texas, which has seen a surge in the number of people testing positive for the coronavirus since it began aggressively loosening restrictions in

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May. Hospitalizations due to COVID-19 in the state have more than doubled in the last two weeks, and Texas is reporting, on average, more than four times as many cases each day as it was a month ago. It surpassed 10,000 new confirmed cases in a single day Tuesday.

Nearly 80% of the state's hospital beds are in use, and intensive care units are filling up in some of the nation's biggest cities, including San Antonio and Houston, where leaders are warning their health facilities could become overwhelmed in the coming days. In all, Texas has recorded more than 2,670 deaths and more than 200,000 confirmed cases of the virus.

While rising case numbers partly reflect more testing, Texas has a positive test rate of 13.5%, more than double the rate from a month ago.

"We're going to get into situations like Italy did, like Spain did, like New York did just a couple of months ago," said Varon, board chair at United Memorial Medical Center, a small north Houston hospital.

United Memorial has been rapidly dedicating more and more space to virus care. Now, 88 of 117 beds are devoted to such patients — and Varon says the hospital may soon turn over the entire facility to treating those with the virus. Outside, long lines of cars wait hours for tests.

The hospital has taped off three separate wings with a sequence of large tarps and gates. Assisting Varon is a team of nurses and volunteer medical students. Anyone seeing a patient with COVID-19 is required to wear two sets of masks, gowns, gloves, shoe and head coverings, and a face shield.

Varon has worked more than 100 days with barely a rest and normally sleeps just a few hours a night. When he isn't seeing patients or trying to obtain more hospital supplies, he does media interviews to encourage people to wear masks and take the virus seriously.

"People need to see this so they can understand and won't do stupid things," he said, standing in the widow's hospital room. "Every day, we have stuff like this. Every single day."

The Associated Press, which spent Monday inside the hospital, is not identifying the widow because it was unable to speak to her before her death and is withholding her daughter's name to protect the mother's identity.

The widow entered the hospital in late June — about a week after the funeral for her husband, who died from liver cancer.

Around 10 a.m. Monday, the widow's oxygen levels fell dangerously. Varon decided that she needed to be placed on a ventilator. Like many doctors, he has tried to use alternatives to ventilators because of the relatively low survival rate of people on the machines.

When the ventilator failed to restore her oxygen levels, medical staff ran to bring a second one just in case there was a problem with the first. Varon also ordered shocks to her chest and injections of epinephrine, a hormone that stimulates the heart.

"Every effort that you can imagine, everything that has been written, we did, and yet we were unsuccessful," he said later. "The problem is with COVID, that's what we're seeing."

For most people, the virus causes mild or moderate symptoms. But it can cause severe symptoms in and be fatal for others, especially older adults and people with existing health problems.

Next door to the widow was LaTanya Robinson, who was breathing with a machine providing high-flow oxygen through her nose and could see hospital staff running into the widow's room as they tried to save her. Monday was the first day Robinson felt well enough to have a conversation about her illness.

The 51-year-old says she cared for her adult son when he got the virus. Both she and her husband eventually caught it. While her son and husband's symptoms were relatively mild, she went from feeling tired and struggling to move to hardly being able to breathe.

Robinson says she was held in an urgent-care center for two days before being moved to United Memorial because the first available hospital beds were in Corpus Christi and Lufkin, cities at least a two-hour drive away.

Texas leaders say there are still 12,000 available hospital beds statewide — about 23% of total beds. But Robinson's case shows that even if the sprawling state still has spare capacity, that may not accommodate people in cities where the virus is surging.

Robinson's son had recently spent time outside the house and his girlfriend had gone out with friends. She thinks one of them may have originally gotten the virus and infected her, but isn't certain.

Asked what she would tell people outside the hospital about the virus, she said: "The only thing I can do is to live to be that example for them. You don't take anything for granted."

United Memorial, already near capacity, could soon be filled, Varon says, as he braces to see what Fourth of July celebrations might bring. Some people gathered for the holiday even as Texas Gov. Greg Abbott instituted new restrictions on outdoor get-togethers and required mask-wearing indoors.

After Varon's team did three rounds of compressions on the widow, he stopped them. "Thank you, everybody," he said. The 10 people around the bed filed out of the room, one of them sighing. The machines around her continued to beep.

A few people worked to prepare her body for the undertaker and placed a sheet over her.

Varon called the widow's daughter, expressing condolences first in Spanish, then English. He repeated that he had done everything he could and to call if there was anything she needed.

When he hung up the phone, his bluish gray eyes were filled with tears.

"That's the one thing you don't want to do when you're a doctor," he said. "But you've got to do it. Somebody has to do it."

Japan battered by more heavy rain, floods; 58 dead

By MARI YAMAGUCHI Associated Press

TOKYO (AP) — Pounding rain that already caused deadly floods in southern Japan was moving northeast Wednesday, battering large areas of Japan's main island, swelling more rivers, triggering mudslides and destroying houses and roads. At least 58 people died in several days of flooding.

Parts of Nagano and Gifu, including areas known for scenic mountain trails and hot springs, were flooded by massive downpours.

Public broadcaster NHK showed a swollen river gouging into its embankment and destroying a highway. In the city of Gero, the rising river was flowing just below a bridge.

Flooding and mudslides blocked parts of a main road connecting Kamikochi and Matsumoto, two major tourist destinations in Nagano, stranding hundreds of residents and visitors, though they were believed to have safely evacuated. In neighboring Gifu, hundreds were isolated in the hot spring towns of Gero and Ontake.

In the scenic mountainous town of Takayama, several houses were hit by a mudslide, but their residents were safely rescued.

As of Wednesday morning, the death toll from the heavy rains which started over the weekend had risen to 58, most of them from hardest-hit Kumamoto prefecture. Four others died in Fukuoka, another prefecture on Kyushu, Japan's third-largest island.

At the peak, as many as 3.6 million people were advised to evacuate, although it wasn't mandatory and the number who sought shelter was not known. About half of the advisories had been lifted by Wednesday afternoon.

In places where rain has subsided, residents were busy cleaning up their homes and workplaces.

In Gero, a man washed off mud at the entrance of his riverside house despite the evacuation advisory. "I was told to run away and my neighbors all went, but I stayed," he said. "I didn't want my house to be washed away in my absence."

In Oita, teachers at a nursery school were wiping the floor and drying wet furniture. "I hope we can return to normal life as soon as possible," Principal Yuko Kitaguchi told NHK.

As the rains pounded central Japan, flooding continued to affect the southern region. Search and rescue operations continued in Kumamoto, where 14 people remained missing.

Tens of thousands of army troops, police and other rescue workers mobilized from around the country to assist. Rescue operations have been hampered by the rains, flooding, mudslides and disrupted communications.

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In Kagoshima, a pickup truck was hit by a mudslide and fell into the ocean, but the driver was airlifted out with a head injury, according to Fuji Television. In another town in Oita, two brothers in their 80s were extracted alive after a mudslide smashed into their hillside house, NHK said.

Chief Cabinet Secretary Yoshihide Suga urged residents to use caution. "Disasters may happen even with little rain where ground has loosened from previous rainfall," he said.

Suga pledged continuing search and rescue efforts, as well as emergency funds for affected areas.

Japan is at high risk of heavy rain in early summer when wet and warm air from the East China Sea flows into a seasonal rain front above the country. In July 2018, more than 200 people, about half of them in Hiroshima, died from heavy rain and flooding in southwestern Japan.

Follow Mari Yamaguchi on Twitter at <https://www.twitter.com/mariyamaguchi>

In risky bid, Trump stokes racial rancor to motivate voters

By JONATHAN LEMIRE Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — President Donald Trump is wielding America's racial tensions as a reelection weapon, fiercely denouncing the racial justice movement on a near-daily basis with language stoking white resentment and aiming to drive his supporters to the polls.

The incendiary discourse is alarming many in his own party and running contrary to the advice of some in his inner circle, who believe it risks alienating independent and suburban voters. It's a pattern that harks back to cultural divisions Trump similarly exploited in his victorious 2016 campaign.

"It's not about who is the object of the derision or the vitriol. The actual issue is understanding the appeal to white resentment and white fear," said Eddie Glaude, chair of the Department of African American studies at Princeton University. "It's all rooted in this panic about the place of white people in this new America."

Though Trump has long aired racially divisive language and grievances in the public sphere, his willingness to do so from behind the presidential seal — and on his Twitter account — has reached a breakneck pace in recent days as the nation grapples with racial injustice.

The Republican president tweeted — and later deleted — a video of a supporter yelling "white power." He referred to the Black Lives Matter mantra as a "symbol of hate." He took a swipe at NASCAR for removing the Confederate flag from its races and falsely suggested a Black driver had carried out a racially charged hoax. He mused about overturning a suburban fair-housing regulation and spoke approvingly of the current branding of the Washington Redskins and the Cleveland Indians, team nicknames that many consider offensive to Native Americans.

Most notably, he has engaged in a full-throated defense of the Confederate legacy, which he at times has cloaked within tributes to the Founding Fathers, including during a pair of high-profile Fourth of July weekend speeches.

"Those who seek to erase our heritage want Americans to forget our pride and our great dignity, so that we can no longer understand ourselves or America's destiny," Trump said Friday at the base of Mount Rushmore. "In toppling the heroes of 1776, they seek to dissolve the bonds of love and loyalty that we feel for our country, and that we feel for each other. Their goal is not a better America; their goal is the end of America."

In defending Thomas Jefferson and George Washington that night, Trump did not mention the Confederacy. Instead, he painted racial justice demonstrators with a broad brush that made no distinction between the many who oppose honoring the Confederacy and the relative few who question celebrating Founders who owned slaves.

But Trump has repeatedly called for the preservation of statues of the Confederacy and the names of its generals on military bases — all assailed in the protests that have swept from coast to coast in the aftermath of the death of George Floyd.

His comments are an apparent descendant, a half-century later, of Richard Nixon's coded outreach to white voters known as the Southern Strategy. Trump himself has embraced Nixon's phrase "the Silent

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Majority" to describe his own supporters.

By all accounts, the president's actions are, at times, born of impulse and an instinctive reaction to what he sees on television. However, according to current and former Trump campaign officials, his overarching strategy is an appeal to white voters — some of them racist and some who fear being left behind by a government seemingly consumed with helping others. Those officials were not authorized to publicly discuss such private matters and commented only on condition of anonymity.

The belief is that his appeals will generate enthusiasm among the same disaffected white voters who made up the president's base of supporters four years ago.

But many in Trump's orbit are sounding the alarm that 2020 is not 2016.

White House advisers Kellyanne Conway and Jared Kushner, according to the officials, have both warned that some of the racist rhetoric, including the use of China-blaming "kung flu" to describe the COVID-19 pandemic, could turn off swaths of voters. And some believe there was more of an audience for inflammatory rhetoric about immigration four years ago, particularly as polls show the Black Lives Matter movement gaining widespread support.

"The 2016 debate about immigration was about the future of sovereignty, the American worker, and our culture. The issues that involve race now are completely different," said Sam Nunberg, a former Trump campaign adviser.

"It's not easy to conflate people who want to tear down the statues of the Confederacy and the few who want to get George Washington," said Nunberg. "I don't think it's a winning argument in a time of a pandemic. This doesn't affect people's daily lives. This is a dumb issue to fight."

Four months before Election Day, Republicans are nervously watching polls that show Trump slipping behind his Democratic rival Joe Biden. They have grown increasingly worried that his focus on racial rancor could force GOP senators locked in tough campaigns to distance themselves from their party's president.

"Defending the Confederacy and racial dog whistles is not going to help win the suburbs. He is solely focused on a small part of his base when he should be looking to grow his support," said Alex Conant, a Republican strategist who advised Sen. Marco Rubio's presidential bid. "If Joe Biden proposed tearing down Mount Rushmore, that would be a huge opening for Trump. But Biden is not doing that."

Sen. John Thune, R-S.D., said GOP candidates "need to do what they need to do to win. And in some states, he will be a benefit in some parts of the country. In other parts of the country, less so."

The Trump campaign dismisses accusations of racism.

"President Trump's Mount Rushmore address was a defining speech highlighting America's highest ideals of freedom and individual liberty," said campaign spokesman Ken Farnaso. "He both educated citizens on our shared history and pushed for a more united front combating those who want to create chaos."

Democrats have charged that Trump's recent rhetoric is consistent with his history, including his call in the 1980s for the death penalty for Black teenagers later exonerated for the rape of a jogger in Central Park and for questioning whether the nation's first Black president, Barack Obama, was born in the United States.

"We are beyond dog whistles with this president," said TJ Ducklo, the Biden campaign's national press secretary. "Donald Trump openly embraces racist rhetoric and sends blatant signals of support for the causes of white supremacists -- and he does it from the highest office in the land."

Associated Press writer Alan Fram in Washington contributed to this report.

Follow Lemire on Twitter at <https://twitter.com/JonLemire>.

Monuments and statues are falling. But what comes next?

By RUSSELL CONTRERAS Associated Press

TIERRA AMARILLA, N.M. (AP) — The dusty town of Tierra Amarilla perches in the shadows of the Sangre de Cristo Mountains. Here, five decades ago, this poor northern New Mexico community saw one of the

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most violent clashes in civil rights history when armed Mexican American ranchers raided a courthouse in a dispute over land grants. It shocked the nation and helped trigger the Chicano Movement.

Today, there's almost nothing in town to honor this historic moment, except for graffiti art on an abandoned gas station and a sentence on a marker. There's also almost no public art about the event anywhere.

As monuments and statues fall across the United States, activists and towns are left wondering what to do with empty spaces that once honored historic figures tied to Confederate generals and Spanish conquistadors. They also are debating how to remember civil rights figures and events in areas where they have been forgotten.

The opportunity to reimagine spaces has created a debate: whose history should the U.S. now honor and why? Should anything go on those empty podiums at all?

Some advocates say monuments to the late U.S. Rep. Barbara Jordan or Mexican American civil rights leader Dolores Huerta should replace the fallen statues. Others say World War II Marine Sgt. Miguel Trujillo Sr., a member of the Isleta Pueblo who sued to get Native Americans the right to vote in New Mexico, or former slave-turned-abolitionist Olaudah Equiano should have monuments erected in their honor. Christy Symington, a London-based sculptor, has already created an image of Equiano that some advocates say should be replicated in now empty spaces.

"I almost think the pedestals just need to be left there (empty)," said Rev. Rob W. Lee, a senior pastor of Unifour Church in Newton, North Carolina, and a descendant of Confederate Gen. Robert E. Lee, who now speaks out against Confederate monuments.

Lee said he sees the toppling of Confederate statues with Black Lives Matter graffiti as a move to reclaim Black lives from white supremacy. "I think it's quite beautiful," Lee said. "Leave it like that."

Brett Chapman, a Tulsa, Oklahoma, attorney and descendant of Standing Bear, a Ponca chief and civil rights leader, said he'd like to see the fallen statues replaced by largely unknown social justice advocates. "There are so many people we can honor that will show how we've overcome oppression," Chapman said. "It'll be a chance for us to learn and reflect."

On Saturday, protesters in Baltimore pulled down a statue of Christopher Columbus and threw it into the city's Inner Harbor. That followed other episodes of Confederate and Spanish colonial statues getting toppled last month by demonstrators or after officials ordered their removal.

It's also led to statues of Presidents George Washington and Ulysses S. Grant getting vandalized.

That has given some supporters of anti-racism protests pause. Cultural critic Thomas Chatterton Williams, the author of "Self-Portrait in Black and White," said he understood the need to remove Confederate monuments but is uncomfortable with the vandalism of statues honoring the Founding Fathers and American Union Civil War figures.

"Mobs in the street tearing down Ulysses S. Grant statues is a really chilling sight," Williams said. "We should understand the context (of history). But erasing these men from the public sphere seems like a bad road to go down to me."

Vanessa Fonseca-Chávez, an assistant English professor at Arizona State University and author of the upcoming book "Colonial Legacies in Chicana/o Literature and Culture: Looking Through the Kaleidoscope," said she can see the spaces honoring people who are not famous.

"What about the people who are living and breathing right now who made this place what it is today?" Fonseca-Chávez said. "Not a famous person. Just who we are. I think that could go a long way."

Associated Press writer Russell Contreras is a member of the AP's Race and Ethnicity Team. Follow him on Twitter at <http://twitter.com/russcontreras>

FBI investigating reported assault on Black Indiana man

By CASEY SMITH Associated Press/Report for America
INDIANAPOLIS (AP) — The FBI said Tuesday it's investigating the reported assault of a Black man by a group of white men at a southern Indiana lake.

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Vauhxx Booker, a civil rights activist and member of the Monroe County Human Rights Commission, said the men pinned him against a tree, shouted racial slurs and one of them threatened to "get a noose" at Monroe Lake near Bloomington over the Fourth of July weekend.

Much of the assault was captured on cellphone video by Booker's acquaintances.

"The FBI is investigating. We have no further comment," spokeswoman Chris Bavender said.

Booker's attorney, Katherine Liell, said the FBI was questioning witnesses and that charging decisions could be made soon.

"We want this investigated as a hate crime. It was clearly racially motivated," Liell said. "We will continue our quest every day until some justice is served."

Booker said he's pleased the FBI got involved.

"I'm sad that this happened, honestly," Booker said. "I just wanted to have a good time with some friends."

Liell also complained that law enforcement officers with the Indiana Department of Natural Resources "did not move rapidly enough" in response to reports of the attack. She said their failure to make arrests at the scene warrants further investigation from other law enforcement agencies.

Bloomington Mayor John Hamilton said at the news conference that police continue to search for two people accused of knocking a woman unconscious and dragging a man with their car at a protest over the assault on Booker.

Police Capt. Ryan Pedigo told The Associated Press that the confrontation happened near the Monroe County courthouse in Bloomington on Monday evening.

A male passenger got out of a red Toyota car and went to move an electric scooter that had been left in the road near the protest site, Pedigo said. A 29-year-old woman approached the car and placed her hands on the hood, he said.

The driver accelerated into the woman, launching her onto the hood. A 35-year-old man then grabbed the driver's side of the car and held on as the vehicle continued to accelerate. Both were eventually flung to the ground and the car fled the scene, Pedigo said.

The woman was knocked unconscious and suffered a cut to her head, while the man scraped his arm. She was transported by ambulance to a hospital but her injuries are not believed to be life-threatening, Pedigo said. Authorities have not released the identities of the injured nor said if they were participating in the protest.

The red Toyota has not been located and investigators are still trying to determine the identities and location of the male passenger and female driver, police said in a news release.

Several protesters provided police with cellphone footage, Pedigo said.

"The event last evening is being actively and aggressively investigated right now," Hamilton said. "We are taking whatever steps it takes to bring justice to that event."

The protesters had gathered in Bloomington, about 50 miles (80 kilometers) southwest of Indianapolis, to demand arrests in the assault on Booker.

This story has been corrected to show that Chris Bavender is an FBI spokeswoman

Casey Smith is a corps member for the Associated Press/Report for America Statehouse News Initiative. Report for America is a nonprofit national service program that places journalists in local newsrooms to report on undercovered issues.

Rare gorillas in Nigeria captured on camera with babies

By CARLEY PETESCH Associated Press

DAKAR, Senegal (AP) — Conservationists have captured the first images of a group of rare Cross River gorillas with multiple babies in Nigeria's Mbe mountains, proof that the subspecies once feared to be extinct is reproducing amid protection efforts.

Only around 300 Cross River gorillas were known to be alive at one point in the isolated mountainous

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region in Nigeria and Cameroon, according to the Wildlife Conservation Society, which captured the camera trap images in May. More color images were recovered last month.

John Oates, professor emeritus at the City University of New York and a primatologist who helped establish conservation efforts for the gorillas more than two decades ago, was excited about the new images.

"It was great to see ... evidence that these gorillas in these mountains are reproducing successfully because there have been so few images in the past," he told The Associated Press. "We know very little about what is going on with reproduction with this subspecies, so to see many young animals is a positive sign."

Experts don't know how many Cross River gorillas remain in the mountain cluster and have been trying to track the subspecies for some time.

About 50 cameras were set up in 2012 and multiple images have been captured in Cameroon's Kagwene Gorilla Sanctuary and in Nigeria's Mbe Mountains community forest and Afi Mountain Wildlife Sanctuary. But Cross River gorillas are notoriously difficult to capture together on camera and no images had captured multiple infants.

An alliance of nine local communities, the Conservation Association of the Mbe Mountains, has been working with the Wildlife Conservation Society since the mid-1990s to help protect the Cross River gorillas. Since that time, there have been no recorded deaths in Nigeria, the society said.

The gorillas at one point had been thought to be extinct, according to the society's Nigeria country director, Andrew Dunn.

"It's a big success story that shows communities can protect their wildlife," he told the AP.

Cross River gorillas have been threatened for decades primarily by hunting but also by loss of habitat as residents cut down forests to make way for agriculture. The subspecies was "rediscovered" in the late 1980s.

About 100 Cross River gorillas have since been recorded in Nigeria's Cross River State and about 200 in Cameroon in a transborder region of about 12,000 square kilometers (4,633 square miles). The Mbe mountains forest is home to about a third of the Nigeria population.

The gorillas are extremely shy of humans and their presence is detected mostly by their nests, dung and feeding trails, experts say.

A team of about 16 eco-guards have been recruited from surrounding communities to patrol and protect the gorillas and other wildlife, Dunn said.

Inaoyom Imong, director of WCS Nigeria's Cross River Landscape project, said that seeing a few young gorillas in a group is promising.

The new photos were taken in a community forest without any formal protection status, Imong said, "an indication we can have strong community support in conservation."

Hunting was always the main threat, he said, but "we do believe that hunting has reduced drastically." The conservation groups also are working to reduce illegal cutting of forests, he said.

But other dangers remain.

"Although hunters no longer target gorillas, snares set for other game pose a threat to the gorillas as infants can be caught in them and potentially die from injuries," Imong said. Disease is also a potential threat, along with conflict and insecurity in Cameroon.

"Refugees from the ongoing insecurity in Cameroon are also moving into the area, and they will likely increase hunting pressure and the need for more farmland," Dunn said.

For now, they must rely on the work of Nigerian communities.

"I feel honored to be part of the efforts that are producing these results," said Chief Damian Aria, the head of the village of Wula.

He told the AP his community and others have worked hard to help preserve the natural habitat for the gorillas, and they are proud of their efforts.

"We are so happy they are reproducing," he said. While the gorillas' livelihood is important for nature, Aria also hopes that mountain communities in due time will benefit from the tourism they might bring.

A deeply divided Poland chooses a president in runoff vote

By VANESSA GERA Associated Press

WARSAW, Poland (AP) — Two bitter rivals are heading into a razor's-edge presidential runoff election Sunday in Poland that is seen as an important test of populism in Europe after a campaign that exacerbated a conservative-liberal divide in the country.

The tough campaign has seen strains of homophobia and anti-Semitism, and both sides have sought backing from rival political camps in Washington.

President Andrzej Duda, a nationalist and conservative, is seeking a second term, but he faces a tough challenge from liberal Warsaw Mayor Rafal Trzaskowski. The first round in late June eliminated nine other candidates, leaving the two rivals, both 48.

Duda has made his opposition to LGBT rights a key campaign theme, while Trzaskowski signed a tolerance declaration last year that triggered a backlash against gay rights in the mostly Catholic country.

Duda has called LGBT rights an "ideology" more dangerous than communism, and on Monday he formally proposed a constitutional amendment to bar same-sex couples from adopting children.

He and the Law and Justice party have won the backing of older and rural Poles, helped by cash payments to families and other welfare programs.

"These last five years have been a good time that we have used well," Duda told supporters at a rally Monday. "I want to continue this policy -- for the family, for the development of Poland, for the development of all generations of my countrymen."

But many liberal and urban Poles reject a brand of populism that they see as xenophobic and dangerous to their standing with European partners.

Last month, Duda was feted at the White House by President Donald Trump, who said he was doing a "terrific job." Trzaskowski later turned to former President Barack Obama to discuss the state of Poland's democracy.

As Duda's once-high poll numbers have fallen, his campaign has turned further to the right, seeking to incite fears of gays, Jews and even Germans, apparently to mobilize conservatives and those who remember the Nazis' World War II-era occupation of Poland.

The president has a key role in foreign policy and veto power over laws passed by parliament. During his five-year-term, Duda has approved laws giving the Law and Justice party vast new powers over Poland's top courts and key judicial bodies.

The European Union says the changes violate the democratic principle of separation of powers, but the government has insisted on moving forward with most measures, arguing it has a mandate from voters to reform the justice system.

Adding to strains in its relationship with its European partners has been coal-dependent Poland's refusal to agree to the EU's ambitious carbon neutrality goals, and a refusal to accept any migrants who arrived in large numbers in Europe in 2015.

Sunday's vote will determine whether Law and Justice will keep control of almost all institutions of power in Poland, or will have to give a say to Trzaskowski, who belongs to the pro-EU Civic Platform party and has vowed to restore constitutional norms.

Duda won 43.5% of the vote in the first round. Trzaskowski got 30.5% but is expected to get the bulk of the centrist votes that went to the eliminated candidates. This leaves the final outcome hinging on the nearly 7% of voters who supported a far-right candidate, Krzysztof Bosak.

