

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, July 11, 2020 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 008 ~ 1 of 90

- 1- Summer Fest Ad
- 2- 2019-20 Season Volleyball Team Awards
- 3- From the SD Dept. of Tourism: Happy July, Tourism Partners!
- 4- Covid-19 Update: by Marie Miller
- 8- Coming up on GDILIVE.COM
- 9- Area COVID-19 Cases
- 10- July 10th COVID-19 UPDATE
- 13- Baseball Schedule
- 14- Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs
- 15- Weather Pages
- 18- Daily Devotional
- 19- 2020 Groton Events
- 20- News from the Associated Press



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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L to R: Stella Meier, Payton Colestock, Eliza Wanner, Tadyn Glover, Indigo Rogers, Kaylin Kucker, Nicole Marzahn, Madeline Flihs. (Photo by Chelsea Hanson)

Coach Chelsea Hanson said, "It was pretty cool actually, this team kind of chose to do the awards this way, they just wanted to get in the gym and play again!"

2019-20 Season Volleyball Team Awards

Team MVP: Nicole Marzahn and Eliza Wanner

MVP Offense: Kaylin Kucker

MVP Defense: Tadyn Glover

ACE award: Payton Colestock

Most improved: Stella Meier

Rookie of the Year: Madeline Flihs

(Photo by Chelsea Hanson)

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, July 11, 2020 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 008 ~ 3 of 90

From the SD Dept. of Tourism: Happy July, Tourism Partners!

We hope you were able to watch or attend the Mount Rushmore Fireworks Celebration last week. It was a tremendous day and evening. We continue to calculate the economic impact and media coverage of the event. Thus far, we are extremely happy to share very conservative estimates that:

Attendees spent more than \$2 million while they were here for the fireworks.
Their spending generated more than \$160,000 in sales tax revenue for state and local governments.
The show has generated more than \$22 million in media coverage.

We hope to have even more updated numbers to report in the next Mile Marker.

We want to thank our industry for your support and assistance with the show. We know the event will inspire and influence travel to our state, now and into the future. In recent days, we have received numerous emails from potential visitors around the nation thanking our state for hosting the fireworks. They have also shared that they now have South Dakota squarely in their sights for a future trip. Excellent!

Here are some highlights from this week's COVID-19 update:

From June 28 to July 4, traffic to TravelSouthDakota.com increased 398% over the prior year. Much of this traffic can be attributed to the Mount Rushmore Fireworks event held on July 3rd.

While still seeing year-over-year declines of -26%, South Dakota continues to see improved travel spending that surpasses the national average and those of other states in our region.

The percentage of Americans who say they cancelled their trip completely increased significantly from 37% last week to 45% this week.

The percentage of American travelers who now feel safe traveling outside their community has fallen to 41%, a new low since mid-May.

63% of consumers now feel that the severity of the coronavirus in the US will worsen in the next month.

A thorough cleaning and hygiene plan continues to be the most important factor to Americans who are considering leisure activities, attractions or tours.

Thank you to our research partners for providing this information: Tourism Economics, Destination Analysts, STR, U.S. Travel Association, Arrivalist, Miles Partnership, MMGY Travel Intelligence, ADARA and Longwoods International.

As you can see, consumer sentiment has turned a bit more pessimistic and negative about the virus and travel. Now more than ever, it will be important for us to share with our visitors that:

South Dakota is ready to safely welcome them to our state, whether that be yet this summer, fall, or next year.

Your business has meticulously implemented - and is following - all the latest health and hygiene protocols to keep our guests safe and well.

Please don't hesitate to reach out to us if we can help you with anything. I can always be reached at James.Hagen@TravelSouthDakota.com. Enjoy the weekend! We'll be in touch again soon.

All our best,
Jim and Team
Jim Hagen
Secretary of Tourism

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, July 11, 2020 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 008 ~ 4 of 90

#138 in a series

Covid-19 Update: by Marie Miller

OK, so we've passed awful. It was another record day with 67,400 new cases. That's not just a record; it's 8000 cases over the record. This, of course, means our 11 worst days are the last 11 days, a streak I wouldn't mind breaking. And our rate of growth is increasing too; we're up to 2.2% growth in total cases. This is territory familiar from March and April, only now our base is higher at 3,197,200 cases to date. We have 39 states showing growth in 14-day rolling new case average and only three declining.

Setting records for new cases are Montana, Utah, Iowa, Ohio, Georgia, and North Carolina. Texas set records four times this week. Ohio, which had seemed to have the virus managed, is back in trouble with an average new-case number twice last month's average. Louisiana and Iowa seem to be in similar situations. Another troubling new trend is that cases in the US military forces have more than doubled in the last month. Hospitalization and death rates in the military remain low, likely largely because of the younger, healthier demographic.

792 new deaths were reported today, a 0.6% increase, putting us at 133,847. This number isn't growing as fast as new cases and not coming close to the peak in April, but it's growing, and this is a concern. We continue to lose valuable lives to this thing, now in increasing numbers. Eight states set single-day death records this week. Arizona, Texas, and South Carolina have experienced 100% increases in deaths in the last month. California, Louisiana, Mississippi, and Tennessee have had at least 10% growth. Experts are expecting a fairly sharp uptick in deaths nationwide for at least the rest of this month.

I spent most of the day immersed in papers and analyses related to a set of claims currently making the rounds in the social media swamp. This is the claim that herd immunity has been achieved in many places, and there's no need to worry because this will cause the pandemic to burn itself out. This is basically used as an argument for reopening everything, ditching the face masks and other mitigation measures, and just going back to "normal life." These claims rest primarily on some work done by a group of scientists in Europe who reportedly claim that the so-called herd-immunity threshold (HIT), the point at which herd immunity is reached, is not the 50 or 60 or 70 percent most experts cite, but instead as low as 10 or 20 percent. Now there's a lot of wide open space between 10 percent and 50 percent, so let's go exploring a bit.

To make sure we're all starting on the same page, let's talk first about herd immunity. Essentially, this is achieved when you have a large enough proportion of your population immune to a particular pathogen that infected people don't really have anyone to pass it on to, so transmission pretty much shuts down. Where there is herd immunity, there can still be little sporadic outbreaks when an infected person happens by chance to encounter a pocket of susceptible others, but these tend to burn themselves out fairly quickly because of the no-one-to-transmit-it-to problem. Overall, the immunity of the many protects the few who are still susceptible. This isn't a theory; it's an actual thing. We know it happens.

There is a sort of standard calculation done to estimate the HIT for any particular disease based on the virus's reproduction number. You will recall that the reproduction number for the virus is the number of other individuals, on average, to whom an infected person will transmit the virus. When reproduction number is estimated for a novel pathogen where the entire population is immunologically naïve, or susceptible, we call it R_0 ; when it is estimated later in the course of events, it is called R_e or R_t (for effective reproduction number or reproduction number over time). Either of these names will do; if you've been hanging out here for a while, you know I made an executive decision early on to go with R_e (mostly because it's easier to type).

The calculation for HIT is straightforward: $1 - (1/R_0)$. Easy computation; however, as with many things, the devil is in the details. The R_0 for SARS-CoV-2 is widely agreed to be between 2 and 6. That's a pretty wide range, which isn't surprising because it's difficult to place a very precise value on a parameter like this one while you're in the middle of an ongoing pandemic, which leaves you sort of short of definitive data on which to base the estimate. But working from what we have, we can place the HIT between 50% [$1 - (1/2) = 1 - 0.5 = 0.5$, or 50%] and 83% [$1 - (1/6) = 1 - 0.17 = 0.83$, or 83%]. You can see from this,

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, July 11, 2020 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 008 ~ 5 of 90

the higher the R_0 , the higher the HIT, which makes sense since it's going to be harder to block transmission of an easy-to-transmit virus.

Thing is, this simple computation rests on some assumptions that are not going to be exactly correct, among them that you have a homogeneous population which homogeneously mixes and that everyone who's infected is going to develop what's called sterilizing immunity, complete life-long protection. We know there is individual variation in risk of acquiring infection; this might be due to biological differences, to differing potential for exposure, or to a combination of the two. This is also going to be impacted by mitigation efforts which will reduce the potential for exposure.

And that's how you take a simple concept and turn it into an incredibly thorny problem. So we have a lot of smart people trying to figure out just what the actual HIT is for Covid-19. Whatever we come up with, it's going to be somewhat off-the-mark, simply because we're short on information at this point; but we do our best.

So this is where our story picks up. A team of scientists in the UK, the US, Brazil, and Portugal led by a mathematical bioscientist at the Liverpool School of Tropical Medicine made something of a splash a couple of months ago with a paper (I read it in preprint, so not yet peer-reviewed) discussing just what this virus's HIT might be. Their argument was that, because of population heterogeneity (the idea that we're not all the same in our susceptibility or opportunity for exposure), the HIT is going to be considerably lower than whatever the above formula yields. The theory goes like this: The people who are more susceptible or more exposed tend to be infected earlier. That reduces the number of people who are higher risk of infection because more and more of them will be either recovered and immune or dead. As the number of highly susceptible people decreases, incidence of the infection will decrease until you hit the HIT. And the more heterogeneous, or variable, your population, the lower the HIT is going to be; so in highly variable populations, the classical model (the computation above) is going to overestimate the HIT.

They then present a rather complex mathematical model for estimating the precise effect of this variability on the HIT computation, saying that, in theory, if you choose to use an R_0 around 3 and you have a lot of variability, the HIT could decline as low as 10 to 20% and recommending we "urgently" address the matter of obtaining accurate measures of individual variation. So this work is intended to illustrate just how much effect variability in a population can have on HIT, not to provide an estimate of HIT. They also point out that these conclusions rely on herd members remaining very loosely connected, interacting rarely, which limits opportunities for exposure; if they start hanging out together in bars and at parties, the HIT will rise.

I think what happened is that most folks didn't read the actual paper, but just read or heard summaries in their favorite news media, and so most of the nuance in these scientists' conclusions was lost; it is possible, in addition, that some figures doing the reporting chose to bend these conclusions to fit their own biases. Ten percent sounds like a miracle, and if you are invested in believing we no longer need these harsh mitigation measures, 10 percent is all you need to hear, not all that stuff about "theoretically" and "assuming" and "more study is needed." Because that's not a big story, is it?

Where things went from there is that some folks took a look at the outbreaks in various European countries, noting that cases had declined after precipitous rises and making the leap (a pretty big one) from there to declare that such declines were caused by the development of herd immunity. When you do that, you take a look at seroprevalence (the percentage of people who show antibodies to SARS-CoV-2) and conclude that number must be the HIT, which is not supported by any sort of—you know—evidence. Same story for New York. There was a flash-in-the-pan story from Sweden, whose non-lockdown approach to mitigation has been controversial, that some 30 percent of that population had developed immunity, which was taken as proof of concept, only to be retracted within days in favor of a study which showed the actual number was more like 7.3 percent, a number that no one who understands disease transmission thinks is right.

Anyway, this leads to the suggestion that suppressing this infection in the US is making things worse, that we should let natural infection burn through, only suppressing it enough to prevent overwhelming medical resources, until we, too, achieve HIT—like Europe. And then some stuff about mutation rate, accompanied

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, July 11, 2020 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 008 ~ 6 of 90

by a cockamamie theory that while the pandemic is suppressed, the virus is mutating like mad, moving on to present in some new form to which we can't transfer our old immunity from our initial exposure—or from responding to coronavirus-caused colds over the years. This is not scientifically supportable on a number of grounds, among them the fact that this virus is not mutating like mad, but is, in fact, mutating remarkably slowly for an RNA virus and there is no evidence of transferability of immunity in this manner.

(This is accompanied by a bunch of talk about T-cell immunity. That would fit under the category of innate immunity, if you will recall our conversation on that subject last night. But it's a stretch to start with an assumption that we can "transfer" our T-cell responses from not-closely-related viruses to SARS-CoV-2, but then suddenly hit a wall when SARS-CoV-2 mutates. This part of the speculation really goes off the rails of scientific credence.)

In the following discussion, I am drawing on the analyses of a number of infectious disease epidemiologists and public health experts, among them, Natalie Dean from the University of Florida, Jeffrey Shaman at Columbia University, Joel Miller at LaTrobe University in Australia, Mark Lipsitch at Harvard University, and one of the co-authors of the study referenced above, Caetano Souto-Maior from the National Institutes of Health, much of it from Twitter conversations I spent a fair amount of time tracking just lately. I have also drawn on a letter from a group at Imperial College London published in *The Lancet* last month. None of this is my opinion; all of it is the analysis of bonified experts.

We'll begin with the issue of attributing plateauing of cases in Europe to herd immunity. I've seen three compelling arguments asserting that plateau is far more likely due to lockdowns and other mitigation efforts than to the development of herd immunity. First, if the operative factor was herd immunity, the cumulative per-capita mortality rate from the infection would be expected to plateau at roughly the same level in countries with similar levels of health care and testing capacity. This is not what happened: Germany plateaued at 95 deaths per million population, the Netherlands at 332 deaths per million, and Italy at 525 deaths per million. When you have demographically similar populations in close geographic proximity with strong genetic similarities and similar previous exposure to other human coronaviruses, it's hard to make the case that there is evidence of radically different exposure, susceptibility, or severity, which is the only thing that would support the herd immunity theory. Secondly, if herd immunity had the determining factor, then we would expect to see no correlation between lockdown measures and death rate per capita. And yet, we do see that countries applying strict suppression measures early experienced far lower deaths per capita. And finally, if herd immunity had been reached in these countries, we expect seroprevalence to be similar from one to the next; but we instead see as much as a ten-fold difference that correlates well to the timing and stringency of suppression measures. In short, there is no evidence to support the supposition that plateauing was the result of achievement of the HIT in European countries.

Additionally, Shaman says a 20% HIT "is not consistent with other respiratory viruses. It's not consistent with the flu. So why would it behave differently for one respiratory virus versus another? I don't get that." Miller adds, "I think the herd immunity threshold [for naturally acquired immunity] is less than 60%, but I don't see clear evidence that any [place] is close to it."

Dean hosted a fascinating Twitter conversation about these issues. In this conversation, her primary point is that there is still far too much uncertainty to select a model and use it to pin down HIT for this virus, something the authors of the original paper took pains to point out too—for those who troubled to read the paper instead of just hearing a summary. They clearly said there is more information we need and that their HIT computations were theoretical and based on assumptions we need to further investigate before accepting. What they did not say is they knew the HIT for the virus or that they thought anyone had hit it.

Dean points at work by network epidemiologists showing that incoming risk is not necessarily equivalent to outgoing risk, that is we cannot be sure the people who are the most likely to be infected will be the people who are most likely to infect others. Apparently, there is some thought that the modeling is missing the point that our network is heterogeneous right now because essential workers are at work while the rest of us hang out at home, but that this is changing—and changing that dynamic along with it. She explains that the model assumes the heterogeneity on which those low HIT values rest is permanent instead of something that changes as economies open back up. And we've already established that any

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, July 11, 2020 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 008 ~ 7 of 90

model is only as good as the assumptions that underlay it.

There was a lot of discussion of the whole idea of taking this paper and using it to strengthen the case for "managed infection" to let the virus burn through a population, suppressing it only enough to prevent overwhelming the medical system, until the HIT is reached. To this, Souto-Maior, one of the co-authors of the paper in question, said, "As a coauthor in this study I'm going to start by saying what its conclusions are NOT: (i) it does NOT conclude that lockdowns/social distancing are unnecessary; (ii) it does NOT say "herd immunity" is ~20% regardless. In fact that number is conditional on social distancing. In fact the effect of this heterogeneity can actually strengthen the argument for the effectiveness of shutdowns." And Miller adds, "If you say: heterogeneity means we reach herd immunity sooner and so we can reopen safely now...the counter argument is that if the population is heterogeneous, that means shutdowns are even more effective, so stopping a shutdown gives a large bump to R_{eff} ."

And then the experts turn their attention to costs. "I believe that those who support 'managed' infection strategies are underestimating the true impact on morbidity and mortality (the numbers are staggering). And they are over-estimating their ability to 'manage' a virus that has so quickly gotten out of hand."

I'll add this: For the sake of argument, let's stipulate that 10-20 percent seroprevalence would be the threshold for naturally acquired herd immunity. (I don't think it is, but I want to follow this argument to its natural conclusion.) Let's do some math: Current estimates of seroprevalence in the US place it around one percent. Getting there through natural infection has cost us just short of 134,000 lives. Let's account for the fact that we're better at treating this thing than we were at the start and figure we can get by on half the deaths per identified case going forward (a very generous assumption), so that each additional percentage point would "cost" us only 67,000 lives; in that case, we'd be looking at over three-quarters of a million deaths to get to 10 percent seroprevalence, the low-end estimate for HIT being bandied about. And to get to 20 percent, we're in the neighborhood of 1.4 million lives lost. That doesn't sit very well with me. At all. Especially when you consider that, implicit in these arguments in favor of just shooting for herd immunity through natural infection is a willingness to sacrifice the most susceptible—the old, the sick, the black and brown, and the poor—in service of getting the young, the healthy, the white, and the well-to-do some protection. That's kind of ugly.

One more thing we haven't factored in here is the duration of immunity, a topic we've addressed before in relation to achieving herd immunity by way of natural infection. For other coronaviruses, duration seems to run somewhere around a year or two. If this one follows the pattern (and we have no particular reason to think it won't) and we've taken five months to get to that one percent seroprevalence, even allowing for the faster transmission we're seeing nowadays, it seems likely that, by the time we reach that HIT of 10 or 20 (or whatever) percent, the earliest-infected people's immunity will be on the wane, so we're going to need some more new infections to keep our seroprevalence level above the HIT. Result: We really never get there at all, and we're facing the fact that we sacrificed a few hundred thousand people in pursuit of a fantasy.

To put a cap on that line of thinking, there is a paper published earlier this week in *The Lancet* by Isabella Eckerle from the Geneva Centre for Emerging Viral Diseases and Benjamin Meyer from the Center for Vaccinology at the University of Geneva, who looked at seroprevalence determinations in various locations on three continents. Their conclusion: "[A]ny proposed approach to achieve herd immunity through natural infection is not only highly unethical, but also unachievable." That should put this whole line of thinking to bed.

Brigitta Mullican lives in Rockville, Maryland. She's a senior citizen, so she's one of those folks stuck at home during this pandemic, but she needed something to do all day, hanging around the house, deprived of her usual round of activities. A friend told her she'd heard masks were soon going to be required when people left their houses. At that point, masks were hard to come by, so Brigitta decided to help. She put out the word on social media that she would be sewing masks for people and invited requests, then she set to work, using the stocks of fabric and elastic she had on-hand to get started.

Well, the requests poured in and it became apparent her supplies were going to run out quickly, so she

put out a call for materials people might have sitting around the house. The response was, according to a friend, "overwhelming." She had fabric with cats, hearts, the Washington Nationals, Harley Davidson, Pittsburgh Steelers. People sent sewing machine needles too. She didn't need to purchase anything, so she just kept sewing masks and giving them away. Her sewing machine broke down, so she borrowed one and kept on sewing. As of a couple of months ago, she'd given away over 700 of them to restaurant employees, post office workers, Meals on Wheels, friends, family, and strangers all over the country.

Her friend said, "Seniors wonder what they can do during these unbelievable times. In fact, through Brigitta's inspiration, I realized I needed to get involved in dealing with the boredom of the coronavirus crisis. As a result, I am helping Montgomery County Public School System with the distribution of food to needy families. . . . As seniors she and I have contributed to our community in ways we never dreamed."

You see what happened there, right? Like the rats? When we see someone helping, we help too. Maybe you want to consider being the first rat to pitch in. Who knows who will see you and be inspired to pack up a few lunches or something? Worth a try.

We can build the kind of world we want to live in, but we have to put in the work. It won't build itself. Be well. I'll see you tomorrow.

Coming Up on GDILIVE.COM

2020 GHS Graduation Ceremony



**Sunday, July 12, 2020
2 .m.
GHS Arena**

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, July 11, 2020 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 008 ~ 9 of 90

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	July 9	July 10	July 11			
Minnesota	39,133	39,589	40,163	40,767			
Nebraska	20,201	20,425	20,623	20,777			
Montana	1,327	1,371	1466	1,593			
Colorado	34,664	35,116	35,525	36,191			
Wyoming	1,378	1,404	1428	1,445			
North Dakota	3898	3971	4070	4154			
South Dakota	7,163	7242	7336	7401			
United States	2,994,776	3,055,144	3,118,168	3,187,270			
US Deaths	131,626	132,309	133,291	134,117			
Minnesota	+564	+456	+574	+604			
Nebraska	+155	+224	+198	+154			
Montana	+78	+44	+95	+127			
Colorado	+407	+452	+409	+666			
Wyoming	+29	+26	+24	+17			
North Dakota	+49	+73	+99	+84			
South Dakota	+58	+79	+94	+65			
United States	+56,152	+60,368	+63,024	69,102			
US Deaths	+1,320	+683	+982	+826			

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

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, July 11, 2020 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 008 ~ 10 of 90

July 10th COVID-19 UPDATE

Groton Daily Independent
from State Health Lab Reports

This is sobering today. A record number of deaths recorded in South Dakota with six. Four were males and two females. 2 were in the 30-39 age group, 1 in the 60-69 age group and 3 in the 80+ age group. Hughes County recorded its first two deaths while Minnehaha County had one and Pennington County three.

Campbell County is now on the fully recovered list. Dewey County continues to have lots of cases with six more, making a total of 32 active cases in that county. Brown County had two positive cases and one recovered for a net gain of one positive case making 19 total.

Brown County:

Active Cases: +1 (19)
Recovered: +1 (333)
Total Positive: +2 (354)
Ever Hospitalized: 0 (18)
Deaths: 2
Negative Tests: +51 (3309)
Percent Recovered: 94.1% (-.2)

South Dakota:

Positive: +65 (7401 total)
Negative: +1167 (81,141 total)
Hospitalized: +8 (726 total). 65 currently hospitalized (Up 4 from yesterday)
Deaths: +6 (107 total)
Recovered: +51 (6331 total)
Active Cases: -18 (886)
Percent Recovered: 86.6 +0.3

Counties with no positive cases report the following negative tests: Harding +2 (42), Perkins +4 (100), Potter +3 (192), unassigned -49 (2560).

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: +5 recovered (498 of 551 recovered)
Brookings: +4 positive, +2 recovered (71 of 90 recovered)
Brown: +2 positive, +1 recovered (333 of 354 recovered)
Brule: +1 recovered (24 of 33 recovered)
Buffalo: -1 positive, +2 recovered (68 of 83 recovered)
Butte: +1 positive (0 of 2 recovered)
Campbell: +1 recovered (1 of 1 recovered)
Clark: +1 recovered (14 of 15 recovered)
Clay: +1 positive, +2 recovered (79 of 93 recovered)
Codington: +2 positive, +2 recovered (66 of 92 recovered)
Davison: +1 positive (37 of 52 recovered)
Day: +1 recovered (15 of 19 recovered)
Dewey: +6 positive (1 of 33 recovered)

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, July 11, 2020 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 008 ~ 11 of 90

Faulk: +1 positive (20 of 24 recovered)
 Grant: +1 recovered (14 of 16 recovered)
 Hanson: +2 recovered (8 of 13 recovered)
 Hughes: +1 recovered (54 of 68 recovered)
 Hutchinson: +1 recovered (13 of 15 recovered)
 Lake: +3 positive, +1 recovered (20 of 26 recovered)
 Lincoln: +3 positive, +3 recovered (340 of 384 recovered)
 Lyman: +4 positive, +9 recovered (56 of 84 recovered)
 McCook: +2 recovered (10 of 15 recovered)
 Meade: +4 recovered (45 of 53 recovered)
 Mellette: +1 recovered (4 of 6 recovered)
 Minnehaha: +15 positive, +17 recovered (3448 of 3738 recovered)
 Oglala Lakota: +6 recovered (75 of 108 recovered)
 Pennington: +8 positive, +8 recovered (455 of 624 recovered)
 Roberts: +1 recovered (46 of 53 recovered)
 Todd: +4 positive (52 of 65 recovered)
 Tripp: +1 positive, +1 recovered (16 of 19 recovered)
 Union: +8 positive, +1 recovered (123 of 148 recovered)
 Yankton: +1 positive (72 of 84 recovered)
 Ziebach: +1 positive (1 of 3 recovered)

Fully recovered from positive cases (Gained Campbell): Campbell 1-1, Deuel 4-4, Haakon 1-1, Hyde 3-3, Kingsbury 6-6, Lawrence 19-19, Sanborn 12-12, Spink 12-12, Sully 1-1.

The NDDoH & private labs report 5,573 completed tests today for COVID-19 with 84 new positive cases, bringing the statewide total to 4,154. NDDoH reports no new deaths.

State & private labs have reported 219,737 total completed tests.
 3,496 ND patients are recovered.

RACE/ETHNICITY OF SOUTH DAKOTA COVID-19 CASES

Race/Ethnicity	# of Cases	% of Cases
Asian, Non-Hispanic	715	10%
Black, Non-Hispanic	984	13%
Hispanic	1122	15%
Native American, Non-Hispanic	1182	16%
Other	752	10%
White, Non-Hispanic	2646	36%

County of Residence	# of Deaths
Beadle	7
Brown	2
Buffalo	3
Faulk	1
Hughes	2
Jackson	1
Jerauld	1
Lake	1
Lincoln	1
Lyman	1
McCook	1
Meade	1
Minnehaha	60
Pennington	21
Todd	2
Union	1
Yankton	1

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, July 11, 2020 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 008 ~ 12 of 90

County	Positive Cases	Recovered Cases	Negative Persons
Aurora	34	33	299
Beadle	551	498	1529
Bennett	4	3	436
Bon Homme	13	12	620
Brookings	90	71	1940
Brown	354	333	3309
Brule	33	24	558
Buffalo	83	68	544
Butte	2	0	555
Campbell	1	1	66
Charles Mix	96	39	897
Clark	15	14	339
Clay	93	79	1045
Codington	92	66	2106
Corson	19	17	154
Custer	10	8	610
Davison	52	37	1768
Day	19	15	444
Deuel	4	4	312
Dewey	33	1	1045
Douglas	10	4	344
Edmunds	8	7	312
Fall River	13	9	768
Faulk	24	20	136
Grant	16	14	559
Gregory	5	2	256
Haakon	1	1	247
Hamlin	13	11	502
Hand	7	6	214
Hanson	13	8	147
Harding	0	0	42
Hughes	68	54	1308
Hutchinson	15	13	743

Hyde	3	3	103
Jackson	6	2	362
Jerauld	39	37	243
Jones	1	0	40
Kingsbury	6	6	432
Lake	26	20	707
Lawrence	19	19	1542
Lincoln	384	340	4874
Lyman	84	56	747
Marshall	5	4	318
McCook	15	10	513
McPherson	5	4	175
Meade	53	45	1464
Mellette	6	4	237
Miner	10	6	205
Minnehaha	3738	3448	21245
Moody	23	20	497
Oglala Lakota	108	75	2594
Pennington	624	455	8002
Perkins	0	0	100
Potter	0	0	192
Roberts	53	46	1215
Sanborn	12	12	176
Spink	12	12	927
Stanley	14	13	168
Sully	1	1	53
Todd	65	52	1431
Tripp	19	16	484
Turner	28	24	737
Union	148	123	1526
Walworth	16	10	440
Yankton	84	72	2521
Ziebach	3	1	157
Unassigned****	0	0	2560

SEX OF SOUTH DAKOTA COVID-19 CASES

Sex	# of Cases	# of Deaths
Female	3581	58
Male	3820	49

Age Range	# of Cases	# of Deaths
0-19 years	799	0
20-29 years	1540	1
30-39 years	1553	5
40-49 years	1170	7
50-59 years	1153	12
60-69 years	687	20
70-79 years	266	14
80+ years	233	48

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, July 11, 2020 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 008 ~ 13 of 90

Baseball Schedule

Date	Team	Opponent	Location	Time
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)

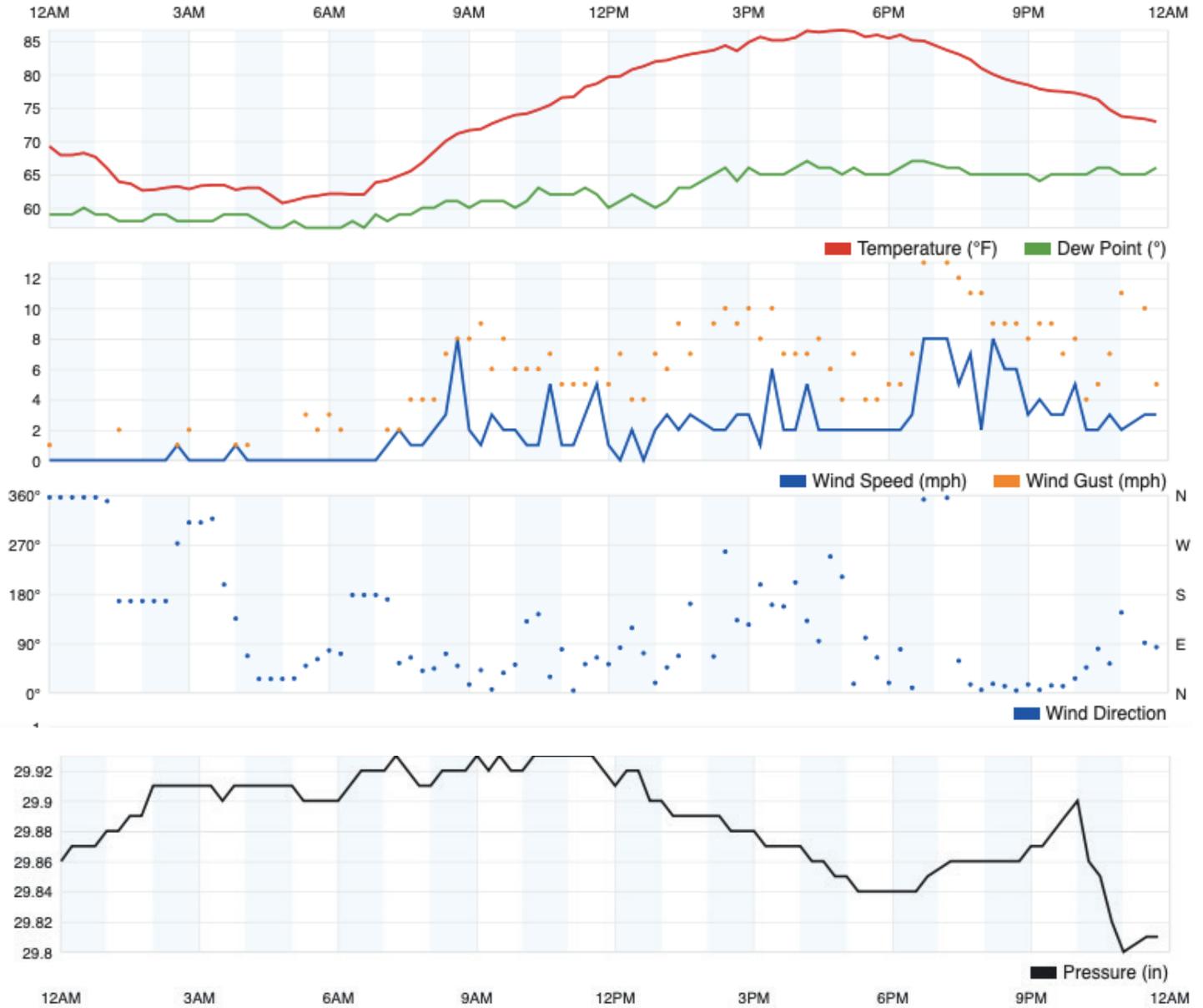
First Round State VFW Jr. Teener Schedule in Webster

DATE	AWAY TEAM	HOME TEAM	Result/Time
Fri, Jul 17	SDVFW 14U Castlewood	SDVFW 14U Groton	12:00PM CDT
Fri, Jul 17	SDVFW 14U Canova Gang	SDVFW 14U Parker	2:30PM CDT
Fri, Jul 17	SDVFW 14U Mt. Vernon-Plankinton	SDVFW 14U Gregory	5:00PM CDT
Fri, Jul 17	SDVFW 14U FH Hitmen	SDVFW 14U Webster	7:30PM CDT

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, July 11, 2020 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 008 ~ 14 of 90

Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs



Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, July 11, 2020 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 008 ~ 15 of 90

Today



Mostly Sunny

High: 81 °F

Tonight



Mostly Clear

Low: 59 °F

Sunday



Sunny

High: 84 °F

Sunday
Night



Mostly Clear

Low: 66 °F

Monday



Chance
T-storms

High: 87 °F

Today

- Partly cloudy, a few showers and thunderstorms mainly east.
- Highs 75-88°F

Tonight

- Mostly Clear
- Lows 54-61°F

Sunday

- Mostly Sunny
- Highs 80-93°F

Graphic Created 7/11/2020 2:05 AM

A few showers and thunderstorms are possible this morning, but most of the activity should be over NE SD and WC MN this afternoon. Tonight and Sunday will be dry. #mnwx #sdwx

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, July 11, 2020 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 008 ~ 16 of 90

Today in Weather History

July 11, 1909: A deadly, estimated F2 tornado moved ESE across the Simpson Park section of Big Stone City in South Dakota. A bus was thrown from the road, and the driver was killed. Two homes and several barns were destroyed. As the tornado crossed the foot of Big Stone Lake, it tore apart a railroad yard and killed four of the 26 Armenian laborers who were living in box cars at Ortonville, Minnesota. Nineteen were injured.