Bosak belongs to a party called Confederation, which Law and Justice leaders have denounced as pro-Kremlin and anti-Semitic, but whose votes Duda has been seeking.

"I see them as the most pro-Russian force in Poland," said Wojciech Przybylski, editor of Visegrad Insight, a policy journal focused on Central Europe. "They are anti-American, they are anti-Jewish. They accuse everyone of conspiracies to take away money from Poland."

Public television broadcaster, TVP, flush with an additional \$500 million of funding approved by Duda in the spring, has been airing a stream of positive news stories casting him as the defender of Polish families and Trzaskowski as someone who would sell them out.

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A recurring allegation on the prime-time evening news has been that Trzaskowski would take away the popular social benefits and give the money to Jewish groups seeking reparations for prewar property.

Trzaskowski has called for a tolerant and inclusive society and vowed to stop a further erosion of judicial independence under Law and Justice, while also promising to preserve his rivals' popular welfare programs.

On Tuesday, he accused Duda of running a "cynical campaign against those people on the margins," vowing to "stand on the side of those being attacked."

The divide is so deep that the two could not agree to the conditions for a debate this week. Trzaskowski refused to debate Duda on the state broadcaster, while Duda refused to go on an independent U.S.-owned broadcaster, TVN.

The result was that each candidate held his own show, each alone in a friendly TV studio in different cities, taking questions at a "debate" as a lectern labeled with the rival's name stood empty.

In recent days, Duda and his allies have lashed out at foreign-owned media, raising concerns about press freedom.

U.S. Ambassador Georgette Mosbacher intervened Monday in defense of TVN, now owned by Discovery Inc., after a former ruling party spokeswoman insinuated the broadcaster is tied to shadowy former communist interests. Mosbacher accused the official of lying.

Duda lashed out at partly German owned tabloid that reported on his pardon of a convicted sex offender, and also against a German foreign correspondent in Poland for critical coverage. He alleged "a German attack in these elections."

"The Germans want to choose the president in Poland? I will not allow this!" Duda said at a rally.

German government spokesman Steffen Seibert said in Berlin on Monday that "the German government obviously doesn't influence the presidential elections of our Polish neighbors."

"We likewise don't try to influence the work of German foreign correspondents. They do their job within the framework of press freedom," Seibert said.

The election was originally scheduled for May but postponed due the coronavirus pandemic, with over 36,000 confirmed infections and 1,500 dead in Poland. Prime Minister Mateusz Morawiecki last week urged older Poles — Duda's base — to vote.

He said the virus is waning and "there is nothing to be afraid of."

Associated Press writer Frank Jordans in Berlin contributed to this report.

Wedding season brings new virus outbreak in West Bank

By MOHAMMED D'ARAGHMEH Associated Press

RAMALLAH, West Bank (AP) — By the end of May, the Palestinian Authority appeared to have quashed a coronavirus outbreak in the Israeli-occupied West Bank, with only around 400 confirmed cases and just two fatalities in the territory, following a nearly three-month lockdown.

Then the wedding invitations went out.

Over the last few weeks, infections have skyrocketed across the West Bank, with more than 4,000 new cases and an additional 15 deaths. Authorities blame the surge on widespread neglect of social distancing and mask-wearing — and on the summer wedding season.

Palestinian Prime Minister Mohammad Shtayyeh told a Cabinet meeting on Monday that 82% of cases in the West Bank were linked to weddings and funerals, saying that such large public gatherings must stop "immediately" or security forces would start breaking them up.

The Palestinian Authority imposed a strict five-day lockdown on Friday, forcing nearly all businesses to close and heavily restricting travel between towns and cities. The stay-at-home orders were renewed for another five days on Tuesday.

The epicenter of the renewed outbreak is in Hebron, the largest Palestinian city and a commercial hub of the territory. It accounts for around 75% of all active cases and more than two-thirds of all deaths, according to Ali Abed Rabu, a Palestinian Health Ministry official.

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Palestinian weddings, usually held in the summer months, are major community events in which large families typically invite hundreds of guests. They feature lavish meals, often served buffet-style, as well as dancing and music late into the night.

"Hebronites are proud of their traditions and maintain them even at risky times like these," Abed Rabu said. "They brag about how many people attend and how many sheep they slaughter to feed them."

The virus causes mild to moderate flu-like symptoms in most patients, who recover within a few weeks. But it can cause severe illness or death, particularly among the old or infirm. The virus is highly contagious and can be spread by those showing no symptoms.

That makes weddings and other large public gatherings particularly risky. A major outbreak could overwhelm the Palestinian health sector, which has just 350 ventilators for a population of more than 2.5 million people.

Hebron's mayor, Tayseer Abu Snaineh, points to other potential vectors, including the fact that large numbers of workers and merchants in Hebron travel back and forth from Israel, which is battling a much larger outbreak that has also surged in recent weeks.

Abu Snaineh said the Palestinian Authority, which governs parts of the Israeli-occupied West Bank, has tried to prevent large gatherings. But Palestinian security forces are not allowed to operate in a large part of downtown Hebron known as H2, which under past agreements is under complete Israeli military control.

Several hundred hard-line Jewish settlers live in H2, protected by Israeli troops. The area is also home to more than 30,000 Palestinians.

With the PA barred from the area and the Israeli military focused on securing the settlements, Abu Snaineh said there is no authority to impose virus restrictions. As a result, residents have held large weddings and other gatherings in recent weeks that appear to have accelerated the outbreak.

"People celebrate, hug each other and eat together in this area with no restrictions," he said.

Odeh al-Rajabi, the head of an informal local committee that administers H2, says it has been reaching out to people and has convinced many to hold small family weddings rather than the usual massive feasts.

"Some people feel it is embarrassing to not hold a feast and invite people, but we tell them not to feel embarrassed, that we all understand, it's an emergency situation," he said.

The committee hopes to convince most large families to sign a code of conduct in the coming days that would prohibit such gatherings.

Abu Snaineh, the mayor, said ultra-conservative Muslims have also defied restrictions in order to pray in mosques. One group, known as Hezb al-Tahrir, has openly called on people to defy restrictions on group prayers, accusing the PA of "using coronavirus as a pretext to fight Islam." The group is particularly influential in Hebron, where the population is more conservative than in other parts of the West Bank.

Alaa Abu Diab, a popular Palestinian comedian, posted a video this week in which he criticized people for holding weddings during the pandemic.

"I've just seen a video of a wedding party in which people are dancing and hugging as if there is no coronavirus," he said. "Why are you hugging and kissing each other in these sweaty, crowded gatherings?"

He also mocked those trafficking in conspiracy theories about the restrictions. "Who in the hell is conspiring against who? The whole world is collapsing, and you say it's a conspiracy."

Associated Press writer Joseph Krauss in Jerusalem contributed to this report.

Brazil's president says hydroxychloroquine to cure his virus

By MARCELO DE SOUSA and DAVID BILLER Associated Press

RIO DE JANEIRO (AP) — Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro says he is confident that he will swiftly recover from the new coronavirus thanks to treatment with hydroxychloroquine, the anti-malaria drug that has not been proven effective against COVID-19.

Bolsonaro said he tested positive for the new coronavirus on Tuesday after months of downplaying its severity while deaths mounted rapidly inside the country.

The president told reporters he underwent a lung X-ray on Monday after experiencing fever, muscle

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aches and malaise. As of Tuesday, his fever had subsided, he said, and he attributed the improvement to hydroxychloroquine.

He stepped back from the journalists and removed his mask at one point to show that he looked well.

The 65-year-old right-wing populist who has been known to mingle in crowds without covering his face confirmed the results while wearing a mask and speaking to reporters huddled close in front of him in the capital, Brasilia.

"I'm, well, normal. I even want to take a walk around here, but I can't due to medical recommendations," Bolsonaro said.

Later Tuesday, he posted a video to Facebook of him taking his third dose of hydroxychloroquine, which has also been promoted by President Donald Trump..

"Today I'm a lot better, so certainly it's working," Bolsonaro said, downing the dose with a glass of water. "We know today there are other remedies that can help fight the coronavirus. We know none of them have their efficacy scientifically proven, but I'm one more person for whom this is working. So I trust hydroxychloroquine. And you?"

Brazil, the world's sixth-biggest nation, with more than 210 million people, is one of the outbreak's most lethal hot spots. More than 65,000 Brazilians have died from COVID-19, and over 1.5 million have been infected.

Both numbers are the world's second-highest totals, behind those of the U.S., though the true figures are believed to be higher because of a lack of widespread testing. On Tuesday alone, 1,254 deaths were confirmed.

Other world leaders who have had bouts with COVID-19 include British Prime Minister Boris Johnson, Britain's Prince Charles, Prince Albert II of Monaco and Honduran President Juan Orlando Hernández.

Bolsonaro is "the democratic leader who has most denied the seriousness of this pandemic," said Maurício Santoro, a political science professor at the State University of Rio de Janeiro. "Him getting infected is a blow to his credibility. It will be seen as another example of the failure of his coronavirus response."

Bolsonaro has often appeared in public to shake hands with supporters and mingle with crowds, at times without a mask. He has said that his history as an athlete would protect him from the virus and that it would be nothing more than a "little flu" if he were to contract it.

He has also repeatedly said that there is no way to prevent 70% of the population falling ill with COVID-19 and that local authorities' efforts to shut down economic activity would ultimately cause more hardship than allowing the virus to run its course.

For nearly two months, Brazil's fight against COVID-19 has been in the hands of an interim health minister with no health experience before April. He took over after his predecessor, a doctor and health care consultant, quit in protest over Bolsonaro's support for hydroxychloroquine.

Brazilian cities and states last month began lifting restrictions that had been imposed to control the spread of the virus, as deaths began to decline along with the caseload in intensive care units.

Bolsonaro supporter Silas Ribeiro said on the streets of Rio that the president is correct in saying the dangers of the virus have been exaggerated.

"Our president is a popular man. He is showing that he isn't afraid to die," said Ribeiro, 59. "He is going to have health and get through this sickness."

Speaking near recently reopened shops in Rio, Wesley Morielo said he hopes Bolsonaro's sickness prompts him to reassess his stance.

"I think everything he said before, of not giving importance to COVID-19, came back against him," said Morielo, a 24-year-old student.

The World Health Organization's emergencies chief, Dr. Michael Ryan, wished Bolsonaro a speedy recovery and said his infection "brings home the reality of this virus" by showing that it doesn't distinguish between "prince or pauper."

Bolsonaro has repeatedly visited the hospital since taking office, requiring several operations to repair his intestines after he was stabbed on the campaign trail in 2018.

He said he canceled a trip this week to Brazil's northeast region and will continue working via videocon-

ference and receive rare visitors when he needs to sign a document.

Unlike Britain's prime minister, who moderated his rhetoric after testing positive for the virus, Bolsonaro will probably not change his stance, said Leandro Consentino, a political science professor at Insper, a university in Sao Paulo.

"He's going down a path of trying to indicate to his base of support that COVID-19 is just a little flu and take advantage of the illness to advertise for chloroquine," Consentino said.

Over the weekend, the Brazilian leader celebrated American Independence Day with the U.S. ambassador to Brazil, then shared pictures on social media showing him in close quarters with the diplomat, several ministers and aides. None wore masks.

The U.S. Embassy said on Twitter that Ambassador Todd Chapman is not showing any symptoms but would be tested.

Bolsonaro tested negative three times in March after meeting with Trump in Florida. Members of his delegation to the U.S. later reported becoming infected.

AP video producer Diarlei Rodrigues contributed from Rio.

'Desperation science' slows the hunt for coronavirus drugs

By MARILYNN MARCHIONE AP Chief Medical Writer

Desperate to solve the deadly conundrum of COVID-19, the world is clamoring for fast answers and solutions from a research system not built for haste.

The ironic, and perhaps tragic, result: Scientific shortcuts have slowed understanding of the disease and delayed the ability to find out which drugs help, hurt or have no effect at all.

As deaths from the coronavirus relentlessly mounted into the hundreds of thousands, tens of thousands of doctors and patients rushed to use drugs before they could be proved safe or effective. A slew of low-quality studies clouded the picture even more.

"People had an epidemic in front of them and were not prepared to wait," said Dr. Derek Angus, critical care chief at the University of Pittsburgh Medical Center. "We made traditional clinical research look so slow and cumbersome."

It wasn't until mid-June — nearly six months in — when the first evidence came that a drug could improve survival. Researchers in the United Kingdom managed to enroll one of every six hospitalized COVID-19 patients into a large study that found a cheap steroid called dexamethasone helps and that a widely used malaria drug does not. The study changed practice overnight, even though results had not been published or reviewed by other scientists.

In the United States, one smaller but rigorous study found a different drug can shorten recovery time for seriously ill patients, but many questions remain about its best use.

Doctors are still frantically reaching for anything else that might fight the many ways the virus can do harm, experimenting with medicines for stroke, heartburn, blood clots, gout, depression, inflammation, AIDS, hepatitis, cancer, arthritis and even stem cells and radiation.

"Everyone has been kind of grasping for anything that might work. And that's not how you develop sound medical practice," said Dr. Steven Nissen, a Cleveland Clinic researcher and frequent adviser to the U.S. Food and Drug Administration. "Desperation is not a strategy. Good clinical trials represent a solid strategy."

Few definitive studies have been done in the U.S., with some undermined by people getting drugs on their own or lax methods from drug companies sponsoring the work.

And politics magnified the problem. Tens of thousands of people tried a malaria medicine after President Donald Trump relentlessly promoted it, saying, "What have you got to lose?" Meanwhile, the nation's top infectious disease expert, Dr. Anthony Fauci, warned "I like to prove things first." For three months, weak studies polarized views of hydroxychloroquine until several more reliable ones found it ineffective.

"The problem with 'gunslinger medicine,' or medicine that is practiced where there is a hunch ... is that it's caused society as a whole to be late in learning things," said Johns Hopkins University's Dr. Otis Braw-

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ley. "We don't have good evidence because we don't appreciate and respect science."

He noted that if studies had been conducted correctly in January and February, scientists would have known by March if many of these drugs worked.

Even researchers who value science are taking shortcuts and bending rules to try to get answers more rapidly. And journals are rushing to publish results, sometimes paying a price for their haste with retractions.

Research is still chaotic — more than 2,000 studies are testing COVID-19 treatments from azithromycin to zinc. The volume might not be surprising in the face of a pandemic and a novel virus, but some experts say it is troubling that many studies are duplicative and lack the scientific rigor to result in clear answers.

"Everything about this feels very strange," said Angus, who is leading an innovative study using artificial intelligence to help pick treatments. "It's all being done on COVID time. It's like this new weird clock we're running on."

Here is a look at some of the major examples of "desperation science" underway.

A MALARIA DRUG GOES VIRAL

To scientists, it was a recipe for disaster: In a medical crisis with no known treatment and a panicked population, an influential public figure pushes a drug with potentially serious side effects, citing testimonials and a quickly discredited report of its use in 20 patients.

Trump touted hydroxychloroquine in dozens of appearances starting in mid-March. The Food and Drug Administration allowed its emergency use even though studies had not shown it safe or effective for coronavirus patients, and the government acquired tens of millions of doses.

Trump first urged taking it with azithromycin, an antibiotic that, like hydroxychloroquine, can cause heart rhythm problems. After criticism, he doubled down on giving medical advice, urging "You should add zinc now ... I want to throw that out there." In May, he said he was taking the drugs himself to prevent infection after an aide tested positive.

Many people followed his advice.

Dr. Rais Vohra, medical director of a California poison control center, told of a 52-year-old COVID-19 patient who developed an irregular heartbeat after three days on hydroxychloroquine — from the drug, not the virus.

"It seems like the cure was more dangerous than the effects of the disease," Vohra said.

Studies suggested the drug wasn't helping, but they were weak. And the most influential one, published in the journal *Lancet*, was retracted after major concerns arose about the data.

Craving better information, a University of Minnesota doctor who had been turned down for federal funding spent \$5,000 of his own money to buy hydroxychloroquine for a rigorous test using placebo pills as a comparison. In early June, Dr. David Boulware's results showed hydroxychloroquine did not prevent COVID-19 in people closely exposed to someone with it.

A UK study found the drug ineffective for treatment, as did other studies by the U.S. National Institutes of Health and the World Health Organization.

Boulware's colleague, Dr. Rahda Rajasingham, aimed to enroll 3,000 health workers in a study to see if hydroxychloroquine could prevent infection, but recently decided to stop at 1,500.

When the study started, "there was this belief that hydroxychloroquine was this wonder drug," Rajasingham said. More than 1,200 people signed up in just two weeks, but that slowed to a trickle after some negative reports.

"The national conversation about this drug has changed from everyone wants this drug ... to nobody wants anything to do with it," she said. "It sort of has become political where people who support the president are pro-hydroxychloroquine."

Researchers just want to know if it works.

LEARN AS YOU GO

In Pittsburgh, Angus is aiming for something between Trump's "just try it" and Fauci's "do the ideal study" approach.

In a pandemic, "there has to be a middle road, another way," Angus said. "We do not have the luxury

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of time. We must try to learn while doing.”

The University of Pittsburgh Medical Center’s 40 hospitals in Pennsylvania, New York, Maryland and Ohio joined a study underway in the United Kingdom, Australia and New Zealand that randomly assigns patients to one of dozens of possible treatments and uses artificial intelligence to adapt treatments, based on the results. If a drug looks like a winner, the computer assigns more people to get it. Losers are quickly abandoned.

The system “learns on the fly, so our physicians are always betting on the winning horse,” Angus said. A small number of patients given usual care serve as a comparison group for all of the treatments being tested, so more participants wind up getting a shot at trying something.

Mark Shannon, a 61-year-old retired bank teller from Pittsburgh, was the first to join. “I knew that there was no known cure. I knew that they were learning as they went along in many cases. I just put my trust in them,” he said.

Shannon, who spent 11 days on a breathing machine, received the steroid hydrocortisone and recovered. Doris Kelley, a 57-year-old preschool teacher in Ruffs Dale, southeast of Pittsburgh, joined the study in April.

“It felt like someone was sitting on my chest and I couldn’t get any air,” Kelley said of COVID-19. She has asthma and other health problems and was glad to let the computer choose among the many possible treatments. It assigned her to get hydroxychloroquine and she went home a couple days later.

It’s too soon to know if either patient’s drug helped or if they would have recovered on their own.

THE BUMPY ROAD TO REMDESIVIR

When the new coronavirus was identified, attention swiftly turned to remdesivir, an experimental medicine administered through an IV that showed promise against other coronaviruses in the past by curbing their ability to copy their genetic material.

Doctors in China launched two studies comparing remdesivir to the usual care of severely and moderately ill hospitalized patients. The drug’s maker, Gilead Sciences, also started its own studies, but they were weak -- one had no comparison group and, in the other, patients and doctors knew who was getting the drug, which compromises any judgments about whether it works.

The NIH launched the most rigorous test, comparing remdesivir to placebo IV treatments. While these studies were underway, Gilead also gave away the drug on a case-by-case basis to thousands of patients.

In April, Chinese researchers ended their studies early, saying they could no longer enroll enough patients as the outbreak ebbed there. In a podcast with a journal editor, Fauci gave another possible explanation: Many patients already believed remdesivir worked and were not willing to join a study where they might end up in a comparison group. That may have been especially true if they could get the drug directly from Gilead.

In late April, Fauci revealed preliminary results from the NIH trial showing remdesivir shortened the time to recovery by 31% — 11 days on average versus 15 days for those just given usual care.

Some criticized releasing those results rather than continuing the study to see if the drug could improve survival and to learn more about when and how to use it, but independent monitors had advised that it was no longer ethical to continue with a placebo group as soon as a benefit was apparent.

Until that study, the only other big, rigorous test of a coronavirus treatment was from China. As that country rushed to build field hospitals to deal with the medical crisis, doctors randomly assigned COVID-19 patients to get either two HIV antiviral drugs or the usual care and quickly published results in the *New England Journal of Medicine*.

“These investigators were able to do it under unbelievable circumstances,” the journal’s top editor, Dr. Eric Rubin, said on a podcast. “It’s been disappointing that the pace of research has been quite slow since that time.”

WHY SCIENCE MATTERS

By not properly testing drugs before allowing wide use, “time and time again in medical history, people have been hurt more often than helped,” Brawley said.

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For decades, lidocaine was routinely used to prevent heart rhythm problems in people suspected of having heart attacks until a study in the mid-1980s showed the drug actually caused the problem it was meant to prevent, he said.

Alta Charo, a University of Wisconsin lawyer and bioethicist, recalled the clamor in the 1990s to get insurers to cover bone marrow transplants for breast cancer until a solid study showed they "simply made people more miserable and sicker" without improving survival.

Writing in the *Journal of the American Medical Association*, former FDA scientists Drs. Jesse Goodman and Luciana Borio criticized the push to use hydroxychloroquine during this pandemic and cited similar pressure to use an antibody combo called ZMapp during the 2014 Ebola outbreak, which waned before that drug's effectiveness could be determined. It took four years and another outbreak to learn that ZMapp helped less than two similar treatments.

During the 2009-2010 swine flu outbreak, the experimental drug peramivir was widely used without formal study, Drs. Benjamin Rome and Jerry Avorn of Brigham and Women's Hospital in Boston noted in the *New England Journal*. The drug later gave disappointing results in a rigorous study and ultimately was approved merely for less serious cases of flu and not severely ill hospitalized patients.

Patients are best served when we stick to science rather than "cutting corners and resorting to appealing yet risky quick fixes," they wrote. The pandemic will do enough harm, and damage to the system for testing and approving drugs "should not be part of its legacy."

Marilynn Marchione can be followed on Twitter: @MMarchioneAP

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Mary Kay Letourneau, teacher jailed for raping student, dies

SEATTLE (AP) — Mary Kay Letourneau, a teacher who married her former sixth-grade student after she was convicted of raping him in a case that drew international headlines, has died. She was 58.

Her lawyer David Gehrke told multiple news outlets Letourneau died Tuesday of cancer. He did not immediately return an email from The Associated Press.

Letourneau was a married mother of four having difficulties with her marriage in 1996 when Vili Fualaau was a precocious 12-year-old in Letourneau's class at Shorewood Elementary in Burien, a south Seattle suburb.

At about 1:20 a.m. on June 19, 1996, police discovered them in a minivan parked at the Des Moines Marina.

Letourneau, then 34, initially told officers the boy was 18, raising suspicions that something sexual was going on. But back at the police station, Fualaau and Letourneau denied there had been any "touching." Instead, they said, Letourneau had been babysitting the boy and took him from her home after she and her husband had a fight.

About two months after the marina incident, Letourneau became pregnant with the couple's first daughter. Their second child was conceived in 1998, after Letourneau had pleaded guilty to child rape and received a 7 1/2-year prison term.

Letourneau and Fualaau married on May 20, 2005, in Woodinville, Washington, after she finished serving time in prison.

Fualaau and Letourneau had previously characterized their relationship as one of love, and even wrote a book together — "Un Seul Crime, L'Amour," or "Only One Crime, Love." Their story was also the subject of a USA Network movie, "All American Girl."

King County court records show Fualaau asked the court for a legal separation from Letourneau on May 9, 2017.

Seattle attorney Anne Bremner befriended Letourneau in 2002, when she represented the Des Moines

police department in a lawsuit brought by Fualaau's mother, claiming the city and school district failed to protect him from the teacher. A jury found against the family in the civil action. Bremner visited Letourneau in prison and would meet her for lunch after her release.

"She accepted that it was a crime and that she had to serve her time, but when she got out she didn't dwell," Bremner said. "She moved forward in a very positive way and raised those girls. She was somebody I rooted for. I really wanted her to do well, and she did."

In the civil trial following the multimillion-dollar lawsuit filed by Fualaau's mother, the police department and school district insisted the romance was so bizarre that no one could have predicted it. The district's lawyer said it began off school grounds after the academic year had ended. Police argued that they simply had no evidence of sexual abuse until it was too late.

Bremner said of Letourneau and Fualaau's relationship: "Everyone said it wouldn't last, but it did, at least for 20 years."

Exhausted cities face another challenge: a surge in violence

By TOM HAYS and COLLEEN LONG Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Still reeling from the coronavirus pandemic and street protests over the police killing of George Floyd, exhausted cities around the nation are facing yet another challenge: a surge in shootings that has left dozens dead, including young children.

The spike defies easy explanation, experts say, pointing to the toxic mix of issues facing America in 2020: an unemployment rate not seen in a generation, a pandemic that has killed more than 130,000 people, stay-at-home orders, rising anger over police brutality, intense stress, even the weather.

"I think it's just a perfect storm of distress in America," said Atlanta Mayor Keisha Lance Bottoms after a weekend of bloodshed in her city.

Jerry Ratcliffe, a Temple University criminal justice professor and host of the "Reducing Crime" podcast, put it more bluntly: "Anybody who thinks they can disentangle all of this probably doesn't know what they're talking about."

President Donald Trump has seized on the violence for political gain, accusing Democrats of being weak and suggesting the crime wave is being driven by recent protests calling for racial justice, police reform and drastic cuts in law enforcement funding.

"Law and order are the building blocks of the American dream, but if anarchy prevails, this dream comes crumbling down," White House Press Secretary Kayleigh McEnany said last week.

Police officials in New York City and elsewhere say the recent bloodshed has shown there are consequences to some reforms they see as misguided, particularly on bail reform, enacted before the protests happened but exacerbated by the moment.

Emboldened criminals feel "that the cops can't do anything anymore, that no one likes the police, that they can get away with things, that it's safe to carry a gun out on the street," New York Police Department Chief Terence Monahan said this week.

Monahan's remarks came after a holiday weekend that saw a wave of shootings leaving 10 dead. Through Sunday, shootings were up more than 53% — to 585 — so far this year.

The recent spasm of violence was captured in a New York Post headline about a crime-ravaged city crying out for help. It was nearly identical to one that ran 30 years ago — when there were more than 2,000 murders a year. But crime has been declining for more than a decade — there were about 300 last year.

Crime has spiked in other major cities, too. In Dallas, violent crime increased more than 14% from April to June. In Philadelphia, homicides were up 20% for the week ending July 5 over last year at this time. In Atlanta, 31 people were shot over the weekend, five fatally, compared with seven shootings and one killing over the same week in 2019.

Some police unions say officers just aren't doing their jobs over fear of being charged with crime.

Bottoms, a Democrat, lashed out after an 8-year-old girl was shot and killed near the Atlanta Wendy's restaurant where Rayshard Brooks died three weeks earlier in a confrontation with police who were later

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charged criminally.

"That's an important movement that's happening," she said at a news conference. "But this random, wild, wild West shoot 'em up because you can has got to stop."

Trump's Georgia campaign arm claimed Atlanta was a "war zone" brought on after Bottoms "lost control of the city after what started out as peaceful protests, quickly turned violent. In a flurry of anti-police activity."

The Trump campaign also launched a \$250,000 ad blitz Sunday on Facebook and Twitter, claiming "violent crime has EXPLODED" as protesters call for cuts to police departments across the country. The ad features video of an empty police station with a ringing phone that sends a caller to an answering machine, which says the estimated wait time for police help is five days.

The video ends by flashing the words, "You won't be safe in Joe Biden's America."

Biden's campaign said the Trump approach was just another distraction from his "inaction and mismanagement" of the coronavirus crisis.

"While Donald Trump searches for the latest cultural issue to drive people apart and celebrates Independence Day with new, race-baiting rhetoric, Americans are contracting coronavirus at alarming rates, and there is still no coherent national plan to address it," said T.J. Ducklo, a spokesman for the presumptive Democratic nominee.

Trump's messaging went beyond the ad campaign. Donald Trump Jr. shared on Facebook a conservative-created meme of 11-year-old Davon McNeal, who was shot to death in Washington during a cookout over the weekend.

"Davon was murdered after a string of BLM (Black Lives Matter) violence on the Fourth of July," it read.

The shooting was not connected to Black Lives Matter, the movement behind many of the protests against police brutality. The boy had been at a family-oriented anti-violence cookout Saturday, but he left to get a phone charger from his aunt's house when he was struck by gunmen in a sedan.

Tracie Keese, a longtime police official in Denver and New York who co-founded the Center for Policing Equity, said it's important to get answers on what is driving the crime, whether it's drugs, domestic violence or poverty. She cautioned against broad-stroke generalizations.

"You have to get into the numbers," she said.

Reform advocates say blaming a spike on the necessary push for police reform ignores the root causes of crime and the progress of the movement.

Government officials need to "be thoughtful and nuanced and contextual about these things," liberal New York City Council Speaker Corey Johnson told radio station WNYC this week.

To link the shootings to reforms, Johnson added, gives "an inaccurate picture of what criminal justice reform is about and is just demonizing the moment that we're in and not talking about what brought us here today."

Like New York, Chicago had already seen an increase in homicides and shootings in the first part of the year. But while the violence tapered off in New York under stay-at-home orders, shootings in Chicago remained steady, likely because of gang warfare, said Wesley Skogan, who studies crime at the Institute for Policy Research at Northwestern University.

Seventeen people were fatally shot in Chicago and 70 wounded, one of the bloodiest holiday weekends in memory there.

Gangs "are not particularly deterred by the risks of being out there," Skogan said. "Of all the things they are likely to be worried about, COVID is way down the list."

Long reported from Washington. Associated Press writers Don Babwin and Amanda Seitz in Chicago, Summer Ballentine in St. Louis, Jake Bleiberg in Dallas, and Bill Barrow and Kate Brumback in Atlanta contributed to this report.

Chief Justice Roberts recently spent a night in a hospital

WASHINGTON (AP) — Chief Justice John Roberts spent a night in a hospital last month after he fell and injured his forehead, a Supreme Court spokeswoman said Tuesday night.

Roberts was walking for exercise near his home June 21 when he fell, court spokeswoman Kathleen L. Arberg said in an emailed statement. The injury required sutures, she said, and out of an abundance of caution, Roberts stayed in the hospital overnight.

Roberts' injury and hospitalization was first reported by The Washington Post, which reported that the fall happened at the Chevy Chase Club in Maryland.

Roberts, 65, suffered a seizure at his summer home in Maine in 2007, causing a fall that resulted in minor scrapes, and had a similar episode in 1993. Arberg said that Roberts' doctors "ruled out a seizure" this time. "They believe the fall was likely due to light-headedness caused by dehydration," she said.

The fall took place three days after the court grabbed headlines with a 5-4 decision written by Roberts rejecting President Donald Trump's effort to end legal protections for 650,000 young immigrants.

Supreme Court justices are not required to disclose injuries or health issues. However, during the coronavirus pandemic, Arberg has confirmed on a regular basis that the justices are in good health. Other justices, including Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg, have at times notified the public about hospitalizations.

Most recently, in May, when the justices heard arguments by telephone because of the coronavirus pandemic, the 87-year-old Ginsburg made public the fact she was at a Maryland hospital to receive nonsurgical treatment for an infection caused by a gallstone. She spent one night at the hospital and participated in court arguments by telephone from her hospital room.

The Supreme Court is wrapping up the release of opinions for cases argued in May. Five cases remain before the court is expected to take its summer break.

The Latest: New Zealand to charge patient who went shopping

By The Associated Press undefined

WELLINGTON, New Zealand — New Zealand authorities say they will press charges against a coronavirus patient who escaped quarantine in Auckland and went shopping at a supermarket.

Air Commodore Darryn Webb, the head of managed isolation and quarantine, said the 32-year-old man escaped through a fence at the Stamford Plaza hotel and was gone for just over an hour before returning. The man later tested positive for the virus.

Webb said the man was a New Zealand citizen who'd recently returned from India and his actions were "completely unacceptable."

New Zealand has eliminated community transmission of the virus and is trying to contain cases at the border by placing new arrivals into a 14-day quarantine at various hotels.

Depending on exactly what charges are brought, the man could face a fine or a maximum of six months in jail if found guilty. Webb said that CCTV footage indicated the man had not been in close contact with others at the Countdown supermarket and had used a self-service checkout. Nevertheless, the supermarket has been closed for a deep clean.

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

— U.S. Education Secretary Betsy DeVos wants schools "fully operational" even amid coronavirus pandemic.

— Brazil's President Jair Bolsonaro says he has tested positive for COVID-19 after months of downplaying the virus' severity.

— WHO watching surge of virus cases, expects uptick in deaths.

— Almost 11 million students begin taking China's university entrance exam after a delay as the country worked to bring down coronavirus infections.

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

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UnderstandingtheOutbreak

HERE'S WHAT ELSE IS HAPPENING:

HARRISBURG, Pa. — Renewed pandemic restrictions appeared possible in southwestern Pennsylvania as virus infections in Pittsburgh and its border counties surged, driven in part by people frequenting bars and restaurants, according to health officials.

Already, Allegheny County, where Pittsburgh is located and the recent spike in new infections is centered, is in the midst of a one-week ban on in-person service at bars and restaurants as health officials try to contain the spread. Allegheny County also ordered the casino there to close and banned gatherings of more than 25 people for the week.

There were indications Tuesday that restrictions could be reimposed in surrounding counties that are also reporting rising infection numbers. Increased viral transmission in southwestern Pennsylvania is largely responsible for a 37% jump in the rate of new infections statewide over the past four weeks, according to an Associated Press analysis of state data.

"There will be targeted mitigation efforts that the commonwealth will announce tomorrow," Washington County Commissioner Diana Irely Vaughan told the AP on Tuesday evening.

SAN FRANCISCO -- San Francisco is holding off on reopening indoor restaurants and outdoor bars because of continued coronavirus infections.

In Santa Clara County, officials plan to open hair and nail salons after receiving permission from the state to do so. Despite the different tactics in reopening, health officials from both San Francisco Bay Area counties pleaded with the public to keep wearing masks and stay away from others.

The counties have been among the most aggressive in battling the pandemic. But like other communities nationwide, the counties are seeing increasing hospitalizations and infections.

California on Tuesday reported more than 6,000 newly identified cases and 111 deaths.

MISSOURI — Missouri is reporting the state's highest daily increase in confirmed cases of the coronavirus, which health officials said is partly due to delayed reporting because of the holiday weekend.

Missouri reported another 773 cases of coronavirus Tuesday, a roughly 3.2% increase from Monday. There have been 24,629 reported cases total since the virus first struck the state. At least 1,042 people have died so far, including another 14 reported Tuesday.

Health department officials attribute the single-day hike partly to delayed reporting from labs to the state. "We also had a high volume of case accumulation over the holiday weekend and expect some higher than average numbers tomorrow as well," spokeswoman Lisa Cox said in an email.

On July 4, the state reported only 59 additional cases, for example.

Health department data show roughly 700 daily hospitalizations from COVID-19 in recent days. That's up from the roughly 600 a day reported at the end of last month but lower than the more than 980 when hospitalizations peaked in May.

BISMARCK, N.D. — North Dakota regulators have rejected imposing mandatory production cuts on the oil industry.

Both Texas and Oklahoma rejected similar proposals this year as oil prices fell during the coronavirus pandemic. The three-member North Dakota Industrial Commission decided unanimously to dismiss the idea following a lengthy hearing in May.

Many oil producers and tribal mineral owners from the Fort Berthold Indian Reservation opposed mandatory production cuts, The Bismarck Tribune reported.

"Let's let the private sector hammer out some of these things and where government can assist and intervene we'll do so, but it's probably best if we don't go down this road," state Agriculture Commissioner Doug Goehring said Tuesday.

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State regulators have imposed production cuts before, in the 1950s and 1960s during the early days of North Dakota's oil industry. But since then, the industry has grown much more complex, State Mineral Resources Director Lynn Helms said. But regulators still have the authority to declare oil as a "waste" if prices get low, and effectively require that oil producers curtail their output.

RALEIGH, N.C. — North Carolina has announced that residents will no longer need a doctor's referral to get a coronavirus test.

Tuesday's order, lasting until Gov. Roy Cooper's current state of emergency is rescinded, aims to encourage more Black, Hispanic and Native American residents to get tested.

Mandy Cohen, state secretary of Health and Human Services, also announced the creation of up to 300 free temporary testing sites throughout July.

The expansion comes even as Cohen said the state needs more testing supplies from the federal government. Cohen said she and Cooper discussed the need for more chemical reagents Monday with U.S. Health and Human Services Secretary Alex Azar.

While test results previously took 2 to 3 days to get back results in June, Cohen said supply issues have increased current waits to a week in some cases.

North Carolina reported a high of nearly 1,000 coronavirus hospitalizations Tuesday, along with a two-week low in daily completed tests with less than 13,000 performed.

WASHINGTON — Dr. Deborah Birx, a member of the Trump administration's White House task force on COVID-19, says experts have been surprised by the impact the virus has had on high-income and upper-middle-income countries.

She says public health experts never thought that 80 percent of the cases and probably 90 percent of the deaths would be reported in high-income and upper-middle-income countries.

She says COVID-19's impact in the United States has been aggravated by the prevalence of hypertension, diabetes and obesity, highlighting America's need to become a healthier nation.

Birx spoke Tuesday during an online event Tuesday hosted by the Atlantic Council.

Dr. Anthony Fauci says Alabama and other states with soaring coronavirus rates have a window of opportunity to bring it under control and spoke in favor of state and local requirements for masks in public.

Fauci, director of the National Institute of Allergy and Diseases, says the United States is in a resurgence of new coronavirus cases, with daily cases nearly double the country's previously high baseline. Infection rates have been rising in the South and West.

"We are facing a serious problem now," Fauci said in an online news conference with Alabama Sen. Doug Jones. He says the U.S. is in a situation where it must continue to try to reopen in a safe, prudent manner.

"What is alarming is the slope of the curve," Fauci said of cases in Alabama. He added, "the signal should be wear a mask, period."

Fauci says the mean age of people getting infected is about 15 years younger than previously in the U.S. While generally healthier, young people can still face serious illness if they have underlying health conditions.

The country's top infectious disease expert spoke in favor of school reopening, saying there are ripple effects for families if children can't go to school. He says areas with high rates of illness might consider mandatory masks or rotating schedules to reduce classroom size.

JACKSON, Miss. — Mississippi's Lt. Governor Delbert Hosemann has tested positive for the new coronavirus, his spokeswoman said.

That comes hours after Republican Gov. Tate Reeves announced that his own test for the highly contagious virus had come back negative.

The announcement about 73-year-old Hosemann came two days after the other top leader in the Mississippi Legislature, Republican House Speaker Philip Gunn, 57, announced his positive test for COVID-19.

Mississippi legislators were at the Capitol for most of June and on July 1, wrapping up their annual ses-

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sion that was interrupted for several weeks by the pandemic. Many legislators and others in the building did not wear masks, and people often sat and stood close to one another.

Hosemann has informed members of the Senate he tested positive for the virus and "will follow State Health Department guidelines by self-quarantining and working at home," spokeswoman Leah Rupp Smith said.

OKLAHOMA CITY — Oklahoma health officials reported a new daily record of confirmed coronavirus cases on Tuesday, with 858 reported in the last 24 hours.

The Oklahoma State Department of Health also reported five additional deaths from COVID-19, bringing the statewide death toll to 404.

Oklahoma has been experiencing a surge in hospitalizations due to the coronavirus, with 426 people currently hospitalized because of the disease, an increase of more than 100 from the same time last week, according to health department figures.

The latest data brings the total number of confirmed positive cases for coronavirus in Oklahoma to 17,220.

Meanwhile, New York officials added Oklahoma to the list of states required to quarantine for 14 days because of the surge.

The previous daily high for Oklahoma was 585, which was reported last week. Gov. Kevin Stitt said at the time the state was a "long ways away" from reintroducing restrictions that might harm the economy.

BATON ROUGE, La. — One of Louisiana's education leaders is calling for the cancellation of public school athletics this fall amid the resurgence of the state's coronavirus outbreak.

Nearly 2,000 new virus cases were confirmed in Louisiana on Tuesday, and hospitalizations from the COVID-19 disease have reached above 1,000.

Senate Education Chairman Cleo Fields sent letters to the leaders of the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education and the Louisiana School Boards Association, calling for the suspension of athletic events at K-12 public schools during the fall semester as a safety precaution.

"I'm asking them to step up and take action to protect our children," he said in a statement.

Louisiana is experiencing a sharp uptick in confirmed cases of COVID-19 and patients who are hospitalized with complications from the disease. More than 3,200 Louisiana residents have died, according to the state health department, a number that grew by 23 on Tuesday.

RAMALLAH, West Bank — The Palestinian Authority has extended a lockdown in the West Bank for another five days in hopes of slowing a new outbreak of the coronavirus.

The stay-at-home orders allow people to go out only for food or medicine and prohibit most intercity travel in Palestinian areas of the Israeli-occupied West Bank.

The lockdown was imposed last Friday and had been set to be lifted on Wednesday.

After the authority largely contained a first wave of cases, infections have skyrocketed in recent weeks, with more than 4,600 cases in the West Bank.

Neighboring Israel is also experiencing a new outbreak, reporting record levels of new cases in recent days.

The emergencies chief of the World Health Organization says the coronavirus is continuing to gain pace globally. Noting the marked increase in the number of confirmed cases being reported in the past five or six weeks, he warned that a spike in deaths could be soon to follow.

"In April and May, we were dealing with 100,000 cases a day," said Dr. Michael Ryan during a Tuesday press briefing. "Today we're dealing with 200,000 a day."

Ryan said that the number of COVID-19 deaths appeared to be stable for the moment, but he cautioned that there is often a lag time between when confirmed cases increase and when deaths are reported due to the time it takes for the coronavirus to run its course in patients.

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Ryan also dismissed the idea that the significant jump in cases was due to more widespread testing and, said, "This epidemic is accelerating."

He says he hopes the collective knowledge gained about effectively treating COVID-19 patients helps keep the death rate relatively low, but that can't be guaranteed.

"We've only really experienced this rapid increase in cases over the last five to six weeks," Ryan said. "So I don't think it should be a surprise if the deaths start to rise again."

WASHINGTON -- U.S. Education Secretary Betsy DeVos says the nation's schools must reopen this fall and be "fully operational" even as cases of COVID-19 continue to surge around the country. She says anything short of a full reopening would fail students and taxpayers.

DeVos made the comments during a call with governors as the Trump administration launched an all-out effort to get schools and colleges to reopen. Audio of the call was obtained by The Associated Press.

"Ultimately, it's not a matter of if schools need to open, it's a matter of how. School must reopen, they must be fully operational. And how that happens is best left to education and community leaders," DeVos told governors.

DeVos slammed districts that are planning to offer in-person instruction only a few days a week. She called out Fairfax County Public Schools in Virginia, which is asking families to decide between fully remote instruction or two days a week in the classroom.

The education secretary also criticized schools' past distance education efforts during the pandemic, saying there were schools that "didn't figure out how to serve students or who just gave up and didn't try."

--Alan Suderman contributed to this report.

RIO DE JANEIRO — Brazil's President Jair Bolsonaro says he has tested positive for COVID-19 after months of downplaying the virus' severity.

Bolsonaro confirmed the test results while wearing a mask and speaking to reporters in the capital of Brasilia.

"I'm well, normal. I even want to take a walk around here, but I can't due to medical recommendation," Bolsonaro said.

JACKSON, Miss. — Mississippi Gov. Tate Reeves has tested negative for the coronavirus Tuesday, a day after announcing he was going into isolation after being in contact with a lawmaker who tested positive.

"My girls and I tested negative for COVID-19," Reeves wrote in a tweet. "Limited contact with the people who were diagnosed, but better safe than sorry! If someone you know gets the virus, get a test!"

Reeves has not identified the lawmaker who tested positive and with whom he had brief contact last week. During a Facebook Live video Monday, Reeves said a "large number" of legislators have tested positive for the virus. The Mississippi Department of Health has not released more information.

The governor was in close contact last week with House Speaker Philip Gunn during the signing of a bill that removed the Confederate emblem from Mississippi's state flag. Gunn announced Sunday that he had tested positive for the coronavirus.

Data: Congress created virus aid, then reaped the benefits

By MATTHEW DALY and BRIAN SLODYSKO Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — At least a dozen lawmakers have ties to organizations that received federal coronavirus aid, according to newly released government data, highlighting how Washington insiders were both author and beneficiary of one of the biggest government programs in U.S. history.

Under pressure from Congress and outside groups, the Trump administration this week disclosed the names of some loan recipients in the \$659 billion Paycheck Protection Program, launched in April to help smaller businesses keep Americans employed during the pandemic. Connections to lawmakers, and the organizations that work to influence them, were quickly apparent.

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Among businesses that received money was a California hotel partially owned by the husband of House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, as well as a shipping business started by Transportation Secretary Elaine Chao's family. Chao is married to Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell.

Car dealerships owned by at least three Republican House members — Reps. Roger Williams of Texas, Vern Buchanan of Florida and Mike Kelly of Pennsylvania — received money. So, too, did fast-food franchises owned by Rep. Kevin Hern, R-Okla., a law firm owned by the husband of Sen. Jeanne Shaheen, D-N.H., and the former law firm of Rep. Matt Cartwright, D-Pa., which employs his wife.

Money also flowed to a farming and equipment business owned by the family of Rep. Vicky Hartzler, R-Mo., and a regional casino company led by the husband of Rep. Susie Lee, D-Nev.

Members of Congress and their families are not barred from receiving loans under the PPP, and there is no evidence they received special treatment. Loans were granted to Democrats and Republicans alike, something President Donald Trump's campaign was quick to highlight when records showed donors to his campaign coffers were among the earliest beneficiaries.

Hundreds of millions of dollars also flowed to political consultants, opposition research shops, law firms, advocacy organizations and trade associations whose work is based around influencing government and politics.

While voting, lobbying and ultimately benefiting from legislation aren't illegal, advocates say the blurred lines risk eroding public trust in the federal pandemic response as Congress begins debating yet another round of coronavirus relief.

"It certainly looks bad and smells bad," said Aaron Scherb, a spokesperson for Common Cause, a watchdog group whose education arm was also approved for a loan through the program. Members of Congress should not be allowed to vote on bills in which they can personally benefit, he said.

As of June 30, the Treasury Department program had handed out \$521 billion to industries including manufacturing, construction, restaurants and hotels.

Treasury identified just a fraction of the total borrowers Monday, naming only companies that got more than \$150,000. Those firms made up less than 15% of the nearly 5 million small companies and organizations that received assistance.

Many of the lawmakers connected to loan awards emphasized they weren't part of the application process.

A spokesperson for Pelosi said her husband, Paul, is a minority investor in the company that owns the El Dorado Hotel in the wine-country town of Sonoma, Calif. Paul Pelosi has a 8.1% stake in the company, valued at \$250,000 to \$500,000, Pelosi's office said.

"Mr. Pelosi is a minor, passive investor in this company," said the Democratic speaker's spokesperson, Drew Hammill. "He was not involved in or even aware of this PPP loan." The firm, EDI Associates, is listed as a recipient of a loan between \$350,000 and \$1 million.

New York-based Foremost Maritime Co., founded by Chao's parents and run by her sister, was cleared for a loan valued between \$350,000 and \$1 million. McConnell, a Republican seeking reelection in Kentucky, said Tuesday: "Neither my wife, nor I, have anything to do with that business and didn't know anything about it."

The Shaheen & Gordon law firm in Dover, New Hampshire, got a loan of \$1 million to \$2 million. The firm is owned by Jeanne Shaheen's husband, William Shaheen. A title company partially owned by William Shaheen got a \$160,000 loan and a half dozen companies he partially owns or another relative owns got loans, below \$150,000.

Jeanne Shaheen said she "was not involved in any way in applying for those loans nor do I have anything to do with their businesses, and Congress had no role in processing PPP applications."

Four car dealerships owned by Kelly received \$600,000 to \$1.4 million. Mike Kelly Automotive Group, Mike Kelly Automotive LP and Mike Kelly Hyundai and Kelly Chevrolet-Cadillac, all near Pittsburgh, received the money. A spokesman for Kelly said he wasn't part of the loan application and isn't involved in the operations of the dealerships, in accordance with ethics rules.

Williams, who had a net worth of over \$27 million in 2018, received a loan for his Roger Williams Chrysler Dodge Jeep dealership in Weatherford, Texas. Williams is president and CEO of JRW Corp. of Fort Worth, which is listed as receiving a loan of \$1 million to \$2 million. "Like every other company who accepted a

small business loan, our business qualified under law and regulation, and today over 100 of our employees are grateful that we did," Williams said in a statement.

Buchanan, whose net worth is estimated at \$74 million, received three loans for car dealerships totaling \$2.7 million to \$7 million. He told the Tampa Bay Times that he hoped any eligible small business "would use the program to make sure their workers continued to get paid during this difficult period."

At least five car dealerships owned by the husband of Rep. Carol Miller, R-W.Va., also received loans, each ranging from \$350,000 to \$1 million, the data show.

Other lawmakers, while distancing themselves from the loan process, sought to portray the PPP program as a success story.

Hern's Tulsa-based KTAK Corp., a management company for several McDonald's restaurants, received \$1 million to \$2 million. Hern isn't involved in the day-to-day operations, but "he is happy to share that the family business was able to keep all employees either at their current level of employment or move part-time employees to full time," Hern's chief of staff, Cameron Foster, said. Four businesses owned by fellow Rep. Markwayne Mullin, R-Okla., received at least \$800,000.

Full House Resorts, a Las Vegas-based casino company led by Lee's husband, Daniel, got two loans totaling \$5.6 million, according to the Securities and Exchange Commission. The company said the funds would be used to rehire several hundred employees and prepare to reopen two casinos in Indiana and Colorado.

A spokesperson said Tuesday that Lee did not know about the company's intention to apply for a loan when she and other Nevada lawmakers pushed for a rule change to allow small casinos to receive the loans. She had no influence over the application or any aspect of Full House's business or decision making, spokesperson Jesus Espinoza said.

Two wineries tied to Rep. Devin Nunes, R-Calif., and an Iowa farm run by his family received loans worth at least \$2 million. The wineries got separate loans worth \$1 million to \$2 million, and an Iowa dairy farm that is tied to his relatives received \$150,000 to \$350,000.

Associated Press writers Lisa Mascaro in Washington; Holly Ramer in Concord, N.H.; Marc Levy in Harrisburg, Pa.; Cuneyt Dil in Sacramento, Calif., and Anthony Izaguirre in Charleston, W.Va., contributed to this report.