July 11, 1981: Severe thunderstorms moved eastward across the entire length of the South Dakota along the northern portion of the state. Hail, with the largest up to nine inches in circumference, resulted in 100 percent crop loss, damage to numerous buildings and loss of livestock. Trees were stripped, and large limbs were broken. High winds also accompanied these storms. Storms lasted into the early morning hours on the 12. Thunderhawk in Corson County had estimated winds of 70 to 75 mph that destroyed a machine shop and seven metal grain storage bins. In and around Pollock, a silo was moved three feet off the foundation. Power and telephones lines were down. Rainfall measured 2.28 inches in two hours in Pollock.

1888 - Heavy snow reached almost to the base of Mt. Washington, NH, and the peaks of the Green Mountains were whitened. (David Ludlum)

1936: From July 5-17, temperatures exceeding 111 degrees in Manitoba and Ontario claimed 1,180 lives (mostly the elderly and infants) during the most prolonged, deadliest heat wave on record. Four hundred of these deaths were caused by people who drowned seeking refuge from the heat. In fact, the heat was so intense that steel rail lines and bridge girders twisted, sidewalks buckled, crops wilted and fruit baked on trees. Some record temperatures include; 112 degrees at St. Albans and Emerson, Manitoba, 111 at Brandon, Manitoba, 108 at Atikokan, Ontario, and Winnipeg, Manitoba.

1987 - Early morning thunderstorms produced wind gusts to 90 mph at Parkston, SD, and wind gusts to 87 mph at Buffalo, MN. Later in the day strong thunderstorm winds at Howard WI collapsed a circus tent injuring 44 persons. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1988 - Thunderstorms produced heavy rain in southern Texas, with totals ranging up to 13 inches near Medina. Two men drowned when their pick-up truck was swept into the Guadalupe River, west of the town of Hunt. Ten cities in the eastern U.S. reported record high temperatures for the date. Baltimore, MD, reported a record high reading of 102 degrees for the second day in a row. (Storm Data) (The National Weather Summary)

1989 - Afternoon and evening thunderstorms produced severe weather from North Dakota to Indiana. Thunderstorms in North Dakota produced tennis ball size hail at Carson. Thunderstorms in Indiana produced wind gusts to 75 mph at Fort Wayne. Five cities in the Southern Atlantic Coast Region reported record high temperatures for the date, including Lakeland, FL, with a reading of 100 degrees. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1990: The costliest hailstorm in U.S. history occurred along the Front Range of the Colorado Rockies. (Denver, Colorado): Softball-sized hail destroyed roofs and cars, causing more than \$600 million in total damage.

Groton Daily Independent

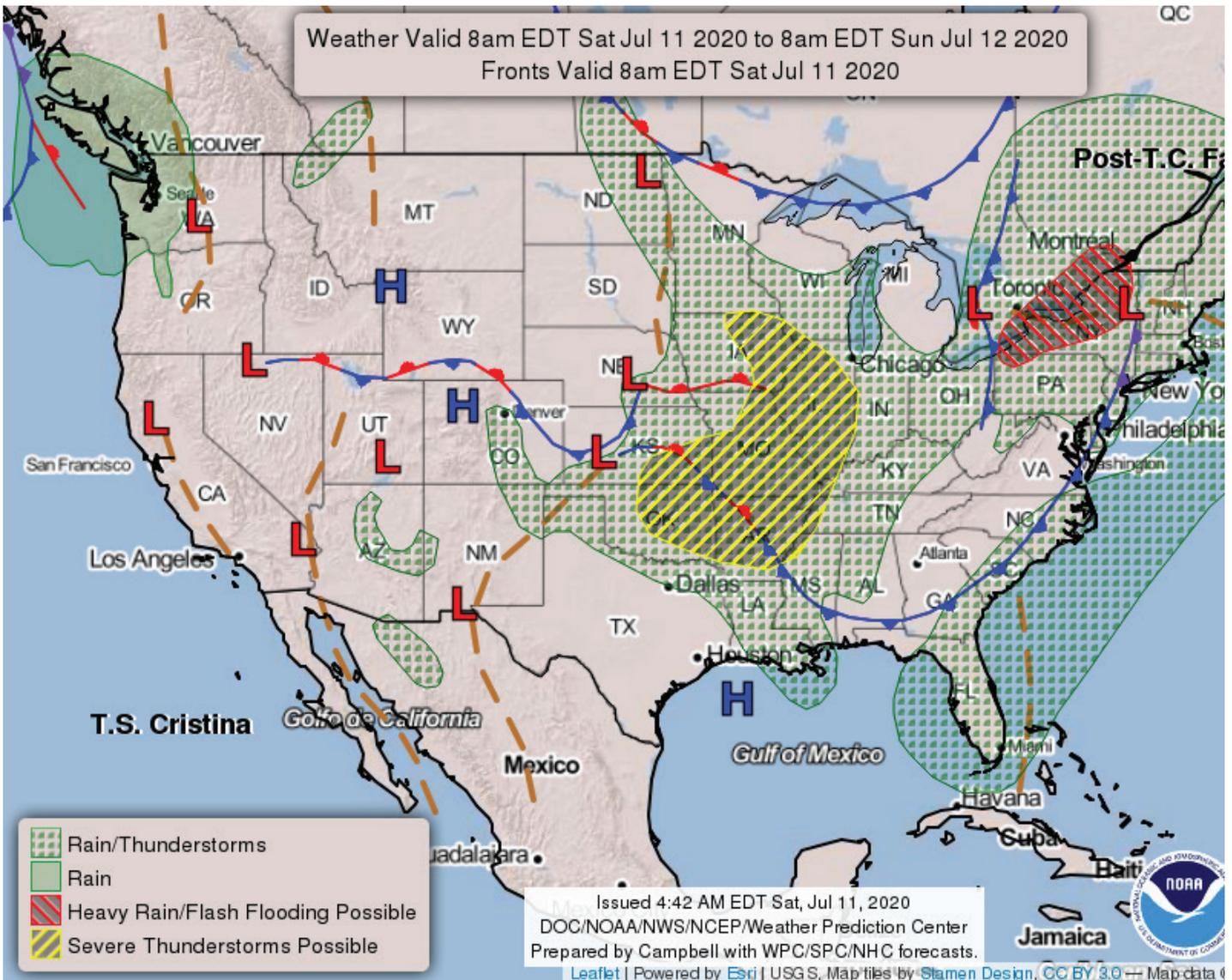
Saturday, July 11, 2020 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 008 ~ 17 of 90

Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 87 °F at 4:11 PM
Low Temp: 60 °F at 5:04 AM
Wind: 14 mph at 7:04 PM
Precip: .00

Today's Info

Record High: 110° in 1930
Record Low: 45° in 1941
Average High: 83°F
Average Low: 59°F
Average Precip in July.: 1.07
Precip to date in July.: 0.32
Average Precip to date: 11.91
Precip Year to Date: 8.64
Sunset Tonight: 9:21 p.m.
Sunrise Tomorrow: 5:58 a.m.



Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, July 11, 2020 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 008 ~ 18 of 90



THE REWARDS OF HONESTY

One of the traits that made Harry S. Truman a great president was his honesty. In fact, it was more important to him than the presidency.

During the presidential campaign against Thomas Dewey, his staff notified him that his campaign funds were running low. When one of his supporters was presented with this information, he approached Truman and said, "I'll give you what you need if, when you become president, you will use your office to get policies that will benefit me."

"Give your money or keep it," said Truman, "but I'm not making any deals."

His response electrified his staff, and they began to work harder than ever. As a result, the money coming into his election committee increased dramatically, and Truman went on to win the election.

We read in Proverbs that, "The Lord hates cheating, but He delights in honesty." That advice is about as straight forward as it gets. And, there is no way to get around it.

Honesty is easy to verify: We are either honest, or we are not honest. We either tell the truth, or we deceive others. There are no "degrees" in honesty. We can't be 99% honest and 1% dishonest or somewhere in between. It's 100% or nothing.

Honesty is necessary for a Christian's integrity.

Prayer: It is so easy, Lord, to compromise the truth when we want to fulfill some worldly desire. Cleanse us from deceit and fill our minds and mouths with the truth. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today : The Lord hates cheating, but He delights in honesty. Proverbs 11:1

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, July 11, 2020 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 008 ~ 19 of 90

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

Sioux Falls schools enter Phase 2 of return to play plan

By BRIAN HAENCHEN Argus Leader

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — Following a nearly month-long stay in Phase 1 of their return to play game plan, the Sioux Falls public schools are ready to advance to Phase 2 next week.

To some, the 28-day stay in Phase 1 and upcoming 21-day stay in Phase 2 may seem like overkill — after all, the NFHS guidelines upon which the school district's plan is based sets the minimum at two weeks in each phase. But the district's multi-phased approach was designed with two specific targets in mind: To ensure fall sports can begin on time and, when they are allowed to resume, that their athletes are able to hit the ground running.

"Our whole goal in this is to start (fall sports and activities) on August 3. We want to compete on August 3," SFSD activities director Casey Meile told the Argus Leader. "We've taken some really good measures and have been really methodical and smart about how we're planning to make that happen."

With no setbacks through Phase 1 — "Everything's been going great," Meile said — Lincoln, Roosevelt and Washington are preparing to move into Phase 2 on Monday.

While pre-workout screenings and an overall focus on individual fundamental skill development will continue, two coaches will be allowed to help with workouts, with limitations on gathering size loosened based on each sport. For example, basketball is now allowed 20 participants in the main gym and 10 in the auxiliary gym, while volleyball can have 40 total participants (24-main, 16-auxiliary).

On-field football workouts will also begin Monday, with groups limited to 25 per half of field, which will allow for position-specific workouts while still maintaining social distancing. Meile said they've discussed bringing out helmets and pads so the athletes can begin getting acclimatized. "They're going to start ramping it up," Meile said.

Football, and the other sports, will also be allowed to start running group drills (i.e. set recognition and skeleton group drills on air). Scrimmaging and drills involving face-to-face interaction are still not allowed, but, Meile said, they are gradually "increasing that bubble."

Team activities and workouts will be lengthened to 75 minutes beginning Monday, but weight room sessions — which will be allowed larger groups — will remain at 45 minutes to accommodate more athletes. Not unlike others in the state, Meile said the Sioux Falls strength and conditioning coaches have seen upsides to the new format, with coaches telling him that the participants are "fresh and excited" when they arrive. "All of our coaches were really positive on what's going on and on the approach we've taken," Meile said.

"We frameworked everything around (strength and conditioning) at the three schools," he added. "We don't think our kids, if they've been participating in our strength and conditioning program, are going to come back out of shape. We think we're going to come and hit the ground running. We think they're going to be fresh."

Barring any setbacks, the three Sioux Falls schools will move into the third and final phase on Aug. 3 — the scheduled start date for soccer, competitive cheer, competitive dance and girls tennis.

"Ultimately, we're successful if we kick off and we're practicing on Aug. 3," Meile said. "That's really going to be the litmus test on whether or not our summer program was a success."

Canteen cup left behind by South Dakota GI found in Germany

By JOHN KUBAL The Brookings Register

BROOKINGS, S.D. (AP) — In October 1944, four months following the June 6 D-Day landings in Normandy, France, United States Army units were on the verge of bringing the ground war into Germany itself. For 19 days beginning in early October, they fought German Panzer units in and around Aachen, Germany.

And a G.I. from Brookings took part in the action, leaving behind a piece of gear that would be found more than 75 years later.

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, July 11, 2020 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 008 ~ 21 of 90

The soldier was Kenneth Heath; the artifact is a battered standard Army-issue canteen cup. As can be seen in photos, the canteen is flattened nearly beyond recognition and has multiple perforations. Roughly etched on it is Heath's name; the name of Doris, his wife; Brookings, S.D.; a heart with an arrow through it and what might be leaves.

The Brookings Register found out about the canteen via some circuitous emails. The first was written by Es Westhovens, who lives in Holland. He was metal detecting in Aachen when he found the canteen: in part his email, reads: "... Anyway, can someone help me to find the soldiers family? so I can sent this item back to them, I really hope the soldier lives but must be very old and probably no Facebook

"Sorry for my bad English greetings from Holland."

A second email corroborated much of the above information and helped locate the names of two of Kenneth Heath's five children. The Register interviewed both of them.

In the thick of things

"Very little," said Peggy Pirrung, who now lives in Sioux Falls, when asked about how much she knew about her late father's World War II service.

"It was a horrible war. He was in the worst part of it: Normandy, Northern France, Rhineland and the Ardennes Forest during the Battle of the Bulge. He was an engineer. His job was driving heavy trucks to build bridges. When they (the Germans) blew up all the bridges except for one, he was one of the men who had to go in and rebuild them all."

"He was pretty much in the thick of things," she added. "He was assigned to the 1274th Engineering Company." While she has seen pictures of the canteen, she had no memory of her father ever talking about it.

However, Pirrung, who was born in 1947, has a pretty good paper trail covering her father's life and activities, including documents related to going into the Army, pictures of him in uniform and wedding pictures.

She said her parents were both born in Brookings. Her mother's maiden name was Doris Iverson. Kenneth Heath was one of nine children.

"Following the death of his father, he had to quit school after the eighth grade," Pirrung said. "He helped support his mother." He would later join the Army, serving from March 16, 1943, to November 12, 1945.

Kenneth and Doris Heath would have five children. In birth order they were: Roger, now deceased and the only child to be born in Brookings; twins Betty Pingon, now living in Seattle, and Bonnie Savold, now living in Grand Junction, Colorado; Peggy Pirrung; and Dennis, now living in Florida.

"My dad and my two brothers were truckers," Pirrung added. Like father, like sons.

Waiting for the canteen

"He taught me how to drive," Dennis said, noting that like his father, he, too, was a truck driver. Dennis was born and grew up in Sioux Falls. He did a 3 1/2-year tour in the Marine Corps and later drove trucks in California and Colorado before retiring to Florida.

In talking about his father's World War II service, Dennis brings a historical perspective to the events in and around Aachen.

He believes that his father's unit was not part of the American forces in place at the time of the battle; but it would have been used in a temporary reinforcement role for engineering assignments.

"I know his unit wasn't with that Army," he explained. "They were engineers. There were a lot of rivers that had to be crossed. Of course, the Germans blew all the bridges.

"What I think happened, he was serving probably in the south and they went up there to help build bridges across these rivers and eventually he returned back to the south and he was sent to the Battle of the Bulge."

He noted that a lot of historical information relative to the areas and battles in which his father participated can be found online.

For his part and tied to the role his father played, Dennis has been trying to get the canteen. He has attempted to get in touch with Es Westhovens via email, but he has received no response.

"I've done all that I can," he said. "He found the cup; it belongs to him until he decides to return it. It's his."

SD Lottery

By The Associated Press undefined

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

Mega Millions

10-15-20-49-53, Mega Ball: 22, Megaplier: 5

(ten, fifteen, twenty, forty-nine, fifty-three; Mega Ball: twenty-two; Megaplier: five)

Estimated jackpot: \$83 million

Powerball

Estimated jackpot: \$79 million

Professional Bull Riders welcome fans back into arena

By STEPHEN GROVES Associated Press

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — As bull riders attempted to hang on for eight seconds Friday night, they were encouraged by something they hadn't heard in months — the cheers of a crowd.

A little more than a thousand fans were on hand in the 9,000-seat arena to watch one of the first indoor professional sporting events since the coronavirus pandemic began.

The Professional Bull Riders event ends a month-long competition that until Friday has played out before silent stands. It's a cautious step toward giving sports fans who have been cooped up for months a chance to leave their homes and watch a bull attempt to throw a man from its back as the rider tries to hold on.

Other professional sports leagues are watching the bull riding event to observe how fans may be allowed back into stadiums and arenas, competition organizers said. NASCAR will let thousands of spectators into a race in Texas on July 19, but English soccer's Liverpool has played out its march to a first league title in 30 years in front of empty stadiums.

"It's going to be very sparsely attended tonight," Professional Bull Riders CEO Sean Gleason said. "There's only so many seats that you can sell in this building and keep people socially distanced."

PBR tried to keep both cowboys and fans safe from the spread of coronavirus infections by seating spectators apart from each other in a method they call "pod seating," as well as regularly testing riders and their support staff. The tightly packed lines for the concession stand or bathroom were gone as well, with signs encouraging people to space apart.

As the number of COVID-19 cases topped 3 million in the United States this week, South Dakota has seen a relatively low number of coronavirus cases in addition to a governor eager to push reopening economic activity.

Gov. Kristi Noem has worked with event organizers and even welcomed the event as a way to "get back to normal." The county where the bull riding event is being held had 230 active cases of COVID-19, according to the South Dakota Department of Health.

Stadium workers patrolled the hallways with cleaning supplies, and the arena offered masks to spectators. Most people in the crowd went without masks.

Sandy Hall drove three hours with her husband to attend the competition and said she was nervous at first about coronavirus infections, but enjoyed the show.

"We haven't been out of town for a while, to come up here was a lot of fun," she said.

Though the arena was far from packed, the bull riders, who wore masks with their cowboy hats, said having a live crowd for the first time in months provided motivation.

"It does feel a lot cooler when you get to ride your bull and step off and you've got people screaming your name," said Ezekiel Mitchell, a 23-year-old rider from Rockdale, Texas. "It's like nothing else, really. Just to be able to bring light to what a lot of people think of as a dark time in America just to be able to lighten the mood and make somebody's day is amazing."

The three-day competition, known as the Monster Energy Team Challenge, pits teams of riders against each other in a playoff-style competition. The winning team will be decided Sunday.

South Dakota teen gets 55-years for killing of Wyoming girl

STURGIS, S.D. (AP) — A South Dakota teenager was sentenced Friday to 55 years in prison after admitting he fatally shot a Wyoming girl last fall.

The 17-year-old Sturgis boy was sentenced after pleading guilty in May to first-degree manslaughter for killing Shayna Ritthaler, a 16-year-old from Upton, Wyoming.

Judge Kevin Krull sentenced the boy at the Meade County Court in Sturgis, defense attorney Steven Titus told the Rapid City Journal.

The teen was charged as an adult. Both the prosecutor and the defense agreed to ask the judge to sentence the teen to 55 years in prison and Krull agreed with their request.

The plea deal also says the boy will forgo his right to appeal. He can seek parole after 27 years, when he is 44 years old.

The teen originally pleaded not guilty and not guilty by reason of insanity to alternate counts of first- and second-degree murder.

Meade County State's Attorney Michele Bordewyk previously told the Journal that the boy and Ritthaler had been chatting online for a while but met in person for the first time when he killed her.

Ritthaler went missing Oct. 3 after being seen getting into a Jeep-like vehicle at a coffee shop in Moorcroft, Wyoming. She was found Oct. 7 in the basement of the home the boy shared with his mother east of Sturgis, near the Wyoming border.

Bordewyk, the prosecutor, said it's unclear how an argument between the pair escalated to the boy ultimately shooting Ritthaler. She said the teen used a handgun that belonged to his mother, who was not home at the time.

Titus, the defense attorney, has said the shooting wasn't planned and that alcohol and drugs were involved.

The teen will be held in the Meade County Jail until next week when he turns 18, Titus said, adding that he will then be transferred to prison.

Man seriously injured in shooting in Pierre

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) — A man who suffered life-threatening injuries in a shooting in Pierre has been airlifted to a Sioux Falls hospital.

Police say the 30-year-old man was shot about 9 p.m. Thursday and brought to Avera St. Mary's Hospital by a private vehicle. KGFX reports the man was then flown to Sioux Falls.

Authorities say a preliminary investigation shows the man was outside a residence when the shooting occurred and that it doesn't appear to be a random act of violence.

The investigation is ongoing. No arrests have been made.

Body of deputy sheriff recovered from Missouri River

FORT PIERRE, S.D. (AP) — The body of a deputy sheriff who drowned while trying to save his young son has been recovered from the Missouri River near Fort Pierre.

Volunteers helping search for the body of 37-year-old Lee Weber discovered it Thursday afternoon. KGFX reports Weber's body was covered with an American flag, placed in a funeral car and escorted by law enforcement officers to a funeral home.

Weber had been missing since July 3 when he jumped into the river to save his 8-year-old son who had fallen from a moving boat. The child was picked up by nearby boaters, but Weber was swept away by the river's current.

Weber was chief deputy for the Hughes County Sheriff's Office and served in the South Dakota National Guard.

He is survived by his wife and six children. Funeral arrangements are pending.

Judge rejects Dakota Access pipeline request to stop closure

BISMARCK, N.D. (AP) — A federal judge rejected a request from the operator of the Dakota Access Pipeline to halt an order to shut down the oil pipeline during a lengthy environmental review.

U.S. District Judge James Boasberg denied the company's request Thursday, effectively sending the case to a panel of judges on the U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit.

Boasberg on Monday ordered the pipeline shut down by Aug. 5 for an additional environmental assessment more than three years after it began pumping oil. The move was a victory for the Standing Rock Sioux and a blow to President Donald Trump's efforts to weaken public health and environmental protections his administration views as obstacles to businesses.

In arguing against the closure, pipeline operator Energy Transfer estimated it would take three months to empty the pipe of oil and complete steps to preserve it for future use, the Bismarck Tribune reported.

The Texas-based company says that to keep the line from corroding without the flow of oil, it must be filled with an inert gas, such as nitrogen.

Energy Transfer Vice President of Crude and Liquid Operations Todd Stamm wrote in a court filing that while the equipment that causes oil to flow through the line could be shut off by the judge's deadline, "it is not physically possible to 'empty it of oil' in the thirty days provided by the order."

The line must undergo a "purge-and-fill process" that involves draining segments one at a time while the pipeline is operating to replace the oil with nitrogen, Stamm wrote.

Energy Transfer estimated it would cost \$24 million to empty the oil and take steps to preserve the pipe. The company says that to maintain the line, it would spend an additional \$67.5 million each year it remains inoperable.

The pipeline holds about 5 million barrels of oil when full.

It was the subject of months of protests in 2016 and 2017, sometimes violent, during its construction near the Standing Rock Sioux Reservation that straddles the North Dakota-South Dakota border. The tribe took legal action against the pipeline even after it began carrying oil from North Dakota across South Dakota and Iowa and to a shipping point in Illinois in June 2017.

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 has concerns about pollution. The company maintains the line is safe.

Dozens of US Marines in Japan's Okinawa get coronavirus

By MARI YAMAGUCHI Associated Press

TOKYO (AP) — Dozens of U.S. Marines at two bases on the southern Japanese island of Okinawa have been infected with the coronavirus in what is feared to be a massive outbreak, Okinawa's governor said Saturday, demanding an adequate explanation from the U.S. military.

Gov. Denny Tamaki said he could say only that a "few dozen" cases had been found recently because the U.S. military asked that the exact figure not be released. The outbreaks occurred at Marine Corps Air Station Futenma, which is at the center of a relocation dispute, and Camp Hansen, Tamaki said.

Local media, citing unnamed sources, said about 60 people had been infected.

"Okinawans are shocked by what we were told (by the U.S. military)," Tamaki told a news conference. "We now have strong doubts that the U.S. military has taken adequate disease prevention measures."

Tamaki demanded transparency in the latest development and said he planned to request talks between the U.S. military and Okinawan officials. He said Okinawan officials also asked the Japanese government to demand that the U.S. provide details including the number of cases, seal off Futenma and Camp Hansen, and step up preventive measures on base.

Okinawan officials made similar requests to the U.S. military on Friday in order to address local residents' concerns, Tamaki said.

The Marines said in a statement Friday that the troops were taking additional protective measures to limit the spread of the coronavirus and were restricting off-base activities. The statement said measures are

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, July 11, 2020 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 008 ~ 25 of 90

“to protect our forces, our families, and the local community,” without providing details on the infections. The Marines did not immediately respond Saturday to an Associated Press inquiry about the latest outbreak.

Okinawa is home to more than half of about 50,000 American troops based in Japan under a bilateral security pact, and the residents are sensitive to U.S. base-related problems. Many Okinawans have long complained about pollution, noise and crime related to U.S. bases.

Okinawans also oppose a planned relocation of the Futenma air base from the current site in a densely populated area in the south to a less populated area on the east coast.

Local media reported that the Okinawan assembly adopted a resolution Friday protesting the U.S. military’s lack of transparency about its outbreak on base.

Okinawa has about 150 cases of the coronavirus. In all, Japan has about 21,000 cases and 1,000 deaths, with Tokyo reporting more than 200 new cases for a third straight day Saturday.

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

Poland faces momentous choice in tight presidential runoff

By MONIKA SCISLOWSKA Associated Press

WARSAW, Poland (AP) — Voters in Poland on Sunday will decide a tight runoff election between populist incumbent President Andrzej Duda and his liberal pro-European Union challenger, Warsaw Mayor Rafal Trzaskowski.

Recent opinion polls show a race so close that it could hinge on a narrow margin of voters, which added urgency to the final days of campaigning in the central EU nation of 38 million people.

If Duda is reelected, he and the right-wing Law and Justice party that backs him will maintain a hold on almost all key instruments of power in the country, possibly until the next parliamentary election, which is scheduled for 2023.

The party’s welfare policies have helped reduce income inequality, creating reservoirs of admiration, especially in rural areas where the party’s attachment to Roman Catholic traditions also goes far.

But Law and Justice has exacerbated divisions in society with rhetoric marginalizing liberals, the LGBT community and other minority groups. It has also drawn criticism from some EU leaders for laws increase political influence over Poland’s justice system.

A victory for Trzaskowski, who belongs to the main opposition party, Civic Platform, would give him veto power over the laws passed by the ruling party. Also, since the Polish president represents the country abroad, Trzaskowski would bring in a more pro-European side of Poland to European forums.

“If Trzaskowski wins, it will be a clear sign that the society has had enough and wants a kind of politics where compromise is a value,” said Wojciech Przybylski, editor in chief of Visegrad Insight, a policy journal focused on Central Europe.

Duda and Trzaskowski, both 48, eliminated nine other candidates in the first round on June 28. Duda got 43.5% support and Trzaskowski got 30.5% but is expected to pick up many of the votes that went to other candidates in the first round. There are nearly 30 million eligible voters and the new president will serve a five-year term.

Duda has the support of the powerful ruling party leader Jaroslaw Kaczynski and Prime Minister Mateusz Morawiecki.

He has traveled across Poland visiting open-air markets and vowing to protect the government’s signature spending policies. He was especially well received in farming regions and small towns, where government-paid bonuses have helped alleviate poverty and have given families with children more money to spend.

“This election will decide Poland’s development in the future, whether it will continue on the path to development,” Duda said at a rally in Starachowice, an industrial town of 50,000 in central Poland.

Duda has claimed that Trzaskowski would cut the popular welfare spending programs — but Trzaskowski has vowed to preserve them, acknowledging the “mistake” his pro-business party made in not introducing

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, July 11, 2020 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 008 ~ 26 of 90

such help earlier.

Ryszard Sadowski, a 72-year-old who turned out to cheer Duda, praised him as a "reliable" man who kept his promises to help improve the lives of regular people. The retired biology and gym teacher said he benefited from a new yearly cash bonus for senior citizens and others in his family have received payments for children.

"From the moment when the money started coming to the families, suddenly everyone is happy," Sadowski said.

Trzaskowski, a former European Parliament lawmaker, has vowed to heal Poland's social divide and respect democratic rules. His support is strongest in larger cities and among more highly educated people, according to data from the first round.

"The stakes in this election are extremely high," he told reporters this week.

Law and Justice will either "continue to destroy independent institutions, further try to politicize courts, destroy local governments and threaten the freedom of the media, or we will have a democratic state where the president restores the balance," he said. "It's now or never."

At a Trzaskowski rally in Gniezno, Włodzimierz Mokracki, a 74-year-old who still teaches at technical schools, believes Poland's 30-year-old democracy is at stake in this vote.

If Trzaskowski wins, Mokracki said, "we will go back to a democratic state. I will not be afraid to say what I think, because today they are taking the first small steps toward intimidating us."

A text message Saturday to all mobile phones from a government public safety office said the elderly, the disabled and pregnant women need not wait in line to vote Sunday, drawing angry comments on Twitter. Users said it violated the mandatory ban on campaigning Saturday and was an abuse of the office that warns against dangerous weather and other safety threats.

The election was originally scheduled for May, but was put off amid political wrangling over concerns for public health during the coronavirus pandemic. To date, Poland has 37,000 confirmed infections and almost 1,600 virus-related deaths.

Sunday's vote, just like the first round, will be held under strict sanitary conditions.

Voters must wear masks and gloves, maintain a safe distance and use hand sanitizer. They can use their own pens to mark ballots. Election officials must wear masks and sit apart from each other, and ballot boxes will be regularly disinfected in the well-ventilated polling stations.

Morawiecki, the prime minister, said the virus is "retreating" and urged everyone to vote, which was seen as encouraging Duda's older supporters, some of whom did not vote in June's first round out of health concerns.

"The political situation is tense, the outcome may be a very close call, and that has pushed the coronavirus theme into the background," Jaroslaw Flis, a political scientist with the Jagiellonian University in Krakow, was quoted as saying by the Gazeta Prawna newspaper.

Concerns were raised in the first round that some voters outside the country were disenfranchised because many mail-in ballots reached voters too late.

Trzaskowski won 48.1% of votes cast from abroad, while Duda got 20.9%, according to official results.

It remained to be seen if those voting procedures, carried out by Poland's government-controlled diplomatic missions abroad, will improve for the presidential runoff.

Trump commutes longtime friend Roger Stone's prison sentence

By JILL COLVIN and ERIC TUCKER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump has commuted the sentence of his longtime political confidant Roger Stone, intervening in extraordinary fashion in a criminal case that was central to the Russia investigation and that concerned the president's own conduct.

The move came Friday, just days before Stone was to begin serving a 40-month prison sentence for lying to Congress, witness tampering and obstructing the House investigation into whether Trump's campaign colluded with Russia to win the 2016 election.

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, July 11, 2020 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 008 ~ 27 of 90

The action, which Trump had foreshadowed in recent days, underscores the president's lingering rage over special counsel Robert Mueller's investigation and is part of a continuing effort by the president and his administration to rewrite the narrative of a probe that has shadowed the White House from the outset. Democrats, already alarmed by the Justice Department's earlier dismissal of the case against Trump's first national security adviser, Michael Flynn, denounced the president as further undermining the rule of law.

Stone, 67, had been set to report to prison on Tuesday after a federal appeals court rejected his bid to postpone his surrender date. But he told The Associated Press that Trump called him Friday evening to tell him he was off the hook.

"The president told me that he had decided, in an act of clemency, to issue a full commutation of my sentence, and he urged me to vigorously pursue my appeal and my vindication," Stone said by phone from Fort Lauderdale, Florida, where he was celebrating with friends. He said he had to change rooms because there were "too many people opening bottles of Champagne here."

Although a commutation does not nullify Stone's felony convictions, it protects him from serving prison time as a result.

The move is another extraordinary intervention by Trump in the nation's justice system and underscores anew his willingness to flout the norms and standards that have governed presidential conduct for decades. As Trump stares down a coronavirus pandemic that has worsened his chances for reelection, he has been more willing than ever to test the limits of his power.

Democrats denounced Trump's action. House Speaker Nancy Pelosi on Saturday called it "an act of staggering corruption," saying legislation is needed to prevent a president from pardoning or commuting the sentence of someone who acted to shield that president from prosecution.

House Intelligence Committee Chair Adam Schiff called it "offensive to the rule of law and principles of justice. Democratic National Committee Chair Tom Perez asked, "Is there any power Trump won't abuse?"

Sen. Mitt Romney, a Utah Republican, also condemned the move. "Unprecedented, historic corruption: an American president commutes the sentence of a person convicted by a jury of lying to shield that very president," he tweeted Saturday.

White House press secretary Kayleigh McEnany, in a statement, called Stone a "victim of the Russia Hoax that the Left and its allies in the media," and declared, "Roger Stone is now a free man!"

Stone had been open about his desire for a pardon or commutation, appealing for the president's help in a monthslong television and social media campaign and seeking to postpone his surrender date by months after getting a brief extension from the judge, in part by citing the coronavirus.

Trump, who had made clear in recent days that he was inching closer to acting, had repeatedly publicly inserted himself into Stone's case, including just before Stone's sentencing.

That earned a public rebuke from his own attorney general, William Barr, who said the president's comments were "making it impossible" for him to do his job. Barr was so incensed that he told people he was considering resigning over the matter.

"With this commutation, Trump makes clear that there are two systems of justice in America: one for his criminal friends, and one for everyone else," Schiff said. "Donald Trump, Bill Barr, and all those who enable them pose the gravest of threats to the rule of law."

Stone, a larger-than-life political character who embraced his reputation as a dirty trickster, was the sixth Trump aide or adviser to have been convicted of charges brought during Mueller's investigation.

A longtime Trump friend and informal adviser, Stone boasted during the campaign that he was in contact with WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange through a trusted intermediary and hinted at inside knowledge of WikiLeaks' plans to release more than 19,000 emails hacked from the servers of the Democratic National Committee.

But Stone denied any wrongdoing and consistently criticized the case against him as politically motivated. He did not take the stand during his trial, did not speak at his sentencing. His lawyers did not call any witnesses in his defense.

Prosecutors had originally recommended Stone serve seven to nine years in prison. But in a highly unusual move, Barr reversed that decision after a Trump tweet and recommended a more lenient punish-

ment, prompting a mini-revolt inside the Justice Department, with the entire prosecution team resigning from the case.

Department officials have vehemently denied Barr was responding to Trump's criticism and have insisted there was no contact with the White House over the decision. Barr has also pointed out that the judge, in imposing a 40-month sentence, had agreed with him that the original sentencing recommendation was excessive.