In risky bid, Trump stokes racial rancor to motivate voters

By JONATHAN LEMIRE Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — President Donald Trump is wielding America's racial tensions as a reelection weapon, fiercely denouncing the racial justice movement on a near-daily basis with language stoking white resentment and aiming to drive his supporters to the polls.

The incendiary discourse is alarming many in his own party and running contrary to the advice of some in his inner circle, who believe it risks alienating independent and suburban voters. It's a pattern that harks back to cultural divisions Trump similarly exploited in his victorious 2016 campaign.

"It's not about who is the object of the derision or the vitriol. The actual issue is understanding the appeal to white resentment and white fear," said Eddie Glaude, chair of the Department of African American studies at Princeton University. "It's all rooted in this panic about the place of white people in this new America."

Though Trump has long aired racially divisive language and grievances in the public sphere, his willingness to do so from behind the presidential seal — and on his Twitter account — has reached a breakneck pace in recent days as the nation grapples with racial injustice.

The president tweeted — and later deleted — a video of a supporter yelling "white power." He referred to the Black Lives Matter mantra as a "symbol of hate." He took a swipe at NASCAR for removing the Confederate flag from its races and falsely suggested a Black driver had carried out a racially charged hoax. He mused about overturning a suburban fair-housing regulation and spoke approvingly of the current branding of the Washington Redskins and Cleveland Indians, team nicknames that many consider offensive to Native Americans.

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Most notably, he has engaged in a full-throated defense of the Confederate legacy, which he at times has cloaked within tributes to the Founding Fathers, including during a pair of high-profile Fourth of July weekend speeches.

"Those who seek to erase our heritage want Americans to forget our pride and our great dignity, so that we can no longer understand ourselves or America's destiny," Trump said Friday at the base of Mount Rushmore. "In toppling the heroes of 1776, they seek to dissolve the bonds of love and loyalty that we feel for our country, and that we feel for each other. Their goal is not a better America; their goal is the end of America."

In defending Thomas Jefferson and George Washington that night, Trump did not mention the Confederacy. Instead, he painted racial justice demonstrators with a broad brush that made no distinction between the many who oppose honoring the Confederacy and the relative few who question celebrating Founders who owned slaves.

But Trump has repeatedly called for the preservation of statues of the Confederacy and the names of its generals on military bases — all assailed in the protests that have swept from coast to coast in the aftermath of the death of George Floyd.

His comments are an apparent descendant, a half-century later, of Richard Nixon's coded outreach to white voters known as the Southern Strategy. Trump himself has embraced Nixon's phrase "the Silent Majority" to describe his own supporters.

By all accounts, the president's actions are, at times, born of impulse and an instinctive reaction to what he sees on television. However, according to current and former Trump campaign officials, his overarching strategy is an appeal to white voters — some of them racist and some who fear being left behind by a government seemingly consumed with helping others. Those officials were not authorized to publicly discuss such private matters and commented only on condition of anonymity.

The belief is that his appeals will generate enthusiasm among the same disaffected white voters who made up the president's base of supporters four years ago.

But many in Trump's orbit are sounding the alarm that 2020 is not 2016.

White House advisers Kellyanne Conway and Jared Kushner, according to the officials, have both warned that some of the racist rhetoric, including the use of China-blaming "kung flu" to describe the COVID-19 pandemic, could turn off swaths of voters. And some believe there was more of an audience for inflammatory rhetoric about immigration four years ago, particularly as polls show the Black Lives Matter movement gaining widespread support.

"The 2016 debate about immigration was about the future of sovereignty, the American worker, and our culture. The issues that involve race now are completely different," said Sam Nunberg, a former Trump campaign adviser.

"It's not easy to conflate people who want to tear down the statues of the Confederacy and the few who want to get George Washington," said Nunberg. "I don't think it's a winning argument in a time of a pandemic. This doesn't affect people's daily lives. This is a dumb issue to fight."

Four months before Election Day, Republicans are nervously watching polls that show Trump slipping behind his Democratic rival Joe Biden. They have grown increasingly worried that his focus on racial rancor could force GOP senators locked in tough campaigns to distance themselves from their party's president.

"Defending the Confederacy and racial dog whistles is not going to help win the suburbs. He is solely focused on a small part of his base when he should be looking to grow his support," said Alex Conant, a Republican strategist who advised Sen. Marco Rubio's presidential bid. "If Joe Biden proposed tearing down Mount Rushmore, that would be a huge opening for Trump. But Biden is not doing that."

Sen. John Thune, R-S.D., said GOP candidates "need to do what they need to do to win. And in some states, he will be a benefit in some parts of the country. In other parts of the country, less so."

The Trump campaign dismisses accusations of racism.

"President Trump's Mount Rushmore address was a defining speech highlighting America's highest ideals of freedom and individual liberty," said campaign spokesman Ken Farnaso. "He both educated citizens

on our shared history and pushed for a more united front combating those who want to create chaos.” Democrats have charged that the president’s recent rhetoric is consistent with Trump’s history, including his call in the 1980s for the death penalty for Black teenagers later exonerated for the rape of a jogger in Central Park and for questioning whether the nation’s first Black president, Barack Obama, was born in the United States.

“We are beyond dog whistles with this president,” said TJ Ducklo, the Biden campaign’s national press secretary. “Donald Trump openly embraces racist rhetoric and sends blatant signals of support for the causes of white supremacists -- and he does it from the highest office in the land.”

Associated Press writer Alan Fram contributed to this report.

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‘Palm Springs’ arrives for the Groundhog Days of quarantine

By JAKE COYLE AP Film Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Though most of the films that have debuted during the pandemic never got to screen for packed movie houses, “Palm Springs” had the kind of premiere filmmakers dream of.

At the Sundance Film Festival in January, the time-loop romantic comedy, starring Andy Samberg and Cristin Milioti drew big laughs, enthusiastic reviews and a record deal for the festival. Hulu and the indie distributor Neon acquired “Palm Springs” for \$17,500,000.69. The extra cents were suggested after negotiations stretched deep into the night by Samberg’s Lonely Island partner Akiva Schaffer, a producer on the film.

“We’ve been saying Hulu insisted. It was either Akiva or Hulu,” says Samberg, chuckling. “It might have been Akiva at, like, 5 a.m. after staying up all night making a deal and having been drinking earlier in the night. Or it was Hulu. I can’t quite recall.”

That memory may be distant and from another lifetime, entirely. But “Palm Springs,” which premieres Friday on Hulu and in drive-in theaters, has found itself oddly suited to right now. The film, the feature debut of director Max Barbakow and screenwriter Andy Siara, is about a bridesmaid, Sarah (Milioti), who, after an encounter with a guest, Nyles (Samberg), at her sister’s wedding, falls into a time loop. She begins reliving the day over and over again, a cycle that Nyles has already been stuck in for so long he can’t remember.

When other movies were postponing their releases, “Palm Springs” opted to essentially stay put. With people in some state of lockdown across the country, a movie about the comedy of reliving the same day became weirdly appropriate. A time loop opened, and “Palm Springs” dove in.

When Siara and Barbakow started on “Palm Springs,” they didn’t intend to wade into “Groundhog Day” territory. The two met in film school and, after making a few shorts together, decided to set their feature debut in Palm Springs after a weekend in the Southern California desert oasis. Siara had just gotten married in Palm Springs, and they gravitated toward a nihilistic character who had long tired of standard wedding chit chat.

That the film started character first, not with the high concept, the two say was key. Still, encroaching on any such story line risked breaching the sacred comedy territory of Harold Ramis’ “Groundhog Day.”

“I went in thinking, ‘The all-timer of that is done.’ And I don’t think this changes that in the slightest,” says Samberg. “The thing about it that made me want to do it anyway is, to me, it feels like it very intentionally picks up where ‘Groundhog Day’ leaves off.”

“Palm Springs” uses its daily reset to dig into the emotional lives of Sarah and Nyles, both of whom who have shrugged off maturity in various ways. It’s a relationship comedy where the starts and stops of personal and romantic growth happen through surreal science-fiction re-runs.

“It was dark and weird in ways that I’m extremely drawn to while also making me laugh and also moving me,” Milioti says. “I just thought it was so delightful and nuts.”

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Lonely Island, the trio of Samberg, Schaffer and Jorma Taccone, helped develop the project with Barbakow and Siara. But if "Groundhog Day" was initially an impediment, time-loop tales — like the acclaimed Netflix series "Russian Doll" — proliferated while they worked on "Palm Springs."

"We were like, '(Expletive).' We talked about bailing on it a few times," says Samberg. "It sort of morphed into feeling like 'We shouldn't do this because there are so many' into 'We should do this because there are so many' — like it was just a genre now.

"Palm Springs," the filmmakers realized, hung on the relationship between Sarah and Nyles, and it would be difficult to overstate how much Milioti ("Fargo," "Black Mirror") brings to the movie. Her performance, while equally goofball, grounds the film in genuine self-reproach.

"When I watch it, I feel like she just absolutely murders it," Samberg says.

Over the past month, they have all wondered about whether "Palm Springs" really does fit the moment. While protests around the death of George Floyd forced a national reckoning on ingrained racism, it became clear the pandemic hasn't been "Groundhog Day." It's also been a time of tragedy and reckoning and self-examination.

"We've all been asked to sit with ourselves, and that can be really difficult. That's what happens in the film for Sarah for the first time, and it's a nightmare," says Milioti. "The silver lining of that is that we, white people, had to sit in the discomfort of 'Oh my God.' We had to watch things. We had to sit in the horror of it all and there was no distraction."

Samberg calls it "an interesting moment to be putting out a comedy."

"The last thing you want is to feel like you're distracting from what's going on right now. I think it's a moment of wanting to stay vigilant and focused and engaged," he says. "As someone who is trying to be that way, I also find that at the end of the day, when I put the kid to bed, we want to put on something light half the time to give ourselves a momentary break."

They've all found themselves living a strange version of the movie they created. But there are some positives. The main upside, says Samberg, is spending more time with his wife, musician Joanna Newsom, and young daughter. Siara, who with his wife is soon expecting the birth of their second child, hasn't minded the repetitive days. "I'm cool with being stuck in the monotony," he says.

But no one can compete with Barbakow in terms of syncing with their film. He proposed to his girlfriend during quarantine.

"If you're stuck with yourself, there's a lot of opportunity for introspection and connection with whoever you're stuck with," says Barbakow. "I'm happy to be stuck with my now fiancée."

Follow AP Film Writer Jake Coyle on Twitter at: <http://twitter.com/jakecoyleAP>

McConnell eyes virus aid as evictions, benefits cuts loom

By LISA MASCARO AP Congressional Correspondent

WASHINGTON (AP) — An eviction moratorium is lifting. Extra unemployment benefits are ending. Parents are being called to work, but schools are struggling to reopen for fall as the COVID-19 crisis shows no signs of easing.

With Congress bracing for the next coronavirus aid package, Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell is outlining Republican priorities as earlier programs designed to ease Americans through the pandemic and economic fallout begin to expire. He is eyeing \$1 trillion in new aid.

"This is not over," McConnell said during a visit to a food pantry Monday in Louisville, Kentucky.

The GOP leader's next virus aid package is centered on liability protections, a top priority for Republicans seeking to shield doctors, schools, businesses and others from coronavirus-related lawsuits brought by patrons claiming injuries during reopenings.

McConnell is also considering a fresh round of direct payments, noting they are especially helpful for those earning \$40,000 a year or less. He wants the liability shield to run for five years, retroactive to December 2019.

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"Liability reform, kids in school, jobs and health care," he said. "That's where the focus, it seems to me, ought to be."

Democrats have proposed a far more ambitious aid approach in the \$3 trillion House-passed coronavirus rescue package, setting the outlines of a robust debate over how best to help Americans as COVID-19 cases surge in hot spots nationwide, threatening public health and economic livelihoods.

Congress is away for a two-week recess, but the contours of the debate are taking shape before lawmakers resume session July 20. Deadlines for many programs expire by the end of the month.

McConnell's earlier decision to hit "pause" on new relief has infuriated Democrats, especially as state and local governments clamor for aid to prevent worker layoffs.

Senate Democratic leader Chuck Schumer said in a statement Tuesday that McConnell "has created needless uncertainty and pain for millions of families who are still reeling from the public health and economic crises."

Schumer said, "Senator McConnell ought to be working across the aisle to prevent mass evictions, a new hunger crisis, and the layoff of more essential state and local government employees — all things that will happen if Republicans continue to delay action or act stingily."

The earlier rounds of aid, including the sweeping \$2 trillion coronavirus aid package approved in March, were the biggest in U.S. history. And while aid was approved almost unanimously, it is now dividing the parties. Many Republicans view the outlay as excessive, and they want to avoid another round of big-ticket spending. Democrats argue that more aid is needed, and their bill includes new worker health and safety protocols to ensure a safe reopening.

While the two sides share many common goals in boosting public health research toward treatments and a vaccine, the difference in the economic aid to Americans is stark.

For example, Republicans mostly oppose the \$600 weekly boost to unemployment benefits, arguing it's a disincentive to work because some employees earn more by staying home than they would on the job. Democrats say it's a lifeline for struggling Americans trying to make ends meet.

Democrats also provide more money in their bill to prevent evictions: \$100 billion in rental assistance and \$75 billion for homeowners paying mortgages. The \$2 trillion coronavirus aid package's 120-day federal eviction moratorium on certain rentals expires at the end of July. The Democrats' bill would extend it through March 2021.

Democrats are wary of the liability protections being proposed by Republicans. Instead, their bill includes other priorities, such as funding to shore up the struggling U.S. Postal Service, which they see as another lifeline for Americans, and to provide \$50 monthly stipends toward broadband services for households with laid-off or furloughed workers to stay connected online.

Sen. Ron Wyden of Oregon, the top Democrat on the Finance Committee, said McConnell's idea for another round of direct \$1,200 payments is no substitute for extending the enhanced unemployment benefits.

"The next coronavirus relief package must extend supercharged unemployment benefits," Wyden said in a statement.

He said the jobless aid has "kept the economy afloat and allowed millions of families to pay the rent and buy groceries."

One area of common ground that has emerged in recent weeks is that both parties believe in the importance of wearing masks in public to help limit the virus spread as more shops and businesses reopen and Americans leave their homes.

Rep. Bennie Thompson, D-Miss., the chairman of the Homeland Security Committee, and other Democrats have pushed the Transportation Security Administration to require masks for all people going through airport security checkpoints.

McConnell told people in Kentucky that wearing masks is the single-most important thing they can do when around others.

"It ain't confusing," McConnell said Monday at a hospital in Bradford. "Put on a mask."

Associated Press writer Becky Yonker in Shelbyville, Ky., contributed to this story.

Trump pushes state, local leaders to reopen schools in fall

By COLLIN BINKLEY AP Education Writer

President Donald Trump on Tuesday launched an all-out effort pressing state and local officials to reopen schools this fall, arguing that some are keeping schools closed not because of the risks from the coronavirus pandemic but for political reasons.

"They think it's going to be good for them politically, so they keep the schools closed," Trump said at a White House discussion on school plans for the fall. "No way. We're very much going to put pressure on governors and everybody else to open the schools."

The White House's round-table gathered health and education leaders from across the nation who said schools and colleges are ready to open this fall and can do so safely. They argued that the risks of keeping students at home outweigh any risks tied to the coronavirus, saying students need access to meal programs and mental and behavioral health services.

"We want to reopen the schools," Trump said. "Everybody wants it. The moms want it, the dads want it, the kids want it. It's time to do it."

But that bright outlook was met with skepticism by some beyond the White House. The president of the nation's largest education union said Trump is more interested in scoring points for the November election than in keeping students safe.

"Trump has proven to be incapable of grasping that people are dying — that more than 130,000 Americans have already died," said Lily Eskelsen Garcia, president of the National Education Association. "Educators want nothing more than to be back in classrooms and on college campuses with our students, but we must do it in a way that keeps students, educators and communities safe."

At the White House event, Trump repeated his claim that Democrats want to keep schools closed for political reasons and not health reasons. He made the same claim on Twitter a day before, saying: "They think it will help them in November. Wrong, the people get it!"

Trump offered no evidence for the allegation, which has been criticized by health experts who say politicizing the issue will make it harder to work toward reopening schools. Jennifer Nuzzo, of Johns Hopkins University's COVID-19 Testing Insights Initiative, said she was "deeply troubled" by the claim.

"When you make it about politics and just people trying to score points and get elected, I mean, I really think it's a disservice to how incredibly important this issue is," Nuzzo said in an interview. "And it really distracts from what I think we need, which is real solutions and a plan in order to make this happen."

Whether schools and colleges should open this fall and how has been a topic of growing debate as the coronavirus continues to surge in parts of the United States. Trump applauded Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis for his state's recent order to open public schools this fall. And Trump attacked Harvard University for its decision to hold instruction online for the fall term.

"I think it's ridiculous, I think it's an easy way out and I think they ought to be ashamed of themselves, if you want to know the truth," Trump said Tuesday.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has sent mixed signals on the issue, saying students should return to the classroom but also noting that virtual classes present the lowest risk of COVID-19 spread. Speaking at Trump's event Tuesday, however, the agency's director said unequivocally that it's better for students to be in school than at home.

Dr. Robert Redfield noted that COVID-19 cases tend to be mild in young people, adding that the greatest risk is transmission from children to more vulnerable populations. He said the CDC encourages all schools to reopen with customized plans to minimize the spread of the coronavirus while giving students access to school services.

"It's clear that the greater risk to our society is to have these schools close," Redfield said. "Nothing would cause me greater sadness than to see any school district or school use our guidance as a reason not to reopen."

The CDC's guidance for schools recommends that students and teachers wear masks "as feasible,"

spread out desks, stagger schedules, eat meals in classrooms instead of the cafeteria, and add physical barriers between bathroom sinks.

Some schools have announced plans to bring students back for only a few days a week, an option that Education Secretary Betsy DeVos on Tuesday said was unacceptable.

"It's clear that our nations schools must fully reopen and fully operate this school year. Anything short of that robs students, not to mention taxpayers, of their future," DeVos said.

During a call with governors, DeVos slammed plans by Virginia's Fairfax County Public Schools to have families decide between fully remote instruction or two days a week at school. "A choice of two days per week in the classroom is not a choice at all," DeVos said, according to audio of the call obtained by The Associated Press.

DeVos also criticized many schools' attempts at distance education after the pandemic prompted them to move classes online last spring. She said she was disappointed in schools that "didn't figure out how to serve students or who just gave up and didn't try."

The same thing can't happen again this fall, she said, urging governors to play a role in getting schools to reopen.

Among those joining Trump on Tuesday was the president of the American Academy of Pediatrics, which recently issued guidelines suggesting that schools aim to start the academic year "physically present in school." Keeping students at home can lead to social isolation, the organization said, and prevent schools from identifying learning deficits, abuse, depression and other issues.

Students' mental and emotional health — along with their parents' — was repeatedly raised in the argument to reopen schools.

"Children's mental health and social development must be as much of a priority as physical health," first lady Melania Trump said at the round-table. "The same is true for parents. Many will be forced to make stressful choices between caring for their children and going back to work."

But some are calling for greater caution. Arne Duncan, who served as education secretary under former President Barack Obama, has said the focus should be on making sure students can return safely.

"We all want children to go back to school," Duncan said on Twitter. "The question is whether we care enough about our children to ALLOW them to go to school safely. Our behavior, our commitment to shared sacrifice — or our selfishness — will determine what happens this fall for kids."

Associated Press writers Alan Suderman in Richmond, Virginia, and Carla Johnson in Washington state contributed to this report.

Civil rights groups denounce Facebook over hate speech

By BARBARA ORTUTAY and AMANDA SEITZ Associated Press

Facebook keeps telling critics that it is doing everything it can to rid its service of hate, abuse and misinformation. And the company's detractors keep not buying it.

On Tuesday, CEO Mark Zuckerberg and Chief Operating Officer Sheryl Sandberg met with a group of civil rights leaders, including the organizers of a growing advertising boycott over hate speech on Facebook. One of those leaders, NAACP President Derrick Johnson, said Facebook's executives offered little but cheap talk that skirted major commitments to new rules or actions that would curb racism and misinformation on its platform.

"We've watched the conversation blossom into nothingness," Johnson said. "They lack the cultural sensitivity to understand that their platform is actually being used to cause harm. Or, they understand the harm their platform is causing and they've chosen to take the profit."

The NAACP was one of several groups that sent Facebook a list of 10 demands for policy change. Those included hiring a civil rights executive; banning private groups that promote white supremacy, vaccine misinformation or violent conspiracy theories; and ending an exemption that allows politicians to post voting misinformation.

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Such calls have the support of big-name companies like Coca-Cola and Unilever who have yanked their Facebook ads in recent days. But nothing concrete will change for Facebook's 2.6 billion users.

In a statement following the meeting, Facebook largely reiterated its existing policies against voter and census interference, also noting the white supremacist groups it has banned and other recent changes.

"This meeting was an opportunity for us to hear from the campaign organizers and reaffirm our commitment to combating hate on our platform," the statement read. "We know we will be judged by our actions not by our words and are grateful to these groups and many others for their continued engagement."

Facebook did agree to install a civil rights vice president, but didn't say how long that would take, Jessica J. González — the co-CEO of Free Press, a group behind the boycott — told The Associated Press.

President Donald Trump frequently skirts Facebook's posting rules, yet faces no consequences, dismaying both civil rights leaders and some of Facebook's own employees. The president made several misleading claims about mail-in-voting in May and June posts, including one that pushed a far-fetched theory that foreign countries plan to print millions of bogus ballots. Trump also used the platform to threaten violence against racial injustice protesters in Minneapolis when he wrote "when the looting starts, the shooting starts" in a May post.

The posts have gone unchecked on Facebook. Twitter, meanwhile, has fact checked, removed or obscured some of Trump's controversial tweets.

"When a politician, no matter who that politician is, when he makes a post that says 'shoot the looters,' it is not only racially insensitive, it could incite violence across the country," Johnson said.

Last month, Facebook announced it would begin labeling rule-breaking posts — even from politicians — going forward. But it is not clear if Trump's previous controversial posts would have gotten the label.

On Wednesday, Facebook will release the final results of its own "civil rights audit" of its U.S. practices. The audit was led by former American Civil Liberties Union executive Laura Murphy, who was hired by Facebook in May 2018 to assess its performance on vital social issues.

More than 900 companies have joined the ad boycott, which runs through the end of July, although some companies plan to withhold their ad dollars for longer.

In a Facebook post Tuesday, Sandberg emphasized what she called the company's years of effort to "minimize the presence of hate" on Facebook and the billions of dollars it has spent "to find and remove hate — as well as protect the integrity of our platform more generally."

Facebook's 2019 revenue was more than \$70 billion, nearly all of it from advertising.

Facebook's inaction will only encourage companies to continue their boycott of advertising on the site for longer, said Jonathan Greenblatt, CEO of the Anti-Defamation League.

"The list is growing every day," Greenblatt said of companies joining the boycott. "It's unfortunate to go back to them and say we haven't seen the progress we expected."

More positive tests, canceled workouts add to MLB unease

By CHARLES ODUM AP Sports Writer

As baseball nears the two-week countdown to the start of its delayed season, the COVID-19 pandemic continues to keep more players, including Boston Red Sox projected opening day starter Eduardo Rodriguez, off the field.

On Tuesday, one day after Major League Baseball released its 60-game schedule, there was continued evidence of the difficulties caused by the pandemic.

The San Francisco Giants suspended workouts at Oracle Park as they awaited the results of weekend tests for the coronavirus. The Chicago Cubs' workout was delayed.

Oakland left-hander Jake Diekman, who has ulcerative colitis, an autoimmune condition, said teams having to call off workouts because of delays in test results "just can't happen."

"I know they're trying their hardest, but I don't know if that's good enough for right now," Diekman said Tuesday. "It's a little worrisome. Say we go on a 10-day road trip and we only get results one time. That's not very good with 45 or 50 people in a clubhouse at one time."

Giants manager Gabe Kapler said one missed day wouldn't put his club behind. He said he expects the

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testing process to improve.

"I feel as confident today as I did yesterday," Kapler said. "I understand that there are going to be hiccups along the way. ... I think more than anything I just maintain a level of empathy for everybody that's working really hard to get our camp up and running but also across the league and for all the clubs that are working really hard to put their players in a position to have success. Nobody expected this to be easy and everybody is doing the best that they can."

The Giants already have had prospect Hunter Bishop and pitcher Luis Madero test positive.

Rodriguez, who broke out in 2019 as a star, and Red Sox prospect Bobby Dalbec tested positive for the virus.

Rodriguez had not reported to camp after informing the team that he had been around relatives who had been ill. Dalbec, a third baseman, also is home and is asymptomatic.

Manager Ron Roenicke said it is "just unfortunate" the positive test could jeopardize Rodriguez's chances to start on opening day. Rodriguez had career-best numbers with 19 wins and a 3.81 ERA in 2019.

Also, the Kansas City Royals announced right-hander Brad Keller and first baseman Ryan O'Hearn had positive tests and gave the team permission to announce the results.

Keller, 24, said he has "minor symptoms that remind me more of an allergy attack."