Barr has said the prosecution was justified, and the Justice Department did not support Stone's more recent effort to put off his surrender date. Though the Justice Department raised concerns about the handling of Flynn's case, including what it said were irregularities about his FBI interview, prosecutors did not point to any similar issues or problems with the Stone prosecution.

Even so, the commutation will almost certainly contribute to a portrait of a president determined to erase the impact of the Russia investigation and to intervene on behalf of allies.

The commutation was the latest example of Trump using his unlimited clemency power to pardon powerful men he believes have been mistreated by the justice system.

Trump went on a clemency spree in February, commuting the 14-year prison sentence of former Illinois Gov. Rod Blagojevich, a Democrat, and pardoning former New York City police commissioner Bernie Kerik, financier Michael Milken and several others.

Trump has also offered clemency to other political allies, including Joe Arpaio, an Arizona sheriff who was awaiting sentencing at the time, conservative commentator Dinesh D'Souza, who had been convicted on campaign finance violations, and Conrad Black, a newspaper publisher convicted of fraud who had written a flattering book about the president.

Trump, however, has spent much more time trumpeting his decision to commute the sentence of Alice Marie Johnson, who was serving life in prison for nonviolent drug offenses and who came to Trump's attention after reality star Kim Kardashian West took up her cause. Her story was featured in a Trump campaign Super Bowl ad.

Stone told the AP he expressed his gratitude to Trump in the phone call.

"You know, he has a great sense of fairness," Stone said. "We've been friends for many, many years, and he understands that I was targeted strictly for political reasons."

25 years since Srebrenica, some victims finally laid to rest

By RADUL RADOVANOVIC Associated Press

SREBRENICA, Bosnia-Herzegovina (AP) — Bahrudin Salihovic always knew his father had perished 25 years ago in the storm of violence unleashed after Serb forces overran the eastern Bosnian town of Srebrenica in the final months of the Balkan country's 1992-95 war. He himself barely survived.

But over the years, he has been waiting for his father's remains to be found in one of dozens of mass graves scattered around his hometown.

On Friday, Salihovic finally huddled over a coffin holding a few of his father's bones, unearthed from a death pit found near Srebrenica last November and identified through DNA testing.

"His remains are incomplete, but mother and I decided to bury the part of him that was found, to know where his grave is, to know where to go to pray for him," Salihovic said.

"I know that many people will never be found," he added.

On Saturday, the anniversary of the day the killing began in 1995, Salihovic was finally laying his father to rest in a memorial cemetery at Potocari, just outside Srebrenica, next to 6,610 previously identified victims. Draped in green covers, his father's coffin, and the coffins of eight other victims, were moved to the memorial center several days ago to give surviving relatives time to say their final goodbyes.

Bahrudin cried and prayed over the coffin, but his mother could not muster the strength to join him.

"It means a lot to have at least a few of his bones because for all these years ... we did not know where he is," Hajrija Salihovic said. But she said it will not stop her from agonizing over his last moments on

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, July 11, 2020 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 008 ~ 29 of 90

Earth: "His bones do not tell the story of how he met his death. Did he suffer?"

In July 1995, at least 8,000 mostly Muslim men and boys were chased through woods in and around Srebrenica by Serb troops in what is considered the worst carnage of civilians in Europe since World War II. The Srebrenica massacre is the only episode of the Bosnian war to be defined as a genocide, including by two U.N. courts.

The Bosnian war pitted the country's three main ethnic factions — Serbs, Croats and Bosnian Muslims — against each other after the break-up of Yugoslavia. More than 100,000 people were killed in the conflict before a peace deal was brokered in 1995.

What took place in Srebrenica was a mark of shame for the international community because the town had been declared a U.N. "safe haven" for civilians in 1993.

However, two years later, the outgunned U.N. peacekeepers watched helplessly as Serb troops separated men and boys for execution, bussing the women and girls to Bosnian government-held territory.

Bahrudin Salihovic, then 25, fled through the woods, reaching safety after several days of wandering through the countryside. He was hungry, thirsty, and terrified by the constant echo of Serb machine guns executing others who had been caught.

The Serbian killers sought to hide evidence of the genocide, piling most of the bodies into hastily made mass graves, which they subsequently dug up with bulldozers. The bodies were scattered across numerous burial sites.

In the years since the war, remains of nearly 7,000 victims of the massacre have been dug out and identified through DNA testing. About 1,000 victims remain to be found.

A special U.N. war crimes tribunal in The Hague and courts in the Balkans have sentenced close to 50 Bosnian Serbs to more than 700 years in prison for Srebrenica crimes.

However, adding to the suffering of the survivors, many Serbs still deny the extent of the 1995 Srebrenica killings and often even celebrate the executioners. Last year, top Bosnian Serb leader Milorad Dodik called the massacre "a fabricated myth."

"On this sombre anniversary, we are reminded that peace (in Bosnia) is still fragile. We cannot let up in working toward genuine reconciliation," Antonio Guterres, secretary-general of the United Nations, said in a video message released Friday.

"Reconciliation means rejecting denial of genocide and war crimes and of any effort to glorify convicted war criminals," he added.

In Srebrenica, Bahrudin Salihovic stared into the distance, saying he has constantly thought about "the past 25 years of yearning for a part of my heart that had been hacked away, killed" in the massacre.

"I survived a genocide," he said with a heavy sigh.

Biden forges brand of liberal populism to use against Trump

By BILL BARROW and WILL WEISSERT Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Joe Biden stood in a Pennsylvania metal works shop, just miles from his boyhood home, and pledged to define his presidency by a sweeping economic agenda beyond anything Americans have seen since the Great Depression and the industrial mobilization for World War II.

The prospective Democratic presidential nominee promised the effort would not just answer a pandemic-induced recession, but address centuries of racism and systemic inequalities with "a new American economy" that "finally and fully (lives) up to the words and the values enshrined in the founding documents of this nation — that we're all created equal."

It was a striking call coming from Biden, a 77-year-old establishment figure known more as a back-slapping deal-maker than visionary reformer. But it made plain his intention to test the reach of liberal populism as he tries to create a coalition that can defeat President Donald Trump in November.

Trump and his Republican allies argue that Biden's positioning, especially his ongoing work with progressives, proves he's captive to a "radical" left wing. Conversely, activists who backed Bernie Sanders or Elizabeth Warren in the Democratic primary were encouraged, yet cautious, about Biden's ability to follow

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, July 11, 2020 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 008 ~ 30 of 90

through while conceding that his plans on issues including climate action and criminal justice still fall short of their ideals.

Biden's inner circle insists his approach in 2020 is the same it's been since he was elected to the Senate in 1972: Meet the moment.

"He's always evolved," said Ted Kaufman, Biden's longest-serving adviser. "The thing that's been consistent for his entire career, almost 50 years, is he never promises things that he doesn't think he can do."

Kaufman, who succeeded Biden in the Senate when he ascended to the vice presidency, said Biden's core identity hasn't changed: "progressive Democrat," friendly to labor and business, consistent supporter of civil rights, believer in government and the private sector. What's different in 2020, he said, are the country's circumstances — a public health crisis, near-Depression level unemployment, a national reckoning on racism — and the office Biden now seeks.

"If you want to get something done, encourage it," Kaufman said. "What he learned over history watching campaigns is that you put forth a program, and then you come into office, and everybody involved knows that's the program you're offering."

Biden's evolution has been on display from the start of his campaign as he's tacked left both in substance and style while trying to preserve his pragmatist brand.

At the start of the Democratic primary, Biden was positioned as offering a moderate alternative to Sanders' call for a "political revolution" and Warren's push for "big structural change."

The former vice president countered their proposed universal government-funded health insurance with a government insurance plan that would compete alongside private insurance. Progressives wanted tuition-free public higher education; Biden offered tuition subsidies for two-year schools. Biden called the climate crisis an "existential threat" and offered a clean energy plan with a trillion-dollar price tag, but resisted the full version of progressives' Green New Deal. He promised hefty tax hikes for corporations and the investor class but opposed a "wealth tax" on individuals' net worth.

Biden noted that his health care platform put him to the left of 2016 nominee Hillary Clinton and President Barack Obama, who had jettisoned a "public option" from his 2010 health care law, angering liberal Democrats.

And on race, even before the recent national uprising against police violence, Biden spoke often of the nation's systemic failure "to live up to" the Declaration of Independence. "Thomas Jefferson didn't," he said often in early speeches, alluding to the fact that the Declaration's author and the third U.S. president owned slaves.

Still, Biden isn't immune from the kind of internal party tensions that cost Clinton progressive support in 2016, and he's spent the last three months shoring up his left flank.

Biden and Sanders created policy groups to write recommendations for Democrats' 2020 platform. Those committees unveiled 110 pages of policy plans Wednesday, ahead of Biden's speech in Pennsylvania. They left Biden short of endorsing single-payer health insurance and the most aggressive timelines to achieve a carbon-neutral economy, but ratified his claims of a more progressive slate than his predecessors'.

Further, Biden already had moved toward Sanders' tuition position, endorsing four years of full subsidies for most middle-class households. He adopted Warren's proposed bankruptcy law overhaul and her ideas for a government procurement campaign to benefit U.S. companies.

Progressives promise continued pressure.

"I think our job is really to sometimes push him," Washington Rep. Pramila Jayapal said. Jayapal, who helped lead the Biden-Sanders health care task force, said that means being "alongside him, of course, and then sometimes be out in front."

Likewise, Varshini Prakash of the Sunrise Movement, a leading environmental advocacy group, said her group won't abandon the Green New Deal. But she credited Biden for embracing a level of public investment that would remake the energy economy during the pandemic recession.

Biden has managed party unity that wasn't present four years ago.

"I don't consider Biden's proposals a political hat tip to progressives as much as rising to the moment

we're living in," said Adam Green, co-founder of the Progressive Change Campaign Committee and a Warren ally.

The former vice president also has amassed an impressive slate of endorsements and built a stable of regular campaign surrogates, including all his major primary rivals. Many of them held events in the hours and days following his speech Thursday in a show of force that Trump, even with his intense online presence and fervent base, would be hard-pressed to match.

For his part, Trump accused Biden of "plagiarizing" his economic populism but also tarred Biden as a leftist who can't win.

"It's a plan that is very radical left, but he said the right things because he's copying what I've done," Trump said Friday before departing the White House for Florida.

Kaufman said Biden will continue campaigning as a nominee unconcerned about such labels. "What's allowed him to survive all these years," Kaufman said, "is that he's not into any of those characterizations."

Virus cases up sharply in Africa, India as inequality stings

By CARA ANNA Associated Press

JOHANNESBURG (AP) — South Africa's confirmed coronavirus cases have doubled in just two weeks to a quarter-million, and India on Saturday saw its biggest daily spike as its infections passed 800,000. The surging cases are raising sharp concerns about unequal treatment in the pandemic, as the wealthy hoard medical equipment and use private hospitals and the poor crowd into overwhelmed public facilities.

Globally more than 12.5 million people have been infected by the virus and over 560,000 have died, according to data compiled by Johns Hopkins University. Experts say the pandemic's true toll is much higher due to testing shortages, poor data collection in some nations and other issues.

Some of the worst-affected countries are among the world's most unequal. South Africa leads them all on that measure, with the pandemic exposing the gap in care.

In Johannesburg, the epicenter of South Africa's outbreak, badly needed oxygen concentrators that help COVID-19 patients who are struggling to breathe are hard to find as private businesses and individuals are buying them up, a public health specialist volunteering at a field hospital, Lynne Wilkinson, told The Associated Press.

Meanwhile, South Africa's public hospitals are short on medical oxygen — and they are now seeing a higher proportion of deaths than private ones, the National Institute for Communicable Diseases says.

South Africa now has more than 250,000 confirmed coronavirus cases, including more than 3,800 deaths. To complicate matters, the country's troubled power utility has announced new electricity cuts in the dead of winter as a cold front brings freezing weather. Many of the country's urban poor live in shacks of scrap metal and wood.

And in Kenya, some have been outraged by a local newspaper report that says several governors have installed intensive care unit equipment in their homes. The country lost its first doctor to COVID-19 this week.

"The welfare, occupational safety & health of frontline workers is a non-negotiable minimum!!" the Kenya Medical Practitioners, Pharmacists and Dentists Union tweeted after her death. On Saturday, the union and other medical groups urged President Uhuru Kenyatta to implement a promised compensation package to ease the "anxiety and fear that has now gripped health care workers."

More than 8,000 health workers across Africa have been infected, half of them in South Africa. The continent of 1.3 billion has the world's lowest levels of health staffing and more than 550,000 cases, and the pandemic is reaching "full speed," the Africa Centers for Disease Control and Prevention says.

Many parts of the world are facing fresh waves of infections as they try to reopen their economies.

In India, which reported a new daily high of 27,114 cases on Saturday, nearly a dozen states have imposed a partial lockdown in high-risk areas. Cases jumped from 600,000 to more than 800,000 in nine days. People are packing India's public hospitals as many are unable to afford private ones that generally uphold higher standards of care.

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, July 11, 2020 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 008 ~ 32 of 90

Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi urged top officials to improve infection testing and tracking, especially in states with high positivity rates.

Officials on the southern Japanese island of Okinawa said dozens of U.S. Marines have been infected at two bases there in what is feared to be a massive outbreak. The officials said the U.S. military asked that the exact figure not be released.

"We now have strong doubts that the U.S. military has taken adequate disease prevention measures," Gov. Denny Tamaki told reporters.

In Australia, the beleaguered state of Victoria reported 216 new cases in the past 24 hours, down from the record 288 the previous day. It hopes a new six-week lockdown in Melbourne, Australia's second-largest city with a population of 5 million, will curb the spread.

"We cannot pretend that doing anything other than following the rules will get us to the other side of this," said Victoria Premier Daniel Andrews.

In Latin America, where inequality is sharp and Brazil and Peru are among the world's top five most badly hit countries, the COVID-19 pandemic is sweeping through the continent's leadership, with two more presidents and powerful officials testing positive in the past week.

Yet developing countries are not the only ones overwhelmed. Confirmed COVID-19 cases in the U.S. have hit 3 million, with over 130,000 deaths — the worst outbreak by far in the world. The surge has led to equipment shortages as well as long lines at testing sites.

Texas is among the U.S. states setting records for infections and deaths almost daily after embarking on one of America's fastest reopenings. Republican Gov. Greg Abbott on Friday extended a statewide disaster as the state surpassed 10,000 hospitalized patients for the first time.

"Things will get worse," Abbott told Lubbock television station KLBK. "The worst is yet to come as we work our way through that massive increase in people testing positive."

Associated Press writers around the world contributed.

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

Serbia police detain 71 after 4th night of virus protests

BELGRADE, Serbia (AP) — Serbian police have detained 71 people after clashes during the fourth night of anti-government protests that were initially sparked by the announcement of a new coronavirus lockdown, a senior police official said Saturday.

Fourteen policemen were injured in the rioting when hundreds of right-wing demonstrators tried to storm the parliament building in downtown Belgrade on Friday evening, said police director Vladimir Rebic.

Several reporters also have been hurt. Demonstrators defying an anti-virus ban on gatherings threw bottles, rocks and flares at police who were guarding the parliament building, and police responded with tear gas to disperse them.

Similar clashes erupted twice earlier this week. The protests first started when populist President Aleksandar Vucic announced a strict curfew for this weekend to curb a surge in new coronavirus cases.

Vucic later scraped the plan to impose a new curfew. Authorities instead banned gatherings of more than 10 people in Belgrade, the capital, and shortened the working hours of indoor businesses.

Many in Serbia accuse the increasingly authoritarian Vucic and his government of letting the virus crisis spin out of control in order to hold a parliamentary election on June 21 that tightened the ruling party's grip on power.

Vucic has denied this, although authorities had relaxed the rules prior to the vote, allowing massive crowds at soccer games, weddings and other events.

On Friday, the Serbian prime minister announced the highest daily number of deaths, 18, since the start of the pandemic in the Balkan country. Authorities reported 12 new deaths on Saturday and 354 new

infections.

The country has over 18,000 confirmed infections and 382 deaths since March and health authorities have warned that Serbian hospitals are almost full due to the latest surge in cases.

Vucic has claimed involvement of unspecified foreign security services in the unrest and pledged he won't be toppled in the streets. Some opposition leaders, meanwhile, are blaming the rioting on groups they say are controlled by the government and sent out to discredit peaceful protests.

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

England World Cup winner Jack Charlton dies at 85

By STEVE DOUGLAS and ROB HARRIS AP Sports Writers

Jack Charlton, an uncompromising central defender who won the 1966 World Cup with England alongside his brother, Bobby, before coaching Ireland to its first major tournaments, has died. He was 85.

Nicknamed "Big Jack," and celebrated for his earthy "beer and cigarettes" image, Charlton was Footballer of the Year in England in 1967. He spent all his club career at Leeds from 1952-73, tying its all-time record of 773 appearances. He won every domestic honor, including the league title in 1969.

Charlton died at home on Friday in his native Northumberland in northeast England, surrounded by his family.

"As well as a friend to many, he was a much-adored husband, father, grandfather and great-grandfather," the family said in a statement on Saturday. "We cannot express how proud we are of the extraordinary life he led and the pleasure he brought to so many people in different countries and from all walks of life.

"He was a thoroughly honest, kind, funny and genuine man who always had time for people. His loss will leave a huge hole in all our lives but we are thankful for a lifetime of happy memories."

Premier League games will be preceded by a minute's silence this weekend as a tribute to Charlton and players will wear black armbands.

British Prime Minister Boris Johnson remembered Charlton as a "football great whose achievements brought happiness to so many."

The England team Twitter account said "we are devastated." Charlton was one of the players who helped to deliver England's first and only major international title, featuring at the heart of defense alongside captain Bobby Moore as Germany was beaten 4-2 after extra time in the 1966 World Cup final.

"Jack was the type of player and person that you need in a team to win a World Cup," said Geoff Hurst, who scored a hat trick in the final. "He was a great and lovable character."

Charlton had younger brother, midfielder Bobby, on the field at Wembley Stadium to celebrate with him. They embraced in tears at the final whistle.

"Nobody can ever take this moment away from us," Bobby Charlton was quoted as telling Jack.

Jack celebrated the victory by partying in a random person's house in north London, ending up sleeping on the floor. That was typical of the man who kept the common touch despite his fame and remained an affable character, fond of life's simple pleasures.

"I got a lift back the following morning and my mother was playing hell as I hadn't been to bed all night," Charlton recalled. "I said, 'Mother, we've just won the World Cup!'"

Charlton made 35 appearances for England between 1965-70, also playing in the 1968 European Championship and the 1970 World Cup. A very different player to Bobby, who was once all-time top scorer for both England and Manchester United, Jack was in the shadow of his brother during his playing career.

It was obvious from an early age that Bobby "was going to play for England and would be a great player," Jack recalled in a 1997 BBC interview. "He was strong, left- and right-footed, good balance, good skills. He had everything, our kid. I was over 6 foot (1.8 meters). Leggy. A giraffe, as I finished up being called."

There were tensions in the relationship between the siblings over Bobby's wife, Norma. But there was a public reconciliation in 2008 when Bobby received a lifetime achievement award at a BBC sports ceremony

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, July 11, 2020 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 008 ~ 34 of 90

and Jack told the audience: "Bobby Charlton is the greatest player I've ever seen and he's my brother."

Of all the England World Cup winners to go into management, Jack Charlton was the most successful. He had brief but impressive spells at northeast clubs Middlesbrough, Sheffield Wednesday and Newcastle before being hired by Ireland in 1986 as its first foreign coach.

Adopting a direct, physical and attack-minded style, Charlton got the best out of Ireland's hard-working players and ensured they qualified for the World Cup for the first time in 1990 and again in 1994.

"He was an Englishman becoming the Irish national team manager at a time when it wasn't always easy politically," said Andy Townsend, Ireland's captain at the 1994 World Cup in the United States. "But as Jack always did he breezed into it and took it by the scruff of the neck."

In 1990, the Irish shocked Romania to reach the World Cup quarterfinals where they lost to host Italy.

"He brought us ... to places we never thought possible," former Ireland striker Niall Quinn said. "He changed lives. For his players, he gave us the best days of our lives."

Ireland also played at Euro 1988 and the 1994 World Cup under Charlton.

"You get the ball forward, you compete, you close people down, you create excitement, you win balls when you shouldn't win balls, commit yourself to the game," Charlton said of Ireland's style. "A lot of the pundits didn't like it but the teams we played against hated it."

Charlton said his best memory as Ireland coach was beating Brazil 1-0 in a friendly at Lansdowne Road in 1987. He resigned in 1995 after losing in a Euro 1996 playoff to the Netherlands.

"It was not just the success on the field of play," Ireland president Michael D. Higgins said. "Jack's endearing popularity also had much to do with the warmth and personality of the person who quickly became such a legendary sporting icon."

He was awarded honorary Irish citizenship in 1996. A life-size statue of him was erected at Cork Airport, depicting him wearing fishing gear and holding a salmon — recalling Charlton's favorite pastime of fishing.

"I am as much Irish as I am English," said Charlton, who was given the freedom of Dublin.

Born May 8, 1935, in a gritty area of northern England, Charlton worked down the mines as a teenager before going for a trial at Leeds. He grew up in a footballing family, cousin to Newcastle great Jackie Milburn while his uncles Jack, George, Jimmy and Stan all played professionally.

"It left me no choice but to be a footballer," Charlton said.

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

Pandemic, racism compound worries about Black suicide rate

By SOPHIA TAREEN Associated Press

CHICAGO (AP) — Jasmin Pierre was 18 when she tried to end her life, overdosing on whatever pills she could find. Diagnosed with depression and anxiety, she survived two more attempts at suicide, which felt like the only way to stop her pain.

Years of therapy brought progress, but the 31-year-old Black woman's journey is now complicated by a combination of stressors hitting simultaneously: isolation during the pandemic, a shortage of mental health care providers and racial trauma inflicted by repeated police killings of Black people.

"Black people who already go through mental health issues, we're even more triggered," said Pierre, who lives in New Orleans. "I don't think my mental health issues have ever, ever been this bad before."

Health experts have warned of a looming mental health crisis linked to the coronavirus outbreak, and the federal government rolled out a broad anti-suicide campaign. But doctors and researchers say the issues reverberate deeper among Black people, who've seen rising youth suicide attempts and suffered disproportionately during the pandemic.

Mental health advocates are calling for more specialized federal attention on Black suicides, including research funding. Counselors focusing on Black trauma are offering free help. And Black churches are finding new ways to address suicide as social distancing has eroded how people connect.

"There has been a lot of complex grief and loss related to death, related to loss of jobs and loss of

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, July 11, 2020 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 008 ~ 35 of 90

income," said Sean Joe, an expert on Black suicides at Washington University in St. Louis. "There's a lot of hurt and pain in America going on right now, and you only are getting a sense of depth in the months ahead."

Suicides overall have increased. Roughly 48,000 people in the U.S. died by suicide in 2018, with the rate increasing 35% since 1999, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Suicide is the 10th leading cause of death among all ages. For ages 10 to 19, it's second after accidents.

The rates of suicides and suicide attempts for Black adults have trailed white and Native American adults. But newer research shows an alarming rise in Black young people trying to take their own lives.

Suicide attempts rose 73% between 1991 and 2017 among Black high school students while suicidal thoughts and plans for suicide fell for all teens, according to a study published in November in the journal *Pediatrics*. The findings, including troubling suicide trends among Black children, prompted the Congressional Black Caucus to issue a report in December deeming the situation a crisis.

Experts say the reasons are a complex mix requiring more study.

Suicide risk factors include a diagnosis like depression or trauma or having a parent who committed suicide. Many factors are amplified for Black families, who often face higher poverty rates, disproportionate exposure to violence and less access to medical care.

The pandemic has heightened the disparities.

Black people are dying from COVID-19 at higher rates, leaving them to grieve more in isolation with restrictions on funerals and gatherings. Added to the mix is a national reckoning with racism after George Floyd's killing.

"Dealing with racism and stereotypes and all the inequity that we have to face, it's bandaged up," said Arielle Sheftall, an author of the *Pediatrics* study. "It feels like the bandage is ripped off and everybody is looking at it and staring at it, and we are bleeding profusely."

Part of the problem is the study of suicide remains largely white, with little race research. There's also been a misconception of suicide as only a "white problem."

Michigan psychologist Alton Kirk was among the first to study Black suicides in the 1970s, outlined in his 2009 book, "Black Suicide: The Tragic Reality of America's Deadliest Secret."

"When I first started, a lot of Black people were in denial about suicide," he said. "We had suffered enough. We survived slavery and segregation and all this other stuff. They almost saw it as being a weakness."

While many attitudes have changed, obstacles to health care persist.

For one, there aren't enough mental health professionals. Also, treatment has traditionally been based on white experiences, potentially leaving some clinicians unprepared.

Each time there's a publicized episode of police brutality against Black people, calls to the Trevor Project's suicide-prevention lines spike immediately. The organization focuses on LGBTQ youth, including addressing racial disparities.

"You're already starting at a different point because you spent your life fighting back racism," said Tia Dole, the organization's chief clinical operations officer. "People are walking around with a half-filled tank of emotional resources because of their identity."

For suicide attempt survivors, navigating the pandemic means more uncertainty.

Kiauna Patterson, who graduated from Pennsylvania's Edinboro University this year, tried to end her life in 2018 as she felt pressure from school and working three jobs to help support family.

Since losing university health care, she meditates daily and focuses on her goal of becoming a doula.

"You don't really know what's going on or what's going to happen," she said. "You're taking each day, just one at a time, to try and grasp some type of control or calmness."

Pierre, who uses her experiences to counsel others, doesn't want people struggling alone. She created The Safe Place, a free Black-oriented mental health app that's seen more signups during the pandemic.

Others are also trying to fill care gaps.

Donna Barnes, who runs the National Organization For People of Color Against Suicide, plans a free online counseling course. After losing her son to suicide in 1990, she noticed a lack of resources for Black

families and started the group.

"It took me four years before I could smile again," Barnes said. "It wasn't easy. My friends and family didn't know what to do with me."

Trinity United Church of Christ, an influential Black church once attended by former President Barack Obama, has met increased need in Chicago with Zoom chats and calls.

The Rev. Otis Moss III used a recent podcast to discuss his sister's suicide, which occurred before his wedding in the 1990s.

He called it an effective medium as people remain isolated with services canceled. Moss said it took years to talk openly share about his sister's schizophrenia and to stop blaming himself.

"It is an appropriate time to let people know there are many people who are walking the same road they are walking," he said. "I found how to punch holes in the darkness and witness light shine through."

Sophia Tareen is a member of The Associated Press' Race and Ethnicity Team. Follow her on Twitter: <https://twitter.com/sophiatareen>.

Leaders, survivors mark 25 years since Srebrenica massacre

SREBRENICA, Bosnia-Herzegovina (AP) — Dozens of world leaders on Saturday joined survivors of the 1995 Srebrenica massacre in Bosnia to remember the victims of the only crime in Europe since World War II that has been declared a genocide.

Most international speakers urged tolerance and reconciliation in Bosnia, still ethnically divided 25 years since the brutal execution in July 1995 of more than 8,000 Bosniak Muslim men and boys.

But the Bosniak Muslim member of the country's tripartite presidency, Sefik Dzaferovic - one of a few officials attending in person - went further, urging the world to demand Serb leaders finally accept responsibility and open the way for true reconciliation.

"I am calling on our friends from around the world to show not just with words but also with actions that they will not accept the denial of genocide and celebration of its perpetrators," he said.

"The Srebrenica genocide is being denied (by Serb leaders) just as systematically and meticulously as it was executed in 1995 ... we owe it not just to Srebrenica, but to humanity, to oppose that," he added.

On Saturday, the recently identified remains of nine victims were reburied in a memorial cemetery and center just outside the town in eastern Bosnia.

The Srebrenica massacre is the only episode of Bosnia's 1992-95 war to be defined as genocide, including by two U.N. courts. But leaders in neighboring Serbia still deny the extent of the 1995 massacre and refuse to acknowledge they amounted to a genocide.

After murdering thousands of Srebrenica's Muslims, in an attempt to hide the crime, Serbs dumped their bodies in numerous mass graves scattered throughout eastern Bosnia.

Body parts are still being found in mass graves and are being put together and identified through DNA analysis. Close to 7,000 of those killed have already been found and identified. Newly identified victims are buried each year on July 11 — the anniversary of the day the killing began in 1995 — in the memorial cemetery.

Dozens of world leaders, including Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau and Spain's Pedro Sanchez, U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo and Britain's Prince Charles, addressed the commemoration ceremony held Saturday, before the funeral, via prerecorded video messages.

Typically, thousands of visitors attend the commemoration service and funeral, but this year only a relatively small number of survivors were allowed at the cemetery due to the coronavirus pandemic.

Bosnian Serb wartime political leader, Radovan Karadzic, and his military commander, Ratko Mladic, were both convicted of and sentenced for genocide in Srebrenica by a special U.N. war crimes tribunal in The Hague. In all, the tribunal and courts in the Balkans have sentenced close to 50 Bosnian Serbs wartime officials to more than 700 years in prison for Srebrenica killings.

Bosnian Serbs, however, still celebrate Karadzic and Mladic as heroes. Some are even staging celebra-

tions of "the 1995 liberation of Srebrenica" on the anniversary of the crime.

Judge Carmel Agius, President of the U.N. court that is currently completing war crimes trials stemming from the breakup of Yugoslavia, warned in his video message that the victims of the Srebrenica massacre "continue to be tormented by those who attempt to deny their lived experiences, and, thereby, their very existence."

Agius voiced hope that the new generations in the Balkans will reject the narratives of their political leaders and "champion the truth and justice in honor of the victims we are commemorating today."

The Bosnian war pitted the country's three main ethnic factions — Serbs, Croats and Bosnian Muslims — against each other after the break-up of Yugoslavia. More than 100,000 people were killed in the conflict. When the war ended in a U.S.-brokered peace deal in 1995, a Serb-run entity was formed within Bosnia, of which Srebrenica became part.

COVID-19 heroes must jump through hoops for workers' comp

By RICARDO ALONSO-ZALDIVAR Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Lauded for their service and hailed as everyday heroes, essential workers who get the coronavirus on the job have no guarantee in most states they'll qualify for workers' compensation to cover lost wages and medical care.

Fewer than one-third of the states have enacted policies that shift the burden of proof for coverage of job-related COVID-19 so workers like first responders and nurses don't have to show they got sick by reporting for a risky assignment.

Debate over workers' comp in the states is part of a much larger national discussion about liability for virus exposure, with Republicans in Congress seeking a broad shield for businesses in the next coronavirus relief bill.

And for most employees going back to job sites as the economy reopens, there's even less protection than for essential workers. In nearly all states, they have to prove they got the virus on the job to qualify for workers' comp.

Nurse Dori Harrington of Manchester, Connecticut, said she got COVID-19 caring for infected patients at a nursing home, with limited protective gear. Harrington was severely ill and missed five weeks of work, yet her workers' comp claim was initially denied on grounds that her disease was "not distinctively associated with, nor peculiar" to her job.

"It's great to be appreciated, but we need to be taken care of, too," said Harrington, who eventually won her claim with union help. "Nobody should have to fight to be taken care of when they were simply doing their job taking care of other people. It's obnoxious to me."

Workers' compensation is not health insurance, or an unemployment benefit. The \$56 billion, state-level insurance system is one of the nation's oldest forms of a social contract. In exchange for coverage, workers give up the right to sue their employers for job-related harms. Employers pay premiums to support the system. Complex rules differ from state to state.

Dealing with job-related injuries is fairly straightforward, but diseases have always been trickier for workers' comp, and COVID-19 seems to be in a class of its own.

"You don't know per se where you inhaled that breath whereby you became infected," said Bill Smith, president of the Workers' Injury Law & Advocacy Group, or WILG, a professional association of lawyers representing workers.

You can still reach a logical conclusion, says University of Wyoming labor law professor Michael Duff.

"When you are talking about certain kinds of frontline workers, out in the trenches, day in and day out, that person starts to look like the coal miner who is routinely exposed to a hazardous health condition because of their work," he explained.

Think hospital and nursing home clinical staff, first responders, and meat packing workers, among others.

Acknowledging such realities, more than a dozen states have enacted policies known as "presumptions" that relieve essential workers like Dori Harrington, the nurse from Connecticut, of having to prove how

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, July 11, 2020 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 008 ~ 38 of 90

they actually got COVID-19 on the job.

The list includes liberal states like California and conservative states like Kentucky, according to WILG, the lawyers' group. California's policy stands out because it protects all workers, not just those in frontline roles.

At the federal level, there's a push to protect workers at the Transportation Security Administration and the Postal Service.

Duff predicts most states will be reluctant to expand protections.

The issue involves significant costs and hard lobbying. It pits workers, labor groups, lawyers, and social welfare advocates against employers, insurers, and even local and state governments that employ frontline workers.

In Colorado, a drive to enact a COVID-19 presumption for essential workers stalled in the legislature over cost concerns.

"At a time of community spread of a disease like this, it is not appropriate for a workers' comp system to act as a public safety net," said Edie Sonn, head of public affairs for Pinnacle Assurance, Colorado's leading workers' comp insurer, which opposed the effort.

Certain businesses would have seen premiums rise up to 27%, she added.

Industry expert Stefan Holzberger of the AM Best credit rating agency said there's a risk of significant losses for workers' comp insurers, but there are also potential mitigating factors. The bottom line isn't clear yet.