The threat of an infection was enough for the Cleveland Indians to keep outfielder Franmil Reyes away from camp. Reyes was told to stay home after he was seen on social media attending a weekend holiday party without wearing a mask.

It was an example that off-field activities can affect a player's status.

Manager Terry Francona said Reyes would be re-tested "when it's appropriate."

Francona said Reyes could have exposed himself and his teammates to the virus by not practicing social distancing or wearing a mask. Francona said he has used the incident as a teaching point for other players. He said Reyes has apologized.

"This is not to poke at Franmil," Francona said, adding Reyes is "a wonderful kid and I don't ever want that to be disputed. But we have gone around to the other players and talked to them about it."

The Cubs' workout was delayed a few hours as the team awaited test results. On Monday, Cubs slugger Kris Bryant criticized the lack of frequency of the tests and delays in getting results.

Manager David Ross said Tuesday's delay "isn't a huge deal" and seemed bigger "with what's been going on with some teams the last day or so."

"We can't just crush MLB because this is new to them, too, and the testing facility," Ross said.

The two teams from last year's World Series, the champion Washington Nationals and the Houston Astros, resumed workouts after canceling practices on Monday because of testing delays.

"They're still trying to iron out the bugs," Astros manager Dusty Baker said. "No one's happy about it — the players, the MLB, probably the testing site. But the tests came back today, and we were able to work."

Some Washington players did not take part in workouts, including Starlin Castro, Juan Soto, Howie Kendrick and Victor Robles. General manager Mike Rizzo said two unidentified players tested positive for the coronavirus. Any players and staff who came into contact with the two players had to be re-tested.

"Several of those players that you mentioned beyond the two positive tests have tested negative in their intake test, but if you come into any type of contact with a player that is positive — and we cast a real wide net of being in contact — (then) you have to be re-tested," Rizzo said. "Those players were re-tested a couple days ago, and we're waiting on the results on a group of those players."

Braves manager Brian Snitker, eager for a quiet day, embraced "our first normal feel day since we've been back."

Four Atlanta players, including first baseman Freddie Freeman and one of the team's top relievers, Will Smith, have tested positive. Two veterans, outfielder Nick Markakis and right-hander Félix Hernández, have decided to sit out the season.

On Tuesday, Snitker had his first chance to address his full squad at Truist Park as he made plans for a situational scrimmage on Wednesday and the team's first intrasquad game on Monday. Before Tuesday, only small groups had been on the field as the team practiced social distancing.

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"I told the guys I've never felt so detached from the team in all my life because we've been here, there and everywhere," Snitker said. "I feel like today is the start of something that we're all kind of getting back in the swing of these things."

Among Braves pitchers scheduled to throw on Wednesday are Mike Soroka, Max Fried, Josh Tomlin and Shane Greene.

The Baltimore Orioles will play their first intrasquad game on Wednesday night at Camden Yards. Left-hander Tommy Milone and right-hander Tom Eshelman will start in the game, which is scheduled for 7 1/2 innings.

"Everyone's getting tired of going through the daily workout and ready to play some meaningless games, at least where pitchers face hitters in a game environment," manager Brandon Hyde said.

The intrasquad games and workouts give top prospects opportunities to show they belong.

In a matchup of the Marlins' last two first-round picks, right-hander Max Meyer faced right fielder JJ Bleday in batting practice. Both hope to make the majors this season.

"Everyone has to be ready to go," Meyer said. "COVID could go through the locker room. You never know what's going to happen, especially the time we're in right now. So all of us are getting ready."

AP Sports Writers Kristie Rieken, Tim Booth, Janie McCauley, Kyle Hightower, Tom Withers, Stephen Whyno, Dave Ginsburg and Steven Wine contributed to this report.

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

Protective gear for medical workers begins to run low again

By GEOFF MULVIHILL and CAMILLE FASSETT Associated Press

The personal protective gear that was in dangerously short supply during the early weeks of the coronavirus crisis in the U.S. is running low again as the virus resumes its rapid spread and the number of hospitalized patients climbs.

A national nursing union is concerned that gear has to be reused. A doctors association warns that physicians' offices are closed because they cannot get masks and other supplies. And Democratic members of Congress are pushing the Trump administration to devise a national strategy to acquire and distribute gear in anticipation of the crisis worsening into the fall.

"We're five months into this and there are still shortages of gowns, hair covers, shoe covers, masks, N95 masks," said Deborah Burger, president of National Nurses United, who cited results from a survey of the union's members. "They're being doled out, and we're still being told to reuse them."

When the crisis first exploded in March and April in hot spots such as New York City, the situation was so desperate that nurses turned plastic garbage bags into protective gowns. The lack of equipment forced states and hospitals to compete against each other, the federal government and other countries in desperate, expensive bidding wars.

In general, supplies of protective gear are more robust now, and many states and major hospital chains say they are in better shape. But medical professionals and some lawmakers have cast doubt on those improvements as shortages begin to reappear.

In other virus-related developments Tuesday:

— Brazil's president, Jair Bolsonaro, said he has tested positive for COVID-19 after months of downplaying the virus' severity. The 65-year-old populist confirmed the test results while speaking to reporters in the capital of Brasilia. Bolsonaro has often appeared in public to shake hands with supporters and mingle with crowds, at times without a mask.

— The Trump administration formally notified the United Nations of its withdrawal from the World Health Organization. The move makes good on President Donald Trump's vow to terminate U.S. participation in the WHO, which he has criticized for its response to the pandemic and accused of bowing to Chinese influence. The pullout will not take effect until next year, meaning it could be rescinded under a new administration or if circumstances change.

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— Education Secretary Betsy DeVos said the nation's schools must reopen this fall and be "fully operational" even as cases of COVID-19 continue to surge around the country. She said anything short of a full reopening would fail students and taxpayers. DeVos made the comments during a call with governors. Audio of the call was obtained by The Associated Press.

Speaking about protective equipment on the call, U.S. Health and Human Services Secretary Alex Azar said Tuesday that it's important for gear to be reused and repurposed as a way to stretch the stocks and avoid shortages.

Dr. Aisha Terry said that she has good access to PPE as an associate professor of emergency medicine at George Washington University in Washington, but some non-academic and rural health facilities have much less.

"I think overall, production, distribution and access has improved," Terry said. "But the fear is that we will become complacent" and allow supplies to dwindle in some places.

The American Medical Association wrote to the Federal Emergency Management Agency, Vice President Mike Pence and members of Congress calling for a coordinated national strategy to buy and allocate gear.

Rep. Carolyn Maloney, a New York Democrat, released a memo last week ahead of a congressional committee hearing that raised concerns about looming problems in the supply chain. Her report was based on interviews with unnamed employees at medical supply companies, one of whom warned that raw material for gowns is not available at any price in the amounts needed, leading to an "unsustainable" situation.

Rear Adm. John Polowczyk, who is in charge of coronavirus-related supplies for the White House, told Congress last week that more than one-fourth of the states have less than a 30-day supply.

"It would seem like in less than 30 days, we're going to have a real crisis," said Rep. Bill Foster, an Illinois Democrat.

FEMA, one of the main federal agencies in charge of the coronavirus response, would not break down which states have enough gear to last beyond 30 days and which do not. It referred those questions to individual states. In June, the government started replenishing its once-depleted stockpile with the goal of building up a two-month supply.

As of June 10, FEMA had distributed or directed private companies to distribute more than 74 million N95 masks and 66 million pairs of gloves, along with other gear. The agency said it changed its distribution method to send more equipment to hot spots.

Although all U.S. states and territories have received some protective gear from FEMA, an Associated Press analysis of the agency's own data found that the amounts varied widely when measured by population and the number of confirmed COVID-19 cases.

The AP analysis found that low-population, mostly rural states received the largest FEMA allocations per confirmed case. As of mid-June, for example, Montana had received 1,125 items of protective gear per case, compared with 32 items per case in Massachusetts, an early hot spot. States including California, Iowa and Nebraska, all of which have seen a surge in confirmed infections, received among the lowest amounts of protective gear from FEMA per case, according to the AP analysis.

Many states say the federal supplies make up a small part of their stockpiles after they spent millions of dollars to acquire equipment on their own. FEMA told the AP that its initial distributions were made on a per-capita basis, but also said the agency has tried to accommodate individual requests from the states.

Concerns extend beyond the amount of gear. In New Hampshire, an association representing nursing homes said most items sent by FEMA in early June were unusable, including child-size gloves, surgical masks with ear loops that broke when stretched and isolation gowns with no arm openings.

A nonprofit group called #GetUsPPE was established in March by physicians to help distribute donated protective gear.

The group had a 200% increase in requests during the last two weeks of June from medical providers in Texas, a state with a big surge in confirmed virus cases. State officials there have said their supplies are adequate.

"We anticipated that we would need to be around for a few weeks until someone else stepped in and solved this problem," said Dr. Megan Ranney, an emergency physician at Rhode Island Hospital who was

among the group's founders. "Here we are, still getting hundreds of thousands of requests a week."

Fassett, a data journalist based in Santa Cruz, California, is a corps member for The Associated Press/Report for America Statehouse News Initiative. Report for America is a nonprofit national service program that places journalists in local newsrooms to report on under-covered topics.

Mulvihill reported from Cherry Hill, New Jersey. Follow him at <http://www.twitter.com/geoffmulvihill>. Follow Fassett at <http://www.twitter.com/camfassett>.

AP Explains: Bolsonaro has downplayed virus fears for months

By MAURICIO SAVARESE and DAVID BILLER Associated Press

SAO PAULO (AP) — Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro for months flirted with the new coronavirus as he flouted social distancing at lively demonstrations and encouraged crowds during outings from the presidential residence, often without a mask.

He has at times downplayed the risk posed by COVID-19, the disease that can be caused by the virus, and at others expressed fatalism that it will inevitably claim lives. He says tough measures to curb the virus' spread such as lockdowns are a threat to Brazil's economic well-being

On Tuesday, he announced that he has tested positive for the virus, making him one of the more than 1.6 million Brazilians with confirmed infections. It is the world's second highest total, though considered by experts to be an undercount due to lack of testing. Here's a look at what Bolsonaro has said as the tally grew.

HOW HAS HE MINIMIZED THE THREAT OF THE CORONAVIRUS?

Bolsonaro has argued that alarm about the spread of the virus is overblown.

"In my understanding, the issue of the coronavirus is more of a fantasy. It is not all that that mainstream media says and advertises around the world," he said during an event with U.S. President Donald Trump in Florida on March 10, when Brazil had confirmed only a handful of cases.

But multiple members of his delegation on the trip proved to have infections. Still, Bolsonaro insisted in a March 15 interview that worry about COVID-19 was "hysteria."

"Other viruses that were more dangerous happened in the past and we didn't have this crisis," he said.

In a March 24 nationally televised address, Bolsonaro struck a defiant tone as he downplayed the virus, sometimes while smirking.

"In my particular case, because of my history as an athlete, in case I were contaminated by the virus I wouldn't need to worry. I wouldn't feel anything or it would be, at most, similar to a little flu, or a little cold," he said.

Asked two days later if Brazil's situation could become as dire as that of the U.S., Bolsonaro scoffed.

"Brazilians need to be studied. They don't catch anything. You see the guy jumping in the sewer, diving in. And nothing happens to him," the president said.

More than three months later, he continues to minimize the risks.

"Let's take care, especially the elders, those who have comorbidities. The youngest, take care, too," Bolsonaro he said Tuesday. "But if you get the virus, stay calm. For you the possibility of something more serious is nearly zero."

WHAT HAS HE SAID ABOUT THE INEVITABILITY OF SUFFERING?

In early April, when almost 400 people had died from the disease in Brazil, Bolsonaro began to say that the coronavirus would only be vanquished once the population reached so-called herd immunity.

"The virus is the same as a rainstorm: 70% of you will get wet. No one contests that," Bolsonaro told supporters in Brasilia. "And the whole nation will be free of the pandemic after 70% are infected and have the antibodies. Period."

Bolsonaro's comments began to take a darker turn. Asked on April 20 about the surging number of deaths, he responded: "I'm not a gravedigger, OK?"

Eight days later, with the tally of COVID-19 deaths surpassing 5,000, Bolsonaro feigned impotence. "So what? I am sorry. What do you want me to do?" he told reporters. "I don't do miracles."

"Do I lament the deaths? Yes, I lament them. But it's the reality. Everyone here will die (someday). No one will be left. And if you die in the middle of a field, a vulture will eat you," he said May 22, the day after Brazil's death toll surpassed 20,000. It has since risen above 65,000, the world's second highest total.

He added, "Face the virus like a reality: 70% of people will get infected. Why fill people with terror? Everybody is going to die."

WHAT DOES HE SAY ABOUT THE THREAT TO THE ECONOMY?

Bolsonaro's concern about the Brazilian economy has been a fixture of his statements since late March. He has repeatedly said strict social distancing measures that sacrifice jobs and income will ultimately be more harmful than the virus itself, and he criticized governors and mayors who imposed restrictions.

"Life is more important than the economy, but we cannot exaggerate," he said March 22 about the imposition of social distancing by local leaders. "With unemployment there the catastrophe will be bigger. Soon people will know they have been cheated by these governors and by a big part of the media on this issue of the coronavirus."

On May 14, he warned that "more people will die -- many, many more -- if the economy continues to be destroyed."

Even in announcing that he had tested positive for the coronavirus, Bolsonaro defended his view that Brazil needs to return to normal activity. "You can't just talk about the consequences of the virus that you have to worry about. Life goes on. Brazil needs to produce. You need to get the economy in gear," he said.

Missouri summer camp virus outbreak raises safety questions

By MARGERY A. BECK and JAMIE STENGLE Associated Press

Missouri leaders knew the risk of convening thousands of kids at summer camps across the state during a pandemic, the state's top health official said, and insisted that camp organizers have plans in place to keep an outbreak from happening.

The outbreak happened anyway.

An overnight summer camp in rural southwestern Missouri has seen scores of campers, counselors and staff infected with the coronavirus, the local health department revealed this week, raising questions about the ability to keep kids safe at what is a rite of childhood for many.

Missouri is one of several states to report outbreaks at summer camps. The Kanakuk camp near Branson ended up sending its teenage campers home. On Friday, the local health department announced 49 positive cases of the COVID-19 virus at the camp. By Monday, the number had jumped to 82.

Some states, like Oregon, New York, New Jersey and Connecticut, closed summer camps this year, and many camps elsewhere have voluntarily canceled programs. But other camps are plowing ahead, hoping that precautions like social distancing, masks and requiring children to quarantine before coming to camp will quell the risk. Other states where outbreaks have been reported have included Texas, Georgia, North Carolina and Tennessee.

Some 26 million youths normally take part in camps across the U.S. each year, the American Camp Association said Tuesday. The group estimates 19.5 million young people will miss out on in-person day and overnight camps this year due to the pandemic, with 6.5 million still expected to go.

Missouri's outbreak at a camp operated by Christian-based Kanakuk Kamp has done little to change the way that state is handling summer camps, which essentially calls for camp operators to consult with their local public health agency to craft plans to keep kids and staff safe. Camps must report any positive cases to the state.

Dr. Randall Williams, director of the Missouri Department of Health, said Monday that his agency had no

plans to shut down summer camps in the wake of the Missouri outbreak.

"We think school is incredibly important to kids. We also think camps are important," Williams said.

In fact, the camp plans to reopen later this summer once test results from all staffers are returned and show it's safe to do so, Williams said.

Phone and email messages left Tuesday by The Associated Press for Kanakuk Kamp were not immediately returned. The organization holds six overnight and day camps across the state, usually drawing more than 20,000 kids from across the country, according to its website.

In Texas, dozens of campers and staffers who attended Pine Cove's Christian camps have tested positive, and several weeks of camp were canceled after clusters of cases were discovered. That includes at least 76 cases in June linked to its overnight camp for teens in Southeast Texas near Columbus. The Ridge camp shut down for two weeks in June before reopening last week, Pine Cove spokeswoman Susan Andreone said.

The organization's Silverado camp, also near Columbus, and two of its camps in East Texas also saw staff changes or interruptions after coronavirus cases. Despite that, Andreone said more than 8,500 people had been on their camp properties through last week, and most sessions haven't been affected. Pine Cove has 10 overnight properties in Texas.

The spread came despite state requirements that include enforcing social distancing and banning outside visitors. As of last week, campers and staff must wear masks when social distancing isn't possible.

"Can we guarantee that someone is not going to get COVID? Absolutely not. But we also understand that parents really know their families best, they know what their particular circumstances are or any particular risks that they have within their family," Andreone said.

Increases in reported cases around the country led Tara Carlson, of Omaha, Nebraska, to pull her 9-year-old son and 6-year-old daughter from their planned summer camps at the last minute.

"We lost over \$300," Carlson said, "but we feared the risk was too great."

Carlson said she was comfortable with efforts camps had taken against the virus, including mask requirements, limited group sizes and increased cleaning of communal areas. But she didn't want to risk picking up the virus because of regular visits with her parents, including her mom in hospice care.

"I didn't feel I could trust what other families were doing as far as social distancing," she said.

Mary Trump's book offers scathing portrayal of president

By LARRY NEUMEISTER and JILL COLVIN Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — President Donald Trump's niece offers a scathing portrayal of her uncle in a new book, blaming a toxic family for raising a narcissistic, damaged man who poses an immediate danger to the public, according to a copy obtained Tuesday by The Associated Press.

Mary L. Trump, a psychologist, writes that Trump's reelection would be catastrophic and that "lying, playing to the lowest common denominator, cheating, and sowing division are all he knows."

"By the time this book is published, hundreds of thousands of American lives will have been sacrificed on the altar of Donald's hubris and willful ignorance. If he is afforded a second term, it would be the end of American Democracy," she writes in "Too Much and Never Enough, How My Family Created The World's Most Dangerous Man."

Mary Trump is the daughter of Trump's elder brother, Fred Jr., who died after a struggle with alcoholism in 1981 at 42. The book is the second insider account in two months to paint a deeply unflattering portrait of the president, following the release of former national security adviser John Bolton's bestseller.

In her book, Mary Trump, who is estranged from her uncle, makes several revelations, including alleging that the president paid a friend to take the SATs — a standardized test widely used for college admissions — in his place. She writes that his sister Maryanne Trump did his homework for him but couldn't take his tests and he worried his grade point average, which put him far from the top of the class, would "scuttle his efforts to get accepted" into the Wharton School of the University of Pennsylvania, where he transferred after two years at Fordham University in the Bronx.

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"To hedge his bets he enlisted Joe Shapiro, a smart kid with a reputation for being a good test taker, to take his SATs for him," she writes, adding, "Donald, who never lacked for funds, paid his buddy well." White House spokesperson Sarah Matthews called the allegation "completely false."

Mary Trump also writes, in awe, of Trump's ability to gain the support of prominent Christian leaders and white evangelicals, saying: "The only time Donald went to church was when the cameras were there. It's mind boggling. He has no principles. None!"

White House press secretary Kayleigh McEnany slammed the book Tuesday, saying, "It's ridiculous, absurd accusations that have absolutely no bearing in truth."

Mary Trump traces much of her pain to the death of her father when she was 16. The president, who rarely admits mistakes, told The Washington Post last year that he regretted the pressure he and his father had put on Fred Jr. to join the family business when his brother wanted to be a pilot instead.

"It was just not his thing. ... I think the mistake that we made was we assumed that everybody would like it. That would be the biggest mistake. ... There was sort of a double pressure put on him," Trump told the paper.

Yet as her father lay dying alone, Mary Trump claims, "Donald went to the movies."

She says that, as a child, Donald Trump hid favorite toys from his younger brother and took juvenile stunts — like Fred Jr. dumping a bowl of mashed potatoes on his then-7-year-old head — so seriously that he harbored resentments even when his eldest sister, Maryanne, brought it up in her toast at his White House birthday dinner in 2017.

She paints Trump, who often called her "Honeybunch," as a self-centered narcissist who demanded constant adulation — even from his family — and had little regard for family members' feelings. Trump's crude rhetoric on the campaign trail, she said, was nothing new, reminding her "of every family meal I'd ever attended during which Donald had talked about all of the women he considered ugly fat slob or the men, usually more accomplished or powerful, he called losers."

The book is, at its heart, a lengthy psychoanalysis of the Trump family by a woman trained in the field, who sees the traits of her uncle that critics despise as a natural progression of behaviors developed at the knees of a demanding father. For Donald Trump, she writes, "lying was defensive — not simply a way to circumvent his father's disapproval or to avoid punishment ... but a way to survive."

Publisher Simon & Schuster announced Monday that it would be publishing the book two weeks early, on July 14, after a New York appellate court cleared the way for the book's publication following a legal challenge.

Robert Trump, the president's younger brother, had sued Mary Trump, arguing in legal papers that she was subject to a 20-year-old agreement between family members that no one would publish accounts involving core family members without their approval.

A judge last week left in place a restraint that blocked Mary Trump and any agent of hers from distributing the book, but the court made clear it was not considering Simon & Schuster to be covered by the ruling.

In the book, Mary Trump writes that she didn't take her uncle's run for the presidency seriously in 2016 — an opinion apparently shared by Trump's eldest sister, a retired federal appeals court judge.

"He's a clown," my aunt Maryanne said during one of our regular lunches at the time. "This will never happen," she recalls her saying.

She said she declined an invitation to attend her uncle's election-night party in New York City four years ago, convinced she "wouldn't be able to contain my euphoria when (Hillary) Clinton's victory was announced."

Instead, she found herself wandering around her house a few hours after Trump's victory was announced, fearful that voters "had chosen to turn this country into a macro version of my malignantly dysfunctional family."

Mary Trump wrote that she considered speaking out against her uncle at various times, including the summer of 2016, but was reluctant to do so for fear of being "painted as a disgruntled, disinherited niece looking to cash in or settle a score."

After the events of the last three years, she writes, "I can no longer remain silent."

Colvin reported from Washington.

Movement for Black Lives seeks sweeping legislative changes

By KAT STAFFORD Associated Press

DETROIT (AP) — Proposed federal legislation that would radically transform the nation's criminal justice system through such changes as eliminating agencies like the Drug Enforcement Administration and the use of surveillance technology was unveiled Tuesday by the Movement for Black Lives.

Dubbed the BREATHE Act, the legislation is the culmination of a project led by the policy table of the Movement for Black Lives, a coalition of more than 150 organizations. It comes at an unprecedented moment of national reckoning around police brutality and systemic racism that has spurred global protests and cries for change after several high-profile killings of Black Americans, including George Floyd.

"We stand on the shoulders of giants and there has been 400 years of work that Black people have done to try to get us closer to freedom," Black Lives Matter co-founder Patrisse Cullors said.

"This moment is a watershed moment. I think this moment calls for structural change and transformative change in ways that we haven't seen in a very long time. We see this opportunity to push for the BREATHE Act as a part of what we're calling the modern-day civil rights act."

The proposed changes, first shared with The Associated Press, are sweeping and likely to receive robust pushback from lawmakers who perceive the legislation as too radical.

University of Michigan professor and criminal justice expert Heather Ann Thompson acknowledged the uphill battle, but noted that the legislation is being introduced at a highly opportune time.

"I think those programs that they're suggesting eliminating only look radical if we really ignore the fact that there has been tremendous pressure to meaningfully reform this criminal justice system," said Thompson, author of "Blood in the Water: The Attica Prison Uprising of 1971 and Its Legacy." "Every radical piece of legislation that we've ever passed in this country, it has passed on the heels of the kinds of grassroots protests that we saw on the streets. The will of the people indicates that if they just keep putting a Band-Aid on it, these protests are not going to go away."

No members of Congress have yet said they plan to introduce the bill, but it has won early support among some of the more progressive lawmakers, including Ayanna Pressley and Rashida Tlaib, who participated in Tuesday's news conference.

The bill is broken into four sections, the first of which specifically would divest federal resources from incarceration and policing. It is largely aimed at federal reforms because Congress can more easily regulate federal institutions and policy, as opposed to state institutions or private prisons.

The other sections lay out a detailed plan to achieve an equitable future, calling for sweeping changes that would eliminate federal programs and agencies "used to finance and expand" the U.S. criminal-legal system.

The elimination would target agencies such as the Immigration and Customs Enforcement, which has come under fire in recent years for its aggressive deportation efforts, and lesser-known programs such as Department of Defense 1033, which allows local law enforcement agencies to obtain excess military equipment.

The act, which also seeks to reduce the Department of Defense budget, would institute changes to the policing, pretrial detention, sentencing and prosecution practices that Cullors said have long disproportionately criminalized Black and brown communities, LGBTQIA people, Indigenous people, and individuals with disabilities.

It would establish the Neighborhood Demilitarization Program, which would collect and destroy all equipment like military-grade armored vehicles and weapons in the hands of local, state, and federal law enforcement agencies by 2022.

Federal law enforcement also would be unable to use facial-recognition technology, which many communities across the nation already have banned, along with drones and forms of electronic surveillance

such as ankle-monitoring.

The bill would end life sentences, abolish all mandatory minimum sentencing laws and create a "time bound plan" to close all federal prisons and immigration detention centers.

Recent polling from the Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research shows a dramatic shift has occurred in the nation's opinions on policing and race, with more Americans today than five years ago believing police brutality is a very serious problem that too often goes undisciplined and unequally targets Black Americans. The polling found that the majority of Americans say the criminal justice system needs major changes, including many saying it needs a complete overhaul.