"From what we see so far, the average claims cost associated with a COVID-19 claim is less than the loss associated with a typical workers' comp claim," said Holzberger. "Going to the hospital and getting a test is a lot less than getting neck or back surgery."

Another mitigating factor: workplace injuries went down dramatically in the economic shutdown.

For essential workers who got COVID-19 and suffered through fever, fatigue, shortness of breath, racking cough, and other symptoms, the denial or acceptance of a workers' comp claim can have a profound impact.

Fire alarm inspector Kenneth Larkin of Montevallo, Ala., said he was rebuffed by his former employer when he requested workers' comp for a coronavirus test. He had gotten sick soon after inspecting systems in the COVID-19 wing of a hospital.

"I think a certain number of workers are being villainized because they want to take care of themselves," said Larkin, who's retained a lawyer. "It's hard for me as a human being to swallow that, when you place the value of a person's health at less than the cost of a test."

But nurse Debbie Koehler of Warren, Ohio, said she felt validated when her claim was accepted by the insurer for the rehab hospital where she works.

"It's just knowing that my employer is actively admitting that this wrong happened and they are paying for my therapy," she said.

AP FACT CHECK: If he's said it once, he's said it 100 times

By CALVIN WOODWARD, HOPE YEN and CHRISTOPHER RUGABER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — If saying things 100 times could make them true, President Donald Trump's account of how the U.S. is doing with the coronavirus would be true.

COVID-19 testing would be the envy of the world, the economy would be on the cusp of roaring back, the threat would be receding in a pandemic that has sickened more than 3.1 million Americans and killed more than 133,000.

But repetition doesn't make for reality. The U.S. is taking a disproportionate hit from the coronavirus globally and does not have it under control.

A look at how rhetoric from the past week compares with the facts on various fronts:

VIRUS

TRUMP: "For the 1/100th time, the reason we show so many Cases, compared to other countries that haven't done nearly as well as we have, is that our TESTING is much bigger and better. We have tested

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, July 11, 2020 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 008 ~ 39 of 90

40,000,000 people. If we did 20,000,000 instead, Cases would be half, etc. NOT REPORTED!" — tweet Thursday.

THE FACTS: His notion that infections are high only because the U.S. diagnostic testing has increased is false. His own top public health officials have shot down this line of thinking. Infections are rising because people are infecting each other more than they were when most everyone was hunkered down.

It's true that increased testing also contributes to the higher numbers. When you look harder, you're going to see more. But the testing has uncovered a worrisome trend: The percentage of tests coming back positive for the virus is on the rise across nearly the entire country.

That's a clear demonstration that sickness is spreading and that the U.S. testing system is falling short. "A high rate of positive tests indicates a government is only testing the sickest patients who seek out medical attention and is not casting a wide enough net," says the Johns Hopkins University Coronavirus Resource Center, a primary source of updated information on the pandemic.

Americans are being confronted with long lines at testing sites, often disqualified if they are not showing symptoms and, if tested, forced to wait many days for results.

TRUMP on the coronavirus: "We have the lowest Mortality Rate in the World." — tweet Tuesday.

THE FACTS: This statement is wholly unsupported.

An accurate death rate is impossible to know. Every country tests and counts people differently, and some are unreliable in reporting cases. Without knowing the true number of people who become infected, it cannot be determined what portion of them die.

Using a count kept by Johns Hopkins University, you can compare the number of recorded deaths with the number of reported cases. That count shows the U.S. experiencing more deaths as a percentage of cases than most other countries now being hit hard with the pandemic. The statistics look better for the U.S. when the list is expanded to include European countries that were slammed early on by the virus but now appear to have it under control. Even then, the U.S. is not shown to be among the best in avoiding death.

Such calculations, though, do not provide a reliable measurement of actual death rates, because of the variations in testing and reporting, and the Johns Hopkins tally is not meant to be such a measure.

The only way to tell how many cases have gone uncounted, and therefore what percentage of infected people have died from the disease, is to do another kind of test comprehensively, of people's blood, to find how many people bear immune system antibodies to the virus. Globally, that is only being done in select places.

TRUMP: "Deaths in the U.S. are way down." — tweet Monday, one of at least a half dozen heralding a drop in daily deaths from the virus.

THE FACTS: It's true that deaths dipped even as infections spiked in many parts of the country. But deaths lag sickness and the spikes have not played out.

"It's a false narrative to take comfort in a lower rate of death," Dr. Anthony Fauci, director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, said Tuesday. He advised Americans: "Don't get yourself into false complacency."

ECONOMY

TRUMP: "Job growth is biggest in history." — tweet Wednesday.

THE FACTS: Yes, but only because it is following the greatest job losses in history, by far.

The U.S. economy shed more than 22 million jobs in March and April, wiping out nearly a decade of job growth in just two months, as the viral outbreak intensified and nearly all states shut down nonessential businesses. Since then, 7.5 million, or about one-third, of those jobs have been recovered as businesses reopened. Even after those gains, the unemployment rate is 11.1%, down from April and May but otherwise higher than at any point since the Depression.

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, July 11, 2020 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 008 ~ 40 of 90

TRUMP: "Economy and Jobs are growing MUCH faster than anyone (except me!) expected." — tweet Wednesday.

THE FACTS: Not really. It's true that May's gain of 2.7 million jobs was unexpected. Economists had forecast another month of job losses. But most economists projected hiring would sharply rebound by June or at the latest July, once businesses began to reopen. The gains kicked in a month earlier than forecast.

Now, though, coronavirus cases are rising in most states, imperiling the climb back. In six states representing one-third of the economy — Arizona, California, Colorado, Florida, Michigan, and Texas — governors are reversing their reopening plans, and the restart is on pause in 15 other states. Such reversals are keeping layoffs elevated and threatening to weaken hiring.

TRUMP ON BIDEN

TRUMP campaign ad, playing out a scenario where a person needing help calls the police in a Biden presidency and gets a voice recording: "You have reached the 911 police emergency line. Due to defunding of the police department, we're sorry but no one is here to take your call." The ad closes with the message: "You won't be safe in Joe Biden's America."

THE FACTS: Biden has not joined the call of protesters who demanded "defund the police" after Floyd's killing. He's proposed more money for police, conditioned to improvements in their practices.

"I don't support defunding the police," Biden said last month in a CBS interview. But he said he would support tying federal aid to police based on whether "they meet certain basic standards of decency, honorableness and, in fact, are able to demonstrate they can protect the community, everybody in the community."

Biden's criminal justice agenda, released long before he became the Democrats' presumptive presidential nominee, proposes more federal money for "training that is needed to avert tragic, unjustifiable deaths" and hiring more officers to ensure that departments are racially and ethnically reflective of the populations they serve.

Specifically, he calls for a \$300 million infusion into existing federal community policing grant programs. That adds up to more money for police, not defunding law enforcement.

Biden also wants the federal government to spend more on education, social services and struggling areas of cities and rural America, to address root causes of crime.

Democrats, meanwhile, have pointed to Trump's repeated proposals in the administration's budget to cut community policing and mediation programs at the Justice Department. Congressional Republicans say the program can be effectively merged with other divisions, but Democrats have repeatedly blocked the effort. The program has been used to help provide federal oversight of local police departments.

Despite proposed cuts, Attorney General William Barr last month said that the department would use the COPS program funding to hire over 2,700 police officers at nearly 600 departments across the country.

REPUBLICAN NATIONAL COMMITTEE email: "In the wake of rioting, looting, and tragic murders ripping apart communities across the country, Joe Biden said 'Yes, absolutely' he wants to defund the police." — email Wednesday from Steve Guest, RNC's rapid response director.

THE FACTS: That's misleading, a selective use of Biden's words on the subject.

The email links to an excerpted video clip of Biden's conversation with liberal activist Ady Barkan, who endorsed Biden on Wednesday after supporting Elizabeth Warren and Bernie Sanders during the Democratic primaries. A full recording of that conversation, provided by the Biden campaign to The Associated Press, shows he again declined to support defunding police,

Barkan raises the issue of police reform and asks whether Biden would funnel money into social services, mental health counseling and affordable housing to help reduce civilian interactions with police.

Biden responds that he is calling for increased funding for mental health providers but "that's not the same as getting rid of or defunding all the police" and that both approaches are needed, including more money for community police.

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, July 11, 2020 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 008 ~ 41 of 90

Asked again by Barkan, "so we agree that we can redirect some of the funding," Biden then answers "absolutely yes."

Biden then gives the caveat that he means "not just redirect" federal money potentially but "condition" it on police improvements.

"If they don't eliminate choke holds, they don't get (federal) grants, if they don't do the following, they don't get any help," Biden replied.

"The vast majority of all police departments are funded by the locality, funded by the municipality, funded by the state," he added. "It's only the federal government comes in on top of that, and so it says you want help, you have to do the following reforms."

BIDEN ON TRUMP

BIDEN: "President Trump claimed to the American people that he was a wartime leader, but instead of taking responsibility, Trump has waved a white flag, revealing that he ordered the slowing of testing and having his administration tell Americans that they simply need to 'live with it.'" – statement Wednesday marking the rise in U.S. coronavirus infections to more than 3 million.

THE FACTS: To be clear, the government did not slow testing on the orders of the president.

Trump at first denied he was joking when he told a Tulsa, Oklahoma, rally on June 20 that he said "to my people, 'Slow the testing down, please'" because "they test and they test." Days later he said he didn't really mean it.

In any event, a succession of his public-health officials testified to Congress that the president never asked them to slow testing and that they were doing all they could to increase it. But testing remains markedly insufficient.

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

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Fay becomes post-tropical cyclone over eastern New York

MIAMI (AP) — A tropical storm that brought heavy rain to mid-Atlantic states and southern New England was downgraded twice Saturday morning as it moved over New York, forecasters said.

Post-tropical cyclone Fay was about 30 miles (48 kilometers) south of Albany and had maximum sustained winds near 35 mph (55 kph), the National Hurricane Center in Miami said in its 5 a.m. advisory. The forecasters said the advisory would be its last for the system that was expected to continue moving north Saturday.

Fay had closed beaches and flooded shore town streets after it made landfall as a tropical storm Friday afternoon in New Jersey. It weakened once it hit land and was expected to dissipate Sunday, forecasters said.

Forecasters again decreased expected rain totals from Fay. The post-tropical low was expected to produce 1 to 2 inches (3 to 5 centimeters) of rain, with flash flooding possible in some areas.

The forecast track put the system moving into western New England and then southeastern Canada later Saturday and into Sunday, forecasters said. No coastal watches or warnings were in effect for the system.

Fay was the earliest sixth-named storm on record, according to Colorado State University hurricane researcher Phil Klotzbach. The previous record was Franklin on July 22, 2005, Klotzbach tweeted.

Two named storms formed before the official June 1 start of the hurricane season. None of this season's previous five named storms strengthened into hurricanes.

Zimbabwe bird sanctuary has 400 species, not enough tourists

By FARAI MUTSAKA Associated Press

HARARE, Zimbabwe (AP) — A fish eagle swoops over the water to grab a fish in its talons and then flies to its nest.

Nearby are a martial eagle, a black eagle, an Egyptian vulture and hundreds of other birds. With an estimated 400 species of birds on an idyllic spot on Zimbabwe's Lake Chivero, about 40 kilometers (25 miles) south of Harare, the Kuimba Shiri bird sanctuary has been drawing tourists for more than 15 years.

The southern African country's only bird park has survived tumultuous times, including violent land invasions and a devastating economic collapse but the outbreak of coronavirus is proving a stern test.

"I thought I had survived the worst, but this coronavirus is something else," said owner Gary Strafford. "One-third of our visitors are from China. They stopped coming in February ... and when we were shut down in March, that was just unbelievable."

A life-long bird enthusiast, Strafford, 62, established the center for injured, orphaned and abandoned birds in 1992 and tourism has kept the park going.

With Zimbabwe's inflation rising to over 750%, tourism establishments are battling a vicious economic downturn worsened by the new coronavirus travel restrictions.

Zimbabwe's tourism was already facing problems. The country recorded just over 2 million visitors in 2019, an 11% decline from the previous year, according to official figures. However, tourism remained one of the country's biggest foreign currency earners, along with minerals and tobacco.

Now tourism "is dead because of coronavirus," said Tinashe Farawo, the spokesman for the country's national parks agency. National parks and other animal sanctuaries such as Kuimba Shiri are battling to stay afloat, he said.

"We are in trouble. All along we have been relying on tourism to fund our conservation ... now what do we do?" he asked.

Kuimba Shiri, which means singing bird in Zimbabwe's Shona language, was closed for more than three months. It's the longest time the bird sanctuary, located in one of the global sites protected under the United Nations Convention on Wetlands, has been shut.

On a recent weekday, the only sound of life at the place usually teeming with children on school trips was that of singing birds perched on the edges of large enclosures. Horses, zebras and sheep fed on grass and weeds on the lakeshore.

A parrot standing on a flower pot at the entrance repeatedly shouted "Hello!"

"He misses people, especially the children," said Strafford, who established Kuimba Shiri on the 30-acre spot on Chivero, the main reservoir for Harare. Now it is home to many rare species including falcons, flamingos and vultures.

"This place is a dream place for me," he said.

Things turned nightmarish however when then president, the late Robert Mugabe, launched an often-violent land redistribution program in which farms owned by whites were seized for redistribution to landless Blacks in 2000.

Animal sanctuaries were not spared and Kuimba Shiri was targeted "30 to 40 times," said Strafford. Eventually, the sanctuary was endorsed by Mugabe and returned to a measure of stability.

In 2009, Zimbabwe's economy collapsed as hyperinflation reached 500 billion percent, according to the International Monetary Fund. The sanctuary struggled to make ends meet. Many birds starved to death while those that could fend for themselves were released into the wild.

"We sold our vehicles and a tractor to feed the birds. When it really got desperate we had to kill our horses," he said.

Now, a decade later, Strafford is again being forced to sell some items as coronavirus and a new economic crisis take their toll. A land excavator, a boat, a truck, a tractor and sheep are among the items he hopes to urgently sell.

But there is some hope. As Zimbabwe relaxes some of its restrictions, the sanctuary is now able to open

to limited numbers of visitors.

On a recent weekend, Strafford displayed the talents of his trained falcons and other raptors to a small group for the first time since March.

Strafford enthusiastically described the various traits of the birds and supervised as a barn owl perched on a 5-year-old boy's gloved hand.

"Everything got to start afresh," he said after the show. "I have started training the birds again. We are beginning to fly again!"

Pac-12 joins Big Ten in eliminating nonconference games

By JOHN MARSHALL AP Sports Writer

The Pac-12 has become the second major conference to shift to a conference-only fall schedule amid growing concerns over the coronavirus pandemic.

The announcement came after a meeting of the Pac-12 CEO Group on Friday and a day after the Big Ten opted to eliminate nonconference games for all fall sports.

"The health and safety of our student-athletes and all those connected to Pac-12 sports continues to be our No. 1 priority," Pac-12 Commissioner Larry Scott said in a statement. "Our decisions have and will be guided by science and data, and based upon the trends and indicators over the past days, it has become clear that we need to provide ourselves with maximum flexibility to schedule, and to delay any movement to the next phase of return-to-play activities."

Two hours later, the Pac-12 announced that Scott had tested positive for COVID-19 and was under self-quarantine.

The Atlantic Coast, Big 12 and Southeastern conferences are still weighing options for fall sports. On Wednesday, the Ivy League became the first Division I conference to suspend all fall sports until at least January, leaving open the possibility of moving some sports to the spring if the pandemic is under better control.

The Pac-12's decision covers football, men's and women's soccer and women's volleyball. Conference-only schedules will be announced no later than July 31.

The conference is also delaying the start of mandatory athletic activities until a series of health and safety indicators become more positive. Athletes who choose not to participate in the next academic year due to COVID-19 concerns will continue to have their scholarships honored and will remain in good standing with their teams.

The college sports world has been put on hold since the coronavirus pandemic wiped out the lucrative NCAA basketball tournaments and all spring sports. Athletes recently began returning to campuses for voluntary workouts, but many schools have scaled back as more than a dozen schools have reported positive COVID-19 tests among athletes in the past month.

Schools also have faced massive budget shortfalls in the wake of the pandemic.

The NCAA shorted its member schools \$375 million in scheduled payouts due to the cancellation of the NCAA Tournament and schools across the country have been hit with massive budget shortfalls as college sports remain on hold.

Stanford eliminated 11 of its 36 varsity sports this week and at least 171 four-year schools have eliminated sports during the pandemic.

"Arizona State University and Sun Devil athletics support the Pac-12's announcement of a strictly conference schedule for the 2020 football and fall sports seasons," Arizona State athletic director Ray Anderson said in a statement. "We will continue to seek the guidance and input from medical and infectious disease experts, as well as our local and campus health officials and doctors as we evaluate this ever-changing landscape."

A shift to conference-only schedules will likely have a ripple across the college sports landscape.

Smaller schools that rely on revenue from guarantee football games against Power Five schools could be shorted millions of dollars.

Non-Power Five schools receive hundreds of thousands of dollars to more than \$1 million from guarantee

games to fund their athletic departments. Guarantee-game revenue can account for more than 5% of a school's overall athletic budget.

More AP sports: <https://apnews.com/apf-sports> and https://twitter.com/AP_Sports

Trump lags Biden on people of color in top campaign ranks

By DARLENE SUPERVILLE Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Amid a summer of racial unrest and calls for more diversity in leadership, President Donald Trump lags Democratic rival Joe Biden in the percentage of people of color on their campaign staffs, according to data the campaigns provided to The Associated Press.

Twenty-five percent of the Republican president's senior staff are nonwhite, compared to 36% of Biden's senior staff. Biden's overall campaign team is 35% nonwhite; Trump's campaign did not provide a comparable number.

And neither campaign provided racial breakdowns for their nonwhite staff, nor the total number of staffers who are on their payrolls, including senior staff.

Advocates for minority groups say staff diversity is necessary to ensure political candidates hear a full range of voices and viewpoints to help them understand the concerns of various communities and interest groups — especially at a time when racial injustice is front and center in the national conversation. And while Biden has an edge on Trump, there is plenty more to be done in presidential campaigns overall.

Jennifer Lawless, commonwealth professor of politics at the University of Virginia, said "there are still a lot of milestones that haven't been hit" by political campaigns, such as a Black man or woman directing — and winning — a presidential campaign. And she said having diverse staff at lower levels in campaigns can help increase the pool of future managers, finance chairs and others.

"It's all part of the pipeline," Lawless said.

Trump's campaign makeup got a double-take in June when Vice President Mike Pence tweeted — and later deleted — a photo from his visit to campaign headquarters. The photo at first drew attention for the lack of social distancing and use of face masks among the staff. But it also was notable for the sea of mostly white faces.

Eric Rodriguez, senior vice president of policy and advocacy at UnidosUS, said the Biden team had more Latinos in senior positions than Trump.

"You need people from those communities to be able to make those connections," said Rodriguez, whose organization used to be called the National Council of La Raza.

The rival campaigns fared better — and are about even — on employing women, with females filling more than half of all jobs overall, and more than half of all senior positions.

The president's daughter-in-law, Lara Trump, who is white, former White House aide Mercedes Schlapp, who is Cuban American, and Katrina Pierson, who is Black and worked on Trump's 2016 campaign, are among the highest-profile senior female staffers working to help him get reelected.

Others include former Fox News host Kimberly Guilfoyle, now a top fundraiser for the reelection effort and the girlfriend of Trump's son, Donald Trump Jr., and Hannah Castillo, a Latina and the campaign's coalitions director. Guilfoyle's mother is Puerto Rican.

Biden senior adviser Symone Sanders, who is Black, is the campaign's highest-ranking person of color and, at 30, is the youngest member of his inner circle. The candidate also recently brought on several African Americans who worked for President Barack Obama, including Karine Jean-Pierre, formerly an NBC News and MSNBC political analyst.

Jamal Brown, a spokesperson for Biden, said the former vice president's campaign reflects the "diversity, breadth and promise of America."

"He believes our democracy is strongest when people see themselves reflected in their government," added Brown, who is Black.

The killing in May of George Floyd, who was Black, by a white Minneapolis police officer sparked nationwide protests against racial injustice and calls for greater minority representation across the board in

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, July 11, 2020 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 008 ~ 45 of 90

society that brought fresh scrutiny to the presidential campaigns.

Biden had faced questions earlier in the campaign about the lack of diversity on his staff. Along with adding more people of color to his campaign, Biden has promised an administration that "looks like America" if he is elected on Nov. 3.

The U.S. population is about 60% white, 19% Latino and 13% Black, according to Census Bureau estimates.

Trump has not made a similar pledge about a potential second term. His campaign declined to discuss minority representation on the campaign staff.

Four women currently serve in Trump's Cabinet: CIA Director Gina Haspel and Education Secretary Betsy DeVos, both of whom are white; Jovita Carranza, a Latina who leads the Small Business Administration; and Transportation Secretary Elaine Chao, who was born in Taiwan.

Housing Secretary Ben Carson is the only Black member of the Cabinet.

Rodriguez summed up the Biden campaign strategy as focused on winning support from a diverse pool of voters, especially in battleground states where large numbers of Latino and Black voters live. He characterized Trump's strategy as being "really all about the base" and attempting to replicate his successful 2016 campaign playbook, which used immigration as a wedge issue.

"The strategy is to run on racial division," Rodriguez said of the president, who has begun to use the racial tensions that surfaced after Floyd's killing in his reelection pitch.

Still, Trump and his campaign make regular appeals to Black and Latino voters.

The president regularly cites employment gains for these groups before the coronavirus pandemic struck, and he continues to showcase legislation he signed to overhaul criminal sentencing procedures and provide permanent funding for historically Black colleges and universities.

This week, Trump was surrounded by Latino American leaders as he announced a new advisory commission to help Hispanic Americans with economic and educational opportunities.

But the event also highlighted how far Trump has to go in winning support from people of color. Critics of Trump's record with Hispanics called for a boycott of the Goya food company after its president praised Trump at the event.

The president does have strong support among some people of Cuban and Venezuelan descent, though, because of his tough stance against authoritarian leaders in those countries.

The Biden campaign said LGBTQ staff and staff of color hold such positions as senior advisers, deputy campaign managers, national coalitions director, chief financial officer, chief operating officer and national press secretary, among others.

Trump's campaign defined its senior staff as "senior leaders who meet regularly to make decisions. People with authority," and did not elaborate.

Trump threatens to pull tax exemption for schools, colleges

By COLLIN BINKLEY AP Education Writer

In his push to get schools and colleges to reopen this fall, President Donald Trump is again taking aim at their finances, this time threatening their tax-exempt status.

Trump said on Twitter on Friday he was ordering the Treasury Department to re-examine the tax-exempt status of schools that he says provide "radical indoctrination" instead of education.

"Too many Universities and School Systems are about Radical Left Indoctrination, not Education," he tweeted. "Therefore, I am telling the Treasury Department to re-examine their Tax-Exempt Status and/or Funding, which will be taken away if this Propaganda or Act Against Public Policy continues. Our children must be Educated, not Indoctrinated!"

The Republican president did not explain what prompted the remark or which schools would be reviewed. But the threat is just one more that Trump has issued against schools as he ratchets up pressure to get them to open this fall. Twice this week Trump threatened to cut federal funding for schools that don't reopen, including in an earlier tweet on Friday.

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, July 11, 2020 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 008 ~ 46 of 90

It's unclear, however, on what grounds Trump could have a school's tax-exempt status terminated. It was also not clear what Trump meant by "radical indoctrination" or who would decide what type of activity that includes. The White House and Treasury Department did not immediately comment on the president's message.

Previous guidance from the Internal Revenue Service lays out six types of activities that can jeopardize a nonprofit organization's tax-exempt status, including political activity, lobbying and straying from the organization's stated purpose.

But ideology is not on the IRS's list, said Terry Hartle, senior vice president of the American Council on Education, which represents university presidents. Any review of a school's status would have to follow previously established guidelines, he said.

"It's always deeply troubling to have the president single out schools, colleges or universities in a tweet," Hartle said. "Having said that, I don't think anything will come of this quickly."

In his latest threat, Trump revived his oft-repeated claim that universities are bastions of liberalism that stifle conservative ideas. He used the same argument last year when he issued an executive order telling colleges to ensure free speech on campuses or lose federal research funding.

His interest in colleges' finances appears to have been renewed as several schools sue the Trump administration over new restrictions on international students. Harvard University and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology sued to block the policy earlier this week, followed by Johns Hopkins University on Friday. The University of California system has said it also plans to sue.

The universities are challenging new guidance issued by Immigration and Customs Enforcement saying international students cannot stay in the U.S. if they take all their classes online this fall. The policy has been viewed as an attempt to force the nation's universities to resume classroom instruction this fall.

Under the rules, international students must transfer schools or leave the country if their colleges plan to hold instruction entirely online. Even if their schools offer a mix of online and in-person classes, foreign students would be forbidden from taking all their courses remotely.

The lawsuit from Harvard and MIT argue that the policy breaks from a promise ICE made in March to suspend limits around online education "for the duration of the emergency."

Until Friday, Trump had mostly focused his efforts on reopening elementary and secondary schools as millions of parents wait to find out if their children will be in school this fall. He has insisted that they can open safely, and in a Friday tweet argued that virtual learning has been "terrible" compared with in-person instruction.

"Not even close! Schools must be open in the Fall. If not open, why would the Federal Government give Funding? It won't!!!" he wrote. Trump issued a similar warning on Twitter on Wednesday, saying other nations had successfully opened schools and that a fall reopening is "important for the children and families. May cut off funding if not open!"

Trump has not said what funding he would withhold or under what authority. But White House spokeswoman Kayleigh McEnany has said the president wants to use future coronavirus relief funding as leverage. McEnany said Trump wants to "substantially bump up money for education" in the next relief package, but only for schools that reopen.

"He is looking at potentially redirecting that to make sure it goes to the student," McEnany said at a Wednesday press briefing. She added that the funding would be "tied to the student and not to a district where schools are closed."

But Trump's control over school funding is limited. The vast majority of funding for public elementary and secondary schools comes from state and local sources, and nonprofit colleges are more likely to rely on tuition or state aid than federal money.

His threats to withhold funding have been denounced by a growing array of education and health groups, including a medical association that the White House has repeatedly cited in its press to reopen schools.

In a joint statement with national education unions and a superintendents group, the American Academy of Pediatrics on Friday said decisions should be made by health experts and local leaders. The groups

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, July 11, 2020 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 008 ~ 47 of 90

argued that schools will need more money to reopen safely during the coronavirus pandemic and that cuts could ultimately harm students.

"Public health agencies must make recommendations based on evidence, not politics," the groups wrote. "Withholding funding from schools that do not open in person full-time would be a misguided approach, putting already financially strapped schools in an impossible position that would threaten the health of students and teachers."

The American Academy of Pediatrics has supported a fall reopening, saying in June guidelines that schools should strive to start the academic year with their students "physically present in school." Vice President Mike Pence, Education Secretary Betsy DeVos and McEnany have repeatedly, and as recently as Wednesday, cited the group in defense of Trump's approach.

But Friday's statement acknowledged that it may be best for some schools to stay online. School leaders, health experts, teachers and parents should be at the center of reopening decisions, the groups said, "taking into account the spread of COVID-19 in their communities and the capacities of school districts to adapt safety protocols to make in-person learning safe and feasible."

Some districts have already announced plans for only a partial reopening, with a mix of in-person and online instruction. New York City's public school district, the nation's largest, said students will be in classrooms two or three times a week and learn remotely between. DeVos has opposed that kind of approach, saying it fails students and taxpayers.

It's not just the presidency: Trump is changing the Congress

By LISA MASCARO AP Congressional Correspondent

WASHINGTON (AP) — Donald Trump isn't just changing the presidency during his first term in office. He's also changing Congress.

More than perhaps any president in modern history, Trump has been willing to ignore, defy and toy with the legislative branch, asserting power and breaking norms in ways his predecessors would hardly dare.

Republicans shrug it off as Trump being Trump, leaving Democrats almost alone to object. While the Democratic-run House took the extraordinary step of impeaching the president, the GOP-controlled Senate acquitted. Over time, there's been a noticeable imbalance of power, a president with few restraints drifting toward what the founders warned against.

Think of it as "the incredible shrinkage" of Congress, said historian Douglas Brinkley.

"It's created this massive void in our democracy," Brinkley told The Associated Press.

As Trump seeks reelection with the country facing crises unseen in a lifetime, Congress is confronting questions about its ability to shape the direction and future of the nation.

This week, the Supreme Court weighed in, acknowledging the "clash between rival branches of government" over Trump's financial records. Chief Justice John Roberts, writing for the majority to return the case to lower courts, said that while the subpoenas for the documents were broad, the president went too far in claiming virtual immunity from congressional oversight.

"What was at stake is, is the president above the law?" said House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, D-Calif., taking the ruling as a win for her end of Pennsylvania Avenue.

The erosion has taken place in ways large and small.

First, Trump took money for his promised border wall with Mexico without lawmaker approval, circumventing Congress's bedrock power over spending. Then he began to fill top posts with officials who did not have the support of senators, negating their role to advise and consent on nominees.

And when the House launched investigations that led to impeachment — the ultimate check on the executive — Trump refused to comply with subpoenas, declaring them invalid. The courts are now left to decide.

Presidents have almost always reached to grab power. Abraham Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation to free enslaved people. Barack Obama issued executive actions on immigration when Congress wouldn't comply.

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, July 11, 2020 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 008 ~ 48 of 90

But typically presidents only go so far, knowing Congress is eyeing their every move, ready and willing to intervene. The executive knows they may soon need votes from lawmakers on other matters, creating a need for cooperation.

Trump rejects that model outright, treating the Congress as support staff to his presidency and relying on sheer force of personality to shape the government to his will. A simple Trump tweet can cower critics and reward loyalists all the same. His power only grows as lawmakers, particularly Senate Republicans, stay silent.

The result is a an exhaustive, head-spinning era that's turning Capitol Hill into a spectator stand of those watching, reacting and shaking a fist as their institutional prerogative is slipping away.

"There's a deeper institutional question," said Sen. Angus King, the independent from Maine. "The Congress is abdicating its responsibilities to the executive."

The singular challenge to Trump comes from Pelosi, a seasoned legislator who captured the Democratic majority after Trump's first two years in large part because voters longed for a check on his power. In the Senate, Majority Leader Mitch McConnell has taken a different tack, working with the Republican president or at times around him as GOP senators avoid direct confrontations.

"Congress is evolving," said Sen. Marco Rubio, R-Fla., once a Trump rival for the White House.

Rubio acknowledges the Congress is a different place than when he arrived a decade ago on the tea party wave. He wishes, at times, that Congress would be more assertive.

"America is going through a transformational moment, as we have many times in our history," he said. He notes that lawmakers still join forces, including on his legislation on human rights in Hong Kong. "It's easy to watch what is happening here today and think these are the worst times in congressional history. That's not accurate."

But day in and day out, Congress is mostly unwilling to pull together, Republicans declining to join Democrats to rebuke the president when he overreaches or confront him with bipartisan legislation to force his hand.

"There isn't even a whimper out of the Republican side," said Sen. Dick Durbin of Illinois, the assistant Democratic leader.

"Every president does that — they will push their authority as far as they can," Durbin said. "For Trump, it has been nonstop."

The forces diminishing the Congress have been at work for some time, as relentless partisanship leave lawmakers unable to meet the moment and produce solutions for a splintered nation.

Polling shows Americans overwhelmingly support a legislative response to many top issues. They back changes to policing tactics in the aftermath of mass demonstrations over the deaths of Black Americans at the hands of law enforcement. They support background checks on firearm purchases to stem violence and mass shootings. And they want immigration law changes, particularly to protect young immigrants from deportation.

Over and over, Congress failed to deliver. In the void and buoyed by it, Trump extends his reach.

Sarah Binder, a professor at George Washington University, said the Constitution's separation of powers can only take the country so far. "Parchment doesn't stop these battles," she said.

When people ask incredulously if the president can do something he has just done, she said, "Presidents can get away with this if there's no broader public or his own party reining him in."

Brinkley warns that unless Congress exerts itself, with Pelosi's House and McConnell's Senate pulling together to bring the nation to common ground, Trump will press on, emerging as the nation's first "authoritarian" executive.

"Those are the people's houses. That's where the people's voices are heard," he said. "They need to show the American people that Capitol Hill is working."

Army: Independent probe coming after Fort Hood soldier death

By ACACIA CORONADO Report for America/ Associated Press

AUSTIN, Texas (AP) — U.S. Army officials announced Friday they will begin an independent review of the command climate at Fort Hood following calls from members of Congress and community activists for a more thorough investigation into the killing of a soldier from the Texas base.

Secretary of the Army Ryan D. McCarthy said he was directing the review and that it will be conducted by an independent panel of congressional representatives selected in collaboration with League of United Latin American Citizens. The panel will examine claims and historical data of discrimination, harassment and assault.

The review comes in the wake of the death of 20-year-old Spc. Vanessa Guillen, who investigators say was bludgeoned to death at Fort Hood by a fellow soldier. She was last seen in April and was listed as missing for six weeks before the Army released details. The soldier suspected in Guillen's slaying, Spc. Aaron Robinson, died by suicide on July 1 as police were trying to take him into custody.

"The Army is deeply saddened and troubled by the loss of one of our own," McCarthy said Friday during a press conference.

In a separate press conference Friday, U.S. Rep. Sylvia Garcia, D-Texas, said McCarthy had also agreed to back calls for the Department of Defense to conduct an inspector general's investigation into the death of Guillen. She said the independent review of Fort Hood's climate showed military officials were listening.

The Texas congresswoman and others met with McCarthy after dozens of lawmakers joined a letter demanding a full accounting of the circumstances surrounding Guillen's death.

"This is the military 'me too' movement," Garcia said.

President Donald Trump acknowledged Guillen's death in an interview with Noticias Telemundo on Friday. He said he had heard of the sexual harassment and assault allegations in the Army and was expecting a report by Monday, when he said he would say more.

"I thought it was absolutely horrible," Trump said.

Natalie Khawam, who is representing the Guillen family, said Friday that she hopes to find support in members of Congress and President Trump for the I Am Vanessa Guillen bill that she will be presenting this month. If passed, the bill would allow for active duty service members to file sexual assault and harassment claims to a third party agency, instead of their line of command.

"Vanessa Guillen dedicated her life to serving our country," Khawam said. "America looks forward to Congress passing our bill and the President signing it into law so this injustice never happens to another soldier ever again."

Questions over Guillen's disappearance still loom.

Guillen's family has said Robinson, the soldier accused of killing her, sexually harassed Guillen at Fort Hood, but they have not given specifics of what they were told.

Guillen was assigned to work in an armory room at Fort Hood on April 22, when she was last seen walking to a parking lot, according to the Army. On April 23, the U.S. Army Criminal Investigations Division learned of her disappearance and began investigating.

Investigators began interviewing people who had been in contact with Guillen on April 28, according to a timeline provided by the Army. That day, Robinson, of Calumet City, Illinois, was identified as a "person of concern" based on information that he provided investigators during his interview, Army officials said.

The Army was receiving 20 to 30 tips per day about Guillen's whereabouts, officials said, and it took more than a month to get cell phone records requested for the investigation.

Phone records helped lead investigators to Cecily Aguilar, a civilian now charged with one federal count of conspiracy to tamper with evidence. Investigators believe she helped Robinson hide Guillen's body. Aguilar, 22, of Killeen, Texas, near Fort Hood, is currently in custody at the Bell County Jail.

The Army said a contractor not involved with the investigation found human remains June 30 in the woods near the Leon River. The remains were later identified as Guillen's.

Later that day, Robinson, who had been confined at Fort Hood for reasons that were not related to the

Guillen investigation, ran away unnoticed from the barracks, according to the Army. After being confronted by police later that night, Robinson died July 1 by taking his own life.

The Army says the gun Robinson used was not issued by Fort Hood, but it's unclear where he got it. Army officials said 52 agents from multiple military and civilian law enforcement agencies have conducted more than 300 interviews investigating Guillen's killing. That has lasted for more than 170 days, and Army officials say that has led to forensic examinations of more than 50 phones.

Acacia Coronado is a corps member for the Associated Press/Report for America Statehouse News Initiative. Report for America is a nonprofit national service program that places journalists in local newsrooms to report on undercovered issues. Associated Press reporters from around the world contributed to this report.

Tropical Storm Fay weakens after New Jersey landfall

By KAREN MATTHEWS and MICHAEL HILL Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Tropical Storm Fay made landfall in New Jersey on Friday amid heavy, lashing rains that closed beaches and flooded shore town streets, before weakening as it moved over New Jersey.

The fast-moving storm system was expected to continue weakening overnight, the U.S. National Hurricane Center said in its 11 p.m. advisory. The storm was moving north at 17 mph (27 kph) and producing top sustained winds of 40 mph (64 kph), forecasters said.

The storm is expected to bring 1 to 3 inches (3 to 7 centimeters) of rain, a further reduction from earlier forecasts' estimates. Flash flooding in certain areas is possible, as is minor coastal flooding in the tropical storm warning area stretching north from New York's Long Island to Rhode Island.

The storm made landfall along the coast of New Jersey about 10 miles (15 kilometers) north-northeast of Atlantic City, according to national forecasters, and the center of the storm was around 15 miles (24 kilometers) northwest of New York City as of the latest advisory.

Several beaches in Delaware had been temporarily closed because of the storm. And police in Ocean City asked drivers to avoid southern parts of the tourist town because flooding had already made some roads impassable. Some streets in the New Jersey shore towns of Sea Isle City and Wildwood were flooded, according to social media posts. Seaside Heights, New Jersey, reported a sustained wind of 37 mph (60 kph) and New York City's John F. Kennedy International Airport reported a wind gust of 45 mph (72 kph), said forecasters.

Heavy rain was falling in New York City on Friday afternoon as the center of the storm moved northward. "We expect some pretty heavy winds, and we need people to be ready for that, and some flash flooding in certain parts of the city," New York City Mayor Bill de Blasio said at a briefing Friday morning.

The summer storm's impact on the city was expected to be "pretty limited," but de Blasio said it would be a bad night for outdoor dining — the only sit-down service allowed at city restaurants because of the pandemic.

"If you were going to go out tonight, instead order in and keep helping our restaurant community," he said.

The shoreline town of Old Saybrook, Connecticut, was preparing to open the local high school as a 2,000-person shelter. In a nod to the coronavirus outbreak, Police Chief Michael Spera they will be handing out masks and will not be sending residents to the gym or other common areas.

"They will actually be escorted into individual classrooms," he said. "If you take a school and make pretend that it's a hotel, we'll be using individual classrooms like individual hotel rooms."

He said families will be allowed to stay together in one room. People who indicate they have symptoms that might be associated with the virus will be segregated to a separate area of the school.

President Donald Trump said the storm is being monitored and that the Federal Emergency Management Agency was poised to help if needed.

"We're fully prepared. FEMA's ready in case it's bad. Shouldn't be too bad, but you never know," Trump

told reporters while departing the White House for Florida.

Trump postponed his Saturday rally in New Hampshire due to the weather, Press Secretary Kayleigh McEnany said.

The storm was expected to move across southeastern New York overnight and then across western New England into southeastern Canada by Saturday, when it's expected to become a post-tropical low before dissipating Sunday.

Fay is the earliest sixth-named storm on record, according to Colorado State University hurricane researcher Phil Klotzbach. The previous record was Franklin on July 22, 2005, Klotzbach tweeted.

Two named storms formed before the official June 1 start of the hurricane season. None of this season's previous five named storms strengthened into hurricanes.

Hill reported from Albany, New York. Associated Press writer Pat Eaton-Robb contributed from Columbia, Connecticut.

Storm clouds hang over Trump's attempted campaign reboot

By JONATHAN LEMIRE and BILL BARROW Associated Press

MIAMI (AP) — Friday was supposed to be the day President Donald Trump's campaign reboot itself got a reboot. Instead, it hit another snag.

Amid uncertainty over whether he can still draw big and enthusiastic crowds to his signature rallies in the coronavirus era, Trump postponed a planned Saturday rally in Portsmouth, New Hampshire, citing a tropical storm expected to hit a swath of the Eastern United States.

"With Tropical Storm Fay heading towards the Great State of New Hampshire this weekend, we are forced to reschedule our Portsmouth, New Hampshire Rally at the Portsmouth International Airport at Pease," Trump tweeted. "Stay safe, we will be there soon!"

The latest setback came as the Trump campaign casts about for ways to reverse its recent downward slide in the polls at a time when the president is facing widespread criticism over his handling of the pandemic and his harsh stance against those protesting racial injustice.

With growing whispers of a staff shakeup and behind-the-scenes finger-pointing among White House, campaign and Republican Party officials, the campaign has been looking for something to reverse the negative momentum.

But attack lines against Democratic rival Joe Biden have failed to get traction and attempts to get Trump back on the road have faltered. His rally in Tulsa, Oklahoma, three weeks ago was intended to mark his triumphal return to the trail, but it produced a surprisingly sparse crowd and campaign travel again was put on hold.

Trump's visit to Florida was supposed to launch back-to-back days of high-profile campaigning but instead wound up being a one-off. He did fit in a campaign fundraiser in South Florida and events focused on government counternarcotics efforts and support for the Venezuelan people.

At his Doral event with Venezuelan expatriates, Trump courted a segment of Florida's diverse Hispanic population by sharpening an emerging attack line: Biden might not be a socialist, but he is running past his expiration date and controlled by an ascendant liberal wing of the Democratic Party.

"Republicans are the party of freedom, and Democrats are the party of socialism and worse," Trump said.

His visit to Florida took him to terrain where COVID-19's surge threatens his hold on a must-win state and raises questions about Republican aims to hold their nominating convention in Jacksonville next month.

Biden pointed to Florida's rising coronavirus cases, saying, "It is clear that Trump's response — ignore, blame others, and distract — has come at the expense of Florida families."

But Saturday's New Hampshire visit was more problematic. Campaign officials privately acknowledged there had been fears all along about how many people would attend the Portsmouth rally. After the disappointing turnout in Tulsa, aides were intent on avoiding a repeat.

Once the storm entered the forecast, even if the rain was expected to stop in the hours before the rally,

concerns about turnout only grew. For the event's scheduled start time Saturday evening, Weather.Com forecast a 15% chance of rain.

But there was also strong opposition to Trump's rally among some prominent New Hampshire Republicans. Judd Gregg, who previously served New Hampshire both as a governor and senator, bluntly called Trump's planned appearance "a mistake."

"New Hampshire has been extremely aggressive under the governor in containing the virus," Gregg said in an interview with The Associated Press, confirming that he had not planned to attend. "People are concerned about folks bringing the problem to us."

Trump, with just months left before voters decide whether to reelect him, has been eager to signal that normal life can resume despite a rampaging virus that has killed more than 130,000 Americans.

Unlike the rally in Tulsa, which was held indoors where the virus more easily circulates, the rally in Portsmouth was to be partially outdoors, held in an airplane hangar open on one side with the crowd spilling out onto the tarmac before Air Force One.

Moreover, while masks were distributed in Tulsa, few rallygoers wore them after weeks of Trump deriding their use. This time, the campaign had strongly encouraged their use.

The venue was to be significantly smaller than the cavernous Tulsa arena, and aides had deliberately set lower expectations for crowd size. Before the Oklahoma event, which spurred days of protests, campaign manager Brad Parscale boasted that a million ticket requests had been received. The Tulsa fire marshal said 6,000 people attended.

New Hampshire has had a relatively low number of COVID-19 cases, while those in Oklahoma were rising before Trump arrived. Oklahoma health officials said the rally and accompanying protests "likely contributed" to a surge in infections in the city. Several campaign staffers and Secret Service agents tested positive for the virus.

Barrow reported from Atlanta. Associated Press writers Amer Madhani in Washington and Steve Peoples in London contributed to this report.

Follow Lemire on Twitter at <https://twitter.com/@JonLemire> and Barrow at <https://twitter.com/@BillBarrowAP>.

Trump undercuts health experts — again — in schools debate

By JILL COLVIN and MIKE STOBBE Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The White House seating chart spoke volumes.

When the president convened a roundtable this week on how to safely reopen schools with coronavirus cases rising, the seats surrounding him were filled with parents, teachers and top White House officials, including the first and second ladies.

But the head of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, usually the leader of disease-fighting efforts, was relegated to secondary seating in the back with the children of parents who had been invited to speak.

Intentional or not, it was a telling indication of the regard that President Donald Trump has for the government's top health professionals as he pushes the country to move past the coronavirus. Whatever they say, he's determined to revive the battered economy and resuscitate his reelection chances, even as U.S. hospitalizations and deaths keep climbing.

Confirmed COVID-19 cases in the U.S. hit the 3 million mark this week, with over 130,000 deaths now recorded. The surge has led to new equipment shortages as well as long lines at testing sites and delayed results.

States are responding.

At midnight Friday, Nevada was to enforce new restrictions on bars and restaurants in several areas including Las Vegas and Reno after a spike in cases. And New Mexico's Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham said

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, July 11, 2020 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 008 ~ 53 of 90

her state was halting indoor restaurant service, closing state parks to nonresidents and suspending autumn contact sports at schools in response to surging infections within its boundaries and neighboring Texas and Arizona.

Yet Trump paints a rosy picture of progress and ramps up his attacks on his government's own public health officials, challenging the CDC's school-reopening guidelines and publicly undermining the nation's top infectious-diseases expert, Dr. Anthony Fauci.

"Dr. Fauci is a nice man, but he's made a lot of mistakes," Trump told Fox News Channel host Sean Hannity in a call-in interview Thursday, pointing, in part, to changes in guidance on mask-wearing over time.

In his latest beef with the CDC, the president accused the Atlanta-based federal agency of "asking schools to do very impractical things" in order to reopen. The recommended measures include spacing students' desks 6 feet (1.8 meters) apart, staggering start and arrival times, and teaching kids effective hygiene measures to prevent infections.

After Trump's scolding comment, Vice President Mike Pence announced Wednesday that the CDC would be "issuing new guidance" that would "give all-new tools to our schools."

But the agency's director, Dr. Robert Redfield, pushed back amid criticism that he was bowing to pressure from the president.

"I want to clarify, really what we're providing is different reference documents. ... It's not a revision of the guidelines," he said the next day. Indeed, draft documents obtained by The Associated Press seem to confirm Redfield's assertion, though officials stress the drafts are still under review.

Deputy White House press secretary Judd Deere issued a supportive statement Friday: "The White House and CDC have been working together in partnership since the very beginning of this pandemic to carry out the president's highest priority: the health and safety of the American public."

But the flap has touched a nerve amid increasing concern over how the administration has sidelined, muzzled and seemed to derail the CDC. Repeatedly now, the administration has shelved or altered CDC draft guidance, or even told the the agency to take down guidance it has already posted. That includes in early March, when administration officials overruled CDC doctors who wanted to recommend that older and physically fragile Americans be advised not to fly on commercial airlines because of the pandemic.

In May, officials removed some recommendations for reopening religious events hours after posting them, deleting guidance that discouraged choir gatherings and shared communion cups.

"Here we have at this time the 21st century's biggest public health crisis, and the CDC has been shunted aside," said Dr. William Schaffner, a professor of preventive medicine and infectious diseases at the Vanderbilt University School of Medicine in Nashville. They have "been sidelined and their voices — their clear, consistent, transparent voices — have been muffled or even completely silenced."

While Trump has led the way, he's not the only one sending messages contrary to those of public health officials. At a briefing this week by the White House coronavirus task force, Pence's message to those in states like Texas, Florida, California and Arizona, where cases are rising, was simple: "We believe the takeaway from this for every American, particularly in those states that are impacted, is: Keep doing what you're doing."

Not so, said Dr. Deborah Birx, the task force's response coordinator. She said those states should instead close bars, end indoor dining and limit gatherings "back down to our Phase 1 recommendation, which was 10 or less."

Experts warn the U.S. has suffered from a lack of clear, science-based messaging during the pandemic — typically provided by the CDC. But Trump and the White House have kept the agency at arm's length since the early days, when it botched development of a test kit, delaying tracking efforts.

Trump also grew enraged in late February when Dr. Nancy Messonnier — a CDC official who was then leading the agency's coronavirus response but has since been sidelined — contradicted statements by other federal officials that the virus was contained.

"It's not so much a question of if this will happen anymore, but rather more a question of exactly when," Messonnier said, sending stocks plunging and infuriating Trump, even though she proved correct.

Many outside the White House also fault Redfield, who was appointed two years ago, for failing to

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, July 11, 2020 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 008 ~ 54 of 90

adequately assert himself and his agency. Redfield does not have a close personal relationship with the president and has rubbed some at the White House the wrong way.

This week, before his later, tougher comments, Redfield appeared to fold before Trump's complaints, saying that the CDC guidelines should not "be used as a rationale to keep schools closed."

"This is the opposite of good public health practice," said Carl Bergstrom, a University of Washington evolutionary biologist who studies emerging infectious diseases. "You put guidelines out there about what's necessary to keep people safe and then you expect people to follow them — not act disappointed if people follow them."

The school reopening controversy is just the latest chapter in a depressing tale, said Jason Schwartz, a government health policy expert at the Yale School of Public Health.

"This reflects a failure on the part of the CDC director to defend his agency, his scientists and the science through the pandemic. And this is what has led to this crisis in the CDC's public standing, and frankly will take years to recover," Schwartz said.

Some others expressed more sympathy for Redfield.

Vanderbilt's Schaffner said that Redfield's commitment to public health is clear, but said he nonetheless lacks the standing and forcefulness needed to influence the president's thinking.

"His rhetorical style is nothing like what would be necessary for him to push back. And it's unclear how much he could push back without being removed," he said.

Stobbe reported from New York. Associated Press writers Jeff Amy in Atlanta, Susan Montoya Bryan in New Mexico and Michelle Price in Nevada contributed to this report.

Jada and Will Smith reveal marriage trouble on Facebook show

By LYNN ELBER AP Television Writer

LOS ANGELES (AP) — With their marriage under social-media scrutiny, Jada Pinkett Smith and Will Smith reaffirmed their commitment to each other as Pinkett Smith admitted to having a relationship with musician August Alsina when she and Smith were separated.

In a one-on-one conversation Friday on Pinkett Smith's series "Red Table Talk," she said she was reluctantly discussing Alsina's reported comments because of the public speculation they provoked.

What started as a friendship and a family effort to help Alsina with his health about four years ago became a "different kind of entanglement" at a time when she and Smith thought their marriage was over, Pinkett Smith said.

"An entanglement? A relationship," Smith said, prodding his wife to be more specific, alluding to the Facebook Watch show's dedication to candid discussion.

"Yes, it was a relationship. Absolutely. I was in a lot of pain. I was very broken," she replied. "Now, in the process of that relationship, I definitely realize that you can't find happiness outside of yourself. ... I would definitely say we did everything that we could to get away from each other, only to realize that that wasn't possible."

At one point in the conversation they echoed each other, saying: "We ride together. We die together. Bad marriage for life," an allusion to a catchphrase in Smith's "Bad Boys" franchise.

The two have been married since 1997 and have two children, Jaden and Willow. Each appeared uncomfortable at times during their exchanges on the talk show.

A representative for Alsina didn't immediately respond to a request for comment.

Pinkett Smith, who starred in two "Matrix" films, questioned why Alsina would bring the episode up again, saying he had broken off communication with her. She also pushed back at the idea that Smith had given her permission for the affair. Alsina was quoted in an interview as saying the actor had given his "blessing."

"The only person that can give permission in that particular circumstance is myself," Pinkett Smith said, then cut Alsina slack for his remarks.

"I could actually see how he would perceive it as permission because we were separated amicably. And

I think he also wanted to make it clear that he is not a homewrecker, because he's not," she said.

US appeals to proceed with 1st federal execution in 17 years

By MICHAEL BALSAMO, COLLEEN LONG and ANDREW DEMILLO Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Determined to proceed with the first federal execution in nearly two decades, the Justice Department plans to appeal a judge's ruling that would halt authorities from carrying it out on Monday.

The family of the victims in the case had requested that it be called off because their fear of the coronavirus would keep them from attending. Not that they wanted to see the killer die; they have long asked that he be given a life sentence instead, and their pandemic objection could postpone the execution indefinitely.

Daniel Lee, 47, had been scheduled to die by lethal injection on Monday. Lee, of Yukon, Oklahoma, was convicted in Arkansas of the 1996 killings of gun dealer William Mueller, his wife, Nancy, and her 8-year-old daughter, Sarah Powell.

But Chief District Judge Jane Magnus-Stinson ruled Friday that the execution would be put on hold because the family's concern about the pandemic, which has killed more than 130,000 people and is ravaging prisons nationwide.

About an hour after the judge's ruling, the Justice Department filed its notice to appeal to the 7th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals and filed court papers asking the district judge to stay the order pending the appeal. The 7th Circuit, based in Chicago, includes Indiana, which is where the execution was to take place at the federal prison in Terre Haute.

The Justice Department argues that it is likely to win an appeal. It contends that executions require extensive planning and coordination with other law enforcement officials and says dozens of staff members were already being brought in from other facilities ahead of Monday's planned execution.

"These preparations cannot easily be undone," the filing says.

Attorney General William Barr has said part of the reason the Trump administration wants to resume executions is to deliver a sense of justice to the victims' families.

But relatives of those killed by Lee strongly oppose that idea. They wanted to be present to counter any contention that it was being done on their behalf.

"For us it is a matter of being there and saying, 'This is not being done in our name; we do not want this,'" said relative Monica Veillette.

The relatives, including Earlene Branch Peterson, who lost her daughter and granddaughter in the killing, have argued that their grief is compounded by the push to execute Lee in the middle of a pandemic.

"The harm to Ms. Peterson, for example, is being forced to choose whether being present for the execution of a man responsible for the death of her daughter and granddaughter is worth defying her doctor's orders and risking her own life," the judge wrote.

The injunction delays the execution until there is no longer such an emergency. The court order applies only to Lee's execution and does not halt two other executions that are scheduled for later next week.

The decision to resume executions has been criticized as a dangerous and political move. Critics argue that the government is creating an unnecessary and manufactured urgency around a topic that isn't high on the list of American concerns right now.

The family hopes there won't be an execution, ever.

"The family is hopeful that the federal government will support them by not appealing today's ruling, a reversal of which would put them back in the untenable position of choosing between attending the execution at great risk to their health and safety, or forgoing this event they have long wanted to be present for," said Baker Kurrus, an attorney for the victims' family.

The relatives would be traveling thousands of miles and witnessing the execution in a small room where the social distancing recommended to prevent the virus' spread is virtually impossible. There are currently four confirmed coronavirus cases among inmates at the Terre Haute prison, according to federal statistics, and one inmate there has died.

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, July 11, 2020 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 008 ~ 56 of 90

"It feels disingenuous to me for someone to say they're doing this in our family's name and for us and no one's taken into account our well-being and health," Veillette said.

In an interview with The Associated Press earlier this week, Barr said he believed the Bureau of Prisons could "carry out these execution without being at risk." The agency has put a number of additional measures in place, including temperature checks and requiring witnesses to wear masks.

The federal prisons system has struggled in recent months to stem the exploding coronavirus pandemic behind bars. As of Friday, more than 7,000 federal inmates had tested positive; the Bureau of Prisons said 5,137 of them had recovered. There have also been nearly 100 inmate deaths since late March.

Lee's attorneys also sought the delay on grounds that they've been forced to choose between their own health and adequately defending their client.

Chevie Kehoe, whom prosecutors described as the ringleader of the killers, recruited Lee in 1995 for his white supremacist organization. Two years later, they were arrested for the killings of the Muellers and young Sarah in Tilly, Arkansas, about 75 miles (120 kilometers) northwest of Little Rock. At their 1999 trial, prosecutors said Kehoe, of Colville, Washington, and Lee stole guns and \$50,000 in cash from the Muellers as part of their plan to establish a whites-only nation.

Lee's attorneys also cite evidence from his trial that Kehoe was the man who actually killed Sarah.

The executions appeared set to happen following a Supreme Court decision refusing to block them and a lower court affirming the ruling. It's not clear what will happen with the other scheduled executions, which are scheduled next week for Wednesday and Friday.

Wesley Ira Purkey, of Kansas, who raped and murdered a 16-year-old girl and killed an 80-year-old woman, is scheduled to die Wednesday. Dustin Lee Honken, who killed five people in Iowa, including two children, is scheduled to be executed Friday.

Keith Dwayne Nelson, scheduled to be executed in August, was convicted of kidnapping a 10-year-old girl while she was rollerblading in front of her Kansas home, raping her in a forest behind a church and then strangling her.

DeMillo reported from Little Rock, Arkansas.

Sonar, divers search for 'Glee' star thought to have drowned

By ANDREW DALTON AP Entertainment Writer

Teams are using sonar and robotic devices in what could be a long search for "Glee" star Naya Rivera, who authorities believe drowned in a Southern California lake.

"We don't know if she's going to be found five minutes from now or five days from now," Ventura County Sheriff's Capt. Eric Buschow said at a news conference Friday, two days after Rivera's 4-year-old son was found asleep and alone on a boat the two had rented a few hours earlier.

Search teams on Lake Piru are towing sonar devices across the surface that scan the bottom for shapes that might be a body, then employing small remote controlled devices to explore the underwater spaces that show promise.

Two such shapes were found Friday, but neither led to Rivera, Buschow said.

Divers are also still searching the murky waters, but fewer are being used than in the hours immediately after the 33-year-old was reported missing.

"We're putting as many assets as we can out there," Buschow said. "We appreciate everybody's concern out there about locating her, and providing some closure for her family."

Surveillance video showed Rivera and her son parking and entering the boat dock in the recreation area at the lake 55 miles (89 kilometres) northwest of downtown Los Angeles on Wednesday afternoon, authorities said. She had experience boating on the lake.

About three hours later, the man who rented them the pontoon boat found the boy alone on it wearing a life vest. The boy told investigators he and his mother had gone swimming, and he had gotten back on the boat but she hadn't.

An adult life vest was found in the boat, along with Rivera's identification, and her car was still in the

parking lot.

On Thursday, authorities said they believed she had accidentally drowned, and the search had shifted from an effort to rescue Rivera to an attempt to find her body.

Search teams were focusing on the north end of the lake, known as the Narrows, where the boy was found, and the east side, where wind patterns suggest it might have been earlier.

The boy, Rivera's son with actor Ryan Dorsey, was safe and healthy and with family members, authorities said. The couple divorced in 2018.

The last tweet on Rivera's account, from Tuesday, read "just the two of us" along with a photo of her and her son.

Rivera played singing cheerleader Santana Lopez for six seasons on the Fox musical-comedy "Glee."

If she is declared dead, she will become the third major cast member from the show to die in their 30s.

Cory Monteith, one of the show's leads, died at 31 in 2013 from a toxic mix of alcohol and heroin.

And co-star Mark Salling, who Rivera dated at one point, killed himself in 2018 at age 35 after pleading guilty to child pornography charges.

Follow AP Entertainment Writer Andrew Dalton on Twitter: <https://twitter.com/andyjamesdalton>.

Amazon says email to employees banning TikTok was a mistake

By TALI ARBEL AP Technology Writer

Roughly five hours after an internal email went out Friday to Amazon employees telling them to delete the popular video app TikTok from their phones, the online retailing giant appeared to backtrack, calling the ban a mistake.

"This morning's email to some of our employees was sent in error," Amazon emailed reporters just before 5 p.m. Eastern time. "There is no change to our policies right now with regard to TikTok."

Company spokeswoman Jaci Anderson declined to answer questions about what caused the confounding turnaround or error.

The initial internal email, which was disseminated widely online, told employees to delete TikTok, a video app increasingly popular with young people but also the focus of intensifying national-security and geopolitical concerns because of its Chinese ownership. The email cited the app's "security risks."

An Amazon employee who confirmed receipt of the initial email but was not authorized to speak publicly had not seen a retraction at the time of Amazon's backtrack.

Amazon is the second-largest U.S. private employer after Walmart. Moving against TikTok could have escalated pressure on the app in a big way, particularly if other companies did the same. The U.S. military already bans TikTok on employee phones and the company is subject to a national-security review of its merger history.

U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said this week that the government was "certainly looking" at banning the app, setting off confused and irritated posts as well as jokes by TikTok users.

Chinese internet company ByteDance owns TikTok, which is designed for users outside of China; it also makes a Chinese version called Douyin. Like YouTube, TikTok relies on its users for the videos that populate its app. It has a reputation for fun, goofy videos and is popular with young people, including millions of Americans.

But critics have cited concerns, including the possibility of TikTok censoring videos, such as those critical of the Chinese government, sharing user data with Chinese officials, and violating kids' privacy. TikTok has said it doesn't censor videos based on topics sensitive to China and it would not give the Chinese government access to U.S. user data even if asked.

TikTok said earlier in the day that Amazon did not notify it before sending the initial email around mid-day Eastern time Friday. That email read, "The TikTok app is no longer permitted on mobile devices that access Amazon email." To retain mobile access to company email, employees had to delete the TikTok app by the end of the day.

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, July 11, 2020 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 008 ~ 58 of 90

"We still do not understand their concerns," TikTok said at the time, adding that the company would welcome a dialogue to address Amazon's issues. A TikTok spokeswoman declined to comment further Friday evening.

TikTok has been trying to appease critics in the U.S. and distance itself from its Chinese roots, but finds itself caught in an increasingly sticky geopolitical web.

It recently named a new CEO, former Disney executive Kevin Mayer, a move experts said could help it navigate U.S. regulators. And it is stopping operations in Hong Kong because of a new Chinese national security law that led Facebook, Google and Twitter to also stop providing user data to Hong Kong authorities.

Pompeo said the U.S. government remains concerned about TikTok and referred to the administration's crackdown on Chinese telecom firms Huawei and ZTE. Washington has tried to convince allies to root Huawei out of telecom networks with mixed success. President Donald Trump has also said he is willing to use Huawei as a bargaining chip in trade talks. Huawei has denied that it enables spying by the Chinese government.

A U.S. national-security agency has been reviewing ByteDance's purchase of TikTok's precursor, Musical.ly. Meanwhile, privacy groups say TikTok has been violating children's privacy, even after the Federal Trade Commission fined the company in 2019 for collecting personal information from children without their parents' consent. Concerns aren't limited to the U.S. India this month banned dozens of Chinese apps, including TikTok, citing privacy concerns, amid tensions between the countries.

Amazon may have been concerned about a Chinese-owned app's access to employee data because the U.S. government says China regularly steals U.S. intellectual property, said Susan Ariel Aaronson, a professor at George Washington University and a data governance and national-security expert.

Part of Amazon's motivation with the ban, now apparently reversed, may also have been political, Aaronson said, since Amazon "doesn't want to alienate the Trump administration."

Seattle-based Amazon and its founder, Jeff Bezos, are frequent targets of Trump. Bezos personally owns The Washington Post, which Trump has called "fake news." Last year, Amazon sued the U.S. government, saying that Trump's "personal vendetta" against Amazon, Bezos and the Post led it to lose a \$10 billion cloud computing contract with the Pentagon to rival Microsoft. Meanwhile, federal regulators as well as Congress are pursuing antitrust investigations at Amazon as well as other tech giants.

AP Business Writer Joseph Pisani contributed to this report.

Trump commutes longtime friend Roger Stone's prison sentence

By JILL COLVIN and ERIC TUCKER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump on Friday commuted the sentence of his longtime political confidant Roger Stone, intervening in extraordinary fashion in a criminal case that was central to the Russia investigation and that concerned the president's own conduct.

The move came just days before Stone was to begin serving a 40-month prison sentence for lying to Congress, witness tampering and obstructing the House investigation into whether Trump's campaign colluded with Russia to win the 2016 election.

The action, which Trump had foreshadowed in recent days, underscores the president's lingering rage over special counsel Robert Mueller's investigation and is part of a continuing effort by the president and his administration to rewrite the narrative of a probe that has shadowed the White House from the outset. Democrats, already alarmed by the Justice Department's earlier dismissal of the case against Trump's first national security adviser, Michael Flynn, denounced the president as further undermining the rule of law.

Stone, 67, had been set to report to prison on Tuesday after a federal appeals court rejected his bid to postpone his surrender date. But he told The Associated Press that Trump called him Friday evening to tell him he was off the hook.

"The president told me that he had decided, in an act of clemency, to issue a full commutation of my sentence, and he urged me to vigorously pursue my appeal and my vindication," Stone said by phone

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, July 11, 2020 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 008 ~ 59 of 90

from Fort Lauderdale, Florida, where he was celebrating with friends. He said he had to change rooms because there were "too many people opening bottles of Champagne here."

Although a commutation does not nullify Stone's felony convictions, it protects him from serving prison time as a result.

The move marks another extraordinary intervention by Trump in the nation's justice system and underscores anew his willingness to flout the norms and standards that have governed presidential conduct for decades. As Trump stares down a coronavirus pandemic that has worsened his chances for reelection, he has been more willing than ever to test the limits of his power.

Democrats denounced Trump's action. House Intelligence Committee Chair Adam Schiff called it "offensive to the rule of law and principles of justice. Democratic National Committee Chair Tom Perez asked, "Is there any power Trump won't abuse?"

White House press secretary Kayleigh McEnany, in a statement, called Stone a "victim of the Russia Hoax that the Left and its allies in the media," and declared, "Roger Stone is now a free man!"

Stone had been open about his desire for a pardon or commutation, appealing for the president's help with a monthslong television and social media campaign and seeking to postpone his surrender date by months after getting a brief extension from the judge, in part by citing the coronavirus.

Trump, who had made clear in recent days that he was inching closer to acting, had repeatedly publicly inserted himself into Stone's case, including just before Stone's sentencing.

That earned a public rebuke from his own attorney general, William Barr, who said the president's comments were "making it impossible" for him to do his job. Barr was so incensed that he told people he was considering resigning over the matter.

"With this commutation, Trump makes clear that there are two systems of justice in America: one for his criminal friends, and one for everyone else," Schiff said. "Donald Trump, Bill Barr, and all those who enable them pose the gravest of threats to the rule of law."

Stone, a larger-than-life political character who embraced his reputation as a dirty trickster, was the sixth Trump aide or adviser to have been convicted of charges brought during Mueller's investigation.

A longtime Trump friend and informal adviser, Stone boasted during the campaign that he was in contact with WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange through a trusted intermediary and hinted at inside knowledge of WikiLeaks' plans to release more than 19,000 emails hacked from the servers of the Democratic National Committee.

But Stone denied any wrongdoing and consistently criticized the case against him as politically motivated. He did not take the stand during his trial, did not speak at his sentencing. His lawyers did not call any witnesses in his defense.

Prosecutors had originally recommended Stone serve seven to nine years in prison. But in a highly unusual move, Barr reversed that decision after a Trump tweet and recommended a more lenient punishment, prompting a mini-revolt inside the Justice Department, with the entire prosecution team resigning from the case.