Cullors said she is hopeful the bill will gain support and build upon the change the movement has produced since it first began seven years ago.

"We are calling for the federal government to be creative in identifying new approaches to dealing with harm and violence in our communities as well as developing investments into building healthy, sustainable and equitable communities," she said.

The bill would direct Congress to establish a Community Public Safety Office that would conduct research on non-punitive, public safety-focused interventions that would be funded through new grants, and programs like a "Free Them All" Matching Grant Program offering a 50% federal match for projected savings when states and communities close detention facilities, local jails, and state or youth prisons.

According to the document, it also would bring about numerous changes for parents and children, such as removing police, school resource officers and other armed security and metal detectors from schools.

The coalition first began releasing policy recommendations in 2016 and is in the midst of relaunching its Vision for Black Lives 2020, which will be rolled out and expanded over the coming months leading up to a planned National Black Convention in August of 2020.

"We are a generation that wants to make sure that the needs of all Black people are met," Cullors said. "We believe the BREATHE Act is that legislation. It's an act that is pushing us to look at the future of this country, an act that is mandating and demanding a new future and policies that are courageous and visionary."

Kat Stafford is a member of The Associated Press' Race and Ethnicity team. Follow her on Twitter at https://twitter.com/kat__stafford.

At least 8 Mississippi lawmakers test positive for COVID-19

By LEAH WILLINGHAM and EMILY WAGSTER PETTUS Associated Press

JACKSON, Miss. (AP) — At least eight Mississippi lawmakers have tested positive for the coronavirus after working several weeks in a Capitol where many people stood or sat close together and did not wear masks.

Among those who have publicly acknowledged having COVID-19 are Lt. Gov. Delbert Hosemann, who presides over the 52-member Senate, and House Speaker Philip Gunn, who presides over that 122-member chamber.

The state health officer, Dr. Thomas Dobbs, said Tuesday that there are also at least 11 other suspected cases of the virus among legislators and Capitol employees. In addition, Dobbs said the virus is spreading in social gatherings across the state. Dobbs said, for example, he was told about teenagers having a party on a Pearl River sandbar in Jackson during the July 4 weekend and about people going without masks in restaurants and other public settings.

"You can't put a lot of people together in the middle of the worst pandemic in a century and expect nothing bad to happen," Dobbs said during a news conference. "It's just absolutely an insane thought process."

Mississippi legislators were at the Capitol for most of June and on July 1, wrapping up their annual session that was interrupted for several weeks by the pandemic.

Gunn, 57, announced Sunday that he had tested positive for the virus. Hosemann, 73, has informed members of the Senate he tested positive for the virus and "will follow State Health Department guidelines by self-quarantining and working at home," his spokeswoman Leah Rupp Smith said Tuesday.

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Republican Gov. Tate Reeves, 46, said Monday he was in isolation with his wife and their three daughters at the Governor's Mansion. They were tested for the coronavirus after he came into contact with a lawmaker who tested positive last week.

"My girls and I tested negative for COVID-19," Reeves wrote Tuesday on Twitter. "Limited contact with the people who were diagnosed, but better safe than sorry! If someone you know gets the virus, get a test!" Reeves will follow social distancing guidelines and "will continue to reduce contact with others as dramatically as possible, while still completing his duties as governor," his spokeswoman, Renae Eze, said.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention says even if people test negative for COVID-19 and feel healthy, they should remain in quarantine since symptoms may appear two to 14 days after exposure.

The Health Department said Tuesday that Mississippi — with a population of about 3 million — has had at least 32,214 confirmed cases and 1,158 deaths from the coronavirus as of Monday evening. That was an increase of 957 confirmed cases and 44 deaths from numbers reported a day earlier; the latest count included 10 deaths between June 17 and June 28, with information from death certificates arriving later.

The number of coronavirus infections is thought to be far higher because many people have not been tested, and studies suggest people can be infected without feeling sick. For most people, the coronavirus causes mild or moderate symptoms that clear up within weeks. For others, especially older adults and people with existing health problems, it can cause severe symptoms and be fatal.

Dobbs said the rapid increase in cases is stressing the health care system, including emergency rooms. "My greatest fear is starting to be realized because there are people in ERs now across the state who can't get a bed, they can't get transferred where they need to go, and we're sending them out of state," Dobbs said

Speaking of the Legislature, Dobbs said it's risky to have any group of people in close proximity for an extended time.

"We know they were very busy and doing some really important work over the past couple of weeks, but it's going to be risk, especially if people don't maintain that distancing and masks," Dobbs said.

Gunn and Hosemann stood near Reeves and others last week as the governor signed a bill retiring Mississippi's 126-year-old state flag that had the Confederate battle emblem. None wore masks.

Democratic Rep. Bo Brown of Jackson announced last week that he had tested positive for COVID-19. Republican Rep. Greg Haney of Gulfport announced Tuesday that he has the virus.

"We don't know where we got it," Haney told The Associated Press. "We had to eat out, so we could have got it from a waitress, waiter, you know, you can't wear your mask while you eat."

The Health Department had free drive-thru COVID-19 testing Monday for legislators and others who work in the Capitol. Dobbs said 270 were tested.

Leah Willingham is a corps member for the Associated Press/Report for America Statehouse News Initiative. Report for America is a nonprofit national service program that places journalists in local newsrooms to report on undercovered issues.

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

US notifies UN of withdrawal from World Health Organization

By MATTHEW LEE AP Diplomatic Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Trump administration has formally notified the United Nations of its withdrawal from the World Health Organization, although the pullout won't take effect until next year, meaning it could be rescinded under a new administration or if circumstances change. Former Vice President Joe Biden, the presumptive Democratic presidential nominee, said he would reverse the decision on his first day in office if elected.

The withdrawal notification makes good on President Donald Trump's vow in late May to terminate U.S.

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participation in the WHO, which he has harshly criticized for its response to the coronavirus pandemic and accused of bowing to Chinese influence.

The move was immediately assailed by health officials and critics of the administration, including numerous Democrats who said it would cost the U.S. influence in the global arena.

Biden has said in the past he supports the WHO and pledged Tuesday to rejoin the WHO if he defeats Trump in November. "Americans are safer when America is engaged in strengthening global health. On my first day as president, I will rejoin the WHO and restore our leadership on the world stage," he said.

Trump is trailing Biden in multiple polls and has sought to deflect criticism of his administration's handling of the virus by aggressively attacking China and the WHO.

The withdrawal notice was sent to U.N. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres on Monday and will take effect in a year, on July 6, 2021, the State Department and the United Nations said on Tuesday.

The State Department said the U.S. would continue to seek reform of the WHO, but referred to Trump's June 15 response when asked if the administration might change its mind. "I'm not reconsidering, unless they get their act together, and I'm not sure they can at this point," Trump said.

Guterres, in his capacity as depositary of the 1946 WHO constitution, "is in the process of verifying with the World Health Organization whether all the conditions for such withdrawal are met," his spokesman, Stephane Dujarric, said.

Under the terms of the withdrawal, the U.S. must meet its financial obligations to the WHO before it can be finalized. The U.S., which is the agency's largest donor and provides it with more than \$450 million per year, currently owes the WHO some \$200 million in current and past dues.

On May 29, less than two weeks after warning the WHO that it had 30 days to reform or lose U.S. support, Trump announced his administration was leaving the organization due to what he said was its inadequate response to the initial outbreak of the coronavirus in China's Wuhan province late last year.

The president said in a White House announcement that Chinese officials "ignored" their reporting obligations to the WHO and pressured the organization to mislead the public about an outbreak that has now killed more than 130,000 Americans.

"We have detailed the reforms that it must make and engaged with them directly, but they have refused to act," Trump said at the time. "Because they have failed to make the requested and greatly needed reforms, we will be today terminating the relationship."

The withdrawal notification was widely denounced as misguided, certain to undermine an important institution that is leading vaccine development efforts and drug trials to address the COVID-19 outbreak.

The Republican chairman of Senate health committee, Lamar Alexander of Tennessee, said he disagreed with the decision.

"Certainly there needs to be a good, hard look at mistakes the World Health Organization might have made in connection with coronavirus, but the time to do that is after the crisis has been dealt with, not in the middle of it," he said.

House Speaker Nancy Pelosi condemned the move.

"The President's official withdrawal of the U.S. from the World Health Organization is an act of true senselessness," she said in a tweet. "With millions of lives at risk, the president is crippling the international effort to defeat the virus."

And the top Democrat on the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, New Jersey Sen. Bob Menendez, said calling Trump's "response to COVID chaotic and incoherent doesn't do it justice. This won't protect American lives or interests — it leaves Americans sick and America alone."

UN Foundation President Elizabeth Cousens called the move "short-sighted, unnecessary, and unequivocally dangerous. WHO is the only body capable of leading and coordinating the global response to COVID-19. Terminating the U.S. relationship would undermine the global effort to beat this virus — putting all of us at risk."

The ONE Campaign, which supports international health projects, called it an "astounding action" that jeopardizes global health.

"Withdrawing from the World Health Organization amidst an unprecedented global pandemic is an astounding action that puts the safety of all Americans and the world at risk. The U.S. should use its influence to strengthen and reform the WHO, not abandon it at a time when the world needs it most," ONE president Gayle Smith said.

Associated Press writers Lisa Mascaro in Washington and Edith M. Lederer at the United Nations contributed.

Dream owner Loeffler objects to WNBA's social justice plans

By DOUG FEINBERG AP Basketball Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Atlanta Dream co-owner Kelly Loeffler is not in favor of the WNBA's social justice plans and has sent a letter to Commissioner Cathy Engelbert objecting to the league's initiatives to honor the Black Lives Matter movement.

Loeffler, who is also a Republican U.S. senator running for re-election in Georgia, asked the league commissioner to scrap plans for players to wear warmup jerseys with "Black Lives Matter" and "Say Her Name" and instead put an American flag on all uniforms and apparel.

"The truth is, we need less - not more politics in sports. In a time when polarizing politics is as divisive as ever, sports has the power to be a unifying antidote," wrote Loeffler. "And now more than ever, we should be united in our goal to remove politics from sports."

In the letter, Loeffler, a Dream owner since 2011, said she wasn't consulted about the league's new social justice policy.

Engelbert issued a statement in response to Loeffler in a statement.

"The WNBA is based on the principle of equal and fair treatment of all people and we, along with the teams and players, will continue to use our platforms to vigorously advocate for social justice," the commissioner said. "Sen. Kelly Loeffler has not served as a Governor of the Atlanta Dream since October 2019 and is no longer involved in the day-to-day business of the team."

The WNBA players union put out a tweet Tuesday saying "E-N-O-U-G-H! O-U-T!" in response.

The league announced on Monday that players would wear special uniforms during the opening weekend that had Breonna Taylor's name on the back of them.

Taylor, a 26-year-old Black emergency medical technician, was shot eight times by plainclothes Louisville police officers serving a narcotics search warrant at her apartment on March 13. No drugs were found. Her family and protesters around the country have called for swift action against the officers who shot Taylor.

The league is considering ways to recognize other women who have died because of alleged police brutality or racial violence — including Vanessa Guillen and Sandra Bland.

The jersey idea was first publicly put forth by Las Vegas Aces forward Angel McCoughtry, who starred for the Dream before signing with Las Vegas in the offseason. Players have the option to just wear the uniforms opening weekend or throughout the season.

AMERICA DISRUPTED: Troubles cleave a nation, and a city

By JOSH BOAK and KAT STAFFORD Associated Press

SAGINAW, Mich. (AP) — It was difficult to celebrate America in Saginaw this year. The deadly coronavirus had torn through the county. Unemployment had surged five-fold. Weeks of protest over racial inequality left many debating what should be hallowed and what must be changed.

But Tom Roy had given it his best. As the head of the July Fourth fireworks board, he struggled to save the display of red-rocketed flares and bursting peonies, fruitlessly seeking a venue that felt safe from the sickness.

He couldn't do it. So Saginaw canceled its festivities, upsetting many of Roy's neighbors who lost an opportunity to unify a bitterly divided community for one night.

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The dark skies over this mid-Michigan city were a plaintive marker of a nation utterly disrupted in a matter of months.

EDITOR'S NOTE — Americans are preparing to choose a leader and a path through a time of extraordinary division and turmoil. Associated Press journalists tell their stories in the series "America Disrupted."

This period of national crisis has not inspired unity. Americans are aiming their anger at each other, talking past each other, invoking race, class and culture. They cannot even agree on the need to wear a mask to protect against a virus that has killed more than 130,000 Americans.

These forces are converging as the country hurtles toward a convulsive presidential election. President Donald Trump continues to portray himself as a disrupter, with a wrecking-ball agenda that is rooted in nationalism and roils racial divisions — taking the stage over the July Fourth weekend to warn of "new far-left fascism" that would tear down "our national heritage." His Democratic rival, Joe Biden, meanwhile, calls for a national reset to something resembling normal for a "suffering" nation.

"It's never been this divided," says Roy, vice chair of Saginaw's Republicans.

It is in places like Saginaw County, Michigan, which narrowly flipped from voting for President Barack Obama to voting for Trump, where clarity about America's future is likely to come.

The traditional battleground states of Michigan, Pennsylvania, Wisconsin and Florida, and emerging ones such as North Carolina and Arizona, have all been hit with the triple shock of a pandemic, recession and an uprising against police abuse. The political fallout is unfolding, leaving a striking degree of uncertainty just four months from Election Day.

Will younger voters, whose generation is the first since World War II to be faring worse than their parents, turn out? Will older voters, those most vulnerable to the coronavirus, seek change? Will the growing political power of Black women manifest itself in ways that swing key states? Will the suburbs once again provide the pivot points in the country's partisan divide?

The election will provide answers to all these questions, but not necessarily to the central issue of American life in the year 2020: Can the United States pull itself together?

The country is beset by "parties who see each other as 'the other' instead of collaborators in a democracy," says historian Doris Kearns Goodwin.

"A crisis allows you, if you've got the leadership, to unite the nation. What's needed — and we've seen this for a while — is a national direction," she said.

In 2010, out of love for his ailing hometown, a Saginaw artist spray-painted some familiar lyrics on the husks of buildings and stumps of concrete steps: "I'm empty and aching and I don't know why."

But in 1968, when Simon & Garfunkel released "America" — starting their hitchhiking narrator's cross-country odyssey in Saginaw — the city was a very different place.

The population then was nearly twice as large as the 48,115 people who now call it home. General Motors alone operated at least eight plants in the city and surrounding county, providing middle-class jobs that drew African Americans from the Deep South. The Great Migration gave Saginaw its most famous native son: Stevland Hardaway Judkins, better known as Stevie Wonder.

The Saginaw River slashes a diagonal line through the city and became a dividing line between Black residents on the east side and white residents on the west.

GM stumbled and there were layoffs and closures — manufacturing jobs dropped by 50% in the last 30 years. White people fled to the suburbs, the population declined, and the question arose: How to save Saginaw?

The answers have been disjointed — and none erased the economic inequality or racial segregation. The city of Saginaw, 45% Black, has a median income of \$29,800, while the majority white county has a median income of \$47,000.

In 2016, the area ended a Democratic voting streak. By just 1,073 votes, voters in the county entrusted Trump to revive its fading industrial hub.

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Yet the people of Saginaw are now coping with a 20.7% jobless rate, more than four times the rate on Election Day 2016. There have been 123 confirmed deaths so far from COVID-19, among the top 10th of counties per capita nationwide. Trump's promise of a renaissance in manufacturing remains unmet.

And despite all the hardship, or because of it, Dave Adams believes that Saginaw might help save America — from Trump.

Until February, Adams was athletic director at Swan Valley High School, a suburban school with about 580 students. He had dabbled in local politics, enjoying the competition that so reminded him of sports, but Trump's election changed him.

The former social studies teacher used to make a point of teaching students about respect for the presidency. But Donald Trump, he thought, showed no respect for the office he held.

At 47, in a sort of midlife political crisis, Adams left his job. He would help turn out voters for the Democrats. He wanted to live without regrets, he says.

"You don't want to look back and say woulda, coulda, shoulda," Adams says.

Trump's very nature had forced him to take a stand. "I always thought that the president should be a role model," Adams says. "The current president is so far from it, for me, that it blows my mind. It's everything I'm against."

Trump came to power as a bulldozer, an approach that had wider than expected appeal in a country that was fed up with Washington's chronic fighting and inertia. The president has emphatically kept his promise to upend American politics, but in the process has ripped at racial wounds, antagonized allies and courted foes, been impeached and acquitted, and flouted norms of presidential leadership.

Relatively few Americans think Trump tells the truth or cares about people like them, but neither point is a deal-breaker for his supporters. A majority of Americans believe the country is off track and in a June poll by The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research, about two-thirds said they believe Trump is making America more divided.

Even Republicans are more likely to describe Trump as divisive than unifying, 37% to 20%. But they still overwhelmingly approve of the job he's doing.

They like the idea of a tough businessman who speaks his mind, cuts taxes, appoints conservative judges and promises to crack down on illegal immigration. And even if they have misgivings about his style, many Republicans believe a Democrat would be worse.

But the Trump style that worked well in times of relative calm — inattention to detail, indifference to briefings, go-with-your-gut decisions — is now facing an ultimate test in the face of real crises, not those of his invention.

A virus cannot be dispatched with a tweet. Four months into the fight against the disease, the U.S. has more than 2.9 million infections.

For Adams, that means his new job — canvassing neighborhoods looking for voters — has become a health risk, and much of the work has shifted to calls and online meetings.

The pandemic also exposed his own financial vulnerabilities. He had planned to return to a school district after the November election. He needs just two more years of service to qualify for a pension. But it's still unclear how schools will reopen in the fall — and whether anyone needs a substitute teacher if classes move online.

Out of caution, Adams began a new job this month as a school custodian.

"I'll take what I can get," he said.

Hattie Norwood doesn't remember a time when Saginaw was a growing middle-class haven. At just 31, she's already witnessing the second major recession of her adult life. She sees Saginaw's problems — crime, poverty, struggling schools, food deserts — as entrenched. *Déjà vu*, she says.

Norwood has tried to take it in stride. As a Black woman in America, "I can't let them see me sweat," says the communications consultant and mother of four girls.

She remembers well the protests that erupted eight years ago when Saginaw police officers fatally shot at Milton Hall, a Black homeless man who was waving a pocket knife, 47 times. The officers never faced

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charges. She marched then.

But this moment has changed her.

Norwood watched with frustration as the coronavirus seemed targeted at her community, tearing through Black neighborhoods at a disproportionate rate. The economic collapse that followed only made things worse. And with schools closed, kids were deprived of the free meals upon which they depended.

So Norwood and eight strangers she connected with online met in a Tim Hortons coffee shop in March to devise a plan to distribute food to families.

When George Floyd, a Black man, died after a Minneapolis police officer pinned him on the ground for nearly 8 minutes, she went a step further. She and others organized the county's first protest in response and later launched Saginaw's own Black Lives Matter chapter.

"I've gained my political grounding," Norwood said.

It felt right to join the wildfire of activism that spread across the country after protests and riots raged through Minneapolis. The marches filled American streets, even in conservative bastions. They called attention to police brutality and deaths of Black men and women at the hands of police — to deaths like that of Milton Hall — but also evidence of racism in housing, health and education. They've toppled Confederate monuments and statues of past leaders.

The next phase of the protest movement is still evolving. Many activists say they're focused on local issues — largely overhauling police departments — and not the presidential race. Still, Democrats hope it's part of a warm-up for November. Young, liberal voters have been cool to Biden, a 77-year-old moderate, and a fight for racial justice may be the thing that mobilizes these often elusive voters.

They'll have extra hurdles this year. The virus has shaken up voting, pushing many Americans to vote by mail for the first time. Norwood intends to ensure that people are ready.

"We're talking more about voter education in our community and I am for doing whatever it takes to get Trump out of office." Norwood said. "When I leave this place, when I'm gone, there will be brown girls after me and I just can't fathom a world that continues in this way."

Tom Roy, a white man, sees a very different America. In his experience, anyone who sacrifices can buy into the stock market and get ahead.

At 57, Roy thinks of himself as a Reagan Republican and a self-made man. Roy started playing the stock market in the 1980s, but the profits really piled up years later while working as a manager at a roller rink. He did well enough to buy a Corvette (and six others since).

Trump had planned to make Roy's pocketbook politics the heart of this campaign. Republican-leaning voters often express reservations about Trump's Twitter feed, but they like his tax cuts and handling of the economy.

The almost-overnight recession disrupted that plan.

That pain hit Republican and Democratic areas alike, even as COVID-19 was initially concentrated in urban centers and coastal cities. That disconnected impact helped breed skepticism about the virus' danger and fuel the resentment about government-ordered business closures that seemed unnecessary.

As businesses started to reopen in June, so did the offices of the Saginaw County Republicans — in time for riled-up voters to come by, asking to sign a petition to recall the Democratic governor, Gretchen Whitmer.

Many Republicans blamed her stay-at-home orders for Michigan's economic morass. Protesters and an armed militia filled the statehouse to demand an end to the restrictions some labeled "tyranny." Prosecutors even charged one of her critics with terrorism for making credible death threats against her.

But there was a hitch in the recall effort: There was nothing to sign.

"People on Facebook and social media had talked about recalling the governor," said Roy, a GOP candidate for town trustee who marvels at what he views as evidence of pro-Trump energy. "We never had a document."

The virus has now shifted course, spreading with alarming speed into Republican counties in the south

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and southwest. Some GOP governors have been forced to follow in Whitmer's path, to close bars, talk up wearing masks and urge people to stay home.

The surge in red America seems to contradict the Trump campaign's message that the country — the economy — is already coming back.

But in a polarized America, shared facts are hard to find. About two-thirds of Republicans viewed economic conditions as "good" in June, even though the unemployment was near the highest in 70 years. An overwhelming majority of Democrats held the opposite view, according to AP-NORC polling.

Indeed, Roy's view on the economy is filtered through his own experience. Business has been steady at his landscaping company — the grass keeps growing during a pandemic. He recently mowed the lawn around the temporarily closed Fashion Square Mall after it crested 2 feet.

Roy says he thinks most companies will learn to adapt during the crises. He notes the stock market has nearly recovered to where it was before the pandemic.

"Everyone has a chance to make money — that's what is great about America," he says.

"Michigan seems like a dream to me now," says the narrator of the song "America," deeply weary as he boards a bus in Pittsburgh.

Look for America in 2020 and you'll find exhaustion. So many tribulations, so much strife. But there are those in Saginaw who say maybe the United States isn't being pulled apart. Maybe it's growing, even if uncomfortably so.

The Rev. Hurley Coleman is head of the World Outreach Campus Church, a congregation founded by his parents in 1957 in their living room on Saginaw's east side. He knows it's a hard time to talk about hope.

In the past month, he's lost a parishioner to gun violence. Many in his congregation are struggling to survive on low-wage jobs or as front-line health workers. He hasn't delivered a sermon in person in weeks, but he has participated in three marches since last month.

Those recent protests were the first time he's seen Black and white people march together in Saginaw for racial equality, he said. They walked together — crossing the bridge over the Saginaw River — to call for change. It made him think this might be a moment of such upheaval that even long-standing barriers are broken, divides disrupted.

"This is one of those terrible growth moments where people of goodwill and good thought can bring us to another level," Coleman said. "When you build on truth, anything is possible."

Associated Press writers Nicholas Riccardi and Angeliki Kastanis contributed to this report.

US general skeptical that bounties led to troops' deaths

By LOLITA C. BALDOR Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The top U.S. general for the Middle East said Tuesday that the intelligence suggesting that Russia may have paid Taliban militants to kill American troops in Afghanistan was worrisome, but he is not convinced that any bounties resulted in U.S. military deaths.

Gen. Frank McKenzie, the head of U.S. Central Command said in a telephone interview with a small group of reporters that the U.S. did not increase force protection measures in Afghanistan as a result of the information, although he asked his intelligence staff to dig into the matter more.

"I found it very worrisome. I didn't find that there was a causative link there," said McKenzie, who is the first Pentagon official to speak publicly at length about the issue. He warned, however, that Russia has long been a threat in Afghanistan, where there have been many reports that it has backed Taliban fighters over the years with resources and weapons.

According to U.S. intelligence officials, information that Russia offered bounties to Taliban militants for killing American troops was included in an intelligence brief for President Donald Trump in late February. The White House, however, has denied Trump was briefed at that time, arguing that the intelligence was not credible enough to bring to his attention.

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McKenzie said that while he could draw no direct link between any potential payments and U.S. casualties, it's common that intelligence is not definitive.

"We should always remember, the Russians are not our friends," said McKenzie, who is traveling in the Middle East. "They are not our friends in Afghanistan. And they do not wish us well, and we just need to remember that at all times when we evaluate that intelligence."

He said there was no need to beef up security for troops there because the U.S. already takes "extreme force protections measures" in Afghanistan. "Whether the Russians are paying the Taliban or not, over the past several years, the Taliban have done their level best to carry out operations against us."

Just days after the February intelligence briefing, the U.S. signed an agreement with the Taliban, mapping out the withdrawal of American forces from Afghanistan by May 2021. That date would be nearly 20 years after American forces invaded the country after the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks on the U.S. by al-Qaida militants.