Department officials have vehemently denied Barr was responding to Trump's criticism and have insisted there was no contact with the White House over the decision. Barr has also pointed out that the judge, in imposing a 40-month sentence, had agreed with him that the original sentencing recommendation was excessive.

Barr has said the prosecution was justified, and the Justice Department did not support Stone's more recent effort to put off his surrender date. Though the Justice Department raised concerns about the handling of Flynn's case, including what it said were irregularities about his FBI interview, prosecutors did not point to any similar issues or problems with the Stone prosecution.

Even so, the commutation will almost certainly contribute to a portrait of a president determined to erase the impact of the Russia investigation and to intervene on behalf of allies.

The commutation was the latest example of Trump using his unlimited clemency power to pardon powerful men he believes have been mistreated by the justice system.

Trump went on a clemency spree in February, commuting the 14-year prison sentence of former Illinois

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, July 11, 2020 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 008 ~ 60 of 90

Gov. Rod Blagojevich, a Democrat, and pardoning former New York City police commissioner Bernie Kerik, financier Michael Milken and several others.

Trump has also offered clemency to other political allies, including Maricopa County Sheriff Joe Arpaio, who was awaiting sentencing at the time, conservative commentator Dinesh D'Souza, who had been convicted on campaign finance violations, and Conrad Black, a newspaper publisher convicted of fraud who had written a flattering book about the president.

Trump, however, has spent much more time trumpeting his decision to commute the sentence of Alice Marie Johnson, who was serving life in prison for nonviolent drug offenses and who came to Trump's attention after reality star Kim Kardashian West took up her cause. Her story was featured in a Trump campaign Super Bowl ad.

Stone told the AP he expressed his gratitude to Trump in the phone call.

"You know, he has a great sense of fairness," Stone said. "We've been friends for many, many years, and he understands that I was targeted strictly for political reasons."

Storm clouds hang over Trump's attempted campaign reboot

By JONATHAN LEMIRE and BILL BARROW Associated Press

MIAMI (AP) — Friday was supposed to be the day President Donald Trump's campaign reboot itself got a reboot. Instead, it hit another snag.

Amid uncertainty over whether he can still draw big and enthusiastic crowds to his signature rallies in the coronavirus era, Trump postponed a planned Saturday rally in Portsmouth, New Hampshire, citing a tropical storm expected to hit a swath of the Eastern United States.

"With Tropical Storm Fay heading towards the Great State of New Hampshire this weekend, we are forced to reschedule our Portsmouth, New Hampshire Rally at the Portsmouth International Airport at Pease," Trump tweeted. "Stay safe, we will be there soon!"

The latest setback came as the Trump campaign casts about for ways to reverse its recent downward slide in the polls at a time when the president is facing widespread criticism over his handling of the pandemic and his harsh stance against those protesting racial injustice.

With growing whispers of a staff shakeup and behind-the-scenes finger-pointing among White House, campaign and Republican Party officials, the campaign has been looking for something to reverse the negative momentum.

But attack lines against Democratic rival Joe Biden have failed to get traction and attempts to get Trump back on the road have faltered. His rally in Tulsa, Oklahoma, three weeks ago was intended to mark his triumphal return to the trail, but it produced a surprisingly sparse crowd and campaign travel again was put on hold.

Trump's visit to Florida was supposed to launch back-to-back days of high-profile campaigning but instead wound up being a one-off. He did fit in a campaign fundraiser in South Florida and events focused on government counternarcotics efforts and support for the Venezuelan people.

At his Doral event with Venezuelan expatriates, Trump courted a segment of Florida's diverse Hispanic population by sharpening an emerging attack line: Biden might not be a socialist, but he is running past his expiration date and controlled by an ascendant liberal wing of the Democratic Party.

"Republicans are the party of freedom, and Democrats are the party of socialism and worse," Trump said.

His visit to Florida took him to terrain where COVID-19's surge threatens his hold on a must-win state and raises questions about Republican aims to hold their nominating convention in Jacksonville next month.

Biden pointed to Florida's rising coronavirus cases, saying, "It is clear that Trump's response — ignore, blame others, and distract — has come at the expense of Florida families."

But Saturday's New Hampshire visit was more problematic. Campaign officials privately acknowledged there had been fears all along about how many people would attend the Portsmouth rally. After the disappointing turnout in Tulsa, aides were intent on avoiding a repeat.

Once the storm entered the forecast, even if the rain was expected to stop in the hours before the rally,

concerns about turnout only grew. For the event's scheduled start time Saturday evening, Weather.Com forecast a 15% chance of rain.

But there was also strong opposition to Trump's rally among some prominent New Hampshire Republicans. Judd Gregg, who previously served New Hampshire both as a governor and senator, bluntly called Trump's planned appearance "a mistake."

"New Hampshire has been extremely aggressive under the governor in containing the virus," Gregg said in an interview with The Associated Press, confirming that he had not planned to attend. "People are concerned about folks bringing the problem to us."

Trump, with just months left before voters decide whether to reelect him, has been eager to signal that normal life can resume despite a rampaging virus that has killed more than 130,000 Americans.

Unlike the rally in Tulsa, which was held indoors where the virus more easily circulates, the rally in Portsmouth was to be partially outdoors, held in an airplane hangar open on one side with the crowd spilling out onto the tarmac before Air Force One.

Moreover, while masks were distributed in Tulsa, few rallygoers wore them after weeks of Trump deriding their use. This time, the campaign had strongly encouraged their use.

The venue was to be significantly smaller than the cavernous Tulsa arena, and aides had deliberately set lower expectations for crowd size. Before the Oklahoma event, which spurred days of protests, campaign manager Brad Parscale boasted that a million ticket requests had been received. The Tulsa fire marshal said 6,000 people attended.

New Hampshire has had a relatively low number of COVID-19 cases, while those in Oklahoma were rising before Trump arrived. Oklahoma health officials said the rally and accompanying protests "likely contributed" to a surge in infections in the city. Several campaign staffers and Secret Service agents tested positive for the virus.

Barrow reported from Atlanta. Associated Press writers Amer Madhani in Washington and Steve Peoples in London contributed to this report.

Follow Lemire on Twitter at <https://twitter.com/@JonLemire> and Barrow at <https://twitter.com/@BillBarrowAP>.

Church singing ban strikes sour note with California pastor

By DON THOMPSON Associated Press

SACRAMENTO, Calif. (AP) — Crossroads Community Church Senior Pastor Jim Clark wants to keep his 1,500 parishioners safe during the coronavirus pandemic but he's drawing the line at a new California ban on singing or chanting at religious services.

"I said enough's enough," Clark said. "We will be singing and praising the Lord. ... We don't chant, but if we did chant, we'd be chanting too."

The California ban was one of a number of restrictions on indoor businesses and gatherings put in place last week by Gov. Gavin Newsom amid fast-rising virus cases and hospitalizations. It's unclear if any similar prohibition on singing exists in the United States, though there is one in England.

The virus is more easily transmitted indoors and singing releases minuscule droplets that can carry the disease. The ban may well end up in court as there are differing opinions on its legality, with some groups arguing it infringes on religious freedom while others believe it's constitutional, especially during a pandemic.

The American Center for Law and Justice, a religious freedom law firm with ties to President Donald Trump, says it will sue.

"We can't stand by and watch as California strips its believers of their God-given right to raise their voices in worship and praise," executive director Jordan Sekulow said on the center's website. The center, which was founded by televangelist Pat Robertson, did not say how quickly it would sue.

Sekulow was a member of Trump's defense team, and his father, Jay Sekulow, the center's chief legal

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, July 11, 2020 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 008 ~ 62 of 90

counsel, was one of Trump's lead attorneys during the impeachment trial.

Another conservative-leaning legal group, The Pacific Justice Institute, told faith leaders in a letter that Newsom's guidance is advisory because it does not say it is an order, cites no legal authority, isn't signed by any official and includes no reference to penalties.

Institute president Brad Dacus said after the letter went out that attorneys there fielded dozens of subsequent calls from relieved religious leaders who allowed singing last Sunday and intend to keep doing so.

"These churches are just glad to know they will not be criminally prosecuted for singing worship songs on Sunday morning," said Dacus, whose institute has filed pandemic unequal treatment lawsuits against state officials in Oregon and Washington.

But Ali Bay, a spokeswoman for the state Office of Emergency Services, said the guidance by the state Department of Public Health and Division of Occupational Safety and Health must be followed.

It "has the same authority as all of CDPH's other guidance, directives, and orders, which the governor has ordered residents to heed," she said.

Newsom earlier faced criticism for not more quickly allowing religious organizations to resume offering inside services. He relented last month but imposed many restrictions, including limiting crowds to 100 people. He added the order on singing to the state's 14-page guidance, which reasons that "activities such as singing and chanting negate the risk-reduction achieved through six feet of physical distancing."

Erwin Chemerinsky, dean of the law school at the University of California, Berkeley, said the ban is legally enforceable.

"The Supreme Court has made it clear, as have the lower courts, that restrictions on assemblies, including for religious purposes, are constitutional," he said in an email. "I think this restriction surely is constitutional, especially as cases of COVID-19 are surging. There can be enforcement of this, as with other businesses."

The California Catholic Conference said it would comply.

"You could have a respectful worship service, a quiet one — in fact a lot of people kind of seek that out anyway," Catholic Conference spokesman Steve Pehanich said. He said some have choir members participate remotely or take other steps to safely provide music.

"The churches are just trying to keep people safe and are working within those guidelines to do so," Pehanich said.

But others like Clark said they will ignore the ban.

He has spent nearly 30 years growing his Yuba City church north of Sacramento, and said he is intent on protecting his flock with social distancing and other safety measures. He has masks available, with gloves and hand sanitizer, but they are not required.

Clark won't cancel indoor services or end singing by the roughly 500 who attend one of three weekly services.

Clark said there has been no effort to crack down, and no criticism of him flouting Newsom's restrictions. To the contrary, he said feedback has been positive.

"Most of them have been calls, 'Thank you for standing up for what you believe,'" he said.

In May, health officials blamed a fatal outbreak north of Seattle on a choir practice in which one singer unwittingly infected 52 other people, two of whom died.

Partly in response, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention subsequently posted reopening tips for religious organizations that discouraged choir gatherings, but removed the guidelines hours later because they had not been cleared by the White House.

About 200 state inspectors fanned out over the long Independence Day weekend to check businesses for violations of new state health orders. But Greg Burt, spokesman for the conservative California Family Council, said he'd heard of no effort to enforce the singing ban during the first weekend it applied.

"As soon as they try to enforce it, it's going to make national news," he said.

"This seems to be a little more extreme than telling them they can't meet, because you're telling them how to worship," Burt said. "That seems to be a little more over the line involving the government directly violating the First Amendment."

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, July 11, 2020 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 008 ~ 63 of 90

Harmeet Dhillon, a lawyer and Republican Party official who has unsuccessfully sued Newsom over several health orders during the pandemic, said she is considering a lawsuit over the singing restriction.

Dhillon and other critics including Advocates for Faith & Freedom and the National Center for Law and Policy, said the church restrictions constitute unequal treatment when compared to recent crowds of demonstrators protesting police violence after the death of George Floyd in Minneapolis.

"If you're allowed to chant 'Hey hey, ho ho, racism's got to go' but you can't chant the liturgy, that's obviously discriminatory," she said.

Trump threatens to pull tax exemption for schools, colleges

By COLLIN BINKLEY AP Education Writer

In his push to get schools and colleges to reopen this fall, President Donald Trump is again taking aim at their finances, this time threatening their tax-exempt status.

Trump said on Twitter on Friday he was ordering the Treasury Department to re-examine the tax-exempt status of schools that he says provide "radical indoctrination" instead of education.

"Too many Universities and School Systems are about Radical Left Indoctrination, not Education," he tweeted. "Therefore, I am telling the Treasury Department to re-examine their Tax-Exempt Status and/or Funding, which will be taken away if this Propaganda or Act Against Public Policy continues. Our children must be Educated, not Indoctrinated!"

The Republican president did not explain what prompted the remark or which schools would be reviewed. But the threat is just one more that Trump has issued against schools as he ratchets up pressure to get them to open this fall. Twice this week Trump threatened to cut federal funding for schools that don't reopen, including in an earlier tweet on Friday.

It's unclear, however, on what grounds Trump could have a school's tax-exempt status terminated. It was also not clear what Trump meant by "radical indoctrination" or who would decide what type of activity that includes. The White House and Treasury Department did not immediately comment on the president's message.

Previous guidance from the Internal Revenue Service lays out six types of activities that can jeopardize a nonprofit organization's tax-exempt status, including political activity, lobbying and straying from the organization's stated purpose.

But ideology is not on the IRS's list, said Terry Hartle, senior vice president of the American Council on Education, which represents university presidents. Any review of a school's status would have to follow previously established guidelines, he said.

"It's always deeply troubling to have the president single out schools, colleges or universities in a tweet," Hartle said. "Having said that, I don't think anything will come of this quickly."

In his latest threat, Trump revived his oft-repeated claim that universities are bastions of liberalism that stifle conservative ideas. He used the same argument last year when he issued an executive order telling colleges to ensure free speech on campuses or lose federal research funding.

His interest in colleges' finances appears to have been renewed as several schools sue the Trump administration over new restrictions on international students. Harvard University and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology sued to block the policy earlier this week, followed by Johns Hopkins University on Friday. The University of California system has said it also plans to sue.

The universities are challenging new guidance issued by Immigration and Customs Enforcement saying international students cannot stay in the U.S. if they take all their classes online this fall. The policy has been viewed as an attempt to force the nation's universities to resume classroom instruction this fall.

Under the rules, international students must transfer schools or leave the country if their colleges plan to hold instruction entirely online. Even if their schools offer a mix of online and in-person classes, foreign students would be forbidden from taking all their courses remotely.

The lawsuit from Harvard and MIT argue that the policy breaks from a promise ICE made in March to suspend limits around online education "for the duration of the emergency."

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, July 11, 2020 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 008 ~ 64 of 90

Until Friday, Trump had mostly focused his efforts on reopening elementary and secondary schools as millions of parents wait to find out if their children will be in school this fall. He has insisted that they can open safely, and in a Friday tweet argued that virtual learning has been "terrible" compared with in-person instruction.

"Not even close! Schools must be open in the Fall. If not open, why would the Federal Government give Funding? It won't!!!" he wrote. Trump issued a similar warning on Twitter on Wednesday, saying other nations had successfully opened schools and that a fall reopening is "important for the children and families. May cut off funding if not open!"

Trump has not said what funding he would withhold or under what authority. But White House spokeswoman Kayleigh McEnany has said the president wants to use future coronavirus relief funding as leverage. McEnany said Trump wants to "substantially bump up money for education" in the next relief package, but only for schools that reopen.

"He is looking at potentially redirecting that to make sure it goes to the student," McEnany said at a Wednesday press briefing. She added that the funding would be "tied to the student and not to a district where schools are closed."

But Trump's control over school funding is limited. The vast majority of funding for public elementary and secondary schools comes from state and local sources, and nonprofit colleges are more likely to rely on tuition or state aid than federal money.

His threats to withhold funding have been denounced by a growing array of education and health groups, including a medical association that the White House has repeatedly cited in its press to reopen schools.

In a joint statement with national education unions and a superintendents group, the American Academy of Pediatrics on Friday said decisions should be made by health experts and local leaders. The groups argued that schools will need more money to reopen safely during the coronavirus pandemic and that cuts could ultimately harm students.

"Public health agencies must make recommendations based on evidence, not politics," the groups wrote. "Withholding funding from schools that do not open in person full-time would be a misguided approach, putting already financially strapped schools in an impossible position that would threaten the health of students and teachers."

The American Academy of Pediatrics has supported a fall reopening, saying in June guidelines that schools should strive to start the academic year with their students "physically present in school." Vice President Mike Pence, Education Secretary Betsy DeVos and McEnany have repeatedly, and as recently as Wednesday, cited the group in defense of Trump's approach.

But Friday's statement acknowledged that it may be best for some schools to stay online. School leaders, health experts, teachers and parents should be at the center of reopening decisions, the groups said, "taking into account the spread of COVID-19 in their communities and the capacities of school districts to adapt safety protocols to make in-person learning safe and feasible."

Some districts have already announced plans for only a partial reopening, with a mix of in-person and online instruction. New York City's public school district, the nation's largest, said students will be in classrooms two or three times a week and learn remotely between. DeVos has opposed that kind of approach, saying it fails students and taxpayers.

'A slap in the face:' Goya faces boycott over Trump praise

By ALEXANDRA OLSON, KATE BRUMBACK AND MATT OTT Associated Press Writers

NEW YORK (AP) — The CEO of food company Goya is facing an uproar over his praise for President Donald Trump, with some Latino families purging their pantries of the products and scrambling to find alternatives to the beloved beans, seasoning and other products that have long been fixtures in their cooking.

But the controversy is also drawing attention to the mixed political sentiments of Latinos in the U.S. Many of them oppose Trump because of his derogatory comments about Hispanics and harsh policies toward immigration, most notably the separation of families at the U.S.-Mexico border. Hispanics have also been disproportionately hit hard by the coronavirus pandemic and related economic recession, causing them

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, July 11, 2020 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 008 ~ 65 of 90

to question Trump's handling of both.

At the same time, the president has strong support among some people of Cuban and Venezuelan descent because of his tough stance against the authoritarian leaders of those countries. He has been working recently to court Latino voters who could swing the vote in states such as Arizona and Florida. On Wednesday, he welcomed President Andrés Manuel López Obrador to the White House, calling Mexico a cherished partner.

Standing beside Trump in the Rose Garden on Thursday, Goya CEO Robert Unanue declared: "We are truly blessed, at the same time, to have a leader like President Trump who is a builder."

Almost immediately, #BoycottGoya, #GoyaFoods and #Goyaway began trending on social media platforms. Former Democratic presidential candidate Julian Castro, Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez and "Hamilton" writer Lin-Manuel Miranda joined the boycott calls. The United Farm Workers posted a video on Twitter contrasting Trump's words deriding some Latinos as criminals and rapists against images of them working hard in the fields.

Lorgia Ortega, a retired payroll manager in Los Angeles who regularly puts about 10 Goya products in her shopping cart, said she called her four sisters when she saw Unanue's comments on Twitter.

"Does he realize who the people are that are buying his products?" said Ortega, who immigrated from El Salvador in 1974. "This president has insulted us so much."

Ortega said her children, cousin and her daughter's mother-in-law all plan to stop buying Goya products, even if they don't know yet how to replace them.

"I'm going to go to the Latino market and whatever is next to them, I'm going to start trying that out," Ortega said.

Goya was founded in Manhattan in 1936 by Prudencio Unanue and his wife Carolina, immigrants from Spain. The company calls itself the largest Hispanic-owned food company in the United States, listing 2,500 products including seasonings, cooking oils, beans, frozen products and snacks. Their offerings are ubiquitous in grocery stores across the U.S., sometimes taking up their own entire aisle.

Unanue stood by his words during a Friday appearance on "Fox & Friends": "I'm not apologizing for saying — and especially when you're called by the president of the United States — you're gonna say, 'no I'm sorry I'm busy, no thank you?' I didn't say that to the Obamas and I didn't say that to President Trump."

The grandson of the company's founder, Unanue has been a longtime donor to Republican political causes, with the exception of contributions to New Jersey Sen. Bob Menendez, a Democrat.

Adriana Waterston, senior vice president of Horowitz Research, which specializes in Hispanic consumers, said Goya routinely emerges among the most trusted brands in the studies she conducts for clients. She said that speaks to the potential for a deep sense of betrayal among Goya customers, though the brand's popularity will also make any boycott effort difficult.

"This Goya thing is going to go down as one of the biggest marketing faux pas of the year," Waterston said. "This kind of stance is a slap in the face to the community."

The buying power of the rapidly growing U.S. Latino community is expected to reach \$1.9 trillion in 2023, according to a 2019 report on Hispanic consumer trends by the data analytics company Nielsen. While that outlook is likely to be affected by the current recession, Hispanic spending will also be a key engine of economic recovery that many brands will want to tap into, said Stacie de Armas, vice president of strategic initiatives and consumer engagement at Nielsen.

In particular, de Armas said Hispanics spend more on food than other groups — 14% of their income, compared to 11% for non-Hispanic whites. It's also a family affair, with 79% of Latinos saying they shop for food with someone else, making word-of-mouth a powerful factor in buying choices, de Armas said. She said that could translate into an opening for Goya competitors seeking to capitalize on the controversy.

Jenny Robles, a public relations professional in New Jersey, said she had just finished making a chicken stew with three Goya products on Thursday night when her younger sister read a tweet about Unanue's praise for Trump. She said her Spanish-speaking mother shook her head in disapproval, and the whole family will no longer buy the products.

"This was the only type of food chain she relied on and used to feed us growing up, and it was now

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, July 11, 2020 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 008 ~ 66 of 90

betraying us," said Robles, whose family immigrated from Ecuador when she was 3.

Still, as a public relations specialist, she acknowledged she did not know how successful the boycott would be against such a powerful brand. In her own family, she said, it would be up to the younger, bilingual generation to research alternatives on the internet.

Companies have long walked a tight-rope when it comes to engaging with Trump's White House.

In 2017, the top executive at Under Armour walked back comments in which he called Trump "an asset to the country." Last year, the fitness clubs Equinox and SoulCycle attempted to distance themselves from billionaire Stephen Ross, a real estate developer whose Related Companies owns them, after he held a Trump fundraiser in the Hamptons.

Many of those that came to Goya's defense Friday pointed to the company's history of philanthropy.

This spring, Goya donated over 300,000 pounds of food, or about 270,000 meals, to food banks and other organizations as part of its pandemic relief effort. Last month, Goya showed up with thousands of pounds of food for families in the Bronx and Harlem who have been affected by COVID-19.

AP reporter Astrid Galvan contributed to this story from Phoenix.

COVID hits dozens of Latin leaders, including presidents

By MICHAEL WEISSENSTEIN and DAVID BILLER Associated Press

HAVANA (AP) — The COVID-19 pandemic is sweeping through the leadership of Latin America, with two more presidents and powerful officials testing positive this week for the new coronavirus, adding a destabilizing new element to the region's public health and economic crises.

In Brazil, President Jair Bolsonaro, 65, announced his illness Tuesday and is using it to publicly extol hydroxychloroquine, the unproven malaria drug that he's been promoting as a treatment for COVID-19, and now takes himself.

Bolivian interim President Jeanine Añez, 53, made her own diagnosis public Thursday, throwing her already troubled political prospects into further doubt.

And in Venezuela, 57-year-old socialist party chief Diosdado Cabello said Thursday on Twitter that he, too, had tested positive, at least temporarily sidelining a larger-than-life figure considered the second-most-powerful person in the country.

Another powerful figure, Venezuela's Oil Minister Tarek El Aissami, announced Friday he has the bug.

An Associated Press review of official statements from public officials across Latin America found at least 42 confirmed cases of new coronavirus in leaders ranging from presidents to mayors of major cities, along with dozens, likely hundreds, of officials from smaller cities and towns. In most cases, high-ranking officials recovered and are back at work. But several are still struggling with the disease.

Many leaders have used their diagnoses to call on the public to heighten precautions like social distancing and mask wearing. But like Bolsonaro, some have drawn attention to unproven treatments with potentially harmful side effects.

El Salvador's Interior Minister, Mario Durán, was diagnosed on July 5, becoming the second Cabinet member there to fall ill.

"I am asking you, now more than ever, to stay home and take all preventive measures," he said after his diagnosis. "Protect your families."

Durán was receiving treatment at home on Friday.

Honduras President Juan Orlando Hernández announced June 16 that he and his wife had tested positive, along with two other people who worked closely with the couple.

The following day the 51-year-old Hernández was hospitalized after doctors determined he had pneumonia. The president's illness came as the pandemic spread from an early epicenter in the northern city of San Pedro Sula to the capital of Tegucigalpa, where cases surged.

Hernández said he had started what he called the "MAIZ treatment," an experimental and unproven combination of microdacyn, azithromycin, ivermectin and zinc that his government is promoting as an affordable way of attacking the disease. He was released from the hospital July 2.

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, July 11, 2020 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 008 ~ 67 of 90

The revelation that Cabello – whose commanding voice resonates from Venezuelan airwaves every Wednesday on his weekly television show – has COVID-19 will likely have a sobering impact on the many people who thought their isolated country was relatively shielded from the virus, said Luis Vicente León, a Venezuelan political analyst.

Venezuela – already largely cut off to the outside world before COVID-19 – has had far fewer registered cases than many other countries in Latin America, though in recent weeks the number of new confirmed infections has been steadily increasing.

Cabello said he was in isolation while getting treatment. A day earlier, he'd canceled his regular TV appearance, telling followers he was battling "strong allergies."

No information has been released on whether Cabello is hospitalized or what type of medical care he is receiving. Venezuela is considered one of the least prepared countries in the world to confront the pandemic. Hospitals are routinely short on basic supplies like water, electricity and medicine.

"I think this shows Venezuela is on the same route all the other countries," León said.

In the Caribbean, Luis Abinader, the newly elected president of the Dominican Republic, contracted and recovered from COVID-19 during his campaign.

Like Bolsonaro, many Latin leaders have kept up a schedule of public appearances even as the region has become one of the hardest-hit in the world.

That poses a growing risk to governance in the region, said Felicia Knaul, a professor of medicine who directs the Institute for Advanced Study of the Americas at the University of Miami.

"We're trying to keep our health providers safe. It's the same for our government leaders. We don't want a Cabinet ill and in hospital. It would be tremendously destabilizing in a situation that's already extremely unstable," she said. "That's a reason why being out in public unless everyone around you has masks on is dangerous. They have to be responsible."

Guatemalan President Alejandro Giammattei placed his entire Cabinet and their staff in quarantine Thursday after one of his ministers tested positive.

In Bolivia, officials said the interim president Añez, had not been displaying symptoms and was in good spirits in her official residence on Friday.

At least six other Bolivian ministers and vice ministers have been infected, and at least eight staff members.

COVID-19 is spreading rapidly in Bolivia, overwhelming the already weak medical system and funeral services to the point where families in the central city of Cochabamba have been holding funerals in the street.

With the country in crisis, some polls have shown Añez in last place in a three-way presidential race leading to September elections. Añez, who took office after President Evo Morales was ousted during national unrest last year, does not have a vice president and, if she could no longer serve, the next in the line of succession is Senate President Eva Copa, a member of Morales' party and a bitter opponent of Añez.

Billar reported from Rio de Janeiro. Also contributing were Marcos Aleman in San Salvador, Christine Armario in Bogota, Christopher Sherman in Mexico City, Carlos Valdez in La Paz, Bolivia, and correspondents around the region.

It's not just the presidency: Trump is changing the Congress

By LISA MASCARO AP Congressional Correspondent

WASHINGTON (AP) — Donald Trump isn't just changing the presidency during his first term in office. He's also changing Congress.

More than perhaps any president in modern history, Trump has been willing to ignore, defy and toy with the legislative branch, asserting power and breaking norms in ways his predecessors would hardly dare.

Republicans shrug it off as Trump being Trump, leaving Democrats almost alone to object. While the Democratic-run House took the extraordinary step of impeaching the president, the GOP-controlled Sen-

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, July 11, 2020 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 008 ~ 68 of 90

ate acquitted. Over time, there's been a noticeable imbalance of power, a president with few restraints drifting toward what the founders warned against.

Think of it as "the incredible shrinkage" of Congress, said historian Douglas Brinkley.

"It's created this massive void in our democracy," Brinkley told The Associated Press.

As Trump seeks reelection with the country facing crises unseen in a lifetime, Congress is confronting questions about its ability to shape the direction and future of the nation.

This week, the Supreme Court weighed in, acknowledging the "clash between rival branches of government" over Trump's financial records. Chief Justice John Roberts, writing for the majority to return the case to lower courts, said that while the subpoenas for the documents were broad, the president went too far in claiming virtual immunity from congressional oversight.

"What was at stake is, is the president above the law?" said House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, D-Calif., taking the ruling as a win for her end of Pennsylvania Avenue.

The erosion has taken place in ways large and small.

First, Trump took money for his promised border wall with Mexico without lawmaker approval, circumventing Congress's bedrock power over spending. Then he began to fill top posts with officials who did not have the support of senators, negating their role to advise and consent on nominees.

And when the House launched investigations that led to impeachment — the ultimate check on the executive — Trump refused to comply with subpoenas, declaring them invalid. The courts are now left to decide.

Presidents have almost always reached to grab power. Abraham Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation to free enslaved people. Barack Obama issued executive actions on immigration when Congress wouldn't comply.

But typically presidents only go so far, knowing Congress is eyeing their every move, ready and willing to intervene. The executive knows they may soon need votes from lawmakers on other matters, creating a need for cooperation.

Trump rejects that model outright, treating the Congress as support staff to his presidency and relying on sheer force of personality to shape the government to his will. A simple Trump tweet can cower critics and reward loyalists all the same. His power only grows as lawmakers, particularly Senate Republicans, stay silent.

The result is a an exhaustive, head-spinning era that's turning Capitol Hill into a spectator stand of those watching, reacting and shaking a fist as their institutional prerogative is slipping away.

"There's a deeper institutional question," said Sen. Angus King, the independent from Maine. "The Congress is abdicating its responsibilities to the executive."

The singular challenge to Trump comes from Pelosi, a seasoned legislator who captured the Democratic majority after Trump's first two years in large part because voters longed for a check on his power. In the Senate, Majority Leader Mitch McConnell has taken a different tack, working with the Republican president or at times around him as GOP senators avoid direct confrontations.

"Congress is evolving," said Sen. Marco Rubio, R-Fla., once a Trump rival for the White House.

Rubio acknowledges the Congress is a different place than when he arrived a decade ago on the tea party wave. He wishes, at times, that Congress would be more assertive.

"America is going through a transformational moment, as we have many times in our history," he said. He notes that lawmakers still join forces, including on his legislation on human rights in Hong Kong. "It's easy to watch what is happening here today and think these are the worst times in congressional history. That's not accurate."

But day in and day out, Congress is mostly unwilling to pull together, Republicans declining to join Democrats to rebuke the president when he overreaches or confront him with bipartisan legislation to force his hand.

"There isn't even a whimper out of the Republican side," said Sen. Dick Durbin of Illinois, the assistant Democratic leader.

"Every president does that — they will push their authority as far as they can," Durbin said. "For Trump,

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, July 11, 2020 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 008 ~ 69 of 90

it has been nonstop.”

The forces diminishing the Congress have been at work for some time, as relentless partisanship leave lawmakers unable to meet the moment and produce solutions for a splintered nation.

Polling shows Americans overwhelmingly support a legislative response to many top issues. They back changes to policing tactics in the aftermath of mass demonstrations over the deaths of Black Americans at the hands of law enforcement. They support background checks on firearm purchases to stem violence and mass shootings. And they want immigration law changes, particularly to protect young immigrants from deportation.

Over and over, Congress failed to deliver. In the void and buoyed by it, Trump extends his reach.

Sarah Binder, a professor at George Washington University, said the Constitution’s separation of powers can only take the country so far. “Parchment doesn’t stop these battles,” she said.

When people ask incredulously if the president can do something he has just done, she said, “Presidents can get away with this if there’s no broader public or his own party reining him in.”

Brinkley warns that unless Congress exerts itself, with Pelosi’s House and McConnell’s Senate pulling together to bring the nation to common ground, Trump will press on, emerging as the nation’s first “authoritarian” executive.

“Those are the people’s houses. That’s where the people’s voices are heard,” he said. “They need to show the American people that Capitol Hill is working.”

With new name and album, The Chicks’ voices ring loud again

By KRISTIN M. HALL AP Entertainment Writer

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (AP) — The Dixie Chicks are no more. Breaking their ties to the South, The Chicks are stepping into a new chapter in their storied career with their first new music in 14 years.

The Texas trio of Emily Strayer, Martie Maguire and Natalie Maines have been teasing new music for a year, and “Gaslighter” finally drops on July 17 when the nation is embroiled in divisive politics, cancel culture and reckoning with inequality. The timing is right for their voices to be heard again.

“It just seemed like a good reflection on our times,” said Maines. “In 20 years, we’ll look back at that album cover and title and remember exactly what was going on in the country right then.”

“Gaslighter” is a slang term, inspired by a 1944 Ingrid Bergman film, to describe a psychological abuser who manipulates the truth to make a person feel crazy. In recent years, it’s been used to describe powerful men like Harvey Weinstein or Donald Trump.

“I think most everybody has a gaslighter in their lives somewhere,” said Strayer. “But, yeah, it was so weird how it echoes our current administration.”

As the best-selling female group in RIAA history, The Chicks appealed to generation of country fans that saw themselves in the band’s stories, whether it was “Wide Open Spaces” or “Cowboy Take Me Away.” After three independent albums, their first major label record in 1998 sold 13 million copies in the U.S. alone.

With Maguire on fiddle and Strayer on banjo, they were all steeped in bluegrass and classic country, but relished in fun country-pop on crossover songs like “Goodbye Earl.” They were country music’s next big thing until suddenly the door was slammed on them.

In 2003, as then-President George Bush was preparing to invade Iraq, the trio were playing a show in London when Maines announced they were ashamed that the president was from Texas.

The fallout became country music lore, a warning to stay away from political talk, especially of the liberal kind. They were booed on awards shows, radio stations pulled their music off the air and fans destroyed their CDs. Maguire only recently showed her daughters the 2006 documentary called “Shut Up and Sing” that showed how the backlash affected them behind the scenes.

“I was putting off showing them because I have one that’s 11 and I just thought she was a little young,” Maguire said. “I thought she might be upset by just the death threat stuff.”

Instead, her daughters, living in a social media generation when everyone is afforded an opinion, were confused by the reaction to Maines’ tame comments compared to the vitriolic criticism lobbed by politi-

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, July 11, 2020 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 008 ~ 70 of 90

cians and pundits every day.

"And it was just funny hearing 16- and 11-year-olds going, 'Why? What? Wait. She said that? And people got so mad?'" said Maguire.

The trio are all now parents of teenagers when youth activists are taking the lead on gun control, climate change and racial inequality. Their song "March March," which was released the same day they announced they were dropping the word Dixie from their name, was inspired by student-led demonstrations over gun control in 2018.

"We were all at March for Our Lives with Emma Gonzalez leading that charge," said Strayer. "We were in the hundreds of thousands of people in that march. And it's the first time I've ever experienced something like that. And it was very powerful."

On "Juliana Calm Down," their daughters and nieces are name-checked in a song that encourages young women to keep their heads held high when struggling through life's obstacles. Maines is speaking to her two teenage boys on "Young Man," a song for divorced parents who feel like they've let down their kids.

Still fans have been quick try to associate very specific lyrics from "Gaslighter" to Maines' contentious divorce to actor Adrian Pasdar. Between the three women, they've had five divorces, so they said people shouldn't read too literally into the words.

"I think people had it in their minds that this album is about one thing and one thing only, and it's not," said Maines. "People are jumping to conclusions."

Hit pop songwriter Justin Tranter, who has penned hits for Justin Bieber, Selena Gomez and Imagine Dragons, helped The Chicks co-write some of the album's most raw, vulnerable breakup songs, including "Sleep at Night."

"Some of those pre-choruses are not songs," said Tranter. "Natalie was just talking and I was literally writing down what she was saying and then I found a way to put it to a melody."

"Gaslighter" was recorded and co-written with Jack Antonoff, the Grammy-winning producer-artist known for recording with pop's female elite: Taylor Swift, Lana Del Rey, Lorde and Sia. Antonoff pushed them to use their core strength, the three-part harmonies backed by fiddle and banjo, in new ways.

Maguire's fiddle playing is rhythmic on "Texas Man" backed by electric guitar from Grammy-winner St. Vincent. Strayer's banjo leads a chorus of electronic melodies, cello and double drums on "Sleep at Night." Their voices, strong, sharp and haunting, blend and build in cinematic ways.

Their last album, 2006's "Taking the Long Way," earned five Grammys, including album, record and song of the year, and won over masses of fans who never listened to them before. But it's unlikely the fans who turned their back on The Chicks 17 years ago are going to feel any different about the band's return.

When The Chicks and Beyoncé performed at the Country Music Association Awards in 2016, a vocal minority unleashed their anger on social media at the idea that both artists would be invited to perform.

The Chicks knew the high-profile awards show performance would get some criticism, but they were upset after the CMA briefly removed promo videos online of the performance. The CMA later said the clips were not approved, so they were removed before the broadcast.

"The CMAs were absolutely wrong to cower to that racism," said Maines. "It was disgusting. It's good that they put it back up, but it should have never come down."

"When you invite (Beyoncé) knowing that she's going to bring that elevation to the show and those eyeballs and then you diss her like that, it's twisting the knife," said Strayer.

Although their fallout occurred before Twitter or Facebook, The Chicks have a unique viewpoint on the rise of cancel culture, when prominent people are attacked online in an almost mob mentality.

"On one hand, you know, it's freeing now. People just are way more vocal," said Maines. "But then the downside is one slip up, one major slip up, and no publicist can make that go away."

Maines said for movements like #MeToo, those speaking out online held people accountable. "And you can't silence or quiet them when you've got so many women coming forward," Maines said.

The phrase "shut up and sing" is still used as a weapon against women, minorities and anyone straying from their musical lane. But The Chicks think younger music fans don't adhere to that idea.

"There's not a whole lot of respect anymore if you're just going to smile and entertain," Maines said. "They want you to have a point of view."

Strayer added, "My 15-year-old won't even let me use a filter on my phone! They want real."

While the break between albums was longer than any of them anticipated, they realized they still had important things to say.

"We have to say things when the time is right to say them, and we've been quiet for 10 years, so get ready," Strayer said with a laugh.

Follow Kristin M. Hall at <http://Twitter.com/kmhall>

Singer says lawsuit over Lady A name is 'white privilege'

The Associated Press undefined

Singer Anita White, who was sued by a country group over the use of the name Lady A, says the group is using their white privilege against her.

The band, who had previously been known as Lady Antebellum, filed a lawsuit in federal court on Wednesday seeking a ruling that their use of the trademark "Lady A" does not infringe on White's use of the same name. The band is not seeking monetary damages.

The Grammy-winning band made up of Hillary Scott, Charles Kelley and Dave Haywood, who are all white, changed their name last month saying they are regretful and embarrassed for not taking into consideration the word's associations with slavery.

White, who is Black, told Rolling Stone magazine in an article posted Friday that she felt like she was being erased. White said she had been performing as Lady A for more than 20 years.

"They claim to be allies and that they wanted to change their name out of the racist connotation, and then they sue a Black woman for the new name," White told the publication.

White said in negotiations with the band over the use of the name, she requested \$10 million, half of which she would use to rebrand herself and the other half she would donate to charities of her choice, including those associated with Black Lives Matter.

"I have to rebrand myself. I don't want to have to share a name with you. And you shouldn't be allowed to just get a slap on the wrist," White said. "I wanted my name. All I ever wanted was to keep my name in the blues genre doing what I did. I should not have to bend to (the band's) will because they've got money," she said.

The lawsuit said that the country group filed for a trademark for the name "Lady A" back in 2010.

Lawyer: Over 150 Minneapolis officers seeking disability

By AMY FORLITI Associated Press

MINNEAPOLIS (AP) — More than 150 Minneapolis police officers are filing work-related disability claims after the death of George Floyd and ensuing unrest, with about three-quarters citing post-traumatic stress disorder as the reason for their planned departures, according to an attorney representing the officers.

Their duty disability claims, which will take months to process, come as the city is seeing an increase in violent crime and while city leaders push a proposal to replace the Minneapolis Police Department with a new agency that they say would have a more holistic approach.

While Floyd's death in May and the unrest that followed are not the direct cause of many of the disability requests, attorney Ron Meuser said, those events and what Meuser called a lack of support from city leadership were a breaking point for many who had been struggling with PTSD from years on the job. Duty disability means the officer was disabled while engaged in inherently dangerous acts specific to the job.

"Following the George Floyd incident, unfortunately it became too much and as a result they were unable to, and are unable to, continue on and move forward," Meuser said. "They feel totally and utterly abandoned."

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, July 11, 2020 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 008 ~ 72 of 90

He said many officers he represents were at a precinct that police abandoned as people were breaking in during the unrest. Some officers feared they wouldn't make it home, he said, and wrote final notes to loved ones. People in the crowd ultimately set fire to the building.

Mayor Jacob Frey issued a statement saying that COVID-19 and unrest following Floyd's death tested the community and officers in profound ways. He said cities need resources to reflect the realities on the ground.

"In the meantime, I am committed to supporting those officers committed to carrying out their oath to serve and protect the people of Minneapolis during a challenging time for our city," he said.

Meuser said in recent weeks, 150 officers have retained his office for help in filing for duty disability benefits through the state's Public Employment Retirement Association, or PERA. So far, 75 of them have already left the job, he said.

Police spokesman John Elder questioned Meuser's figure of 150, though he does expect an increase in departures. The department currently has about 850 officers and will adjust staffing to ensure it can do its job, he said.

The city said it has received 17 PTSD workers compensation claims in the last month, but when it comes to PERA duty disability, officers are not obligated to notify the Police Department that an application was submitted. Meuser said the city isn't being transparent about departures, and the numbers it sees will lag as PERA benefits take months to process.

Doug Anderson, executive director for PERA, said 150 officers seeking duty disability from one department would be high. PERA approved 105 disability applications from both police and firefighters statewide in all of 2019, including 60 claims for duty-related PTSD and 20 for other work-related injuries.

PERA is primarily a retirement plan, in which members and employers contribute funds. Members who become disabled can receive a disability benefit until age 55, at which time retirement benefits kick in.

A high percentage of those on duty disability do not return to the job, Anderson said.

"It's a disability that as a general rule is a permanent designation entitling them for benefits for the rest of their life," Meuser said.

A high number of people taking PERA disability likely won't impact the city budget immediately, as the city's rate of contribution to the plan is fixed, though the Minnesota Legislature could increase contribution rates. The city can incur significant costs if the leave is classified as "duty disability," because the city would continue to pay for the officer's health insurance.

To apply, an officer needs supporting documents from two physicians. A third-party administrator ensures applications are complete. If there is a discrepancy, PERA can require an independent medical evaluation. The Police Department could also challenge an application, and there is a process for appeal. Denials and appeals are uncommon, Anderson said.

Meuser made his announcement amid an increase in violent crime. From Thursday night to Friday morning alone, nine people were shot in Minneapolis, including one fatally. Police data analyzed by the Star Tribune show that at least 243 people have been shot so far this year, compared with 269 in all of 2019.

Asked about his timing, Meuser said he believes Minneapolis officers are being unfairly tarnished, and it's time to call out "decades of failed leadership" in the city.

Meuser opposes calls to dismantle or defund the Police Department, and said he hopes the news that veteran officers are leaving will make the public reassess the city's current trajectory.

"The men and women in public safety who give their heart and soul to serve Minneapolis and keep it safe deserve to have Minneapolis leaders to step up and supporting them," he said. "Instead of spending time plotting the dismantling of the force, let's come together to improve community trust and work towards a safer city for all."

Follow Amy Forliti on Twitter: <http://www.twitter.com/amyforliti>

Comet streaking past Earth, providing spectacular show

By MARCIA DUNN AP Aerospace Writer

CAPE CANAVERAL, Fla. (AP) — A newly discovered comet is streaking past Earth, providing a stunning nighttime show after buzzing the sun and expanding its tail.

Comet Neowise — the brightest comet visible from the Northern Hemisphere in a quarter-century — swept within Mercury's orbit a week ago. Its close proximity to the sun caused dust and gas to burn off its surface and create an even bigger debris tail. Now the comet is headed our way, with closest approach in two weeks.

NASA's Neowise infrared space telescope discovered the comet in March.

Scientists involved in the mission said the comet is about 3 miles (5 kilometers) across. Its nucleus is covered with sooty material dating back to the origin of our solar system 4.6 billion years ago.

The comet will be visible across the Northern Hemisphere until mid-August, when it heads back toward the outer solar system. While it's visible with the naked eye in dark skies with little or no light pollution, binoculars are needed to see the long tail, according to NASA.

It will be about 7,000 years before the comet returns, "so I wouldn't suggest waiting for the next pass," said the telescope's deputy principal investigator Joe Masiero of NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory in Pasadena, California.

He said it is the brightest comet since the mid-1990s for stargazers in the Northern Hemisphere.

Astronauts aboard the International Space Station have already caught a glimpse.

NASA's Bob Behnken shared a spectacular photo of the comet on social media late Thursday, showing central Asia in the background and the space station in the foreground.

"Stars, cities, spaceships, and a comet!" he tweeted from orbit.

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Border authorities use pandemic powers to expel immigrants

By ELLIOT SPAGAT Associated Press

SAN DIEGO (AP) — The Honduran woman was nine months' pregnant and exhausted with stomach pain when the Border Patrol found her in the Southern California mountains with her longtime partner and their 9-year-old son. What happened next illustrates how difficult it has become to seek asylum in the United States during the coronavirus pandemic.

Alexy, 32, and his son Samuel were whisked to the border in the wee hours of June 28 and returned to Mexico. Two days later, after giving birth at a hospital in Chula Vista, California, 25-year-old Karina was returned to Tijuana in similar fashion with her newborn son, a U.S. citizen by birthright.

In normal times, the family would probably have been released in the United States with appointments in immigration court to argue for asylum. Instead, they were among those swept up by Customs and Border Protection using extraordinary power available during public health emergencies to expel Mexicans and many Central Americans immediately to Mexico and waive immigration laws that include rights to seek asylum.

The change made in March is evident in figures released Thursday: The Border Patrol in June put 27,535 people on a track to expulsion under the public health emergency and made only 2,859 arrests under immigration law.

Chad Wolf, the acting Homeland Security secretary, boasted that most expulsions are carried out within two hours.

The special powers will expire when the pandemic ends, but Trump administration officials have proposed a string of regulations over the last month to put asylum further out of reach. The proposals instruct judges to be more selective and deny some claims without a hearing. On Wednesday, the administration proposed denying asylum to people from countries with widespread communicable disease.

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, July 11, 2020 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 008 ~ 74 of 90

Most of the people crossing the border illegally are now Mexican adults — a change from the recent past, when they were predominantly Central American families and children. The Associated Press agreed to identify the Honduran family using only their middle names because of fears for their safety.

A year ago, the family fled the steamy, tropical lowlands of northwest Honduras, where the father worked in a shoe factory and gang violence was rampant. The father was held with a gun to his head while his son cried, leading to a beating that required stitches to the boy's head, the father said.

They applied for refugee status in Mexico and were cleared for humanitarian visas in February but did not complete the process in the southern state of Chiapas, said Carlos Gonzalez Gutierrez, Mexico's consul general in San Diego.

They had moved to the northern city of Monterrey because they were being followed by a man who said he wanted to take the 9-year-old under his wing and a Mexican official told them they could travel freely, according to Luis Gonzalez, an attorney for Jewish Family Service of San Diego who represents the family.

The family waded across the Rio Grande to Eagle Pass, Texas, trapped in a strong current for hours. After surrendering to the Border Patrol, they were returned to Mexico to wait for a hearing in Laredo, Texas. More than 60,000 people have been forced to wait in Mexico for hearings under a policy introduced last year called "Migrant Protection Protocols."

Alexy said the family was held at gunpoint on a taxi ride to the Laredo border crossing by unidentified men in bulletproof vests who released them unharmed but forced them to miss their March 25 hearing. A judge rescheduled for Sept. 30.

After Alexy lost a job as a security guard, still rattled by the holdup and spooked by talk of child abductions, the family left Monterrey for Tijuana. Alexy said drug dealers and users made going outside unsafe in Tijuana, prompting them to try the United States again to ask for asylum.

Alexy believes hiking in the San Diego mountains precipitated Karina's labor. He felt helpless when agents separated them as her pain intensified, shuttling him and his son back to the border.

"They didn't tell me anything. They said they might return my wife later," he said in a phone interview from Tijuana.

Karina was crying when she called two days later with their newborn in Tijuana.

In response to questions about the case, CBP said Friday that it does not comment on pending litigation — the expulsion authority is under legal challenge — but underscored that agents can make exceptions for humanitarian or other reasons.

The agency has only about 100 people in custody, down from more than 19,000 at the peak of last year's surge of asylum-seeking families from Central America.

Mark Krikorian, executive director of the Center for Immigration Studies, said U.S. authorities handled the case properly and accused the family of trying to use the newborn to secure legal status. He said they should have settled in Mexico.

"Asylum has been so widely used as a gambit for illegal immigration that honestly I don't believe it anymore," said Krikorian, echoing views of the president and other hard-liners. "I assume that anyone crossing through Mexico and applying for asylum (in the U.S.) is lying until proven otherwise."

Last week, a federal appeals court and a district judge blocked a Trump policy to deny asylum to anyone who passes through another country on the way to the U.S. border with Mexico without first seeking protection there.

Jewish Family Service wants the family released in the United States, where they have relatives, to argue their asylum case in court. Together with the American Civil Liberties Union of San Diego & Imperial Counties, the group on Friday asked the Homeland Security Department's internal watchdog to investigate what happened.

ACLU attorney Mitra Ebadolahi calls it "a perfect storm of inhumanity." The family waited in Mexico for months as instructed, leaving for San Diego only when they felt physically threatened, she said.

Ebadolahi said U.S. authorities should have exercised their significant discretion to keep the family together in the U.S. to fight their case. She believes the authorities broke the law by twice refusing to have

an asylum officer interview the family about their fears of being returned to Mexico — first in Texas and again in California.

Ebadolahi is slower to opine on the legality of expelling the newborn, a U.S. citizen. She said it was done to keep him with his mother.

"To me that's less a pure question of law and more a question of what country we want to be," she said. "The cruelty is staggering."

Florida's curve no longer flat amid new surge of virus cases

By ADRIANA GOMEZ LICON and KELLI KENNEDY Associated Press

MIAMI (AP) — Fighting a surge in coronavirus cases in the spring, Florida appeared to be "flattening the curve" as theme parks shuttered, sugar sand beaches closed and residents heeded orders to stay home. Now, it's almost as if that never happened.

Bars, restaurants and gyms began reopening in May — critics said it was too soon — and weeks later, the Sunshine State became one of the country's virus hot spots, experiencing an alarming surge in cases. On Thursday, officials reported 120 deaths in one day, the highest number since the previous record of 113 in early May.

"We thought maybe we could keep this thing under wraps. And that worked for a little bit of time," Dr. Jason Wilson, an E.R. physician at Tampa General Hospital, said during a conversation with Tampa Mayor Jane Castor that was livestreamed Wednesday on Facebook. "But eventually ... it caught up to us."

From Miami to Jacksonville and Tampa, hospitals in June and July have seen their numbers of coronavirus patients triple, with new patients outpacing those being discharged.

A record 435 newly hospitalized patients were reported Friday to have tested positive for the virus, including some who sought care for other reasons and aren't necessarily symptomatic. There were 6,806 patients being treated for COVID-19 in Florida hospitals, according to a new tally that state officials started releasing Friday. Before that, available data only showed overall hospital occupancy and capacity, including noncoronavirus patients.

Hospital networks are scrambling to hire more health care workers to expand their COVID units. Last week, hospitals in several cities announced they would again halt or reduce nonemergency procedures to free up space.

Wilson and other health experts believe the spike was sparked in large part by young people who weren't experiencing symptoms and were more likely to take fewer precautions while gathering at reopened bars and crowded beaches.

"We saw the floodgates open really for young people having what we call asymptomatic or presymptomatic spread," he said. "Three weeks later, we are starting to see everyone else starting to get the virus as well."

The state's predicament echoes that of other current hot spots. Texas, which is marking its deadliest week of the pandemic, on Thursday reported a record daily death toll of more than 100, a new high for hospitalizations for the 10th consecutive day, and a nearly 16% positive test rate, its highest yet. In Arizona, hospitals were at nearly 90% capacity, with a record 3,437 patients hospitalized as of Wednesday, and a record number of those, 575, on ventilators, health officials said. Earlier in the week, a record high number of 871 patients filled ICU beds.

In Miami-Dade, Florida's worst-hit county, a few of the smaller hospitals have run out of ICU beds completely, though countywide there were still about 14% available as of Friday, the state health agency reported. Even hospitals with some of the biggest ICUs in the state are stretched: Tampa General currently has 70 patients who are infected, half of whom are in ICU beds, Wilson said.

More than 45% of intensive care units in Florida hospitals were at capacity or had fewer than 10% of their beds available as of Friday, the state Agency for Health Care Administration reported on its website.

However, many hospitals can convert additional beds to ICUs, and Gov. Ron DeSantis said at a news conference Friday that no major hospital in Florida had yet "gone to the surge level."

Florida Agency for Health Care Administration Secretary Mary Mayhew said her agency is working with

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, July 11, 2020 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 008 ~ 76 of 90

hospitals to open up hospital beds by discharging patients who can be cared for at home through telehealth, and sending COVID-19 positive patients who don't need hospitalization to nursing facilities where they can be isolated.

"We're focused on how we can help hospitals decompress so that their beds again are used for individuals who absolutely require hospital level of care, both COVID and non-COVID," Mayhew said in an interview.

Chad Neilsen, the infection prevention director for UF Health Jacksonville hospital, anticipates the hospital will run out of rapid test kits in about two weeks or maybe sooner because manufacturers can't keep up with demand. He said the hospital instead will have to rely on commercial labs, which can take several days to issue results. Quest, a company that operates many such labs, said this week that it is potentially facing an even longer turnaround because of high demand.

Slower test results have a domino effect because a hospital has to assume that every patient with flu-like symptoms has COVID-19, meaning it will burn through its protective equipment and other gear much more quickly.

"For a hospital, that's a big problem," Neilsen said. "We have patients that need surgery that we want to test. We have mothers about to give birth that we want to test."

The rise in hospitalizations comes as physicians and nurses have been working around the clock for months, and during the summer, when facilities are typically low staffed. Gov. Ron DeSantis just deployed 200 nurses to fill staffing shortages in Miami and Tampa, and has pledged to send hundreds more.

"We're just overwhelmed with patients. ... Right now, it's like all hands on deck," said Esther Segura, a nurse at Miami's Jackson South Medical Center, who said she and her colleagues are weary after four months working in the pandemic. "Now we're just spiking all the way. Every day the numbers keep surging."

Physicians and hospital officials are also concerned about how long it takes to discharge patients.

Yolanda Villalobos of Homestead, Florida, said her husband, Julio Alejandro Berrios, was on a ventilator for weeks at one of the first intensive care units to fill up in the Miami-Dade area. The 37-year-old, 300-pound (136-kilogram) man was feverish, delusional and screaming in pain when Villalobos carried him out of their bedroom and delivered him into the hands of paramedics.

"I thought he would be there three days or a week at the most," Yolanda Villalobos said.

In both Jacksonville and Miami, doctors expressed worries about a noticeable uptick in the number of patients on ventilators. The Florida Hospital Association's interim president, Crystal Stickle, said providers are all trying to get their hands on remdesivir, which has been shown in a clinical trial to help with the disease.

Stickle said initially the governor and federal lawmakers helped obtain quantities of the drug that the state health department then distributed to hospitals. But beginning next week, she said, the drug will begin shipping directly to the hospitals.

US bets on untested company to deliver COVID-19 vaccine

By MARTHA MENDOZA and JULIET LINDERMAN Associated Press

When precious vats of COVID-19 vaccine are finally ready, jabbing the lifesaving solution into the arms of Americans will require hundreds of millions of injections.

As part of its strategy to administer the vaccine as quickly as possible, the Trump administration has agreed to invest more than half a billion in tax dollars in ApiJect Systems America, a young company. Its injector is not approved by federal health authorities and the company hasn't yet set up a factory to manufacture the devices.

The commitment to ApiJect dwarfs the other needle orders the government has placed with a major manufacturer and two other small companies.

EDITOR'S NOTE -- This story is part of an ongoing investigation by The Associated Press, the PBS series FRONTLINE and the Global Reporting Centre that examines the deadly consequences of the fragmented worldwide medical supply chain.

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, July 11, 2020 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 008 ~ 77 of 90

"The fact of this matter is, it would be crazy for people to just rely on us. I would be the first to say it," said ApiJect CEO Jay Walker. "We should be America's backup at this point, but probably not its primary."

Trump administration officials would not say why they are investing so heavily in ApiJect's technology. The company has made only about 1,000 prototypes to date, and it's not clear whether those devices can deliver the vaccines that are currently in development. So far, the leading candidates are using traditional vials to hold the vaccine, and needles and syringes in their clinical trials.

RELUCTANT SUPPLIER

ApiJect founder Marc Koska never intended to vaccinate the United States. For the past five years, he's been working on his lifetime mission of creating an ultra low-cost prefilled syringe that would reduce the need to reuse needles in the developing world.

Instead, the company's biggest customer has become the U.S. government.

ApiJect received a no-bid contract earlier this year from the Defense Department under an exception for "unusual and compelling urgency." Authorities said the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, tasked with buying the necessary supplies, "does not have the resources or capacity to conduct procurements necessary to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic," according to a June 5 military document.

The government promised ApiJect \$138 million to produce 100 million of its devices by the end of the year, which will require the company to retrofit new manufacturing lines in existing factories. And it's offered another \$456 million as part of a public-private partnership contract to bring online several new factories to make another 500 million devices to "contain the pandemic spread to minimize the loss of life and impact to the United States economy," said the document.

These amounts are more than double the per-syringe cost the government is paying other companies for the work.

ApiJect first appeared on the U.S. government's radar almost two years ago when the company piqued the interest of Admiral Brett P. Giroir, HHS's assistant secretary for health, at the World Health Organization's Global Conference on Primary Health Care in Astana, Kazakhstan.

Koska said Giroir was "blown away" by their technology and told them that if a pandemic hit, the strategic national stockpile was going to need a very fast way to get injections filled with vaccines or therapeutics and ready to deliver.

According to Walker, the CEO, ApiJect wasn't interested in a federal contract — they were aiming to change the developing world with quick, inexpensive injection devices that could save millions of lives.

But at the conference, Walker found himself at a table with Giroir at a luncheon, just two seats apart. The admiral was fascinated by the low-cost injection technology, Walker said, and when Walker showed him the prototype that he always carries in his pocket, Giroir asked how they plan to do this in the U.S.

Walker said he told the admiral that the company wasn't planning to operate in the U.S. but was struck by Giroir's enthusiasm.

"He was the first person, if not the only person at the event, who understood the revolutionary nature of this platform," Walker recalled in an interview with AP. "And he said, 'Wow this is amazing. You need to do this in the U.S.'"

Walker continued to resist, he said, but Giroir — who is also a doctor specializing in pediatric critical care — "wasn't big on taking no for an answer," Walker said.

At Giroir's urging they presented the prototype injector to U.S. officials. HHS declined to make agency officials available for interviews.

It wasn't until later, when Walker was introduced by a friend to Col. Matthew Hepburn at the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency, that a plan for ApiJect to work in the United States began to take shape, he said.

HHS Assistant Secretary for Preparedness and Response Robert Kadlec approved a \$10 million contract for ApiJect for research and development in January 2020, according to a document in the federal procurement data system. The company was responsible for securing private investments to create new production lines where the devices would be made over three to five years.

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, July 11, 2020 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 008 ~ 78 of 90

When the pandemic emerged weeks later, officials sounded the alarm about a potential shortage of needles and syringes to deliver a vaccine if and when one became available.

The federal Strategic National Stockpile of medical supplies had only 15 million syringes, according to Rick Bright, who later left his position at Health and Human Services and filed a whistleblower complaint.

Bright warned White House trade adviser Peter Navarro and his HHS colleagues of a looming needle shortfall, according to a series of emails disclosed in his complaint.

"We are hearing rumblings about the US inventory of needles and syringes ... heading to other countries," wrote Bright. "There is limited inventory in the supply chain, it could take 2+ years to make enough to satisfy the U.S. vaccine needs."

Navarro said the U.S. would need 850 million needles.

"We may find ourselves in a situation where we have enough vaccine but no way to deliver all of it," he said in a February memo to the White House coronavirus task force.

He recommended the task force "direct HHS BARDA to initiate a program to identify all alternate vaccine delivery methods and ramp up production." BARDA is the Biomedical Advanced Research and Development Authority within HHS.

Suddenly ApiJect's 5-year plan to mass produce its devices became a sprint measured in months with a new \$138 million contract, announced in May, to produce 100 million devices by year's end.

Jefferies Financial Group is acting as the leader of the public-private partnership with HHS and invested \$10 million to help ApiJect build surge production facilities in March. The company said it would try to raise up to \$1 billion more. There have been no additional announcements of funding.

Walker said due to nondisclosure agreements with both the government and investors, the company is unable to say what private funding they've secured so far.

OPERATION WARP SPEED

On a warm mid-May day in the White House Rose Garden, President Donald Trump introduced "a massive scientific, industrial and logistical endeavor" dubbed Operation Warp Speed.

The idea, he said, was to be ready to distribute a COVID-19 vaccine as soon as it was developed.

"We must not be caught short on our capacity to deliver emergency drugs to Americans in need," said HHS Secretary Alex Azar.

An estimated 700 million injections may be needed to inoculate the nation -- at least two shots for every person, according to the military document.

In early May, the government put in two orders, to Retractable Technologies in Little Elm, Texas, and Marathon Medical in Aurora, Colorado, totaling 320 million needles and syringes.

Later in May, the government announced plans for ApiJect to manufacture more than 500 million all-in-one devices that would come pre-loaded with the vaccine.

On Wednesday, the largest domestic manufacturer of needles and syringes, Becton Dickinson, announced the first U.S. order of \$11.7 million for 50 million needles and syringes by the end of this year. It plans to ramp up manufacturing over the next year.

And earlier this month Retractable entered into a second contract with the government, this one for \$53 million meant to boost domestic manufacturing.

Together that sounds like enough injection devices.

But Retractable, which was worried enough about its financial future that earlier this year it received a \$1.36 million loan from the Paycheck Protection Program, has been doing about 80% of its manufacturing in China. And Marathon is a medical supply distributor, and there is no indication on its web site that it manufactures needles and syringes at all. The company did not respond to repeated requests for comment.

Despite the race to replenish the domestic needle and syringe supply, about 400 shipping containers of syringes have left the U.S. for countries including Germany, Colombia, Australia, Brazil and Italy this year, according to Panjiva Inc., a service that independently tracks global trade. That's the same, on average, as syringe exports over the past five years.

Experts acknowledge that a mass vaccination campaign is going to be complicated.

"There are a lot of moving parts to this," said Dr. Bruce Gellin, the Sabin Vaccine Institute's president of

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, July 11, 2020 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 008 ~ 79 of 90

global immunization.

Darin Zehrung, who studied medical devices at PATH, a nonprofit advocating for health equity, said it's wise to invest in new injection technologies. But that only works if there are plenty of basic syringes and needles stocked up.

"Hedging bets is the best approach, but plan for the worst case scenario and hope for the best case scenario," said Zehrung.

AWAITING APPROVAL

ApiJect's devices are self-contained, with soft plastic blisters that are squeezed, like a nose spray or eye drop, to push the vaccine through an attached needle and into the patient.

The device includes a little computer chip — like the ones in credit cards — that can transmit information about the drug, dose, location and time of administration. The chip is not injected into patients.

Other injection devices Koska designed have been used in the developing world, but this ApiJect technology has not.

The company said they have started discussions with the U.S. Food and Drug Administration to review the device on a priority basis while the company moves ahead fitting factories to make their injectors. The agency wouldn't confirm this, citing its policy against discussing products involved in clinical trials.

Testing different vaccine candidates in the ApiJect devices will be critical before injecting the public.

Plastic could interact differently with the liquid than the glass vials currently used in trials, experts say. And there are strict temperature requirements. ApiJect's planned process is to pour vaccine doses into the warm plastic blisters as they come off the production line, the company says. ApiJect says they can instantly cool the devices as they are made.

Walker, the ApiJect CEO, who founded the online travel agency Priceline, acknowledges that the government's decision to rely on "an emergency plan of refitting established pharmaceutical manufacturing facilities is risky. But we feel good about it."

NO COMMENT

The Associated Press asked the Health and Human Services department over many weeks to explain the government's approach. The agency didn't allow an official to speak on the record for this story.

A senior administration official, speaking on condition of anonymity because the agency declined to allow him to be identified by name, told AP he wasn't familiar with ApiJect or the contract. But he said the government was buying a range of devices to deliver the vaccine because they don't know what they need. And, he said, the Trump administration is looking to boost domestic manufacturing.

When AP reached out directly to Trump's vaccine czar, Moncef Slaoui, to discuss the new technology, a spokesperson said the query was inappropriate.

"If this continues, we will make no one else available either," Natalie Baldassarre, a special assistant at HHS, wrote in an email.

Last week, HHS Assistant Secretary of Public Affairs Michael Caputo wrote that the agency has "lost interest in assisting your story" and offered no further comment.

Mendoza reported from San Francisco. Linderman reported from Baltimore. Luran Neergaard and Stephen Braun in Washington contributed.

Contact AP's Investigative Team at investigative@ap.org.

AP: Catholic Church lobbied for taxpayer funds, got \$1.4B

By REESE DUNKLIN and MICHAEL REZENDES Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — The U.S. Roman Catholic Church used a special and unprecedented exemption from federal rules to amass at least \$1.4 billion in taxpayer-backed coronavirus aid, with many millions going to dioceses that have paid huge settlements or sought bankruptcy protection because of clergy sexual abuse cover-ups.

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, July 11, 2020 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 008 ~ 80 of 90

The church's haul may have reached -- or even exceeded -- \$3.5 billion, making a global religious institution with more than a billion followers among the biggest winners in the U.S. government's pandemic relief efforts, an Associated Press analysis of federal data released this week found.

Houses of worship and faith-based organizations that promote religious beliefs aren't usually eligible for money from the U.S. Small Business Administration. But as the economy plummeted and jobless rates soared, Congress let faith groups and other nonprofits tap into the Paycheck Protection Program, a \$659 billion fund created to keep Main Street open and Americans employed.

By aggressively promoting the payroll program and marshaling resources to help affiliates navigate its shifting rules, Catholic dioceses, parishes, schools and other ministries have so far received approval for at least 3,500 forgivable loans, AP found.

The Archdiocese of New York, for example, received 15 loans worth at least \$28 million just for its top executive offices. Its iconic St. Patrick's Cathedral on Fifth Avenue was approved for at least \$1 million.

In Orange County, California, where a sparkling glass cathedral estimated to cost over \$70 million recently opened, diocesan officials working at the complex received four loans worth at least \$3 million.

And elsewhere, a loan of at least \$2 million went to the diocese covering Wheeling-Charleston, West Virginia, where a church investigation revealed last year that then-Bishop Michael Bransfield embezzled funds and made sexual advances toward young priests.

Simply being eligible for low-interest loans was a new opportunity. But the church couldn't have been approved for so many loans -- which the government will forgive if they are used for wages, rent and utilities -- without a second break.