Trump had repeatedly said he wants to have all U.S. forces out of Afghanistan. His call in May for a quick exit, fueled speculation that he wants troops out by the November election, as part of his vow to end U.S. involvement in what he calls "endless wars."

The U.S. pulled several thousand troops out this year, and now has about 8,600 there. Additional troop withdrawal is contingent on the Taliban's commitment that extremist groups, such as al-Qaida and the Islamic State group, not be able to use the country as a base to carry out attacks on the U.S.

Asked about the potential for pulling more U.S. troops out, McKenzie said he still does not believe the conditions allow for a significant reduction yet.

Biden wants US to produce more of its own pandemic supplies

By WILL WEISSERT Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Joe Biden is promising to shift production of medical equipment and other key pandemic-fighting products "back to U.S. soil," creating jobs and bolstering a domestic supply chain he says has been exposed as inadequate and vulnerable by the coronavirus outbreak.

The presumptive Democratic presidential nominee's campaign released a plan Tuesday to reinforce stockpiles of a "range of critical products on which the U.S. is dangerously dependent on foreign suppliers" in places like China and Russia. That includes medical equipment and pharmaceuticals, but also energy and grid resilience technologies, semiconductors and key electronics, as well as telecommunications infrastructure and raw materials.

It marked the Biden campaign's most comprehensive statements yet on how it would better equip the nation to fight the coronavirus and future pandemics and other threats — though the proposal did not include specifics on how much doing so would cost. If elected in November, Biden promises to initiate immediately a 100-day review of "critical national security risks across America's international supply chain," while asking Congress to create a permanent, mandatory review process.

The former vice president envisions creating a "critical supply chains workforce" that would be part of a larger job creation and economic recovery plan his team has spent weeks promising it will soon release.

Before the pandemic, the U.S. got much of its medical supplies from China. But that country limited exports earlier this year amid its own fight against the virus. When the U.S. stockpile ran short, states that had only minimal supplies were left scrambling to try to buy needed equipment.

In a conference call with reporters, senior Biden campaign officials said public health authorities have indicated that there were positive signs around the creation of coronavirus vaccines, but that there's no guarantee any might be ready by January. The officials said Biden's camp is preparing for the possibility that a vaccine isn't available by then, or that one is but will need to be mass produced and distributed in equitable ways around the country.

Biden has long criticized President Donald Trump's administration for failing to press more private companies into production of ventilators and other critical medical and protective equipment during the virus outbreak under the Defense Production Act. The Republican president has countered that his use of the

authority has been effective enough to save lives by “removing obstacles in the supply chain.”

The Biden plan released Tuesday promises to rely more heavily on the Defense Production Act while seeking to harness federal purchasing power to improve manufacturing capacity for products deemed vital to national security. It also includes an emphasis on increasing long-term, domestic pharmaceutical production, citing the Food and Drug Administration in reporting that more than 70% of active pharmaceutical ingredient facilities that currently supply the U.S. market are located abroad.

The campaign officials said the goal was not to make U.S. manufacturing “purely self-sufficient” but to decrease dependence on foreign producers. Biden also wants a system that is resilient.

The plan aims to do that by increasing critical stockpiles while creating national “surge capacity” to further ramp up production in times of crisis. It includes provisions to work with U.S. allies globally and use regulatory tools to bolster their own critical supply chains and potentially create new markets for American manufactured goods.

Also Tuesday, the Biden campaign announced its first field hires in the key battleground state of Pennsylvania, which narrowly backed Trump in 2016. The former vice president’s team picked up the executive director of the state Democratic Party, Sincere Harris, as senior adviser and Brandon McPhillips — a veteran of presidential races in Pennsylvania and the former Iowa state director of Pete Buttigieg’s presidential campaign — as the campaign’s state director.

Associated Press writer Marc Levy contributed to this report from Harrisburg, Pa.

Catch up on the 2020 election campaign with AP experts on our weekly politics podcast, “Ground Game.”

Aggressive seaweed smothers one of world’s most remote reefs

By CALEB JONES Associated Press

HONOLULU (AP) — Researchers say a recently discovered species of seaweed is killing large patches of coral on once-pristine reefs and is rapidly spreading across one of the most remote and protected ocean environments on earth.

A study from the University of Hawaii and others says the seaweed is spreading more rapidly than anything they’ve seen in the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands, a nature reserve that stretches more than 1,300 miles north of the main Hawaiian Islands.

The study was published in the journal PLOS ONE on Tuesday.

The algae easily breaks off and rolls across the ocean floor like tumbleweed, scientists say, covering nearby reefs in thick vegetation that out-competes coral for space, sunlight and nutrients.

“This is a highly destructive seaweed with the potential to overgrow entire reefs,” said biologist Heather Spalding, a study co-author and longtime Hawaii algae researcher. “We need to figure out where it’s currently found, and what we can do to manage it.”

In 2016, government researchers were on a routine survey of Pearl and Hermes Atoll when they found small clumps of seaweed they’d never seen before.

Last summer, they returned to find algae had taken over huge areas of the reef — in some areas covering “everything, as far as the eye could see” — with seaweed nearly 8 inches (20 centimeters) thick, said Spalding, who was among the divers there.

“Everything underneath of it was dead,” she said.

The area was mostly devoid of large schools of tropical fish and other marine life that usually cruise the vibrant reef, and fish that typically eat algae were not grazing on the new seaweed, researchers said.

Dives along the outer reef of the 15-mile (24-kilometer) atoll revealed the seaweed in varying densities and depths.

Scientists say the actual coverage area is likely much larger than documented because they couldn’t survey many sites during their brief visit.

Close to Midway Atoll, site of a pivotal World War II air and sea battle, Pearl and Hermes Atoll is mid-

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Pacific about 2,000 miles (3,200 kilometers) from Asia and North America.

The uninhabited atoll is in the 600,000-square-mile (1.6 million-square-kilometer) Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument, one of the world's largest protected marine environments.

Noting that individual mats of seaweed were as big as several soccer fields, researchers say the algae could dramatically alter Pearl and Hermes' reef and threaten the entire Hawaiian archipelago if it spreads.

Hawaii's main islands have several established invasive seaweeds, but cases in the remote northwest are rare.

"We have, not until now, seen a major issue like this where we have a nuisance species that's come in and made such profound changes over a short period of time to the reefs," said University of Hawaii at Manoa Interim Associate Dean and Professor Alison Sherwood, chief scientist on the study.

Researchers studied the seaweed's DNA to try to determine its origin but concluded it's a new species of red algae they named *Chondria tumulosa*.

The algae can spread in various ways, Sherwood said. It produces tumbleweed-like clumps that move around the immediate area, but it also generates spores that could be traveling much greater distances.

Among the unknowns are why the algae is growing so fast and how it reached such a remote place.

Scientists say seaweed blooms happen worldwide and can be seasonal, but this does not appear to be the case. The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration has been monitoring the site for over 20 years.

"When you see something unusual in the last few years, you can be pretty sure that this is something that's a bit special as opposed to just things that change from year to year," said University of Queensland Professor Peter Mumby, who is also chief scientist for Australia's Great Barrier Reef Foundation. "But it is a matter of concern whenever you see an ecosystem start to display symptoms ... like this."

Mumby, who was not involved with the Hawaii research, said more needs to be done to understand what is driving the seaweed growth.

But he noted that in other parts of the world algae blooms often occur because fish that eat the plants have been harvested or forced to relocate by environmental changes.

The new seaweed could have been introduced by a boat or marine debris. But there is no fishing allowed at Pearl and Hermes, and any ship that enters the region is required to have been inspected and cleaned. The species could also be native, having lived in small, unseen nooks and crannies before a change in local conditions caused it to bloom, researchers said.

The NOAA research crews will soon return to study the outbreak and find out if currents have spread it to nearby Midway, home to the Battle of Midway National Memorial, a U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service base and the region's only airstrip.

The first order of business, officials say, is to ensure anyone studying the seaweed doesn't inadvertently spread it.

"All of our dive gear, all of our boats, everything got saturated with bleach," said Randall Kosaki, NOAA research coordinator at the marine monument and expedition lead for the earlier surveys.

"If something like this got back to Waikiki or anywhere in the main Hawaiian Islands it would be an ecological disaster, but also an economic disaster," Kosaki said. "You can imagine what that would do to tourism to have an algae like this overgrowing the reefs."

Follow Caleb Jones on Twitter: @CalebAP

Breonna Taylor's family argues police had no cause for raid

By DYLAN LOVAN Associated Press

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (AP) — Louisville police called off a warrant search of Breonna Taylor's apartment after a drug suspect was located elsewhere, but then went ahead with the deadly raid to look for other suspects with no connection to Taylor, her family says in a new court filing.

Taylor, a emergency medical technician who had settled down for the night at her Louisville apartment,

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was fatally shot when officers burst into her apartment in the early morning hours of March 13. The shooting set off weeks of protests, policy changes and a call for the officers who shot Taylor to be criminally charged. Global protests on behalf of Taylor, George Floyd in Minnesota and others have been part of national reckoning over racism and police brutality.

"Connecting the dots, it's clear that these officers should never have been at Breonna Taylor's home in the first place, and that they invaded the residence with no probable cause," national civil rights attorney Ben Crump said in a statement. Crump and other Louisville attorneys are representing Taylor's mother, Tamika Palmer, in a civil lawsuit, which was amended this week to include new allegations about the night of the shooting.

Louisville police have declined to comment on the investigation, and an internal probe of the officer's actions has been turned over to the Kentucky attorney general for review. The FBI is also investigating potential civil rights violations by the police.

The warrant used to enter Taylor's home just after midnight was secured by police observing an alleged drug dealer, identified in the complaint as "JG," at Taylor's home two months earlier. Taylor and the man had a prior relationship, the family's suit said.

But that man, Jamarcus Glover, was arrested that night more than 10 miles (16 kilometers) away, though two other suspects the police were looking for were not with Glover, the suit said. Those suspects, identified in the suit as "AW" and "DC" never had a relationship with Taylor and neither looked like Kenneth Walker, Taylor's boyfriend who was with her the night she was shot, the court filing said.

The suit said "AW" lived at a separate address that police also had a warrant for, but they proceeded to search Taylor's house to see if he or the other man were there.

An ambulance that had been stationed near Taylor's apartment in anticipation of the initial search had been called off, the suit said. It said the EMS unit was cleared because police "had never actually intended to raid Breonna's home unless (Glover) was there."

"As such, it does indeed appear that the (police) 'hit the wrong house' when they went to Springfield (Taylor's apartment), rather than actually hitting the house in which the target was actually located," the 31-page complaint said.

Police arrived at Taylor's apartment about 12:40 a.m. and banged on the door but did not say they were police officers, the suit said. Louisville police have said they knocked and announced their presence at the apartment.

After the door was knocked down by a battering ram, Officer Jonathan Mattingly went inside and was shot in the leg by Walker, who has said he didn't know who was entering the apartment and was firing a warning shot. An attempted murder charge against Walker was later dropped.

Mattingly and the other officers serving the warrant, Myles Cosgrove and Brett Hankison, then began shooting "erratically, recklessly, willfully, wantonly and maliciously from inside the home, outside the home, outside a neighbor's home, outside Breonna's patio door and outside the window to Breonna's sister's room," the suit said. Taylor was struck by bullets in the hallway. Hankison has been fired; the other two officers remain on administrative assignment.

The suit, which named the three officers as defendants, said Taylor lived for another five or six minutes after she was shot but an ambulance was not on the scene.

The complaint also said police conducted a concerted effort to remove Glover and other alleged drug dealers from a residential area near downtown to make way for a new development with federal funding.

Jean Porter, a spokeswoman for Mayor Greg Fischer, called the allegations "outrageous" and "without foundation or supporting facts." Other advocates of the project, including Mary Ellen Weiderwohl, who leads the city community development group Louisville Forward, said those allegations in the suit are a "gross mischaracterization" of a plan to build new affordable housing in low-income areas.

Trump increasingly turning to executive orders, more to come

By KEVIN FREKING Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump is setting a brisk pace lately in issuing executive orders and he's just getting started as he tries to position himself as a man of action on everything from foreign policy to racial justice in an election year. The impact of some of the orders, though, is less than meets the eye.

Trump has so far issued 33 executive orders this year, though he was a critic of such actions when running for office. He's on pace to exceed his high of 55 executive orders issued during his first year in office.

Mark Meadows, Trump's chief of staff, says the president is considering more orders in coming days dealing with topics such as immigration, jobs and China. He contrasted Trump's efforts with members of Congress who are returning to their home states and districts for much of July. They're expected to come back for a short while before heading out again for most of August.

"It's apparent that they are not willing to stay here to get the people's work done. In fact, they're disappearing for almost three weeks," Meadows said. "I don't know that in this particular environment that you can just stand by and say we can just take a three-week vacation."

Running against Congress is a time-honored tradition in Washington. Harry Truman poked at the Republican "do-nothing" Congress in his 1948 campaign. President Barack Obama mocked the GOP leading up to the 2014 midterm elections: "It is lonely, me just doing stuff. I'd love if the Republicans did stuff, too." Trump's attack line is the "Do-Nothing Democrats."

An executive order can have the same effect as a federal law — but its impact can be fleeting. Congress can pass a new law to override an executive order and future presidents can undo them. Trump's executive orders allow him to make use of the bully pulpit, though it's questionable how much some will accomplish.

For example, a recent order on protecting monuments and statues appealed to those alarmed by demonstrators growing increasingly emboldened to destroy statues that they deem offensive or inappropriate. But it merely called on federal officials to make the fullest use of existing law, which authorizes a penalty of up to 10 years in prison for the "willful injury" of federal property.

The president's executive order on policing stopped far short of what Democratic lawmakers are seeking. Kristina Roth at Amnesty International USA said it "amounts to a Band-Aid for a bullet wound." Democrats want to eliminate qualified immunity for police officers, which would allow those injured by law enforcement personnel to sue for damages. They also seek to ban chokeholds and no-knock warrants.

But that legislation is unlikely to move beyond passage in the House. Meanwhile, Trump tried to project a sense of progress through his executive order, which encourages better police practices as Republicans and Democrats remain in a standoff. "It's tangible action. And it's solutions," White House press secretary Kayleigh McEnany said.

Trump also signed an executive order last week to create a "National Garden of American Heroes" before July 4, 2024. To be certain, the monument is far from a done deal and Trump's plan could be dashed if presumptive Democratic nominee Joe Biden denies him a second term in November or Congress balks at allocating money for the project.

Several of the president's executive orders this year are focused on the coronavirus and the impact it has had on the economy. Last month, Trump ordered federal agencies to use emergency authority to scale back environmental reviews for highways, bridges and other major infrastructure projects.

But some law firms have advised that companies that rely on the executive order to obtain approval for long-term projects will expose themselves to lawsuits that have been promised by various environmental groups. An analysis from the Baker McKenzie law firm said legal support for the order "appears dubious and likely to be challenged at every turn."

Trump's extensive use of executive orders comes after he criticized Obama for doing the same, saying the country "wasn't based on executive orders."

"Right now, Obama goes around signing executive orders. He can't even get along with the Democrats, and he goes around signing all these executive orders. It's a basic disaster. You can't do it," Trump said

at a South Carolina campaign stop in 2016.

Hiring soared in May as mass layoffs eased

By CHRISTOPHER RUGABER AP Economics Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — The job market took a big step toward healing in May, though plenty of damage remains, as a record level of hiring followed record layoffs in March and April.

The Labor Department reported Tuesday that the number of available jobs rose sharply as well, but remained far below pre-pandemic levels.

The figures, from the government's Job Openings and Labor Turnover survey, or JOLTS, illustrate the whiplash the economy has experienced since the pandemic intensified in mid-March. Layoffs soared in March to a stunning 11.5 million, roughly four times the peak during the 2008-2009 recession. They remained extraordinarily high in April, at 7.7 million, but in May they fell back to pre-pandemic levels of 1.8 million.

Hiring, meanwhile, plunged in April to 4 million, the lowest level since 2011, but jumped to 6.5 million in May. While that is the most hires on records dating back to 2000, it wasn't nearly enough to offset the roughly 19 million layoffs in March and April.

And whatever ground has been recaptured to this point is now being imperiled by a resurgence of COVID-19 cases throughout the South and West. Despite a solid rebound in employment, the job market remains badly damaged, both by mandatory lockdowns and the reluctance of people to again visit restaurants, theaters or to travel freely, at least until a vaccine or an effective treatment for the virus is available.

The JOLTS report provides gross totals of hiring and layoffs, while the monthly jobs report, which also includes the unemployment rate, is a net figure of total jobs gained or lost.

On Thursday, the jobs report showed that employers added a net total of 4.8 million jobs in June, after a gain of 2.7 million in May. Even those huge net gains recaptured only one-third of job lost in March and April and the unemployment rate is 11.1%, down from its April and May levels but otherwise higher than at any time since the Depression.

Employers advertised 5.4 million jobs in May, about 10% higher than in April, but still below pre-pandemic levels of about 7 million.

GOP worries Trump's divisive June imperils Senate control

By ALAN FRAM Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump's June began with his Bible-clutching photo op outside a church after authorities used chemicals and batons to scatter peaceful demonstrators. It never got less jarring or divisive.

By month's end, he was downplaying a coronavirus pandemic upsurge that was forcing Western and Southern states to throttle back their partial reopening of businesses. And Republican strategists already straining to retain Senate control in November's elections were conceding that Trump's performance could make it harder to defend their majority.

One said key Republicans were telling Trump they're worried about his campaign and he should heed polls showing him in trouble. Another pointed to surveys showing diminished public optimism and many voters' views that Trump is poorly managing the surging virus and languishing economy. Still another said Republicans worry the GOP brand of cutting taxes could be overshadowed by Trump's drive to defend Confederate monuments.

All spoke on condition of anonymity to describe internal GOP thinking, and each said Republican prospects for holding the Senate remain viable. Yet their willingness to discuss the problem, plus carefully worded assessments by Republican senators and others in the party, highlight GOP worries about a June that saw Trump feed inflammatory rhetoric to his deeply conservative base, risking support from more moderate voters.

"In all elections, the political environment shapes how things come out, and sometimes you can't control

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that," No. 2 Senate Republican leader John Thune of South Dakota said last week. He said GOP candidates "need to do what they need to do to win. And in some states, he will be a benefit in some parts of the country. In other parts of the country, less so."

"It is the reason the president is sitting behind in the polls right now, because he can't stay on a message that is a unified message and one that is a positive one for the country," Rick Santorum, a former GOP Pennsylvania senator who challenged Trump for the party's 2016 presidential nomination, said Tuesday on CNN's "New Day."

Republicans control the Senate 53-47. Democrats must gain three seats to gain the majority if they win the White House because of the vice president's tie-breaking vote, four if they don't.

Even measured against the warp-speed news cycle now routine under Trump, June was remarkable.

He repeatedly used cataclysmic language to denigrate nationwide protests for social justice, mostly peaceful gatherings that he cast as mobs unleashing violence. He called for the U.S. military to "dominate" the streets of American cities, drawing rebukes from military leaders and his own current and former top Defense Department officials.

He held his first campaign rally in the coronavirus era in Tulsa, Oklahoma, where many in a modest crowd that Trump aides said would be far larger wore no masks. Critics called him racially insensitive for choosing a city that saw one of the 20th century's worst spasms of racial violence and originally scheduling it on June 19, date of the Juneteenth holiday celebrating the end of slavery in the United States.

John Bolton, his former national security adviser, released a book claiming Trump asked China's president to buy more farm products to bolster his reelection. Trump also used the month to refuse to erase Confederate commanders' names from U.S. military bases, retweet an image of a Florida supporter shouting, "White power!" and question reports that Russia had placed bounties on U.S. troops in Afghanistan.

"Republican Senate candidates will have to defend things President Trump says and does between now and Election Day," said Rory Cooper, a Republican strategist and longtime Trump foe. Cooper said many Trump positions "are toxic to mainstream voters and will make down-ballot Republican candidates equally toxic."

Trump's June outbursts came as polls showed him trailing presumptive Democratic presidential nominee Joe Biden nationally and in several battleground states. A Gallup poll released Monday showed Trump with a dangerously low 38% job approval rating.

Trump trailed in nearly all 2016 surveys until late in that campaign.

Both parties envision tight Senate races in closely divided states where moderate suburban voters, who have abandoned the GOP over Trump's penchant for sowing discord, could be key. These include Sens. Cory Gardner of Colorado and Martha McSally of Arizona, often seen as their party's most vulnerable incumbents.

Also facing competitive reelections are GOP Sens. Thom Tillis of North Carolina, Susan Collins of Maine, Joni Ernst of Iowa and Steve Daines of Montana. Both Georgia Republican senators, particularly Kelly Loeffler, may see close races. Sen. Doug Jones of solidly Republican Alabama is considered Democrats' most endangered incumbent.

Republicans must defend 23 Senate seats to Democrats' 12. But several Democratic challengers have posted strong fundraising numbers this year, including Amy McGrath in Kentucky, Mark Kelly in Arizona and Sara Gideon in Maine. Democrat Jaime Harrison, waging an uphill fight to topple three-term South Carolina GOP Sen. Lindsey Graham, said he'd raised nearly \$14 million over the past three months.

To Democrats, June merely underscores how this fall's presidential and congressional elections will be dominated by how Trump is viewed by voters.

"I think to a significant degree, this campaign is about Donald Trump vs. Donald Trump. And I think Trump is losing," said Sen. Bernie Sanders, I-Vt., who lost a bid for this year's Democratic presidential nod.

Stewart Boss, spokesperson of the Democratic Senatorial Campaign Committee, said GOP candidates would be damaged because they've been "unwilling to be a check" on Trump. Jesse Hunt, spokesperson for the National Republican Senatorial Committee, said Republicans "are well positioned to draw important

contrasts" against Democrats.

Scott Reed, the U.S. Chamber of Commerce's senior political strategist, said Trump has enunciated "zero" about his second-term agenda and should correct that. He said he believes independent swing voters abandoning Trump will be willing to back GOP Senate candidates and expressed cautious optimism.

"It's going to be tough" to hold the Senate, Reed said. "Republicans are playing defense across the board, but they're good defensive players."

Catch up on the 2020 election campaign with AP experts on our weekly politics podcast, "Ground Game."

Richmond removes statue of Confederate Gen. J.E.B. Stuart

By STEVE HELBER and DENISE LAVOIE Associated Press

RICHMOND, Va. (AP) — Work crews on Tuesday took down a monument to Confederate Gen. J.E.B. Stuart, the third major statue to be cleared away in less than a week as the Confederacy's former capital rushes to remove symbols of oppression in response to protests against police brutality and racism.

As a crowd cheered, crews strapped the huge bronze equestrian statue in harnesses and used a crane to lift it from its granite base to be trucked away. Some in the crowd chanted "Black Lives Matter" after the statue was removed. One person sang, "Na na na na, na na na na, hey hey, goodbye."

The Stuart statue was installed on Richmond's Monument Avenue in 1907, a time when white leaders across the South sought to glorify the 'lost cause' of the Civil War and suppress attempts by Black people to assert their equality.

It depicts James Ewell Brown (JEB) Stuart, commander of the Cavalry Corps of Robert E. Lee's Army of Northern Virginia, in full uniform with a sword at his side, turned east as his horse faces north. The statue is 15 feet (4.6 meters) high, atop a 7-foot (2.1 meter) pedestal.

Inscriptions on the base are filled with tributes to Stuart, who was fatally wounded by a Union soldier and died at age 31 on May 12, 1864.

"He gave his life for his country and saved his city from capture," reads one inscription.

The Stuart monument is one of several targeted by protesters in Richmond since the police killing of George Floyd in Minneapolis prompted nationwide demonstrations. Police declared an unlawful assembly on June 21 after protesters tried to pull it down with ropes.

Mayor Levar Stoney, citing his emergency powers on July 1, ordered the removal of all city-owned Confederate statues. Stonewall Jackson's likeness was removed that day, followed by a statue of Naval officer Matthew Fontaine Maury. Stoney has said the statues will be placed in storage while the city seeks public input on what to do with them.

Stuart's has been the last major statue left standing, other than a massive monument to Gen. Robert E. Lee that's on state land. The Lee monument also is slated for removal, but that has been blocked at least temporarily by an injunction issued in one of several lawsuits filed after Gov. Ralph Northam ordered its removal last month.

Death toll from flooding in Japan reaches 55, dozen missing

By MARI YAMAGUCHI Associated Press

TOKYO (AP) — Soldiers used boats to rescue residents as floodwaters flowed down streets in southern Japanese towns hit by heavy rains that were expanding across the region on Tuesday. At least 55 people have died and a dozen remain missing.

Pounding rain since late Friday in the southern region of Kyushu has triggered widespread flooding. More rain was predicted in Kyushu and the western half of Japan's main island of Honshu as the rain front moved east.

In Fukuoka, on the northern part of Kyushu, soldiers waded through knee-high water pulling a boat carrying a mother, her 2-month-old baby and two other residents.

"Good job!" one of the soldiers said as he held the baby up to his chest while the mother got off the boat, Asahi video showed. Several children wearing orange life vests over their wet T-shirts arrived on another boat.

An older woman told public broadcaster NHK that she started walking down the road to evacuate, but floodwater rose quickly to her neck. Another woman said, "I was almost washed away and had to grab a electrical pole."