Religious groups persuaded the Trump administration to free them from a rule that typically disqualifies an applicant with more than 500 workers. Without this preferential treatment, many Catholic dioceses would have been ineligible because -- between their head offices, parishes and other affiliates -- their employees exceed the 500-person cap.

"The government grants special dispensation, and that creates a kind of structural favoritism," said Micah Schwartzman, a University of Virginia law professor specializing in constitutional issues and religion who has studied the Paycheck Protection Program. "And that favoritism was worth billions of dollars."

The amount that the church collected, between \$1.4 billion and \$3.5 billion, is an undercount. The Diocesan Fiscal Management Conference, an organization of Catholic financial officers, surveyed members and reported that about 9,000 Catholic entities received loans. That is nearly three times the number of Catholic recipients the AP could identify.

The AP couldn't find more Catholic beneficiaries because the government's data, released after pressure from Congress and a lawsuit from news outlets including the AP, didn't name recipients of loans under \$150,000 -- a category in which many smaller churches would fall. And because the government released only ranges of loan amounts, it wasn't possible to be more precise.

Even without a full accounting, AP's analysis places the Catholic Church among the major beneficiaries in the Paycheck Protection Program, which also has helped companies backed by celebrities, billionaires, state governors and members of Congress.

The program was open to all religious groups, and many took advantage. Evangelical advisers to President Donald Trump, including his White House spiritual czar, Paula White-Cain, also received loans.

'TRULY IN NEED'

There is no doubt that state shelter-in-place orders disrupted houses of worship and businesses alike. Masses were canceled, even during the Holy Week and Easter holidays, depriving parishes of expected revenue and contributing to layoffs in some dioceses. Some families of Catholic school students are struggling to make tuition payments. And the expense of disinfecting classrooms once classes resume will put additional pressure on budgets.

But other problems were self-inflicted. Long before the pandemic, scores of dioceses faced increasing financial pressure because of a dramatic rise in recent clergy sex abuse claims.

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, July 11, 2020 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 008 ~ 81 of 90

The scandals that erupted in 2018 reverberated throughout the world. Pope Francis ordered the former archbishop of Washington, Cardinal Theodore McCarrick, to a life of "prayer and penance" following allegations he abused minors and adult seminarians. And a damning grand jury report about abuse in six Pennsylvania dioceses revealed bishops had long covered for predator priests, spurring investigations in more than 20 other states.

As the church again reckoned with its longtime crisis, abuse reports tripled during the year ending June 2019 to a total of nearly 4,500 nationally. Meanwhile, dioceses and religious orders shelled out \$282 million that year — up from \$106 million just five years earlier. Most of that went to settlements, in addition to legal fees and support for offending clergy.

Loan recipients included about 40 dioceses that have spent hundreds of millions of dollars in the past few years paying victims through compensation funds or bankruptcy proceedings. AP's review found that these dioceses were approved for about \$200 million, though the value is likely much higher.

One was the New York Archdiocese. As a successful battle to lift the statute of limitations on the filing of child sexual abuse lawsuits gathered steam, Cardinal Timothy Dolan established a victim compensation fund in 2016. Since then, other dioceses have established similar funds, which offer victims relatively quick settlements while dissuading them from filing lawsuits.

Spokesperson Joseph Zwilling said the archdiocese simply wanted to be "treated equally and fairly under the law." When asked about the waiver from the 500-employee cap that religious organizations received, Zwilling deferred to the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops.

A spokesperson for the bishops' conference acknowledged its officials lobbied for the paycheck program, but said the organization wasn't tracking what dioceses and Catholic agencies received.

"These loans are an essential lifeline to help faith-based organizations to stay afloat and continue serving those in need during this crisis," spokesperson Chieko Noguchi said in a written statement. According to AP's data analysis, the church and all its organizations reported retaining at least 407,900 jobs with the money they were awarded.

Noguchi also wrote the conference felt strongly that "the administration write and implement this emergency relief fairly for all applicants."

Not every Catholic institution sought government loans. The Ukrainian Catholic Eparchy based in Stamford, Connecticut, told AP that even though its parishes experienced a decline in donations, none of the organizations in its five-state territory submitted applications.

Deacon Steve Wisnowski, a financial officer for the eparchy, said pastors and church managers used their rainy-day savings and that parishioners responded generously with donations. As a result, parishes "did not experience a severe financial crisis."

Wisnowski said his superiors understood the program was for "organizations and businesses truly in need of assistance."

LOBBYING FOR A BREAK

The law that created the Paycheck Protection Program let nonprofits participate, as long as they abided by SBA's "affiliation rule." The rule typically says that only businesses with fewer than 500 employees, including all subsidiaries, are eligible.

Lobbying by the church helped religious organizations get an exception.

The Catholic News Service reported that the bishops' conference and several major Catholic nonprofit agencies worked throughout the week of March 30 to ensure that the "unique nature of the entities would not make them ineligible for the program" because of how SBA defines a "small" business. Those conversations came just days after President Trump signed the \$2 trillion Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act, which included the Paycheck Protection Program.

In addition, federal records show the Los Angeles archdiocese, whose leader heads the bishops' conference, paid \$20,000 to lobby the U.S. Senate and House on "eligibility for non-profits" under the CARES Act. The records also show that Catholic Charities USA, a social service arm of the church with member

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, July 11, 2020 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 008 ~ 82 of 90

agencies in dioceses across the country, paid another \$30,000 to lobby on the act and other issues.

In late April, after thousands of Catholic institutions had secured loans, several hundred Catholic leaders pressed for additional help on a call with President Trump. During the call, Trump underscored the coming presidential election and touted himself as the candidate best aligned with religious conservatives, boasting he was the "best (president) the Catholic church has ever seen," according to Crux, an online publication that covers church-related news.

The lobbying paid off.

Catholic Charities USA and its member agencies were approved for about 110 loans worth between \$90 million and \$220 million at least, according to the data.

In a statement, Catholic Charities said: "Each organization is a separate legal entity under the auspices of the bishop in the diocese in which the agency is located. CCUSA supports agencies that choose to become members, but does not have any role in their daily operations or governance."

The Los Angeles archdiocese told AP in a survey that reporters sent before the release of federal data that 247 of its 288 parishes -- and all but one of its 232 schools -- received loans. The survey covered more than 180 dioceses and eparchies.

Like most dioceses, Los Angeles wouldn't disclose its total dollar amount. While the federal data doesn't link Catholic recipients to their home dioceses, AP found 37 loans to the archdiocese and its affiliates worth between \$9 million and \$23 million, including one for its downtown cathedral.

In 2007, the archdiocese paid a record \$660 million to settle sex abuse claims from more than 500 victims. Spokespeople for Los Angeles Archbishop Jose M. Gomez did not respond to additional questions about the archdiocese's finances and lobbying.

In program materials, SBA officials said they provided the affiliation waiver to religious groups in deference to their unique organizational structure, and because the public health response to slow the coronavirus' spread disrupted churches just as it did businesses.

A senior official in the U.S. Department of the Treasury, which worked with the SBA to administer the program, acknowledged in a statement the wider availability of loans to religious organizations. "The CARES Act expanded eligibility to include nonprofits in the PPP, and SBA's regulations ensured that no eligible religious nonprofit was excluded from participation due to its beliefs or denomination," the statement said.

Meanwhile, some legal experts say that the special consideration the government gave faith groups in the loan program has further eroded the wall between church and state provided in the First Amendment. With that erosion, religious groups that don't pay taxes have gained more access to public money, said Marci Hamilton, a University of Pennsylvania professor and attorney who has represented clergy abuse victims on constitutional issues during bankruptcy proceedings.

"At this point, the argument is you're anti-religious if in fact you would say the Catholic Church shouldn't be getting government funding," Hamilton said.

CASHING IN FAST

After its lobbying blitz, the Catholic Church worked with parishes and schools to access the money.

Many dioceses -- from large ones such as the Archdiocese of Boston to smaller ones such as the Diocese of La Crosse, Wisconsin -- assembled how-to guides to help their affiliates apply. The national Catholic fiscal conference also hosted multiple webinars with legal and financial experts to help coach along local leaders.

Federal data show that the bulk of the church's money was approved during the loan program's first two weeks. That's when demand for the first-come, first-served assistance was so high that the initial \$349 billion was quickly exhausted, shutting out many local businesses.

Overall, nearly 500 loans approved to Catholic entities exceeded \$1 million each. The AP found that at least eight hit the maximum range of \$5 million to \$10 million. Many of the listed recipients were the offices of bishops, headquarters of leading religious orders, major churches, schools and chapters of Catholic Charities.

Also among recipients was the Saint Luke Institute. The Catholic treatment center for priests accused

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, July 11, 2020 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 008 ~ 83 of 90

of sexual abuse and those suffering from other disorders received a loan ranging from \$350,000 to \$1 million. Based in Silver Spring, Maryland, the institute has at times been a way station for priests accused of sexual abuse who returned to active ministry only to abuse again.

Perhaps nothing illustrates the church's aggressive pursuit of funds better than four dioceses that sued the federal government to receive loans, even though they entered bankruptcy proceedings due to mounting clergy sex-abuse claims. Small Business Administration rules prohibit loans to applicants in bankruptcy.

The Archdiocese of Santa Fe, New Mexico -- once home to a now-closed and notorious treatment center for predator priests -- prevailed in court, clearing the way for its administrative offices to receive nearly \$1 million. It accused the SBA of overreaching by blocking bankruptcy applications when Congress didn't spell that out.

Yet even when a diocese has lost in bankruptcy court, or its case is pending, its affiliated parishes, schools and other organizations remain eligible for loans.

On the U.S. territory of Guam, well over 200 clergy abuse lawsuits led church leaders in the tiny Archdiocese of Agana to seek bankruptcy protection, as they estimated at least \$45 million in liabilities. Even so, the archdiocese's parishes, schools and other organizations have received at least \$1.7 million as it sues the SBA for approval to get a loan for its headquarters, according to bankruptcy filings.

The U.S. church may have a troubling record on sex abuse, but Bishop Lawrence Persico of Erie, Pennsylvania, pushed back on the idea that dioceses should be excluded from the government's rescue package. Approximately 80 organizations within his diocese received loans worth \$10.3 million, the diocese said, with most of the money going to parishes and schools.

Persico pointed out that church entities help feed, clothe and shelter the poor -- and in doing so keep people employed.

"I know some people may react with surprise that government funding helped support faith-based schools, parishes and dioceses," he said. "The separation of church and state does not mean that those motivated by their faith have no place in the public square."

Data journalist Justin Myers contributed from Chicago.

Contact AP's global investigative team at investigative@ap.org.

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Dutch government to take Russia to European court over MH17

By MIKE CORDER Associated Press

THE HAGUE, Netherlands (AP) — The Dutch government is taking Russia to the European Court of Human Rights for its alleged role in the shooting down of Malaysia Airlines Flight 17 over eastern Ukraine six years ago, the foreign minister announced Friday.

The move is intended to support individual cases being brought to the European court by relatives of some of the 298 people who were killed when a Buk surface-to-air missile fired from territory controlled by pro-Moscow Ukrainian rebels blew the Amsterdam-to-Kuala Lumpur flight out of the sky on July 17, 2014.

"Achieving justice for 298 victims of the downing of Flight MH17 is and will remain the government's highest priority," Foreign Minister Stef Blok said. "By taking this step today ... we are moving closer to this goal."

By launching the case against Russia, the Dutch authorities can share evidence with the Strasbourg-based European court so it can be considered in individual relatives' cases.

"As a government, we have information, evidence, that leads us to the conclusion of the involvement of the Russian Federation," Blok told The Associated Press. "Of course, the relatives themselves do not have all this information so we can help them by starting this procedure."

Moscow has repeatedly denied involvement in the downing of the Boeing 777. Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova said Russia sees Friday's announcement "in connection with the disaster of the

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, July 11, 2020 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 008 ~ 84 of 90

Malaysian Boeing as another blow to Russian-Dutch relations.”

Throughout the case, the Netherlands has acted “exclusively within the framework of anti-Russian logic, to which both technical and criminal investigations were subordinated,” Zakharova said.

However, an international team of prosecutors investigating the case has, however, charged three Russians and a Ukrainian with involvement in bringing down the plane and the murder of all on board. The men are on trial in a Dutch court, although none have been extradited to the Netherlands to face justice.

Blok said much of the evidence the government will submit to the human rights court also is part of that criminal case.

Prosecutors say they have evidence the missile that blew MH17 out of the sky was trucked into Ukraine from a Russian military base and the mobile launcher was later returned to Russia.

The Russian foreign ministry didn't immediately react. Konstantin Kosachev, head of the foreign affairs committee in the upper house of Russia's parliament, called the Dutch move “a strange initiative from every aspect” in remarks carried by the Interfax news agency.

“The investigation isn't over yet, there have been no court verdicts on the national level yet and, finally, what does the European Court for Human Rights have to do with it?” Kosachev said.

Friday's move is the latest legal maneuver by the Dutch government, which has long vowed to secure justice for victims and their loved ones. Separately, the government is pursuing Russia for state responsibility in the downing.

“The government attaches importance to continuing the meetings with Russia on the matter of state responsibility,” the foreign ministry said in a statement. “The purpose of these meetings is to find a solution that does justice to the enormous suffering and damage caused by the downing of Flight MH17.”

Blok said the twin legal tracks are headed toward the same goal.

“From the onset, we have made clear that the downing of an airplane, civilian airplane, and 298 innocent casualties is such a severe breach of international law that we will pursue any venue to find the truth and bring justice to the relatives,” he said.

Scenes from hell: 1995 Srebrenica genocide in photos

SREBRENICA, Bosnia-Herzegovina (AP) — It's been 25 years since the slaughter of men and boys in the eastern Bosnian town of Srebrenica, but every year more bodies are found and reburied, and every year the survivors — mostly women — return to commemorate their fathers and brothers, husbands and sons.

At least 8,000 mostly Muslim men and boys were chased through woods in and around Srebrenica by Serb troops in what is considered the worst carnage of civilians in Europe since World War II. The slaughter has been confirmed as an act of genocide.

On Saturday, nine newly identified victims of the 1995 massacre will be laid to rest in the memorial cemetery at Potocari, just outside Srebrenica. Among them will be Bajro Salihovic, whose partial remains were unearthed from a mass grave discovered last November and identified through DNA testing.

“They found just a few of his bones, but my mother and I decided to bury him this year so we will know where his grave is, where to go to say a prayer, to find some peace,” said his son Bahrudin, who himself survived the massacre by fleeing through the woods.

The Bosnian war pitted the country's three main ethnic factions — Serbs, Croats and Bosnian Muslims — against each other after the break-up of Yugoslavia. More than 100,000 people were killed in the conflict before a peace deal was brokered in 1995.

What took place in Srebrenica was a mark of shame for the international community as the town had been declared a U.N. “safe haven” for civilians in 1993.

When Bosnian Serb forces broke through two years later, about 15,000 Bosnian Muslim men and boys fled into the woods. And twice as many terrified residents rushed to the U.N. compound in what was formerly an industrial zone at the entrance to town, in the hope that Dutch U.N. peacekeepers would protect them.

However, the outgunned peacekeepers watched helplessly as Serb troops took around 2,000 men and boys from the compound for execution while bussing the women and girls to Bosnian government-held

territory. Meanwhile, in the woods around Srebrenica, Serb soldiers hunted the fleeing Bosniaks, as Bosnian Muslims are otherwise known, killing them one by one.

The killers sought to hide evidence of the genocide, piling most of the bodies into hastily made mass graves, which they subsequently dug up with bulldozers and scattered the bodies across numerous burial sites.

In the years since, bodies have been unearthed and the victims identified through DNA testing. About 1,000 victims remain to be found.

A special U.N. war crimes tribunal in The Hague and courts in the Balkans have sentenced close to 50 Bosnian Serbs, including their top civilian war-time leader, Radovan Karadzic, and his military commander, Ratko Mladic, to more than 700 years in prison for Srebrenica crimes.

And every year, the women return to mourn their dead.

Oxygen already runs low as COVID-19 surges in South Africa

By MOGOMOTSI MAGOME Associated Press

JOHANNESBURG (AP) — The coronavirus storm has arrived in South Africa, but in the overflowing COVID-19 wards the sound is less of a roar than a rasp.

Medical oxygen is already low in hospitals at the new epicenter of the outbreak, Gauteng province, home to the power centers of Johannesburg and the capital, Pretoria. Health Minister Zweli Mkhize, visiting a hospital Friday, said authorities are working with industry to divert more oxygen their way.

Some patients spilled into heated tents in the hospital parking lot. They lay under blankets in the middle of winter in the Southern Hemisphere, with a cold front bringing freezing temperatures this weekend.

"The patients are scared, very, very scared," said Lynne Wilkinson, a public health specialist who is part of a volunteer effort seeking 100 oxygen concentrators for a 450-bed field hospital in Johannesburg.

But sourcing the portable, low-volume devices is a problem because they're bought up by the private sector, even individuals, she told The Associated Press: "They keep them at home."

South Africa overnight posted another record daily high of confirmed cases, 13,674, as Africa's most developed country is a new global hot spot with 238,339 cases overall. More than a third are in Gauteng.

"The storm that we have consistently warned South Africans about is now arriving," Mkhize said this week.

A nurse at Chris Hani Baragwanath Hospital — the third largest hospital in the world with more than 3,000 beds — painted a bleak picture, saying new patients with the virus are now being admitted into ordinary wards as the COVID-19 ones are full.

"Our hospital is overloaded already. There has been an influx of patients over the last two weeks," the nurse said, speaking on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to give interviews.

More and more colleagues at the hospital are testing positive daily for the virus, the nurse said, "even people who are not working in COVID wards."

Already more than 8,000 health workers across Africa have been infected — half of them in South Africa.

How the country struggles to manage the pandemic will be amplified in other nations across Africa, which has the world's lowest levels of health funding and health staffing.

The continent as of Friday had 541,381 confirmed cases, but shortages in testing materials means the real number is unknown.

South Africa's surge in cases comes as the country loosens what had been one of the world's strictest lockdowns, with even alcohol sales banned until June 1. Now restaurants have sit-down service and religious gatherings have resumed. The economy was hurting and needed reopening, authorities said.

But nervous officials in Gauteng province have called for stricter lockdown measures to return. On Friday, Gauteng Premier David Makhura announced he had tested positive with mild symptoms.

"We must double our efforts," he said in a statement, urging people to wear face masks, wash their hands and distance themselves.

Warning signs keep flashing. Hospital beds in all provinces could be full within the month, the health minister said this week. On Friday he said a team is looking at 2,000 additional beds for field hospitals in

Gauteng.

In addition to the bed shortage, many hospitals are grappling with limited oxygen supplies to treat patients with the respiratory disease.

Eight hundred new beds will be built at the field hospital in Johannesburg, and the health minister on Friday said the facility would receive 1,000 "oxygen points." But that will take weeks, said Wilkinson, the public health specialist.

Guy Richards, director of clinical care at Charlotte Maxeke Hospital in Johannesburg, told the AP they are extremely worried.

"Even a big hospital like ours has difficulty supplying sufficient amounts of oxygenation for our patients. The same thing is happening at Helen Joseph (Hospital), and this is a major problem," he said.

Tshwane District Hospital, which the health minister visited Friday, is now devoted completely to COVID-19 patients, said Veronica Ueckermann, head of the COVID-19 response team at Steve Biko Academic Hospital, which includes Tshwane District Hospital.

"Currently we are stretched but we are still coping in terms of our wards, our sisters and doctors are working extremely hard," she said.

Bram Janssen and Cara Anna in Johannesburg contributed.

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

Tapping into crime fears, GOP conflates mayhem with protests

By ALAN FRAM Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Apocalyptic images of blazing buildings and window-smashing protesters pop on the TV screen as a caller to a 911 emergency line reaches voicemail. The computer offers to take reports of rapes, murders or home invasions, adding, "Our estimated wait time is five days."

The 30-second ad by President Donald Trump's reelection campaign ends with "You won't be safe in Joe Biden's America" emblazoned across a flickering hellscape. It blames a push by progressive activists to defund the police as "violent crime has exploded."

With recent shootings that have killed children and dozens of others in cities with large Black populations like New York, Atlanta and Chicago, the GOP is trying to play offense, ominously. Ads like Trump's and other Republican messaging insinuate that the rare looting and violence that marred largely peaceful social justice protests are spreading and foretell a wave of mayhem that they claim Democrats would abet with anti-police policies.

Trump emphasized that menacing theme at the White House Thursday, calling proponents of defunding the police "crazy." Telling a visiting group of Hispanic Americans that many immigrants had fled dangerous countries, Trump added, "They know what happens when the police cannot protect the innocent, when the rule of law is destroyed."

Democrats call the GOP drive an obvious diversion from issues they say voters care most about: the coronavirus pandemic that Trump has failed to control, the economic shutdown, recession-level unemployment, racial justice and health care.

They say Biden, the party's presumptive presidential nominee, has a well-honed moderate record that makes Republican efforts to cast him as a radical fruitless. And they say the GOP is fanning the flames of racism, preying on white suburbanites worried that televised scenes of burning buildings mean their neighborhoods are next.

"It's not even subtle. We're well beyond dog whistle," said Ian Russell, a Democratic consultant.

The GOP spearhead comes with polls showing that Trump's reelection and Republican control of the Senate may be in jeopardy in November's voting. It also follows weeks of protests following the killing of George Floyd by Minneapolis police and during a period that's seen Trump call the phrase "Black Lives Mat-

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, July 11, 2020 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 008 ~ 87 of 90

ter" a "symbol of hate," defend Confederate commanders and retweet a supporter yelling, "White power!"

Biden supports overhauling police practices and budgets but has repeatedly disavowed calls for defunding the police, as have most congressional Democrats. Republicans often suggest the term means that proponents want to abolish entire departments — and some far-left Democrats do — but most in the party consider it a call to shift some police resources to social welfare and other agencies.

Biden aides say it's a fantasy to cast the former vice president as seeking to dismantle police departments or ready to heed those who would. "Donald Trump is a chronic liar" who is "desperate to run against a fictitious opponent instead of Joe Biden," said Biden spokesperson Andrew Bates.

Trump campaign spokesperson Tim Murtaugh called it "ridiculous" for Democrats to say the GOP tactic is racist.

"All Americans, no matter who they are or where they live, should be concerned about the anarchists and lawless mobs roaming the streets with the tacit approval of Joe Biden and the Democrats," Murtaugh said.

Republican strategists say the issue will help woo suburban voters, a pivotal bloc that's abandoned Trump over his caustic divisiveness. "They want to be able to call 911 and know someone's coming," said Sarah Chamberlain, president of the centrist Republican Main Street Coalition.

But they also acknowledge that the tactic is designed to reorient what's so far been a difficult campaign season. "It gets us away from a referendum on the president, and more to a contest between the two parties," said GOP consultant Robert Blizzard.

Experts say there is scant evidence to connect the protests or activists' calls to defund the police to recent urban shootings. But in one of the few congressional races where Republicans have pressed the issue, Sen. Kelly Loeffler, R-Ga., has done just that.

Loeffler, facing a difficult reelection with rivals to her left and right, said on Fox News' "America's Newsroom" this week that the defunding movement has "resulted in the death of a child." She was referring to Secoria Turner, 8, who was fatally shot near the site of recent protests in Atlanta. Police are seeking the shooter.

Loeffler, part owner of the WNBA's Atlanta Dream, has also opposed the basketball league's plan to incorporate Black Lives Matter messaging on uniforms and courts. In a letter to the league, she said the movement favors "the disruption of the nuclear family structure" and has "promoted violence and destruction."

One of her Democratic opponents, Rev. Raphael Warnock, said Loeffler had surrendered to "the narrow impulses of tribalism and bigotry."

Homicides and shootings routinely rise in spring and summer as days get longer and people spend more time outdoors, academics say. Other factors include gang violence, and this year's spike could be fed by stress related to the virus, sky-high unemployment, stay-at-home orders and anger over police brutality.

Recent polling suggests Republicans have work to do to win over large swaths of the public.

About 3 in 4 people believe defund the police means revamping how police departments work, not erasing them, according to a Monmouth University Poll conducted last month. Six in 10 Americans say Trump's handling of the protests worsened the situation.

An Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research survey last month found major increases since 2015 in the number of white Americans who consider police violence a serious problem. Seven in 10 people back a complete reshaping or major changes to the criminal justice system, though only a quarter supports cutting law enforcement funding.

In the 2018 congressional elections, Trump vaulted immigration and supposedly dangerous "caravans" of Central Americans streaming toward the U.S. border a major GOP issue. Democrats focused on health care.

AP VoteCast, a nationwide survey of American voters, showed large majorities bucked Trump and thought immigrants arriving illegally should have a chance for citizenship.

Democrats gained 40 House seats, capturing control of the chamber.

Associated Press writers Emily Swanson and Aamer Madhani contributed to this report.

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, July 11, 2020 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 008 ~ 88 of 90

Biden's Iowa hires signal tightening in state Trump won big

By THOMAS BEAUMONT Associated Press

DES MOINES, Iowa (AP) — Joe Biden's presidential campaign has lined up a senior team in Iowa, a sign Democrats see the state where Republican Donald Trump beat them handily in 2016 as within reach.

Although Iowa's six Electoral College votes hardly make the state a political jackpot, a competitive race for them this fall could signal problems for Trump in other northern states he won by smaller margins and would likely need to carry again to win reelection, chiefly Michigan, Pennsylvania and Wisconsin.

"I don't know who will win Iowa, but I think the state is in contention in a way that six months ago you might not have suspected," said David Axelrod, a former senior strategist to President Barack Obama. "The fact that Iowa is a close race means that those other states are very much in jeopardy for Trump."

Biden has named veteran Democratic operative Jackie Norris as the senior adviser for his general election team in Iowa, where Trump beat Democrat Hillary Clinton by 9.4 percentage points in 2016, the campaign confirmed to The Associated Press on Thursday.

Norris, who was president and CEO of Goodwill Industries of Central Iowa until May, was the senior adviser to Obama's winning 2008 Iowa caucus campaign and later directed Obama's winning 2008 Iowa general election campaign before being tapped to serve as Michelle Obama's first chief of staff in Washington.

Joining Norris as Biden's Iowa campaign director is Lauren Dillon, who directed Minnesota Sen. Amy Klobuchar's 2020 Iowa caucus campaign. She was a senior advertising strategist for Democratic Senate candidates during the 2018 midterm elections after serving in several roles at the Democratic National Committee.

A Des Moines Register poll last month showed the race nearly tied in Iowa. Trump led Biden by more than 10 percentage points in the Register's March poll.

The tightening in Iowa follows incremental gains by Democrats since Trump carried the state.

After a decade of steady Republican gains capped by Trump's 2016 win, Democrats ousted two Republican House members in 2018, while also picking up seats in the legislature. Democrats have since pulled near even with Republicans in voter registration for the first time in seven years.

Trump's campaign spent more than \$400,000 in Iowa from April through late June, according to advertising data obtained by the AP. Meanwhile, Trump has reserved at least \$5 million in advertising time in Iowa this fall, according to Advertising Analytics, a nonpartisan ad-tracking group.

"Trump folks know it is in play because they are advertising here," said former Iowa Gov. Tom Vilsack, a Democrat who endorsed Biden last year.

Biden aides declined to say whether they planned an Iowa advertising campaign, though Democratic operatives unaffiliated with the campaign suggested one would be likely should the race remain close, given how relatively inexpensive television time is in the state.

Besides Michigan, Pennsylvania and Wisconsin, Biden has staff organizing in Arizona, Florida, Nevada and North Carolina.

The Trump campaign named a senior Iowa team almost a year ago, including Eric Branstad, son of former Gov. Terry Branstad, as senior adviser.

Though Trump campaign aides declined to comment on the advertising, campaign spokesperson Preya Samsundar said the campaign had made more than a million voter contacts in the state and had volunteers in all of Iowa's 99 counties.

Catch up on the 2020 election campaign with AP experts on our weekly politics podcast, "Ground Game."

Today in History

By The Associated Press undefined

Today in History

Today is Saturday, July 11, the 193rd day of 2020. There are 173 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, July 11, 2020 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 008 ~ 89 of 90

On July 11, 1804, Vice President Aaron Burr mortally wounded former Treasury Secretary Alexander Hamilton during a pistol duel in Weehawken, New Jersey. (Hamilton died the next day.)

On this date:

In 1533, Pope Clement VII issued a bull of excommunication against England's King Henry VIII for the annulment of the king's marriage to Catherine of Aragon and subsequent marriage to second wife Anne Boleyn.

In 1798, the U.S. Marine Corps was formally re-established by a congressional act that also created the U.S. Marine Band.

In 1859, Big Ben, the great bell inside the famous London clock tower, chimed for the first time.

In 1915, the Chicago Sunday Tribune ran an article titled, "Blues Is Jazz and Jazz Is Blues." (It's believed to be one of the earliest, if not the earliest, uses of the word "jazz" as a musical term by a newspaper.)

In 1936, New York City's Triborough Bridge (now officially the Robert F. Kennedy Bridge) linking Manhattan, Queens and The Bronx was opened to traffic.

In 1955, the U.S. Air Force Academy swore in its first class of cadets at its temporary quarters at Lowry Air Force Base in Colorado.

In 1960, the novel "To Kill a Mockingbird" by Harper Lee was first published by J.B. Lippincott and Co.

In 1972, the World Chess Championship opened as grandmasters Bobby Fischer of the United States and defending champion Boris Spassky of the Soviet Union began play in Reykjavik, Iceland. (Fischer won after 21 games.)

In 1974, the House Judiciary Committee released volumes of evidence it had gathered in its Watergate inquiry.

In 1979, the abandoned U.S. space station Skylab made a spectacular return to Earth, burning up in the atmosphere and showering debris over the Indian Ocean and Australia.

In 1995, the U.N.-designated "safe haven" of Srebrenica (sreh-breh-NEET'-sah) in Bosnia-Herzegovina fell to Bosnian Serb forces, who then carried out the killings of more than 8,000 Muslim men and boys. The United States normalized relations with Vietnam.

In 2017, emails released by Donald Trump Jr. revealed that he'd been told before meeting with a Russian attorney during the presidential campaign that the Russian government had information that could "incriminate" Hillary Clinton. MSNBC "Morning Joe" host and former Republican congressman Joe Scarborough announced that he was leaving the Republican party, partly because of its loyalty to President Donald Trump.

Ten years ago: Over the din of vuvuzela horns in Johannesburg, South Africa, Spain won soccer's World Cup after an exhausting 1-0 victory in extra time over the Netherlands. The Rev. Robert H. Schuller, founder of Southern California's Crystal Cathedral megachurch, announced he would retire after 55 years in the pulpit. Paula Creamer won her first major tournament, shooting a final-round 2-under 69 for a 3-under 281 at the U.S. Women's Open in Oakmont, Pennsylvania.

Five years ago: Top Mexican drug lord Joaquin "El Chapo" Guzman, head of the powerful Sinaloa Cartel, escaped from a maximum security prison in Mexico for the second time by exiting through a secretly dug mile-long tunnel (he was recaptured in January 2016 and is serving a life sentence at a supermax prison in Colorado following a conviction on U.S. drug-trafficking charges.) A crowd of furious Bosnian Muslims jumped over fences and attacked Serbia's prime minister, Aleksandar Vucic, with stones and water bottles, marring the 20th anniversary commemorations of the Srebrenica (SREH'-breh-neet-sah) massacre. Serena Williams won her sixth title at Wimbledon, beating Garbine Muguruza of Spain 6-4, 6-4 in the women's final; for Williams, it was her second "Serena Slam" — holding all four major titles at the same time.

One year ago: Singer R. Kelly was arrested in Chicago after he was indicted on 13 federal counts including sex crimes. (Kelly has pleaded not guilty; a trial is set for later this year.) President Donald Trump abandoned his effort to put a citizenship question into the 2020 census, instead telling federal agencies to try to compile the information through existing databases. Twitter was down for about an hour in an outage that appeared to affect users around the world; the company blamed an "internal configuration change."

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, July 11, 2020 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 008 ~ 90 of 90

Today's Birthdays: Actress Susan Seaforth Hayes is 77. Singer Jeff Hanna (Nitty Gritty Dirt Band) is 73. Ventriloquist-actor Jay Johnson is 71. Actor Bruce McGill is 70. Actor Stephen Lang is 68. Actress Mindy Sterling is 67. Former boxer Leon Spinks is 67. Actress Sela Ward is 64. Reggae singer Michael Rose (Black Uhuru) is 63. Singer Peter Murphy is 63. Actor Mark Lester is 62. Jazz musician Kirk Whalum is 62. Singer Suzanne Vega is 61. Rock guitarist Richie Sambora (Bon Jovi) is 61. Actress Lisa Rinna is 57. Rock musician Scott Shriner (Weezer) is 55. Actress Debbe (correct) Dunning is 54. Actor Greg Grunberg is 54. Wildlife expert Jeff Corwin is 53. Actor Justin Chambers is 50. Actress Leisha Hailey is 49. Actor Michael Rosenbaum is 48. Pop-rock singer Andrew Bird is 47. Country singer Scotty Emerick is 47. Rapper Lil' Kim is 46. Actor Jon Wellner is 45. Rapper Lil' Zane is 39. Pop-jazz singer-musician Peter Cincotti is 37. Actress Serinda Swan is 36. Actor Robert Adamson is 35. Actor David Henrie is 31. Actor Connor Paolo is 30. Former tennis player Caroline Wozniacki is 30. R&B/pop singer Alessia Cara is 24.