The Fire and Disaster Management Agency said 49 victims were from riverside towns in Kumamoto prefecture. Another victim was a woman in her 80s found inside her flooded home in another prefecture.

About 3 million residents were advised to evacuate across Kyushu, Japan's third-largest island.

Tens of thousands of army troops, police and other rescue workers mobilized from around the country worked their way through mud and debris in the hardest-hit riverside towns along the Kuma River. Rescue operations have been hampered by the floodwater and continuing harsh weather.

Japan is at high risk of heavy rain in early summer when wet and warm air from the East China Sea flows into a seasonal rain front above the country. In July 2018, more than 200 people, about half of them in Hiroshima, died from heavy rain and flooding in southwestern Japan.

In Kuma village in Kumamoto prefecture, dozens of residents took shelter under a roofed structure in a park with no walls or floor. They sat on blue tarps spread on the dirt ground, with no partitions. The village office's electricity and communications had been cut.

Among the fatalities were 14 residents of a nursing home next to the Kuma River, known as the "raging river" because it is joined by another river just upstream and is prone to flooding. Its embankment collapsed, letting water gush into the nursing home.

Follow Mari Yamaguchi on Twitter at <https://www.twitter.com/mariyamaguchi>

Jerusalem offers a grim model for a post-annexation future

By JOSEPH KRAUSS Associated Press

JERUSALEM (AP) — It's hard to say what exactly will change in the West Bank if Israel follows through on its plans to annex parts of the occupied territory, but east Jerusalem, which was annexed more than a half-century ago, may provide some answers.

Israeli leaders paint Jerusalem as a model of coexistence, the "unified, eternal" capital of the Jewish people, where minorities have equal rights. But Palestinian residents face widespread discrimination, most lack citizenship and many live in fear of being forced out.

Rights groups say that in some aspects, Palestinians in east Jerusalem have even fewer legal protections than those in the West Bank, where it's possible to appeal to international laws governing the treatment of civilians in occupied territory.

They point to Israel's Absentee Property Law of 1950, which allows the state to take control of any property whose owner lives in an "enemy state" and was used to confiscate the lands and homes of the hundreds of thousands of Palestinians who fled or were forced out during the war surrounding Israel's creation in 1948.

Rights groups say that in recent decades, authorities have abused the law to seize homes in sensitive parts of Jerusalem, evicting Palestinian residents and paving the way for settlers to move in.

The Sumarin family has been locked in a 30-year legal battle to prove ownership of their home in Silwan, an east Jerusalem neighborhood coveted by Jewish settlers because of its proximity to holy sites.

When the original owner died in the 1980s, the property was deemed to have an absentee landlord because his four children lived in Jordan. The Israeli branch of the Jewish National Fund then purchased the property from the state in 1991. Last week, a court ordered the family to vacate the property by mid-August and to pay around \$5,800 in court fees.

Family members say the original owner left it to his nephew, who was born and raised there, and from

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whom they are descended. The extended family living in the home, which now includes 15 men, women and children, says it will appeal the decision.

"Who's absent? We're right here. I've been here for 40 years," said Amal Sumarin, the wife of the nephew's son. "Where are the families with their children supposed to go? Every house built in Silwan is under threat."

The Israeli branch of the Jewish National Fund, which promotes Jewish settlement in the Holy Land and is known by its Hebrew acronym KKL, did not respond to requests for comment.

Rights groups fear that if annexation takes place, Israel will use the same law to strip Palestinians of privately held land in the West Bank.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has vowed to annex all of Israel's settlements and the strategic Jordan Valley in line with President Donald Trump's Middle East plan, which overwhelmingly favors Israel and was rejected by the Palestinians.

It's unclear when or even if Netanyahu will follow through on his pledge, but he has made clear that he wants to annex land but not people, leaving cities, towns and villages under limited Palestinian self-rule. Tens of thousands of acres of privately owned land would likely become part of Israel, potentially leaving the owners "absent" in enclaves outside its new borders.

"It's not something that we will see the first day of annexation, and it won't be a big announcement," said Hagit Ofran, an expert on settlement policy at Peace Now, an Israeli rights group opposed to the settlements. "But the potential is that Israel will not only prevent the owners from accessing their land ... but also take over their land."

Palestinians in the annexed territories are unlikely to be offered citizenship, due to Israel's interest in preserving its Jewish majority, and many would refuse it so as not to legitimize Israeli rule. Instead, they are likely to get the same kind of permanent residency held by most Palestinians in east Jerusalem.

That form of residency grants Palestinians access to social services, freedom of movement in Israel and the right to vote in local elections — but not national ones. It can be revoked if Palestinians reside outside the city, as many are tempted to do because of the difficulty of building or expanding homes in east Jerusalem.

East Jerusalem Palestinians must apply for Israeli citizenship. Many refuse on ideological grounds, but those who do apply often encounter lengthy bureaucratic delays. In recent years, Israel has launched various efforts to narrow the gaps in east Jerusalem by investing in infrastructure, job creation and legalizing construction. But deep disparities remain.

Peace Now has found evidence of systematic housing discrimination and says around half of all Palestinian housing units in east Jerusalem have been built without hard-to-get permits, putting them at risk of demolition by Israeli authorities.

The inequities are on vivid display in Silwan, a crowded, run-down Palestinian neighborhood spilling into a valley just outside the walls of the Old City. It's proximity to the bitterly-contested hilltop religious site known to Muslims as the Noble Sanctuary and to Jews as the Temple Mount has made it a focus for powerful settler organizations who have spent decades acquiring properties there.

Palestinians view the sale of properties to such groups as a betrayal of their national cause, so the transactions are often carried out in secret through Palestinian middlemen, leading to drawn-out legal disputes and in some cases the physical takeover of homes — or parts of homes — by settlers who claim to have bought them.

Jawad Siyam's backyard is divided by a crude wall of corrugated steel. On the other side, a group of settlers live in a building that belonged to his family for decades. The settlers took control last year after a complicated 25-year legal battle that they won, in part by invoking the Absentee Property Law.

The two families don't get along.

Siyam says they shout at each other from their respective terraces. When the settlers held a party recently, Siyam responded to the loud music by dragging his speakers outside and blasting Arab pop.

"He is not a settler that comes to be your neighbor, he comes to take the next house and the next house," Siyam said. "These neighbors are coming to kick you out."

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Daniel Luria, the executive director of Ateret Cohanim, one of the settler organizations that operates in Silwan, says Jews have as much right to live there as in Tel Aviv. For him and other ideological settlers, Jerusalem is the capital of the biblical homeland promised to the Jews, and the settlers are heirs to the "pioneers" who established Israel in the first place.

"The Jews have a right, clearly, as the true sons of Abraham coming back home, to live in any neighborhood," he said. "Especially if an Arab wants to sell, which is the case in 99% of the cases."

For many Palestinians living in the West Bank, which has been under Israeli military rule for decades, annexation seems like a grim formality. Siyam fears they will be in for a cruel awakening.

"People think it will not change because they talk about the big image," he said. "If you talk about the small image, and details, it will change a lot."

VIRUS DIARY: Goodbye to NYC, and to its unforgettable sounds

By FARNOUSH AMIRI Report for America/Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — The last few weeks I spent in New York City, the soundtrack of my days went like this: police helicopters circling, firecrackers startling, uniform chants for justice rising into the air.

The noise was constant — particularly following what had been months of silence as the city that never sleeps went into a deep slumber. Since mid-March, the only sound we'd heard came from ambulances carrying the thousands of people who would become victims to a startling virus as the city became the epicenter.

I had dreamt of living in New York City since I was 13. I had come here from Southern California for the first time with my middle school choir class. We stayed in a hotel near Times Square, and I remembered the noise — the constant, looping sound of a city in motion. The subway rumbled underneath our feet as New Yorkers existed outside, creating a cacophony.

It was beautiful. I remember thinking: This is what life must sound like.

Now, more than a decade later, my time with New York is limited but also, somehow infinite. The days now have no beginning or end. We are not working from home but, rather, living at work. And now I find myself with too much time to recollect about a whirlwind romance with the only place I have ever felt at home.

In a 1967 essay, "Goodbye to All That," Joan Didion wrote: "I am not sure that it is possible for anyone brought up in the East to appreciate entirely what New York, the idea of New York, means to those of us who came out of the West and the South."

In many ways, I am so lucky. I got to have New York City for three beautiful and challenging years. For some, that may seem short, but I came alive here. I moved into a 300-square-foot apartment in the East Village in the summer of 2017, and life as I knew it changed.

I attended my dream school in New York. I met the girl who is now my best friend at a coffee shop near Washington Square Park. I fell in love for the first time while waiting for a table on the Upper West Side. I had my first national byline on the third floor of 30 Rock. I experienced my first heartbreak in an apartment deep in Bushwick. I graduated with my master's on a blistering hot summer day at Yankee Stadium.

I moved to four apartments in three years. I cried on every train line in the city's subway system but one. I truly lived in New York. And now, as the city is battered and broken down, as buildings remain closed and most stores are boarded up, I am leaving. Not because of the virus, but to start a new job.

Like many, I have spent these past three months mourning the life we had before this virus. The memories and lives lost. But I am also mourning the noise of a city in motion. And now, I wonder, will the sidewalks of New York ever be filled to the brim again? Will there be a day when the neighborhood barber shops, restaurants, and dive bars are busy again?

I don't know. But I know one thing. The other night, as protests erupted in each of the city's five boroughs, a beautiful sound poured into the corners and crevices of my Brooklyn neighborhood. It interrupted the chants, the helicopters and the fireworks. It was the sound of Martin Luther King Jr.'s "I Have A Dream" speech.

It echoed off the brownstones and spilled into the bodegas. It was the new soundtrack of a city in motion.

Virus Diary, an occasional feature, showcases the coronavirus pandemic through the eyes of Associated Press journalists around the world. Farnoush Amiri works for the AP/Report for America Statehouse News Initiative. Report for America is a nonprofit national service program that places journalists in local newsrooms to report on undercovered issues. Follow her on Twitter at <http://twitter.com/FarnoushAmiri>

Doctors say experimental treatment may have rid man of HIV

By MARILYNN MARCHIONE AP Chief Medical Writer

A Brazilian man infected with the AIDS virus has shown no sign of it for more than a year since he stopped HIV medicines after an intense experimental drug therapy aimed at purging hidden, dormant virus from his body, doctors reported Tuesday.

The case needs independent verification and it's way too soon to speculate about a possible cure, scientists cautioned.

"These are exciting findings but they're very preliminary," said Dr. Monica Gandhi, an AIDS specialist at the University of California, San Francisco. "This has happened to one person, and one person only," and it didn't succeed in four others given the same treatment, she said.

Another UCSF specialist, Dr. Steven Deeks, said: "This is not a cure," just an interesting case that merits more study.

The case was described at an AIDS conference where researchers also disclosed an important prevention advance: A shot of an experimental medicine every two months worked better than daily Truvada pills to help keep uninfected gay men from catching HIV from an infected sex partner. Hundreds of thousands of people take these "pre-exposure prevention" pills now and the shot could give a new option, almost like a temporary vaccine.

If the Brazil man's case is confirmed, it would be the first time HIV has been eliminated in an adult without a bone marrow or stem cell transplant. Independent experts want to see whether his remission lasts and for the intense drug combination that he received to undergo more testing.

"I'm very moved because it's something that millions of people want," said the 35-year-old man, whose spoke to The Associated Press on condition that his name not be published. "It's a gift of life, a second chance to live."

Transplants are how two other men, nicknamed the Berlin and London patients for where they were treated, were cured previously.

"I'm the living proof it's possible to be cured," Adam Castillejo, the London patient, said in a news conference at the AIDS meeting, which is being held online because of the coronavirus pandemic.

He and the Berlin patient, Timothy Ray Brown, had donors with a gene that confers natural immunity to HIV infection. Such transplants are too medically risky and impractical to attempt on a large scale, so doctors have been trying other approaches.

It's hard to eliminate HIV because it establishes an early "reservoir" of blood cells where it lies dormant and can't be attacked by medicines or the immune system. Infections can be controlled with drugs, but as soon as patients stop taking them, the dormant virus activates and renews the disease.

Dr. Ricardo Diaz of the University of Sao Paulo in Brazil led a study testing strong and new drug combinations to try to purge this reservoir.

"We are trying to wake up the virus" and boost the immune system's ability to eliminate it once it's flushed out of hiding, Diaz explained. The Brazil man had been taking a standard three-drug combo to suppress his virus. In September 2015, Diaz added two newer ones to intensify his treatment — dolutegravir and maraviroc — plus nicotinamide, a form of vitamin B3 that may help expose dormant virus.

After nearly a year, the patient went back to the standard three drugs for two more years, then stopped all HIV medicines in March 2019. The virus has been undetectable in many blood and tissue samples since then.

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"We can't search the entire body, but by the best evidence, we do not have infected cells," Diaz said. The most convincing evidence: Tests show the man has lost nearly all HIV antibodies — substances the immune system makes when fighting the virus.

Eager for independent verification, the patient said he went to a counseling center for an anonymous HIV test in February. It was negative.

"He made a picture of the results" and sent a photo of them, Diaz said.

The antibody results are "the most fascinating part of this story," said Deeks. "These are solid scientists" and "the team may have come up with something that helps," but it's going to take verification of these results and much more testing to know, he said.

In particular, doctors will want to see proof from blood tests that the patient truly had stopped his HIV medicines. Diaz said all HIV patients in Brazil get their medicines from a government health program and that he verified the man had stopped.

"I think it's very promising. This patient might be cured," but it will take more time to know, Diaz said.

The treatment did not succeed in four others treated the same way, or in any of the others in the 30-person study testing related approaches.

Diaz said he has approval for a new study in 60 patients, sponsored by government grants in Brazil and by ViiV Healthcare, the British company that makes maraviroc.

Dr. Anton Pozniak, head of the AIDS conference and an HIV specialist at the Chelsea and Westminster Hospital in London, said more time is needed to see if the virus rebounds.

"I'm waiting. I'm a skeptic about all of this ... until a couple of years go by," he said.

The separate study on prevention involved nearly 4,600 people in North and South America, Asia, and Africa. It tested shots of ViiV's experimental drug cabotegravir against daily pills of Truvada, the Gilead Sciences drug already approved for preventing HIV infection.

The study was stopped early, in May, when the shot seemed at least as effective as the pills. Final results now show the shot works better — there were 13 new infections among those who got it versus 39 among those taking Truvada, said the study leader, Dr. Raphael Landovitz of the University of California, Los Angeles.

"People can stay protected without having taken a pill every day," he said. "You get a shot and you don't have to do anything for two months. That's incredibly powerful."

The results "could revolutionize prevention for HIV worldwide" and give a new option for people who don't want to take a daily pill, Gandhi said.

ViiV has said it will seek U.S. approval for cabotegravir; its eventual price is unknown. Truvada costs \$1,600 to \$1,800 a month, but what patients pay out of pocket depends on insurance and other factors. With either drug, people are still urged to use condoms to prevent other sexually spread diseases.

Marilynn Marchione can be followed on Twitter at <http://twitter.com/MMarchioneAP>.

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Thermometers in hand, Dubai opens for tourists amid pandemic

By JON GAMBRELL Associated Press

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates (AP) — From French soccer jerseys to slick online campaigns, Dubai is trumpeting the fact that it reopened for tourism on Tuesday — but what that means for this sheikhdom that relies on the dollars, pounds, rupees and yuan spent by travelers remains in question.

With travel uncertain and the coronavirus still striking nations Dubai relies on for tourists, this city-state wants to begin coaxing people back to its beaches and its cavernous shopping malls. By instilling the idea that Dubai is safe, authorities likely hope to fuel interest in the sheikhdom ahead of its crucial winter months for tourism.

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But all that depends on controlling a virus that the United Arab Emirates as a whole continues to fight. Armed with thermometers, mandatory face masks and hand sanitizer, Dubai is wagering it is ready.

"I think that will give people confidence — when they're ready to travel — to come to Dubai," said Paul Bridger, the corporate director for operations at Dubai-based Rove Hotels. "It will take time to come back. ... We are expecting to be one of the first markets to be back because of the confidence that we can give to people that are traveling."

That Dubai is a tourist destination at all is largely thanks to its ruler, Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, who used the state-owned long-haul carrier Emirates to put this one-time pearling post on the map. Attractions like the Burj Khalifa, the world's tallest building, and the sail-shaped Burj Al-Arab luxury hotel draw transit passengers out of Dubai International Airport, the world's busiest for international travel.

In 2019 alone, Dubai welcomed 16.7 million international guests, up from 15.9 million the year before, according to the Dubai Department of Tourism and Commerce Marketing. The top seven tourist-sending nations were India, Saudi Arabia, the United Kingdom, Oman, China, Russia and the U.S. The city's 741 hotels saw around 75% occupancy for the year, with visitors staying on average 3½ days.

Those travelers also fuel Dubai's vast restaurant, bar and nightlife scene. Though drinking is illegal in the neighboring emirate of Sharjah and the nations of Iran, Kuwait and Saudi Arabia, alcohol sales remain a crucial part of Dubai's economy. Though bars only briefly reopened to quickly close again, alcohol-serving restaurants abound.

But even before the pandemic, lower global energy prices, a 30% drop in the city's real estate market value and trade war fears have led employers to shed staff. The virus outbreak accelerated those losses, especially as Dubai has postponed its Expo 2020, or world's fair, to next year over the pandemic.

That makes reopening for tourism that much more important, even though Dubai's top three tourist-feeding countries remain hard-hit by the virus, said Rabia Yasmeen, a consultant at the market-research firm Euromonitor International. Even retail sales are affected by tourism, with some 35% of all revenue coming from tourists, she said.

"It's good for them to go ahead and announce because there needs to be a call for the confidence to come back," Yasmeen said. "Someone has to take that step first to show the world."

And Dubai has, in typical headline-baiting fashion, taken those steps. French football club Olympique Lyonnais, under a sponsorship with Emirates, wore "Dubai Is Open" jerseys at a recent match. Dubai passport controllers have begun putting stickers on foreigners' passports reading in English and Arabic: "A warm welcome to your second home."

But there's a risk, particularly in allowing more travel as the virus stalks other countries. Emirates stopped flying to Pakistan over virus fears. Across the seven sheikhdoms that form the United Arab Emirates, there have been 52,600 confirmed cases of the virus among the 9 million people living here, and 326 deaths.

At Rove Hotels, a new budget chain run by state-linked firms Emaar and Meraas, thermometer-carrying staffers check the temperature of everyone coming inside. Cleaners fog disinfectants over rooms and wipe down tables and chairs. Even a camel statue and an oversized stuffed animal wore a mask. The chain, like others in Dubai, also has sought outside certification over its cleaning routines on top of fulfilling government regulations.

"It's kind of the icing on the cake to give people comfort that we're following those standards," Bridger said.

There are still risks. In order to travel, tourists must take a COVID-19 test within 96 hours of their flight and show the airline a negative result. Otherwise, they will be tested on arrival and required to isolate while awaiting the results, which travelers say typically takes a few hours.

Travelers must also have health insurance covering COVID-19 or sign a declaration agreeing to cover the costs of treatment and isolation.

"A key question comes in: Is the traveler ready to come to Dubai?" Yasmeen asked. "That's a big question mark."

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Associated Press writer Fay Abuelgasim in Dubai, United Arab Emirates, contributed to this report.

Follow Jon Gambrell on Twitter at www.twitter.com/jongambrellAP.

Today in History

By The Associated Press undefined

Today in History

Today is Wednesday, July 8, the 190th day of 2020. There are 176 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On July 8, 2000, Venus Williams beat Lindsay Davenport 6-3, 7-6 (3) for her first Grand Slam title, becoming the first Black female champion at Wimbledon since Althea Gibson in 1957-58.

On this date:

In 1776, Col. John Nixon gave the first public reading of the Declaration of Independence, outside the State House (now Independence Hall) in Philadelphia.

In 1889, The Wall Street Journal was first published.

In 1947, a New Mexico newspaper, the Roswell Daily Record, quoted officials at Roswell Army Air Field as saying they had recovered a "flying saucer" that crashed onto a ranch; officials then said it was actually a weather balloon. (To this day, there are those who believe what fell to Earth was an alien spaceship carrying extra-terrestrial beings.) Demolition work began in New York City to make way for the new permanent headquarters of the United Nations.

In 1950, President Harry S. Truman named Gen. Douglas MacArthur commander-in-chief of United Nations forces in Korea. (Truman ended up sacking MacArthur for insubordination nine months later.)

In 1972, the Nixon administration announced a deal to sell \$750 million in grain to the Soviet Union. (However, the Soviets were also engaged in secretly buying subsidized American grain, resulting in what critics dubbed "The Great Grain Robbery.")

In 1975, President Gerald R. Ford announced he would seek a second term of office.

In 1989, Carlos Saul Menem was inaugurated as president of Argentina in the country's first transfer of power from one democratically elected civilian leader to another in six decades.

In 1994, Kim Il Sung, North Korea's communist leader since 1948, died at age 82.

In 2011, former first lady Betty Ford died in Rancho Mirage, California, at age 93. Atlantis thundered into orbit on a cargo run that would close out the three-decade U.S. space shuttle program.

In 2012, Roger Federer equaled Pete Sampras' record of seven men's singles titles at the All England Club and won his 17th Grand Slam title overall, beating Andy Murray 4-6, 7-5, 6-3, 6-4.

In 2014, President Barack Obama appealed to Congress for \$3.7 billion in emergency spending to deal with the immigration crisis on the nation's southern border, where unaccompanied children were showing up by the thousands (Republican lawmakers rejected the request). Washington became the second state to allow people to buy marijuana legally in the U.S. without a doctor's note.

In 2018, divers rescued four of the 12 boys who'd been trapped in a flooded cave in northern Thailand with their soccer coach for more than two weeks. (The remaining eight boys and their coach were rescued over the next two days.)

Ten years ago: The largest spy swap between the U.S. and Russia since the Cold War unfolded as 10 people accused of spying in suburban America pleaded guilty to conspiracy and were ordered deported to Russia in exchange for the release of four prisoners accused of spying for the West. Violent protests erupted in Oakland, California, after a Los Angeles jury convicted a white former transit officer, Johannes Mehserle (yoh-HAH'-nes MEZ'-ur-lee), of involuntary manslaughter (instead of murder) in the videotaped fatal shooting of an unarmed black man, Oscar Grant. During an ESPN prime-time special, basketball free agent LeBron James announced he was leaving the Cleveland Cavaliers to join the Miami Heat.

Five years ago: On a rough day for tech, a "router issue" at United Airlines suspended all of the company's flights for nearly two hours, leading to 800 flight delays and 60 cancellations; a "technical problem"

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at the New York Stock Exchange halted trading; and the Wall Street Journal's website, WSJ.com, had "technical difficulties." (Government officials said it did not appear that the incidents were related, or the result of sabotage.) Medicare said it planned to pay doctors to counsel patients about end-of-life care, the same idea that sparked accusations of "death panels" and fanned a political furor around President Barack Obama's health care law.

One year ago: Iran began enriching uranium to 4.5%, just breaking the limit set by its nuclear deal with world powers. Billionaire financier Jeffrey Epstein was charged with sexually abusing dozens of underage girls; the newly unsealed federal indictment came more than a decade after he secretly cut a deal with federal prosecutors to dispose of nearly identical allegations. (Epstein was found unresponsive in his jail cell a month later; the medical examiner ruled the death a suicide.) After a remarkable run at Wimbledon, 15-year-old American Coco Gauff lost to former No. 1 Simona Halep, 6-3, 6-3, in the fourth round.

Today's Birthdays: Singer Steve Lawrence is 85. Actor Jeffrey Tambor is 76. Rock musician Jaimoe Johanson is 75. Ballerina Cynthia Gregory is 73. Actress Kim Darby is 73. Actress Jonelle Allen is 72. Children's performer Raffi is 72. Celebrity chef Wolfgang Puck is 71. Actress Anjelica Huston is 69. Writer Anna Quindlen is 68. Actor Kevin Bacon is 62. Actor Robert Knepper is 61. Rock musician Andy Fletcher (Depeche Mode) is 59. Country singer Toby Keith is 59. Rock musician Graham Jones (Haircut 100) is 59. Rock singer Joan Osborne is 58. Writer-producer Rob Burnett is 58. Actor Rocky Carroll is 57. Actor Corey Parker is 55. Actor Lee Tergesen is 55. Actor Michael B. Silver is 53. Actor Billy Crudup is 52. Actor Michael Weatherly is 52. Singer Beck is 50. Country singer Drew Womack (Sons of the Desert) is 50. Comedian Sebastian Maniscalco is 47. Actress Kathleen Robertson is 47. Christian rock musician Stephen Mason (Jars of Clay) is 45. Actor Milo Ventimiglia (MEE'-loh vehn-tih-MEEL'-yuh) is 43. Rock musician Tavis Werts is 43. Singer Ben Jelen (YEL'-in) is 41. Actor Lance Gross is 39. Actress Sophia Bush is 38. Rock musician Jamie Cook (Arctic Monkeys) is 35. Actor Jake McDorman is 34. Actress Maya Hawke is 22. Actor Jaden Smith is 22.